African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development

المركز الإفريقي للتدريب و البحث الإداري للإنماء

Centre Africain de Formation et de Recherche Administratives pour le Développement

SITUATING DECENTRALISATION IN ZAMBIA IN A

POLITICAL CONTEXT

BY

ROYSON M. ***MUKWENA***

Introduction

When decentralisation is undertaken governments usually state that the major reason for administrative reorganisation is to improve administrative performance. Yet, in many cases the administrative rationale is advanced in order to cover up for unstated political reasons behind undertaking decentralisation measures. In such situations, the unstated political reasons are more paramount than the concerns for improving administrative performance.

In this article, the author uses the Zambian experience with decentralisation to show that it is the political context that provides the big push for initiatives towards decentralisation. It should be emphasised here that if the political undercurrents, which usually provide the initiatives for decentralisation programmes, are not unmasked and understood, it will be very difficult for us to appreciate and understand the factors accounting for decentralisation failures in many countries.

It is in this context that the author situates decentralisation reforms in Zambia in their political context so as to enhance our understanding as to why some of the decentralisation measures have not lived up to their officially stated objectives.

Decentralisation in Zambia

Since the attainment of its independence, Zambia has initiated several decentralisation reform programmes that have entailed a mix of deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Deconcentration in Zambia has occurred through the strengthening and extension of the inherited system of field administration, whereby various central government ministries are represented in the provinces and districts by local staff. Such staff are accountable to their respective district and provincial heads, who are in turn accountable to departmental or ministerial headquarters in Lusaka. Deconcentration has also occurred through the development of provincial and district government. Ideally, provincial and district government in Zambia has been maintained for the purpose of coordinating government work at district and provincial levels while also permitting the performance of responsibilities for which no special agency has existed or for which a special agency might exist but lacks local level representation by its own staff.

African Administrative Studies, N° 57, pp. … to …
Situating Decentralisation in Zambia in a Political Context

Delegation of specific functions has mainly occurred through the creation of statutory boards such as the National Housing Authority (NHA) (to provide housing); the Dairy Produce Board (DPB) (to market dairy products and promote the dairy industry); and the now defunct National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) (to market agricultural products and promote agriculture). The Zambian government has at times delegated certain functions to nongovernmental organisations. For example, when NAMBOARD was disbanded in 1987, the marketing of agricultural produce was delegated to the Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF), a nongovernmental apex organization which was created by voluntary "primary" (that is, local level) cooperative societies in order to coordinate and promote the activities of cooperatives in the country.

Devolution in Zambia has taken place through attempts to bolster the role of multipurpose local authorities governed by local councils. Membership on local councils has been through election, selection and appointment of one form or another. The various means by which Zambia has organized and re-organized its system of local authorities are discussed in Chapter Two.

Before we discuss the post-independence reforms of provincial and district administration in Zambia, it is important that we describe the administrative arrangements that existed at those levels during the colonial era.

For administrative purposes, Northern Rhodesia was divided into eight provinces, and each of these was in turn subdivided into districts. As of 1962, Northern Rhodesia had forty-four districts. Each province was headed by a provincial commissioner. The provincial commissioner was responsible to the minister in charge of African Affairs for the "good administration" of his province, and for the preservation of law and order in it. He saw to it that the laws were enforced and the overall policy of the government was carried out; in addition, it was his task to plan, within the framework of general policy, the political, economic and social development of his province. This planning was performed in close connection with the district officers, and in consultation with the chiefs and native authorities and such formally constituted local authorities as may have existed in the province (Mitchell, 1963). The provincial commissioner was assisted at his provincial headquarters by administrative, technical and clerical staff.

The provincial commissioner presided over a number of provincial level agencies, including the provincial team, whose duty was to put into effect plans for development. Furthermore, under various ordinances he was empowered either to appoint directly or to advise the central authorities on the appointment of members of various boards and authorities. For example, under the Native Authorities Ordinance, he could appoint any African to be the "native authority" for an area for a period of up to six months (Mitchell, 1963). The provincial commissioner also had certain judicial powers and duties; he held a court with powers equivalent to those of a resident magistrate (Mitchell, 1963).

In each district, the head of the administration was the district commissioner, who was generally the most senior district official at this level. The district commissioner was assisted by administrative staff (usually including one or more district officers, cadets, district assistants and assistant executive officers), technical staff and clerical staff. The district commissioner was responsible to his provincial commissioner for the "good administration" of his district and for the preservation of law and order. It was his responsibility at the district level to ensure that government policies were implemented.

The district commissioner also attended meetings of the native authorities in his jurisdiction in an advisory and consultative capacity. In townships where there were no management boards, the district commissioner was the local authority; and where there were management boards, he was almost invariably a board member (Mitchell, 1963, p.28). Further, the district commissioner was the head of the district team, which was responsible for carrying out schemes and plans for the political, economic and social advancement of the district (Mitchell, 1963, p.28). Like the provincial commissioner, the district commissioner had certain judicial powers and duties; he held a subordinate court, for example (Mitchell, 1963, p.28).

