



Service Delivery and Accountable Governance in Urban Zimbabwe: the Issue of Policy Implementation

Sylvester MARUMAHOKO

University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park, South Africa
School of Post Graduate Studies
(Research and Innovation)
marumahokos@gmail.com

Norman T. NHEDE

University of Pretoria, Hatfield, South Africa
School of Public Management and Administration
Norman.Nhede.up.ac.za



Abstract. *The role of urban local government in Zimbabwe in producing public goods and services such as water supply, solid waste management, primary health care, road construction and maintenance and others is beyond contest. In generating these services that ordinary urbanites cannot do without, urban local government has become not only a frontline service provider but an indispensable subnational government playing a crucial role in improving the quality of human life. Yet, service delivery is seemingly characterised by chronic backlog that appears to suggest that urban councils are not dispensing their duties as well as they should but that they are also failing to meet the expectations of communities in their jurisdictions. The explanations for the policy failures include the inability to collect revenue due a municipality, notable legislative weaknesses, and possibly inter and intra political friction impacting urban service delivery. With the assistance of a hypothetical process model, the article focuses on the lack of implementation capacity or the inability to implement policy as one of the major reasons that is often overlooked or ignored when explaining policy failure at the local sphere of urban government.*

Keywords: *Service Delivery, Accountable Governance, Policy Implementation, National Development Strategy 1, Vision 2030, Urban Zimbabwe.*

JEL: Z18, D73.

1. Introduction

Extending service delivery to communities is the most important measure of assessing the contribution of urban local government to creating a better life for all residing in urban areas. As the government closest to citizens, the expectation is that a core function of urban local government (along with rural local government) is the facilitation of basic services to the community. In that vantage position, local government works with groups and citizens within communities to meet their material, economic and social needs and improve the quality of their lives. The other two spheres of government, national government and provincial and metropolitan councils are not comparatively in physical proximity to the people. Using information about local public goods and services in their voting decisions, the electorate can either punish or reward aspiring councillors and those who wish to be retained as ward councillors. Some countries with three-tier models of governmental arrangements have begun to question whether it is still optimal for achieving responsiveness, public participation and efficiency.

In this regard, for example, South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) has begun to review the cooperative mode of government comprised of national government, provincial government and local government that has been in operation in South Africa since 1994 (Mokoena, 2011). In its summit on Provincial and Local Government held between 2-4 December 2010 at Gallagher Estate in Midrand (South Africa), the ANC spent three days reviewing South Africa's provincial and local government policy. The summit initiated public debate on the changes required to government structures to enhance service delivery. In particular, the Summit extensively discussed the proposition to abolish provinces and only have a two-tier system of government comprising national government and local government (ANC 2010:2). The discussion hinged on the argument that the more layers of government there are, coupled with an unclear division of functional responsibilities, the greater the complexity that must be coordinated, is likely to have a retarding effect on service delivery. Although a decision on the fate of provinces was deferred, eleven years after the Midrand Summit, the debate about how government should be organised in South Africa rages on with majority indications seemingly suggesting a skew towards greater public acceptance of capacitating local government to be more involved in local service delivery.

The 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe accepted a three tier system of government comprising national government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local government (divided into rural and urban councils). Provincial and metropolitan councils are still to be established, with the governing Zimbabwe African National

Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party appearing to be questioning the contribution of provincial councils and metropolitan councils to local service delivery. Before all three systems of government were constitutionalised, the performance of provincial social delivery was chequered at best and very limited in some instances (Marumahoko & Fessha, 2011). Besides the developmental role of provinces was unclear if not contested, it was also intimated that many provincial functions could be better performed at national or local levels. A two-tier system of government, releases massive public resources for reallocation to local government.

Even as its relationship with the lower sphere of government is characterised by animosity, national government in Zimbabwe is seemingly supporting the goals of improved urban service delivery through investment in service infrastructure, law reform, assignment of functional responsibilities and support of administrative systems and processes. However, the interventions do not appear to be facilitating much desired progress and breakthrough given that for the most part, urban municipalities are not functioning in accordance with their original founding objectives, resulting in rampant inefficiencies. The rate of basic service delivery has not proceeded at the desired accelerated pace. This is concerning, coming as it does against the announcement by national government on 16 November 2020 of a new five-year medium term policy, the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) whose success seemingly depends on the efficacy, ability and capability of decentralised local government to meet its targets. The NDS1 replaces the Transitional Stabilisation Programme which ran from 2018 to end of 2020.

