

**INTERROGATING THE REASONS BEHIND CHALLENGES OF SERVICE
DELIVERY IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MALAWI**

MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT THESIS

FELISTUS RABECCA LWINGA MUGHOGHO

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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BY

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**Submitted to the Faculty of Social Science, Political and Administrative Studies
Department in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Public Administration and Management**

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

MAY 2022

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is totally my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for the same purpose. Wherever I have used other people's work, acknowledgements have appropriately been made.

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Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and efforts, and has been submitted with our approval.

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Second Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my late loving parents, Henry Lyson Lwinga and Mary Mbale.

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ABSTRACT

The study interrogated the reasons behind challenges of service delivery in the local government. Data was collected through in-depth interviews from Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the study established the reasons behind the technical, political and contextual challenges of service delivery. The study employed qualitative method to collect data. Among other findings, the study established lack of proper orientation for members of staff in their respective fields, lack of enforcement on the definition of roles and responsibilities and inadequate of funds for the operations of the local councils. These challenges have a negative impact in the delivery of services in local councils. The findings in this study are significant and contributes to effective service delivery decisions and their implementation processes in Malawi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
WHO	World Health Organization
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
BCC	Blantyre City Council
BDC	Blantyre District Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I.0 Introduction to the Study

The study interrogated the reasons behind challenges of service delivery in the local government. The study was conducted at Blantyre City Council (BCC), Blantyre District Council (BDC) and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development MLGRD).

Successful implementation of policies is portrayed in quality service delivery and contributes to the achievement of national development (Ahmed & Dantata, 2016). In this light, dealing with service delivery challenges ensures government's attainment of the desired goals in public service. According to Khan (2016:3), a policy is a broad statement of future goals and means of attaining it. Ikechukwu and Chukwuemeka (2013) describe a public policy as a course setting action that provides the direction, the guide and the way to the achievement of goals or objectives desired by government. All public policies should be implemented effectively to ensure that objectives desired by government are achieved. Policy implementation is defined by Mthethwa (2012) as the mechanisms, resources, and relationships that link policies to programme action and more specifically carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing or completing a given task. Policy implementation is an important stage of the policy making process. The success of the policy is judged when the aim of the policy has been achieved (Begley et al., 2018) and on the other hand, McConnel (2015:1) states that a policy fails, even if it is successful in some minimal

respects, and it does not fundamentally achieve the goals that were set out to achieve. According to Knill and Tosun (2008), policy does not become a public policy until it is adopted, implemented and enforced by government institutions.

The policy making process has five stage namely agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation, and, monitoring and evaluation (Jordan and Adelle, 2012 as cited in Benson and Jordan, 2015). According to Benoit (2013), policy agenda setting is where public problems needing government attention are identified and specified; policy formulation is the identification of alternatives for resolving public policy problems; policy Adoption involves deciding which proposed alternative will be used to handle a problem. Policy implementation is where a decision is put into practice and this is a crucial stage which requires knowledge, resources and effort to realize effective policy outcome. However, the intended outcome might not be realized due to ddecision-makers and implementers, who often tailor policy outputs to suit their own interests rather than bending to the demands and support from the wider environment (Skees, 1994). The last stage is evaluation and monitoring which is the process of assessing whether the policy is achieving its goals, or whether it has other consequences or policy failure. If the policy fails, the government and stakeholders learn from the mistakes, redefine the policy and implement again (Kent et al., 2005). In public policy making process, conflicts between the public interest and the actors' interests naturally emerge in the design and implementation of public policies (Rausser and Goodhue, 2014). Literature has revealed that some policies achieve the intended goals while others achieve partially or even fail or take so many years to achieve the objectives than planned. One of the factors for policy implementation failure

in African public sectors is the development of over ambitious policies that fail to achieve the intended objectives (Ajulor, 2018; Makide, 2015; Imurana et al., 2015). Other scholars have argued that human, financial resources, and inadequate accountability mechanisms affect policy implementation (Chigudu, 2015; Mugwagwa, 2015). Lack of participation by the implementers was also found in various studies to be the reason behind policy implementation failure because they do not have enough knowledge of the policy and also sabotage the implementation as they might feel they do not own it (Dialoke et al., 2017; Ajulor, 2018). While in other studies, it was found that politics and power contribute to policy failure because the policies implemented mostly benefit the politicians (McConnel, 2010; Ajulor (2018); Signe (2017).

In Malawi, during the one-party system, the president, Dr. Banda, had almost total control of the country's economic and developmental policies (Kayuni, 2011). He used the MCP convention called Parliament Number One to initiate developmental policies and the National Parliament would meet just to comply and indorse. The developmental policies were mainly to fight against poverty, ignorance and diseases. Dr. Banda's firmness on high standards of discipline and obedience made policy implementation successful where corrupted and undisciplined officials and politicians had to be removed from their offices.

From 1993, Malawi became a democratic country where the Constitution and human rights are respected. Therefore, the policy making process involves consultations with many actors such as the ruling party, other political parties, NGOs, civil society and the donor community to participate and agree on policies which benefit the citizens. Many policies

have been implemented since then to promote the public sector governance in order to achieve the national development goals and for making Malawi globally competitive. The public service however, had been experiencing a number of challenges that have undermined its ability to effectively implement policies and programmes that are crucial for the transformation of the country and which had produced mixed results with limited impact on overall transformation of the public sector (Malawi National Public Sector Reforms Policy, 2018-2022). Therefore, what could be the reasons behind these challenges?

Literature has shown that policies do not succeed or fail on their own merits, rather their progress is dependent upon the process of implementation. According to Khan (2016), the success of an adopted public policy depends on how successfully it is implemented and the very best policy is of little worth if it is not implemented successfully. Furthermore, some policies are implemented immediately, others partially or incrementally implemented while others take long to be implemented despite being adopted. According to OECD (2008), policy initiatives may fail to deliver the expected results during the implementation stage as a result of non-compliance by various stakeholders. McConnel (2015:1) states that a policy fails, even if it is successful in some minimal aspects, and it does not fundamentally achieve the goals that were set out to achieve. It is in this regard of policy implementation gap that this study sought to interrogate the reasons behind challenges that hinder the effective implementation of services delivery at Blantyre City Council, Blantyre District Council and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Malawi, like any other developing countries in the world and specifically in Africa, adopted the decentralization policy as one of the reforms to reduce poverty and as a strategy to improve public service delivery and to reinforce citizen participation in the decision-making processes. The government of Malawi adopted the decentralization policy in 1998 (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 1998). The justification for the adoption of the decentralisation policy was to promote democratic governance and participatory approaches in economic development of the country. According to (Olum, 2010, as cited in Olum, 2014:23), decentralisation policy is the process through which the central government transfers its powers, functions, responsibility and finances, or decision-making power to other entities away from the centre to lower levels of government. The aim is to enhance local institutions, local administration and service delivery that could reduce poverty if it was well implemented by focusing on local people's needs and preferences.

According to Ojambo (2012), decentralisation promotes the participation of people in government functions where their problems are identified, set priority plans and monitor any programme implementation which ensures better allocation and resource utilization. Thus, the challenges of service delivery are reduced and its objectives are achieved. Muriu (2013) emphasizes that decentralization involves the transfer of administrative, fiscal and political powers and functions of the central government to lower-level governments to improve administrative and service delivery outcomes. Muriu further states decentralization has empowered citizens' participation in decision making at their core. This has increased the focus on democratic governance, whose core principles

include participation, transparency, accountability, subsidiarity and separation of powers. Accordingly, decentralization and service delivery might fail if the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery are not known and dealt with. Accordingly, decentralization and service delivery might fail if the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery are not known and dealt with. Accordingly, decentralization and service delivery might fail if the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery are not known and dealt with.

As part of the process of consolidating democracy and as a strategy for realising the country's development goal of poverty reduction, the Malawi Government expressed its desire to decentralise political and administrative authority to district level in order to improve the service delivery (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 1998).

The decentralization policy seeks to achieve the following objectives: to create a democratic environment and institutions for governance and development at the local level. This facilitates the participation of the grassroots in decision making process and also eliminates dual administrations at local councils and central government. The aim is to make the public service more efficient, more economical and cost effective. It also promotes accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help government reduce poverty (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 1998). The policy was adopted in 1998 which is more than twenty years ago and it has not completely achieved its intended objectives. What could be the reasons behind these policy challenges hindering the effective service delivery? Jagero et al. (2014) in their study regarding the challenges of decentralization in Malawi, found that despite the decentralization policy having good

intentions such as cost cutting, improving participation and improving local economic development, the process of improving the service delivery has not been successful. The NDP II Report (2014) also indicates that the decentralisation policy has not been achieved which may cause the country to remain under developed for a long time because of poor service delivery and failures to implement development projects. This study therefore sought to interrogate the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Malawi Local Government and Rural Development.

1.1 Problem Statement

Malawi is one of the least developed countries and despite the adoption of the decentralisation policy in 1998, many challenges regarding the delivery of services had been encountered causing the policy not to achieve its objectives as expected (Jagero et al., 2014). This remains as a concern to the development of the nation. Various studies have come up with different solutions to deal with the challenges however, these challenges are still there affecting the effective service delivery in local councils.

Although different studies have been carried out on the challenges of service delivery in local government, there are limited studies that have interrogated the reasons behind challenges of service delivery at Blantyre City Council, Blantyre District Council and Malawi Local Government and Rural Development. The study carried out by Dzimbiri and Dzimbiri (2016) on human resource management found that the challenges of transfer of human resources, popular participation in decision making and bringing up of governance and service delivery to the grassroots was not accompanied by

corresponding transfer of the human resource function to the local level. Msewa (2005) in his research on the decentralisation and local governance in Lilongwe district found that transparency, accountability, no gender equity to decision making and inadequate efficiency of services were some of the challenges affecting the service delivery and the achievement of the decentralisation. While there is a plethora of solutions to deal with the challenges of service delivery in local councils, the problems still exist. What could be the reasons behind all these challenges which hinder the effective service delivery in local councils?

This study therefore, intends to fill this gap by interrogating the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Malawi Local Government and Rural Development. Blantyre was chosen considering that it has both a District Council and City Council whose operations slightly differ. The research questions for the study were: What are the challenges which affect the service delivery in the local councils? What could be the cause of these persistent challenges?

1.2 Main Objective

The main objective was to investigate the reasons behind challenges of service delivery in the local government in Malawi.

1.2.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives were:

1. To establish the reasons behind political challenges of service delivery at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.
2. To establish the reasons behind the technical challenges of service delivery at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.
3. To establish the reasons behind the contextual challenges of service delivery at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

1.3 Justification to the study

The successful implementation of public policies is vital for the country's economic growth. The primary role of public policy is to provide solutions to identified problems that citizens wish to see resolved. This study was therefore, anticipated to add value to the body of knowledge in terms of new insights to the policy making processes and implementation in particular which is a critical phase in the policy making process by highlighting the root cause of challenges of service delivery in local councils. When the root cause is not known and resolved, the delivery of services is negatively affected. Empirically, policy makers would find the results useful and would consider redesigning the system, reduce challenges to improve the service delivery in local councils, and reap maximum benefits. In addition, future researchers would find the information to be valuable for their studies in different aspects of service delivery processes.

1.4 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction of the study, background to the study, problem statement, objectives of the study and justification to the study. Chapter two deals with the review of relevant literature that supports the study. The literature was examined and the gaps identified which were then investigated to find the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery in the local government. Chapter three discusses the research methodology which was followed during the collection of data. Chapter four focuses on data analysis and discussion of findings. Chapter five presents the study conclusion and implications.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background to the study. The emphasis has been based on the reasons behind challenges of service delivery. It has also presented the problem statement service delivery which has been facing numerous challenges despite many solutions suggested by several researchers. The chapter has also presented specific objectives to the study and the justification for carrying out the study. The next chapter discusses the relevant literature to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the relevant literature to the policy challenges that affect the decentralisation and effective services delivery in developing nations including Malawi. Makinde (2005) states that developing nations are facing various problems regarding implementation of national policies. This chapter discusses the concept of the policy and implementation of decentralisation and effective service delivery. In addition, it presents the relevant theories that guided the study. The chapter also discusses the concept of decentralisation policy and its service delivery in the local government in Malawi.

2.1 Definition of a Public Policy

In any public policy making process, political and economic forces are at play in resolving the strategic interactions among the various interests of government and other stakeholders (Rausser and Goodhue, 2014, p. 1). Dye (2001) states that public policies are developed by high positioned officials who have power to influence or determine policies and practices within institutions of government to address public issues through the political process. Birkland (2019:26) defines a policy as a solution to problems. A public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do (Dye, 2013, p. 3) while Birkland (2019) states that the reason for having public policies is to solve problems oriented towards

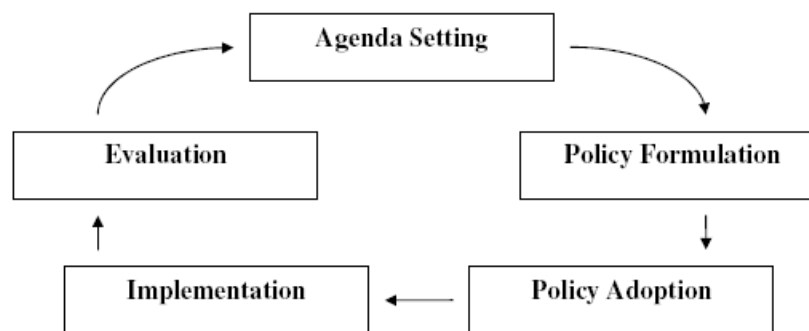
desired goal. A public policy is usually made by government, even though some ideas may come from outside the government and through nongovernmental actors. It is interpreted and implemented by public and private actors who have different interpretations of problems, solutions, and their own motivations (Birkland, 2019). On the other hand, Meir and Bohte (2007, as cited in Popoola, 2016) define public policy as a purposive course of action followed by actors or sets of actors usually related with government on a problem or matters of public concern while Anyebe (2018:2) define a public policy as a policy made and implemented by government with a view to achieving certain goals. Khan (2016) explained that policy making does not occur in a vacuum, rather it takes place amidst complex political and social environments in which different stakeholders operating within a changing institutional context, interact strategically as they pursue conflicting agendas. Chirwa and Chinsinga (2013) also states that the context in which policy processes takes place matters since adaptation of policies cannot be judged in their technical attributes without considering the institutional, political and cultural context. FAO (2017) agree with Chirwa and Chinsinga (2013) that the development world has become increasingly aware that technically sound policies do not necessarily produce good results because of not considering the role of politics, actors, interests and institutions in shaping what actually happens on the ground. Conflicts between the public interest and the actors' interests naturally emerge in the design and implementation of public policies.