Operating beside the provincial and district administration were the technical staff of the central government; these included agricultural officers, forestry officers, soil and water conservation experts, animal husbandry and veterinary officers, medical officers, education officers and welfare officers.

Thus, at independence, Zambia inherited a fragmented administrative structure: a diffuse collection of government departments enjoying a large measure of autonomy and only loosely controlled by any central, coordinating body, whether bureaucratic or political (Dresang, 1975, p.92). The situation in which Zambia found itself at independence whereby field officers operated under the double supervision of the all-purpose district secretary (the reincarnation of the former district commissioner) for coordination purposes and their own professional head for technical purposes was thus a direct colonial legacy (Subramaniam, 1971). In other words, the problem of double supervision and ineffective coordination at the district level was a creation of the colonial system of administration in place at independence.

As was to be expected, Zambia's new government found the inherited administrative structures unsuitable for meeting its political and economic objectives, and concluded that administrative reforms were necessary. Indeed, as Tordoff (1980, p.185) observes, "one of the Zambian Government's most urgent tasks in 1964 was to transform the inherited structure of provincial administration - the focal point of the colonial system of government - into an instrument of economic development". Thus, in July 1964 the old system of provincial and district government was abolished and, the following month, was replaced by a new, more limited structure of provincial and district government. The reformed provincial and district government arrangement was intended to coordinate and implement government policies and provide a link between government and the new structure of party power. It was stripped of most of its predecessor's functions, which were distributed among central government ministries and their agencies. For example, the Local Courts Department of the Ministry of Justice took over the reorganization and running of the old native authority courts (Zambia, 1966a, p.2); responsibility for law and order was devolved on the police, although local authorities retained a small force of constables to assist in the enforcement of council bye-laws. The Ministry of Local Government became responsible for supervising the rural local authorities through its own cadre of local government officers (Tordoff, 1980, p. 185). Further, many important functions of the native authorities were not inherited by the new rural councils but by central government instead. These included responsibility for agriculture, conservation and primary education.

The new provincial and district government system was, nonetheless, to become a strategic part of the machinery of central government, and was organised under a separate ministry with its own permanent secretary and minister. It differed from all the other field agencies of the central government in two major respects:

(a) Its officers had a wide and varying range of responsibilities. Their remit covered everything for which no special agency existed (for example, the supervision of the census) or for which a special agency did exist but lacked field level representation by its own staff (thus district secretaries might act as labour officers in settling local industrial disputes where the Ministry of Labour did not have its own full-time officials present).
(b) It had the responsibility for coordinating the functioning of all agencies of government at both provincial and district levels in order to ensure that they worked as a team. Thus, the Ministry of Provincial and District Government did not concern itself only with its own sphere of responsibilities; its field staff were broadly concerned with the performance of all other ministries at provincial and (especially) district level (Zambia, 1979, p.20).

In September 1964, the provincial administration underwent a formal politicising with the appointment of under-Ministers (subsequently renamed Resident Ministers, and later Ministers of

State) to each of Zambia's eight provinces. The Minister of State was supported on the political side by at least one official known as a public relations assistant and from 1966 by a special presidential political assistant (with the Copperbelt Minister of State having four of these assistants); these officials were recruited from the ranks of the ruling party. On the administrative side, the minister of state was supported by a civil servant known as a resident secretary, who replaced the former provincial commissioner (just as at the district level, the colonial district commissioner was replaced by the district secretary). The September 1964 changes in fact marked the new government's first moves towards political control of provincial and district government. Indeed, Heisler's view is correct that "...as the name [resident] secretary suggests, they became more directly subject to political control, namely that of Under-Ministers", (1965, p.183).

Yet, initially, no politician was sent to head the district and for some time the district remained under the charge of a civil servant - the district secretary. As Tordoff has observed, up to mid-1967 one obvious and important difference between the formal positions of the district secretary and resident secretary was the absence of a political boss at the district level equivalent to the minister of state at provincial level (1968, p.538). Thus the district secretary became more closely involved in political issues than his superior officer, and could be regarded as the political and administrative head of his district until mid-1967, when the UNIP Regional Secretary took over from him as Chairman of the district development committee (DDC) (Tordoff, 1968).

By the middle of 1966 it was already clear to the government that the performance of provincial and district government was unsatisfactory. In June of that year, the government tried to strengthen provincial and district government with the release of a presidential circular which attempted to raise the status of the district and resident secretaries. In his circular, President Kenneth Kaunda himself directed:

From now on I want it to be known and realised that Residential Secretaries and District Secretaries are in their provinces or districts respectively, my personal civil service representatives; and that I am charging them with the following specific responsibilities:

(i) To be the chief government coordinating officers in their provinces or districts with particular reference to the work of economic development;
(ii) To maintain the morale and well-being of the civil service;
(iii) To ensure that government policies and procedures are understood by the people;
(iii) To ensure that the presence of the government is felt throughout the provinces and districts;
(v) To supervise generally the functioning of other government departments within their provinces or districts (Zambia, 1966).

