

Conceptual dynamics of intergovernmental relations in a unitary nation: The case of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This paper is a critical examination of the conceptual differentiation of intergovernmental relations (IGR). The paper distils the conceptual boundaries of IGR and disqualifies classical scholarship that restricts the study, conception and application of the term to federal nations only, either as a conceptual synonym of federalism or a term applicable in articulating the relations between federal and state governments. The paper argues that classical scholars of the field restricted the conceptual breath of IGR to the philosophical traces of federalism while presenting a nebulous picture that such relations are not found in unitary nations. Such restriction has presented a theoretical liability to the field of IGR by confining its depth below its actual stretches as a field of reasoned discourse. This paper is based on twenty qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with key informants using the purposive sampling technique. Respondents were drawn from Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs, Members of Parliament, the judiciary, academia, civil society, permanent secretaries in government ministries and mayors of municipalities and city councils. The findings of the paper unequivocally places that IGR is a universal concept that extends beyond the dogmatic debate of federalism and unitarism as such relations are to be found wherever two or more governments interact in the development and execution of public policies and programmes. The necessity of IGR therefore cuts across political systems to address the disputes, interdependencies and spillover effects resulting from constitutional overlaps in all forms of governmental interaction.

Keywords: intergovernmental relations, decentralisation, unitary nation, federal nation

Introduction

The relationship between government jurisdictions, particularly as it pertains to the exercise of 'defined' power has elevated the critical role IGR should play in modern day governments and politics (Mathebula 2001). The level of attention has resulted in a scholarly definitional contest on the conceptual breath of IGR and its application in unitary nations. Classical scholars and students of federalism have argued that IGR as a concept is usually associated with federal administration systems where relations between the federal and the state governments are formally spelt out in the Constitution (De Villiers, 2012). In relation to this, a fundamental question has been raised to determine whether IGR are a discourse of federalism with little relevance to unitary nations (Ile 2007). This is important because, the leadership of a country, unitary or federal, has to contend with the varied relationships between organs of government in an effort to achieve governmental goals. In other words, a country may be unitary in nature but have federal characteristics and vice-visa in terms of the implementation of governmental systems. This paper strongly argues that IGR exists both in federal and unitary nations and the paradigm that IGR is only associated with the federal system should be strictly discarded.

History and dimensions of the study of intergovernmental relations

According to Wright (1978: 1), 'in comet-like fashion', the concept or phrase IGR has entered the orbit of common political discourse and enjoys extensive usage among scholars and policy-makers of various types and persuasion. Wight (1978: 2) further traced the earliest usage of the terminology, IGR to Professor Clyde F. Snider's writing in 1937 on county and township government in the U.S. Wright's engagements with Professor

Snider concerning the history and usage of the term IGR elicited the following comment from the latter: 'I doubt very much that I was the first to use the term but have no notion from whom or from what I borrowed it'.

However, there are contestations over the history and conceptions of IGR due to a multiplicity of factors. To Mathebula (2011, 834) the relationship between government jurisdictions, particularly as it pertains to the exercise of 'defined' power has elevated the critical role IGR should play in modern day governments and politics. The level of attention has resulted in a scholarly definitional contest that necessitates a need to reopen the inquest. Ongaro et al (2011) added that the exploration of IGR and multi-level governance has historical, conceptual and contextual dimensions which can better be resolved through providing a contextual compliment to the conceptual perspectives. Over the years many authors have attempted to define the conceptual boundary of IGR. However, there seems to be a general agreement with Rosenthal's (1980: 5) that 'drawing conceptual boundaries around the structures of IGR is not only difficult, but also problematic in terms of understanding the processes associated with IGR'. Thus, even while some effort has gone in to describing cooperative patterns of behaviour, much remains to be done in identifying the various factors which either promotes cooperation or conflict.

