

Debating the Inconsistencies between Constitutional Provisions on Decentralisation and Citizen Participation Realities in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a kaleidoscopic description and explanation on the challenges and problems associated with Zimbabwe's governance terrain after the many years of political polarisation, economic crisis and social mistrust characterising the country. The present situation puts the whole debate of devolution as provided for in the new Constitution, to precariousness. The central thematic issues that this paper seeks to address are legality, constitutionality, and social, economic and spatial marginality that are likely to continue if the state remains stuck in erstwhile practices hence unwilling to move to redress that imbalances the characterise the nation today. This paper emanates from the fact that there is dearth of current literature in Zimbabwe on issues of decentralisation and constitutional issues. We use textual and discourse analyses to describe and explain this strands of debate in this present discussion. The article also adopts documentary review, where the Zimbabwean Constitution was assessed with the aim of exposing the intentions on devolution. From this study, it become clear that a big lacuna exists between constitutional intends and practice. The citizen participation notion is one that has not been implemented as the intensions on devolution have not been operationalised. The paper recommends political will on the part of the central government to implement the provisions of the New Constitution as a way of enhancing citizen participation, democratic governance and human rights promotion.

Keywords: *constitutionality, legality, governance, policy, practice, equity, human rights, devolution*

INTRODUCTION

In May 2013, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution (Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment Number 20) which is very robust and express in terms of articulating a number of human rights and humane clauses that in their own right would influence the governance with equity (cf. Dorman, 2003). Despite the existence of this new constitution business continues in the old mantra in which centralisation, recentralisation and desistance to principles and tenets of good governance and devolution hence localism are in wreaking havoc. The ending of the tenure of the government of national unity (GNU) in which ZANU PF and the two MDC-formations (MDC-T and MDC-M) were in a contract of power sharing has ushered it a new dispensation in Zimbabwe. ZANU PF now re-dominates the political landscape. The new dispensation provides a new space in which it is difficult to predict on the extent to which the tenets and provisions of good governance, human rights promotion and devolution will move (Chirisa *et al*, 2013; Dzinesa, 2012). This is the first time in history to have local authorities being a constitutional by-product. One of the most crucial yet controversial provisions of the New Constitution is the issue of devolution (Sims, 2013). Chapter 14 of the New Constitution clearly provides for devolution of power and responsibility from the central government to lower tiers of government (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). The notion of decentralisation is not new in the political sphere of Zimbabwe. In 1984, the Prime Minister's Directive ushered in a roadmap in the new thinking of democratising decision-making. The spirit behind decentralisation then was to create autonomous units at grassroots level (Ashley *et al*, 2008). This policy faced numerous challenges such as the continued centralisation of these structures where the Government continued to interfere in their affairs. The practical shortcomings did not deter the Government from its continued efforts to promote public participation through provisions in legislation. This present study is justified on the grounds of acknowledging citizen participation as a useful tool to enhance public policies. Citizen participation provides an opportunity to the public to make a voice in governance.

FRAMING THE DEBATE

Constitutionality is sometimes just synonymised with legality but in a very mechanical sense (Magaisa, 2011). In determining constitutionality, considers the conduct of the state in terms of compliance with the letter of constitution. It does not matter that the powers provided for in the constitution are excessive. In this regard, the constitution is not serving the purpose of limiting power but simply facilitating the exercise of power (cf. Dzinesa, 2012). Legality, on the other hand, encompasses issues of compliance and the legal rights availing for the population and citizens (Kay, 2009; Magaisa, 2011). Constitutions seek to protect citizens and advance their voice in the conduct of the interactions between the governors and the governed in a given territory. Governance refers to the exercise of political and administrative authority at all levels to manage a country's affairs. It comprises the "... mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences" (UNESCO, 2012:3). UNESCO (2012:4) defines democratic governance as "a process of creating and sustaining an environment for inclusive and responsive political processes and settlements". Governance has also been typologized by Bullivant et al (2006) as equality and clinical governance, intergrated governance, information governance, research governance and staff governance. Of particular concern is the issue of integrated governance which combines service delivery, community development, poverty can be addressed in a holistic manner. there are also principles of governance, each with its own significance in development (Bullivant *et al*, 2006). The principles of governance indicate that whatever an organisation does has an impact on the ordinary being and it has to be factored in (cf. United Nations, 2007) Using the organisational framework, Bullivant *et al* (2006) have outlined six principles of governance as follows: entiity, accountability, stakeholders, governance and management, the board and constructive challenge, and, openness and transparency.