But this presidential directive had little impact because it was not accompanied by any tangible appropriate measures; and before long, provincial and district government was once again under official scrutiny. In January 1968, a Working Party of civil servants was set up to examine how provincial and district government could be strengthened. One of the major areas of concern was that of insufficient coordination among the various agencies operating at the district level. According to the Working Party's subsequent report, this situation occurred for a number of reasons, including various changes which had taken place (or were occurring) in provincial and district government itself: changes

in personnel; an erosion of functions and powers; a decline in numbers of personnel; and the introduction of political control (Zambia, 1979, pp.20-21).

Rapid Zambianisation, which was not always, it appeared, based on clear merit criteria, had resulted in a fall in the average educational level of provincial and district government staff as well as a marked drop in the levels of experience. Such factors lowered their prestige among fellow civil servants at provincial and district level. Inevitably, provincial and district government was less able to perform its functions - especially those of coordination (Zambia, 1979, p.21).

As already noted, provincial and district government had been stripped of most of its former functions, which had been distributed to central government ministries and departments. The district secretary, who was supposed to play a coordinating role at district level, had thus lost many of his responsibilities - including his powers over local authorities. This constituted a major reduction in his role and created a potential for conflict between him and the new district-level local government officers.

According to a subsequent report, there were several consequences of this loss of functions. Thus as was pointed out:

> ... (iii) The standing of the District Secretary fell drastically. The District Secretary was no longer always the most powerful civil servant in the district or the highest paid or the most educated or the most experienced. So, other civil servants in the district did not always respect the District Secretary above other civil servants, or look to him for leadership.
>
> (iv) The District Secretary ceased to be an effective coordinator of the different portions of the government machine - in particular he could not ensure that the local authorities acted in harmony with the civil service departments. Because of the loss of status, civil servants in the district became more reluctant to listen to his advice and directives. The existence of a new political authority in the name of the UNIP Regional Secretary and his party machine further weakened the District Secretary.... (Zambia, 1979, p.23).

As a result of these and other factors, coordination at district level increasingly broke down. The situation was aggravated by the proliferation of parastatal bodies, whose local staff fell entirely outside the authority of the district secretary. To redress the situation, the 1968 Working Party's report included proposals for:

(i) more provincial and district government staff;
(ii) a higher quality of staff, to be achieved by channeling most new graduates entering the public service into provincial and district government;
(iii) more powers to the district secretary, especially over rural councils;
(iv) and freedom from political control (Zambia, 1979, p.25).

The President refused to accept most of these proposals in the package of administrative reforms which he announced in November 1968; he saw them as advocating in effect a return to the colonial system of local administration. In the new reforms which took effect in January 1969, the President not only rejected the proposal for freedom from political control, but indeed greatly increased this control and gave it an even firmer institutional base. At the district level a politician - the district

governor - was appointed as the politico-administrative head of the district with overall responsibility for its good administration as well as for its political management. The district governor was personally appointed by the president and was made formally accountable to the provincial minister (though remained informally accountable first and foremost to the President). He was to be the chief government coordinating officer in the district, with particular reference to the tasks of political and economic development. He took over from the UNIP regional secretary as chairman of the district development committee (DDC) and other committees at district level. Administratively, the district governor was served by the district secretary, who advised the governor on policy questions at that level, assisted in policy formulation, and ensured implementation of the decisions that were taken.

Other important aspects of the 1969 reforms were the posting of a cabinet minister and permanent secretary to each province and the creation of new administrative structures by merging at all levels officers of the Provincial and District Government Division of the Office of the President and the Ministry of Local Government. The provincial cabinet minister was assisted by a Minister of State, who hitherto had been the political head of a province. The provincial cabinet minister became the chairman of the provincial development committee (PDC) and the Minister of State became its vice-chairman. The provincial cabinet minister was the personal political representative at this level of the President (by whom he was appointed). Furthermore, he was the chief government coordinating officer in his province and was charged with supervising generally the activities of all government departments in the province. The provincial cabinet minister was to be subsequently replaced in January 1976 by a member of the UNIP Central Committee as chairman of the PDC. The provincial cabinet minister became vice- chairman of the PDC until December 1978, when the post of provincial cabinet minister was abolished (Tordoff, 1980). By this stage, Zambia hd been operating a de jure one-party state for half a decade.

Although in his 1969 reforms the President had merged Provincial and District Government with the Ministry of Local Government, this did not alter the nature of the relationship between central government and local government units, because the latter were left intact as a separate subsystem, and continued to operate independently.

