THE PARADOX OF DECENTRALIZATION IN NAMIBIA

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to a number of individuals who played an immeasurable role in my life and to whom I am deeply indebted. The first person is my mother, Claudia Kaikike Riruako, who died of cancer a few semesters before I could complete my first degree. She instilled in me a sense of appreciation at an early age, one that I will cherish for the rest of my life. With the little that we had, she made us feel as if we had a lot. My mother was a proud person and she made me proud as well. Had she been alive today, I am certain that she would have been even prouder of this son's accomplishments.

My grandmother, Renathe Mbeiti Riruako, has been a source of inspiration to me. Her passing away in early 2003 left me feeling empty. Her cooking for the late Reverend Michail Scott during the drafting of a petition by her brother, Chief Hosea Kutako, is a small gesture for some, but one with great meaning for her, so much so that she cherished it until her death as her humble contribution to the liberation struggle. My father, Daniel Kazekondjo, an educated man himself, installed an appreciation of the value of education in me from an early age. I always looked up to him as my role model. While pursuing his teaching career is South Africa he shared his school years with some of those who were to shape the future of politics in Namibia, such as the founding Deputy Prime Minister, Reverend Hendrick Witbooi. After completing his studies he played a pivotal role in the formation of SWAPO, often meeting with party stalwarts such as Namibia's Father of the Nation and founding President, Dr. Sam Nujoma, and the Founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Professor Peter H. Katjavivi to mention just two. However, his passing away in mid-2003 also robbed me of an opportunity to make him proud once

more of his son's accomplishments by successfully completing my doctoral studies. My nephew, Betuel Ngeama, would have been equally proud of my accomplishment had he not died in a tragic accident during the later part of the same year.

I also dedicate this work to the only surviving member of my family who contributed by moulding me into who I am today, namely Chief Kuaima Riruako, President of the National Unity Democratic Organization (NUDO). He contributed immensely to my early education through financial assistance and encouragement. His efforts enabled me to go to the United States of America to further my studies. The other person who deserves a wealth of appreciation and to whom I dedicate this work is my grandfather, Amon Ukorua Kaamakaa Riruako who recently passed away at the age of ninety-seven years. Had it not been for a slight delay in the completion of my studies as a result of technical problems this is the one person that I wanted at my side during my graduation ceremony. I promised him that, but God willing, it was not to be.

Whatever happened will never dim my spirit and my strong resolve to complete this work, as I owe the completion of it to him. My late grandfather was the only surviving member of the inner cycle of the group of people who worked closely with my late uncle, Chief Hosea Komombumbi Kutako. I am glad that I participated in his burial. I cannot help but to reiterate the words that I said at his funeral: "Tate Kaamakaa resented all forms of oppression such as the German and South African occupation, and the old locations' forced removal to mention just a few. It is through this commitment that he risked his life along with the late Katjikuru Katjiuongua, Kambanderu Kandjou, and

other, too numerous to mention here, who have served in the inner circle of those who drafted and helped to smuggle the famous Chief Hosea Kutako's petition to the UN."

Until his death this year he was the only surviving member of the group of people who moved the late Reverend Michael Scott from house to house to avoid capture, while awaiting the completion of the drafting of the petition which Michael Scott took to the League of Nations, the predecessor to the United Nations. At my grand father's funeral, the SWAPO representative, Hon. Ben Amadhilla, said and I quote, "your father should be remembered for the heroic/historic deed during the dark days of our liberation struggle. With his death he now joins the ranks of those heroes and heroines that you will never find in the history books, but who contributed immensely to our independence." I thank the good Lord and the spirit of my ancestors that he waited for me to arrive and to pray for him before he took his last breath. The fact that I physically had to carry his body, as he carried me as a child, gave me great comfort.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my wife, Belinda Kariraere Riruako, for her inspiration and encouragement throughout my doctoral studies.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration in the School of Government, at the University of the Western Cape. I further testify that it has not been submitted for any other degree or to any other institution of higher learning.

Hoze Riruako

Date………………………….

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the following persons with gratitude and appreciation: Mr. Henry Hesse, a former member of Literacy Volunteers of America, who helped me to master the command of English before I entered Marshall University in the United States of America during the Fall of 1985 to commence my undergraduate studies. No words will be enough to praise Prof. Clair Matz, professor of International Relations at Marshall University, for assisting me and lending me a helping hand during a very daunting time in my life when my mother passed away in 1989.

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I would also like to acknowledge Prof. Peter H. Katjavivi, the founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, now the Namibian Ambassador to the European Union, for not only encouraging me to further my studies, but also for finding funding to enable me to pursue my doctoral studies at the University of the Western Cape. I want to say thank you for opening so many doors for me and for giving me such wide-ranging experiences. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to have work closely with you and for supporting me through thick and thin.
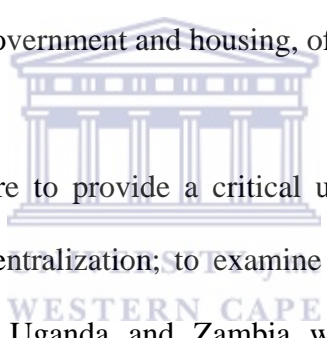
Let me also use this opportunity to thank Dr. Anthony Barclay of ACBF for the advice and continuous assistance in securing funding for my studies. You are an honest man may the good Lord bless you.

Last but not the least I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my supervisor, Prof. Chisepo J. J. Mphaisha, to this dissertation. He was my hope and inspiration during times of despair. He gave me direction when I appeared to be drifting academically. I just want to tell him that I really appreciated the time and effort that he invested in helping me, God bless you.

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Abstract

It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that the government of Namibia has been seeking to adopt structures and procedures that will contribute to the realization of general national development. Decentralisation in any country takes place in a political context and its implementation assumes some political significance, as it is not merely a matter of centralization or decentralization of government functions and procedures, but both centralization and decentralization tendencies exist and reinforce each other in practice. This study argues that the dynamic features of decentralization and its implementation in Namibia have been shaped by central government's view, through the ministry of regional and local government and housing, of the concept decentralization.

The objectives of this study are to provide a critical understanding of the theoretical foundation of the concept decentralization; to examine the models of decentralization adopted and implemented by Uganda and Zambia with a view to assessing their relevance for Namibia and *vice versa*; and to investigate and determine the administrative/institutional factors that have played a role in the implementation of the policy on decentralization in Namibia in general, and in the Omaheke, Otjozondjupa and Otjikoto regions in particular.

