

## Reforming Zimbabwe's Institutions: The Essentialism of Leadership: An Agent-Structure Approach

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### Abstract

This Chapter examines the essentialism of leadership in reforming public institutions in Zimbabwe. While Zimbabwe is pursuing with the vigour the institutional reforms, there has been little success. The Chapter argues that good leadership is quality leadership and quality leadership is a highly ethical leadership. The crucial elements in the good governance being called for in Zimbabwe are effective, accountability, transparency, predictability, and responsive to citizen needs. Reformers in Zimbabwe require a long-term perspective because of the fundamental changes demands sustained efforts, commitment, and leadership. Mistakes and setbacks are a normal and inevitable part of the process. The big challenge is to perceive mistakes as learning opportunities, rather than using them as excuses for squashing the reform.

**Keywords:** leadership, institutional reforms, Zimbabwe, structure-agency theory

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### Introduction

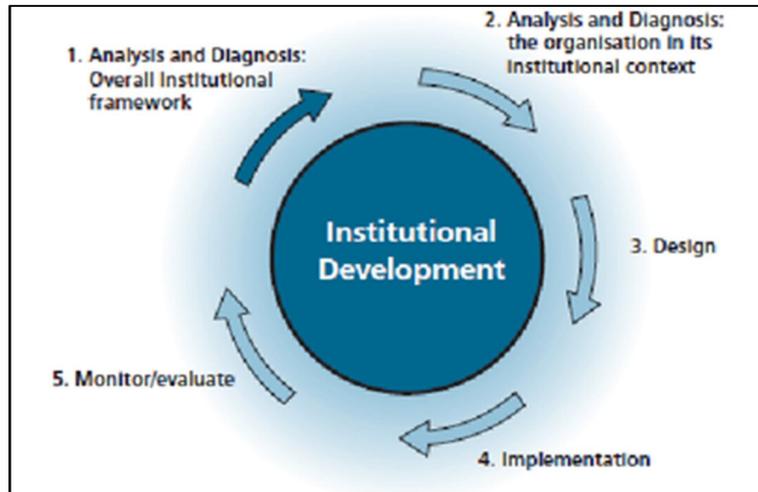
It became obvious in the 1990s that neither good policies nor good investments are likely to emerge and be sustainable in an environment with dysfunctional institutions and poor governance (World Bank, 2000vii). Reforming public institutions to make them functional is a complex and difficult task, both technically and politically. The government of Zimbabwe has been pursuing political and economic reforms since the 1980s in an effort to promote socio-economic growth and good governance. Recent assessments (African Development Bank, 2020; Sivio Institute; 2019; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020) indicate, however, that socio-economic outcomes have been far from satisfactory. Where better results have been observed, there remains sustainability question. With respect to ranking, it is noteworthy that Zimbabwe has consistently ranked at the bottom of the Transparency International index with regard to corruption perception. As generally understood, corruption undermines the rule of law, sound governance and competitive business transaction, distorts social and human values, and raises political and moral values. Concerns about corruption in Zimbabwe and efforts aimed at curbing it, are not recent phenomena. Perhaps of great concern is the evident ineffectiveness of all national anti-corruption initiatives so far in Zimbabwe (Zinyama, 2021). It is the argument of this paper that some of the contributory reasons are lack of commitment by the political leadership, and the absence of effective institutions to address the

problem of socio-economic problems in the country. Lack of proper leadership competencies and commitment underlie the petulant and despicable conduct of the political class and the decadent bureaucratic structures they define through legislative processes or other fiats of executive arms of government. Good leadership is quality leadership and quality leadership is a highly ethical leadership based on integrity. This paper is organised into four sections. The first section discusses the conceptual clarity of leadership, institutional reforms and structure-agency. The second section presents the Zimbabwe experience focusing on socio-economic-political institutional reforms instituted. Thirdly, the leadership: what lies ahead comes and provides a justification for strong institutions and quality leadership. Lastly concluding remarks.

### **Conceptual Clarity**

This chapter uses the political economic analytical framework within the structure-agency epistemological foundations to unpack the essentialism of leadership in Zimbabwe. This is done by assessing “how power is exercised, how decisions are made, and how incentives and disincentives are brought to fore on specific organisations and individuals” (Harris & Booth, 2013, p. 1). The study looks at institutional reforms that have been embarked on in Zimbabwe to improve the performance of the public sector. Institutional reforms attempt to unpack the root causes of problems that might arise from institutional incentives or norms (Hall, 1991; March & Olsen, 1989). For example, a financial management system might be seen as the answer to poor expenditure controls, but if the root cause of the problem is a lack of political will, then reforming financial management systems will not be adequate.

It is instructive to note that institutional reform process comprises a set of steps, starting with political, institutional and organisational reforms and ending with monitoring and evaluation. Figure 1 below gives the conceptual institutional reform framework.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Institutional Reform Framework Source: DFID, 2003**

Institutional reform involves fundamental changes in the “rules of the game” (World Bank, 2000, p. xii). Such reforms require long-term high-level leadership commitment, in-depth knowledge, and extensive support from key stakeholders. World Bank gives a comprehensive definition of institutions as follows:

Institutions ..... are the “rules of the game” that emerge from formal laws, informal norms and practices, and organisational structures in a given setting. The incentives they create shape the actions of public officials. Institutions overlap with but are not synonymous with organisations; they are affected by policy design but are broader in scope and less subject to frequent change than most policy frameworks (p. xii).