The 1969 reforms were on balance unsuccessful, and the administration at local levels continued to fail to provide an adequate level of coordination. Among the reasons for this was the fact that the district governor was not explicitly empowered to give firm orders to local civil servants and the fact that he had no formal powers over the parastatal staff operating in his district. With regard to the district governor's position as chairman of the DDC, the major problem was that DDCs themselves lacked formal or statutory powers; they had no authority to take decisions binding on all committee members, nor were individual members answerable to the committee (Zambia, 1979).

There was a review of local government and provincial and district government in 1971/72 by a new working party headed by Mr. A.J.F. Simmance. The Simmance team was appointed in December 1971 and submitted its report in May 1972; the report of the Simmance team, however, was in the event not acted upon (Tordoff, 1980). The Simmance team, among other findings, pointed out that the decentralized system of government was not working because executive authority remained concentrated at the centre; if decentralization was to become a reality, there was need to transfer significant measure of authority to the local level.

The Simmance team recommended that the provincial cabinet minister be given more power and that the provincial permanent secretary should be accorded control of the provincial budget, transport and staff (Tordoff, 1980). The Simmance team also urged that provinces should be allowed to prepare their own capital and recurrent estimates for all the activities of the sectoral ministries and departments, which should come under provincial rather than Lusaka-based control. As Tordoff (1980, p. 189) notes, "the provincial Cabinet Minister, for example, still had virtually no control over national projects and recurrent expenditure in his province of departments other than the Provincial Administration Division".

The Simmance team was critical of the performance of the PDCs and DDCs, and recommended that each committee should have a revised and reduced membership and should be provided with effective executive support (Tordoff, 1980, pp. 188-189). Tordoff observes that there was very little change in the operations of the PDCs and DDCs in the post-Simmance period. For example, the PDCs continued to be large in size and therefore ineffective in project implementation. Also the PDCs and DDCs continued to lack control over funds as well as executive authority (Tordoff, 1980). Generally, districts faced continuing problems of inadequate funds, shortages of skilled manpower, and lack of accommodation and transport.

During the period under discussion, local administration was characterized by a situation in which each department and agency operating at the district level had a separate administrative organization which looked to the centre for direction. As reported by a subsequent government review of decentralisation conducted between 1977 and 1979, "development, especially rural development, has to be an integrated programme involving all departments and agencies or organisations" (Zambia, 1979, p.40). As pointed out in the same document, there was often reluctance on the part of officers to submit to the discipline of constant cooperation and communication with colleagues operating at the same hierarchical level, resulting in lack of horizontal coordination (Zambia, 1979, p.41). Vertical lines of command and communication tended to be very strong, with various departments and agencies dealing directly either with Lusaka or with their ministry's provincial headquarters. This chaotic administrative system had adverse effects on development programmes and a new structure was needed, therefore, which would among other concerns remedy such defects.

To redress the situation, the government introduced a new bill after studying proposals submitted to it in 1979. This bill was passed in December 1980 as the Local Administration Act of 1980 (hereinafter referred to as the 1980 Act) and took effect on 1st January, 1981.

One of the principal objectives of the 1980 Act was to combine together the primary organs of the party and other organs of local administration within a single, unified framework provided by the district council - and thereby to achieve what Rondinelli and Cheema (1983) have described as integrated local administration. Under this arrangement, the government envisaged that field staff of central ministries would work at local level under the

For a number of reasons which are discussed below, the hoped for integration did not occur, and instead what resulted in practice was what Rondinelli and Cheema would see as unintegrated local administration. Only the roles of the former district secretary - an office that was formally merged with that of the district council secretary under the 1980 system - and the district governor were integrated fully into the district councils, while local offices of government departments continued to operate vertically to their provincial headquarters and subsequently to Lusaka, as they had before 1981. Indeed

in this respect it is necessary to point out that it was not stated in the Act (or in other government documents) how the integration that was being sought was to be achieved (Lungu, 1986; Manda, 1988; Chikulo, 1989; Mukwena, 1991 and 1992). The foregoing shortcoming was compounded by the resistance of central government departments and agencies to being integrated with or working as satellite institutions of the district councils on the one hand (Chikulo, 1989), and on the other by the resentment of district councils over what they regarded as the threat of intrusion by the central government in their own sphere of affairs (Lungu, 1986).

Integration was also difficult to achieve because the districts had no integrated budgets. Central government departments continued to depend on their ministerial headquarters for funds, making it difficult for the district councils to control their activities. Moreover, "the party also made the integration unattainable by continuing to control its district party accounts from Lusaka". Although the offices of the former district secretary and district governor were integrated into the district council structure, there was no integration of council and party finances at the district level (Mukwena, 1992, p.242). Furthermore, officers who joined the local government service from the office of the former district secretary and from other government departments following the passage of the Act continued to draw their salaries from the Ministry of Finance, resulting in a situation where such personnel found it difficult to feel accountable to district councils (Mukwena, 1992, p.242).

