



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**AN EVALUATION OF THE
NATURE AND ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN POST COLONIAL BOTSWANA**

by

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree**

DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY

in the

FACULTY OF ARTS

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PROMOTER: PROF C THORNHILL



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SUMMARY

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DPhil (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)



SUMMARY

A

The main objective of the research was to evaluate and assess the contents and character of local government in post-colonial Botswana. To achieve this objective a systematic evaluation of the historical development of local government in Botswana was undertaken. This involved evaluating the contents and complexion of local government in pre-colonial Botswana as well as during the colonial period. The research procedures utilized, included a literature review and interviews with councillors, public officials and local government levels. Three basic and fundamental concepts were used to evaluate the nature of local government in post-colonial Botswana: decentralization, devolution and deconcentration.

These were used to analyze, assess and evaluate the degree of relative autonomy of local government in post-colonial Botswana. It was concluded that local government in post-colonial Botswana lacks relative autonomy. Eight central government control mechanisms were identified and assessed. These included the:

- (i) nomination of some councillors by the central government
- (ii) the power and authority of central government to suspend councillors
- (iii) the power and authority to dissolve councils
- (iv) the utilization of the doctrine of *ultra-vires*,
- (v) the power and authority to appoint local government personnel
- (vi) the *ex-officio* membership of district commissioners of councils
- (vii) the requirement that all resolutions of councils must first be approved by the Minister of Local Government, Land and Housing before they can become bye-laws, and



- (viii) through a system of using subventions rather than outright grants to assist councils.

The research demonstrated that local government authorities in Botswana lack genuine semi-autonomy.



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OPSOMMING

'N EVALUERING VAN PLAASLIKE REGERING IN DIE POST-KOLONIALE BOTSWANA

DEUR

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FAKULTEIT LETTERE EN WYSBEGEERTE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA

DPhil (PUBLIEKE ADMINISTRASIE)

OPSOMMING

Die hoofogmerk van die navorsing was om die inhoud en karakter van plaaslike regering in Botswana te bestudeer en te evalueer. Ten einde hierdie oogmerk te bereik is 'n sistematiese evaluasie van die historiese ontwikkeling van plaaslike regering in Botswana onderneem. Hierdie ontleding evalueer die inhoud en voorkoms van plaaslike regering se betrokkenheid in die voor-koloniale Botswana asook gedurende die koloniale era. Die navorsingsmetodiek wat aangewend is sluit in die bestudering van relevante literatuur en onderhoude met raadslede en munisipale amptenare. Die basiese en fundamentele begrippe te wete, devolusie, en dekonsentrasie was gebruik om die aard van plaaslike regering in die voorkoloniale era in Botswana te verklaar.

Hierdie metode was verder aangewend ten einde die graad van relatiewe selfregering van plaaslike regering in die voor-koloniale era in Botswana te bepaal en evalueer. Daar is na die evaluasie tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat plaaslike regering in die post-koloniale era in Botswana aan relatiewe selfbestuur ontbreek. Verder is die volgende sentrale beheermeganismes van die sentrale regering oor plaaslike regering geïdentifiseer.

- (i) nominasie van sommige raadslede vanaf sentrale regering
- (ii) die gesag en bevoegdheid om raadslede te skors
- (iii) die gesag en bevoegdheid om rade te ontbind
- (iv) die benutting van die *ultra-vires* leerstelling
- (v) die gesag en bevoegdheid om personeel in die plaaslike regering aan te stel
- (vi) die *ex-officio* lidmaatskap van distrikskommissarisse van rade



- (vii) die vereiste dat alle resolusies van rade eers deur die Minister van Plaaslike Regering, Grondsake en Behuising goedgekeur word voordat dit as munisipale verordeninge van krag word, en
- (vii) die gebruik van direkte toekennings eerder as om plaaslike regerings by te staan.

Die navorsing toon aan dat plaaslike regeringgesag in Botswana aan ware relatiewe selfregering ontbreek.