The case-study method was used as it allowed the use of multiple data sources, namely, documentary analysis, personal interviews and observation. Thus, the interactions and relations between institutions and various stakeholders regarding the policy of decentralization and its implementation were examined in both primary and secondary

data. The study concludes, *inter alia*, that the progress made in the implementation of the decentralization policy in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions was painfully slow as a result of a number of constraints which include inadequate co-ordination, administrative inertia, a shortage of skilled human resources, inadequate central government guidance, and inadequate financial and other resources.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the decentralization policy introduced in Namibia after Independence in 1990. It seeks to identify and critically analyze institutional and organizational factors that constrain the implementation of decentralization in Namibia in general, and in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions in particular. These three regions have certain similarities. It is important to mention that these regions have pretty much the same ethnic composition. The only difference is that the Herero speaking population group heavily populates both Omaheke and Otjozondjupa and the Owambo speaking population group heavily populates the Oshikoto region. The heterogeneity of the regions is another reason why these three regions were selected for this study. They are complex areas in that they are home to a high concentration of all the different ethnic groups of Namibia, such as the Hereros, Owambo, Damara/Nama, Tswana, San, Whites, etc. Apart from the Hereros, as stated before, the Tswana and the San groups are highly concentrated in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions. Thus, due to the complexities of these regions and while also taking cognizance of the historical colonial legacy, it was felt that any success with the implementation of decentralization in these regions could inform and perhaps aid the implementation of decentralization elsewhere in Namibia.

Although the study covers the period 1990 to 2004, selected aspects of the pre-independence period will also be examined for their positive or negative impact on the post-colonial administrative system in Namibia. In addition, the study also considers it as critical to probe the decentralization of administrative structures in a politically unitary state in Africa in order to shed light on how decentralization, deconcentration, devolution, delegation and political control are conceptualised.

The assumption was that Namibia could benefit much from certain aspects of the decentralization strategies employed by both Uganda and Zambia, either immediately upon independence or after regime changes. Of particular interest was the impact of various socio-economic, political, institutional, administrative, and related factors on the definition and implementation of decentralization in these two African countries.

It is of utmost importance to state early in the introductory chapter that the choice of Uganda and Zambia was based on a number of reasons. Among them, as stated in the abstract, is the fact that the two countries offer a theoretical basis for the concept of decentralization. But even more important is the fact that experiences in Uganda and Zambia have in many respects, shaped the thinking and decisions of lawmakers in Namibia and for the purpose of this study, one is interested in this influence on politicians in Namibia.
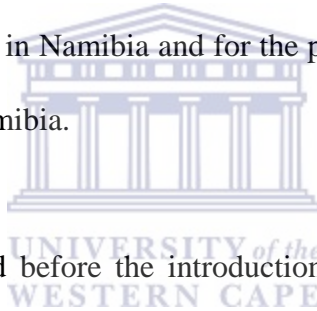
Immediately after independence and before the introduction of decentralization in Namibia, the ministry of regional and local government and housing (MRLGH) tasked with the implementation of decentralization in Namibia, undertook a fact finding trip to Uganda. The rational behind this tour was to study Uganda's experience with decentralization and to use the findings to inform the implementation of decentralization in Namibia. The findings of the tour have been captured in a report entitled 'The study tour to Uganda and Ghana on Decentralisation by delegation from Namibia'. It was as a result of this tour that Uganda was elected as proto type for this study.

In the case of Zambia, it is a known fact that SWAPO, the political party in power in Namibia, operated from Zambia since the late 1960s. The majority of the military bases of SWAPO were in

Zambia. In fact, apart from earlier operations in Tanzania and other frontline countries, all SWAPO's military operations were mounted from Zambia with the leadership and headquarter of SWAPO based in Zambia. It could thus be assumed that major political and military decisions were made in Zambia. In addition, the United Nations Institute of Namibia (UNIN) was also based in Zambia. This institute has trained most of the politicians and officials who are heading the government of Namibia in one form or another.

It is thus not unusual to assume that Zambia, and to a limited extend other frontline states, had an impact on the early political thinking of most of Namibia's leaders, especially those who hailed from SWAPO's exile ranks. It is also natural to assume that early decisions on decentralization that emanated from the SWAPO party manifesto could have been influenced by this close experience with Zambia. It was against this background that Zambia was chosen to serve as a theoretical interpretation of decentralization in Namibia.
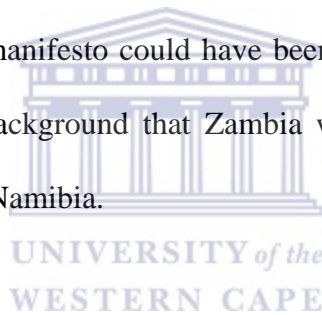
It is not the intention of the author to provide any new information on decentralization in both Uganda and Zambia that have not been documented before. However, it is the intention of the author to provide a theoretical observation of decentralization in these two countries and to use the information collected to inform present day decentralization processes in Namibia. It must also be pointed out that this study is not a comparative study, but as stated earlier, it will use experiences in other countries to inform the decentralization process in Namibia.

Background and the research problem

This study takes cognizance of the fact that decentralization takes place in a political context and the implementation of any of the above elements of decentralization can, and does assume some political significance. As such, it is not a matter of centralization or decentralization because both tendencies exist in a government. This raises the question of a proper "balance" between these apparently contradictory organizational forms of government. However, in the case of Namibia, centralization and decentralization can also be seen as complimentary to each other. The alignment of policies to ensure effective policy implementation and the delivery of services requires, in practice, greater inter-ministerial and inter-organizational co-ordination. This leads to the question as to which level of government is best suited to deliver a service and whether it has the requisite competencies and resources to do so. Countries such as South Africa, ten years after achieving majority rule, are also now seriously discussing the constitutional, as well as legislative allocation of powers and functions between national, provincial and local government with a view to accelerate and improve service delivery.

Thus, the central argument of this study is that the dynamic features of decentralization and its implementation in Namibia have been shaped by the view of central government, through the MRLGH, on decentralization. Much of initial central government thinking was, and remains rooted in SWAPO. SWAPO is a centralist party and has found it difficult to decentralize its authority. Also, patronization has been thriving and decentralization has thus been viewed by some present government leaders as a way of sharing central government authority with opposition parties. Hence, from the outset, there has apparently been little political will in practice to support the decentralization process.