Essentially, the NDS1 tasks local government the objective of realising goals set by government to make Zimbabwe an upper-middle income country by 2030. In this regard, NDS1 contributes to the realisation of Vision 2030. Improved service delivery is at the centre of the fulfilment of governmental targets (Marumahoko, 2020a). Importantly, owing to unrepresented rural-to-urban migration, urban local government has the unenviable task of facilitating increased access to services such as tap water, educational schools, health care centres, navigable roads and other social amenities associated with improved quality of life. The question remains whether government will be able to realise its goals against the backdrop of urban local government that is seemingly unable to provide the necessary infrastructure within which people can find a good life as well as an environment conducive to individual growth and development.

The article engages the ability or inability of urban local government to provide public services of a local nature. In this regard, therefore, it assesses the structures to determine whether inefficiencies have only resulted due to deviations and

anomalies in the implementations process or whether they are actually due to structural problems. Importantly, the article situates urban local service delivery within the framework of a hypothetical process model for the implementation of policies and programmes for service delivery. In doing so, the article, without diminishing the role of other factors, attributes dearth of service delivery to the lack of implementation capacity or the inability to implement policy.

2. Theoretical framework and organisation of the article

Drawing from goal setting theory, the article argues that there is a link between clearly identified goals, implementation and performance. The theory is associated with Locke who derived his inspiration from Aristotle. Goal setting theory stipulates that specific and challenging goals lead to higher level of performance than do the generalized goals (Ajulor, 2018; Swann, 2021). Encapsulated in the development of policy is the issue of translating decisions on service delivery into services that are consumed by urbanites. Policy implementation is an important factor in the equation of policy execution. In addressing issues such as how implementation will be facilitated, the level of public involvement and participation by other key stakeholders, consideration of resources required to translate decisions into tangible benefits and the level of intergovernmental coordination and synchronisation required, the context of goals will give direction and focus to urban local government on the one hand and the local bureaucrats who constitute the policy implementers on the other.

The article is organised as follows. After the introduction, it briefly engages on the subject of urban service delivery in 2021, the idea being to gauge the proficiency of urban government. Furthermore, it is the intention of the article to provide insight into the pressing challenges urban local government has to surmount in its quest to be efficient and effective in the generation and distribution of local public services. Thereafter, the article engages on the options for urban service delivery. The essence of this is to encourage debate on additional strategies to those already in place to facilitate and realise urban service delivery. Following this, the article discusses the role of implementation in urban service delivery.

The assessment of the role of urban local government in service delivery is facilitated in the context of national government's newly introduced policy called National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) in which urban local government is anticipated to play a major role towards the realisation of Vision 2030. Following this, the article applies a hypothetical model associated with Roux (2005) and

others to shed light on the basic characteristics of a well-designed programme on the practice of implementation in ensuring that essential services are generated and distributed in line with initially stated objectives. The article then presents its concluding remarks.

3. Snippets of urban service delivery in 2021

The most recent events in Zimbabwe have highlighted a number of critical challenges facing urban municipalities. With the World Health Organisation announcing the first case of Covid 19 in Zimbabwe towards the end of March 2020, and the Zimbabwe government immediately decreeing a national lockdown to mitigate the impact of the respiratory disease, the knock on effect on urban service delivery was instantly felt. With much of the economy shut down and movement of people severely limited, very few service consumers came forward to settle what they owed urban municipalities for services rendered (Bulawayo 24 News, 2021). The little revenue being collected was channelled towards efforts to contain the deadly respiratory disease. Without a steady stream of revenue, the quality and frequency of service delivery noticeably plummeted. The decline expressed itself through infrequent water supply, inadequate solid waste management, dilapidated road network and failing health care infrastructure, among other issues (Marumahoko, 2020a; Marumahoko, 2020b). Zimbabwe is currently grappling with the second wave of the pandemic which is characterised by a deadly new strand that is proving difficult to contain (Centre for Innovation and Technology, 2021). It is now over a year since urban government has been enduring the burden of generating services against limited financial resources (Marumahoko et al., 2020).

Aggravating the already fragile state of service delivery is that on 1 January 2021, most urban councils experienced a reversal of progress in service delivery when Cyclone Chalane, a severe tropical storm that made landfall in Madagascar and Mozambique before it entered Zimbabwe as a tropical depression, brought heavy rains and bursts of strong winds to Zimbabwe (Munengwa, 2021). It destroyed infrastructure such as clinics, schools and houses, especially in urban centres along the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. Even towns and cities not in the eye of the cyclone were considerably impacted owing to the huge amounts of rainwater dumped. Noticeably, it inflicted considerable damage on the road infrastructure within cities and towns, making them untrafficable and amplifying the crisis of so-called pot-holed roads.