Public policies are significant because they are geared to promoting and monitoring institutions that enforce good governance, for instance strengthening sectors to promote accountability and through citizen empowerment (World Bank, 2008). According to Rausser and Goodhue (2014, p. 3), some public policies pursue the public interest by

attempting to correct for market imperfections, lower transaction costs, effectively enhance productivity while other public policies are the result of manipulation by powerful groups actively engaged in the pursuit of their own self-interest.

2.2 Policy Making Process

The Policy making process has five stages namely: (i) agenda setting, (ii) policy formulation, (iii) policy adoption, (iv) policy implementation and (v) policy evaluation.



Source: Knill and Tosun (2008:9)

Agenda setting involves the identification of public problems which requires the state to intervene, however, only few reach the attention of the government by determining cultural, political, social, economic or ideological factors. The policy agenda is set by four types of actors namely: elected public officials such as the president; members of parliament and the judiciary; the bureaucracy such as technocrats; the mass media; and the interest groups (Gerston, 2004, as cited in (Knill & Tosu, 2008). Elected public officials, represent the president, the parliament, the ministries and courts. The actors to policy making process are people who are relevant in the policy representing different

groups of people and those who can come up with new ideas pertaining to the policy. Policy formulation involves the definition, discussion, acceptance or rejection of feasible courses of action for coping with policy problems while policy adoption refers to the final adoption of a particular policy alternative as determined by government institutions. Policy implementation refers to the translation of the policy into action. This is an important stage of the policy process because without proper implementation, the policy has no value, therefore the success of a policy depends on how well it is implemented. This is asserted by Khan and Khandaker (2016:538) that implementation is an important stage in the policymaking process as it refers to the execution of law, in which various stakeholders and organisations work together with the use of procedures and techniques to put policies into effect to help attain goals. Finally, evaluation is the assessment of implemented policy by experts with a knowledge in the policy to know whether the policy has achieved the intended goals.

2.3 The Concept of Policy Implementation

In regard to the five stages of policy making process, this study focuses on implementation of the policy. Khan (2016:1) defines policy implementation as the translation of the goals and objectives of a policy into an action and it is an important stage of the policy making process. According to Mthethwa (2012), policy implementation refers to the mechanisms, resources, and relationships that link policies to programme action and more specifically carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing or completing a given task. Implementation is an important stage in the policymaking process as it refers to the execution of law, in which various stakeholders

and organisations work together with the use of procedures and techniques to put policies into effect to help attain goals (Khan and Khandaker, 2016:538).

Khan (2016) stresses that what is called policy must be implemented and the adopted public policy depends on how successfully it is implemented and argues that even the very best policy is of little worth if it is not implemented successfully. It is important therefore to understand policy implementation and to ensure good policies achieve what they are designed for. Implementation studies, therefore, place an emphasis on understanding the success or failure of public policy by elaborating on factors that affect it. This concept of implementation helps to draw the attention of policy makers and implementers to study the processes that influence and establish the outcome of public policy (Bempah, 2012, as cited in Khan, 2016).

According to Makinde (2005), implementation problem occurs when the desired result on the target beneficiaries is not achieved. Mugwagwa et al. (2015) states that understanding the policy implementation process is important as it informs on-going decision making and exploring the extent of achievement of targets as well as how things can be done differently in more effective and impactful ways. Policy implementation is a critical phase of the policy making process and good policies without effective implementation will not yield the intended objectives (Khan, 2016). Makinde (2005) however, argues that the most policy implementation challenges in developing countries is the widening gap between stated policy goals and the realization of such planned goals because policies are regularly created in developing nations

however, most of the time, they do not achieve the desired results. It is noted from the literature, that there are challenges which hinder the implementation of policies.

Various studies have been carried out on policy implementation challenges in Africa and have shown that despite having policy documents in place, policy implementation failure (gap) still exists in different countries due to different reasons. Makinde (2005) in his study regarding problems of policy implementation in developing nations with a focus in Nigerian experience found that corruption, lack of continuity in government policies, inadequate human and material resources, often lead to implementation gap by widening the distance between stated policy goals and the realization of such planned goals. The study also found that policies are rolled out regularly in developing nations but most of the time do not achieve the intended results. On the other hand, Ikechukwu and Chukwuemeka (2013) in their study explored the obstacles to policy implementation and found that ineffective political leadership and the corrupt bureaucracy in developing nations were obstacles to policy implementation activities and processes.

Several studies have found that inadequate human and financial resources were factors that cause policy implementation failure (Mugwagwa et al., 2015; Makinde, 2005; Effiong, 2013; Obodo, 2016) while other authors argue that corruption by bureaucrats is the most cause for policy implementation failure (Ikechukuo & Chukuemeka, 2013; Obodo, 2016; Makinde, 2005). On the other hand, McConnel (2015); Ajulor (2018) and Signe (2017), found that politics and power contribute to policy failure because the policies implemented mostly benefit the politicians. The unrealistic goals were found

by (Effiong, 2013; Ajulor, 2018) to be the source for policy implementation failure. Khan (2016); Mthethwa (2012) and Quao, (2018) observed that inconsistency in policy implementation is also the cause of failure.

Aliyu, Alabi, and Adeowu (2018) conducted a study to identify ecological determinants and challenges of public policy formulation and implementation and they found that lack of continuity, inadequate human and material resources impend effective policy implementation. They further found that sectionalism, ethnic biases and lack of political will also account for policy failure at implementation stages. Nanjiofor, Ifeakor and Mgbemena (2013) agree with Aliyu et al., (2018) and Makinde (2005) that corruption, inadequate human and materials resources, lack of continuity of government policies, poor leadership programme are the reasons behind ineffective policy implementation. They further emphasize that until policies are implemented effectively, development of the nations will be unattainable.

Ahmed and Dantata (2016), in their study of problems and challenges of policy implementation for national development found that genuine commitment to eradication of corruption at all levels of government leads to effective policy implementation. Furthermore, Ahmed and Dantata (2016) argue that it is often taken for granted that once a policy is adopted by government, it must be implemented and the desired goals achieved and in most cases little or no attention is paid to the problems and complexities associated with execution of policies.

Juma and Onkware (2015) studied on challenges of public policy formulation and evaluation and the findings were that resistance to change is the main factor to policy

failure while Mthethwa (2012) studied on the critical dimensions for policy implementation and found that supportive environment is effective for effective policy implementation. On the other hand, the study by Mugwagwa et al, (2015) on why and how the health policy agenda setting and formulation in Ghana in MCH fee exemption policy agenda has been maintained since 1963 and found that following policy procedure leads to effective policy implementation.

Internationally, countries have also been experiencing challenges in policy implementation. The study done by Sirajul (2015) on public policy processes and causes of public policies implementation failures in Pakistan, found corruption, insufficient financial allocations, untrained human resource, lack of vision, poor monitoring system, poor policy evaluations and centralized approach in policy implementation as challenges of policy implementation. Sirajul further found that weak institutional structures and frequent political interventions were the reasons behind the challenges of policy implementation. Sirajul (2019) argues that while elected governments are responsible for developing viable policies to address the public issues in Pakistan, politically elected government had always served their own interests rather than public issues hence Pakistan had presented very dismal situation in respect of formulation and implementation of policies. On the other hand, Kirk et al. (2020) in their study regarding the barriers to freshwater policy implementation in New Zealand discovered implementation barriers as community capacity and difficulty in aligning local policy with national policy. They argue that closed loop between problem identification and responding to problems through planning as the reasons behind the challenges to implementation of policy.

Decentralisation has also met challenges through the delivery of services in local government. Dela rosa-Reyes (2016) in his study on challenges of decentralised services in Philippine found that the central government continues to control revenue resources and other significant resources that should be legitimately transferred to local government and the lack of technical skills at local government had affected the delivery of services. On the other hand, Dick-Sagoe (2020) in his study on decentralised services in developing countries found that the service delivery had made some gains in meeting the needs of local people such as an increase in the expenditure of local governments. However, the quality of services delivered is poor which needs a revisit of the design of decentralisation to embrace the type which seeks to empower the local people to demand transparency and accountability from local government officials. In addition, Mudalige and Abeysinghe (2021) in their study to assess the efficacy of provincial councils on its local service delivery in Sri Lanka found that lack of political will on the part of the central government, lack of support from public officials, the dominance of central government institutions and political authority, financial dehydration, lack of human resources, bad behavior of provincial politicians, unpopularity of the minorities and structural design failures affected the smooth functioning of the provincial council system. For delivery of services to be effective, the local government has to be given full responsibility instead of the central government to be controlling. Radevis and Hacek (2019) in their research regarding the delivery of services in Montenegrin Public Administration found that Montenegrin health system is predominantly centralised and lacks substantial involvement by local self-government thereby failing to achieve a stronger level of quality of the health care services.

2.4 Approaches and Theories to Policy Implementation

There are two models of approach to policy implementation thus top-down and bottom-up approaches. According to Signe (2017), the top-down models use the decision of an authority as a starting point. They have clear and consistent goals. However, the goals neglect prior context and political aspects as the administration as a matter of administration depending only on the availability of resources. They tend to focus on the sanctity of crafting the policy rather than those affected by it and ignore the role of policy opponents who make amendments in the policy process. The top-down model assumes that policy makers can master control of the policy implementation (Elmore, 1979, as cited in Signe 2017). It also assumes that efficient and effective achievement of objectives can follow adequate information, carefully specified goals and choice of appropriate methods. However, this has been criticized because without the participation of people affected by the policy, the implementation mostly fails to achieve the intended goals (Dialoke et al, 2017).

2.4.1 Top-down and Bottom-Up Models

Moody et al., (1990, as cited in Signe (2017) view the approach from the perspective of target population and service deliverers. The discretion of those who are relied upon to implement policy in the field is a key factor in successful policy implementation. This gives autonomy to implementers to implement policies which mostly succeed. The politicians, as policy makers, formulate policies which are implemented by bureaucrats and the feedback on policy outcome whether positive or negative is fed back to policy makers who

will make decisions on how to deal with negative outcomes and to support the positive outcomes. The top-down and bottom-up approaches are very significant to the study as will help in establishing the challenges of service delivery and the reasons behind those challenges based on the feedback from the local councils. There are various theories that guide the study on decentralisation and service delivery challenges which are linked to the research problem under study. Some of these theories are principal-agent theory and public choice theory.

2.4.2 Principal-Agent Theory

The principal-agent theory is the theory of interaction between an agent and the principal for whom they act, the point being to structure incentives so that the agent will act to benefit the principal. The principal-agent theory of organizations has the idea that public sector performance can be improved if incentive-based contracts between different actors are implemented (Gauld, 2016). According to Huci et al. (2013), the principal-agent theory focuses on the relationship between the executive or politicians (principal) and the bureaucrats (agents). There is a gap between policy formulators (politicians) and implementers (bureaucrats). This is because bureaucrats are experts and technically knowledgeable about policies (information asymmetric) than politicians. The bureaucrats (agents) implements public policies on behalf of the politicians (principal). The principal has no power to force the agent to implement policies according to their thinking because of knowledge gap hence the principal cannot effectively monitor the problems. This is the most critical cause of policy implementation failures. The problems come as an agent will try to maximize his or her

own benefit even when that may involve a higher damage to the client (Schieg, 2008, as cited in Ceric, 2012).

The principal-agent theory is used as a paradigm for analyzing public accountability. This is because it provides a flexible framework for modeling innumerable variations in institutional arrangements, and comparing their potential for inducing desirable behaviour by agents (Gailmard, 2012). The principal-agent theory is suitable for this study to interrogate the reasons for the persistent challenges which affect the implementation services in local councils. The theory which is an economic in nature, argues that the government and citizens tend to implement public policies which are preferred by voters while politicians tend to deviate them to suit their interests.

2.4.3 Public Choice Theory

According to Schuster (2017) public choice theory explains that government officials maximizes their personal gain at the expense of public's interests and Larkin (2016) emphasizes that public choice theory explains that elected officials do not fundamentally change their character and the rational, self-interested nature they display as individual participants in a free market when assuming public office. According to Mbaku (2008), public choice is defined as an economic theory of nonmarket decision making, or the application of economics to political science. It explains how political decision-making results in conflict with the preferences of the general public. Public choice analyses the behaviour of politicians, bureaucrats, state and voters that they are rational and utility maximizer.

The assumption is that politicians tend to make and implement policies to win more votes while voters maximize the utility of their preferences through the government action. Public choice theorists apply the voluntary exchange paradigm of economic theory in which the individual is assumed to maximize his or her own self-interest and through this, the design and implementation of public policies is affected by several actors, including: legislators; voters; civil servants; politicians and pressure groups (Mbaku, 2008). According to Hughes (2003), bureaucrats maximize their utility at the expense of public interest when implementing policies. For example, the objectives of the decentralisation policy was to bring the government closer to people for effective service delivery in terms of increase participation in decision making and promote accountability and good governance at local levels in order to reduce poverty and mobilise the masses for socio-economic development at local level. This is where voters maximize the utility of their preferences through the government action.

2.4.4. Path Dependency Theory

Path dependency is a phenomenon based on history matters where what has occurred in the past persists because of resistance to change (Bergek and Onufrey, 2014). The resistance to change could be based on the financial implications or because policymakers are making cautious or uninformed decisions. The theory of path dependence thus suggests that the longer an institution has been in place, the more resilient to change it will be and the more likely that any changes will be incremental (Deeg, 2007). Malawi has been striving for effective decentralisation and service delivery measures, yet the progress has been slow because of many challenges it has been facing. Some criticised activities of

decentralisation have been inherited instead of changing them to ensure effective service delivery. For example, that the central government should completely devolve powers to local councils. This has not been completely done causing some challenges to effective service delivery to persist and decentralisation goals not to be achieved. The question is why are these challenges continuing despite the provision of solutions by various researchers? This reflects on the path dependency theory which indicates that the longer an institution has been in place, the more resilient it is to change.

According to Cerna (2013), path dependency argues that it is generally difficult to change policies because institutions are sticky, and actors protect the existing. It means once a country has started down a path, the costs of reversal are very high. As Pierson (2000 as cited in Cerna, 2013) notes, public policies and formal institutions are usually designed to be difficult to change so past decisions encourage policy continuity. In terms of decentralisation and service delivery, path dependency implies that the continued challenges to effective delivery of services in local councils can be linked to resistance to change from both the central government and bureaucrats. These bureaucrats seem to be reluctant to shed off some significant powers to the lower levels of government apparently for fear of losing control over these local institutions. As a result, local authorities have continued to have different challenges. Cerna (2013) emphasizes that the historical path can only be changed if there is a strong push from the central government and local bureaucrats by thoroughly reviewing the policy and changing of mindsets of the key players in decentralisation and service delivery in local councils.