The Apartheid system maintained pseudo-autonomous racially or ethnically-based local government institutions in Namibia for Whites only. These institutions were meant to entrench the relative isolation of the Black African majority and the Coloureds from the privileged White minority. Therefore, no regional government-structures existed between the central government and ethnic or racial local authorities, only the so-called "homelands" - Bantustans. Yet, Forrest (1998) observes that the re-arrangement of these government structures after independence formed part of the pre-independence political negotiations rather than the establishment of new regional administrations. This suggests that the premise of the negotiations was that the future democratically elected government of Namibia would not have to create regional administrations. All it needed to do was to restructure the existing ones to fit the new socio-economic and political realities in 1990.
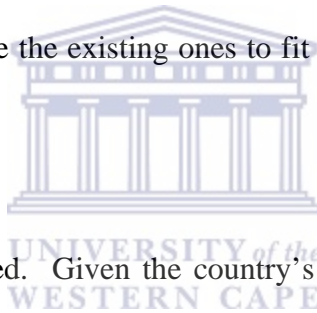
However, Forrest's premise is flawed. Given the country's troubled history of racial and ethnic divisions, SWAPO was convinced that the way to effectively govern Namibia was through a centralized system that would do away with race and ethnicity, as criteria for people's access to economic opportunities and service delivery, and it would also foster national unity. After the constitutional deliberations when the Constitutional Assembly was transformed into the first parliament, the SWAPO government decided that there was a need to explore different ways of organizing government structures in the interest of national development. The idea of decentralizing government initially emerged from a SWAPO-supported book by the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka, Zambia (United Nations Institute for Namibia, 1986). SWAPO, on

assuming political power, sought to adopt and/or adapt government structures in Namibia that would contribute to the realization of general national development aims such as the following:
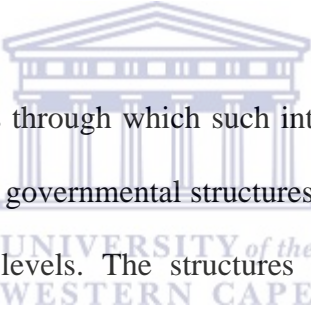
"…achieving security against external aggression and ensuring internal order; establishing and maintaining consensus on the legitimacy of the regime; integrating diverse ethnic, religious, communal and regional elements into a national political community; organizing and distributing former powers and functions among various levels of government and between public and private sectors; displacement or modification of vested traditional, social and economic interests; fostering psychological and material security; development of modernizing skills and institutions; mobilizing financial resources; rational planning and execution of economic development; efficient management of public facilities and services; activating participation of modernizing activities; and achieving a secure position in the international community" (Esman, 1966: 61-63).

There is a paucity of research on these government efforts in Namibia. Admittedly, some studies have touched on the issue of restructuring of regional centres in relation to the improvement of service delivery, while others have indicated that decentralization could help to cut through the often cumbersome administrative procedures that characterize the concentration of power, authority and resources in central government. Tötemeyer (1998), for example, addressed the question of whether or not central government was willing to share power with regional and local government. This question led him to conclude that democracy implied more than exercising a free choice during national and local elections and that democracy's success would principally be determined by its participatory, co-operative and communicative nature. It is probably right to say that the collective efforts by central government and the local authorities should be the way to go, as it will ensure that local initiatives, needs and wants are taken into consideration when decisions are made.

Mukwena and Drake (2001) also suggest that there is a need for the sharing of authority and responsibilities between central government and the regions because decentralization, as a multi-dimensional concept, entails the transfer and/or delegation of some legal and political authority from central government and other subunits of government to plan, make decisions and manage public duties. However, central government would reserve certain powers to itself *vis-à-vis* regional and local government, because Namibia is a unitary State. Indeed, debates and discussions on decentralization at national and international forums also emphasize the fact that decentralization must be a key feature of public sector reforms. This would lead to the establishment of participatory systems that take into account the needs of the poor, the disadvantaged and marginalised groups in the country.

The above studies by Tötemeyer (1998) and Mukwena and Drake (2001) provide varying degrees of, and disparate insights into, certain aspects of decentralization in Namibia. As such, this study only seeks to investigate in a coherent manner the nature and dimensions of the concept of decentralization which was done against the experiences of Uganda and Zambia in order to modestly redress the existing decentralization knowledge gaps in Namibia. The author will later in the dissertation refer to the experiences of other countries to add value to the discussions on Uganda and Zambia. Indeed, the relationship between central government and provincial or district or local government in any given country includes a dynamic significance for a whole range of problems connected to the processes of planning, policy implementation and control. Central government has to make hard decisions with regard to the distribution of scarce resources to competing communities.

At the level of political parties, regional conflicts arising out of perceived unequal access to resources and ideological differences between different groups/factions at either the national or local level or both, are often at the centre of the dynamic process of development, and of progress towards whatever national goals the ruling party may have set for society as a whole. On the one hand, central government and the ruling party are usually engaged in the act of seeking the widest possible legitimacy without which their policies could not be implemented with any degree of success and, on the other hand, competing forces come into play in a number of regional and local government structures, all of which would have to be accommodated or contained in one way or another by central government.

There are thus a variety of structures through which such interactions and transactions could take place within a country. These include governmental structures at the national and sub-national level and elected structures at different levels. The structures include legislative councils, district councils and village councils; structures outside government representing special interests; structures of communication and mass media; and traditional structures. It is within this perspective that the study on decentralization ought to be set.

Therefore, a concern of this study is the issue whether central government in Namibia was ready to implement decentralization when it was introduced in 1992. Alternatively, what nature of decentralization did the central government envisage for Namibia? And, secondly, in what ways and with what results, has the MRLGH implemented the policy decision on decentralization in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions and in Otjikoto? It needs to be stated that the decentralization

policy was implemented in all 13 regions of Namibia in exactly the same way. This study is an attempted to find answers to these questions. As such, the following guiding statements are made: -

No in-depth feasibility studies preceded the preparation, design and implementation strategies for the policy on decentralization. This created confusion about the meaning of decentralization, as well as the balance between the requirements of the elements of deconcentration, devolution and delegation. The colonial administrative legacy and SWAPO's centralist tendencies, as well as the constitutional provisions on the system of government influenced the 'top down' ambivalent nature of decentralization which central government envisaged for Namibia.