Even though the degeneration of the urban road system was in this case largely associated with a weather phenomenon, this crucial element of failing urban service delivery was immediately politicised, with national government which is dominated by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) blaming the opposition Movement for Democratic Change- Alliance (MDC-A) dominated urban councils for service delivery slippages. On 10 February 2021, national government, ostensibly seeking to benefit from the crisis, declared the state of the country's roads a natural disaster paving the way for it to take over rehabilitation of urban roads (Zimeye, 2021).

In the first quarter of 2021, the national spotlight was shown on yet another aspect of failing urban government policy-the proliferation of dysfunctional and irregular settlements built without following spatial planning protocols, rules and regulations. Within the Harare Metropolitan area which comprise the City of Harare, Chitungwiza Municipality, Epworth Local Board, Ruwa Local Board and Norton Town Council, thousands of houses built illegally on State land, municipal land, wet lands, river banks and other undesignated places, often without environmental impact assessment were identified for demolition. In Budiriro 5, a suburb within Harare, 196 houses built without proper planning and approval were demolished (Matsengarwodzi, 2021).

Not only did the challenge of the mushrooming of dysfunctional and irregular settlements expose lack of synchronisation in spatial planning and management of settlements but it also exposed the ease with which so-called land barons were fleecing people out of their money by illegally selling them land they had no title to. Land baron is the term used in Zimbabwe to refer to powerful business people who make a profit from illegally selling land to unsuspecting people who want to build houses. The land barons are people who reportedly wield a lot of influence in governmental affairs-something that the government often dismisses as rumour mongering even when its officials are prosecuted and go on to implicate the governing party as they try to cover up their tracks. The illegal settlements are not connected to council services such as water, sewer lines, and road network (Matsengarwodzi, 2021). They also lack social amenities such as clinics, schools, and shopping centres. In the worst of cases, they are associated with vices such as crime, prostitution and water-borne diseases.

The degeneration in urban service delivery in 2021 is accentuated by the way in which intergovernmental fiscal support is facilitated, managed and allocated. Even as national treasury claims to be supporting devolution by dispensing financial support, it is not clear how financial support is arrived at in the absence of a formula to ascertain transparency and accountability. In addition, the

disbursements are seemingly not aligned with the Constitution which directs that not less than five percent of nationally collected revenue in the budget be allocated to local authorities in pursuit of improved service delivery. Concerning is that intergovernmental fiscal system is not re-engineered to ensure that urban councils that are fragile and poorly resourced receive a lion's share of the funds from the national fiscus to meet their constitutional and developmental mandates.

In 2021, as has been the case before, the issue of urban local government (along with rural district councils) being saddled with unfunded mandates is seemingly not tackled or given due consideration to lessen the burden on urban government and relief in an environment characterised by a decline in own source revenue owing to a lockdown induced by Covid 19. Without any form of compensation or support from national government, urban councils continue to perform certain functions such as library services and primary health care without being compensated for it (Marumahoko 2020a: 7). In the case of municipal clinics, urban local government continues to attend to patients including those with symptoms associated with Covid 19 without charging much. Essentially, this is a function that is not self-funding and urban councils (along with rural district councils) use their own revenue to fund such functions. In this regard, during the period under brief review, it seems that national government is not working with urban local government in a cooperative, interactive and facilitatory way to realise meaningful service delivery.

4. Options for service delivery

Although urban local government in Zimbabwe explicitly rely on its own departments to deliver services, it can also make use of alternative approaches to service delivery. Alternative models to service delivery are seemingly not fully tapped. They include the use of shared services, between multiple local authorities and also between local authorities and other public bodies; outsourcing aspects of service delivery to private or voluntary providers, and its opposite, insourcing and commercialisation.

