

# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL OUTLINE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the ten chapters into which this thesis is divided. The aim is to present a brief description of the contents of each chapter, the arguments and conclusions contained therein. The chapter also contains the statement of the problem the thesis seeks to assess and its significance, as well as the objectives of the study. The chapter also includes the hypotheses which are used as the basis of the evaluation of local government in Botswana. Finally the chapter contains the methodology used to collect data used in the thesis. It needs to be stated that the chapter is highly descriptive.

The thesis is divided into ten chapters, chapter one forms the introduction and describes the contents of each chapter. Chapter two focuses on the definition of decentralization and local government as well as identifying different types of local government, it also seeks to isolate different definitions of decentralization. The chapter concludes that the dividing line between and amongst the different definitions is very thin. It concludes that in practice the difference between the concepts of deconcentration and devolution is almost non-existent.

Reasons behind decentralization as well as the prerequisites for a successful decentralization are identified. Chapter two also looks at the different systems of local government and concludes that there are no fundamental differences between these systems except those of emphasis. It is argued that the significance of local government lies in its role as a training ground for citizens, facilitation of government accountability, increasing administrative efficiency and accommodation of local differences.

Chapter three offers a brief analysis and evaluation of the system of local

government in precolonial Botswana, and concludes that precolonial Botswana had a democratic system of local government. It assesses the nature of local government in Bechuanaland protectorate and concludes that no genuine system of local government existed during this period. Chapter three examines the system of local government in post-colonial Botswana and the reasons for its establishment. It identifies six reasons underlying the introduction of local government in post-colonial Botswana. The chapter begins from the premise that the system of local government was fundamentally introduced to accommodate the contradictory class interests of the members of the ruling class and in the final analysis the system serves the interests of the ruling class rather than the general citizenry.

Chapter four assesses the emergence and establishment of local government in post colonial Botswana. It looks at the reasons or rationale why Botswana decided to introduce a system of local government when it gained independence in 1966. Furthermore, it also analyzes the legal or statutory framework within which local government operates in post-colonial Botswana, as well as the two types of local government, i.e. district and town councils.

Chapter five examines the structure, membership and the class character of council members. It identifies three categories of membership and positions that the nominated members are to secure central government control and manipulation of councils. The chapter also assesses the character of council members and asserts that they are essentially members of the petty bourgeois class. It contends that the majority of council members are generally semi-illiterate or completely illiterate.

Chapter six focuses on the responsibilities and functions of councils and isolate two categories of functions i.e. mandatory and permissive functions. It argues that councils have not been able to meet their targets for various reasons. These include, shortages of skilled personnel and funds. The chapter also identifies council committees as instruments by means of which councils perform their functions and discharge their responsibilities.

Chapter seven looks at the nature of council politics, specifically at the nature of the council election process which includes the delimitation of local government wards, the nomination of local government candidates, the selection of local government candidates and the local government elections results. The chapter contends that council elections in Botswana have, since the establishment of councils in 1966, been dominated by the Botswana Democratic Party.

Chapter eight analyses the nature of local government resources in terms of management and control, auditing, sources of revenue and expenditure and concludes that councils are unable to generate their own revenue. Chapter nine assesses the mechanisms used by the central government to control local government and concludes that these mechanisms have reduced the relative autonomy of councils.

Finally chapter ten provides an evaluative summary and conclusion of the research and tries to identify and draw the major tenets of the analysis. The chapter focuses on the suggestions necessary for the improvement of the status of local government in Botswana.

The conclusion drawn in this chapter is that in a class divided society local government is incapable of becoming an instrument for the extension of democracy, sustainable participation in the decision-making processes, bottom-up planning and genuine accountable governance.

## **2. 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.

2.1 **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.

2.2 Prior to 1966, no authentic system of local government existed. Hence knowledge of the nature and role of local government in post colonial Botswana is still largely patchy owing to the fact that no serious and detailed research has thus far been undertaken. This is especially so in the area of local government. Hence, the need to undertake this study.

2.3 **Secondly**, the study is significant because of the place 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.

2.4 **Thirdly**, the study is significant because it will assist in assessing and testing the degree of local government autonomy in dealing with issues within their areas of statutory jurisdiction.

### 3. STUDY OBJECTIVES

The following are the main objectives of this study:

3.1 To improve the understanding and appreciation of local government in Botswana.

3.2 To assess the level or degree of relative autonomy of local government in Botswana.

3.3 To identify and assess the role or roles that local government plays in Botswana.

3.4 To identify and assess its contribution to the development and growth of democracy.

3.5 To identify and assess mechanisms used by central government to undermine or curtail the relative autonomy of local government.

3.6 To suggest an alternative model of local government for Botswana.

#### **4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

4.1 The first hypothesis is that precolonial Botswana had a democratic system of local government despite what European scholars have argued.

4.2 The second hypothesis is that during the colonial period no genuine system of local government existed because of lack of interest by the colonial administration.

4.3 The third hypothesis is that local government in Botswana is a class-based institution intended to serve the interests of the ruling petty bourgeois class.

4.4 The fourth hypothesis is that local government in Botswana lacks genuine relative autonomy and is manipulated by the central government and as such has failed to become a viable instrument for the promotion and extension of

participatory democracy.

4.5 The fifth hypothesis is that because of their semi-illiteracy and illiteracy, a substantial number of councillors are ignorant of the true role of local government.

4.6 The sixth hypothesis is that local government in Botswana is a male dominated institution.

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The analysis and evaluation of available data will be the main method of research. This is because the type of research being envisaged, makes this method appropriate and useful because much of the information is collected periodically. This makes the establishment of trends over time possible. 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. Data collected in this manner minimizes the incidence of the investigator's subjectivity.

Sufficient data already exist on local government in Botswana in official records. Data collected during the 1974, 1984, 1989 and 1994 general elections in Botswana as part of the election studies by the University of Botswana will also be used. This will be supplemented by interviews conducted in 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993.

## **6. DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF SOME KEY CONCEPTS AND NAMES**

### **6.1 Bechuanaland**

This name was used by the British Colonial Administration between 1885 and 1965.

### **6.2 Botswana**

The name Botswana came into use from 1966 when the country became independent.

### 6.3 Khama

Khama is the spelling used by early historians on Botswana when referring to - Khama.

### 6.4 Class

In this thesis, class will mean what Lenin (1971:248) calls a

"large group of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in the historically determined system of production, by their relation to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and consequently by dimension and mode of acquiring the share of social wealth which they dispose".