Local government and related legislation, and their subsequent amendments, neither clearly created the necessary legal and institutional frameworks for a complete transfer of power, responsibility and resources to regional and local governments, nor did it clearly provide for grassroots participatory structures; Namibia was clearly not ready to implement her decentralization policy. For the policy to have had the intended effect the necessary infrastructure and an enabling environment had to be created. As such, the interaction between administrative structures and processes, conflicting decentralization goals and role confusion on the status of regions, inadequate staffing, poor co-ordination and communication on the one hand, and socio-political elements on the other hand, compounded the implementation of decentralization in the Omaheke, Otjozondjupa and Otjikoto regions. These statements are meant to fine-tune the discussion in the various chapters of this study and should not be considered as premises that ought to have been measured in quantitative terms.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are

- to provide a critical understanding of the theoretical basis of the concept of decentralization, by reviewing the available literature, adopted and/or adapted by countries that have decided to decentralize their administrative systems;

- to examine the models of decentralization adopted and implemented in Uganda and Zambia and to assess their relevance, if any, to the national institutional setting of Namibia; and

- to investigate and determine the administrative/institutional factors that has played a role in the development and implementation of decentralization in Namibia in general, and in the Omaheke, Otjozondjupa and Otjikoto regions in particular.

Method and data sources

A cautionary note is necessary at this stage. It is usually expected of the researcher to formulate hypotheses or research premises that he/she can test on the basis of evidence gathered. This is a study in which the researcher inferred causal relationships between the policy on decentralization and the factors that significantly affects decentralization in both a positive and a negative manner when these relationships could not be directly observed akin to experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. This approach relies on the identification and description of events and organizational structures as perused from documents.

A case-study design was used as method in this research project. A feature of the case-study design, is that the research concerns itself with "real" events," real" contexts, and "real" time. It also emphasizes the meanings of events for actors within the situation, as well as the social processes and wider social functions that provide the context for such personal meanings. The case-study design is also viewed as an analysis of a social situation that allows for the greater examination and insight into the practices and processes of management and the interaction between stakeholders involved in governance. The case-study design was considered appropriate for this study as it also allowed for a variety of methods to be used, including document sources, archive records, observation and personal interviews (see also Yin, 1994).

The interactions and relations between institutions and various stakeholders with regard to the policy of decentralization and its implementation were probed by using both primary and secondary data. The primary data sources included government policy documents, public speeches by leaders, annual reports, gazettes, circulars and legislative documents. The secondary sources included books, journal articles and conference proceedings. A limited number of personal interviews were conducted with stakeholders such as councilors, regional governors and other public servants. These personal interviews were aimed at soliciting views and opinions on decentralization policy and the prospects of its continued implementation. And, lastly, the author has consulted widely with both the office of the prime minister and the MRLGH in Namibia and has, on many occasions, been invited to accompany government delegations on study tours to other African countries, including Uganda and Zambia. He also participated in national and regional conferences and seminars dealing with decentralization. Therefore, his personal impressions gathered during these

events, albeit limited in scope, are reflected as direct observations of his experience with the implementation of decentralization policy.

Organization of the study

This study is organized into eight chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, discusses the background and the research problem, objectives of the study, the method and sources of data as well as the structure of the study. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework, discussing the definitions of decentralization and the various forms of deconcetration and devolution, the rationale for decentralization, the contending organizational models for decentralization and their implications for this study. Chapter Three examines decentralization policy and its implementation in Uganda. Chapter Four examines decentralization policy and implementation in Zambia. Chapter Five discusses the socio-economic and political background to decentralization in Namibia prior to independence in 1990. Chapter Six describes the nature and scope of decentralization policy in Namibia. Topics included are the motivation for the establishment of regions, the role of the Delimitation Commission, the relationship between central government and the regions, the role of the MRLGH, and the relationship between regional and local government. Chapter Seven examines the implementation of decentralization in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa Regions, and the attendant institutional and administrative difficulties experienced during the implementation of decentralization programmes. Chapter Eight presents the summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF DECENTRALISATION

This chapter discusses various dimensions of the key concept of decentralization around which the study is built. The purpose is to give the reader a succinct idea of what various authors are saying and how their various inputs contribute to the development of the issues this author has investigated. The chapter is organized into four sections. The first section focuses on the different forms of the concept of decentralization. The second section discusses the rationale for decentralization focusing, in particular, on the goals that central government sought to achieve when it decided on implementing decentralization measures. The third section examines the nature, application and relevance of three models of decentralization, namely, the functional model, the integrated prefecture model and the unintegrated prefecture model. The last section deals with the implications of the foregoing discussion and analysis of the present study.

The concept of decentralization

Rondinelli (1981: 81) defines decentralization as:

> "…the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or non-governmental private or voluntary organizations."

Mutahaba (1989: 69) has also defined decentralization and in his view, decentralization is:

> "…the transfer of legal, administrative, and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from the central government to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide

development authorities, functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or non-governmental organizations.'

The above two definitions are similar in their main thrust. The degree of political and legal power that is transferred or delegated is a way of differentiating between the various approaches or forms of decentralization, while the forms adopted are generally a function of the motivation for decentralization. It is therefore worthwhile to discuss the degrees of decentralization and the form of decentralization in a particular country.

Decentralization by deconcentration

This form of decentralization involves a minimum transfer of power and entails the shifting of workload from a central government ministry or department headquarters to offices outside the headquarters. On the one hand, this involves a mere shifting of workload on a temporary basis without a shifting of authority to decide how the delegated functions are to be performed and, on the other hand, it may involve a greater degree of deconcentration by formalizing the "hiving off" of functions through the creation of a system of field administration with decision-making discretion given to staff in the field. This allows them the latitude to plan, make decisions, and to adjust the implementation of central directives to local conditions (Mutahaba, 1989: 69). However, the field staff remains employees of central government under whose control and direction they operate.

According to Dillinger (1993), deconcentration is the transfer of power to local administrative offices of central government. For example, this involves the progressive build up of the

development planning committee system within regional administration. Under this system people at the local and regional levels still pay their allegiance to the top hierarchy of government as they are appointed, paid and disciplined by the headquarters of a line ministry. In fact, their planning activities form an integral part of the national plans of the ministry in charge. Their role is merely to advise those who make the decisions because it is feared that by giving them more leverage, they might want to promote local autonomy.

But the lack of resources only exacerbates the situation. The politicians ignore the local authority because it is considered irrelevant to the process of resource allocation. Planning remains the prerogative of central government with little regard for the wishes and aspirations of the local and regional authorities. Thus, local and regional authorities are deprived of an opportunity to exert any type of influence that would shape the actions of central government.

Central government also attempts to gain or to retain ownership of privately initiated development projects. As Oyugi (1985) notes in the case of Kenya, the amount of discretion given to the district officials is just too little and the mechanism for securing horizontal coordination cannot be expected to yield better results than earlier measures. The system of decision-making also remains essentially highly centralized. As a result the measures adopted can never be expected to result in meaningful decentralization.