Governance is part of policy and practice though a contested concept (Torjman, 2005). Public policy seeks to achieve a desired goal considered to be in the best interest of all members of society (for example, concerns over clean air, potable water, good health, high employment, innovative economy, active trade, high educational attainment, decent and affordable housing, minimal levels of poverty,

improved literacy, low crime and a socially cohesive society, to mention but these few). On the other hand, it is a broad concept embodying several different dimensions, some comprehensibly and cogently difficult to express. Overall, policies can be substantive or administrative, vertical and horizontal, reactive and proactive, current and future (Torjman, 2005). Substantive policies have to do with the legislation, programmes and practices governing different thematic aspects of community work (e.g. income security, employment initiatives, child care services and social exclusion). Administrative policy is procedural in nature (involving, for instance, the collection of statistical information on neighbourhoods and the evaluation of complex community programme.) Both substantive and administrative policy can be classified further as either vertical or horizontal. Vertical policy is developed within an organisation responsible for its implementation (Smith, 2003). Such decisions are made at head office and guide subsequent decisions throughout the organization.” By contrast, horizontal or integrated policy, is developed by two or more organisations, each of which has the ability or mandate to deal with only one dimension of a given situation.” This kind of policy making is gaining increasing momentum in most governments of the world (Smith, 2003: 11-12) after realising that the problems solving requires more than one institution hence a systems approach. Policy can be reactive or proactive. A reactive policy emerges from emergent scenarios or crises (for example environmental disasters) while proactive policy comes out by deliberate choice.

Many policies seek to achieve social justice hence equity especially with respect to resource sharing. The World Bank (2005) explains equity as a concept rooted in religious, cultural and philosophical traditions hence concerned with equality, fairness and social justice. However legitimate policies on equity, seek to treat people not as equal but put emphasis on moral calculus (Jones, 2009). Human rights are at the centre of the notion of equity Walter *et al* (2010:8) define human rights as “... minimum standards and rules of procedure to which those in power should or must adhere in their treatment of people.” These rights speak to the minimum or basic entitlements or permissions that impose constraints on others on a given person (Jones , 2009). State authorities such as governments, police or armed forces tend to exert power over other people. The question becomes whether or not they demonstrate respect to human dignity as they exert the power they wield on the targeted persons.

Most constitutions have thus a bill of rights that tries to capture the centrality of human dignity especially spelling out that citizens must freely participate and access activities, opportunities and resources entitled to them.

Citizen participation (also described variously as community involvement or public participation) is multidimensional in its disposition (Edoun & Jahed, 2009; Chikerema, 2013). Its four major areas according to democratic theory, are political behaviour, community development, citizen action and government initiated citizen action define citizen participation. Putting transparency and accountability in resource utilisation at the centre stage. Arnstein (1969) conceptualised the “ladder of citizen participation” comprising eight of (from the bottom-up) manipulation (where there is totally no participation but control) therapy (where there is prescription), informing (which is ritualistic) then consultation and placation. The level of citizen participation is on a continuum, though manipulation and therapy can actually manifest. It is very rare to reach the apex of the ladder. Manipulation and therapy generally denote “non-participation hence pseudo-participation where people may be invited to a community meeting after decisions have already been made. The middle rungs (informing, consultation and placation) depict tokenism where the marginalised may take part in decision-making but the powerful ones hold the rules of the games and are the ones who decide what to include in the final decision). The upper rungs of the ladder comprise partnerships, delegated power and citizen control. In the upper rungs comprise partnerships (where citizens have the power to negotiate for trade-offs and there is generally real participation). However, in practice is difficult to attain. As such, this participation remains a pipe dream. With respect to decentralised governance, the concepts of devolution and localism are contestable (cf. Forjan & Shakespeare, 2009).