As pointed out by Mukwena (1991), the intended statutory integration between central government departments and district councils was in fact substituted in practice by a “dual supervision formula”. Under this arrangement, the government expected district heads of functional government departments to be administratively responsible to district councils but technically responsible to their parent headquarters through their own departmental hierarchy (Mukwena, 1991). As Mukwena (1991, p.27) observes, "the problem with such an arrangement is that, it is very difficult to draw and maintain the dividing line between administrative and technical responsibilities". Due to the foregoing and other factors, the “dual supervision formula” was notably unsuccessful (Mukwena, 1991, p.27).

Following the re-introduction of the multi-party system of govern
ment, the 1980 Act was replaced by the Local Government Act of 1991 in December of that year. The major changes that came with the 1991 Act were the clear institutional divorce of party structures from the council, the abandonment of the integrative role of the district councils and the reintroduction of representative local government based on universal adult suffrage.

The Political Context

The discussion so far omitted any very detailed consideration of the political context of the various administrative changes. Yet, as Fesler has observed (1965, p.550), it is the political context or setting that "substantially accounts for initiatives to decentralize, conditions the operation of decentralization, and is in turn altered by the political consequences, both anticipated and unanticipated, of decentralized structures and processes". As several Zambian scholars have noted, administrative change in Zambia has arisen not only from the need to improve or strengthen the country's administrative system but also from causes of a more directly political nature (Chikulo, 1981; Manda, 1988; Mwape, 1980; and Mukwena, 1992).

Thus, with regard to the 1964 re-organization of provincial administration and the abolition of native authorities, over and above the declared concerns for improving the state's capacity for

managing the tasks of economic development these changes were clearly a response to practical political pressures. Not without reason, the leaders of newly independent Zambia were suspicious of the administrative machinery they had inherited. Zambian politicians perceived the role played by the colonial provincial administration in restraining the development of the nationalist movement as typically "partisan" in character. As President Kaunda (1974) argued, the colonial governor was at the helm of a "colonial party" buttressed by provincial and district commissioners, who were his party representatives in the periphery. Henderson (1972) agrees that the civil service of Northern Rhodesia was not a neutral agency, impartially carrying out the wishes of the Colonial Office; indeed this service had represented a considerable obstacle to any measures which affected its composition (such as the initial moves towards Africanisation before independence), or which affected the interests of the European population in general. The loyalty of this service to the UNIP government was therefore questionable, and it was not surprising that the old provincial administration was reformed and subjected to political control at an early opportunity. As Scott (1975) has noted, one of the major reasons for the introduction of resident ministers was to ensure tighter control over a still European-dominated provincial bureaucracy while another was a perceived need to establish a closer supervision over local UNIP organisations. In mid-1967 the UNIP government took the first step towards political control of district government when the UNIP regional secretary replaced the district secretary as chairman of the DDC. This move meant that the civil servants of the field administration (by now mostly Zambians) were increasingly to be closely watched by politicians at the district level.

The appointment of special presidential political assistants (SPPAs) to assist provincial ministers of state should be seen in the light of the tension that gripped the Copperbelt in 1966. Racial tensions and industrial unrest (Gupta, 1974) led the president to appoint four SPPAs to the office of the Copperbelt minister of state (Chikulo, 1981). Their specific function was to improve race relations and worker discipline. By the end of 1968 there were eleven SPPAs, one assisting each provincial minister of state - with four on the Copperbelt (Chikulo, 1981). As Gupta (1974) noted, there was a strong desire by the government to establish political control over the vital mining industry - and not least over the power of the trade union which represented the mineworkers.

The 1969 reforms were introduced against the background of the events that followed the fateful UNIP general conference at Mulungushi in August 1967. In the elections to the UNIP Central Committee at that conference, UNIP was split into two main groups: a Bemba-Tonga alliance under Simon Kapwepwe and a Lozi-Nyanja-alliance led by Reuben Kamanga. This split was very destructive to both the party and government, and by February 1968 the internal differences within UNIP had become so severe that President Kaunda briefly resigned as both UNIP and republican president (Tordoff, 1970). Although President Kaunda withdrew his resignation, he was now more anxious than before to strengthen national unity. It is in the light of these events that President Kaunda announced in November 1968 his "decentralization in centralism" reforms, which he defined as "a measure whereby through the Party and Government machinery, we will decentralize most of your Party and Government activities while retaining effective control of the Party and Government machinery at the Centre in the interest of unity" (Kaunda, 1968, p.19). In his speech the President went further to state that: "in short, you decentralize to avoid regionalism..... (Kaunda, 1968, p. 19).