Deconcentration is thus the most common form of decentralization. This type of decentralization is usually used by agricultural services, preventative health care, primary education and the population sub-sectors. This is also the "Branch Office Model" which signifies the fact that

government activities are merely an institutional arrangement in terms of a branch office. Local government under deconcentration renders services in such a manner that it appears to be a regional office. Under this system, some functions are allocated to sub-national entities within sector ministries or other sector-specific national agencies. In such a system local governments does not exist as discrete entities but in the form of ministerial offices. Thus, the mechanism for mandatory horizontal integration does not exist at these levels. The driving force behind these systems is central government. This is true irrespective of the geographical dispersion of ministerial offices and the masses of employees from central government that are stationed therein.

Rondinelli (1981) describes deconcentration as administrative decentralization stating that at times deconcentration or administrative decentralization, fiscal decentralization and devolution or democratic decentralization, take place at the same time. However, they can also take place in isolation from one another. Central government officials can be transferred to the lower tiers of government and at the same time remains accountable solely to the higher tier of government. Such a transfer in deconcentration takes place when it occurs in isolation from the other forms of decentralization or when it occurs with fiscal decentralization, but without simultaneous democratization. This move enables the central authority to penetrate the arenas of lower levels of government and to exert their influences. However, this is done without an increase in the influence of organized interests at those levels. Central government does not give up any authority. It merely re-assigns, repositions, and at times deploys its officers at different levels or points in the country. Such a move by central government can be construed as centralization. This is because instead of empowering the lower levels of government, central government enhances its leverage over those institutions at the periphery of the system.

This phenomenon is more prevalent in developing than in developed nations. As a developing country, Namibia in fact, resembles much of what is said here. In a developing country ordinary people are far removed from the axis of power. They are deprived of the necessary information to take part in decision-making processes. Rural communities who are still dependent on the subsistence economy are usually deprived of making any meaningful contributions as they are insulated from the decision-making centres as a result of poor communication. Thus, people at these levels have little opportunity to influence resource allocation to respond to their needs. The three regions in this study, namely Omaheke, Otjozondjupa and Otjikoto serve as good examples of this. In fact, the majority of the population in these regions still resides in the rural areas where the dissemination of information is poor, hampering any meaningful contribution to decision making from their side. They also have little, and at times, no influence at all over those who are to govern them. The field offices of the central government take all major decisions with little regard to local government. Equally important is the fact that local communities practically play little or no role in decision-making processes of the government. In fact, the central government is almost always in a stronger position *vis-à-vis* local government in service delivery. Mawhood (1983) argues that unlike their counterparts in western countries, field officers in developing countries are often less securing, and they tend to work to please their political leaders. Moi's Kenya provides a good example of this phenomenon (see Rondinelli, 1981 and Oyugi Op. Cit.).

The World Bank (2003:4) regards deconcentration as the weakest form of decentralization. According to its report it is mostly prevalent in unitary states where central government passes some of the responsibilities to the regions, provinces or districts. This is done to boost the

capacities and activities of the field administration or of local administrators, but central government through its various line function ministries retains supervisory powers. In the final analysis, therefore, deconcentration merely redistributes some authority in terms of finances and other management responsibilities to different layers of central government. In fact, decentralization in Namibia is deconcentration of authority because central government simply assigns certain responsibilities to the different levels of government. This is done through a number of legal instruments. However, the institutions assigned responsibilities remain integral parts of the central government of Namibia. They are not autonomous institutions.

Decentralization by devolution

This is the more extreme form of the transfer of governmental power and authority to lower levels of government and grassroots institutions, in that unlike delegation were the transfer is temporary, devolution refers to permanent transfer and that is why it is deemed to be an extreme form of decentralization. It involves the legal confirmation of power upon formally constituted local authorities to discharge specified or residual functions. Devolution involves the inter-organizational transfer of power to geographical units of local government outside the command structure of central government. In many instances, devolution mainly prevails in urban areas. One could with a fair degree of caution state that the majority of regions in this study do not exhibit this form of decentralization. This is due to the fact that most parts of these regions are rural and the main towns are not that well developed to be independent like the municipality of a big city such as Windhoek. In other words, the powers and responsibilities that had been entrusted to those regions are only sufficient for the running of those regions and councils but not necessarily to make them independent from the influences and control of central government. Other functions are usually

delegated to project implementation units at national level. Thus, devolution should be viewed as discretionary authority. The central government assigns multiple projects for execution and coordination to sub-national governments. Through this action, and especially, because of the devolved functions, sub-national authorities in the Namibian context of regional and local government are empowered. This is what leads to the discretionary authority at the disposal of local governments. Local government can take somewhat independent decisions, but when taking a decision local government should take cognizance of the prevailing national policy guidelines, their own capacities in terms of human resources, financial resources and materials warranted by the given projects.

Central government under these arrangements takes a "hands-off" approach except when it has to ensure local government's compliance with national policy guidelines. Such a move leaves no room for further devolution. The likely scenario is that project management will be integrated into the established structures of local governments or, in other instances, into the management units responsible to local governments that are granted autonomy to execute their activities. Thus, two types of approaches are employed, the centralization of project management at local government levels or the delegation or deconcentration of project management to project managers by local governments. Sherwood (1969: 60) considers the concept of devolution as quite different from decentralization in that it involves the divestment of functions by central government onto new units of governance outside the control of central authority. His view is that devolution within a political system is not really decentralization, but just a representation of separateness or organizational diversity. This kind of devolution only occurs in a federal system of government, such as Uganda in the early 1960s. But Namibia has a unitary system of government, and therefore

complete devolution is not feasible. In fact, the author foresees only a restricted form of devolution in Namibia. Thus, one could argue that Sherwood's (1969) sentiments are divorced from the realities of governmental operations in the Namibian situation.

In an ideal situation, devolution would exhibit certain characteristics. First, the local units ought to be given corporate status and the power to raise sufficient resources to perform specified functions. Second, devolution in this sense would imply the need to develop local government structures as autonomous institutions belonging to local communities. Such structures would deliver services and goods to the satisfaction of those local communities and would be controlled, directed and influenced by them. Third, devolution is not the same as a federation, because local government structures remain closely linked to central government through mutual support and reciprocity arrangements. Fourth, local government structures ought to have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries within which they can exercise authority and perform public functions. And finally, devolution would imply a serious intent on the part of central government to grant local government structures full autonomy and independence from its direct control.

