

CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSFERRED STAFF IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES: A CASE STUDY OF CHONGWE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA.

Daniel Chulu¹, Zuwa Sinkamba², Saviour Hamvula³

¹(School of Social Sciences, Management department, ZCAS University, Box 35243, Lusaka, Zambia.

²(School of Social Sciences, Management department, ZCAS University, Box 35243, Lusaka, Zambia.

³(Department of Local governance and administrative studies, Chalimbana Local Government Training Institute, Chongwe, Lusaka.

Corresponding Author; Daniel Chulu

ABSTRACT: This study aimed at investigating challenges faced by staff transferred to Chongwe municipal council from other government departments. The transfers were necessitated by devolution policies being pursued by the Zambian government. The study sheds light on the implications of decentralization on the roles, responsibilities, and overall effectiveness of these officials in delivering quality public services to the local community. The main objective of the study was to investigate challenges faced by transferred staff in delivering services to local communities in Zambia.

Specific objectives included the following: To identify challenges faced by transferred staff in their roles and responsibilities at Chongwe municipal council and, to provide recommendations for improving working conditions for transferred staff at Chongwe municipal council.

Challenge faced by transferred staff in Chongwe municipal council include, inadequate capacity building opportunities resulting into lack of the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively perform these new roles and responsibilities, ambiguity in roles and responsibilities and limited decision-making authority,(UNDP, 2019). The study provides some recommendations at the end.

Key words: Decentralization, Local authority, Municipal council, Transferred staff,

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

The decentralization wave began sweeping across the world in 1960s with decentralization policies being accepted positively, (Manor, 2019). Currently, World Bank estimates that about 80 percent of the world's countries are implementing decentralization in one form or another, (WB,2019). The worldwide experimentation of this implementation has been accompanied by a few academic research attempting to ascertain the effects of decentralization on economic, political and social developments. Controversy around decentralization has generated several fundamental questions regarding the relevance of decentralization to small, least-developed countries with weak state capacity and economies.

A study on decentralization policy of the local authority system in Pakistan revealed that, decentralization in Pakistan had taken the form of devolution. It is observed that local authorities in Pakistan undertook educational devolution reforms to address access, equity, and equality. Staff were transferred from central to local governance systems with precautionary measures. Pakistan's decentralization of local authorities followed the Sub-national government model in that, the government played a significant part in the local unit sector while at the same time, recognizing the important role of the private sector or other stake holders, Naidoo (2020).

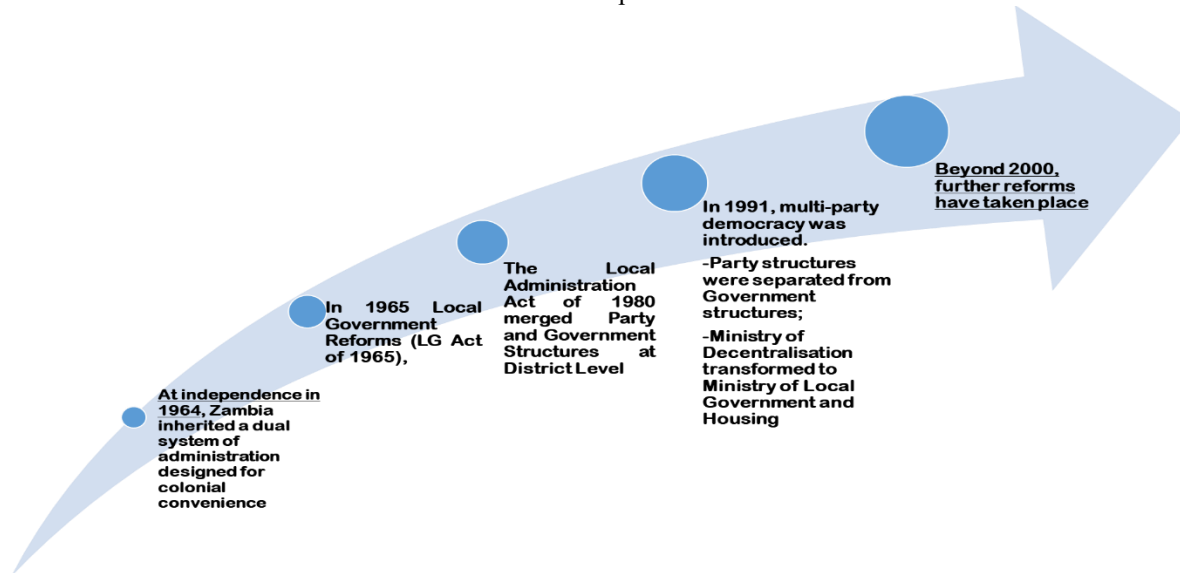
In Ghana, devolution facilitated government policy implementation since independence, In the year 1993 the local government Act was enacted, outlining responsibilities of local authorities. Central government delegated its power to local authorities to facilitate service delivery to local communities. Staff were transferred with responsibilities to

operate and manage public institutions across the country. With time, local authorities in Ghana devolved into district and regional levels, Corkery J, (2010).