### 6.5 Bourgeois

The term bourgeois has come to mean a capitalist, and during the Middle Ages as a synonym for the middle class i.e. the class that came immediately below the aristocracy which was then the ruling class (Marx and Engels 1968:350). The origins of the word can be traced back to the collapse of the slave mode of production, the emergence of feudalism and the emergence of towns. Historically the word meant 'urban dweller', in German 'burgher' (Nikitin 1959:19). It was used to refer to the merchants who operated their businesses from towns. Thus bourgeois is the French version of 'burgher, a town dweller'. In recent times the word has come to denote those who are in charge of the state apparatuses, especially in developed countries. It is also used to denote those who own and control the means of production in the society.

### 6.6 Bureaucracy

The term will be used to refer to public officials or civil servants.

### 6.7 Bureaucratize

The word is used in this thesis to refer to the transformation of chiefs during the colonial period in Botswana into salaried public servants (Holn and Molutsi

1989:103).

### **6.8 Petty Bourgeoisie**

According to Shivji (1978:21):

" petty bourgeoisie in classical marxian literature refers to those strata which cannot be included either in the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. They exist in the middle ranks and interstines ... of a ... capitalist society. This term usually includes such people as small property owners, shopkeepers and small traders, lower ranks of the intelligentsia and liberal professions ...".

This is the definition which will be used in this thesis.

### **6.9 Governance**

It is used in this thesis to denote systematic and continuous interaction between government and society (Kooiman 1993:430).

### **6.10 Power**

Power is used to denote the capacity to affect and change another person's behaviour without the cooperation of the affected person, by the threat of sanction and penalties (Ball 1983:26).

### **6.11 Authority**

Authority is used to denote the right to do something irrespective of the sanctions the person may possess (Ball 1983:30).

### **6.12 Ward (Kgoro)**

The word 'ward' has two political meanings in Botswana. In the traditional political context the word 'ward' refers to the smallest socio-political unit in the socio-political organization. In the traditional socio-political context, society is divided into sections which are made up of families usually related by blood. These units are called wards and each ward is headed by a ward head.



In the post-colonial Botswana, the word 'ward' is also used to mean a local government constituency delimited for electoral purposes.

### **6.13 Ruling class**

In this thesis, ruling class refers to a group of people who collectively control the state and its apparatuses. In Botswana this ruling class is composed of the members of the petty bourgeoisie.

## **7. SUMMARY**

This chapter was designed to identify the main issues analyzed in each chapter and the arguments raised in each one of them as well as the conclusions drawn. The chapter was therefore intended to be an introduction which provided a bird's eyeview of the contents of the chapters in the thesis.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS AN EXPRESSION OF DECENTRALIZATION**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter defines and assesses the meaning of decentralization. In the process an attempt will be made to assess and evaluate the different definitions of decentralization advanced by different scholars. The definition of decentralization, as a starting point, seems essential because it will provide a proper and useful context within which a later analysis of local government could be undertaken.

The starting point for any meaningful discussion of local government would seem to be the definition of decentralization. This is because the system of local government is both a product and an expression of the notion of decentralization. Any fruitful analysis and assessment of local government should be preceded by an analysis of the concept and practice of decentralization. Hence the decision to first define the concept of decentralization before attempting to define local government as well as an assessment of different forms or types of local government systems.

#### **2. DEFINITION OF DECENTRALIZATION**

The definition of decentralization is that there is no general agreement as to what decentralization means and involves. This does not preclude one from attempting to delineate the main features of decentralization. An analysis of the different definitions that have been proffered by different scholars, reveals some general or common tendencies, which, whilst not specific, do provide a general framework within which a definition of decentralization could be gleaned. Before attempting a definition of decentralization, a survey of some of the popular definitions of decentralization must be attempted. In a United Nations Report (1965:88-89) decentralization is described as follows:

"this term refers to the transfer of authority on a geographic basis, whether by decentralization (i.e. delegation) of authority to field units of some department, or level of government, or by devolution of authority to local government units or special statutory bodies. This meaning, although differing from that of the French term *decentralizations*, is one given to the term in a number of countries and is useful for the purpose of this report".

In terms of this definition there are essentially two forms of decentralization, i.e. deconcentration and devolution. According to the United Nations, deconcentration is reserved for the dispersal of central government. Units of the same organization or department, whilst devolution is restricted to the transfer of authority from the central government to the local government units, i.e. local government authorities and what it calls special statutory bodies, such as public enterprises. Olowu (1988:12) defines decentralization as follows:

"As the name implies, decentralisation refers to the transfer of administrative and/or decision-making (political) power to lower organisational units. A second distinction that is made is between bureaucratic decentralisation and political decentralisation or devolution. The former encompasses the transfer of administrative responsibilities to field administrative units of the central government, whereas the latter refers to the transfer of substantial decision-making powers and responsibilities to corporate units outside the framework of the central government. Such units include local governments, statutory corporations, cooperatives and even organised private sector".

The problem with the abovementioned definition, although in the main identical to the one offered by the United Nations, is that it attempts to include what Olowu calls organised private sector without indicating what he means by organized private sector. Moreover it is difficult to see how the private sector can conceptually and empirically be encompassed within the framework of central government decentralization process. Whilst concepts are theoretically elastic it seems that he has stretched the elasticity of decentralization too far, by the

inclusion of the private sector within the framework of the central government decentralization. This implies that the private sector is an extension of the government. Perhaps his problem stems from the fact that he defines devolution in terms of "corporate units outside the framework of central government", whereas local government units and statutory bodies are not units outside the framework of the central government, but units within the political and legislative framework of the central government with relative autonomy.

He is not alone in defining decentralization in such a way that it also encompasses the private sector. Knells and Cyma (1983:25) also include the private sector in their definition of decentralization. Barrington (1967:1) defines decentralization in terms of deconcentration, devolution and dispersal, but he fails to clearly differentiate between dispersal and decentralization, either conceptually or empirically. It is difficult to establish how decentralization can be juxtaposed against dispersal, for decentralization means dispersal and dispersal means decentralization. This explains why Barrington has failed to delineate clear conceptual and empirical boundaries between decentralization and dispersal. Barrington (1967:1) has attempted to define dispersal as follows:

"Sending either parts of departments to different parts of the country, or whole departments to favoured provincial towns, on the model of the sending of most of the British ministry of National Insurance to New Castle Upon Tyne".

It seems that Barrington has included deployment in his definition. The first part of the definition involves a clear case of deconcentration, i.e. the part or section of the definition which refers to parts of departments. The second part of his definition, i.e. the sending of the British Ministry of National Insurance to New Castle Upon Tyne, is a case of redeployment rather than decentralization, i.e. if decentralization means the transfer of authority from a superior organisation or institution to subordinate ones. To extend the meaning of decentralization to include deployment of any and all organizational entities, in the manner in which

Barrington has done devalues the meaning and content of decentralization. Thus, it loses its political and organizational specificity.