The concept IGR has largely been associated with federal nations and most classical scholars of the field assume that the politics of federalism and intergovernmental management are inextricably intertwined (Anderson, 1960, Elazar, 1987). Mathebula (2011) added that the distinction between the terminological meaning of IGR and the philosophical traces of federalism, particularly in relation to the pursuit of common goals by sub-national jurisdictions, creates a grey area between IGR and federalism. This stems from confusion in conceptually distinguishing federalism and IGR. For instance, on one hand, many US students and scholars view the two concepts as equivalent and on the other hand find IGR to be a feature only in nations with a federal system of government (Anderson, 1960, Wright, 1978, Elazar 1987, Finifter, 1993, Peters and Poirier, 2001, Ospekin, 2001, George, 2008, Anton, 2014). Indeed key to this conceptual examination is whether IGR are only a feature in federal nations and whether one can legitimately argue that IGR exists in the same form in unitary nations as it does in federal nations.

In relation to the above, Bello (2014, 67) noted that '...usually, the concept is associated with states having a federal administrative system. This, however, does not in any way suggest that intergovernmental relations do not take place in a unitary system'. McEwen et al (2015, 323) complimented the above view by stating that IGR are essential to all political systems with multi-level government 'given the necessity of governmental interaction to address the disputes, interdependencies and spillover effects resulting from constitutional overlaps', as well as the 'need to confront policy problems that defy competence divisions'. This is the case in both unitary and federal nations because Bohne, Graham, Readschilders and Lehrke (2014) found 'multi-leveledness' to be a fundamental characteristic of the modern state.

Bello (2014) and Jonga and Chirisa (2013) added that in a unitary nation, IGR (conveniently studied as centre-local relations) would refer to interactions between the national government and the sub-national governments. However, the constitutional allocation of governmental functions between federal and regional governments in a federal system is absent in unitary nations. It is the central government, in a unitary nation, that determines which functions should be allocated to the sub-national governments. The central government can also decide to modify the functional allocations without consulting the lower units. Furthermore, the central government in a unitary state can unilaterally determine both the substance and the style of intergovernmental interactions. Rabin et al (2007)'s concept of coercive IGR would squarely articulate the relations in unitary nations often epitomised by central government preemptions, unfunded mandates, grant conditions etc.

Unitarism in perspective: Do systems of government influence intergovernmental relations?

The understanding of systems of government in both conceptual and practical terms presents a fertile ground upon which the influence of a system of government on IGR can be examined. There are many forms of government but the most applied and studied are unitary and federal but perhaps classifying a nation as either unitary or federal is a difficult task as nations may pose both unitary and federal characteristics (Mdliva 2012). Contrary to federal systems, unitary systems are usually found in smaller countries, such as Britain and Japan, Zimbabwe included, and who do not have as much ethnic diversity. For example, nearly all countries in Latin America are made up of unitary systems of government as they strive towards a centralised presidential government. Unitary government however is not completely centralised in its approach. Like federalism, unitary systems often look to the lower levels of government for assistance and to take on more responsibility. Although

unitary government is, in definition, hierarchical, there are often times when the two levels of government meet to bargain with political responsibility.

Mahler (1995) in Mdliva (2012, 30) located that a unitary system ‘usually comprises one level of government above the local level’. This view may not fairly represent the state of the majority of unitary nations as the majority have three levels of government included being regional or provincial structures which occupy the similar government space with states in federal nations though their powers are not as extensive and as expansive as those of state governments in federal nations. For example, almost all counties in Africa have three levels of government in terms of the Constitution and relevant laws or practical operation of government; except for a few examples such as Botswana whose government is constituted at the national and local government levels, without the regional or provincial tier. Therefore, labelling a polity as unitary implies that constitutional and sovereignty authority is vested in the central government, and not that all political and expenditure are made at the. The crucial distinction is that power from national to sub national bodies in a unitary polity may be retrieved’. Mahler (1995, 30) cited Britain as an example, where the power to make political decisions ultimately resides with parliament, despite there being city and county governments, and parliament has control over their decisions. ‘Parliament has the power to grant the cities or counties more influence or to take away policy jurisdiction they may already control’. Hague & Harrop (1987:176) stated that ‘in a unitary state sub-national government, whether regional or local, may make policy as well as administer it, but they do so at the pleasure of the national government’. In a nutshell any form of sub national government in a unitary nation is a creature of central government either through statute or primary legislation or any other relevant enactment.