Jun and Park (2001: 12 as cited in Tambulasi, 2011), states that path dependence theory explains the existence of challenges in the delivery of services as embedded in administrative cultural constraints such as central control of decision-making, corruption and a lack of self-governance. As such, there is no political will or commitment in the implementation of services in local councils as the central government stills holds on to power. Jun and Park (2001: 12 as cited in Tambulasi, 2011), continued that since the path benefits those who created it, the same actors cannot unlock it. Only an event outside the path can radically change the incentives or constraints facing the actors and enable a country to break free of the path. Tambulasi (2011) in his study concluded that the weakening of local councils was likely to continue because the initial path that was created benefited politicians and bureaucrats and were committed to staying on that course.

2.5 The Concept of Decentralisation and Service Delivery

Decentralization is the most type of reform adopted globally in public sectors. Many countries are empowering local governments through decentralisation and service delivery to realize developmental and governance goals (Smoke, 2015). Decentralization is “the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the mobilization and allocation of resources from central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or lower levels of government, semiautonomous public authorities or corporations and regional area-wide or functional authorities” (Mumvuma, 2012, as cited in Jagero, et al., 2014). It means giving autonomy, resources and responsibility to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy to make decisions on their own and delegate the decisions to higher levels in the event of failures or complex situations. According to

Herrera (2014), decentralization has been promoted as a means to better reflect citizen preferences and improve local service delivery. Mohamed (2018), states that the closeness of local governments to citizens gives the latter more influence over local officials, promotes competition among local governments, and alleviates corruption through improved transparency and accountability. Mohamed further indicates that the local government's ability to deliver services determines the access of citizens to quality public services, economic development opportunities, and local environmental resources. On the other hand, Frumence et al. (2013) states that the main goal of decentralization is to enhance the service delivery in equity, efficiency and more participation and responsiveness of government to citizens.

Smoke (2015) argues that decentralization is more diverse and complex and that more careful analysis and strategic action tailored to a specific country are needed to help to realize sustainable decentralization and more effective service delivery.

Various studies have shown that despite the good objective of decentralisation policy, its service delivery has met many challenges which have affected its achievement. The study done by Frumence et al. (2013) on challenges to the implementation of health sector decentralization in Tanzania found that inadequate funding, untimely disbursement of funds from the central government, insufficient and unqualified personnel, lack of community participation in planning and political interference hinder the effective service delivery. Smoke (2010) in his study of comparing few country cases (Uganda, Cambodia, Brazil, Argentina, Thailand, Nicaragua) which had considerable challenges associated with

decentralised services found that lack of coordination and capacity building are challenges which affect the delivery of services. Thomas (2017), in his study regarding education decentralisation in Malawi, argues that decentralisation to a great extent has been unable to meet its objectives as a result of reluctance of the central ministry to relinquish more decision-making power to the local level, and due to insufficient human resources. Green (2015) in his study on challenges to effective service delivery in Uganda found that corruption, lack of competent staff and lack of independence from central government control had led to a lack of effectiveness in the provision of high-quality public goods. On the other hand, Kali (2020) in his study on challenges and prospects of service delivery in Lesotho found that although there are some aspects of improvement in the service delivery, decentralisation has not succeeded to improving the local government. It is affected by lack of financial resources, human resources and the central government's tendency to intrude in local government's affairs and dictate the course of action. The study by Stanley and Siraje (2021) revealed that the challenges of decentralisation and service delivery at Wakiso District in Uganda were due to inadequate human resources, insufficient financial resources, greed, questionable land ownership and lack of political will, stakeholder involvement and bureaucratic bottleneck. These challenges had hindered service delivery to beneficiaries. Gasto et al. (2013) in their study regarding challenges of decentralization in health sector in Tanzania found several benefits of decentralization such as increased autonomy in local resource mobilization and utilization, an enhanced bottom-up planning approach, increased health workers' accountability and reduction of bureaucratic procedures in decision making. However, the also revealed several challenges which hinder the effective service delivery such as inadequate funding, untimely disbursement of funds

from the central government, insufficient and unqualified personnel, lack of community participation in planning and political interference. While Naha (2015) in his study on challenges of decentralisation found that central ministries in Lesotho resist to devolve power to local government and this has led to inadequate human and financial resources which affects the delivery of services negatively. Despite decentralization having several benefits, many countries are experiencing a lot of challenges in the delivery of services which reduce its effectiveness.

The study by Mushemeza (2019) on decentralised services in Uganda revealed a number of challenges despite some progress. Inadequate financing and investment in human resources and facilities, weak systems and coordination, conflicting legislations and local leadership incompetence still persist and threaten to diminish the decentralisation promise envisaged by the policy makers. Mushemeza argues that these challenges require policy reform to strengthen local councils.

The study by Fidelman (2008) on challenges of decentralised services in Watershed Management in Australia found that despite the country having the rhetoric of decentralization, federal governments were still resisting to transfer powers to local institutions and participation in terms of representation and inclusiveness into decision making was a challenge. On the other hand, Khan (2015) in his study regarding the implementation of decentralized services in Pakistan found that political dynamics such as the nature of relationship between district governments and the provincial government, extent of political polarization prevalent within or among different levels of the local

government system, and the role of bureaucracy were responsible for ineffective outcomes of decentralized services. He argues that the extent to which local councils undertake their service delivery obligations was not much on the design of the decentralization schemes but rather on political dynamics that prevail within local councils. Smoke (2015), in his study found that globally many developing countries had decentralized with the objective of promoting better services. However, the system had met many challenges leading to unsatisfactory performance. Smoke argues that “context matters” in approaching reform and realizing results. He found that countries that did not adequately customize to specific countries failed to perform as expected as there was imbalance between design and implementation to allow context-tailored process.

White (2011) in her study government decentralization in the 21st century in America found corruption and multiple intergovernmental transfers as challenges to effective service delivery. White (2011) argues that despite the benefits of decentralised services, there is a disparity between the theory of decentralisation and the actual gained in practice because real-life efforts to decentralisation across a range of contexts have failed. Smoke (2015) argues that for the decentralization and service delivery to show beneficial outcomes, the best way is for policymakers and practitioners to redesign and implement decentralization which would reap potential benefits and limit potential challenges. Smoke further indicates that most decentralisation policy literature focuses heavily on the design of decentralisation and limited on understanding its implementation processes. However, in this regard effective delivery of services is crucial as any challenge encountered at this

stage can hinder the proper running of local councils and therefore the need to deal with all emerging challenges.

From the various studies globally, it can be shown that despite the intended objectives of decentralisation, there are still challenges in improving the service delivery in the local government. This affects the improvement of social economic situations of the local community in the nations.

2.6 Decentralisation and Service Delivery in Malawi

Just like any other nation in Africa, Malawi adopted the decentralisation policy in 1998. The objective of the decentralization policy was to create a democratic environment and institutions in Malawi for governance and development, at the local level which will facilitate the participation of the grassroots in decision-making; to eliminate dual administrations (field administration and local government) at the district level with the aim of making public service more efficient, more economical and cost effective; to promote accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help Government reduce poverty; and to mobilize the masses for socio-economic development at the local level (Malawi Decentralization Policy,1998). With the effective delivery of services, the nation would reap the benefits. However, if decentralised services are not well managed may lead to promoting corruption and undermining efficiency in public sectors. Malawi, just like other countries has met many challenges in the in the delivery of services in local councils.

Jagero, et al. (2014), argues that decentralization in Malawi has not yielded the benefits intended due many challenges encountered through the delivery of services. In their study, they found the following as challenges: reluctance by the central government to relinquish some powers and responsibility, inadequate funding, lack of human and technical capacity on the part of the local authorities themselves, lack of political zeal that existed at the implementation stage. Continuing controlling the lower levels of government is in violation of one of the principles of decentralization and service delivery. In another study, Chiweza (2007) found that lack of capacity, human, funds, equipment, staff weaknesses in the finance directorates, accountability and transparency as challenges. On the other hand, Twea et al. (2020) in their study, found that there was disparity in the distribution of resources in the health sector and argued that the government should not only focus on the design of the decentralisation policy but the service delivery processes. From the studies, it can be noted that there are still challenges of service delivery in local councils and this gap led to the study to interrogate the reasons behind these challenges.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the concept of policy implementation and how the government put policies into effect such as service delivery in local government. This is the fundamental to the public policy where if not managed well the policy can have challenges which in turn can affect the effective service delivery and failure to achieve the objectives of decentralisation. The concept of decentralisation brings the government closer to people for effective service delivery. The theories of principal-agent and public choice have been used as a guidance and explains the behaviour of politicians, public agents and bureaucrats

in the public sector who maximize their own utility from public resource at the cost of the society. Thus, the effectiveness of service delivery depends on the implementation processes by politicians and bureaucrats. Literature review has shown that despite having policy documents in place and having suggested solutions of how to deal with the challenges of service delivery, these challenges are still existing thereby creating a gap between the expected results and the reality on the ground. Therefore, this study established the reasons behind challenges of service delivery by interrogating key informants at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development? The next chapter discusses the research methodology

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological techniques that were employed to carry out the study based on the literature review and suitable theories from the previous chapter. The study used qualitative method to get real rich data from the key informants in their natural settings to interrogate reasons behind the challenges of service delivery at Blantyre City Council and Blantyre District Council. The collection of data was conducted between July and August 2020. The chapter also describes the research design, sampling technique, data collection method, data analysis, ethical considerations which was observed when seeking consent from the research participants.

3.1 Study Setting

The study was conducted at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Malawi Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). Blantyre was chosen considering that it has both a District Council and City Council whose operations slightly differ. Therefore, the researcher was interested to find out the reasons behind challenges of service delivery in those councils. It also chose MLGRD in order to get to the roots of decentralisation and service delivery.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a blueprint to guide the research process by laying out how a study will move from the research purpose or question to the outcome (Kumar, 2011). Kumar further states that it is a comprehensive planning process used to collect and analyse data in order to increase the understanding of a given topic. A qualitative research design was employed in this study in order to have in-depth idea on the challenges of the service delivery in the real-life context at local councils in Blantyre. The aim was to extract rich data from the key informants.

3.2.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs

According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is the means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables in turn can be measured typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The goal of quantitative methods is to determine whether the predictive generalization of a theory is true and enable the researcher to predict, explain, and understand a phenomenon. Research is based primarily on deductive forms of reasoning, and theories and hypotheses are tested in a cause and effect order (Leavy, 2014). In contrast, qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It involves emerging questions and procedures and data is typically collected in the participant's natural setting. Data analysis inductively builds from particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). It is a kind of research that

produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally (Mohajan, 2018).

According to Tracy (2013), quantitative research uses closed format question where the respondent chooses from a set of given answers for example, how much or how often questions. These tend to be quick to answer, easy to code and require no special writing skills from the respondent while qualitative research uses open format questions such as what or why. The respondent is free to answer in their own content and style where respondents are free to express themselves and qualify their responses (Walliman, 2011). Quantitative study designs are specific, well structured, rigid, fixed, tested for their validity and reliability, and can be explicitly defined and recognised. In contrast qualitative study designs are less specific and precise, and do not have the same structural depth. They are based on deductive rather than inductive logic, are flexible and emergent in nature, and are often non-linear and non-sequential in their operationalization. The main focus in qualitative research is to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2011). Quantitative research is based by the use of statistics, builds objectives and its hypothesis and results are reported in graphs and tables. Qualitative research is based on empirical evidence from observations or people's experiences and views respectively and builds the hypothesis after the evidence has been collected. Quantitative uses statistical analysis and applications such as excel or SPSS while qualitative use content analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis.

According to (Choy, 2014), the strengths of quantitative research are that it is the cheapest way to conduct a research over a large number of observations, and the results can be generalised to a larger population. The weaknesses are that it has an interviewer effect, the results always go as the observer intended them to be without room for understanding more from the respondent's side. The advantage of qualitative research method is that it provides rich data whereby a researcher has an opportunity to probe for underlying values, beliefs, experiences and assumptions. It explores views of homogenous as well as diverse groups of people enabling them to unpack different perspectives of the phenomena under study. However, its weaknesses are that the process is time consuming because of large volume of data and complexity of analysis. It needs personal expertise and knowledge to understand behaviours of values, beliefs and assumptions. Furthermore, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population as in quantitative because of small sample size of the participants used. Boyce and Neale (2006) explains that when in-depth interviews are conducted, generalizations of research findings are usually not able to be made because small samples are chosen and random sampling methods are not used. Allwood (2012) states that quantitative and qualitative approaches should be combined when conducting research in order to minimize bias and attain objectivity. However, Ochieng (2009) perceive qualitative and quantitative approaches as incompatible. The argument being that the positivist and the interpretivist paradigms rest on different assumptions about the nature of the world, they require different instruments and procedures to find the type of data desired.

This study employed qualitative research because it required an in-depth interview and understanding the interpretation of the social world by learning different experiences and views of key informants regarding the challenges of delivery of services. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) indicate that the nature of qualitative research questions demands explanations, for example, finding out reasons behind challenges of service delivery in local councils in Blantyre will need an in-depth explanation from participants. It produces the thick description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences and interprets the meanings of their actions. Data for the study was collected from key informants who had knowledge and experience on the challenges of service delivery in local councils at their offices which are their natural places. According to Ahmed et al. (2019), qualitative research is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. It focuses on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena and relies on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives. The explanations by participants enabled the researcher to understand reasons behind challenges of service delivery in local councils in Blantyre. Therefore, qualitative research was ideal for the study to accommodate the non-statistical rich data gathered from participants' explanations to understand the reasons behind challenges of service delivery despite different solutions suggestions by different researchers. Qualitative research answered the research questions on the reasons behind challenges which affect the delivery of services in the local councils? Why are these challenges persistent? This could not be answered by quantitative which since it is based on statistics. Creswell (2014) states that the main focus in qualitative research is

to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people.

3.3 Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling to select key informants to the study. Purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. The researcher sampled people who were able and willing to provide the information because of their knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2002, as cited in Etikan et al., 2016).