4.1. Shared services

Shared services refers to two or more authorities providing a service to their electorates on a joint basis. In Zimbabwe, sharing may take place between neighbouring municipalities or non-neighbouring municipalities. It may take place between different levels of local authorities (e.g. city and municipal councils). Shared services may be facilitated through a joint in-house department or they

may be jointly outsourced (Sandford, 2019). The arrangements for governance of shared services can take place through a joint committee between the participating urban councils, or simply through agreements between the executives of the participating urban local authorities. Critical features of successful sharing initiatives include political leadership; trust, honesty and openness; adaptability; councillor involvement; staff engagement; and communication. Success may be hindered owing to lack of a clear and shared vision of the reasons for shared management, concerns around the loss of sovereignty of a council, a fundamental difference in the organisational culture of the councils and fears of a ‘takeover’ by one council.

4.2. Outsourcing

Outsourcing is when government chooses a private company to provide particular services on its behalf. Local authorities may decide to outsource services as providing that quality and value for money are maintained. Even when they outsource, urban local councils are still responsible for maintaining the standards of service delivery and are accountable for the success or failure of such initiatives. Outsourcing is associated with the notion of competition as the driver of efficiency, quality improvement and innovation. In addition, it is overlaid with considerations around cost-cutting and the need to tackle failings in public services (Sandford, 2019). Counter-arguments highlight the risk of market failure in the realm of public services, the absence of tangible evidence about the impacts of outsourcing, concerns that the general level of transparency over contractors’ costs and profits is limited, fear that government is, to a certain degree, dependent upon its major providers and concerns that some outsourcing deals have attracted media attention due to delays and accusations of overspending and failure.

4.3. Insourcing

Insourcing is another option for service delivery. Its emergence is associated with criticisms of outsourcing in local government, including poor performance by contractors. Insourcing may also be a way of expanding a council’s capacity as part of a broader service restructuring, or where a contract has come to an end and the council does not wish to extend or retender it (Sandford, 2019). Some local authorities may lack the internal capacity to take control of a service at short notice, including harmonising pay and conditions, alongside any aspirations to join up service provision. Insourcing may involve up-front costs to pay for the transition to direct employment itself. There were cases where public sector monopoly provision was of poor quality and poor value for money and the forces to make it better seemed to be lacking.

4.4. Commercialisation

Regarding local government, the term commercialisation assumes several different meanings. These include referring to a change in emphasis within a municipality's internal operations, with the objective of ascertaining opportunities to generate income in response to a decline in own-revenue or decreasing levels of intergovernmental financial support. Other forms it can take are joint ventures with other public and private organisations, seeking to bring in external commercial expertise to increase efficiency and profit (Sandford, 2019). It can also take the form of local authorities offering services in a competitive market, either directly or through a wholly-owned company. In any of these options, urban councils are subject to the same fundamental laws as private companies. They are endowed the power to create companies and joint ventures and to fund them.

5. The case for policy implementation

Policy implementation is a succession of activities carried out by government and others to achieve the goals and objectives expressed in policy statements (Bullock & Lavis, 2019). Policy implementation is as important as policy development. Many countries excel at policy development and are convincing about the direction they would like their countries to take. However, they are less successful at implementing policy (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017). Responding to this challenge at the joint annual discussion held in Tokyo in 2012, then World Bank President Jim Yong Kim told Boards of Governors of the World Bank Group that there was an “urgent need for a science of delivery in development” (World Bank, 2012).

The quality of implementation plays a significant part in facilitating policy outcomes and producing positive results. If a policy is poorly or even moderately implemented, its goals are unlikely to be achieved or the results will be less significant. With effectively implemented policies, success is likely.

Numerous factors may fail policy implementation. These may include the commitment and political will to implement policies, unhealthy inter-agency rivalry and coordination, inadequate understanding of the issues to be addressed, institutional weaknesses and resistance to change (Twahirwa, 2018). In the same vein, it is also said that challenges of policy implementation in Africa may be linked to improper planning, political instability, and bureaucratic bottleneck, the deliberate imposition of policy, complete alteration to the plan if it is not

favourable to the implementers or civil servants saddled with the responsibility to implement it (Ajulor, 2016).

The picture is clear: the public administration in Africa, despite the level at which it is operating (be it national, provincial or local government) has seemingly not been very successful at addressing challenges associated with successful policy implementation and execution.

6. Critical factors that impact policy implementation

Policy implementation does not occur in a vacuum. It is the outcome of various variables that shape the direction that policy implementation takes. According to Brynard (2000) there are five variables that impact policy execution. They are also known as causal factors. They are to be borne in mind when implementing policy. Roux (2005) refers to them as the 5-C protocols. They are content, context, commitment, capacity and clients and coalitions.