Conyer's (1983:102) complaints that the traditional manner of defining decentralization is too narrow and legalistic, in this regard he remarks as follows

"Conventional systems of government have adopted a legal perspective. In countries influenced by the British system of government - and therefore in much of the literature on decentralization written in the English language - it has been usual to distinguish between two main types of decentralization, devolution to legally established locally elected political authorities and deconcentration of administrative authority to representatives of central government agencies".

Conyer's argument like that of Barrington, is not convincing because a concept should not be expanded merely because it is too narrow. The narrowness of the concept in most cases if not all, is theoretically and empirically helpful in that it enhances specificity of the concept and the empirical reality which it attempts to define. His argument is that the usual distinction between deconcentration and devolution has limited utility and application, in describing and explaining the scope of decentralization and its goals and options available. He therefore advocates alternative terminology and conceptual framework, and suggests that political and administrative decentralization replace devolution and deconcentration respectively. The mere addition of the two qualificatives seem to amount to mere semantics and scholasticism. Indeed in his formulation of alternatives, Barrington does not seem to have advanced a conceptual and practical framework capable of substantially adding anything beyond what is understood and by what decentralization means by using the conventional framework.

What Barrington seems to have succeeded in doing, is to make the concept of decentralization more cumbersome than it presently is by adding the qualificative. In addition to that, it merely complicates the understanding of decentralization.

Manda (1988:11) remarks as follows:

"The adoption of political and administrative to differentiate among varying types of decentralisation can, moreover, be awkward. It may be difficult to classify a politically decentralised body with formally assigned decision-making powers where this agency fails to exercise such functions in practice, and for that matter to classify a formally administratively decentralised agency which has assumed a political, that is, a policy-making role. The reliance upon such classifications of decentralisation schemes must be questioned".

Mawhood (1983:3-5), whilst not advocating an alternative conceptual framework, does observe, that:

"Decentralisation is ... used by different people to mean a good many different things".

It is true because decentralization in practice is conditioned by the socio-economic and political circumstances in which it is employed and as such it will tend to acquire the meaning ascribed to it by such circumstances. Indeed concepts must be adaptable to changing circumstances without losing their basic essence. In practice, decentralization does not exist in pure form and tends to display a variegated complexion. It tends to embody elements of both devolution and deconcentration. This is not surprising because organizational entities, like political, economic and social institutions, ever exist in a pure form. For example, a capitalist mode of production contains the survival relics of both the slave and feudal modes of production whilst a parliamentary system of government also embodies elements of a presidential system of government. This is also the case with a presidential system of government which contains elements of a parliamentary system, and this is the essence of socio-economic and political phenomena. To quote Manda (1988:11) again:

"Decentralisation programmes in practice are rarely easily classified into neatly separable categories, marked 'devolution', 'deconcentration', 'delegation' or dispersal since many, perhaps most, actual systems of decentralisation reveal traits of more than one category".

The utility of concepts or theories is determined by their ability and capacity to capture as closely as possible the practical essence of actual social, economic and political entities. Concepts are not the reality, they are intended to explain and as such can never fully explain reality. Lewis (1975:94) remarked as follows:

"The mistake too often made in philosophical and sociological discussions is to regard a concept belonging to a system of thought or explanatory theory as though it were itself a fact, something concrete. It is the assumption that we have reached finality and touched reality when in fact we have only constructed another set of explanatory concepts or useful models".

Lewis (1975:114) further remarked that:

"Reality is never reducible to or understood by, a conceptual system separated from its object which takes on an independence and permanence of its own".

This is the fundamental weaknesses of the conceptualization of decentralization advanced by Conyers et al. Concepts should not be arbitrarily constructed to suit the constructor's perceptions of reality, they must be constructed from reality itself, i.e. to say they must be produced by reality itself. This implies that they must, metaphorically speaking, emerge from the womb of the object they seek to describe and explain, lest they lead to distort of our perception of the reality we seek to capture.

This is not to deny that concepts which are useful to describe reality at a certain time do not become problematic and useless only to be replaced by a new set of concepts which are better suited to describe and explain the ever changing social reality. Conyers et al., are not convincing in their arguments regarding the usefulness of the conventional definition of decentralization in terms of devolution and deconcentration.

It seems therefore that decentralization should be defined in terms of devolution and deconcentration. In this regard, decentralization could be defined as the transfer of some legislative and administrative power and authority from a superior organ or institution to subordinate institutions or organs. This definition encompasses both deconcentration and devolution. Deconcentration refers to the transfer of some administrative power and authority from a superior organ or institution to subordinate organs or institutions, whilst devolution refers to the transfer of some legislative power and authority from a superior organ or institution, to subordinate organs or institutions. It is clear from this definition that the main difference between devolution and deconcentration is that in the case of deconcentration only administrative power and authority are transferred whilst in the case of devolution, some legislative power and authority are transferred. What it means is that under deconcentration the subordinate institution has no power or authority to enact legislation, its main function is to implement policy decisions, rules and regulations, formulated and enacted by a superior organ.

The clearest example of deconcentration is the establishment of field offices by the central government ministries in the regions and districts. Devolution involves the transfer of some legislative power and authority. This means that the subordinate organ has the power and authority to enact laws, rules, regulations and formulate policies independently of the superior organ as long as it acts within its own jurisdiction.



An example of devolution is the system of local government and to some extent the system of federating states in a federal system. This is the definition which will form the context within which an assessment of local government in Botswana will be undertaken. The Commonwealth Secretariat (1986:2) also adopts the same definition when it observes the following:

"A variety of terms is used to describe different types of decentralization ... Particularly common is the distinction between devolution, which usually means the legal transfer of power to a locally elected political body, and deconcentration, which is the transfer of powers by administrative means to local representatives of the central government".

### **3. THE RATIONALE BEHIND DECENTRALIZATION**

Decentralization is as old as the emergence of the state and other social organizations or institutions (Held 1987). During the era of absolute monarchy, some form of decentralization existed (Solo 1982), and ancient societies were characterized by a great deal of decentralization of power and authority (Engels 1884).

In recent years decentralization has taken an amount of seductiveness to the extent that no discussion of political organization is considered complete unless it also embodies a discussion of decentralization. It has become the criterion against which democracy is defined, the absence of decentralization is supposed to indicate the absence of democracy. In reality there is no system of government completely centralized, but what is the rationale behind the need to decentralize? What are the compelling reasons to decentralization? These questions are addressed in the following paragraphs.