In a unitary system, governmental relations are mostly the result of enforced duties as prescribed by the Constitution or statutes which control lower authorities by virtue of the centralized control of authority. Gildenhuys (1991) in Mdliva (2012, 30) viewed that most legislation in unitary nations tends to set out principles, leaving all the detail to be stated in regulations. ‘Where regulations are made by central government, they are usually administered by public servants. This gives public servants a great deal of authority, including in many cases the authority to change local decisions or even to set them aside’.

Sokhela (2006) cited the doctrine of sovereignty while Hattingh, (1998), Roux et al, (1997) and Asmal 1994) defined a unitary form of government as a form of government that recognises a supreme authority in a state, which is not subordinate to anything or any person. This is the premise of the principles whereby a unitary form of government may be identified and forms the basis of relations between governmental bodies in a unitary state. In unitary states the central legislative authority is sovereign and can pass laws that regulate the internal and external affairs of the state, and in theory there is no limit to the powers of the central legislative authority, except that it can place limitations on its own procedures. In a unitary state therefore, the parliament of the whole country is the supreme law making body and final authority vests with the national government.

The nexus between decentralisation and intergovernmental relations in unitary nations

The conceptual and theoretical relationship between decentralisation and IGR is a very fundamental as relations are usually manifested between a national government and decentralised sub national governments in unitary nations. Very often scholars of both subjects have invested much attention on what is generally referred to as fiscal IGR or fiscal decentralisation as most of the conflicts in IGR and decentralisation have fundamentally been hinged around the splitting or distribution of tax authority and revenue sharing between the central government and sub national governments. This theoretical bias has painted a nebulous picture that the only umbilical code connecting IGR and decentralisation is the possibility of conflicts around the fiscal space. However, Ile (2007) argued that considering structural and institutional features of intergovernmental systems in holistic terms is critical in determining the performance of sub national governments in the decentralized policy systems. Hence one can submit that for sub national governments to successfully deliver on their mandates, effective intergovernmental systems in fiscal, political and administrative areas are required.

Examination of the impact of decentralisation and IGR on the delivery of public services in Columbia, which is a unitary nation like Zimbabwe, Lyne (2006), found that at the heart of decentralization reforms is a basic struggle for power and control which inevitably creates conflict and tensions. The study placed particular emphasis in trying to explain and understand how IGR shape the decentralization and effectiveness of public service delivery such as health and education to local and regional governments in Colombia. Looking at how conflict and compromise is achieved by the different political actors is therefore an important contribution to the understanding of decentralization processes. Lyne (2006) concluded that the interrelationship of political

institutions also affect the distribution of power in any IGR system even though context and motives matter, political institutions (and their inter-relationships) are independent and able to influence the process of decentralization. Therefore, the need to concentrate on bargaining relationships between central government, political parties, and sub national governments as underlying factors controlling the reform process is of fundamental importance.

In analysing the consequences of decentralisation on IGR, the OECD (2003) found that while decentralisation is perceived to bring government closer to the people, it also creates an information gap between the centre and sub national jurisdictions entrusted with fiscal powers, with the potential to causing problems where policy objectives differ between layers of government, as they often do. For example, sub national jurisdictions may not be willing to share the burden of fiscal consolidation with the higher levels of government. The benefits of decentralisation, in terms of better responding to local preferences, thus have to be balanced against equity and stabilisation objectives, which are determined nationally and very fundamental for IGR. In the same context, Dickovick (2003) viewed that macro economic crisis, particularly those caused by sub national malfeasance, can trigger reversals in intergovernmental fiscal relations just as they can trigger reversals in broader macro politics.

In practical terms and due to the complex trade-offs involved, the allocation of fiscal competencies among different levels of government is not clear cut and is largely depended on the institutional framework established to overcome co-ordination problems. According to the OECD (2003: 7), the main challenges in this respect are 'the design of an appropriate contractual framework for service delivery between different layers of government, and among different jurisdictions within the same layer, as well as the monitoring and enforcement of these contracts'. Unitary countries experiences, such as South Africa, UK, Ghana and Zimbabwe, suggest that creating the correct incentives poses significant problems of design. For example, conditional grants and transfer schemes are possibly the most common forms of contract to be written among different layers of government and drive a wedge between the benefits and costs of provision, and consequently strengthen the incentives facing sub national providers to supply more of the service in question.