Demands for institutional reform are major components of political arguments and governmental policies. These demands are exemplified by critiques of administrative institutions. Public organisations are not oriented towards the needs of citizens, service, effectiveness, economy, efficiency and productivity. Demands for reforms are supported by the mass media, political parties, organised interests, central government, international organisations such as IMF and World Bank. Experience within institutional reform suggests that successful comprehensive reforms require political support. The political implication gives institutional reform higher status and priority through attention from top levels in the political hierarchy and through linkage with key policy issues. The organisational implication establishes institutional reform as a programme or policy of its own. This makes reforms continuous not episodic.

## Structure-Agency Theory

The structure-agency framework of institutional reforms argues that the capacity of human action is constrained by powerful stable societal structures (educational, religious, or political institutions) and the individual expression of will (agency). This framework promotes a strong standard of leader responsiveness that requires leaders to attempt to alter any structural constraints inhibiting the satisfaction of citizen preferences (Imbroscio, 1999). This is critical in assessing institutional reforms that seek to enhance corporate governance, public procurement, sound public finance management, integrity management and oversight. Thus the structure-agency framework argues that governmental agencies are not neutral instruments but carriers of cultures, missions, values and identities. They are unlikely to adapt automatically to any attempts to influence national development transformation, including those in political leadership.

## Leadership

Leadership provide strategic direction to government and execution of decisions made by leaders. Consequently, "to understand the workings of institutions, it is important to assess the working of leadership" (Guerre & Bissessar, 2009, p.1). It is generally said that "get the right man [person] in the leadership job and all your problems will be solved" (Zinyama, 2020). It is in light of this that Ubegbe (1999, p. 282) defines leadership as the process of creating the subordinates' identification with the group's mission and creating their desires to achieve the group's goal. In the views of Aguda (1995, p. 26) a person may attain the position of leadership in one of several ways. The first method is self-imposition, which is totally devoid of constitutionality. Secondly, a group of persons may forcefully impose a leader on the generality of people. Finally, a person may come to the position of leadership through a demonstration of leadership qualities over a long period of time. Examples of such leaders in Africa are Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Seretse Khama of Botswana.

It is gleaned from these three concepts that there are linkages between politics (formal and informal political arrangements and power structures), policies (objectives and goals) and administrative capabilities (the public bureaucracy) that shape institutional reforms. Both political and professional leadership must craft strategic engagements between the political and administrative leaderships in order to promote successful institutional reforms.

Africa has examples of countries that have achieved success largely as a result of visionary leadership and good governance. A classic example is Rwanda under Paul Kagame. Rwanda's vision combines a performance-based system and has proved to be a working governance model. The literature consulted revealed that Rwanda embraced a transformational leadership as a key component in upholding good governance tenets. Rwanda's strategy to deliver good governance and sustainable

economic development was decentralised decision-making to bring the development process closer to the people.

Another aspect of governance that owes Rwanda's successful implementation is transparency and accountability. Rwanda recognises transparency in governance as a precondition for citizens to be able to hold their leaders accountable; ensure sustainable development with sound economic policies and solid transparent institutions that are responsive to the needs and problems of the people; and combat corruption. Rwanda has mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in public institutions, such as Income and Asset Disclosure, the Parliament Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Auditor General (AG). Income and Asset Disclosure systems require that public officials declare their income, assets and financial interests. Lastly, political will from the top to the lowest level of governance structure. This is a clear and feasible policy framework and appropriate institutional arrangements that are among the key drivers of effective policy implementation in Rwanda.

### **The Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Africa**

The problem which troubles Africans most is the failure of political leadership. There are failures in other domains, but these are traceable in the consciousness to political leadership deficiencies. Seteolu (2004, p. 74) summarises the challenge from the Nigerian perspective:

The political elites are not a productive class, but rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over politicisation of the Nigerian state is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political contest ensured the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centred political gains.

Ake and Onoge (1999, p. 53) also pointed out that:

Political leadership is parochial rather than national; and corruptly converts national resources into its project of primitive accumulation. Ethnic diversity is manipulated to stay afloat to the detriment of national cohesion. There is an embarrassing lack of national heroes. The failure was usually explained either by the easy manipulability of the cultural pluralist background, or by the "two publics" antagonism.

The two quotations above demonstrate that leadership is central for effective management of public affairs. Political will is not a virtue appreciated by African leaders. Political will is the compelling force for sound leadership quality, the ability to do what is right, what is relevant and what is attainable within the context of patriotic nationalism. Political will means personal or group sacrifices. It implies the ability to implement policies that have a nationalistic important and relevant without

allowing pockets of interest to detract from what should naturally be of national benefit. In contemporary Africa, Nelson Mandela represents that model of leadership by personal sacrifice to redeem his people from servitude (Isekhure, 1995, p. 141-142).