#### **3.1 Decentralization as a medium for the extension of democracy**

Decentralization has been posited as an important instrument or mechanism by means of which government can extend democracy to the people, as the

Commonwealth Secretariat (1986:4) describes it:

"Decentralization is probably most often advocated as a means of increasing popular participation in decision-making and development. Popular participation in this case may be seen either as a desirable and in itself (a basic human 'right' and an essential component of 'democracy', necessary for the development of the individual's self-esteem) or as a means of improving the management of development programmes, by making them more relevant to local needs and increasing local commitment to, and involvement in, them".

Viewed from this perspective, decentralization is an important instrument for extending and promoting democracy.

To the pluralist school of thought, decentralization provides an almost fool proof guarantee for the survival and reproduction of democracy, this is because (Held 1987:191):

"in the pluralist account, power is non-hierarchically and competitively arranged ... There is no ultimately powerful decision-making centre ... since power is essentially dispersed throughout society, and since there is a plurality of pressure points, a variety of competing policy-formulating and decision-making centres arises".

At the level of practical politics, decentralization does not guarantee democracy nor does it reflect its existence. Neither does it guarantee nor facilitate the extension of democracy to the majority of people. This is especially so in a class divided society, because political power and the institutions through which it is concretized is a class entity in the hands of the ruling class. Real or true democracy can only exist in a society in which class divisions and all forms of social and political stratification have been abolished (Avineri 1968).

It seems an exaggeration to present decentralization as a necessary condition for the existence of democracy. Seen from this perspective, decentralization becomes a mechanism for the distribution of elements of political power and authority amongst the different fractions and categories of the ruling class. Mamdani (1976:13) comments on it as follows:

"At the level of politics, the state unites the ruling class(es) and divide the appropriated classes. In fact, the ruling class is precisely the class that controls the state. The state is an expression of its unity. The political apparatus of the state provides institutions for the peaceful regulation of conflict between sections of the ruling class".

Part of the problem of liberal democratic conception of decentralization and its place in the democratic process is that it conceives society as if it exists outside the cauldron of class and class struggles. It sees society as made up of groups operating from the same social and political plane. Political and social institutions are not seen as being vitiated by class inequalities and class struggles. Decentralized political institutions such as local governments therefore become mechanisms at the disposal of local inhabitants through which they become involved in political bargaining with central government.

If the class equation is introduced, politics does not become the focus of bargaining and compromise, rather the expression and consummation of class struggles and decentralized political institutions become the arena on which these struggles are fought. They become the eyes and ears of the central government, rather than weapons in the hands of the exploited and downtrodden. These comments should not be interpreted as a wholesale rejection of the value of decentralization in facilitating the extension of democracy to the people of the population, but to caution against uncritical assumptions regarding its value.

Where the masses are systematically depoliticized and deradicalized their effectiveness in assessing and evaluating government performance become almost completely blunted to the extent that decentralization becomes merely political tokenism for effective governance, Ake (1978:78) defines depoliticization as follows:

"Depoliticization entails reducing the effective participation of the masses and of non-hegemonic factions of the ruling class, and preventing some interests and points of view from finding political expression. The point of reducing the effective political participation of masses is to render them impotent, to prevent the political system from being overloaded with demands which are not conducive to its survival and to render the masses less available for socialization into radical political or oppositional behaviour by non-hegemonic factions of the ruling class. The process of depoliticization has made African countries political monoliths".

If decentralization is to become an effective vehicle for promoting and sustaining acceptable governance, it must therefore be accompanied by an intensive programme of radical political education of the masses to make them less subservient to government institutions and officials (Rudebeck 1974).

### 3.2 Preconditions for meaningful decentralization

Although there is no state that is completely centralized, the tendency especially in Africa, has been towards centralization. Decentralization is an exception rather than the norm. This was especially so, on the morrow of independence of many African countries as Chazan (1988:44) aptly puts it:

"The first few years of independence were accompanied by systematic efforts on the part of the new state leaders to overcome the constraints of the colonial legacy by reorganizing public institutions and by concentrating power at the centre".

Marger (1981:274) observes as follows:

"The relationship between class and participation is one of the firmest assumptions of political sociology, backed by a wealth of empirical evidence. Indeed the importance of class as an explainer of all forms of political behaviour is recognized by all political sociologists and political scientists, regardless of theoretical persuasion. Most simply, the higher one's class, the greater the scope of intensity, and significance of political participation. Those at the upper end of society's stratification system participate most frequently and in the most effectual political activities".

Marger is not completely correct when he contends that political sociologists and political scientists of all persuasion recognize the impact of class on political behaviour. On the contrary, most liberal scholars reject class as a factor in politics (Selsam et al 1975). Shivji (1975:3) describes it when he aptly observes:

"The Marxist theory of class struggles is perhaps one of the theories least discussed and most distorted by bourgeois academic scholarship. This is understandable, for class struggle is basically about state power, a fact rightly considered subversive and dangerous by the ruling classes and embarrassing by objective academics ... The political sting has been cleverly removed by reducing the concept to a static, quantitative and undialectical category".

The effectiveness of decentralization as an instrument for the extension of democracy and participation in the decision-making processes of state, must be tampered by the anvils of class divisions and class struggles.

### 3.2 Decentralization as an instrument for promoting and facilitating development and development management

Decentralization has been advocated for its possible contribution towards the facilitation of development. Before embarking on an assessment of whether decentralization of government institutions, structures and systems provides the best mechanism for stimulating and promoting development, it is necessary to provide a working definition of development. Gant (1979:6) defines it as follows:

"The concept of development is elusive; it is perceived not only as a condition of life but also as a goal to be attained, and as the capacity to grow and change and develop. These three ideas of development are bound together in efforts to understand and deal with the phenomenon development".

Commenting on the role of decentralization in the process of development, Olowu (1988:23) argues that:

"... it is felt that preoccupation with top-down development strategy which relied on borrowed capital and technology and emphasized import - substituting industrialisation ... was a false start which explains many of the dilemma confronting African countries today ... In its place, a strategy of 'development from below' ... In this alternative model, effective local institutions represent a key aspect of development strategy. A second consideration for the involvement of local government in the economic development process is the growing realization among scholars, development agencies, advisers and programmers that local institutions played a major role, in the modernisation ... ".

It is this realization which has stimulated the growing popularity of decentralization i.e. that development initiated from below and managed by people and institutions which exist among the people and controlled by them, has a better chance of

success and sustainability than development designed outside the target area and managed by remote control.