Wilson (2006) argued that policy making systems have become more decentralized, but that the performance of these systems is subject to inherent IGR tensions related to resources, institutions, bureaucratic behaviour and politics. In the majority of scenarios, central governments retain important policy roles and instances of recentralization affecting sub national autonomy. In examining the effects of decentralisation on IGR, the OECD (2003) stressed that, decentralisation can make governments more accountable both horizontally and vertically, in the process synchronising public services with local preferences and needs. In the same context, decentralisation may introduce competition across jurisdictions, thus boosting efficiency in the public sector. However, decentralisation can create co-ordination and integration problems that may be unhealthy for cooperative governance and IGR or may fail to deliver efficiency gains in activities where small scale operation increases provision costs or in cases where the benefits and costs of an activity are felt outside the supplying jurisdiction. Moreover, nationwide policy objectives, notably those related to equity and macroeconomic stabilisation may be more difficult to achieve with greater sub-national autonomy.

Presentation and analysis of findings

This section presents and analyses the findings from the twenty qualitative in-depth interviews conducted. The data presented here is a triangulation of views obtained from in-depth interviews and documentary review with the view of obtaining a balanced argument. This approach is particularly supported by Chirisa's (2014) argument that field research data obtained from key informants can be regarded as claims and might not be a reflection of the truth hence the need to compare and relate it to other sources to come out with the truth. This is fundamental to establish a true and balanced argument through interrogation of multiple and dependable sources of data to establish information.

Conceptualisation and relevance of IGR in unitary nations

The respondents demonstrated varied perspectives in their understanding of IGR giving a Zimbabwean context to both theory and practice. While they generally appreciated IGR to imply a horizontal and vertical diffusion of power and authority either across different tiers of government and/ or within a particular tier of government, respondents strongly differed on the configuration of such relations especially the power wielded by the different levels of government in intergovernmental bargaining. Members of the academia interviewed argued that most

unitary nations, Zimbabwe included, have often preferred to classify such relations as centre-local relations which however, presents a limited and narrow focus of such relations by restricting them to interactions between the central government and local government. One University of Zimbabwe lecturer in the Political Science department noted that:

Governments are calibrated differently from central to local level and IGR is a translation of how the different levels of government, some call them spheres while others call them levels, relate. There are various areas in which they relate, they can relate in terms of policy formulation, programme implementation and fiscal relations. So understanding of IGR is how are those areas where they intersect, where they interact, how are they organized, how are they mediated in terms of conflict and how do they collaborate or cooperate in terms of making sure that the individual competencies from which they deliver are complemented, supported and work together.

In the same context one Minister of State for Provincial Affairs interviewed simply defined IGR as the interface and the interrelationships between the central government and other tiers of government. A Member of Parliament (MP) in Bulawayo added that in terms of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 government is constituted at three different levels/tiers that are central government, provincial and metropolitan government and local government. IGR therefore is an expression of the relationship between those three tiers of government and how they interface in terms of service delivery. However, the second tier of government (provincial and metropolitan councils) is yet to be established in terms of the Constitution of Zimbabwe as the relevant legislation governing provincial and metropolitan councils is yet to be enacted, implying that currently IGR are much defined at two levels that is the centre and the local government level. Other respondents, for example a member of civil society referred to the relations as centre-periphery issues, while a mayor interviewed preferred the term multi-level governance and centre-local relations to refer to IGR. Though these are not conceptual synonyms, the general view of the various respondents, despite use of different terminologies pointed to IGR.