Uganda commenced devolution efforts in 1997 under the local government act that focused on health, education, agriculture and natural resources management. Despite strategic positioning of staff from central government organs to local authorities, research indicate that there is less or no improvement in health, education, agriculture and other services at local level.

Some scholars attribute this to insufficient capital and staff, lack of participation by the community, weak civil society and a very narrow tax base. Uganda's case shows us that devolution can only improve service delivery if the local people are made a part of the decision-making process as this will make it possible to hold transferred civil servants accountable, (Patrick C, 2013).

Zambia's efforts at decentralization date back to her independence in 1964 as shown below.



Source: Author, 2023

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

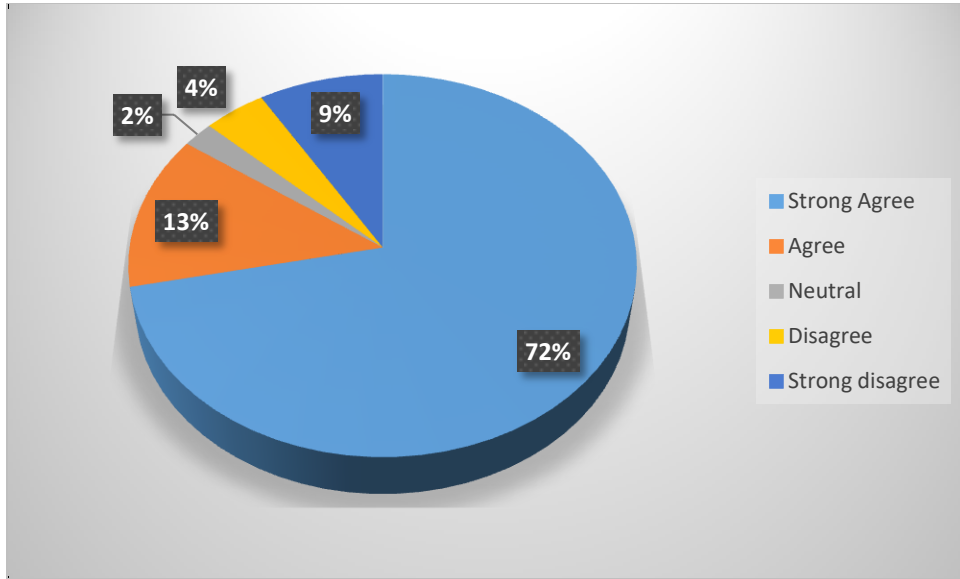
The research adopted a case study design. Both primary and secondary data methods of data collection and tools were used. The researchers used open ended questionnaires, interview guide and observation checklist. An open-ended questionnaire was preferred as it helps in the collection of more data within a short period and allows freedom of expression. Additionally, observational checklists were used to physically observe the respondents from whom the information will come from. The researchers used triangulation by observing the real work environment as well as interviewing the respondents.

In this way, researchers were able to compare and verify what the respondents have indicated on the questionnaires, Cohen and Marion, (2006). Data was collected using unstructured interviews, structured interviews, and focus group discussions that were arranged with staff transferred through decentralization from central government to Chongwe municipal council.

Fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to the respondents at Chongwe municipal council. However, only forty-five (45) questionnaires were correctly answered and returned. This gave a response rate of 90% which is representative and acceptable for analysis, (Mugenda, 2023). The findings of the study were presented in form of frequency tables, bar charts and pie charts. They were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