Devolution is a form of decentralisation in which the political arrangement in that transfers political, administrative and fiscal powers and responsibility to sub-national and local tiers of government (Mwenda, 2010). In this arrangement, low units in governance stratification enjoy a high degree of autonomy hence there is downward accountability at the sub-national and local levels. For Koki *et al* (2012) devolution is simply transfer of power (administrative, legislative and executive) from central government to local units. Administrative devolution is the transferring responsibilities from

central government departments to territorial departments of the same government. Executive devolution is the transfer of powers of central government to ministries of devolved governments, usually under statutory authority. Lastly, legislative devolution is the transfer of law making powers to lower unit legislatures (Koki *et al.*, 2012). Masunungure and Ndoma (2013) have differentiated devolution from federalism. A devolved government system enjoys autonomy and downward accountability hence localism. Localism is the answer to the dominance of central administration in local affairs and in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity (that responsibilities should always be delegated to local governments to promote efficient and effective provision of services) (Hartwich, 2013). Farjon and Shakespeare (2009) define localism by six principles of fundraising and its control, representation, beneficiation, inclusivity of stakeholders, accountability and knowledge sharing. These principles remain idyllic and a serious threat to the culture of centralism that characterises most African states, Zimbabwe included (cf. Chirisa *et al.*, 2013).

Case Study of the Devolution in Kenya

In recent times, Kenya is one of the African countries where devolution process was born out of political instability and economic crisis. The 2008 post-election violence preceded the adoption of the constitution that healed the decade of failing devolution attempts (Governance and Transparency Fund, 2011; Kangu, 2010). Kenya has a diverse population with ten major and more than thirty minor ethnic groups and geographically varying needs across the arid, semi-arid north, the highlands, the rural northern Rift and the various urban centres. The Bill of Rights of the Kenyan Constitution stresses, among other things, non-discrimination of the citizens and populations on grounds of race, ethnicity, culture, gender. Section 174 outlines the objectives of devolution: self-governance and public participation in making decisions that affect them, to enhance checks, balances, and the separation of power. It also provides the local institutions with the responsibility for service delivery in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity. The central government remains with the critical role of oversight over the national budget and national priorities notwithstanding the long-standing history of distrust between the national government and the local stakeholders (Gikonyo, 2013).

The Kenyan Constitution is very fresh just like the Zimbabwean one. Kenya has taken positive steps towards devolution. This has seen the creation of 47 counties which have fiscal autonomy, power and responsibility to make decisions without the central government interfering. The situation has created an opportunity for the citizens to be actively involved in decision making in issues that affect their well-being.

RELEVANCE OF THE DISCOURSE TO ZIMBABWE AND OTHER COUNTRIES

The question of citizen participation is not peculiar to Zimbabwe only. A good example where constitutional provisions and citizen participation becomes key is the People's Republic of China. The Chinese post-cultural Revolution Constitution of 1982 articulates that power belongs to the people of China and thus they should be given an opportunity to have a voice in state affairs (Horsley, 2009). China has taken steps to implement these provisions as evidenced by the introduction of public hearings, public meetings at national, provincial and local government levels. These are the mechanisms that the Chinese people use to express their voices and this is a good move towards promotion of democratic governance. India, Nepal and Bangladesh have democratic forms of governance (Rai, 2010). For example, in Nepal, public participation is enshrined as the directive principle of the state policies. The form of governance and decentralization in Nepal lacks in articulation on the organizational framework and political parties are calling for constitutional reform (Rai, 2010). Bangladesh has also provisions for democratic participation of the marginalized groups of the society such as the women and other subserviant groups of the society. However, there seems to be a gap between these provisions and practice in Bangladesh. The national government continues to control the activities of the local government and decentralised structures, thereby undermining local self-government and citizen participation. In India, very few states have devolved power to the *panchayats*. The national governments and their organs continues to violate the constitution regardless of the constitutional ammendments (Rai, 2010).

Local councils in Latin America represent a good testimony for promotion of local democratic governance. One of the most notable of the councils' outcomes is that they allow marginalised and vulnerable groups to become involved in public policies that concern them. Local citizen participation has perhaps its most elaborate expression in Brazil, where 99% of municipalities have tripartite councils, which many argue have been successful in giving citizens a voice in decision making in their municipality. Colombia is another example where children have their own council. Also, in Peru, in 2009, in the municipality of Jesus Nazareno, Ayacucho, 50 children are included in the decision making processes (Parron, 2006). The existence of favourable legal and constitutional frameworks have been instrumental in promoting local participation and democratic governance processes. In the last two decades, countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru have developed new mechanisms to foster citizen participation at the local level by creating citizen participation bodies. These are institutional spaces where citizens – represented by civil society or community-based organisations, academics and the private sector - come together with municipal authorities to discuss and make decisions about local development and governance issues (Parron, 2006). In the case of South Africa, the Constitution has provisions for public engagement in the development processes and decision making at national and local levels (Nyati, 2008). In Southern Africa, South Africa appears to be one of the countries that have fully implemented a decentralized systems, where local councils enjoy greater autonomy in decision making.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION IN ZIMBABWE: AN EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS AND ISSUES