Furthermore, purposive sampling was ideal for the study because only the key informants who had technical or political expertise, knowledge, and experience or were involved in crafting of policies were selected to give information regarding the reasons behind challenges of service at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The idea behind qualitative research was to purposively identify participants that best helped the researcher understand the problem and provide rich information concerning the problem. In-depth interviews were used to collect rich data from the key informants. This rich information was could only be gathered through an in-depth interview unlike using a questionnaire where it is not possible on the part of the researcher to conduct an in-depth study of the feelings, reactions and sentiments of the respondents as questions are closed-ended. According to Alshenqeeti (2014) also states that, interviews are interactive where interviewers can press for complete, clear answers and can probe into

any emerging topics. He further indicates that interviews broaden the scope of understanding the investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool. The lack of interaction in a questionnaire means the researcher cannot go into the details of the respondent's life. According to Creswell (2014), the questionnaire is the main instrument for collecting data in survey research where a set of standardized questions follow a fixed scheme in order to collect individual data about one or more specific topics. The questionnaire is often administered in the same way to all the respondents of the survey which is suitable in quantitative research. In-depth interviews provide rich information about the experiences of individuals and are relatively flexible as they are conducted in a natural setting (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

The sample size of key informants regarding the reasons behind challenges of service delivery was 22 and these were Directors and junior staff from Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

3.4 Data Collection Method

The study used key informant interview guide with open-ended questions and desk research to collect information. The questions were developed based on the objectives of the study. A key informant interview is a loosely structured conversation with people who have specialized knowledge about the topic a researcher wishes to understand and explore a subject in depth. The informant interviews are considered to be the best for the study because they will allow the researcher to obtain rich data, clarity of ideas and descriptions with examples regarding reasons behind challenges of service delivery in

local councils in Blantyre. This gave the interviewee flexibility and freedom in deciding what was needed to be explained (Pathak and Intrata, 2012). In this study, the researcher was the one who was conducting the interviews and ensured that data was obtained correctly and interpreted comprehensively.

3.5 Data analysis

The data collected from participants was analyzed using content analysis. According to Polit and Beck (2006:499), content analysis is the process of organizing and integrating narrative, qualitative information according to emerging themes and concepts. A theme refers to a more implicit and abstract level, which requires interpretation by the researcher from the participants' perspectives on social reality (Vaismoradi et al., 2016:1). According to Bengtsson (2016), the purpose of content analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and to draw realistic conclusions from it. The content analysis follows the following four distinct main stages: de-contextualisation, the re-contextualisation, the categorization, and the compilation. De-contextualization is where the researcher read through the transcribed text and get sense from it and label the codes which would be understood in relation to the content. The codes in this case facilitate the identification of concepts and the coding process is repeated to increase stability and reliability. Re-contextualization is where meanings from the repeated themes are identified, condensed; categorization is where themes are emerged and identified and placed in terms of headings and subheadings; and compilation is where the categorization is established and then the analysis and write up process begins. However, Schreier (2012), believes that the application of qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis

is suitable for those who want to employ a lower level of inference interpretation, rather than a more abstract interpretation.

For this study, in-depth interviews with key informants were recorded, transcribed and coded based on the emerging themes and concepts. These themes were interpreted and presented in terms of headings and subheadings to make it very understandable and meaningful.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration in research is very important because research can harm people if done unethically. Therefore, permission was sought to conduct research at the Councils as in (Appendix 1 and 2) and also the researcher sought the consent of the participants to interview them and their right was protected throughout the study period (Appendix 3). A consent form was designed to explain the purpose of the study, procedures, its significance and the role that the participant would play. All participants were asked to willingly sign the consent forms after reading them to confirm their voluntary agreement to participate. The principle of anonymity was maintained as codes were used instead of names of participants. The principle of confidentiality was also maintained because the information gathered was to be used for academic purpose only. This ethical consideration was in accordance with Polit and Beck (2006:499) who state that ethics is a system of moral values that is concerned with the degree to which research procedures adhere to professional, legal, and social obligations to the study participants.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

The research study on policy implementation was not a linear process. The study had many challenges in collecting the required data due to Covid 19. The offices were on lockdown and many key informants to the study were not going to work hence difficult to collect data. However, the researcher had to ensure that all preventive protocols were followed. Some participants opted for face-to-face interviews which were conducted outside their offices on an open space. A distance of about two and half (2.5) metres was observed while other participants opted for having interviews by telephone. This Covid 19 pandemic affected the timeline to the study as time allocated for collection of data was more than anticipated and so the rest process was also delayed. In addition, some participants were afraid to provide information due to political nature but the researcher convinced them that it was purely for academic purpose.

However, these interviews have limitations. For example, the process of collecting data from each participant for this study as well as describing data was long. This is what Alshenqeeti (2014) explains that in-depth interviews have been criticized as being time consuming since more time is used for conducting interviews, transcribing them, and analyzing its results. He further indicated that there is also potential for biasness where the interviewer would interpret data to resemble a process of hearing what he/she wants to hear. Knowledge to conduct interviews is required to assist the interviewer in gathering rich and detailed data from the interviewees. If the interviewer is not skilled and experienced, the entire process could be undermined. Another limitation was experienced with telephone interviews where one of the participants from Blantyre District Council had

to ask the researcher to speed up the interview as she was rushing for a meeting. According to Novick (2008), telephone interviews are generally much shorter than face-to-face interview and there is potential for distraction of participants by activities in their environments which reduces the depth of the discussion.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology that was employed in the study to collect data needed to answer the specific objectives indicated in Chapter 1. The study adopted the qualitative approach to collect data from key informants through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structures interviews were used so that real information is collected from the participants' natural settings. Government documents on decentralisation and service delivery were also used to collect information to support the study. The key informants who were interviewed were Directors and Councillors from Blantyre City Council, Blantyre District Council and Directors from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The collection of data was done by the researcher so that first-hand information is collected. Content analysis was used to analyse data based on emerging themes, coded and interpreted to come up with meanings. Informed consent was also sought to observe ethical consideration and finally, limitation to the study was due to Covid 19 which made the period of collection of data to be affected. The next chapter will present the findings and discussions of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the study findings based on empirical research in interrogating the challenges of service delivery in the local government. The findings are presented in relation to the specific objectives of the study. The study findings were analysed with reference to the existing literature and theories.

4.1 Section 1: Social Demographic Data

The study participants were 22 who included 16 male and 6 females aged between 27 and 56 years. 20 were married, 1 single and 1 was a widow. 12 were holders of master's degrees, 9 had bachelor's degrees and 1 had a diploma certificate. Participants had experiences ranging between 1.5 and 35 years whose occupation were either Directors or junior staff (Table 1). All 22 participants were interviewed.

Table 1: Participants' Socio-Demographic Data

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Level of Education	Occupation	Experience	Location	Date
Participant 1	56	Female	Widow	Bachelors	Director	35	BCC	7 July 2021
Participant 2	52	Male	Married	Masters	Director	27	BCC	9 July 2021
Participant 3	42	Male	Married	Masters	Director	5	BCC	12 July 2021
Participant 4	50	Male	Married	Masters	Director	9	BCC	13 July 2021
Participant 5	43	Male	Married	Masters	Director	13	BCC	16 July 2021
Participant 6	56	Male	Married	Masters	Director	33	BDC	19 July 2021
Participant 7	52	Male	Married	Masters	Director	15	BDC	21 July 2021
Participant 8	38	Male	Married	Masters	Director	9	BCC	28 July 2021
Participant 9	43	Male	Married	Masters	Director	8	BDC	30 July 2021
Participant 10	34	Male	Married	Bachelors	Director	6	MLGRD	2 August 2021
Participant 11	45	Female	Married	Masters	Director	10	MLGRD	4 August 2021
Participant 12	53	Male	Married	Masters	Director	25	MLGRD	5 August 2021
Participant 13	38	Female	Married	Masters	Director	11	BDC	9 August 2021
Participant 14	38	Male	Married	Bachelors	Director	8	BDC	10 August 2021
Participant 15	52	Male	Married	Masters	Director	16	BDC	11 August 2021
Participant 16	27	Female	Single	Bachelors	Ass. Engineer	1.5	BDC	15 November 2021

Participant 17	29	Male	Married	Diploma	Works Supervisor	4	BDC	15 November 2021
Participant 18	37	Female	Married	BA	Environmental Officer	12	BCC	17 November 2021
Participant 19	40	Male	Married	BA	Accountant	10	BDC	17 November 2021
Participant 20	37	Male	Married	BA	Human Resource Officer	15	BDC	18 November 2021
Participant 21	37	Female	Married	BA	Monitoring & Testing Officer	2 years	BDC	18 November 2021
Participant 22	54	Male	Married	BA	Health & Social Officer	24	BCC	19 November 2021

4.2 Section 2: Reasons behind Technical Challenges of Service Delivery at Blantyre District and Blantyre City Councils

Technically on the challenges that affect service delivery at Blantyre district and city councils., the study found the following: inadequate capacity, inadequate finances, equipment and human resources, officers at central government were not ready to relinquish power to local authorities. These challenges had been there since the decentralization came into effect in 1998 and despite various studies coming up with suggested solutions to deal with these challenges, they are still existing. Below were reasons the reasons behind the challenges of service delivery:

4.2.1 Lack of Enabling Laws and Partial Devolution of Authority

The study found that the personnel was lacking the enabling laws to perform their duties effectively as well as authority to make decisions. It further found that the central government did not provide the enabling laws and transferred partial authority at the time the functions were being devolved to local councils thereby creating a gap in delivering the council services as the instructions on service delivery was incomplete. One participant from Blantyre City Council explained that:

I am supposed to collect city rates which is used for the operations of the programmes at Blantyre City Council but I do not have enabling laws to enable me perform as I am supposed to. Enabling Laws give a person power to collect property rates or taxes. (Research Participant 3, BCC, 12 July 2021).

Another participant from the legal department explained that:

There are no legal instruments to enable me deal with some of issues regarding land and property in the city and there is no capacity to sue if someone is in breach. This challenge has been there and it affects the service delivery because there is nothing I can do about it (Research Participant 8, BCC, 28 July 2021)

From the above narrations, it shows that some of the challenges of service delivery are caused by lack of enabling laws. Participants feel that the government has not embraced the policy by not transferring authority to local councils. Apart from the enabling laws, Councils have no mandate to recruit new employees leading to a lot of vacancies which affect the delivery of services. One participant from Blantyre District Council explained that:

There is a high rate of technical vacant positions because local councils have no authority to recruit hence the delivery of services in local councils continues to be negatively affected (Research Participant 7, BDC, 21 July 2020).

Another participant indicated that:

There are many vacancies which cause inadequate human resources. Councils are not given mandate to recruit. Service delivery challenges in council will be there unless councils have authority to recruit (Research Participant 4, BCC, 13 July 2020).

Ozmen (2014) describes decentralisation as the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources from central government to local governments. From the above narrations, the lack of authority to recruit is a challenge to services delivery in local councils. The guidelines of decentralisation and service delivery are not being followed by the Ministry of Local Government

Another respondent explained that:

There is inadequate expertise in local councils to operate some essential services because local councils cannot recruit them as it has no mandate which is a challenge in the delivery of decentralised services (Research Participant 20, BDC, 18 November 2021).

One participant from Blantyre District Council explained that:

There is lack of personnel especially technical people at the Council. The central government still has not given authority to Council to recruit and this has been a while now. These challenges cannot end unless the government change its mindset and fully transfer the authority (Research Participant 223, BDC, 19 November 2021).

According to Yuliani (2004) authority is a significant aspect in the delivery of services in local councils. Therefore, lack of authority to carry out services in local councils hinders the successful service delivery as employees feel hand capped.

Another respondent from Blantyre City Council explained that:

There a lot of vacancies at the Council which is affecting the delivery of services and this has been an ongoing thing. The Council has no authority to recruit and the central government has no political will to ensure there is effective service delivery (Research Participant 18. BCC, 12 November 2021).

One respondent indicated that:

Recruitments of staff and promotion are still done by government. People at central government do not want to transfer power to council to recruit for fear being redundant (Research Participant 1. BCC, 7 July 2020).

The above narrations show that the ministry is still clinging to power and it does not want to transfer authority down to councils. The situation can be referred to the theory of public choice as an economic theory which describes the behaviour of an individual in their own settings. Public choice theory emphasizes that bureaucrats are rational and self-interested trying to maximize their own utility at the expense of the public (Hughes, 2002). This can be argued that bureaucrats at the MLGRD are reluctant to give the provisions to enable public officer perform their duties in order to maximize their own interests out of it. Officers at local councils should be given these provisions so that challenges are reduced in order to have an effective implementation of the services. Jagero et al. (2014) argues that unless the power/authority was fully devolved to local councils, decentralization and service delivery would continue to progress at a slow pace.

4.2.2 No Proper Orientation

Orientation of employees on the job is very crucial for the success of organizations because employees become familiar with the operations of the company and understand their responsibilities. The study found that the orientation of new members of staff was lacking in councils which affect the quality of service delivery thereby affecting the achievement of the decentralization. Workplace orientation is a process whereby new employee gets introduced to their job roles and work environments among others. It is also where old employees are inducted on how to operate new systems of the organisation. Employee orientation programmes help employees to understand their responsibilities, increases job satisfaction and feel engaged as they are thoroughly trained and become very motivated (Robinson, 1998 as cited in Akkdere and Schmidt, 2008). However, the delivery of services in local councils is affected by lack of orientation. One of the participants at Blantyre City Council expressed his concern as follows:

Most of the times there is no orientation of new staff in their new jobs. The central government would recruit a Director and sends him/her to a district council to start work without any orientation. Orientation is very vital as it enables a person to know what is expected of him/her ((Research Participant 8, BCC, 21 July 2020.

Another respondent from the Ministry of Local Government explained that:

There is lack of staff orientation in their respective fields. Some challenges in the delivery of services are still there because there is no political will by some officers to ensure that all new staff are oriented before discharging their responsibilities so

that they are familiar with their roles (Research Participant 11, MLGRD, 4 August 2020).

Raub et al. (2021) in his study found that effective new employee orientation reduces role ambiguity and role conflict in employees. Orientation shows that the organization values the employee and employees feel valued and become committed to the organization thereby reduce turnover. But recent research also suggests that high levels of employee engagement are associated with higher rates of profitability growth. The study done by Yu et al. (2017) found that employee orientation increases employee commitment, retention and high organizational performance. This means that lacking of orientation in local councils reduces commitment of employees and retention of employees therefore the delivery of services is also negatively impacted.