If it is accepted that people are the driving force and the locomotive for development, it is logical that institutions as essential instruments should be placed at their immediate disposal and decentralization becomes a logical mechanism by means of which such institutions are placed at their disposal. The success of decentralization in facilitating development and development planning will ultimately depend on the commitment of the central government to decentralization. It also depends on the local capacity, both political and managerial, to capture and control the decentralized institutions.

If there is no local capacity, decentralization will become a smoke screen through which top down development and development planning strategies are imposed by central government. It is therefore important that decentralization as an instrument for facilitating development and development planning, must be peeled off the romanticism which has recently camouflaged the problems inherent in it. The Commonwealth Secretariat (1986:5) observes as follows:

"... the relationship between decentralization and improved management is more complex than may at first appear. In the first place, decentralization programmes has to be carefully designed and implemented if it is to bring about marked improvements in management ... Secondly improved management (like effective participation) is not easy to achieve with or without decentralization ..."

This is a timely warning because of the growing tendency amongst supporters of decentralization to glorify the role of decentralization in facilitating development. In practice, the tendency has been for the local petty bourgeoisie to use decentralization as a vehicle to promote their own class interests at the expense of the people supposed to benefit from the system. Decentralization then becomes a mere smokescreen to deceive local people. (Shivji: 1975)

### 3.3 **Decentralization as an instrument to promote administrative efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services**

Decentralization has also been advocated for promoting administrative efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of services, because it creates political and administrative systems which are closer to the people they seek to serve. According to this argument, it allows the decentralized systems to understand and appreciate the needs of the local people more than the central government which is far removed from the locality. Whether decentralization will promote administrative efficiency and effectiveness will depend on the resources available to the decentralized units and the authority allocated to them by the central government. Smith (1991:59) argues as follows:

"Decentralization of administration arises because of informational economies. It is difficult for any large organization to keep its members adequately informed of each other's activities. As the number of members rises arithmetically, the number of potential links between each of the individuals rises more steeply. Central government can delegate tasks to subsidiary authorities (like local government) ... From this stand point, decentralization is a method by which better information can be gathered for decision-making, and processed at lower cost with a fully-centralized organization".

Whilst there is some merits in the arguments that decentralization facilitates the efficient and effective provision of public services, this depends on the availability of material and human resources. The tendency by the central governments in developing and developed countries has been to decentralize responsibilities without adequate funds and trained personnel. The result has been inefficient and ineffective delivery of services by decentralized units of government such as local government authorities (Manda 1978; Wraith 1972).



It is clear that if theory and practice are to meet, i.e. for decentralization to become a concrete vehicle for improving administrative efficiency and effectiveness, central government will have to provide adequate material and human resources. Management and administrative viability of the unit to which central government power and authority are decentralized, as well as the scope, degree and dimension of popular participation within that decentralized unit, influence to a certain degree the efficiency and effectiveness of decentralized local government management and administration. These issues go beyond the realms of the romanticism of the passionate advocates of decentralization and their unqualified belief in the efficiency and effectiveness of decentralization in the provision of public services.

#### **3.4 Decentralization as a mechanism for reducing sessionist tendencies**

Decentralization has been credited with the capacity of containing and reducing or minimizing sessionist tendencies. The Commonwealth Secretariat (1986:5) describes this capacity as follows:

"The third type of justification for decentralization argues that it will reduce pressure from regional groups who are already threatening to secede or may do so in the future if their demands are not met. In such cases, decentralization may give these regional groups sufficient powers to determine their own affairs, so that they no longer have any desire to secede".

In most cases, decentralization has so far encouraged secessionist tendencies for example, the introduction of federation in Nigeria encouraged the attempted session of Eastern Nigeria and the formation of the short-lived Republic of Biafra, and in Canada, the system of federation is encouraging the sessionist tendencies of Quebec. This has also been the case in India, Srilanka and Russia. This is because decentralization sometimes strengthens regional nationalism, and parochialism.

### **3.5 Decentralization as an instrument for facilitating accountable governance**

Decentralization has been credited with the promotion and sustainability of accountable governance, because of its proximity and closeness to the people. This provides, it is argued, special opportunities for the people to observe the workings and operations of government and enables them to evaluate the quality of services provided to them. It also enables them to assess the quality and performance of public officials, as Olowu (1988:20) remarks:

"Considering the fact that the growing size of the central government in most countries has seriously undermined effective accountability, particularly in the Third World countries, a strong case has been made for a more effective decentralization to subnational units of governments".

The effectiveness of decentralization as an instrument for fostering and sustaining governance will largely depend on the level of political consciousness and awareness of the people and the extent to which they have been politically mobilized. Political mobilization means an ever on-going process whereby people's consciousness of the socio-economic political and structural conditions and contradictions is sharpened and heightened so that they are able to critically assess and evaluate the role of government and its impact on their lives.

Where the people are systematically depoliticized and deradicalized their effectiveness in assessing and evaluating government performance become almost completely blunted to the extent that decentralization becomes merely political tokenism for effective governance, Ake (1978:78) defines depoliticization as follows:

"Depoliticization entails reducing the effective participation of the masses and of non-hegemonic factions of the ruling class, and preventing some interests and points of view from finding political expression. The point of reducing

the effective political participation of masses is to render them impotent, to prevent the political system from being overloaded with demands which are not conducive to its survival and to render the masses less available for socialization into radical political or oppositional behaviour by non-hegemonic factions of the ruling class. The process of depoliticization has made African Countries political monoliths".

If decentralization is to become an effective vehicle for promoting and sustaining acceptable governance, it must therefore be accompanied by an intensive programme of radical political education of the people to make them less subservient to government institutions and officials (Rudebeck 1974).

### **3.6 Preconditions for meaningful decentralization**

Although there is no state that is completely centralized, the tendency especially in Africa, has been towards centralization. Decentralization is an exception rather than the norm. This was especially so, on the morrow of independence of many African countries as Chazan (1988:44) aptly puts it:

"The first few years of independence were accompanied by systematic efforts on the part of the new state leaders to overcome the constraints of the colonial legacy by reorganizing public institutions and by concentrating power at the centre ... A process of power consolidation with strong authoritarian and even repressive overtones occurred throughout the continent".

These tendencies have not been completely eradicated from the political landscape of Africa. The argument in favour of centralization and against meaningful decentralization has been and continues to be the alleged need for national integration. It is generally contended that decentralization encourages secession whilst centralization encourages and even forces national integration. According to Olowu (1988:14):

"Any attempt to effectively decentralize power before this process is completed is bound to court disaster by promoting secessionist movements and misuse of such decentralized power by local despots or through the ignorance, poverty lack of initiative of the mass of the people. Even where sessionist bids are absent, the latter factors reinforce poor local administration, completing a vicious cycle of local government poverty and backwardness".