The New Constitution making process was led by the Constitution Select Committee (COPAC) which was composed of members from the three Political Parties which formed the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009 (Dzinesa, 2012). The constitution making process was a move towards constitutional reforms and has been spearheaded by civil society organizations, government and political parties. One of the work of the constitutional commission was to embark on a nation wide outreach program to gather people's

views on what the constitution should look like (Dzinesa, 2012). This extensive consultation process, guided by the much-publicised List of Constitutional Issues and Questions, offered Zimbabwean citizens an opportunity to openly discuss and debate the proposed constitution (Mandaza, 2012). The Commission mentioned organising 4 321 public meetings which were attended by a total of 556 276 individuals, and 700 *ad hoc* meetings attended by a total of 150 000 people. In addition, the commission received 4 000 written submissions, and aired 31 programmes on ZBC TV as well as 143 programmes on Zimbabwe's four public radio stations: 16 programmes on Radio 1 (English); 55 programmes on Radio 2 (Shona and Ndebele); 2 programmes on Radio 3 (English); and 70 programmes on Radio 4 (minority languages such as Tonga and Venda) (Dorman, 2003: 852). Externally, Zimbabweans in South Africa and the United Kingdom were also consulted.

Mandaza (2012) notes that one of the key activities during the constitutionmaking process was the organizing of an international conference, where scholars debated and shared best practices of constitution making. the constitution-making process involved many different players, there was contrasting ideology particularly between ZANU PF and the two MDC formations. The difference in political ideology between political parties had negative impacts to the process. Sometimes the constitution making process faced deadlock, which led to it taking long to be completed. One of the burning issues during the outreach programmes was the issue of devolution. Arguments sparked as to what devolution is all about. The other MDC formation accused ZANU PF as relating devolution to tribalism (Masunungure & Ndoma, 2013). Although public consultations were done there was actually no assurance that what the people raised as issues will be included in the final document. Although devolution was initially resisted by then tripartite unity government partner Zanu PF, which argued the notion was being pushed by those bent on promoting regionalism, federalism or secessionism, and that the country was too small for the system to work well, the constitutional outreach programme, which involved more than three million people, proved Zimbabweans were keen on decentralisation during the constitutional outreach programmes. Devolution proved popular, especially in areas such as Matabeleland, Manicaland and Masvingo where people felt their provinces were lagging behind in development, or they were not benefiting much from natural resources in their areas. In Manicaland, for example,

most people supported devolution arguing they had nothing to show for the diamonds being mined in the province.

The Terrain and Context of Decentralised Governance in Zimbabwe (1984-2014)

We note strongly that the spirit of decentralisation in Zimbabwe is not new (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1990; 1992; Makumbe, 1996). The structures that were created in the 1980s ought to be questioned in light of the New Constitution of Zimbabwe. This may be another case of ‘new wine in old skins’ and business as usual. The question that needs to be answered is whether the New Constitution maintains the previous structures such as the VIDCOs, WADCOs, District Development Committees (DDCs) and the Provincial Development Committees (PDCs). The first implementation of the decentralisation policy began in 1984 with the Prime Minister’s directive. The Prime Minister’s Directives of 1984 and 1985 and the Provincial Councils Administrative Act 1985 achieved a variety of reforms among which was the appointment of eight provincial governors having a ministerial standing (PlanAfric, 2000). The function of these resident ministers was primarily the coordination and implementation of the provincial development planning process. The reforms saw also, the creation of village and ward development committees (VIDCOs and WADCOs, respectively). Such committees had a role to initiate development from the grassroots by promoting people’s participation in decision-making and development planning. Above the VIDCOs and WADCOs were the district and provincial development committees. These provided the structure for central government field administrators and local authorities to co-operate, co-ordinate and assist one another along a parallel spectrum (PlanAfric, 2000).