Another participant from Blantyre City Council indicated that:

No proper orientation of staff prior to the delivery of services is conducted at the local council hence the challenges will keep on going. Members of staff need to be taken through proper orientation if they have to deliver their services as accordingly and if they are to be committed (Research Participant 22, BCC, 19 November 2021).

This is in line with what Acevedo and Yancey (2011) emphasized that work orientation enables new employee fit into their job which is important when considering job satisfaction, commitment, and retention.

Participants feel that some continuous challenges being encountered in local councils is due to lack of orientation for new staff in their respective fields. One of the participants indicated that:

Most of the times the central government recruits but orientation is not done however employees need to be oriented in order to introduce them to culture of the organization (Research Participant 14, 10 August, BDC 2021).

The study done by Akdere and Schmidt (2008) found that employee orientation programs successfully improve quality management practices in an organization. They further indicate that employee orientation should be the first step to do for continuous quality management improvement culture. The research findings in this study, therefore, agree with Akdere and Schmidt on the need for quality employee orientation programs for new employees.

Another respondent from Blantyre District council indicated that:

.... lack of orientation of new staff is one of the challenges in the delivery of services in local councils. People are not fully aware of what is expected of them to that they can be committed to their roles (Research Participant 13, BDC, 9 August 2020).

The extract above is in line with Srimannarayana (2016) who highlights that orientation is seen as the first opportunity for the organization to introduce the cultural norms, values, and work ethics of the organization to the new employees. It is an effective tool for

improving employee satisfaction and contributing to organization by having a more effective, committed and productive workforce

The other highlighted that:

.... there is some knowledge gap with some members of staff as orientations are not adequately done to take through them on how they should deliver their services (Research Participant 16, BDC, 15 November 2021).

The interview extracts above indicate that some of the inefficiencies in service delivery of are due to lack of orientation for new recruits in their respective positions. The central government however assumes that the objectives of the policy are clear and could be followed easily. Birkland (2011) argues that the top-down approach assumes that one can understand policy implementation by looking at the goals and strategies adopted in the statute or other policy, as structured by the implementers of policy and perform as expected, however, the substantial weakness is that without a consensus on what program goals are, it is hard to set a benchmark for program success and failure. In this respect the central government should not be assuming that the new recruits would understand the policy objective and perform but should be oriented to perform as expected. The study done by Acevedo and Yancey (2011) indicates that orientation of employees is very important in an organization because it is part of investment whereby employees are able to understand the operations of the organization and perform accordingly and therefore become assets. It also shows how committed an organization is to ensure the delivery of quality services leading to the achievement of its goals.

4.2.3 Lack of Proper Planning and Handover of Devolved Sectors

The study found that the respective ministries were lacking proper planning and handover of devolved sectors to local councils. The guidelines were also unclear which affects the smooth operations delivery of services. One of the participants from Blantyre District Council indicated that-

There is no proper planning and handover of devolved sectors. You just hear that the following sector has been devolved. The responsible people at the local council are supposed to know how the central government was handling it so that there is no difference in the operations. Lack of planning in handing over the devolved sectors creates a gap in implementation. Prior planning and communication in the devolving of sectors is very crucial (Research Participant (Research Participant 3, BCC, 12 July 2021).

Planning is one of the strategies to the realization of the intended goals. However, from the above findings, it is concluded that lack of planning affects the proper implementation of decentralized services. Prior communication on the transfer of devolved sectors is significant in order to know the objectives of the sector so that plans could be drawn on how it could be managed in terms of resources. However, there is lack of planning and communication as one participant explained that:

There is a gap in the way some officers deliver their services. There is no proper planning prior to devolving sectors. Planning, communication and orientations are

important aspects which prepares local councils to handle the sectors as expected
(Research Participant 1, BDC, 7 July 2021)

Al-Dhaafri and Malosani (2020) indicate that successful implementation requires effective communication systems through proper planning because lack of planning hinders the intended outcomes. With proper planning, awareness and handover of the functions to be devolved makes public officers to be committed and implement accordingly. The central government need to plan when the sector would be devolved, communicate to the concerned officers prior to and make arrangements for handovers. This would avoid the challenges which could have been encountered. Another participant explained that:

There is lack in planning for the services to be delivered. Planning and priorities were supposed to take place alongside the policy itself. The achievement of decentralisation is taking long because the challenge is that each government brings its own priorities and pay little attention to decentralised services. It is like nobody will be held accountable for not attaining effective service delivery in councils - there is no political will (Research Participant 1, BCC, 7 July 2021).

From the above narration, we conclude that planning is very critical in the implementation of decentralised services. The implementation plan should be communicated to all stakeholders for successful delivery of services. The study conducted by Tezera (2019) found that one effective planning and monitoring mechanism were the factors for successful implementation.

4.2.4 Difficult Income Generation Facilities

Financial responsibility is a core component of decentralization. If local are to carry out decentralized functions effectively, they must have an adequate level of revenues either raised locally or transferred from the central government and also the authority to make decisions about expenditures (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 1998). However, the councils are experiencing challenges because of inadequate fund to run the councils as income generation activities produce little funds. The study found that although the central government was sending inadequate funds for the operations of the councils, councils were able to generate their own income though not enough for its operations. In terms of funding, Blantyre District Council gets direct from the central government which is a bigger portion while Blantyre City Council generates revenue for its operations and salaries. Almost 90% of revenue used at Blantyre City Council is self-generated. One participant from Blantyre City Council said:

There are some licences which are highly paid by foreigners in the city and attract a lot of income but the central government decided to allocate it to Ministry of Trade to manage it. Blantyre City Council is left with difficult ways of generating income for example, collecting from market fees of K1.00 per person which is very little to run the operations. In this way, we cannot deliver the services effectively (Research Participant 3, BCC, 12 July 2021).

Some participants feel that the since the funds generated are not enough for maintenance of roads, money generated from road users in the city could have been channeled to Blantyre City to main the roads. One participant indicated that:

Resource mobilization is difficult in councils. The challenges keep on going because the council is still lacking funds for the delivery of services. Funds generated are not enough to run the council and other developments. The Traffic Police are always on the road in the City fining motorists who breach the law, that money could have been collected by Blantyre City council to maintain the roads (Research Participant 8, BCC, 28 July 2022).

Another respondent explained that:

Blantyre City Council generates its own money however, the money is not enough for its operations because the income generating activities produce less money. The money generated by road users through Road Traffic Directorate could have been shared with the council to maintain the roads but goes to Account No 1 (Research Participant 21, BCC, 24 November 2021).

The study found that money collected from the market fees is not enough for project developments which is a huge challenge. One participant explained that:

The central government is still collecting revenue from all avenues and councils collect from venders who sell little items such as tomatoes. These funds cannot sustain the running of the council such as developing projects hence the challenges will always be there (Research Participant 7, BDC, 21 July 2020).

It can be seen from the above narrations, that effective and efficient delivery of services need adequate funds. If the government could be transferring adequate funds to councils for its operations, some of the challenges could be reduced. Mumvuma (2012, as cited

in Jagero et al., 2014) argues that decentralisation is the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the mobilization and allocation of resources from central government to lower levels for effective service delivery. If the government could consider providing other income generating facilities which produce a lot of income to local councils, more revenues could be collected for the different operations.

4.2.5 Lack of Minimum Qualifications for Councillors

The findings of the study show that there was no provision by central government on the minimum qualifications for one to be elected as a councillor which was one of the reasons for the challenges affecting the delivery of services. One of the research participants from Blantyre City Council indicated that:

Councillors cannot understand their roles regarding decentralization and service delivery and they find it difficult to deliver as expected thereby affecting the achievement of its objectives (Research Participant 4, BCC, 13 July 2021).

For a person to understand the concept of the decentralisation and deliver the services effectively, need to have the necessary qualifications. However, there is need for the government to provide the minimum qualifications for councillors so that they could understand the policy implementation issues written in English. This would enable them provide the necessary service delivery and support because they could understand the concepts and coordinate the required issues between the council and the community effectively. Another participant explained that:

The time the decentralisation policy was adopted, the issues of capacity to handle the implementation of decentralisation and delivery of services was already in place. However, the minimum qualifications of councillors is not clearly defined because they lack capacity. Most Councillors do not understand English and fail to make decisions regarding community needs hence the delivery of services is mostly not done as expected (Research Participant 19, BDC, 17 November 2021).

From this narration above, the capacity in terms of human resources and their required qualifications is vital in the effective delivery of services. One has to have good knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In this way, many challenges encountered in the delivery of services could be minimized. The CoGTA (2009) assessment of state of local government in South Africa found that many councillors have poor ability to deal with the demands of local government. Many councillors fail to cope with the realities of working effectively within local government which impacts on the functioning of municipalities. Councillors are closer to people who represent their needs. However, without understanding the concepts of the decentralisation, it is a challenge in the delivery of services. Another participant responded that:

Some councillors lack capacity to understand and provide support towards implementation of decentralised services. This challenge has been there and has a huge negative impact on the delivery of services. There is need for government to

intensify on the minimum of education for Councillors in order to reduce some service delivery challenges (Research Participant 21, BCC, 18 November 2021).

From the narration above, it be seen that Councillors fail to participate fully in the issues affecting local people because they lack capacity to articulate decentralisation issues and service delivery requirements. However, participation is very crucial in the delivery of services in local councils. According to Muriu (2013), participatory mechanisms are being pursued in a bid to improve governance and service delivery. The study done by Muriu (2013) on the participation in Local Government service delivery in Kenya, found that lack of awareness and inadequate capacity to participate hampered the citizen input in the delivery of services. Therefore, the lack of capacity of councillors to participate fully in the delivery of service contributes the unsuccessful achievement of the objectives of decentralisation. Another participant highlighted that:

The delivery of services in councils need a certain level of understanding however, most councillors do not have minimum qualifications to understand fully the objectives of decentralisation and their roles (Research Participant 19, BDC, 17 November 2021).

From the interview extract, it shows that councillors are not fully participating because they cannot understand some decentralisation and service delivery issues. The study conducted by Zinyama and Shumba (2013) on the minimum qualifications for local Councillors in Zimbabwe - Harare found that councillors lacked capacity - the ability to conceptualise issues of decentralization and service delivery. They argued that most councillors do not know their responsibilities. However, it was important for councillors

to have diverse capacities in order to effectively delivery their services. The study done by Visser et al. (2009) on the quality of local of democracies in South Africa found that local councils had poor quality of councillors due to lack of skills and necessary education. They were incompetent as they could not understand how local government was supposed to work. On the other hand, Piper and Deacon (2008) in their study on elite accountability and public participation in South Africa found that many ward councillors were ignorant about how local government works.

However, their participation is very vital as they represent the community needs. According to Mbithi et al. (2019), participation ensures inclusivity and transparency in the governance process and ensures that citizens are empowered through the provision of information and thus engage in the policy-making process on issues affecting their livelihood. Therefore, the partial participation of Councillors in decentralisation issues negatively impacts on the delivery of services as the needs of the community may not be fully represented.

4.2.6 Lack of a Desk at Central Government for Implementers' Voice

The study found that local councils had been voicing out their concerns regarding various challenges which affect them in the effective service delivery through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development but the officers at that side seem not to assist as no feedback on the requests has ever been received. This hinders service delivery in councils. However, the voice of implementers is very crucial in the policy implementation as it presents the reality of what is happening on the ground.

Responding to the voices from local councils would minimize or eliminate the challenges. One research participant from Blantyre City Council indicated that:

There is need to have a desk at the central government where an officer should specifically handle the concerns and other issues from the local councils. In that way, the challenges being faced on the ground can be resolved and lead to the achievement of decentralisation objectives (Research Participant 8, BCC, 28 July 2020).

The findings have shown that the decentralisation and delivery of services is mainly based on top-down approach of doing things where the policy process and decisions are passed from top (central government) down to implementers (Local councils) and the feedback from down up to government is not being taken into consideration. In this way there is no improvement in the way the delivery of services is being carried out. According to Signe (2017), top-down approach uses the decision of an authority as a starting point with clear and consistent goals. However, the goals neglect prior context and political aspects as the administrations. They tend to focus of the sanctity crafting of the policy rather than those affected by it and ignore the role of those who make amendments in the policy process. Another participant indicated that:

It seems feedback from councils is not acted upon at the local government because some of these challenges cannot be phased out. Local councils have been presenting the challenges to the ministry with the expectation that solutions would be provided but we cannot see any change. There should be an active office at the

Ministry to act upon these challenges if not they would be perpetual challenges (Research Participant 5, BCC, 16 July 2020).

The study findings above are in line with the top-down and bottom-up approaches where policies are formulated and cascaded down to local councils for implementation. Any positive or challenges encountered in local councils are channeled back to policy makers for further action. According to Birkland (2011), a bottom-up perspective suggests that implementation process starts at the lowest levels of the implementation system moving upwards to assess whether implementation is more or less successful and decisions made to improve the service delivery. Another participant highlighted that:

Currently, there is no office at the ministry particularly responsible for looking into the affairs of the local councils. We need someone to take our voices properly at the ministry level (Research Participant 2, BCC, 9 July 2021)

Another participant explained that:

An office should be created at the ministry of local government which should be powerful and influential in dealing with feedback on challenges of service delivery from local councils (Research Participant 22, BDC, 19 November 2021)

From the narrations, it is shown the feedback from the bottom are not adequately acted upon which is significant in the improvement of service delivery in local councils. Uyang et al. (2020) argue that top-down bureaucratic structure, coupled with increasing

encouragement of bottom-up oversight and citizen participation, has provided local governments with strong incentives to improve public policies. Therefore, the local government should take into consideration the feedback from local councils on why challenges in the delivery of services are persistent and come up with innovative strategies to improve the delivery of services in order to achieve the decentralization objectives.

Feedback in is very important in policy implementation because it is the only way to assess the progress and achievement of the policy. One participant explained that:

Local councils are not given an opportunity to present their concerns regarding the challenges faced in the delivery of services and also provide ideas on how to deal with some of these challenges. These challenges will be still in local councils unless we have an active office to be dealing with these issues (Research Participant 15, BDC, 11 August 2021)

Another research participant also commented that:

The Council has no voice to question the central government why it is not providing the necessary solutions to the challenges faced in the delivery of decentralised services. It seems there is an office at the ministry which deals with issues from local councils but in reality, I cannot see any changes because the implementation challenges being faced have been there. We need an active office if the delivery of services is to be achieved (Research Participant 5, BCC, 16 July 2021).