President Kaunda did not stop at the 1969 reforms in his manoeuvres to strengthen political control over the administration. On December 13, 1972, Zambia was proclaimed a one party state, thereby granting UNIP constitutional paramountcy over the administrative machinery. As a result of this step, in 1976 a member of the UNIP Central Committee (MCC) took over from the cabinet

minister as political head of the province and chairman of the PDC and other committees. This was in line with the trend of increasing political control over the administrative machinery. On the government's failure to implement the recommendations of the Simmance team, Tordoff suggests that this was probably due to strong vested interests of the central ministries in retaining their powers (1980, p. 189). Such a development would not in fact be surprising; as Rondinelli and Cheema (1983) have observed, changes in political and administrative organization are rarely without their own, often hidden subtexts; they advance the interests of some groups over others either within the state structure or within society at large. It is, however, noteworthy that the Simmance team's recommendation on the position of the district governor was subsequently incorporated in the 1980 Act. The Simmance team had proposed that "the post of District Governor should be retained, though a new impetus should be given to his role by making him chairman of the district council..... (Tordoff, 1980, p. 189).

This recommendation was incorporated in the 1980 Act because it served the desire of the ruling party to cement in place a structure of close party supervision over the institutions of local government. Thus Mukwena (1992, p.244) has observed that "a careful examination of the provisions of the 1980 Act reveals that the hidden objective of the Act was that of increasing political control over local councils and other organs and creating benefits for local party functionaries in order to revive the demoralized and ineffective UNIP Organisation at grassroots where unpaid local party officials felt they had received next to no benefits from independence". As Scott (1980, p. 155) has pointed out:

> The unwillingness of the national politicians and the civil service to provide government jobs for middle-level party functionaries and the lack of action on the Chona [one-party state] Commission's recommendation that branch and constituency officials should be paid allowances resulted in a considerable loss of morale among those officials.

The loss of morale among branch and constituency officials led in turn to a decline in party support. At the village level, the communication of policy decisions downwards from the district, which had been a key local party task, became difficult. As the local officials became disenchanted, the party lost members, and the contact between Lusaka and the people became increasingly difficult (Scott, 1980). Consequently, UNIP had problems implementing even party policies at the local level: "...policy declarations became statements of intent rather than statements of action because, as many including Kaunda himself knew, the administrative machinery to implement policy simply did not exist" (Scott, 1980, p. 157).

The decline in party support could also be noticed from the apathy by the public and even party members towards party elections. For instance, the local party elections in August 1977 produced little response; many offices went unopposed or unfilled. Following poor turnouts in the 1973 general elections and 1975 local elections, there was concern that another low poll could destroy the one-party state's credibility (Annual Register, 1978, p.245).

Thus, "the UNIP government therefore had to devise new means of implementing its policies at the local level, of communicating its message to the people, and, indeed, of retaining support for its continued existence" (Mukwena, 1992, p.244). Hence, it introduced the 1980 Act which attempted to integrate the local party structures, the field officers of central government departments, and local councils into one Organisation headed by the district council. As a result of the 1980 Act, the chairpersons of the UNIP wards and of the district youth and women's league became councillors of the district council entitled to receive allowances and other benefits from the council.

From the time it was conceived, the 1980 Act met with considerable opposition. In the Zambian National Assembly, the bill had a stormy passage, with members apprehensive about what was perceived to be the marked centralization of political power it entailed (Chikulo, 1983). It was also rightly felt by many members of the Zambian public that the "new" system of local administration signaled the demise of representative local government.There was also widespread fear on the Copperbelt that the "new" system might fail, and cause a breakdown in the provision of services to the public. Indeed, the Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ) threatened to call out miners on strike if the "new" system was imposed on the country as a whole (Zambia Daily Mail, 22 September, 1980). Mine employees in particular were strongly opposed to the reforms, since they entailed the integration of the mine townships into the new district councils; under the former mine township system, the mining companies provided subsidized services such as housing, medical facilities, electricity and water. The workers feared the loss of these benefits. Earlier in the 1970s another attempt at the integration of mine townships into existing councils had met with similar reaction from the Mineworkers, and government had had to shelve these plans (Grenwood and Howell, 1980, p. 181).

The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) had also opposed the new system, arguing that they would not support the creation of a "costly and cumbersome bureaucracy" (Zambia Daily Mail, 30 September 1980). Another major union that was opposed to the reforms was the Civil Servants Union of Zambia (CSUZ), which was unhappy because the initial report on the proposed integrated local government system had recommended that a senior civil servant be appointed to head the new district council (Zambia, 1972, p.50); to the Union's anger, the government, for reasons of apparent political expediency, had settled for a politician - the district governor. The government tried to mollify the trade unions by providing for the representation of labour leaders in the new district councils.

In spite of this stiff opposition, the government weathered the storm and had the bill for the new system passed by parliament. The government was so determined to introduce the reforms that even before the National Assembly had completed discussions of the measure, it had started implementing the new system by organizing elections for UNIP ward chairmen who were to constitute the basis for all the elected councillors for the new system (Times of Zambia, 28 November, 1980). Even after the 1980 Act took effect, the labour movement continued criticizing the changes, leading the government (and President Kaunda in particular) to accuse the labour leaders of opposing decentralization "blindly" (Times of Zambia, 16 January, 1981).