In Africa, as in every region in the world, it is the quality and characteristics of governance that shape the level of peace and stability and the prospects for economic development. There is no more critical variable than governance, for it is governance that determines whether there are durable links between the state and the society it purports to govern. The nature of governance is central because it determines whether the exercise of authority is viewed as legitimate. Legitimate authority, in turn, is based on accepted laws and norms rather than the arbitrary, unconstrained power of the rulers. Governance also has an important regional dimension relating to the institutional structures and norms that guide a region's approach to challenges and that help to shape its political culture and practices.

Governance problems on the continent revolve around the management of states, resulting from the inability of many leaders to properly manage economies, diversities and political inclusion. This leads to a loss of trust in state institutions and in their capacity to execute basic functions, particularly the provision of the public good. Poor governance has failed to address political exclusion and economic marginalisation. In other words, poor governance has failed to address the issues of political exclusion and economic marginalisation. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on social progress, particularly in contexts where there are no social safety nets provided by government.

Moreover, the double challenge of rising inequality and a growing population will become increasingly unsustainable for the continent. It is crucial to change the course of governance on the continent. This means ensuring more inclusive political and economic participation for all where needed, and creating new economic and social models to drastically reduce poverty and inequality.

### **Zimbabwe Experience**

Political and social struggle in Zimbabwe has been a constant feature for many years. What exactly were Zimbabweans fighting for? Under the British rule of course, we fought for independence. Once we achieved independence, our struggle quickly shifted to one for survival. We fought for our existence as a peaceful and law-abiding nation. We fought for our own survival and that of our children and our grandchildren. We fought for the inalienable rights to which each of us is entitled by virtue of being human. The ratification of the Constitution in 2013 was also an important process. The Constitution is a strong and enduring set of laws that is an essential and guiding instrument in a democracy. In a broad sense, this is what we fought for. But at a more human level,

we fought for more. We fought for the right to express ourselves, to assemble peaceably, to write and print our opinions, to worship the God of one's choice. We fought for our personal security, the right to be free from unlawful arrest and unreasonable detention. We fought for the freedom to move throughout our nation and outside our nation. We fought to live free from the fear created by an oppressive and intolerant government.

We also fought to give voice to the many Zimbabweans who remain marginalised and disempowered. We fought to empower women, to integrate to and participant in all aspects of Zimbabwean society including power sharing and decision-making. The contribution of women has been limited because of a whole range of social, legal, economic, cultural and political constraints. As a starting point for change, we fought for girls' education and encouraged parents to keep their daughters in school. We fought for mechanisms to promote the advancement of women in Zimbabwean society.

In addition, we fought for the rights of children, the rights of prisoners, and the rights of the disabled. We fought for the right to development, to economic equality, to own property and to inherit property. We fought for accountability, responsibility and transparency in our government. We fought against corruption and abuse of power. We fought for the separation of powers between the executive, the judiciary and parliament. We fought for a government that is decentralised, responsive and accessible to the electorate, and run in accordance with democratic principles. We fought and we are still fighting. Fortunately, much has been achieved and many battles have been won. But the fight is not over.

### **The Battle Was Won but Did we Get What we Wanted?**

Nonetheless, Zimbabwe continues to experience growing pains in the socio-economic development. Problems still abounds, including systemic corruption, polarisation, economic meltdown, socio-economic infrastructure dilapidation, collapsing health and education systems, unemployment and food insecurity (climatic changes), political violence and limited citizen participation. The attitude of the people, for example, towards political leaders still shows signs of hero worship. Politicians today do not take criticism kindly. Another challenge is poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor has, in fact, grown and keeps growing.

### **Institutional Reforms: What Has Been Done to Address These Challenges?**

Zimbabwe has instituted political, financial and economic reforms in order to strengthen institutions that provide public services. Some of them are discussed below.

**Land reform and compensation:** the government has publicly committed itself to a reform process that is intended to help reconnect to international channels of credit and investment and an

underlying confidence in the country's potential to bounce back (Pigou, 2016). Certainly there has been a degree of progress: there is engagement where previously there was none; there is greater consistency in terms of rhetorical support for reform and the development of policy commitments; anti-western rhetoric has been substantially reduced. Political leadership is fundamental in resolving challenges of property rights, compensation, unresolved issues of legal and illegal occupation and clarity on beneficiaries of the fast-track land reform programme. Successful resolution of these issues would be a key indicator of the government's commitment to strengthening the rule of law. The Zimbabwe government acknowledges that resolving these matters is central to prospects of boosting productivity on the land. The Second Republic government accepts its responsibility to compensate former white farmers. The suggested compensation plan entertains claims for land, improvements and equipment, signaling a major shift in government policy.

**Tackling corruption:** when the President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, was inaugurated in 2018 and at various occasions that in the years that followed, he repeatedly acknowledged that corruption needs to be contained if Zimbabwe is to develop transformatively and sustainably. However, strong and committed leadership in most of the responsible government structures is the missing link to frontally deal with corruption menace in the country. The institutional remedies have been uneven. Zimbabwe's Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) has been an unmitigated disaster, itself accused of corruption, unable to meet its constitutional obligations (Zinyama, 2021). However, the Office of Auditor-General has undertaken an impressive set of investigations that have exposed the rot in multiple government ministries and state-owned enterprises. The Public Entities and Corporate Governance Act provides for stricter oversight of line ministries and the establishment of a governance unit in the Office of the President and Cabinet (Government of Zimbabwe, 2018). But this is yet to result in any serious movement on corruption, which reflects a culture of self-enrichment, rent-seeking and patronage politics.