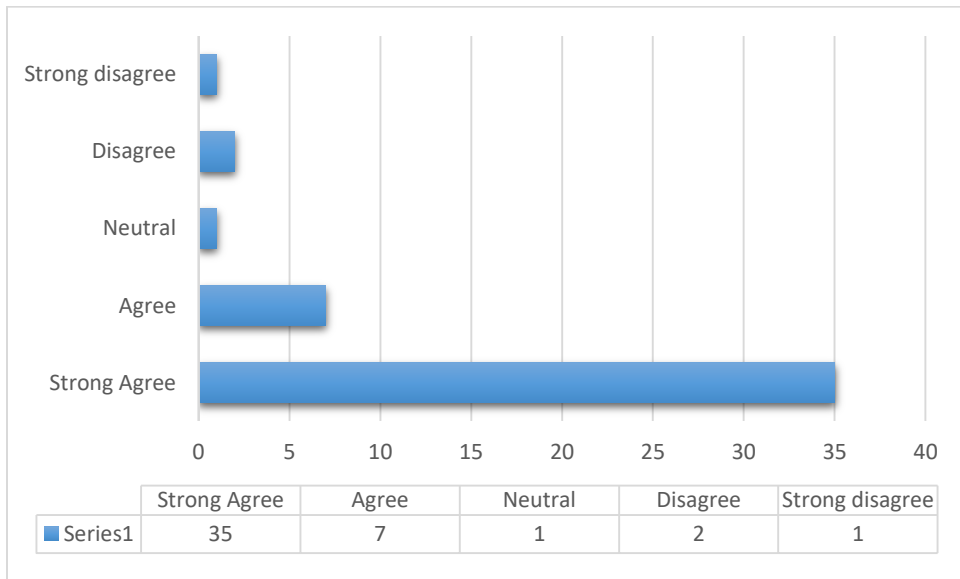
III. FINDINGS

Ambiguity in roles and responsibilities:



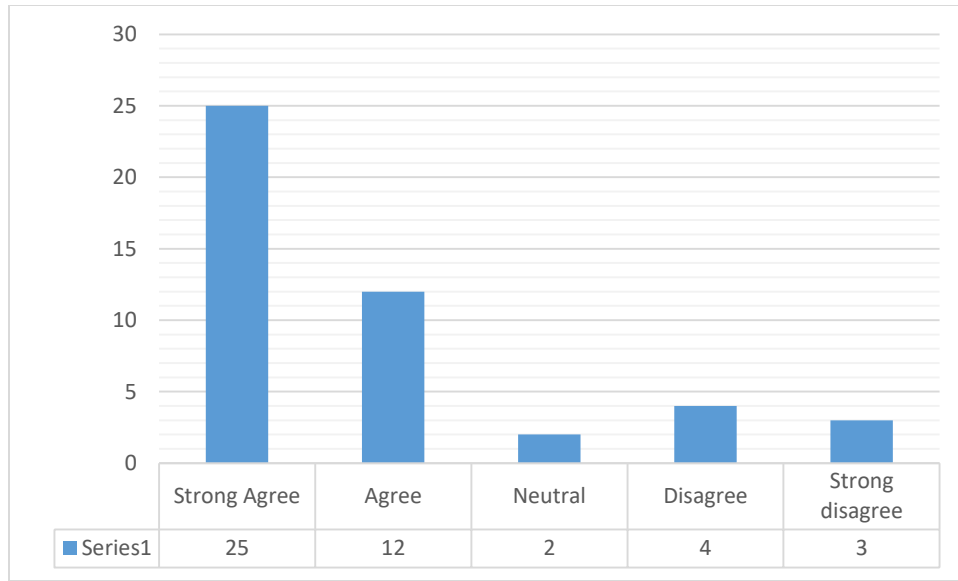
Source: Field data, Author 2023

Limited Decision-Making Authority:



Source: Field data, Author 2023

Limited Capacity Building opportunities:



Source: Field data, Author 2023

IV. DISCUSSION

One of the major challenges faced by devolved staff in Chongwe Municipal Council is the lack of adequate capacity building opportunities. Decentralization requires local authorities to assume more responsibilities in terms of planning, budgeting, and service delivery. However, transferred staff lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively perform their new roles. Without proper training and capacity building initiatives, the staff will continue to struggle in adapting to the increased responsibilities and face difficulties in delivering services.

The decentralization policy introduces new roles and responsibilities for devolved staff members. However, there may be a lack of clarity and ambiguity regarding these roles, leading to confusion among staff members. The absence of clear guidelines and standard operating procedures can create difficulties in decision-making, coordination, and overall governance. This ambiguity can hinder the effective functioning of devolved staff members, impacting their ability to meet the objectives of the decentralization policy.

While decentralization aims to empower local authorities, devolved staff members often face challenges related to limited decision-making authority.

The central government may still retain significant control over certain critical aspects of governance, including financial management, personnel appointments, and policy formulation. This limited decision-making authority restricts the autonomy and effectiveness of devolved staff members, undermining the objectives of decentralization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government should provide adequate information to all stakeholders on the decentralization policy. Use of local languages in information dissemination on decentralization processes should be considered. Roles and responsibilities of transferred staff must be stated clearly in their job descriptions. Citizen must be sensitized on the expectations of the decentralization policy once it is fully implemented. Central Government should strengthen the legal framework that supports implementation of the policy and provide adequate financial resources, infrastructure, human and relevant materials. The government must put in place strategies to sensitive staff of local authorities on the importance of the decentralization to overcome resistance from employees.

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