In practice, it is difficult to find a system of formal devolution that meets Sherwood's basic requirements despite the fact that some constitutions, e.g. that the constitution of South Africa, devolve specific functions and responsibilities to sub-national government structures or give them residual powers that are not claimed by national government. As Mutahaba (1989) correctly observes, and one can agree with him, the above characteristics remain aspects of an ideal situation of devolution. The concept of devolution is often seen as a form of decentralization in which central government retains some supervisory powers over sub-national government structures. This

is the reason why central government tends to play a major role in the financing of sub-national government activities. Central government has tended to ensure that sub-national government structures comply with national development policies and plans in the execution of their functions.

In Namibia the sub-national structures of government have to comply, and work in conjunction with the overall goals set by central government through its development programmes, such as Vision 2030. The Vision 2030 document, for instance, states that "many social and environmental issues are better managed at the local level, where authority, proprietorship/tenure, rights and responsibilities are devolved to appropriate local institutions and organizations, such as aspects of education (school boards), running of towns and villages, water-points and rangeland management, wildlife and forest management etc." (Government of Namibia, 2004). The central government maintains both formal and informal control over sub-national government. This is, in fact, the reality of the democratic political system in Namibia.
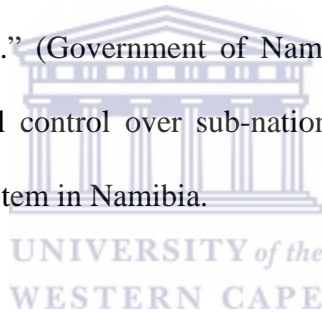
Decentralization delegation

The World Bank (2003:4) views this form of decentralization as more extensive than the concentration of power in central government. This is because the institutions to which central government gives the authority to take over certain functions are semi-autonomous. In this regard central government does not wholly control the activities of these institutions but the institutions remain accountable to central government. This form of decentralization in terms of Namibia can be viewed as the outsourcing of the production of goods and services. Central government in Namibia created public enterprises to provide services to the public that it deems appropriate to be provided by those institutions rather than by some organ of government. However, in the case of

Namibia public enterprises are accountable to central government. They receive most of their funding from central government and their activities are subjected to the scrutiny of central government through the cabinet. Government may also intervene when the public enterprises are not functioning as they should. Air Namibia is a good example. Government intervened in the running of Air Namibia on many occasions to save it from financial ruin through generous financial support. Through its budget, the government of Namibia made provision to rescue the ailing institution. This is not the only area where government intervenes in the activities of Air Namibia. Government is also directly involved in the appointment of the board of directors and the chief executive officer (CEO) of Air Namibia. As per the provision of the Public Enterprise Act, government appoints CEOs and the board members of public enterprises. In addition, government intervenes in cases of financial improprieties. An example is when government intervened to clear financial improprieties at the Social Security Commission through public hearings and presidential commissions. The author was once invited to give evidence before a parliamentary select committee analyzing public enterprise legislation and the establishment of a council to guide the activities of all public enterprises. This council as per the provision of the public enterprise legislation will be located in the office of the prime minister and will be chaired by the Prime Minister (Government of Namibia, 2005:5).

Political decentralization

Political decentralization refers to the efforts by central government to empower citizens and their elected representatives to participate in public decision-making processes. This is the view of the World Bank (2003:3) when it argues that political decentralisation leads to pluralistic politics. According the World Bank political decentralization enhances support for democratization because

it gives the citizens and/or their representatives added influence in policy formulation and the implementation thereof (World Bank 2003:3).

Administrative decentralization

According to the World Bank (2003:4) administrative decentralization has three major forms, namely deconcentration, delegation and devolution. It is through this form of decentralization that central government redistributes decision-making powers pertaining to both responsibilities and financial resources aimed at the provision of public services among different layers of government. It is through this form of decentralization that central government empowers field units of government agencies, subordinate units of levels of government, semi-autonomous public entities or institutions, or area wide, regional, or functional authorities (World Bank, 2003:4).

Fiscal decentralization

Fiscal decentralization, according to the World Bank (2003:5), is one of the important pillars of decentralization. It is this form of decentralization that gives impetus to the effective implementation of decentralization. For decentralization to be successful, adequate revenue whether raised locally or allocated and/or apportioned by central government are vital. Such revenue generation or allocations have to be associated with decisions to incur and defray expenditures. The World Bank (2003:5) lists the following as the many forms of fiscal decentralization:

> "Self-financing or cost recovery through user charges, co-financing or co-production in which users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labour contributions, expansion of local revenue through property or sales taxes or indirect

charges, intergovernmental transfers of general revenues form taxes collected by the central government to local governments for general or specific uses, authorization of municipal borrowing and mobilization of national or local government resources through loan guarantees."

However, it is important to mention that while local governments in many developing countries and other government institutions have the legal authority to impose taxes, the tax base or taxes derived from local activities are so insignificant that most local governments depend on central government for subsidies. The World Bank (2003: 5) is of the opinion that such dependency on central government for subsidies is so engrained that attempts to curtail it has been proven futile.

Economic or market decentralization

The World Bank (2003:5) argues that the most complete form of decentralization is economic or market decentralization. This form of decentralization is associated with economic liberalization and market development policies that have lead to government perspectives on privatization and deregulation. Through this form of decentralization some primary or exclusive functions that were previously the responsibility of central government are transferred to businesses, community groups, co-operatives, private voluntary associations, and other nongovernmental organizations.

This form of decentralization takes on two forms. One form is where the private sector provides goods and services as determined by market forces, and the other is a public-private-partnership. Under the latter arrangement government works with the private sector to provide services and infrastructure. Government relinquishes its monopoly of functions that were previously performed

exclusively by it. There is a sense of *quid pro quo* in this arrangement. Government allows the private sector to move into areas that were previously the exclusive domain of public institutions. In return, the private sector is now able to finance public sector programmes through the capital market, provided that government is able to come up with adequate regulations or measures to ensure that central government does not have to bear the risk for this borrowing.

The Rationale for Decentralization

Decentralization is a relatively new way of thinking about government administration. For more than sixty years the centralization of power and resources was the preferred mode of government administration. Through central control a number of Western nations were able to pull themselves out of the Great Economic Depression of the 1930s, and as a result of their economic prosperity these nations were able to wage World War II. The claimed centralization success stories of the former Communist countries, and the tremendous influence associated with this administrative trend, led many newly independent countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia to also adopt the centralization model of development as a solution to problems of socio-economic underdevelopment. The World Bank and other donor agencies initially encouraged such centralization of power and resource allocation. However, as Rondinelli and Cheema observed in 1983 (cited in Brilliantes & Cuachon, 2003:1) there has been a shift from central authority to local authority in Asia, Latin America and Africa in the 1970s.