6.1. Content

Regarding policy analysis, content is what the policy is mainly about. According to Walt and Gilson (1994), content is one of the four elements comprising the policy analysis triangle, the other being: context (why need this policy), content (what is the policy mainly about), process (how was the policy brought forward and implemented) and actors (who participates in and influences formulation and implementation of the policy) (Ma et al., 2015). The content of policy is important in how it intends to achieve its ends and in how it chooses the ways to attain those outcomes (Roux 2005: 74).

6.2. Context

According to Echt (2017), context is the “complex environment that influences how policy decisions take place as the result of simultaneous interactions between various stakeholders”. The context in which policies are implemented matters. It is important to have appreciation of the environment and the situation where the policy initiative is to be put into practice. Essentially this entails understanding the political dynamics in which policy implementation is facilitated, appreciation of the policy makers’ intentions, goals to be achieved and the means for achieving the goals. An appreciation of governmental institutions matters given that they are the direct environment where decisions about policies are discussed and, most importantly, where they are implemented. Beyond understanding the role of institutions in enabling systemic change, it is also important to appreciate the

socio-economic framework in which policy implementation is taking place. Consideration of issues such as poverty, discrimination, climate change and the state of the economy is also important.

6.3. Commitment

Commitment may be understood of as the determination of governments and those in positions of authority to do and say things that will produce desired outcomes. When the success or failure of policies is engaged, we frequently hear it said that political commitment – or the lack of it – affected the outcome. This suggests that the actions of governmental actors have a bearing on the success or failure of policy implementation. Indicators of commitment often include speeches and other public declarations in favour of certain policies. Thus, commitment is important in designing, developing and implementing policies. As authorities implement local government policies on service delivery, it is important that they consult, engage and mobilise stakeholders as well as facilitate acceptance of partnership with local communities (Roux, 2005).

6.4. Capacity

The capacity of government to develop and implement policy matters a great deal to the success of a policy. The effectiveness of policy is mediated by the quality of implementation. Having better knowledge of the capacity of those implementing policies is important. It gives crucial information on the likely success of an initiative in a specific policy context (Rand Europe 2020: 2). Organisations with strong capacity are, among other things characterised by robust coordination between units, clarity of institutional mandates, recruitment of the right people, rewards good performance, applies rules consistently and facilitates development of organisational culture that emphasise shared values, practices and beliefs. In the opposite direction, organizations with weak capacity are characterised by a lack of resources, knowledge, funds, motivation, commitment and leadership for the successful implementation of policies (Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2017).

6.5. Clients and coalitions

Before creating new policy, authorities may need to be clear about a number of things, including the nature of interest groups advocating certain policy, their objectives, power dynamics, organisation and how to reach them as well as incorporate them in the policy making process. Interest groups are formal or informal association of people seeking to influence governmental policy in favour of their interests. They may represent social causes, economic and corporate

interests, or religious and ideological interests. Through advocacy, lobbying, mobilising and shaping public opinion, they may influence public behaviour by making people more or less supportive of policy development and implementation (Dur, 2019). Thus, it is perhaps important that greater acceptance of a policy is facilitated through involving interest groups in the policy making process, facilitating collaborative consultation and continuously appealing for public support of a certain policy in the course of its implementation.