Also as part of the reforms, was the introduction of five-year and annual development plans at the sub-national levels (village, ward, district and province). The expectation was for the development committees (from village to provincial levels) to input their projects and priorities into the national development planning system. In 1988, as part of the decentralisation reforms, the government adopted new Rural District Councils Act that was only to be implemented in 1993 through a process of amalgamation of rural and district councils, ending the dual system of rural local government that had seen white

colonial farming areas developing at the expense of tribal trust lands. According to the First Schedule of the Rural District Councils Act, RDCs undertake up to 64 separate functions. Central government departments currently undertake most of these functions (Government of Zimbabwe, 1988). The process of decentralising these functions to the RDC has always been recognised as difficult. Studies in the 1990s under the auspices of the Forum for Rural Development within the Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development (MLGRUD) focussed on decentralising functions from key ministries (roads, education, health and finance). Unfortunately, there was no clear decentralisation programme, although the cabinet did agree on the transfer of some central government activities (social welfare, education, health and roads) and an increasing number of ministries now recognise the growing role of RDCs and work closely with them or direct certain programmes through them. A major component of the decentralisation programme has been the Rural District Council Capacity Building Project (RDCCBP), which aimed at increasing the human, institutional and capital capacity of newly formed RDCs. In its 5-year plan (ZIMPREST 1996-2000), the government reiterated its commitment to the decentralisation of functions and financing of RDCs with proper accountability (PlanAfric, 2000). One important factor impelling government to greater emphasis on decentralisation has been the increasing financial problems besetting government and pressures from the IMF and World Bank to reduce central government expenditure. This pressure led some ministries to see decentralisation as a way of dumping difficult and expensive service operations on the RDCs without concomitant financial and manpower resources (PlanAfric, 2000; Ashley *et al*, 2008).

Matters of Policy and Practice in the New Constitution

The New Constitution of Zimbabwe has provisions for equity and public participation in development and policymaking. Section 44 provides for juristic person, institutions and any agency of government having a duty to promote and fulfil the rights and freedoms provided in the constitution. Despite this provision, access to information remains a challenge in the present times in the country given the existence of unconstitutional pieces of legislation such as Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). AIPPA limits the access to

state information, by the citizens of Zimbabwe. Perhaps, it is because the country is still at the transitional stage from the old constitution to the new one. In the terms of public participation, section 141 pronounces that it is the duty of the parliament to facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes and in the processes of its committees, to ensure consultation of interested parties in the making of Bills to be considered in Parliament. However, there is a rider that consultation may be deemed inappropriate or impracticable depending on the circumstances. In addition, the parliament is expected to conduct its business in a transparent manner. This can be achieved by ensuring the preservation of order in parliamentary proceedings, regulating public access (including access of the media, to Parliament and its committees) and excluding the public (including the media) from sittings of committees. The present existence of pieces of legislation hindering effective public participation in national and local affairs is a threat to the spirit of public participation and respect of human rights as enshrined in the new constitution. Zhou and Zvoushe (2012) argue that the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) are a hindrance to democracy in Zimbabwe. The former law shields the person of the president from criticism or condemnation, and by so doing renders it prone to various interpretations by various sections of society. For instance, it becomes less easy to draw lines between honest criticism and contempt or ridicule of the president. The latter controls the media and bans any publication of falsehoods against the government. The two laws were designed to curtail the freedoms of citizenry and prevent their active participation in the political processes of the country.

Specific and Critical Questions to the Devolution Thrust

In the new Zimbabwean Constitution are the issues of the preamble, which looks misplaced (within the constitution document) and appears cosmetic without deep intentions of democratisation at all. The phrase “whereas desirable” put in the preamble sounds vague and implies non-commitment on the part of the state. Centralists would wish devolution away local authorities are still referred as ‘lower tiers of government’ hence continuity of the old story which undermines self-governance of these lower units (Mandiyani & Musekiwa, 2003).