DEFINITION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The study seeks to identify and assess the nature and role of local government in post-colonial Botswana. Reference will however be made to the colonial system of local government in order to provide a pre-independence historical perspective. This will entail a brief study of the socio-economic and political conditions within which the post-colonial system of local government was conceived, the impact of the conditions not only on the process of the development of the system of local government but also on the nature of the local government system that emerged in post colonial Botswana.

There are a number of reasons why the study of local government in Botswana is significant.

- **Firstly**, the system of local government in Botswana is still in its infancy or formative stage. To be specific, it was formally introduced in 1966 when Botswana gained independence.
- Prior to 1966, no authentic system of local government existed. Hence the knowledge of the nature and role of local government in post colonial Botswana is still largely insufficient owing to the fact that no serious and detailed research has so far been undertaken. This is especially so in the area of local government. Hence, the need to undertake this study.
- **Secondly**, the study is significant because of the place that local government occupies or is supposed to occupy in a democratic political system, and the role that it plays or should play in the extension of democracy and provision of services.

The study will thus try to identify and assess the process and the problems local government encounter in trying to concretize the goals.

- **Thirdly**, the study is significant because it will help to assess and test the degree of local government autonomy in dealing with issues within their statutory areas of jurisdiction.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The following are the main objectives of this study:

- (i) to improve the understanding and appreciation of local government in Botswana;
- (ii) to assess the level or degree of relative autonomy of local government in Botswana;
- (iii) to identify and assess the role or roles that local government plays in Botswana;
- (iv) to identify and assess its contribution to the development and growth of democracy;
- (v) to identify and assess mechanisms used by central government to undermine or curtail the relative autonomy of local government;
- (vi) to suggest an alternative model of local government for Botswana.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- (a) The first hypothesis is that local government bodies in Botswana enjoy little autonomy.
- (b) The second hypothesis is that local government in Botswana is controlled, manipulated and monopolized by a small elite made up of rich cattle barons and business people.
- (c) The third hypothesis is that local government in Botswana has so far failed to become a viable instrument for the promotion and extension of participatory democracy.
- (d) The fourth hypothesis is that local government in Botswana has provided a fertile ground for the duplication of government activities.
- (e) The fifth hypothesis is that a substantial number of councillors are ignorant of the true role of local government.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The analysis of available data will be the main method of research. This is because this type of research makes this method appropriate and useful because much of the information of this sort is collected periodically thus making possible the establishment of trends over time.

In addition the gathering of data from such sources does not require the cooperation of individuals about whom information is being sought as does the questionnaire. Thirdly, the data collected in this manner minimizes the incidence of the investigator's subjectivity.



- (i) Sufficient data already exist on local government in Botswana in official records and other documents.

- (ii) Data collected during the 1984, 1989 and 1994 general elections in Botswana as part of an election study will also be used.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of individuals have contributed to the successful preparation of this thesis. Needless to say ultimate responsibility for the views and opinions expressed lies with me for ultimately the final product is of my own conception.

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor and promoter, Prof C Thornhill, who encouraged me to undertake this study and expended energy in advising, criticizing aspects of my analysis and making valuable contributions which made this thesis a success. I am also greatly indebted to Ms Rena Botha who painstakingly waded through my illegible handwriting which in certain instances resembled hieroglyphics, in typing the draft and final draft of the thesis. Her contributions went beyond mere typing, she also took it upon herself to eliminate unnecessary repetitions and spelling errors.

My thanks also go to Ms M Viljoen who typed my proposal. I would like to thank Mr Daniel Moloadi, my former colleague at the Institute of Development Management, who traced the necessary data for me and sent it to me.

I would also like to thank the University of Pretoria for enabling me to study for my degree without paying any fees.

I would also like to thank all the councillors that I have interviewed over the years. My gratitude also go to those government officials both at the local and central government levels who allowed me to interview them on a number of occasions.

I would also like to express my sincere and deepest appreciation for the opportunity accorded to me by the University of Botswana Democracy Project to participate in its research and workshop activities which enabled me to collect valuable data on local government in Botswana. My appreciation also go to my colleagues in the 1984 Botswana General Election Survey.