7. A process model for the implementation of policies and programmes

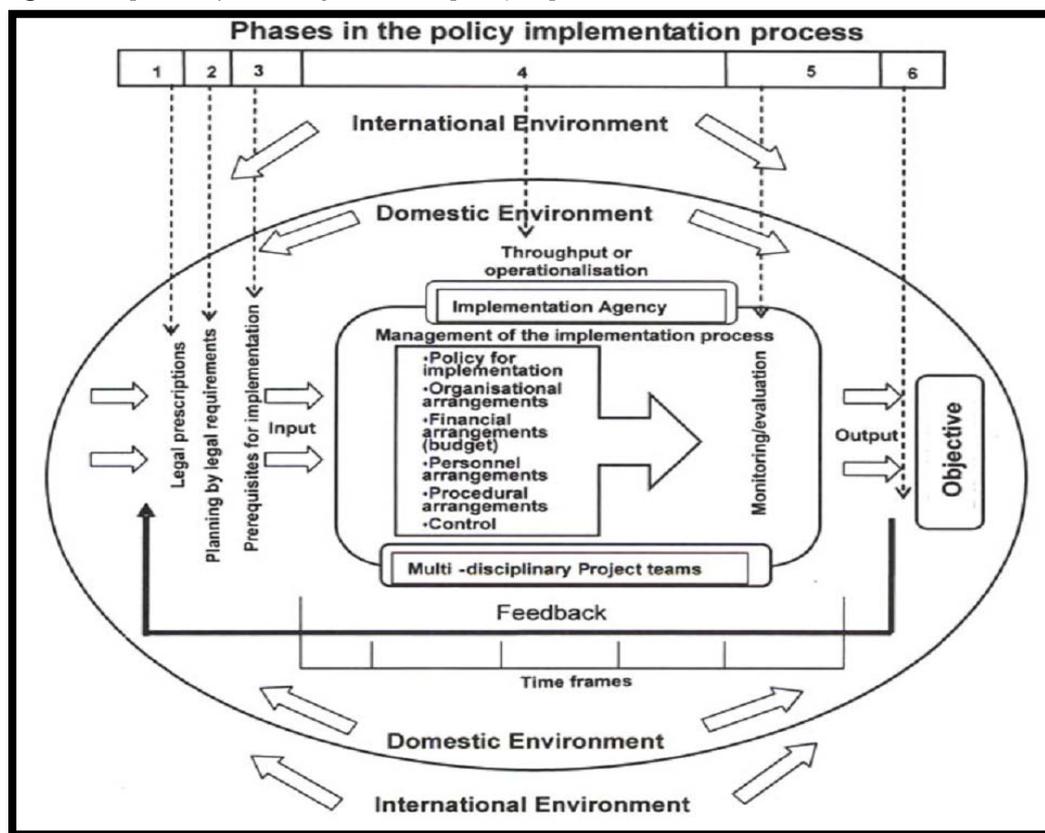
As a pictorial or graphic representation of key concepts, a model in research shows, (with the aid of arrows and other diagrams), the relationship between various types of variables such as independent, dependent, moderating and mediating variables. It is an imitation of reality or a symbolic representation of a particular phenomenon. In this regard, a model can be used by urban local government officials to facilitate efficient and effective policy implementation.

As indicated earlier, Zimbabwe is seemingly at the cusp of transformation following adoption and announcement by President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa of a five-year medium development plan, the so-called National Development Strategy 1. The success of the plan which runs from 2021 to 2025 rests on the ability of urban local government (along with rural district councils) to provide much needed services to improve the quality of human life. In addition, it is anticipated that urban service delivery will considerably contribute towards attainment of so-called Vision 2030-another ambitious government policy that seeks to achieve Zimbabwe the status of middle-upper income country.

Basic essential services expected to be rendered by urban local government include water, sanitation, housing, street-lighting and primary health care. Already, some urban dwellers are dissatisfied with local government service delivery, raising profound doubts about implementation capacity. An additional concern is that NDS1 was seemingly not accompanied by a robust and well-designed programme on the practice of implementation by urban local government. In response to this gap, the article presents the hypothetical process model for the implementation of policies and programmes for service delivery associated with Roux (2005) and other researchers before him. At the centre of the discussion is the question of how best can a programme on the practice of implementation be facilitated to aid urban local government attain greater efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

There are six phases to the model facilitating efficient and effective policy implementation (see Figure 1 below). These are (1) legal prescription, (2) planning by legal requirements, (3) prerequisites for implementation, (4) throughput or operationalisation, (5) monitoring/evaluation and (6), feedback. All six phases are in the domestic environment although they are impacted by the international environment. Environment is the context in which service delivery and policy implementation are facilitated. In the ensuing discussion, the article engages the various aspects of the hypothetical model that both the executive authority and political authority in urban local government can take advantage of to improve not only policy implementation but service delivery as well.

Figure 1. A process for local government policy implementation



Source: The model was created with the aim to present an understandable and more practical representation of the policy implementation process, and is an integrated conceptualisation of various views of exponents such as Easton (1957 and 1965); Smith (1973) in Quade (1989); Hanekom (1987); Cloete J.J.N. (1981); Cloete F. & Wisink (2000) and Roux 2005, amongst others.

7.1. Legal prescription

The role of urban local government as a service provider is protected in Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution and articulated in various subsidiary laws (Marumahoko, 2020c). As urban local government implements its policies, programmes and projects on service delivery, there is need to operate within the enabling framework. Service delivery is devolved through a three-tier system of government comprising (1) national government, (2) provincial and metropolitan councils and (3) local government (divided into urban councils and rural councils). Urban councils represent and manage the affairs of people in urban areas while rural councils do the same for people residing in rural areas (Moyo & Ncube, 2014). Even as the most basic of functions are placed in the hands of local government, the Constitution imagines a cooperative framework in which the three-tier system of government harmonise, consult and co-ordinate to facilitate achievement of improved urban service delivery. Other pieces of legislation that facilitate urban service delivery include, the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) and the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act (Chapter 29:12).