Elmore (1979, as cited in Signe, 2017) also explains that the top-down approach assumes that policy makers can master control of the policy implementation. However, without taking the concerns from the ground, the reality is missed out and challenges cannot be dealt with accordingly and at the right time. In the same way, the challenges in local councils cannot be dealt with if the government does not consider the feedback from local councils. Hoshino (1994, as cited in Ahmad and Talib, 2010) argues that decentralization gives power and voice to implementers for them to better participate and influence government to work according to community demands and it allows local government to respond to the community voice and needs with dynamism. This improves the resource allocation based on the needs of implementers.

4.2.7 Lack of Continuous Professional Development

Continuing professional development (CPD) is a life-long learning process whereby employees gain knowledge, skills and experience above and beyond the knowledge they have Suliman et al., (2020). Employees are up to date with industry change by constantly updating their skill set, and filling in gaps in competencies thereby increasing credibility in delivering services professionally. However, the study found that there is lack of CPD at Blantyre City and Blantyre District Councils which affects the smooth delivery of services. One participant explained that:

There are no CPDs to keep us up-to date in discharging our duties in today's ever-changing world as new standards are constantly being introduced. With no CPDs,

challenges to the implementation of decentralised services are inevitable (Research Participant No. 15, BDC, 11 August 2022).

From the interview extract, we can see that technology comes with new standards to be applied in the delivery of service. It a challenge for some employees who meet emerging issues in their respective roles which need new knowledge and skills to deal with them but they have no updated knowledge. Employees feel motivated and part of the organization when they are sent for CPDs. Friedman and Phillips (2004) emphasizes that employees are a central part of any organisation, putting the development of your employees first can help to improve efficiency, motivation and changing the dynamics of your business completely. With the rapid changing of technology, employees should be updated accordingly for high performance. CPD is critical in the life of every organization in positioning workers to meet changing trends of globalization (Yaqub & Ofosua, 2020). Another participant responded that:

Members of staff are not sent for refresher courses such as CPDs to familiarize themselves with latest technologies in doing things and improve productivity. However, we feel we are not valued by the organization (Research Participant 5, BCC, 16 July 2021)

The above narration is in line with what Friedman and Phillips (2004) argues, that CPDs are a means of keeping employees up-to-date in their roles and the organization as a whole will retain competent, valuable and adaptable workforce for higher productivity. Employee

enhance their skills and abilities on an ongoing basis, ensure that learning is progressed in a structured, practical and relevant way allowing them to focus on specific skills and knowledge required in their fields. Some of the persistent challenges being faced at Blantyre City and Blantyre District Councils may be due to lack of CPDs since the world is technologically changing rapidly.

In today's increasingly digital world, many industries are evolving quickly and competition is very high which means new standards are also constantly being introduced to redefine the way to carry out organizational roles and responsibilities (Yaqub & Ofosua, 2020). This will increase the performance of the organisation. Another participant highlighted that:

.... since I joined Blantyre City Council, I have never been sent for CPD. However, we encounter some challenges which I feel if I had attended one I would be able to carry out my roles effectively. The CPD enables employees to be always be updated and relevant.

Wabule (2016) points out that initial training is no longer seen as enough due to rapid changes in technology and therefore CPDs are there to provide up-to-date information required in employees' profession. On the other hand, Collin et al. (2012), emphasizes that organizations should engage in CPDs because it will have highly skilled, motivated and committed workforce for high productivity. Another respondent indicated that:

There is lack of refresher courses which enables us to gain some new insights regarding our roles. This is a big challenge in the delivery of services. Trainings

should be an on-going process so we are competent enough to deliver (Research Participant 3, BCC, 22 November 2021)

From the narration, CPDs are very crucial in organizations as employees acquire the updated right skills for the effective deliver of their roles. Slotte and Tynjala (2003) states that CPDs are significant in terms of acquiring, developing and retaining a skilled and competent workforce. This workforce would perform highly in their roles thereby reducing challenges faced.

Continuous development capacity (CPDs) is very critical in the delivery of services. Members need to be updated with the changing technology on how to carry out their respective roles. The systems are always changing hence the need for CPDs. According to Sutiyo (2014), continuous learning is important for short and long-term success because the updated skills and knowledge can potentially lead to increased productivity and benefits organizations to remain effective, innovative and competitive. The government should accommodate the nurses from Blantyre City Council for trainings funded by it because Blantyre City Council is still under the government.

4.2.8 Monitoring Mechanisms on the Delivery of Services

Mle (2014) states that policies and programmes are compatible and their proper implementation is what determines the failure or success of a government. Therefore, monitoring of the implementation is very crucial, so that when the services delivered are not up to the expectation, then necessary interventions could be employed to keep the right

track. The at monitoring measures can then be put in place to turn the situation around and ensure better implementation of policies and programmes and productivity. However, the study found that one of the ongoing challenges in service delivery is that the central government is not committed to follow-up on how the devolved services are being implementation so that if there is any deviation, there is need to provide solutions. One of the research participants from Blantyre District Council mentioned that:

It is important for the central government to monitor how the delivery of services is being done and ensure that they are done accordingly otherwise the challenges will continue and the objectives cannot be achieved (Research Participant 7, BDC, 21 July 2021).

Based on the results, the lack of monitoring of how the decentralized services are being delivered, affects the positive outcome of decentralisation. Monitoring provides information needed to assess the progress of decentralised services and make decisions out of that. If challenges are noted there is need for interventions so that the policy is effectively implemented and yield positive outcomes. Abraham (2015) emphasis that without the necessary systems put in place to monitor the impact of the policy, the outcome cannot be as expected. Stakeholders as policy makers should ensure that the enacted policies such as a decentralisation policy, is implemented as intended and the objects are achieved. Another respondent indicated that:

There is lack of monitoring mechanisms at the Council to check how the services are delivered which could lead to abuse of by some employees (Research Participant 7, BDC, 21 July 2020).

Monitoring the progress of the decentralised services is crucial so that any deviation could be managed before encountering big challenges. Mle (2014) argues that monitoring and evaluation measures are put in place to turn the situation around and ensure better implementation of government policies, programmes and productivity.

Another participant from Blantyre District council highlighted that:

There is no continuous auditing of the services delivered to ensure modifications are done according to decentralisation guidelines. Evaluation of service delivery should be conducted every 5 years to see what has been achieved and what to improve on (Research Participant 6, BDC, 19 July 2020)

From the narration above, monitoring of services serves as a measure to reduce and deal with the implementation challenges encountered in the course of delivering services in local councils. Vallejo (2017) argues that monitoring of decentralised services in councils addresses information gap, capacity and resource constraints which can be limiting factors to the delivery of services.

Without the necessary control system put in place to monitor the progress of service delivery and measure the impact, the challenges cannot be traced and dealt with. The

decentralised services should be monitors and strategies to be put in place to deal with any challenge which might come across. One research participant explained that:

... monitoring of decentralised serviced is a must and by the end of every three years, there should be an evaluation to assess what has been achieved and what challenges have been encountered. Then solutions to the challenges could be provided so that the objectives of decentralisation are effectively achieved (Research Participant 1, BCC, 7 July 2021).

According to Steinich (2000), monitoring and evaluation of decentralised services is critical in the delivery of services because the information collected from local councils act as feedback used by policy makers to make decisions on how to improve the policy design and implementation. One participant indicated that:

There is need to monitor the way delivery of services are carried out in local councils and any challenge should be resolved. Evaluation should also be conducted every 5 years to assess what has been achieved (Research Participant 3, BCC, 12 July 2021).

Another participant highlighted that:

There is lack of monitoring to see how decentralised services are being delivered at the council and also what has been achieved so far. Monitoring of services delivered is important because it encourages people to be responsible and accountable in their roles (Research Participant, 13, BCC, 17 August 2020).

From the above interview extract, it is revealed that when monitoring mechanisms are put in place, employees will be extra careful in the roles as they would be held accountable for the responsibilities. According to Ghuman and Singh (2013), effective delivery of service leads to improvement in quality by enhancing accountability and transparency through people's participation and monitoring of decision-making and service provision processes. Without monitoring how the delivery of services are being done, the quality can be compromised hence the failure to achieve the objectives of the decentralisation.

4.3 Section 3: Reasons behind Political Challenges of Service Delivery at Blantyre District and Blantyre City Councils

The research found the following as political challenges affecting service delivery at the councils under the study: conflict of interest between members of parliament and councillors on the development of programmes in the community, no political will to accept change by not relinquishing power to councillors. The study found the reasons behind all these political challenges as follow:

4.3.1 Lack of Enforcement on Definition of Roles and Responsibilities

The political challenge of conflict of interest between members of parliament and councillors has been hindering the effective delivery of services in local councils. Members of parliament always would want to do things which will benefit them at the end. The study found that the reason behind this challenge is that the central government is not enforcing the issue of defining the roles and responsibilities for each party so that they can work without any interference. The non-enforcement of definition of roles and

responsibilities for the politicians make them become monopolistic and taking advantage of that to have all the benefits without consideration the masses who are the community and the nation as a whole. This type of behaviour hinder service delivery.

One of the participants from Blantyre City Council explained that:

Politicians need to know their boundaries so that they do not abuse power. There is lack of enforcement of roles as the government do not emphasize it during their orientation. Sometimes politicians implement community developments from which they could benefit. In this way they do not get advice from the local council on how to go about it leading to substandard of work (Research Participant 2, BCC, 10 August 2020).

Another participant from Blantyre District Council commented that:

Each government comes with politicians who have too much power. When there is a development project in their constituency, they do not follow procedures. They would find their own contractor, suppliers of materials and just bring an invoice to the District Council for payment. At the end of the project, there is substandard of work and if the government will not enforce their limits, the challenges would go on (Research Participant 17, BDC, 15 November 2021).

Another responded from Blantyre City Council indicated that:

When it comes to developing infrastructures in the community, mostly there is no tendering of contractors and suppliers. Politicians find their own without following procedures and these contractors do not do the good job. Politician lack

orientation on their roles as they always go beyond their boundaries (Research Participant 18, BCC, 17 November 2021).

One participant from Blantyre District Council commented that:

Many politicians abuse power by coming in with their own contractors for community projects. The District Commissioner cannot control them for fear of being transferred or dumped at the ministry unless government reduces power of politicians by intensifying the boundaries (Research Participant 19, BDC, 19 November 2021).

Some politicians interfere with the with technocrats' roles in community developments by making decisions which are supposed to be done by the district council in the procurement of materials. At the end, there is substandard of work therefore, challenges to the implementation of decentralised services will continue. One participant commented that:

..... sometimes politicians would find their own suppliers of materials for building schools or bridges without following procedures and without consulting the secretariat. They do not follow their roles (Research Participant 20, BDC, 16 November 2021).

While another participant explained that:

Councillors and Members of Parliament do not stick to their job descriptions and work to their jurisdiction. Orientation on their roles and responsibilities is not intensified hence there is conflict of interest which affects the successful

implementation of decentralised services (Research Participant 17, BDC, 15 November 2021)

From the above interview extracts, politicians do not work within their roles and responsibilities which bring a lot of challenges to delivery of services. However, a study conducted by Hudson et al. (2019) found that clear definitions of responsibilities lead to the effective service delivery and brings sanity to the public sector. The participants politicians do not follow procedures in the way they handle their delivery of services in communities. This makes the challenges of service delivery to continue. One participant indicated that:

Politicians use power to ensure that what they want is done although statutorily their roles and responsibilities are in place. They do not want technocrats to guide them (Research Participant 2, BDC, 5 August 2020).

Another participant explained that:

.....the Job Descriptions are just on paper because practically, there is no definition of roles for Chiefs, Councillors and Members Parliament (MPs) as they always pass their boundaries. There is no intensive orientation regarding their roles (Research Participant 8, 20 July 2020).

The research findings reveal that clear definitions of roles and responsibilities are very crucial in the delivery of services. They act as a control measure for politicians who abuse power by maximizing the utility for their own self-interest. This is in line with

the principal-agent theory which is used as a paradigm for analyzing public accountability. The theory argues that the government and citizens tend to implement public policies which are preferred by voters while politicians tend to deviate to suit their self-interests (Gailmard, 2012). There is monopoly of power associated with the principal-agent theory which is reflected in the maximization of public revenues. The principal-agent theory assumes that monopolistic behaviour is constrained by voters' effort to monitor the outcomes of public policies. The principal agent mainly monitors the accountability of politicians who deviate the voter's interests to their own (Bravo and Silvestre, 2004). With decentralisation which brings the government closer to people, principal-agent theory is assumed as a way to alleviate political control problems. It refers to politicians who act as agents maximizing the benefits of the majority who are the principals. These politicians are expected to fulfil the voter's interests who are the principal however, politicians usually maximize to their own interest. The politician's objective is to maximize his constituents' utility for his own political popularity so that they should be voted again once the term of office expires. A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities can increase the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of services.

4.4 Section 4: Reasons behind Contextual Challenges of Service Delivery at Blantyre District and Blantyre City Councils

The study found that although Blantyre City Council and Blantyre District Council were different, the challenges which were being faced in the delivery of services were almost

the same. Some of them were partial participation of councillors, Lack of funds and Inadequate human resources.

4.4.1 Partial Participation of Councillors

Councillors play a big role in ensuring that the needs of the community are presented to the council so that they can be assisted. They need to understand all aspects of service delivery. However, the research found that they were not doing their roles as expected thereby creating service delivery gaps. The reason behind the service delivery gaps was that many councillors were lacking capacity because they had no minimum qualifications hence could not understand English fully. This affected their participation because they could not grasp everything that would be presented during the meetings between the district council, city council and the councillors. Most of them requested that the meetings should be conducted in Chichewa which is sometimes difficult because the service delivery as laid out in the decentralization documents are written in English. However, participation is very crucial for effective policy implementation. One participant from Blantyre District Council explained that:

I have been conducting many meetings between the city council and councillors but mostly they do not contribute anything because they cannot articulate, understand and interpret what is being presented (Research Participant 7, BDC, 21 July 2021).

This research finding shows that that there is need for minimum education qualifications for councillors as indicated earlier in the chapter. However, the councillors'

participation on issues affecting the community is essential for successful development. The study by Chasukwa et al. (2013) found that the absence of councillors in Malawi from 2005 – 2013 made the local people to be detached from the councils hence their needs could not reach the councils for considerations. This was due to non-participatory of councillors in decision making for development programmes of local people. Another participant highlighted that:

Councillors do not have the required qualifications to understand issues regarding the delivery of services which is a challenge. The central government need to intervene to ensure that the councillors elected have the required minimum qualifications which would enable them participate and understand the concept of decentralisation and service delivery.