Whereas section 267 provides for local authorities to make by-laws in their areas, hence promotion of self-government the Constitution is silent on the responsibilities between central government, provincial councils and local authorities. The Constitution further provides for the members of the provincial and local authorities to be elected thereby promoting accountability and transparency to the electorate (Mandiyanike & Musekiwa, 2003) yet on the ground the president has just appointed ministers of provincial affairs (which is the same old story of provincial governors and residents ministers creeping in again). As far as devolution in Zimbabwe is concerned, the new constitution has a new direction of fiscal transfer to strengthen the capacity of local units to deliver services. Section 301(3) provides for the transfer of 5% of the national revenue to provincial and local councils. However, the criteria for distribution remain undefined. The adequacy of the 5% is also questionable in terms of meeting the capital requirements particularly for those of the local authorities. Moreover, the Constitution itself does not confer fiscal power to the lower tiers of government.

DISCUSSION, POLICY OPTIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The governing system of Zimbabwe clearly presents a paradox. It is difficult to conceptualise what way devolution should take in practice. Devolution does not just happen; the involved actors need to embrace multifaceted strategies to take control of all possible challenges along the way. ZANU PF has been uncomfortable with devolution from the beginning for fear of secessionism and losing grip of the metropolitan councils. At best, ZANU PF will ensure there is a diluted form of devolution, so the Provincial Councils Act is likely to be very mild to ensure they remain in control of all the provinces. Given the strong resistance by ZANU PF to devolution during the constitution-making process, analysts say it would be unrealistic to expect ZANUPF to implement the provision without a robust and sustained push; and the lack of resources could be the convenient excuse for government to drag its feet on the matter. However, devolution enhances local self-government and reduces central government interference. Transparency in the formulation and implementation of public policies

empowers the public to access social services and demand protection of their rights. Facilitating the public's access to information can be a powerful strategy in improving public spending and protecting economic and social rights. There is also need for the government of Zimbabwe to enact laws, which specifically deal with issues of public participation. Currently, public participation is enshrined in a myriad of legislation and this undermines the process. Local authorities should be given more statutory powers over budgets and implementation to enable them to effectively deliver at local government level.

The story of Zimbabwe's devolution depicts very different dimensions with that of other countries such as Kenya. In this study, Kenya was used as benchmark as it is one such country that has moved towards real devolution of power. Several arguments have been raised such as that the Government of Zimbabwe has just adopted the New Constitution that is the reason why efforts towards devolution are still negligible. However, these arguments do not hold water given that the Kenyan Constitution is also fresh. Kenya has taken steps towards devolution which has seen the creation of 47 counties which have fiscal autonomy, power and responsibility to make decisions without the central government interfering. The Kenyan situation has created an opportunity for the citizens to be actively involved in decision making in issues that affect their well-being. Zimbabwe just like India, Nepal and Bangladesh have provisions for citizen participation, there seems to be lacuna between provisions and reality. The national governments continue to control local governments and other lower tiers in the governance frameworks thereby undermining citizen participation and democratic governance.

CONCLUSION

Deciphered from the foregoing discussion are a number of issues and critical aspects to constitutionalism, public participation, localism and devolution in Zimbabwe. Apparently, the promotion of the merits of decentralisation, and in particular, citizen participation in development, reveals a gap between theory and practice. The government sets up development organs as appendages of the central government and are not autonomous entities. This is the case with practice in Zimbabwe. The local authorities in Zimbabwe lack power

and authority to make decisions on their own. The local entities are used as instruments of the central authority to control the behaviour of the citizen in the development process. In short, the decentralised structures fail to effectively involve the citizens in decision-making matters relating to development. This situation has provided strong justifications for the adoption of some form of decentralisation, and in particular, devolution, in the hope to promote participatory development strategies, to improve efficiency and effectiveness in development planning and administration, and to implement egalitarian policies. However, the outcome of such decentralisation initiative tends to be unsatisfactory. For instance, public management at the local level remains centralised in most developing countries despite the pronouncements by politicians and pressures from international donor agencies in favour of decentralisation. Devolution in the New Constitution is one such concept that lack wheels to drive it. The Constitutional provisions and practice are not in line. Fiscal autonomy remains at the centre with local authorities begging for revenue from central government to deliver services at the local level. The New Constitution also speaks of 5% fiscal transfer to the provincial and local authorities, however the practical side reflects differently. Very little if any transfer is taking place from the centre to the local governance entities. The promises of the new constitution of Zimbabwe ought to be tested. In principle, it gives greater responsibility to sub-national and local authorities to plan and deliver services and thereby offers a more important say to the general citizenry. It ought to be seen whether the central government will allow real devolution or it will retain final decision-making power to itself.

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