The constitution mandates the ZACC to conduct corruption investigations. In 2019 President Mnangagwa appointed nine new commissioners to the ZACC and gave the commission the power to arrest. However, ZACC does not have the power to prosecute. In 2018 a separate Special Anti-Corruption Unit was created within the Office of the Presidency. Even with these structures in place, corruption is still lingering in the country at the detriment of national socio-economic development.

**Parliament:** Zimbabwe's institutional capacity is fairly robust. Parliament remains an important nexus for bipartisan debate and scrutiny of elected officials. Despite its reputation as a rubber-stamp body, Parliament has shown itself to be an institution where there is serious scrutiny of government policy by both opposition and ZANU-PF legislators. Cross-party portfolio committees,

such as the Finance and Economic Development, and Public Accounts Committees play an important role in holding the government to account.

**Devolution reforms:** Zimbabwe has constitutionalised local government and devolution. A number of factors contributed to the highly centralised government structures in Zimbabwe regardless the fact that Zimbabwe has a track record of representative democracy. Firstly, colonialism bequeathed a historical legacy of centralised government. Secondly, social and economic crises are powerful stimuli for centralisation. Thirdly, powerful political and bureaucratic vested interests have consciously thwarted attempts to devolve powers. Finally, successful devolution requires certain pre-conditions such as appropriate legal and administrative frameworks, a local information base, capacity-building programmes and civic culture. Regional disparities in development are corrected to address sentiments of marginalisation. The idea behind implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe is to deepen democracy and empower citizens to make locally based development choices to improve the delivery of public services. Leadership and political will to implementing devolution have been demonstrated by the designation of President Emmerson Mnangagwa as chair of the Cabinet Committee on Devolution. This is critical because the central government should provide overall policy direction, setting of standards, and auditing while local governments should be involved with the provision of infrastructure and services.

### **Challenges to Institutional Reforms**

Public sector institutional reforms face numerous fundamental challenges. Successful reforms are not only about technical capacity and knowledge but are fundamentally political and shaped by the political settlement (Bukonya & Yanguas, 2013). Reforms have to deal with complex political and social contexts including corruption, patronage, and political capture (Joshi & Carter, 2015). There are key elements of institutions that must be considered when instituting reforms:

**Priorities:** Has the government identified its priorities amongst its desired outcomes and allocated resources accordingly? Are allocations adhered to? What are the core policy and decision-making structures? What levels of expenditure can be afforded in the short, medium and long term? Who sets priorities and in response to what interests? Can priorities be translated into resource allocation?

**Polices:** How effective are the core policy and decision-making structures and processes? Are they based on evidence and data? What is the availability and quality of data?

**Rules and law:** Are formal rules and laws respected? Are there informal rules leading to corruption, patronage, victimisation, exclusion? Can rights be enforced through law? Are rules and law subject to political interference? Are there informal systems of dispute resolution?

A lack of political commitment is a common explanation for public sector institutional or governance reform failure. It can be linked to factors such as reform fatigue, patronage networks or a lack of financial incentives. While the government vigorously pursued trade liberalisation under Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the 1990s, it stalled on public-sector reforms. The government failed to adhere to the internal logic of the reforms. For example, fiscal stabilisation, which was required up-front, was never seriously attempted because the government found it politically difficult to reduce its expenditure (Makina, 2010).

In economic policy design and implementation during the 2000s, the political factor loomed larger. One survey observed that:

political imperatives took precedence over economic goals in exchange rate policy and pricing policies of parastatals. Economic policies seem to have been driven by the need to secure immediate and medium-term goals, while paying scant attention to collateral social and economic consequences of such actions... (UNDP, 2008, p. 211).

It appeared that economic decisions and programmes formulated after 2000 had a primary rationale of prolonging ZANU-PF's stay in office. Sensing its vulnerability in forthcoming elections, it deployed one key instrument. The instrument was extensive patronage that consisted of material incentives to retain its supporters and buy votes. In such a context, there was little likelihood of rational economic policies with a medium and long-term perspective. Even so, a number of plans with names such as the Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP) in 2001, the National Economic Revival Plan (NERP) in 2003, the Macroeconomic Policy Framework (2005-06) and the National Economic Development Priority Programme (NEDPP) in 2007 were abandoned soon after their launch. Clearly, there was little political will for their implementation and materialization of the intended development outcomes.

Mungiu-Pippidi (2006, p. 87) highlights how in clientelistic societies, access to public goods is predictable but unequal, and is based upon the closeness of groups to centres of power. Under such contexts, reforms need to tackle the pervasiveness of clientelism, rather than its manifestations within specific organisations (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006). Clientelism also undermines institutional reform efforts. For instance, Leftwich and Sen (2010) provide an example from India where organised interests blocked the implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 to protect their political power and rent-seeking abilities.