7.2. Planning by legal requirements

A good understanding of how urban local government functions is key to efficient and effective urban service planning and delivery. The vast majority of the work of urban local authority is facilitated through committees and full council. The committee system is provided for in sections 96 and 97 of the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15). Through the committee system, elected councillors as representatives of the wards are allowed to participate in the decisions of urban councils. The standing committees of urban councils are: Finance Committee, Health and Housing Committee and Environmental Management Committee. Other committees provided for in the Act are the Audit Committee and Municipal Procurement Board. In addition, the Act allows urban councils to create as many committees as are necessary for the facilitation of its work. Decisions of committees of a council are referred to as recommendations and they are submitted to the full council for adoption. All councillors are members of the full council. The decisions of the full council are known as resolutions and they are the basis upon which service delivery initiatives are developed and implemented.

7.3. Prerequisites for implementation

Understanding the prerequisites for implementation is a key component of the policy cycle. One of the issues that determine successful policy implementation is availability of sufficient resources for service delivery (Marumahoko, 2010). Resources are the means required to carry out the project tasks. These can be

people, equipment, facilities, funding, or anything else capable of definition required for the completion of a project activity. Vital to the planning process and eventual success of implementation is ensuring that stakeholders or role players are committed to the implementation of the policy and have pledged their support for it. In the same vein, it is recommended that there is widespread appreciation, understanding and agreement on not only the objectives of the policy and the allocation of tasks but also on the arrangements for communication and coordination. Last but not least, a proper leadership and management structure needs to be in place to facilitate policy implementation.

7.4. Operationalisation

Operationalization can be defined as turning abstract concepts into measurable observations or putting a concept into operation or use (Bhandari, 2020). According to Dann, Johnson and Gregoire (2021), there are four elements to the operationalisation of a policy or plan. The first element involves taking ownership of the policy. Besides making the policy or plan a project management system in the organization, those assigned implementation authority schedule the work needed to accomplish the tasks on the policy. The second element involves rolling the plan out to the front line. Among other things, this involves tying the work of every person employed by a particular local authority to the plan. In the same vein, departmental tasks are rolled up to support the master plan. In the third element, the operationalized plan becomes the lens through which subnational government views new opportunities, risks and decisions. In this regard, the policy sets the direction, and all activities should be measured against, aligned with, and driven by the policy. The fourth element underscores that to fully operationalise a policy or strategic plan you need to make it to be easily revised, updated and adjusted throughout the year (Dann, Johnson & Gregoire, 2021).

7.5. Monitoring and Evaluation

A crucial process by which stakeholders follow and assess policies to ensure they are developed, endorsed, enacted, and implemented as intended, policy monitoring is a crucial element of policy implementation. Essentially policy monitoring involves (1) appraising the policy environment, (2) gauging the level and quality of stakeholder engagement, (3) documenting the progress of policy development and the legislative endorsement of policy, (4) putting policies into practice through financing and implementation planning, and (5) evaluating outcomes of implementation (USAID, 2014). Among other factors, effective policy monitoring requires analytical skills, such as being able to identify,

develop, and apply assessment tools and analyse findings; and the ability to mobilize communities to participate in the policy process.

A key component of the policy process, policy evaluation applies evaluation principles and methods to examine the content, implementation or impact of a policy. Through evaluation, urban local government can develop understanding of the merit, worth, and utility of a policy. In applying policy evaluation, users need to be appraised of its uses which include documenting policy development, documenting and informing implementation, assessing support and compliance with existing policies, demonstrating impacts and value of a policy, informing an evidence base, informing future policies and providing accountability for resources invested (Centre for Disease Control, 2020). Some of the tools used to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of policies in democratic local government include, stakeholder surveys, community score cards, citizen report cards, community based monitoring and evaluation, participatory outputs tracking and social audits.

