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

by

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PROMOTER: PROF C THORNHILL
SUMMARY

AN EVALUATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
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DPhil (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)
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.
(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.
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 hoofoogmerk 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.
CHAPTER TWO
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS AN EXPRESSION OF DECENTRALIZATION

1. INTRODUCTION 11
2. DEFINITION OF DECENTRALIZATION 11
3. RATIONALE BEHIND DECENTRALIZATION 18
   3.1 Decentralization as a medium for the extension of democracy 18
   3.2 Decentralization as an instrument for promoting and facilitating development and development management 23
   3.3 Decentralization as an instrument to promote administrative efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services 25
   3.4 Decentralization as a mechanism for reducing sessionist tendencies 26
   3.5 Decentralization as an instrument for facilitating accountable governance 27
   3.6 Preconditions for meaningful decentralization 28
      3.6.1 The political will 29
      3.6.2 Appropriate and adequate institutional and structural arrangements 29
      3.6.3 Availability of skilled personnel 30
      3.6.4 Availability of funds 30
      3.6.5 Good quality of local leadership 31

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT 32
   4.1 Definition of local government 32
   4.2 The significance of local government 34
      4.2.1 Training ground and nursery school for mass political education 35
      4.2.2 Training for political leadership 36
      4.2.3 Facilitation of government accountability 36
### 4.2.4 Increase in administrative efficiency and effectiveness

### 4.2.5 Recognition of regional and local differences

### 4.3 Types of local government

#### 4.3.1 The French system

#### 4.3.2 The Anglo-Saxon system

#### 4.3.3 The Communist system of local government

#### 4.3.4 The Traditional local government system

### 5. SUMMARY

#### CHAPTER THREE
ANALYSIS OF THE SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PRECOLONIAL BOTSWANA

1. INTRODUCTION

2. PRECOLONIAL DEMOCRACY

3. NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT DURING THE COLONIAL ERA

#### 3.1 The nature of local government between 1885 and 1934

#### 3.2 Local government: 1934 to 1965

4. SUMMARY

#### CHAPTER FOUR
THE EMERGENCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale behind the establishment of local government in post colonial Botswana

1.2 Influence of political history

1.3 Recognition of local differences

1.4 Leadership and political ambitions of chiefs

1.5 Extension of democracy and participation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Local government development</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Local government: administrative efficiency and effectiveness</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SUMMARY</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER FIVE
STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

1. INTRODUCTION                                                   98

1.1 Political arm or component                                    98

1.1.1 Elected council members                                      99
1.1.2 Nominated councillors                                        99
1.1.3 Ex officio council members                                   101

2. STATUS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS                                       107

2.1 Class position                                                 107

2.1.1 Agrarian or rural petty bourgeois                             111
2.1.2 Commercial petty bourgeois                                   111
2.1.3 Bureaucratic petty bourgeois                                 112
2.1.4 Gender representation                                        113

2.2 Age distribution of councillors                                116

2.3 Educational level of councillors                                118

3. SUMMARY                                                         123

CHAPTER SIX
RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF COUNCILS

1. INTRODUCTION                                                   125

2. MANDATORY FUNCTIONS                                            126

2.1 Primary education                                             127

2.2 Primary health                                                130
2.3 Self help housing 133
2.4 Roads construction and maintenance 136
2.5 Water supply 138

3. PERMISSIVE FUNCTIONS 139
3.1 Performance of councils with regard to community development 140

4. COMMITTEES AS MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH COUNCILS OPERATE 145

5. SUMMARY 147

CHAPTER SEVEN
COUNCIL POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION 148
2. THE NATURE OF COUNCIL POLITICS IN BOTSWANA 149
3. THE NATURE OF COUNCIL ELECTION PROCESS 151
3.1 Delimitation of local government wards or constituencies 152
3.2 Nomination of local government candidates 154
3.3 Selection of local government candidates 155
3.4 Local government elections results 158

4. SUMMARY 164

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

1. INTRODUCTION 165
1.1 Local government finance 165
2. MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT 171
   2.1 The central tool in the management of public finance 171
   2.2 Council finance committee 174
   2.3 Management of public finance 176
   2.4 Internal audit 177
   2.5 External auditing 178
3. COUNCIL PERSONNEL 180
4. SUMMARY 184

CHAPTER NINE
THE CONTROL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN BOTSWANA

1. INTRODUCTION 185
   1.2 Nomination of a percentage councillors 186
   1.3 Suspension of councillors 187
   1.4 Establishment of local government 188
   1.5 Dissolution of councils 189
   1.6 Requirement for ministerial approval 189
   1.7 The *ultra-vires* principle 191
   1.8 Personnel appointment, dismissals, transfers and promotions 193
   1.9 Financial control 195
   1.10 District Commissioner 196
2. SUMMARY 196
CHAPTER TEN

1. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 198
2. RECOMMENDATION 204

BIBLIOGRAPHY 207
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