## Constructive Engagement

In spite of unresolved concerns about the governance *modus operandi*, key western partners from the international community have continued efforts to re-engage Zimbabwe. For example, the EU and members such as the United Kingdom. This reflects an ongoing shift from the politics of reprimand to the politics of encouragement, an implicit acknowledgment of past policy failure and the need to explore a constructive engagement approach. The EU suspension of development aid was subsequently lifted and most of the Zanu-PF leaders targeted by restrictive measures were removed from the sanctions list.

The government of Zimbabwe has reaffirmed its commitment to peace and dialogue, and maintaining an open-door policy to resolve challenges facing the country. National dialogue and constructive engagement are designed to remove deficit of trust, restore public confidence, forge a renewed sense of shared national vision and social cohesion and advance an economy that works for everyone. Consequently, a National Political Dialogue (POLAD) was launched on February 6, 2019, bringing together at least 21 leaders of different political parties to confront the national socio-political and economic challenges. The spirit of working with all stakeholders, inclusive of opposition political parties, churches, students, traditional leaders, academia, business fraternity, among others, allows cross-pollination of views and building of trust, tolerance and common understanding that informs policy interventions.

However, to promote constructive engagement, the government of Zimbabwe instituted advisory councils. Zimbabwe has a rich history of developing development coalitions unenthusiastic. This was the case with the weak National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF) set up in 1997, and the Presidential Advisory Council in 2018. A National Economic Council (NEC) envisaged under the Government of National Unity of 2009 to 2013 was never established. Zimbabwe lost opportunities to develop vigorous business associations that would make strong input into development policy.

Zimbabwe needs to craft a broad-based, inclusive and durable political settlement. Experience during the last 41 years indicates that the electoral process and its outcomes are only a partial solution to deeper national and social issues of division, exclusion and authoritarianism. A political settlement is a common understanding, initially among elites, about the organisation and exercise of power. Settlements run the gamut from exclusive, benefitting a select group of elites, or inclusive, representing a broader set of interests (Bratton, 2014). Since power determines the distribution of resources, political settlements establish who gets what, when and how (Laswell, 1936).

Another form of advisory council is the social contract. The social contract discourse was given expression in the Kadoma Declaration of 2003. However, the absence of commitment on the part of the government ensured that a social contract was not implemented despite the setting up of an institutional framework in a Tripartite Negotiating Fund (TNF). The TNF was moribund for nearly two decades until it was resuscitated in 2019. Even so, it remains moot whether the government is sufficiently ideologically and technically committed to the implementation of the tripartite social contract. Furthermore, to be more inclusive, a social contract should embrace other social forces beyond the tripartite framework. Zimbabwe needs to craft such a social contract through refining and expanding the scope of the current framework. The development process would benefit immensely if that enlarged social contract would earn sufficient legitimacy for a national renewal alongside a political settlement. The dividends from improved social cohesion and institutional thrust from a developmental coalition operating within a democratic framework would be immense.

### **State Owned Enterprises and Parastatals Reforms**

Reforms on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were outlined in the 2019 national budget. Having approved the implementation framework for 43 SOEs in 2018, the government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) targeted 5 public enterprises, namely Tel-One/Net-One/Telecel, ZIMPOST and POSB for immediate reforms. The reforms were meant to raise at least US\$350 million. The SOEs reform process was designed to ensure that parastatals, and their restructuring, are fully accountable, transparent, efficient, effective, and viable, complementing government efforts in promoting economic growth and improved service delivery to the general public. Furthermore, Cabinet on 5 February 2019 approved the unbundling of the Grain Marketing Board into Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) Unit and Commercial Entity. The SGR Unit focuses on purchase of the strategic grain requirement amounting to 500 000 tons, while the Commercial Entity and other private players manage the rest of the grain purchase at market based prices.

SOEs internal processes of recruitment, promotion and remuneration of senior staff depended on loyalty to the ruling party rather than their competence. SOEs are viewed as 'gold mines' by their chief operating officers (COEs). Salaries and allowances reached staggering levels for management in the SOEs in the post-2000 period. For example, the most notorious case was that of the CEO of the Public Service Medical Aid Society (PSMAS) who took home USD250, 000 every month (ASCR, 2014). Some SOEs that paid huge salaries included Tel One and Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC); some of them continued to pay such salaries while their low-level workers went for months without pay. Other SOEs such as the National Social Authority (NSSA) staggered from one corruption scandal to another.

### **Ease of Doing Business Reforms**

The rank of Zimbabwe improved to 140 in 2019 from 155 in 2018 (Trading Economics, 2020). Zimbabwe has improved its ease of doing business rankings by 15 places for 2020, driven by good performance on starting a business, streamlining approvals for construction permits and a reduction of the business licencing fee by Harare Municipality (Moyo, 2020). The government of Zimbabwe accelerated and deepened the ease of doing business reforms to improve competitiveness and established a One-Stop Shop Investment Centre through creating Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA) Act. These reforms have greatly improved the investment climate in the country, and thereby stimulating economic development in line with Vision 2030. Ease of Doing Business reforms seek to boost the competitive advantage of the economy in attracting foreign direct investment.