7.6. Continuous feedback

An integral component of policy process, continuous feedback enables managers and teams to recognize achievements of policy implementation right away. It is a modern, human-centered approach to promoting, evaluating, and improving policy performance. Continuous feedback denotes the potential for policies to facilitate municipal service delivery and, as a result, influence future courses of policy development. Through continuous feedback, urban local government can ensure that objectives are met as initially set and identified or altered if necessitated by circumstances (Roux, 2005). As a component of realising this objective, it may be necessary and desirable that subnational government creates a model for facilitating continuous feedback.

7.7. Other actors and stakeholders

When implementing policy, it is important that cognisance is made of the other players and stakeholders involved in service delivery. In Zimbabwe urban local government is not the only actor involved in urban service delivery (Marumahoko et al., 2020). National government has been known to encroach on the role of the local sphere in service delivery. Encroachment takes many forms, some subtle, others not so subtle. It includes national government taking over the functions of urban councils, disrupting decisions based on local participatory consultation, establishing parallel local government structures, replacing elected political authority with commissions, rescinding decisions made in council chambers, and introducing regulations, protocols and rules that erode the authority of urban local

government. Residents and ratepayers' associations are emerging as important actors in urban service delivery. Not only are they testing the boundaries of urban local politics, they are now increasingly monitoring policy implementation.

The Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ) is another important actor. A body that purports to represent the interests of its members across the country, UCAZ often mediates facilitation of service delivery with national government through the Ministry of Local Government. The two dominant political parties in the country, ZANU-PF and MDC-A also have a bearing on successful policy implementation or policy failure. They have often made urban service delivery a point of intense political contestation.

Although policy implementation also needs to consider actors in the international environment such as the United Nations, World Bank and the European Union, the weight of their bearing on local policy implementation has somewhat diminished over the past two decades owing to disagreements over the broader issues of governance. In the past, they influenced both policy development and policy implementation through strengthening the capacity of urban local government (along with rural councils) to facilitate improved service delivery. Those implementing local government policy have to work within these limitations.

8. Conclusions

As one of the three systems of government in Zimbabwe, urban local government is at the frontline of urban service delivery. Its role involves producing public goods and services such as water supply, solid waste management, primary health care, road construction and maintenance and others. Its position relative to that of the other two systems of government makes it the most ideal subnational government body for realising not only policy implementation but also basic service delivery. For its physical proximity however, the task has proven to be daunting. Among the reasons given for its poor performance include chronic shortages of resources, allegations of central interference, and in 2021, reversal of service delivery owing to the devastating effects of Cyclone Chalane, the Covid 19 pandemic and the inconvenience of unfunded mandates. Service delivery continues to tumble with no relief or respite in insight. Even as national government supports urban local government through intergovernmental fiscal policy, the level, magnitude and quality of urban service delivery continues to decline.

It is often the case that the shortage of adequate resources is flagged as the paramount reason leading to policy failure in urban local government. Whilst it accepts the veracity of this claim, the article examines the ability or inability of urban government to implement policy as a major contributory factor that appears to be conveniently overlooked and glossed over. The centre of the challenge appears to be characterised by an absence of an implementation plan or policy. Yet local government policies do not implement themselves. Unless there was a plan to turn ideas into practical outcomes, chances for policy failure would amplify. This is a problem in Zimbabwe where policy development is often not matched with robust policy implementation, leading to a situation in which the country continues to generate many policies in succession that are not translated into practical outcomes.

The article began by discussing in general terms the role of urban government in service delivery. Following this was brief discussion of the goal setting theory, the objective being to set the parameters around the discussion. Following this, the article did a brief overview of urban service delivery in Zimbabwe in the context of devastation on service infrastructure caused by Cyclone Chalane, the Covid 19 pandemic, spiralling of unfunded mandate, declining intergovernmental financial support and general public dissatisfaction with both the quality and thresholds of service delivery. The idea was to facilitate a background as well as introduce discussion on the lack of emphasis placed on the issue of implementation.

The article then explored other options for service delivery open to urban government that are currently not receiving as much attention as service delivery through departments of urban councils. Following this was discussion on why implementation matters. The article then engaged the critical factors that impact service delivery. After this, the article introduced a hypothetical process model associated with Roux (2005) and others that underscores the need for implementation planning.

With the assistance of the model, the article focused on how implementation in the policy process may be successfully facilitated and enhanced. The discussion is facilitated against the assumption that urban government has a crucial role to play in the realisation of National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) and Vision 2030, both of which are major government policies currently under implementation in Zimbabwe. Success or failure appears to hinge on the ability or inability of urban local government to implement service delivery policies, programmes and projects in the three-tier system of government in Zimbabwe.

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