Unfortunately, such top-down approaches to socio-political organization soon proved problematic because they neither promoted development nor reduced poverty. This was especially true of rural

development programmes. These programmes, even though they were meant for local communities, did not address their needs and aspirations. The immediate results were public disappointment and disillusionment. This prompted an increasing number of governments around the globe to search for other governance models. Many of these governments resorted to decentralizing some of the decision-making responsibilities of central government to both regional and local government, with some responsibilities being passed on to local communities and, in some cases, to the private sector. Decentralization is usually an intentional decision by central government, but it does not relinquish all power and authority to the regional and local governments (Wunsch & Oluwu, 1995).

Decentralization can also come about by default (Hulme & Woodhouse cited in Manor, 1999). This happens when other policy innovations yield or produce an unintended decentralization as by-product. In China, for example, provincial governments were able to acquire more resources than central government. Along with this prosperity came power and authority as these provinces felt capable enough to preside over their own affairs at the expense of central government. At one time Russia had a similar experience. This was as a result of unexpected socio-economic developments that prompted regional and local governments to acquire greater power even though it was not the intention of central government. However, decentralization by default is beyond the scope of this study. The focus is on those deliberate decisions by central government to either deconcentrate or devolve certain powers and functions to regional and local government.

Goals of decentralization

The majority of African governments after achieving political independence exhibited a high degree of overt centralization of governmental authority. These tendencies often stem from protracted years of colonialism. In fact, historical factors inherited from the pattern of colonial administration with its rigid emphasis on control from the centre were partially responsible for this tendency. Thus, after independence the majority of African governments retained those rigid centralized structures. The fact that there is considerable concentration on the centralized institutions and agencies, these governments tend to de-emphasize the importance of decentralization and the contribution/participation of grassroots level governance is often overlooked. Thus, local talents in terms of development are overlooked (Reddy, 1999: 22-23).

However, as rightly pointed out by Reddy (1999:22) there is a generally accepted belief that Africa needs more local and regional governments than other continents given the following reasons:

- While urbanization has increased over the past 30 years, the majority of people in Africa still reside in rural areas. It is local institutions that are in direct contact with the people that in essence necessitates the improvements in both service delivery and democratic governance. In addition, it is the local populace that is in a position to measure the success or failure of decentralization because it impacts on their lives.

- Centralization has failed in Africa. This failure is largely attributed to the fact that power is concentrated in the hands of a few, often the modern elites, with the parastatals and other state-owned companies having retained the economic power.

- The need for decentralisation and local self-governance to ease the paradox of the African state, namely, repressive power versus popular mobilization and responsiveness.

- Africa has a legacy of weak institutions coupled with a strong presidency. Members of parliament lack the necessary experience and the necessary skills for parliamentary work. They also lack the necessary autonomy. Also weak are the opposition of political parties. The rural majority that is far removed from the axis of power is deprived of an opportunity to follow the political discourse taking place in capital cities. Thus, a strong local government with politicians with authority that can exercise influence is what is needed to enhance participation in the political processes of the people at the periphery.

- There is a belief that a "bottom-up" approach to the democratization process will be more desirable as opposed to a "top-down" approach. The overriding feeling is that a "top-down" approach will tend to favour the few elites who will be tempted to enrich themselves at the expenses of the people at the periphery. It is assumed that for decentralization to have the desired results, real democracy has to start at the local level. Thus, democratization at the national level may not yield the required dividends; in fact it could be irrelevant.

- It was because of weaker African regimes in terms of exercising control and implementing structural adjustments programmes that some African governments were coerced to remove themselves from certain government functions, e.g. the provision of services such as agricultural marketing.

- In Africa traditional leaders play a pivotal role in public life in general. Thus, their inclusion in the decision-making process presents both the local and regional units of government with an opportunity to blend modern structures of government with traditional structures of government.

- When properly utilized, the participatory structures of local and regional government can give impetus to central government in that they could serve as early warning systems. This is particularly true in the case of the erosion of legitimacy of the political system as a whole.

Lungu (1981) identifies at least three goals that decentralization seeks to achieve, namely, the promotion of national development, making public administration more responsive to citizens, and organizational effectiveness and efficiency. A fourth goal is promotion of democracy at the grassroots levels. With regard to the first goal, namely promoting national development, Lele (1975) states that decentralization allows local leaders to locate services and facilities more effectively within their communities; enables them to integrate isolated or lagging areas into regional economies; and enables them to monitor and evaluate the implementation of development projects more effectively than can be done by central government. About five decades ago Lewis (1958: 54-57) underscored the importance of decentralization in facilitating national socio-economic development as follows:
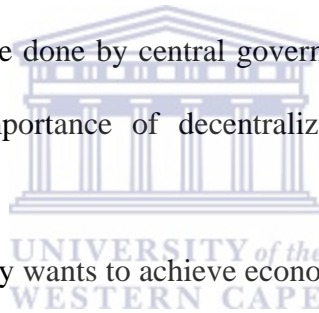
> "If an underdeveloped country wants to achieve economic development, it must first change its villages and districts…Basic social services such as elementary schools and adequate roads from farms to markets are indispensable prerequisites to economic development, and that such services can only be provided in adequate measure when local people have the power and responsibility to tax themselves to pay for their own basic governmental services."

The second goal of decentralization is that it brings about responsiveness in public administration. It makes public administration, whose programmes and personnel serve the needs and represent the interests of local communities, sensitive to the views and needs of these communities. Its interaction with various stakeholders, and their effective influence on administrative decisions, are

also a manifestation of a responsive and responsible public service. Thus, decentralized administrative systems tend to bring government in close contact with local communities, improve stakeholders' positive perception of government, and government's response to policy problems can be more effectively focused through the creation of social space or territories.

A third goal of decentralization is to improve the quality of decision-making in central government and to enable improved information flows from the field administration to central government. Decentralization has the potential to motivate field personnel by increasing their participation in decision-making through delegated authority and responsibility. Swerdlow (1975) and Riggs (1967) suggest that it could result in a much more productive organization with improved motivation and commitment among public servants. In this regard, organizational effectiveness is characterized by relatively high levels of public servants' motivation and productivity; their participation in decision-making in field administration offices; smooth communication between various levels of the public service hierarchy; and increased capacity to achieve organizational goals at reduced overall cost to government.