However, the other study done by Uphoff (1998, as cited in Sutiyo, 2014) found that participation is the main factor contributing to the success of government programmes such as infrastructure development, education and health improvement. It contributes to improving the fit between development outputs and the needs for local people.

The study done by Mbandlwa (2018) on assessing the ward councillors' leadership in South Africa found that most of the ward councillors were finding it difficult to fully participate in the making of by-laws, primarily because they lacked the understanding of the local government policies.

Another participant responded that:

There is need to have qualified personnel who have knowledge in the delivery of services. However, the councillors who are closer to people who need the services do not have the right qualification which the government should put in place otherwise it is a challenge as they cannot participate fully (Research Participant 19, BDC, 19 November 2021)

The participants did not even know what was the required qualification and thought that at least a minimum qualification as could indicated that the government should come up with the minimum qualification. According to Chiweza (2016), the law that guides Councillors' entry into local government based on the Local Government Elections Act of 1996 does not prescribe any specific educational qualifications, but it requires that candidates should be able to read and write English (In her study on women in local government, Chiweza (2016) found the actual education profile of the women councillors as follows: 45 % of women councillors had Junior Certificate of Education (JCE); 45% of women had Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE); 6 % had university diploma; 2 % university degree and 2% had Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC). From Chiweza (2016) study although it was based on women only, it shows the majority of councillors having JCE or MSCE. Another participant highlighted that:

Councillors are closer to the community and are the ones who knows theirs needs. However, the challenge is that they do not understand their role pertaining to the

delivery of services because of their level of education and this affects their participation (Research Participant 17, BDC, 15 November 2021).

Nevertheless, participation in the deliberations of the communities' needs is very vital as the community is the grassroots beneficiary in service delivery. The study by Fidelman (2008) on challenges in local government of Watershed Management in Australia found that participation in terms of representation and inclusiveness into decision making enabled those represented to benefit from decentralisation. Another participant complained that:

The delivery of services in councils need a certain level of understanding however, most councillors do not have minimum qualifications to understand the objective of decentralisation and their roles (Research Participant 19, BDC, 17 November 2021).

Councilors are expected to represent the interests of the local citizens. The main goal of decentralisation is to improve local government service delivery by involving community members in planning and prioritizing their service delivery needs. Another participant explained that:

... on participatory committees at local level, there is still need for awareness and education of the participatory members is not enough especially councillors fail to understand issues of governance and those relating to the needs of the community people (Research Participant 5, BCC, 16 July 2021)

Kwena (2013) states that ward councillors are the representatives of specific communities and are ideally placed to be the link between the people and the municipality in order to participate and bring people's needs and problems to the municipality. Therefore, councillors need to have capacity to understand the aspects of service delivery and communities' needs.

The problem of councillors not having the required qualifications, is also experienced in Zimbabwe. The study conducted by Jonga (2009) on looking beyond political qualifications of councillors in Zimbabwe especially on the qualifications required by councillors to hold public office found that individuals elected as councillors had very low academic and professional qualifications. Some of the councillors did not even have O-Levels and were semi-literate and respondents were of the opinion that the councillors should have diplomas and degrees to participate fully in providing effective and efficient service delivery to the public. Jonga (2009) concluded that this situation at hand demanded for councillors with high academic and professional qualifications who could comprehensively understand urban problems and developmental needs.

4.4.2 *Inadequate Financial Resources*

The study found that there were inadequate financial resources both at Blantyre District Council and Blantyre City Council for operations. Inadequate financial resources are one of the major constraints to service delivery in local councils. The councils use the finances to improve on the lives of people by providing them with initiatives such as access to roads. One of the participants highlighted that:

The devolution is partial and it lacks corresponding financial resources to ensure that the devolved functions are done effectively and efficiently. The delivery of services cannot be implemented without resources that is why the challenges are still there (Research participant 18 BCC, 17 November 2021).

However, Hussein (2006) argues that the success of the service delivery is contingent upon the availability of adequate finances in local government institutions. For local councils to effectively provide essential services to the grassroots, financial resources must be available to carry out its assigned responsibilities. Another participant complained that:

Revenue collection is very little because people are failing to pay rental rates and business licences. In this way we have challenges in the delivery of services. Continuity of non-payment would mean continuous challenges (Research Participant 20, BDC, 18 November 2021).

From the above narration, it shows that the successful delivery of services affected by lack of financial resources. Local councils generate revenue the delivery of services could be successful however with the non-payment of rental rates business licences impact on the lack of developmental activities. One participant from Blantyre City Council highlighted that:

... the functions are not fully devolved. For example, funding is centrally done it is therefore difficult to implement the activities effectively because the council has no control unless the government changes things.

Lack of financial resources in local councils has a negative impact in the delivery of service to the local needs. Muriisa (2008) argues that decentralised services were aimed at addressing local needs that were not being addressed by the centralized government. Therefore, lack of financial resources has a negative impact on the needs of people. Another respondent indicated that:

There are inadequate financial resources for operating activities. Councils are not being supported financially and these challenges in the delivery of services will keep on. There is need for intervention by government (Research Participant 16, BDC, 15 November 2021)

From the above interview extract, it shows that adequate financial resources at local councils promotes the service delivery to the needs of the community. Frumence et al. (2013) argues that funds are an important resource for effective service delivery aimed at improving the livelihood of the grassroots. Another participant highlighted that:

One of the sources of revenue generated by BCC is city rates which is not enough for the delivery of services. There is lack of political will by government to support the city council financially. For example, all revenue collected from city road users'

finances go to Account No. 1. At least a certain portion should be given to city council to maintain the city roads (Research Participant 20, BCC, 16 July 2020)

From the above narration, the effective service delivery cannot be enhanced due to inadequate revenue collected. Hussein (2018) affirms this that the limited availability of finances makes it difficult for sectors to provide adequate and continuous support to policy and project implementation. One of the participants from Blantyre City Council narrated that:

... inadequate of funds is one the challenges which the council faces. The council generates own funds but not enough to runs its operations. The money transferred by government is also not enough. That is why we have challenges in delivering some services (Research participant 18, BCC, 17 November 2021).

The availability of funds plays a greater role in improving the delivery of services and at the same time reducing the challenges which come due to lack of funds. Murriisa (2008) argues that improving local funding sources and creating mechanisms through which public officials could be held more accountable would lead to improved service delivery. Attaining financial capacity would lead to effective and efficient service delivery. Another participant responded that:

Revenue collection is very little because rental rates and business licences are not paid hence delivery of services is negatively affected. Continuity of non-payment

*and challenges in delivery of services will go on if there is no intervention
(Research Participant 20 BDC, 18 November 2021)*

From the narrations above, it was shown that the delivery of services is affected by inadequate revenue collected. Mumvuma (2012, as cited in Jagero et al., 2014) emphasizes that there is need to enlarge the economic/revenue base of the governments and strengthen their revenue mobilization for effective service delivery. On the other hand, Muriisa (2008) argues that attaining financial capacity would lead to effective and efficient service delivery.

4.4.3 Lack of Human Resources

Human resources are the most important assets of an organization recruited and managed well and for the success of any organization. The organisation should maintain the human resource establishments so that there is no gap in the delivery of services. However, the study found that there are inadequate human resources at the council which affect the successful delivery of services. One of the participants explained that:

*Blantyre District Council has a large catchment area and supervision of is difficult due to inadequate human resources which is a challenge to effective delivery of services as the quality is compromised. This is failure for government to recruit more employees and that is why service delivery challenges are still there
(Research Participant 16, BDC, 15 November 2021).*

From the above, we can clearly understand that inadequate of human resources can lead to inadequate quality of service. The study conducted by Pembi (2019) on the effect of inadequate human resources on performance found that inadequate human resources affect the performance of organisations negatively. On other hand, Susan (2012) argues that effective and availability of human resources contribute effectively and productivity to the overall company direction and the accomplishment of the organization's goals and objectives. Local councils need to have adequate human resources to improve quality in the delivery of services. Another participant highlighted that:

There are many vacancies causing inadequate human resources. In addition, frequent postings cause instability in offices as it would take time for new officers to understand office issues. The service delivery is affected because these transfers which are political and the council has no control (Research Participant 15, BDC, 11 August 2021)

From the interview extract, the inadequate and frequent transfers of employees mean lack of expertise in the delivery of services which also affects the performance of local councils. Hussein (2008) affirms that the lack of expertise and skilled personnel translates into reduced capabilities to effectively implement policies and projects at local councils. Adequate human resources enhance the provision of services to local communities. Another participant highlighted that:

There is a high rate of technical vacant positions leading to inadequate human resources. For example, between the Director and myself, there two vacant positions but I am the one doing work for these two vacant positions and it cuts across many departments. these are the challenges the councils facing (Research Participant 16, BDC, 15 November 2021)

Engetou (2017) argues that when there is a shortage of staff, the responsibilities and workloads of existing staff members increase leading to inefficiencies in organisational performance. Therefore, the lack of adequate human resources at local councils affects the performance of services

And the other participant from Blantyre City Council responded that:

Technically, there are a lot of vacancies which is affecting the delivery of services and this has been an ongoing thing it seems there is no political will to recruit on the side of the government (Research Participant 18 BCC, 17 November 2021)

From the narrations above, it is understood that successful delivery of services depends on the adequate and qualified human resources. Golola (2001) argues that lack of financial and human resources at the local council limits the ability of local leaders to implement policies and programmes, as well as reduces the independence of local governments. Pemba (2019) also affirms that there is no industry, firm, organization, business enterprises and nation that can boost a political, economic and social stability, quality product and

profitability without adequate human resources in place to enhance performance in an organization.

Another participant from Blantyre City Council explained that:

There is lack of technical personnel at the council. For example, we are only 3 in the department instead of 7. It is a challenge as we cannot manage to do the work meant for 7 people and the council has no mandate to recruit (Research Participant 17, BDC, 15 November 2021)

From the narration above, it shows that, the service delivery is negatively affected. However, highly skilled and motivated workforce is a critical aspect of successful decentralisation, as service delivery ultimately depends on availability and effective deployment of technical skills. Implementing measures to ensure increased human resource productivity and sustained performance improvement at all levels leads to an efficient and effective service delivery system. Remond and Okoye (2013 as cited in Pembi, 2019) argues that human resources of any organization hold the key to its survival, profitability and sales growth which entails prosperity, future economic and social development. With adequate human resources in local councils, the delivery of services would be successful and so the economic development.

4.5 Conclusion

The chapter has presented the findings of the study based on the data collected from key informants at Blantyre District Council, Blantyre City Council and Ministry of Local Government. The study has found that there are indeed reasons behind the challenges of service delivery in the local councils.

The study has revealed that there is lack of enabling laws and partial authority to enable staff to execute their duties. The findings have also found that there is no proper orientation of new members of staff to enable them understand their roles and perform better. Further, the study has discussed the findings in relation to lack of proper planning and handover of devolved sectors which affect the operations of local councils because people concerned might not perform as expected. The study has also shown that local councils have inadequate income because the income generating facilities produces little money not enough for its operations. The study has further found that there are no minimum qualifications for councillors hence it was difficult to participate and contribute to decision-making process regarding the service delivery in councils. Participants had the opinions that government should provide minimum qualifications which would enable them understand issues of decentralisation and service delivery. The study again has revealed that members of the local councils do not have an office at the Ministry of Local Government which is active to specifically to handle challenges they are facing. The study has found that there is lack of Continuous Professional Developments (CPDs) which are very crucial to effective performance. The study has also revealed that there are no monitoring mechanisms to follow up how decentralized services are being

delivered to avoid being deviated from the dictates of the policy. The findings have also revealed that there is no enforcement in the definition of roles and responsibilities that sets as boundaries e so that there is smooth delivery of services.

The study has further found that there are inadequate financial and inadequate human resources which affect the successful delivery of services in the local councils. Lastly, the findings have shown the relationship between the findings, review of literature and theories which have been used in the research study. The next chapter presents conclusions and implications of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

STUDY CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the summary and implications of the study findings which were presented in the previous chapter based on relevant literature and theory in relation to effective service delivery. It also provides the suggested areas for possible further research in reducing the challenges of service delivery in the local councils in Malawi.

5.1 Study Implications

The study was based on four specific objectives namely: to establish the reasons behind political challenges in the delivery of services at Blantyre District Council and Blantyre City Council; to establish the reasons behind technical challenges in the delivery of services at Blantyre District Council and Blantyre City Council; to establish the contextual challenges in the delivery of services at Blantyre District Council and Blantyre City Council. The study findings from these objectives are concluded as follows:

5.1.1 Reasons behind Technical Challenges in the Delivery of Services

The study has shown that lack of proper employee work orientations, contribute to some challenges the local councils are facing in the delivery of services. Orientation of employees on the job is very crucial for the success of organizations because employees become familiar with the operations of the company and understand their responsibilities. The study found that the orientation of new members of staff is lacking in the councils which affect the quality of service delivery thereby affecting the service delivery. This implies that effective implementation of local services depends on proper orientation of newly recruited employees so that they are familiar with the duties and responsibilities. The new systems again should be introduced to current employees so that they understand how the systems operate thereby producing high quality of services. This high quality of services will reduce some of the challenges the councils facing in meeting the needs of the community. According to Lamba and Choudhary (2013) employee operational performance depends on work orientation. This orientation makes them feel valued and part of the organization thereby remaining committed. Their commitment increases the efficiency of the organization. It is the responsibility of the central government to offer orientation to employees to avoid challenges of service delivery in the councils.

The study findings also show that the lack of enabling laws and authority to operate were other reasons behind technical challenges that has affected the performance of local councils negatively. Properties of those who have failed to pay city rates cannot be closed to force owners to pay off the city rates because employees have no mandate to so. This is part of income generating facilities from which the funds generated could be used for the

operations of the councils. This implies that the for the government to not provide the enabling laws and authority, it is a challenge challenges for running the councils with enabling laws, the employees would use their skills in collecting city rates which would be at least better for the operations of the city councils. The findings have also shown that having difficulty facilities to generate income at local councils is another reason behind technical challenges. Blantyre City Council is large but the income generating facilities do not generate funds enough for all its operations. This has a negative impact of its service delivery. Further, the study has found that councils have no mandate to recruit leading to a lot of vacancies which is a gap in the delivery of services. For local councils effective and efficient delivery of services, it needs adequate, qualified and skilled human recourses to effectively and efficiently carry out their roles. This affirms what Jagero et al. (2014) in their study regarding challenges in local councils found that some ministries were reluctant to devolve power/authority to local councils which make local councils practically not to have the mandate to make decisions. This affects efficient and effective services delivery.