### **Zimbabwe Auditor-General Reports**

The Auditor-General (AG) has been producing reports for appropriation and fund accounts, state-owned enterprises and local authorities. Many Zimbabweans, including especially members of the opposition, civil society, international financial institutions, praised the AG's reports into governance of parastatals and local authorities argued that reports augured well for the rule of law, constitutionalism, the fight against corruption and public financial malfeasance, and Zimbabwe's democratic institutions. What has been lacking was the follow up actions on the AG's report.

The reports (2017, 2018, 2019) found evidence that point to significant wrongdoing, conflicts of interest, corruption, and a lot of governmental impunity. The AG's reports reveal systemic and extensive abuse of power within the parastatals and local authorities. They also reveal that the legislative branch is either unwilling or unable to perform the important function of serving as a check on the executive (Zhou ad Zinyama, 2016). In addition, there are suggestions that corruption has compromised some of the country's counteracting agencies, such as the National Prosecuting Authority and the ZACC. Therefore, they may not be relied upon to deal fully and effectively with government impunity. Nevertheless, it is important for the reader to recognise that Zimbabwe still has democratic institutions that are capable of fully confronting and effectively resolving all the issues uncovered by the AG's reports. From the Auditor-General's reports on parastatals, it is clear that weak institutional frameworks are bleeding the economy and contribute immensely to the current economic menace. Yes, the scourge of corruption is also to blame, but if the country had stronger institutions, the impact could have been limited and contained.

In its 2019 report, the Office of the Auditor General exposed corruption, including payment for undelivered goods such as motor vehicles, generators, excavators, and biometric cards. It reported that between 2016 and 2018, the government failed to account for how it spent US\$29.6 million in the

maize distribution portion of its Command Agriculture programme. Anecdotal reports indicated a significant portion of this total was lost to corruption. The AG also reported US\$417 million of accounts receivable that remained outstanding for extended periods, making their collectability doubtful. Notable cases in the report included the Zimbabwe Electrification Transmission and Distribution Company, which had not taken delivery of transformers nine years after making a payment of US\$4.9 million to a supplier. The report attributed 80 percent of its flagged concerns on state-owned enterprises to “governance issues.” The report also exposed poor maintenance of accounting records in some ministries, with some diverting funds for improper purposes while others paid for goods and services not delivered.

### **Constitutional Reforms**

Constitutional reforms should include institutional reforms. The constitution should lay down the frameworks for the operation of public institutions. A classic example is the Constitutional Amendment No. 2 of Zimbabwe. In the main, this amendment changed the retiring age for judges, expunged the public interview process for judges, removed the presidential running mate clause, extended the women’s quota, introduced a youth quota, increased the number (from five to 7) of cabinet ministers chosen from outside Parliament, and varied the devolution clauses. With respect to the changes to the devolution clauses, the starting point is acknowledging Zanu PF’s unequivocal, absolute and indisputable commitment to devolution. Since 2018, there is aggressive implementation of most devolution provisions in Chapter 14, particularly, Sections 264 to 273. It is striking to note that the Constitutional Amendment No. 2 Act of 2021 removes Members of Parliament (MPs) from the membership of Provincial Councils (PCs) and Metropolitan Councils (MCs). This has been done by:

- separating roles of policy formulation and oversight of the Members of Parliament; and
- ensuring that MPs are not conflicted. MPs must not sit in PCs or MCs because Parliament must supervise PCs and MCs, and so there will be a conflict of interest.

In addition, PCs and MCs provisions were merged. The implication of this change is that MCs will no longer be chaired by mayors, but officials elected in terms of Section 272 like PCs. There will be election of 10 of the members of MCs by a party-list proportional representation system. It is important that PCs and MCs are empowered, independent and well-resourced in order to provide strong institutional local governance. Responsibilities and resources must be transferred from the national government in order to establish a sound financial base for each provincial and metropolitan council (Zinyama and Chimanikire, 2019) as enshrined in the constitution.

## Public Finance Management Reforms

Sound public financial management (PFM) is central in institutional reforms. PFM refers to set of laws, rules, systems and processes used by government and local government to mobilise revenue, allocate public funds, spend public resources, and account for funds and audit. The critical inputs needed for successful PFM reform include:

- Leadership – a strong political and technical commitment, clear communication and coordination of reform and a widening group reform leaders who manage fears, expectations and differences of opinion.
- Policy space for developing appropriate reform – a thorough understanding of the context, a focus on the functionality of the system and not just form, and teams and organisations that experiment and take risks, interrogating both the problem and the proposed solutions.
- Adaptive, interactive and inclusive process –where monitoring, learning and adaptation are key.

Effective PFM is fundamental if Zimbabwe is to properly determine where public funds should best be targeted to make the most impact. This is crucial considering the economic challenges, non-fulfilment of socio-economic rights, tax injustice and debt burden that Zimbabwe is experiencing. Consequently, a strong PFM system is an essential aspect of the institutional framework for an effective state or local authority.