These are some of the problems which normally beset meaningful and successful decentralization:

### 3.6.1 The political will

For a meaningful and successful process of decentralization to occur, there is a need for political will and commitment on the part of the central government to genuinely transfer some political power and authority to lower political and administrative institutions. This should emanate from the conviction that decentralization is not only desirable but essential for good governance, accountability and service delivery. More importantly also the central government must have confidence and faith in the decentralized units that they can accomplish the government mission of fulfilling the needs of the people. Without the necessary political will, it is doubtful whether any meaningful decentralization can take place. Where there is an absence of political will on the part of central government, the tendency has been to reduce decentralized units such as local government authorities, to mere agents and extensions of central government, for instance in Swaziland.

### 3.6.2 Appropriate and adequate institutional and structural arrangements

It is essential that proper institutions and structures be put in place if meaningful decentralization is to take place. This includes adequate office accommodation, equipment such as office furniture, vehicles, and graders essential for the

performance of those functions and responsibilities, decentralized by the central government. In Botswana, local government authorities in some instances, have been hindered in the performance of their functions because of the lack of equipment and poor office accommodation and staff housing (National Development Plan 7 1992-1997, 1992).

### 3.6.3 Availability of skilled personnel

Successful and meaningful decentralization will depend on the availability of skilled personnel essential for tackling effectively the necessary political and administrative functions and responsibilities. Without the necessary skilled personnel decentralized units would find it difficult if not impossible, to undertake their responsibilities. Most decentralized units in Africa in particular and the Third World in general, have not been able to fulfil their responsibilities and commitments because of a shortage of skilled personnel (United States Agency of International Development 1990).

### 3.6.4 Availability of funds

The availability of funds determines successful and meaningful decentralization. Without adequate funds it is difficult for local authorities to fulfil their political and administrative commitments. This has been the case in Zambia (Manda 1988) and in Botswana and in many African countries (see Mawood 1974). It has also been the case in the Western countries (see De Smith 1973).

In most cases decentralization has collapsed because of the lack of funds. This is especially so with regard to smaller units with smaller financial bases. Even larger units usually find themselves unable to discharge their responsibilities because of a shortage of funds. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that decentralized units obtain the bulk of their funds, especially smaller and rural units, from the central government and their debts owed to, or guaranteed by central government. One effect of these conditions and organizational arrangements is to exacerbate the

fiscal crises of decentralized units.

The genesis and the impact of the fiscal crisis of decentralized units have been graphically articulated by O'Connor (1973) and Alcaly and Mermelstein (1977). In brief, decentralized units, have always lacked the authority and funds to deal with acute imbalances in the local economy which emanates from the continued dispersal of economic activities beyond their legal and geographical jurisdiction. These imbalances and shortages of funds have led and continue to lead to a crisis of the legitimacy of local governments because without funds they cannot deliver services.

For decentralized units to become sustainable to local units of governance, adequate funds will have to be made available to them. Without adequate funds decentralization will remain largely a hollow rhetoric as the Commonwealth Secretariat (1986:8) observes:

"The financial aspects of decentralization are equally important because finance is the other major resource required by regional and local governments or administration. In many countries the impact of decentralization has been disappointing because central governments have not been prepared to decentralize sufficient control over financial resources".

The deduction could therefore be made that the availability of financial resources determines or influences the success of decentralization and the ability of local governments to fulfil their obligations.

### 3.6.5 Good quality of local leadership

The success of decentralization will require local leadership capacity, both in terms of political and administrative leadership to give guidance and direction in the formulation and implementation of decentralized policies, programmes and projects. Where no local leadership capacity and capabilities exist it is essential that the

central government assists in developing such a leadership if decentralization is to be a meaningful expression and concretization of democratic governance and accountability (Manda 1988; Tocqueville 1935; Maddick 1963). Where no quality local leadership exists there is a danger, even a high level of probability that central government may continue to run the affairs of the local units directly or indirectly (Molutsi 1989).

#### **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

##### **4.1 Definition of local government**

According to the definition of decentralization, local government is a product of the devolution as a dimension of decentralization, as Olowu (1988:12) remarks:

"There are two approaches to the definition of local government in the literature. One approach, which is usually adopted in comparative studies, is to regard all such national structures below the central government as local government. A second approach is more circumspect in that local governments are identified by certain defining characteristics. These characteristics usually focus on the following five attributes: legal personality, specified powers to perform a range of functions, substantial budgetary and staffing autonomy subject to limited central control, effective citizen participation and localness. These are regarded as essential to distinguishing it from all other forms of local institutions and also ensure its organizational effectiveness".

These so called essential features of local government are misleading. Not all local governments provide an opportunity for effective citizen participation. In any case how is effective citizen participation determined? Is it determined in terms of electoral participation? Is citizen participation unique to local governments? The same problems afflict identifying legal personality as a feature of local government, for legal personality is not a monopoly of local governments. There are a number

of local institutions which have legal personality, but which are not considered local governments. Robson 1937:574) defines local government from a legal point of view as follows:

"In general, local government may be said to involve the conception of a territorial, non-sovereign community possessing the legal right and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. This, in turn, presupposes the existence of a local authority with power to act independent of external control as well as the participation of the local community in the administration of its own affairs...".

Gomme (1897:1-2) defines local government in the following manner:

"Local government is that part of the whole government of a nation or state which is administered by authorities subordinate to the state authority, but elected independently of control by the state authority, by qualified persons resident, or having property in certain localities, which localities have been formed by communities having common interests and common history ...".

Both Robson and Gomme seem to emphasize independence whilst local governments are not independent of central government control. Local governments enjoy only relative autonomy. Marshall's (1965:1) definition seems to come closer to the real features of local government, when he identifies three characteristics:

"... operation in a restricted geographical area within a nation or state; local election or selection; and the enjoyment of a measure of autonomy ...".

Meyer (1978:10) defines local government as follows:

"Local democratic governing units within the unitary democratic system of this country, which are subordinate members of the government vested with prescribed, controlled governmental powers and sources of income to render



specific local services and to develop, control and regulate the geographic, social and economic environment of defined local area".

The weakness of Meyer's definition is that it includes democracy as an essential element of local government whilst a local government can exist without it being democratic in the same way that a national government can exist in a country without that government being democratic. For instance, a government brought into power through a *coup de'etat*, is thus called repressive and undemocratic government. It is also possible to talk of undemocratic local government.