As noted earlier, the change of local government systems in 1991 was necessitated by Zambia's return to a multi-party system of government. The 1980 Act was incompatible with a multi-party system of government, hence it had to be replaced by a new Act which was compatible with the new system of government.

The 1991 Act, however, underwent major surgery in early 1992 when, among other changes, members of parliament (MPs) automatically also became councillors in their districts (Zambia 1992, p.88). When these amendments were being debated in the National Assembly, it was argued by MPs from the new ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) that the change would enable them to easily ensure that councils efficiently and effectively served the residents in their constituencies. This author does not agree with the foregoing, and would contend that an MP need not necessarily sit on a council in order to see to it that a district council was properly serving local residents. One suspects that the amendment was aimed at ensuring political control over the new councils by national politicians - control that might provide access to local resources and facilities that might potentially be

used to reward supporters and hence consolidate one's political position - for instance, the allocation of residential and commercial plots, council houses and market stalls. In fact there has been a tendency in the Third Republic (i.e., the period since the reintroduction of multiparty politics) for MPs - especially where these happened to be ministers - to dominate council proceedings and affairs. Such MPs have, for instance, taken leading roles in deciding whom councils employed in senior positions. Indeed, the continued membership of MPs on councils has enhanced the political control of local councils by national politicians.

In 1995 the National Assembly introduced a "new innovation" to the financing of local development known as Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Under this initiative, the government allocates development funds on an annual basis to all constituencies under the control of the local MP. In theory, the CDF was supposed to enhance local development. But in practice, it appears that its introduction was driven more by political concerns than economic considerations. Indeed, since its introduction many MPs have sought to divert the funds to projects that further their political careers to the detriment of other, more useful projects. If central government were concerned with genuinely decentralising local development funding, it would have been desirable if the constituency funds were channelled through local councils. This could have boosted the finances of local councils and enhanced their role in local development.

The introduction of the position of District Administrator in 1999 is one major reform measure that undoubtedly was driven by political considerations than the desire to improve the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of local administration. Prior to the appointment of district administrators towards the end of 1999, there was no one at the district level that could be referred to as a political appointee representing central government.

The district administrators have supposedly been appointed to coordinate activities at the district level as the most senior civil servants at that level. They have, among other duties, taken over the District Development Coordinating Committees from the Council Secretaries or Town Clerks. So far, all the appointments to the position of District Administrator have been made from the ranks of the party cadres of the ruling MMD. The activities of these political appointees coupled with the lack of specified minimum educational and professional qualifications for the position has lent credence to the view that the district administrators are merely the ruling party's watchdogs strategically placed to increase the party's chances of winning the 2001 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections. Several district administrators, for example, joined the recent failed calls for the Zambian Constitution to be amended to allow President Chiluba go for a third term of office during the 2001 elections; this action by district administrators was viewed by many people to be partisan. Further, during parliamentary and local government by-elections many district administrators have been involved in campaigns, an activity that is not expected of a senior 'civil' servant. In fact, the Zambian Civil Service Regulations forbid civil servants from active party political participation. Yet no district administrator has been disciplined for active involvement in party politics. This goes to show that district administrators were indeed appointed for political purposes and not administrative concerns.

Nonetheless, the desire by Zambian MPs to have direct control over the activities of district councils by automatically becoming councillors was hardly surprising, since even under a scheme of formal devolution, it is to be expected that central authorities would want to retain some control over the activities of local authorities. Indeed, devolution does not mean complete autonomy from the central authorities, since local governments are creatures of the state. Most forms of decentralisation in

the world combine aspects of local autonomy, central control and partnership, and Zambia has been no exception to this. What is crucial is the extent to which central controls are actually beneficial to local government performance. The issue of political or central controls should not necessarily be seen as negative in relation to council performance.

Conclusion

The analysis of the issues and events surrounding the changes to Zambia's administrative system since independence has sought to underline the point that change has arisen not only from the need to improve the system but also from causes of a more directly political nature. As has been shown in the analysis of the Zambian experience, administrative reorganization occurs in a political context; it is that context which to a large extent accounts for initiatives to reorganize the operations of the administrative system and conditions the way such reforms have worked in practice.

It is this author's contention that if the political context within which decentralisation occurs is not unravelled and understood it becomes difficult to adequately account for some of the reasons for the failure of certain decentralisation reforms. This is especially the case with those reforms that are driven more by unstated political considerations than administrative concerns, as was the case with Zambia's Local Administration Act of 1980. Indeed, contrary to the officially stated concerns for improving the operations of local authorities, the 1980 Act appeared to have been driven more by the ruling UNIP's desires to cement its control over the administrative machinery and - through the fusion of local party and council structures - to provide remuneration to local party officials who hitherto had been unremunerated. The lack of remuneration for local party officials had resulted in loss of morale among these officials, which was detrimental to party activities. Due to these overriding political considerations, it was not surprising that the 1980 Act resulted in the collapse of the local government system following the ensuing overpoliticisation of the system; under this Act, political interference in the day-to-day operations of local authorities became the order of the day.