**Table 1: Legislation and Institutional Frameworks for PFM system for Zimbabwe**

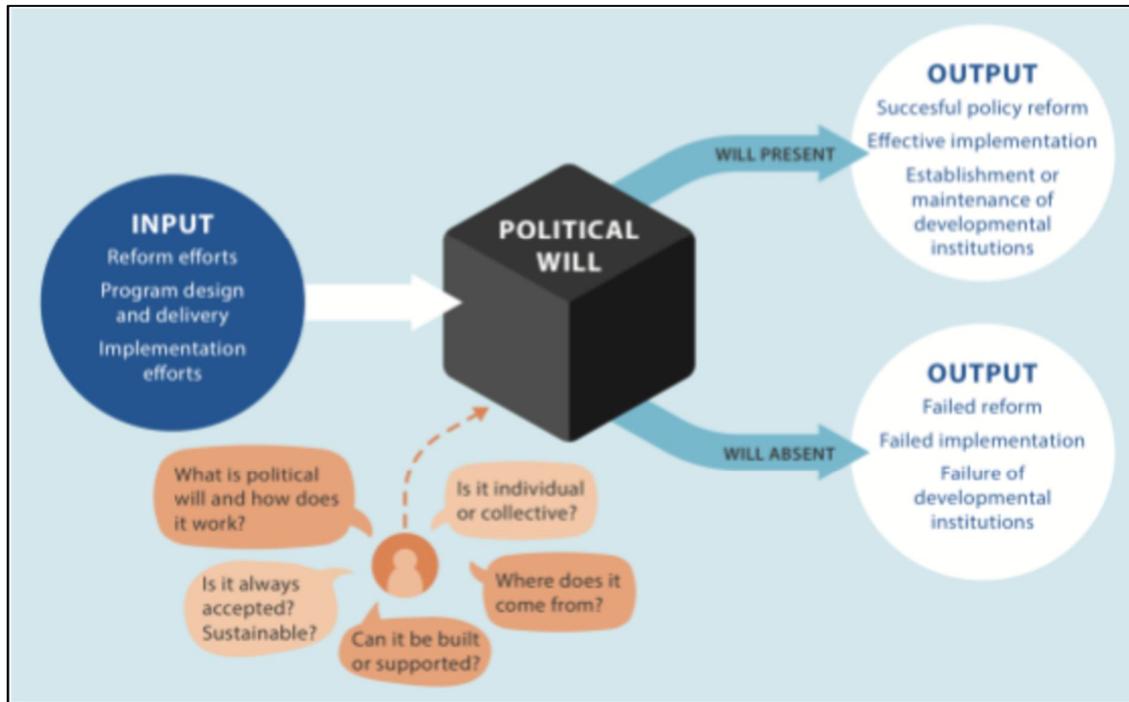
<b>Legislative Framework</b>	<b>Enabling Institutional Framework</b>
Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) Chapter 17, Section 298(1)	Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, Anti-Corruption Commission
Public Finance Management Act [Chapter 22:19]	Parliament, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Procurement Act	Parliament, Procurement and Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
Public Debt Management Act	Zimbabwe Aid and Debt Management Office, Treasury
Audit Office Act[Chapter 22:18]	Parliament, Office of the Auditor-General

Despite comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks on public finance management in Zimbabwe, public funds leakages in Zimbabwe are attributable to regulatory, fiscal and governance loopholes. For instance, public enterprise have weak policy direction emanating from poorly constituted boards or non-existent boards creating a policy vacuum leading to subordinates acting without proper guidance. The is inherent delay in the appointing of Chief Executives or Town Clerks

in local authorities giving birth to absence of strategic plans making it difficult to track progress. The Auditor –General’s annual reports have always exposed such gaps within the system. The following actions might improve the situation:

- Enacting legislation to enforce the Principles of Public Administration and Leadership and Governance as enshrined in Chapter 9 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013.
- There is need for transparent of public resources management (budgets and expenditure) and good governance. Thus, the government of Zimbabwe should strengthen capacity of public financial institutions to monitor public finance administration and adherence to policy and law.
- Above all, political will and commitment to implement the Auditor-General’s recommendations is the missing link in the legal and institutional framework. This calls for robust development of explicit road maps and action points for implementation of the Auditor-General’s recommendations.
- Public institutions must be responsive to the needs of citizens and ensure that citizens have access to public finance management information and strengthen the capacity of citizens to participate in effective monitoring and duty bearer engagement.

**Strong political will:** political will covers intent and motivation (Zinyama, 2021), manifest in spoken or written words (speeches, manifestos, legal documents) (Zinyama, 2021, 2018); and commitment of actors to undertake actions to achieve a set of objectives (Brinkerhoff, 2010, 2007). Political leadership and a commitment to fight bad governance at the highest levels is a pre-requisite for initiating and sustaining reforms until results are achieved. There is global evidence that political will is the most important factor for guaranteeing the effective implementation of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy in countries such as Singapore (Quah, 2013). Reforms simply don’t happen without political will. Implied is that political will explains success or lack of institutional reforms (Zinyama, 2020). Political will is the black box into which lots of things are thrown, they come out as either success or failure (Marquette, 2020). Figure 1 below shows the black box conceptualisation of political will.