Respondents however differed significantly in their conception of how the relations should be configured. Two Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs interviewed strongly insisted that the relations are ideally directed by central government which defines the broad national policy direction and whip sub national government in line with that vision. They argued that this ensures that the operations of sub national governments are in the context of the broader national vision. These two respondents cited above emphasised on the constitutional clauses of Zimbabwe which emphasised the unitary state and the indivisibility of the country through secessionism or provincial parochialism. The argument emphasised a top-down approach to intergovernmental relations often characterised by directives to sub-national governments but largely limiting the autonomy of the latter while centralising power in the national government. One minister emphasised that IGR must be configured in such a way that it gives the national government necessary powers to supervise and monitor sub national governments with the view of bringing their policies in sync with the former. He argued that the sub-national system of government in Zimbabwe is predicated on decentralisation and anchored on the principle of subsidiarity. This view largely reflects the argument by Chatiza (2010) that centre-local relations in Zimbabwe reflect a vacillation between devolution (administration of local affairs by locally elected people) and delegation (performing tasks transferred or assigned by the central government).

However, two members of the academia and one representative of civil society interviewed challenged the above conception of IGR by Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs as a way of reinforcing vested interests in existing patterns of patronage and central–local linkage. They argued that the existing conception of IGR as reflected in the views of the above two ministers is largely an expression of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government’s strong centralist philosophy and practice. This view is widely held by functionaries of the ruling government as a means to maintaining and retaining power. One of the respondents from the academia further argued that it is misplaced to consider central government as a superior tier in the intergovernmental discourse as all the tiers are equal before the law. While appreciating that central government has broader national responsibilities, this should not be justification to distort intergovernmental relations in the favour of the central government. Rather, as alluded by one MP, IGR should be characterised by bargaining and mutual exchanges and not conceptions of superiority of one tier over the other. Tiers of government should be driven by the desire for cooperative governance as a key ingredient of integrated development and planning.

In triangulating the overall responses, 40% held the view that IGR should be directed by the central government in a unitary nation in order to maintain unity and promote the indivisibility of the nation. These were mainly the Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs, one MP, a permanent secretary, one mayor, a member of the judiciary and a retired government bureaucrat. They strongly supported a system where central government institutes mechanisms of controlling the policy context of sub national government in order to bring them in harmony with national processes. To this category of respondents, central government must develop sufficient systems to monitor sub-national governments and ensure that they act according to the dictates of the centre. Machingauta (2010) cited into the above argument where he noted that *'the hierarchical nature of the relationship between central and local government allows central government to supervise local government with a view to bringing it into harmony with national policies. Supervision enables the supervising authorities to prevent the unlawful use of the funds and other property of local authorities, to prevent corruption, or to improve the performance of local authorities, among others'*.

However, 60% of the respondents differed widely with the above views arguing that the current conception and practice of IGR was distorted, biased and reinforced the interference of the central government with the affairs of sub-national governments. This category of respondents contrasted the views held above as a representative of strong unitarism that was antithetical to devolution of power and thrived on patronage. A mayor and two academics interviewed argued that the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 strongly supported a devolved system of government which cannot be sustained under a highly centralised unitary government system. A member of the judiciary added that while central government monitoring systems on sub-national governments is important, there is need to balance the performance and transparency expectations of central government with the need for discretion and innovation by sub-national governments. However, the question is whether the current tight strictures on the functioning of local government will enable those local authorities to realize their potential to facilitate development and sustain democracy. The scope of innovation and responsiveness to local needs is directly to the measure of local discretion offered by the legal framework. He further argued that both conception and practice of IGR should reflect a paradigm shift from the previous context where sub-national governments were creatures of statutes to the current constitutional framework that enshrined local government and provincial and metropolitan councils in the Constitution while emphasising devolution as a cardinal constitutional provision. The former Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Ignatius Chombo cited by De Visser (2010), reiterated the above observation when he noted that, *'central government must of necessity nurture a conducive environment that enables local authorities to optimally tap into the local resources, material, capital and human'*.

In a nutshell, the current conception of IGR in Zimbabwe represents two distinct and conflicting schools. On the one hand are proponents of a strong central government. This school or category of respondents support centralism and are opposed to devolution. They are less enthusiasts of a strong sub national government system but rather argue that a strong central government should censure decentralised government for performance through various monitoring systems. This category rationalize centralist models of governance arguing that decentralization in a unitary nation is a creature of central governments who retains the prerogative of determining the quality and quantity of authority to devolve to local governments. They argued that decentralization of functions to sub national governments should be followed by the institutionalization of a package of control systems and supervisory mechanisms by central government to ensure that sub national governments behaves within the parameters set in the relevant laws.