Also, even in the Third Republic, the central government, as shown in this paper, has introduced measures that appear to have been driven more by political considerations than the need to improve the performance of local government. Examples of these measures, as earlier pointed out, include the membership of MPs on local councils, the introduction of the constituency development fund under the control of MPs and the appointment of district administrators.

References

Chikulo, B.C. (1981), "The Zambian Administrative Reforms: An Alternative View", Public Administration and Development, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.55-65.

Chikulo, B.C. (1983), "The Reorganisation of Zambian Local Government: An Analysis of the Implications of the Local Administration Act 1980", Africa Quarterly, Vol. XXII, No. 3, pp.49-61.

Chikulo, B.C. (1989), "The Zambian Local Administration Act, 1980: Problems of Implementation", Planning and Administration, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 62-67.

Dresang, D.L. (1975), The Zambia Civil Service (East African Publishing House, Nairobi). Fesler, J. W. (I 965), "Approaches to the Understanding of Decentralisation", Journal of Politics, Vol.27, No.3, pp.536-566.

Greenwood, A., and J. Howell (1980), "Urban Local Authorities", in W. Tordoff (ed), Administration in Zambia (Manchester University Press, Manchester), pp. 162-1 84

Gupta, A. (1974), "Trade Unionism and Politics on the Copperbelt", in W. Tordoff (ed), Politics in Zambia (Manchester University Press, Manchester), pp.288-319.

Heisler, H. (1965), "Continuity and Change in Zambian Administration", Journal of Local Administration Overseas, Vol.4, No.3, pp.183-193.

Henderson, I. (1972), "Zambia's Colonial Administration 1900-1964", University of Zambia, PA 210/72/27 (Mimeo, Lusaka).

Kaunda, K.D. (1968), Zambia's Guidelines for the Next Decade (Government Printer, Lusaka). Kaunda, K.D. (1974), Guidelines for the Next Decade (Government Printer, Lusaka).

Lungu, G.F. (1986), "Mission Impossible: Integrating Central and Local Administration in Zambia", Planning and Administration, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.39-57.

Manda, P. M. M. (1988), "The Decentralisation of Government in Zambia since Independence" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leeds, Leeds).

Mitchell, M. (1963) "Basic Information on the Structure of Local Government in Northern Rhodesia as at 31 December, 1962", University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Salisbury.

Mukwena, R M. (1991), "Zambia's Local Administration Act, 1980: An Examination of the Integration Objective", Africanus Vol.21, Nos.1 and 2, pp.22-30.

Mukwena, R. M. (I 992), "Zambia's Local Administration Act, 1980: A Critical Appraisal of the Integration Objective", Public Administration and Development, Vol. 12, No.3, pp.237247.

Mwape, B.L. (1980), "The Politics of Central Reorganisation in Zambia", International Review of Administrative Sciences, Vol.46,, No.2, pp. 193-197.

Rondinelli, D.A. and G.S. Cheema, (1983), "Implementing Decentralisation Policies: An Introduction", in G.S. Cheema, and D.A. Rondinelli (eds), Decentralisation and Development (Sage, Beverly), pp.9-34.

Scott, I (1975), "Party Politics in Zambia: A Study of the Organization of UNIP" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto).

Scott, I (1980), "Party and Administration under the One Party State", in W. Tordoff (ed), Administration in Zambia (Manchester University Press, Manchester), pp. 139-161.

Subramaniam, V. (1971), "Note on the Second National Development Plan: Some Administrative Problems" (University of Zambia, Lusaka).

Times of Zambia, 28 November, 1980.

Times of Zambia, 16 January, 1981.

Tordoff, W. (1968), "Provincial and District Government in Zambia, Part II", Journal of Administration Overseas, Vol. VII, No.4, pp.538-545.

Tordoff, W. (1970), "Provincial and Local Government in Zambia", Journal of Administration Overseas, Vol. IX, No. 1, pp.23-35.

Tordoff, W. (1980), "Rural Administration", in W. Tordoff (ed), Administration in Zambia (Manchester University Press, Manchester), pp. 185-214.

Zambia Daily Mail, 22 September, 1980.

Zambia Daily Mail, 30 September, 1980.

Zambia, Republic of (1966a), Annual Report of the Provincial and District Government for the

Year 1964 (Government Printer, Lusaka).

Zambia, Republic of (1966b), Annual Report of the Provincial and District Government for the Year 1966 (Government Printer, Lusaka).

Zambia, Republic of (1972), Report of the Working Party Appointed to Review the System of Decentralised Administration (Government Printer, Lusaka).

"Zambia", in Annual Register of World Events in 1977 (1978), (Longman, London). Zambia, Republic of (1979), Third National Development Plan, 1979-83 (October) (National Commission for Development Planning, Lusaka

Zambia, Republic of (1992), The Local Government (Amendment) Act, 1992 (Government Printer, Lusaka).