But Meyer's definition seems to capture the essence of local government, for local government is that local government institution with limited legislative power and authority which operates within clearly defined geographical and legal jurisdiction. The defining feature of local government is the authority to enact legislation within the defined jurisdiction. This seems to be the most important feature which sets local government apart from other local government institutions, such as land boards in Botswana.

#### 4.2 The significance of local government

The existence of local government has always been defended on the basis that it is a vital and crucial aspect of the process of democratization and intensification of mass participation in the decision-making process. No political system is considered complete and democratic if it does not have a system of local government. In the developed and industrialized countries of Europe and North America the cruciality of the system of local government has come to be taken for granted for there is no country in Europe and North America without a system of local government. This is not the case in the so called Third World (Mawood 1983; Wraith 1964).

A number of reasons have been advanced why a system of local government is essential.

#### 4.2.1 Training ground and nursery school for mass political education

The system of local government has been advocated and supported because it is generally believed that it serves as a training ground and nursery school for mass political education and mobilization. Tocqueville (1835:631) remarks:

"... town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science: they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy".

Maddick (1963:59) is more explicit when he observes the following:

"... a principal objective of local government is that it should foster healthy political understanding. The citizens learn to recognize the specious demagogue, to avoid electing the incompetent or corrupt representative, to debate issues effectively, to relate expenditure to income, to think for tomorrow".

This does not imply that the mere existence of local government will automatically lead to the development, nourishment and maturation of public spirit of political awareness and consciousness. Intensive political mobilization programmes must be introduced by these institutions to galvanize the public into active and meaningful political involvement. This will enable people to see the usefulness of local government and their role in the process of decision-making. Conscious political work by local government councillors, carried out with the explicit and vowed aim of intensifying, accelerating and directing the participation of the people in local politics lest the public sees local government as just another bureaucratic government institution (Holm 1971).

#### 4.2.2 Training for political leadership

It is believed that local government is essential because it provides training for political leadership, especially for those intending to venture into the arena of national politics. Laski (1931:31) remarks as follows:

"If members (M.P's) were, before their candidature was legal, required to serve three years on a local body, they would gain the feel of institutions so necessary to success".

There is some merit in this logic, but it cannot be logically deduced that legislators with some experience in local government politics are better national legislators than those without it. There is no doubt that participation in local government politics does provide an opportunity to councillors to gain experience in the mechanics of politics such as the process of law-making and budgeting (Laski 1931).

#### 4.2.3 Facilitation of government accountability

Local government is generally seen as a defence mechanism against arbitrary power by government; by preventing an unhealthy concentration of power at the centre. Local government, it is claimed, discourages the tyranny of centralization of power. According to Smith (1985:27):

"There is some truth in the proposition that local democracy provides for greater accountability and control than field administration, public corporates and appointed agencies. The processes involved in local government make accountability more meaningful because of the elective elements linking bureaucrat and citizen. The political activities inherent in local government, i.e. elections, rule-making, political pressure, publicity and public debate - close the gap between the citizen and the administration and provide opportunities for grievances to be aired and wrong remedied".

Whilst this may be true, there is a strong feeling that local government is prone to corruption (Olowu 1988), but according to Stewart (1983:8):

"Where such accusations are made, and justifiably so, they are made because of the very visibility of local governments. There is no official secrets act guarding even routine decisions from public scrutiny. Committees of local authorities generally meet in public and their agendas are open in ways that would horrify civil servants or central politicians. The system is open and provides thereby correctives to reveal defects".

Commenting on the African situation regarding complaints that local governments are prone to corruption, Olowu (1988:20) observes:

"When the first books on corruption in African countries were published, they concentrated on the local government level. Local governments in some parts of Africa were described as a conspiracy against the public, and institution that is riddled with 'bribery, nepotism, politics and corruption'. Over the years, as more documentation on corruption in central governments has accumulated, it has become evident that corruption is a universal problem for all governments in all countries".

This is a very persuasive argument. There are some merits in this argument, for the central government is not only geographically distant but also in psychological and social senses. This is especially so in developing countries where the physical infrastructures necessary to facilitate communication between the central government and the people are poorly developed and in some instances totally non-existent. A genuine local government can therefore become a viable and flexible instrument for promoting and facilitating good governance and public accountability. Held (1987:15) aptly comments as follows:

"The affairs of government and national politics are not things many claim to understand, nor are they a source of sustained interest significantly, those closest to the centres of power and privilege are the ones who indicate the most interest in and are most favourable to political life. However, it may well be that those who express lack of interest in politics do so precisely because they experience 'politics' as remote, because they feel it does not directly touch their lives and/or that they are powerless to affect its course".

Genuine local government may therefore help to put some measure of power in the hands of the masses, thereby making the notion of government of the people, by the people, and for the people a little more realistic. Latib (1995:8) remarks as follows:

"Far too much attention has historically been placed on compliance and process ... what is needed is the building of a broader community perception of accountability ... This broader perspective implies that accountability should be based on an overall concept of governance. This approach emphasizes not only political representation and the supremacy of political structures in the accountability process, but also interactive processes with civil society".

Conceptualized in this way, accountability becomes an integral component of the democratic process. Local government can go a long way in enriching it. It may require extensive efforts to remove or at least reduce the cynicism of the "ordinary" people, and the absolutely poor who see politics as a sophisticated game designed by a small clique of power holders to manipulate and cheat them (see Holm 1989). For they have come to believe that government by the majority is merely a tantalizing mask, an illusion which masks what really happens in the body politic. This pessimistic view is not very far from the truth as Eldeman (1964:31) observes:

"The common assumption that what democratic government does is somehow always a response to the moral code, desires and knowledge

embedded inside people is as inverted as it is reassuring. This model, avidly taught and ritualistically repeated, cannot explain what happens but it may persist in our folklore because it is so effectively sacrifices prevailing policies and permits us to avoid worrying about them".

#### 4.2.4 Increase in administrative efficiency and effectiveness

Like decentralization in general, the system of local government is supposed to increase government's administrative efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness in the provision of services. This, it is argued, is because local governments are closer to the people than central governments and as such they are able to deliver the required services at the appropriate time and to respond to the needs of the people promptly (Olowu 1988; Richards 1968; Manda 1988; Wraith 1964; Meyer 1978).

#### 4.2.5 Recognition of regional and local differences

Smith (1985:50) remarks as follows:

"... different areas within the territory of the state have different needs. This does not mean that national policy implementation may have to vary from area to area because of local circumstances. It also means that local circumstances will require different responses from decision-makers in the priorities they attach to the multiple needs of a particular area. An appropriate mix of services, with resources allocated accordingly has to be produced for each area".