In support of the above category of respondents, Crook (2001) identified three ways by which central government can exercise control over local governments. The first one is the control of local government income and expenditure. In income terms, central government may decide which taxes local governments can access or to set tax rates or to decide the form of intergovernmental transfers. In expenditure terms, central government may seek to control local government access to borrowing for capital purposes and to set limits to current expenditure levels or prohibit certain expenditures or to require localities to meet a greater or lesser proportion of the costs of certain services out of their own resources. Secondly, there is control through a process of administrative regulation or prescription about the ways in which particular local functions or services be provided.

The third dimension is control over the access permitted to local governments collectively and individually to central state decision. Machingauta (2010) also identified four dimensions of central government supervision on local government almost similar to the Zimbabwe Institute (2010) and he argued that, *the hierarchical nature of the relationship between central and local government allows central government to supervise local government with a view to bringing it into harmony with national policies. Supervision enables the supervising authorities to prevent the unlawful use of the funds and other property of local authorities, to prevent corruption, or to*

improve the performance of local authorities, among others. The four dimensions of supervision of local governments by the centre he identified are the establishment of local government institutions and regulating their institutional framework. Secondly, national governments' regulatory role in streamlining local government functions through the laws that establish local government and others that have a functional relationship with local government. The third manner of supervision is the continuous monitoring of local government functions through requests for information and access to local government records as well as investigations into allegations of corruption and other forms of improper conduct. In this regard, supervision may involve the suspension and or dismissal of elected councillors for improper conduct or poor performance. Lastly, is the intervention of central government by appointing administrators, commissioners or caretakers to act as council pending investigations (section 80 of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15)

On the other hand are proponents of devolution. This category of respondents argued that the current conceptions of IGR in Zimbabwe should be grounded in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, particularly the devolution clauses. The basis of their argument is that devolution provides room for innovation and experimentation to sub national government. They attacked a centralist model as a threat to democracy and a nemesis of the Constitution. The major voices in this category were academics, a member of the judiciary, permanent secretaries, a mayor and a representative of the civil society. They challenged that an empowered sub national government is better placed to engage with local systems of power for socio-economic transformation and sustainable governance. This school concurred with Steyler (2005) and De Visser (2008) who argued that in the debates leading to the Constitution of South Africa Act Number 108 of 1996, there was heated debate over the form of sub national government that the country desired. However those in support of a devolved and empowered sub national government and opposed to centralism raised three fundamental points. The first is that a devolved sub national government is a critical element in deepening and widening democracy while secondly being a laboratory for local decision making and experimentation. The third is that devolved sub national governments are an essential element to direct and coordinate regional decision making and service delivery. On the basis of the above two schools, this paper argues that the current conception of IGR should largely reflect the Constitution which strongly advocates for the devolution of power as opposed to centralism. The views of the first category are thus in contravention of the letter and spirit encapsulated in the Constitution

Relevance of IGR in a unitary nation

The relevance of IGR remains undisputable and respondents raised a number of fundamental factors that makes IGR both inevitable and desirable. Fundamentally, respondents argued that IGR promotes a coordinated and integrated approach to government service delivery thus helping to limit service delivery overlaps and conflicts. Countries that lack a well established IGR system are likely to suffer losses related to duplication of service, costs related to overlapping responsibilities, lack of focal points of accountability and a number of related government service delivery multifunctionalities. A permanent secretary interviewed noted that:

The relations between the different spheres of government are vital in any system of government, unitary or federal. While Constitutions assign specific mandates to different spheres of government, the full potential of a level of government to serve citizens cannot be realised if there is no coordination among the various government entities in planning and service delivery. High chances of conflict between the national government and sub national governments, is much likely to compromise functions of governments if the IGR system is not well organised. As such, there is a need for an intergovernmental coordinating mechanism.