The study findings have shown that another reason behind technical challenges is lack of an office that is active at the Ministry of Local Government and Development specifically to deal with local council challenges, needs and suggestions voiced out by local councils. Currently, local councils have challenges in getting responses or they do not get the appropriate assistance and feel that whoever is at Ministry is not being helpful as challenges are not resolved accordingly. Decentralisation has many economic developmental programmes for local people. However, according Galiani et al. (2008), effective service delivery can reduce the lack of ability for poor local communities to voice out and protect

their preferences. This implies that without the community voicing out their needs, the poor local people may not get the benefits of decentralisation. The ministry should provide an office through which would be very crucial for local councils where whatever has been voiced out would be considered and dealt with accordingly. This would reduce some of the challenges which have been there for so long and therefore promote effective service delivery.

The other findings of the study have shown lack of continuous professional developments (CPDs) in local councils. Human resources are the most valuable assets in an organisation and therefore CPDs are very crucial for them to remain updated with the new technologies. Pasquini et al., Cowling and Ziervogel (2013) argues that CPD aims to increase professional expertise, professional competence and individual well-being as well as to increase the competitiveness and effectiveness of organizations and professions. It takes place continuously regardless of the given occupation or profession, thus being a process as well as an outcome. Therefore, CPD needs are very critical in the delivery of service as employees will be updated with knowledge and skills and enhance the performance of local councils. The lack of CPDs imply that employees are not up to-date with their knowledge and skills to deal with emerging issues in their respective fields which affects the implementation of service delivery. employees should be provided with CPDs whenever there is an opportunity so that they are updated with systems and technologies and therefore improve the implementation of services to local people.

5.1.2 Reasons behind Political Challenges of Service Delivery

The findings have shown that lack of enforcement in the definition of roles and responsibilities for members of parliament and councillors is one of the reasons behind the political challenges as it has a negative impact on the delivery of services. This implies that members of parliament and councillors should be served with documents enforcing the definitions of their duties and responsibilities so that whoever, breaches should be held accountable. There should be an awareness to local people in the community on the politician's duties and responsibilities and hold them responsible. This would reduce the conflict of interest and their smooth operations on the development of programmes based on the needs of the community.

5.1.3 Reasons behind Contextual Challenges in the Delivery of Services

The study found that the reasons behind the contextual challenges at both Blantyre and City Councils were not different. The study further found that there were no minimum qualifications for councillors and they were not being able to participate fully in the decentralisation activities because they could not understand and interpret the concepts of decentralisation which were being presented by the district and city council officers. This was because they could not fully understand English hence they could be requesting the presentation to be in Chichewa. This implies that the service delivery was being negatively affected since Councillors are the ones close to the grassroots. Participation of councillors in decision making in the delivery of services to the community is very crucial because they present the needs of the community to the councils. It promotes the development of economic programmes which are beneficial to the citizenry and the

nation as a whole. Therefore, the partial participation affects the effective delivery of services. According to OECD (2019), “participatory governance at local level approaches to local public governance that facilitate the participation and engagement of private citizens and other stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations or faith-based groups in deliberations on the delivery of local public services in partnership with the formal public sector. Therefore, the findings from the study implies that councillors should have minimum qualifications which could enable them understand the concepts and their responsibilities regarding the delivery of services.

Another reason behind contextual challenges was lack of finances to run the councils. The implication is that the shortage of funds seriously hampers the effective public service delivery which promotes democratic governance and local development. Husein (2018) argues that the success of service delivery is contingent upon the availability of adequate capacity in local government institutions. These financial constraints in the local councils inhibit the efforts of local councils to provide better, efficient and effective services to the grassroots. Boris (2015) argues that the inability of local councils to provide services to people at the grassroots is linked to inadequate financial resources. The study done by Boris (2015) found that there is a significant relationship between revenue generated and developmental effort of government. The implication in this result was that decentralised services cannot be achieved without finances. Therefore, having adequate finances means successful delivery of services to the need of local communities. Inadequate human resources were one of the reasons behind persistent challenges in the implementation of decentralised services. This implies that with inadequate employees

there is an increase in workload which leads to inadequate implementation of organizational policies and also a decrease in productivity and failure to achieve organizational goals. Engetou (2017) argues that the organization is bound to succeed when it employs qualified, sufficient, talented and skillful employees. Successful service delivery is depended on the adequate and qualified employees.

5.2 Conclusion

The study interrogated reasons behind challenges of service delivery at Blantyre City Council, Blantyre District Council and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The study established the reasons behind continuous challenges in the service delivery in the local councils. Among other findings, the study established lack of proper orientation for members of staff in their respective fields, lack of enforcement on the definition of roles and responsibilities for Members of Parliament and Councillors and inadequate funds for the operations of the councils as reasons behind challenges of service delivery in the local council. It could be noted that the challenges in the delivery of services which act as feedback from local councils were not being resolved despite presenting them. The findings are line with top-down were plans and guideline on how to implement the decentralised services are passed to local councils but with on act of feedback. The study was guided by public choice theory and principal-agent theory which views politicians, bureaucrats and other political actors as self-interested agents who are rational and tend to maximize their benefits at the cost of the popular. The study was also guided by the path dependency theory which based on history matters. After the expiry of terms of office in the government, the new government would not resolve the challenges faced by local

councils but would come with their own strategies to run the government as literature in Chapter 2 indicated that it is generally difficult to change policies because institutions are sticky, and actors protect the existing and once a country has started down a path, the costs of reversal are very high.

5.3 Further Research Area

Decentralisation improves local institutions, local administration and service delivery that reduces poverty if well implemented by focusing on local people's needs and preferences. However, literature has shown that delivery of services in the local government might be negatively impacted or even fail if the reasons behind these persistent challenges are not known and dealt with. Therefore, in terms of future research, there is need to determine whether decentralization has increased the level of service delivery and the quality in the local councils despite these challenges.

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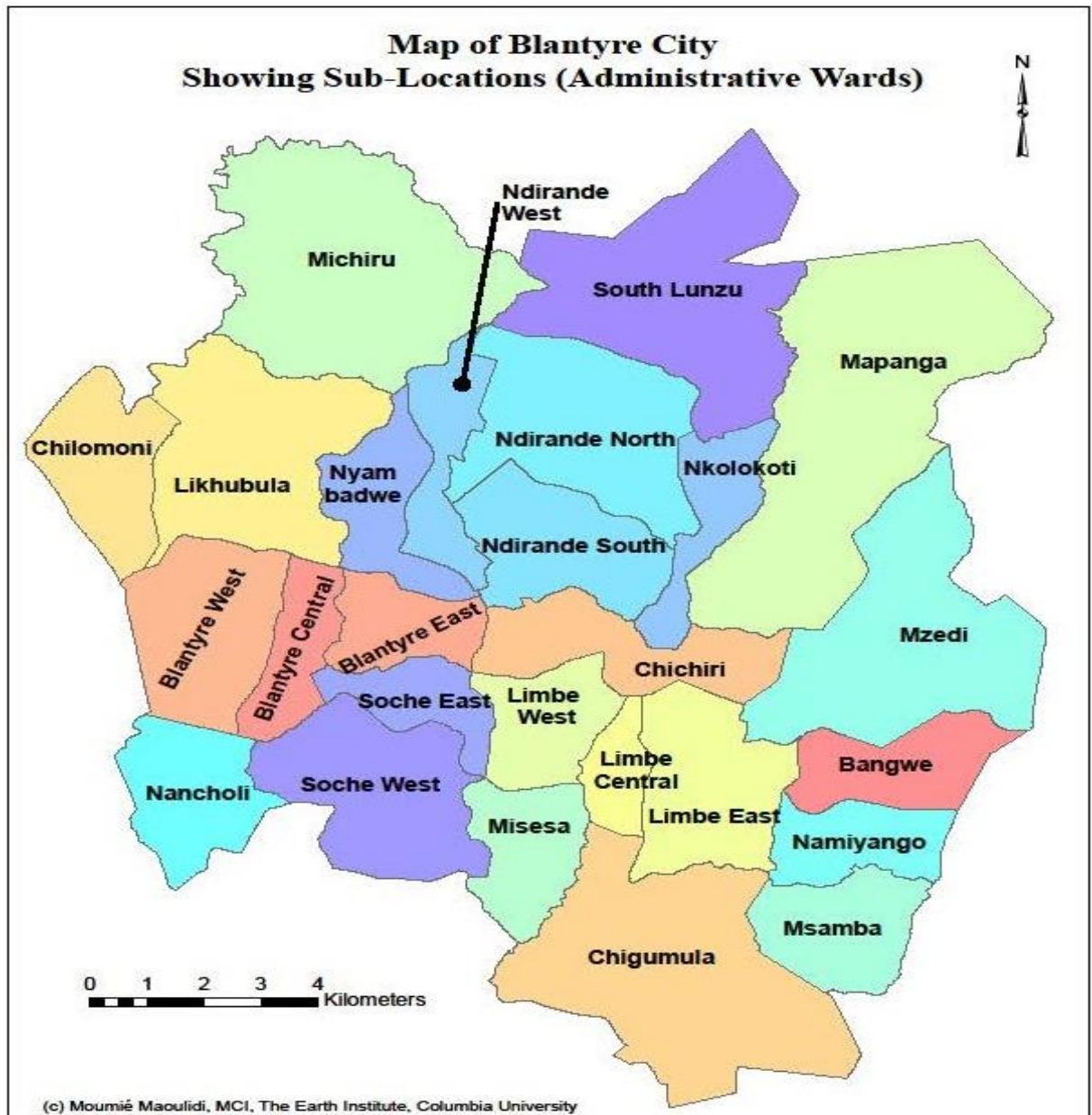
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of Blantyre City



Appendix 2: Letter of Introduction



Principal
Prof. Richard Tambulasi, BA (Pub Admin), BPA (Hons), MPA, Ph.D

Our Ref: PA/4/11
Your Ref:

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE
P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi
Telephone: (265) 01524 222
Fax: (265) 01524 046
Email: principal@cc.ac.mw

Department of Political and Administrative Studies

6th April, 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS. FELISTUS MUGHOGHO - MA/PAM/21/17

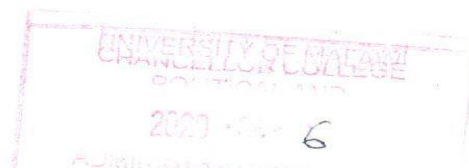
The bearer of this letter is Ms. Felistus Mughogho. She is a student in Master of Public Administration and Management programme in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at Chancellor College.

Our students are required to write a dissertation in order to complete their master's programme. Therefore, Ms. Felistus Mughogho intends to carry out a data gathering exercise for this purpose in your office.

Any assistance rendered to her in the course of this exercise will be highly appreciated. Let me also point out that the information gathered will be treated as confidential and purely for academic purposes.

Yours faithfully,

M. Chasukwa, PhD
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



Appendix 3: Permission to Conduct a Research



The Secretariat
Town Hall
Civic Centre
Kasungu Crescent
Private Bag 67
Blantyre
Republic of Malawi

Blantyre City Council

BCC/ADM/20/1

All correspondence to be addressed to:

The Chief Executive Officer
Phone: +265 1 870 211
Fax: +265 1 870 508 / 1 870 417
Email: bcachief@bccmw.com
Website: www.bccmw.com

13th July, 2020

Miss Felistus Mughogho
University of Malawi – Chancellor Collage
P.O. Box 280
Zomba,
Malawi

Dear Miss F. Mughogho

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

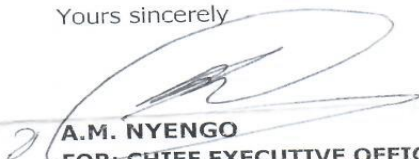
The above stated subject refers.

We are in receipt of your letter dated 6th April, 2020 in which you requested Blantyre City Council to grant you permission to conduct research.

We are pleased to grant you permission to conduct the study at Blantyre City Council.

Relevant Officers are therefore advised to provide you with assistance that you may require towards your research.

Yours sincerely


A.M. NYENGO
FOR: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Taking the City back to the People

Appendix 4: Consent Letter

University of Malawi
Chancellor College
P O Box 280
Zomba

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT

I am Felistus Lwinda Mughogho, a 2nd Year student pursuing a Master of Public Administration and Management Programme at Chancellor College. In partial fulfillment of the award of the master's degree, I am required to conduct a research. Therefore, I am requesting for your participation in this study. My topic is ***“Interrogating the Reasons behind Challenges of service delivery in the local government particularly at Blantyre City and District Councils***

By participating in this study, you will be requested to be interviewed. Your information in this study will be highly confidential and used for academic purposes only. Interviews will be conducted between you and the researcher and the privacy will be maintained. There are no harmful procedures that will be performed on you but only your responses are important. The interview sheets will be anonymous through the use of numbers instead

of names. Your participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate or withdrew from the study at any point you wish without being penalized in anyway. There are no direct benefits as a result of your participation. If you are interested to participate in the study, please sign the consent form below and then respond to the questions asked.

Dear Researcher

I hereby give consent to participate in the study and I have fully understood that my participation is voluntary.

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 5: Interview Guide

INTERROGATING REASONS BEHIND CHALLENGES OF SERVICE DELIVERY AT BLANTYRE CITY AND BLANTYRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

DATE OF INTERVIEW : _____

IDENTITY CODE NUMBER: _____

SECTN 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Age _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Marital status: _____
4. Level of Education: PhD, Master's, Bachelor's Diploma, Others (Tick Appropriate)
5. Occupation : _____
6. Location: _____
7. Period of working _____

The Malawi Government adopted the Decentralisation policy some 20 years ago, however, there have been challenges in the delivery of services in the local government. **My study is to interrogate REASONS behind challenges of service delivery at Blantyre City Council/Blantyre District Council**

**SECTION 2: TECHNICAL CHALLENGES OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN
BLANTYRE CITY COUNCIL/BLANTYRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

1. In your own opinion, what are the technical challenges of service delivery in
Blantyre City Council/Blantyre District Council
2. What do you think are the **REASONS** behind these technical challenges?

**SECTION 3: POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN
BLANTYRE CITY COUNCIL/BLANTYRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

1. In your own opinion, what are the political challenges of service delivery in
Blantyre City Council/Blantyre District Council
2. What do you think are the **REASONS** behind these political challenges?

**SECTION 4: CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN
BLANTYRE CITY COUNCIL/BLANTYRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

1. Based on your experiences, what do you think are the contextual challenges of
service delivery in Blantyre City Council/Blantyre District Council
2. What are the **REASONS** behind these challenges