These differences include cultural, subcultural variations, uneven socio-economic and political development and ethnic diversity. Decentralization thus becomes an instrument through which government can deal with these issues. Central government is usually not able to cater for issues which are too local. for instance in Botswana circumcision is only practised by Bakgatla and as such cannot be handled at a national level.

### 4.3 Types of local government

It is generally recognized that local government is a product of decentralization, but the nature and form that a system of local government assumes is largely determined by the socio-economic and political environment within which such a system of local government operates. Hence the type and pattern of local government sometimes differ from country to country. According to Alderfer (1964) there are four basic patterns of local government in the world today, i.e. the French, Anglo-Saxon, Communist and the Traditional. The essence of each could be summarized as follows:

#### 4.3.1 The French system

Wraith (1972:17-18) characterizes the French system as follows:

"In the French system which is probably the most widely spread of them all, local government may properly be regarded as the local arm of the central government. Local councils (conseils municipals) have indeed important powers and duties, exercised through their principal officer, the mayor, but their proceedings are subject to the direction, approval or veto of a civil servant (the préfet) who represents the government of France in its every aspect".

Meyer (1978:42) characterizes the French system of local government in similar vein when he observes that:

"In France the country is divided into 90 departments each administered by a prefect, who is an official of the Ministry of Interior. He and his staff are responsible for the administration of, amongst others, local services, the enforcement of law, collection of taxes and administration of a number of national services in a particular area. They are part of the government of France, though in local areas must cooperate with a locally elected council



municipal and Mayor. The French system combines representative local government with extensive opportunity for central government to control and guide administratively. It has been widely followed".

The French system rather resembles deconcentration of power and authority than devolution. The French system of local government has been almost slavishly followed in Francophone Africa, with the exception of Senegal which has consistently tried to adopt a local government system modelled along the lines of devolution. This is a reflection of the French colonial heritage. But whilst France has introduced fundamental changes in its model by introducing the *conseil municipal* in which members are elected in the Francophone Africa, Olowu (1988:39) comments:

"Little thought is given to some of the major changes that have taken place in this metropolitan model over the years. In *Côte d'Ivoire*, for instance, the government appoints *prefets-maires* even in the secondary cities and hence there were no elections from 1956 - 1976. Similarly, a number of services which used to be administered by local governments have been transferred ... to public corporations".

#### 4.3.2 The Anglo-Saxon system

Wraith (1972:18) describes the Anglo-Saxon system as follows:

"The characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon type of local government ... is local autonomy, exercised through locally elected councils".

The autonomy Wraith is talking about is relative autonomy because under the Anglo-Saxon system, local government is a creature of statute and its autonomy is defined by the legal and geographical jurisdiction conferred upon it by the statute which creates it. The degree of this relative autonomy differs from country to country (Meyer 1978; Richards 1968; Jackson 1963 (ed); De Smith 1973(ed)). The



Anglo-Saxon system has evolved from devolution rather than deconcentration.

#### 4.3.3 Communist system of local government

The Communist system of local government is based on the doctrine of democratic centralism (Avineri 1968; Lazutkin 1974; Kozlov 1977; Marx 1968(ed)). The doctrine of democratic centralism defines the relative autonomy of local government authorities. In terms of the doctrine of democratic centralism, the central government, under the leadership of the party, provides leadership and direction to local government authorities.

#### 4.3.4 Traditional local government system

Alderfer's classification of non-western political systems as traditional smacks of racism because implied in his classification, is that the Western World has never had traditional political systems. To identify non-western with traditional is unscientific. As Mamdani (1976:2-3) puts it:

"In Africa, the political scientists identified the traditional with the tribal: tribal society was traditional and primordial, timeless and unchanging".

Implied in this conception is that the traditional was static and retrogressive, the modern 'civilized' and progressive. Although this is not explicitly articulated, the modern meaning 'Western' is considered the 'ideal-type' which is generally "identified with the best of all possible politics: the Anglo-Saxon, national pluralist consensus of *laissez-faire*, of live and let live - the politics of advanced capitalism" (Mamdani 1976:1-2). Stripped of its racist and Euro-centric undertones, the traditional system of local government permeated all societies including the so-called Western countries.

The traditional system of local government was characterized by some form of democratic centralism. Wraith (1972:18) argues as that:

"The concept of democratic centralism ... has had considerable appeal in Western Africa (and in other parts of Africa), partly because in some of its aspects it reflects traditional African political practice ...".

What is clear from this comparative analysis of the different types of local government systems is that these systems do not differ fundamentally (Wraith 1972(ed)).

The main difference is the form which the four systems adopted and the degree of local autonomy. More importantly also, these systems have influenced each and one another either directly or indirectly. In most countries especially in Africa, these systems exist side by side (Wraith 1972(ed)).

It would be practically and theoretically untenable to try to put these categories or types in separate concrete containers as if they exist in an antagonistic and contradictory manner. As Wraith (1972(ed):20) comments:

"... public administration in all countries, whether they are industrialized and wealthy or pre-industrial and poor, contains elements of both deconcentration and devolution. It is not a question of one or the other, but of the balance between them. In countries in the French or Communist traditions of government it is self-evident that decentralization takes the form of deconcentration ... put more simply there is a hierarchical structure ... In the Anglo-Saxon countries ... there is more flexibility ...".

Therefore the conclusion could be drawn that in practice the dividing line between devolution and decentralization is very thin.

## 5. SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on the analysis and evaluation of the concept of decentralization. It tried to identify and isolate the essential features of decentralization as well as the different forms of decentralization. It looked at the different definitions of decentralization, and concluded that there is no consensus about what decentralization means. It also argued that the conventional differentiation of decentralization into deconcentration, devolution and dispersal cannot be taken to extreme, i.e. it should not be taken to mean a watertight differentiation. For in practice, the concepts are intertwined and political systems are found to embody elements of all three forms. It was also demonstrated that decentralization does not necessarily facilitate the extension of democracy and participation. For the capacity of decentralized units to become genuine vehicles for the extension of democracy and participation depends on the degree of their relative autonomy. This in turn depends on the level of political will of the central government to decentralize adequate power and authority, appropriate institutional arrangements, accompanied by the level of political awareness of the communities, the decentralized units are intended to serve. The chapter argued that local government is a product of decentralization and devolution, identifying different types of local government, i.e. the French System, Anglo-Saxon System, Communist System and the "traditional" system and demonstrated that the four systems do not differ fundamentally.