Two MP and a member of the judiciary interviewed also argued that Constitutions have their own leakages and slippages and in certain instances different levels of government may be assigned similar functions which then create power struggles that disturb sustainable service delivery. Their argument was that in most political jurisdictions with more than one level of government, jurisdictions of governments as defined in law and applied in practice are much likely to be transcending. This, if not properly governed through clear principles of IGR and cooperative governance, may provoke conflict that can derail government service delivery.

Various respondents identified the following as the key principles and fundamentals guiding IGR in Zimbabwe

- recognizing the sovereignty of the Zimbabwean people;
- inclusive and participatory governance;
- promotion of national values, constitutional governance principles, and service delivery equality;

- respecting the constitutional status of the government levels and institutions;
- objective and impartial decision-making;
- minimizing intergovernmental disputes and facilitating a harmonious resolutions of disputes;
- promoting accountability to the people

When asked to identify some of the objectives of IGR, respondents, particularly members of the academia cited the following:

- to facilitate the steady implementation of the devolution principles enshrined in terms of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013;
- to facilitate cooperation and engagements between national and sub national governments
- to promote coordination of government policies, legislation and functions;
- to promote accountability between among the three levels of government.

From the respondents, the two Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs, two MPs, a mayor and a member of the academia concluded that managing IGR is an important aspect in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has constitutionally entrenched orders of government and there are few issues in public policy that do not cross jurisdictional lines, few areas in which the actions of one government do not affect other governments. Consequently, relations with other governments are a major concern of all the Zimbabwean jurisdictions and governments should develop mechanisms to coordinate their response to intergovernmental issues.

The need for managing intergovernmental relations is driven by a range of factors, including constitutional ambiguity, fiscal relations, public policy interdependence, investment and trade, infrastructure management, environmental protection, policing and security, and the sharing of resources (Poirier and Saunders, 2008 and Agranoff and Radin, 2014). Partisan and group-based competition for political control and differing views on how to achieve national and regional objectives affect the modalities of interaction between intergovernmental partners. Edwards (2008) also seems to concur with the above justifications and added that IGR are intended to promote and facilitate cooperative governance and decision making by ensuring that policies and activities across all spheres encourage service delivery to meet the needs of citizens in an effective way. There are two dimensions of IGR which are vertical and horizontal IGR and in distinguishing the two Ile (2007) argued that vertical IGR are important for the establishment of lines of authority and maintaining accountability and responsibility as well as facilitating control. Horizontal IGR on the other hand occur in governmental bodies between individuals and institutions in the same hierarchical level, for example between ministers and cabinet in the national sphere of government.

On the basis of the above permutations, this paper defines IGR in unitary nations with specific reference to Zimbabwe as vertical and horizontal interactions and networking among different tiers of government and other organs and institutions of the state in the course of formulating and implementing government policy. This implies that there is vertical and horizontal IGR. Vertical IGR are interactions between two or more levels of government in a hierarchical order. A typical example is where central government gives policy directives to local government in a typical top-down approach. At the same time, vertical IGR can be bottom-up where, for instance, local government respond to policy demands of the central government through annual performance reports, financial statements or responding to circulars issued from the centre. In a similar context, horizontal IGR are the interactions of different organs or institutions at the same level/tier of government. This could for example be interaction between the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of central government or various local government units. The major drivers of such interaction would be sharing experiences and challenges, distribution and rationalising the use of resources, addressing policy inconsistencies or integrated planning and development. A typical example is the meeting of various functional heads of government departments at district level as members of the District Development Committee to spearhead planning and development in a district, meeting of members of the legislature, executive and the judiciary arms of government for the presentation and adoption of the national budget.

Conclusion

This paper examined the concept and application of IGR in unitary nations. It dispelled the widely held classical perception that IGR are only found in nations with a federal system of government. The paper emphasised the necessity and indispensability of IGR in unitary nations, as is with federal nations, particularly as a tool for

dealing with intergovernmental disputes emanating from constitutional overlaps and service delivery externalities. However, the paper concluded that most unitary nations have inadequately defined intergovernmental systems and are still struggling under the vices of centralism. Key aspects such as fiscal IGR are inadequately defined, lack sufficient frameworks and are often abused to the advantage of national governments.

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