**Figure 1: Political Will's Black Box** Source: Marquette, 2020.

Zinyama (2018) notes that successful institutional reforms require both technical and political commitments. Policy makers and bureaucrats conceptualise institutional reforms through “technical” and “political” ontological and epistemological premises for comprehending inefficiencies, institutions, incentives, ideas, norms, values, networks and behaviours that underpin public sector reforms. It is striking to note that “players interested in reforms must “dive into the political will box and find out what’s happening there and what is politically and technically possible and what isn’t” (Marquette, 2020, p. 30). Such an approach leads to successful reforms since institutional reforms are inherently political and technical. The public sector in Zimbabwe is not independent and is compromised by political interference, patronage politics and ethnic affiliations. These tendencies coupled with other socio-cultural characteristics are not suitable for establishing the Weberian model of the public service which emphasises individual merit and neutrality (Zinyama, 2017).

### Leadership: What Lies Ahead?

The neo-liberalism has led to a moral breakdown of society and the dehumanisation of citizens. Poverty is not an accident of the development process, it is a function of bad governance and leadership. It is a product of exploitation of human beings by fellow human beings and the social oppression exclusion. The problem of Zimbabwe is not just economic growth, market competitiveness and efficient allocation of resources, as neo-liberalism would have us believe. To increase production

and incomes, and to produce a sustainable and justly distributed improvement in the quality of life, this calls for a prophylactic and transformational leadership.

This requires strong institutions. There is a connection between a society's institutions, that is, political, religious as well as economic, and its ability to achieve growth and development. The growth of institutions in the West bears testimony to the importance of institutional growth and efficiency for economic growth. In a fundamental sense, the crisis of Zimbabwean development can be described as a crisis of its institutions and leadership. Thus, Zimbabwe needs to develop and nurture a new type of leadership, which will set up and nurture new institutions of government. The leadership also need to create the necessary space for the evolution and development of the institutions of civil society since these are essential for both social and economic development. A government that is unable to harness and management its resources effectively usually fails to identify and define its own problems and its priorities for sustainable development.

The concept of leadership signifies the ability to lead others with the purpose of causing movement and change in the country or in an organisation and the talents of a leader are part and parcel of his personality. Management practices in African institutions are decadent as rules of the game reward behaviour that is incompatible with organisational effectiveness and efficiency. The transformation of the character of African institutions should be at the centre of their process of change.

Good national leadership must seek to inscribe principles and values of welfare, equity and justice in its politics. Leaders who turn predatory to public property or resources are simply put thieves. They have no shame emptying public coffers showing us that they have wrong values in life but they have no virtues. Zimbabwe lacks a regime of public ethics yet public ethics are central to the role of the public official in good governance if a system is to be efficient, effective and trustworthy. There is need to devise ways of dealing with declining ethical consciousness among political officials and citizens.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The political institutions determining how a country is run are very important for positive economic performance. The chapter touches on the subject of leadership and institutional reforms. Inevitably, complex agency problems have arisen in the public sphere. In discussing public sector reforms, it is relatively easy with the benefit of hindsight to criticise governments for poor implementation strategies and for lack of commitment. However, in light of the institutional reforms, Zimbabwe is probably more overwhelmed than uncommitted. In the area of institutional building, the

government of Zimbabwe lacks the farsightedness and patience required for success especially from key stakeholders like citizens and international community.

Institutional reforms in Zimbabwe have been complex. This was not only for lack of finances and human resources but also because the civil service, is the weakest link in the reform process, was assigned the task of reforming the public sector, including itself. The agency problems implied this peculiar role explain in part the recalcitrant nature of and the confusion related to public sector reforms. In practice, institutional reforms are easier to draft than to implement or internalise. This has been especially true in devolution efforts. Reforms at the centre have failed to take into account the implications of devolution which implies that capacities need to be shifted from the centre to the locality.

With regard to developing institutional capacities in the public sector, a major issue relates to making civil service an attractive place to work with good career prospects and remuneration. The strategy of turning the civil service into an employer of last resort must end if the sector's productivity is to increase. Thus, to ensure that civil servants are facilitators and not impediments to reform will demand the improvement of their remuneration as well as creation of facilitation for their training and skills upgrading. It is important to remember that a professional civil service will thrive on exhortation alone.

Sound financial management, an efficient civil service and administrative policy, efficient and fair collection of taxes, and transparent operations that are relatively free of corruption all contribute to good delivery of public services. While the above efforts are encouraging, there still remains a lot to be done if good governance and service delivery are to be strengthened. Despite the efforts targeted at institutional reforms, funding remains a major issue in realising those ideas. The crucial elements in the good governance being called for in Zimbabwe are accountability, transparency, predictability and, human rights among others. The Machiavellian behaviour of political elites in Zimbabwe, often attracts little prosecutorial response due to the widespread practice of granting immunity to current and former officeholders.

Institutional reforms demand strong political leadership as discussed above under the strong political will. However, where influential bureaucrats remain largely indifferent or even cynical, reforms will make little headway. Successful institutional reforms are characterised by enthusiasm across the board and not just at the top.

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