A fourth goal of decentralization that needs to be added here is that it yields improved democracy at grassroots level or "gives power to the people" through among others, the creation of committee systems. Decentralization is expected to further democracy and improve governance by increasing opportunities for citizens to participate and hold their leaders accountable for their actions and omissions. It is therefore opportune to now explore the relationship between decentralization and democratization where governments have made attempts not only to deconcentrate power within the central bureaucracy but also to devolve greater powers to local governments in the context of

abject poverty, authoritarianism, low administrative capacity, and ethno-linguistic diversity (Van de Walle, 2002:66). Devolution can indeed increase the power of local communities and it can increase the accountability of local leaders. In this regard, Nsibambi (1998: 9) puts forward a quite compelling argument about the relationship between decentralization and democracy:

> "Decentralization serves as a tool of empowerment and, therefore, enhances democracy and good governance if local governments and institutions at lower levels as well as the people at the grassroots are invested not only with responsibilities but also the legal authority to decide and commit allocated resources in discharging those responsibilities."

This means that democratic reforms, embarked upon simultaneously with devolution, is a crucial condition for the success of decentralization in a country. The decentralization of resources and responsibilities, void of democratization, is incomplete and cannot stand the test of time. Such a system is not even conducive to yielding socially effective results (Manor, 1999). Furthermore, there can be no sustainable development of capacity at local government level unless there is an effective demand by local administration and local communities. The manifestation of such demands is almost non-existent in the absence of some form of democratization that is associated with deconcentration and/or fiscal decentralization.

It is, however, difficult to obtain greater accountability in successful decentralization, even after the introduction of democratic elements into the decentralization process. According to Manor (1999) when these ingredients are absent or when reforms entail only minimal steps towards democratization, the impediments to greater accountability tend to be insurmountable. And decentralization void of fiscal decentralization and administrative deconcentration is destined for failure. Thus, for decentralization to work or to be successful, both fiscal and administrative

aspects of decentralization are required. Fiscal decentralization provides the necessary financial resources so dearly needed to defray the costs associated with decentralization, while administrative deconcentration is also vital because it provides the technical manpower needed for the implementation of decentralization. Therefore, the author is convinced that the tripartite mixture of democratic, fiscal and administrative forms of decentralization is essential to inject the needed fuel to drive decentralization.

In Namibia the goal of decentralization is the devolution of power to the lower tiers of government within the context and the overall authority of a unitary state. This can be deduced from the constitutional commitment, the legislation, and discussions within government and among local leadership. However, to achieve these goals of decentralization the process had to pass through the other two stages of decentralization, namely deconcentration and delegation. The framers of decentralization policy in Namibia decided on this process of decentralization because of the colonial background that was characterized by over-centralization of power, Bantustan policies and the necessity to consolidate the nation during the early years of independence (Government of Namibia, 1997:13).

This stance was further revealed by one of the previous ministers of the MRLGH, Dr. Nicky Iamb, at the Consultative Conference of the Association of Regional Councils when he said that, "for Namibia the choice of model of decentralization is devolution of power to regional and local authorities within the context of a unitary state" (Namibia Institute for Democracy, 1996:18-19).

Iyambo reiterated the message in the form of a foreword to the policy document entitled "Decentralization in Namibia: The Policy, its Development and Implementation, March 1998". He said:

"… in the case of Namibia, initial functions for devolution have been identified and accepted by both regional and local authorities. However, it is felt prudent that we will first embark on delegation of functions before ultimate devolution while making sure that all requirements, i.e. infrastructure, training of personnel etc. are put in place. To this end an implementation strategy and work plan have been worked out and adopted' (Government of Namibia, 1998a).

It is further stated that decentralization in Namibia is aimed at ensuring economic, cultural and socio-economic development. This would be done in a way that presents people at grassroots level with an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes whilst at the same time extending democracy to them as a right, based on national ideals and values (Government of Namibia, 1998b:5). Thus, the decentralization policy in Namibia was designed to achieve the following objectives:

"… to extend, enhance and guarantee participatory democracy, to ensure, and safeguard rapid sustainable development, to transfer powers to the regions and local authorities based on national ideas and values, to improve the capacity of regional and local government councils to plan, implement, monitor and manage delivery of services for their constituents. In a nutshell decentralization seeks to transfer political, administrative, legislative, financial and planning authority from the centre to regional and local authority councils. It strives to promote participatory democracy, empower the local population to make their own

decisions and determine their own destiny. It also aims at improving public sector management so that in the long run there is close linkage between taxes paid by the people and the quality of services provided. The local people shall be able to hold their appointed and elected leaders accountable" (Government of Namibia, 1998b:5-6).

Advantages of decentralization

It is often said that deconcentration and devolution as forms of decentralization create a number of advantages. First, decentralized institutions are more flexible than centralized institutions in their decision-making processes and operations. They are in a better position to respond quicker to changing local circumstances in addressing the needs of local communities, probably also more adequately. Under a decentralized system the people are, to a large extent, involved in decision-making and control processes. Ross (cited in Osborne & Gaebler, 1992:252) gave a very good example of decentralization when he said that "the only way we could serve our business in a rapidly changing market marketplace was by decentralizing authority". Ross took cognizance of the fact that those who are closer to the problems or needs are better equipped to handle or solve them than some "bureaucrats" who are far removed from the problem or need. According to him people out in the field, deal with the problems on a daily basis. Thus, they are in a better position to make quick rational decisions.

Second, decentralized institutions are more effective than their centralized counterparts. Field employees have a closer insight into problems and opportunities. Thus, the solutions they craft, if supported by the top, or if they are independent of the influences from the top, are often the best ones. Such decentralized institutions have a tremendous advantage over centralized institutions

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through the adoption of participatory approaches to their operations. The words of Contino (cited in Osborne & Gaebler, 1992:252) seem to add weight to this assertion when he said that he used a participatory approach to resuscitate the New York City Sanitation Department Bureau of Motor Equipment. He once said:

> "I regard the BME workers as the most valuable resource, which has more capability to improve the organization as an entity and solve its problems than barrels of management specialists bearing very profound ideas about what should be done in the work place. Armed with the employee involvement programmes that we have to put in place, the worker has an overriding advantage: it is his/her work place…there is nothing that can replace the special intelligence that a worker has about the workplace. No matter how smart the boss is or how great a leader, he/she will fail miserably in tapping the potential of employees by working against employee instead of with them."
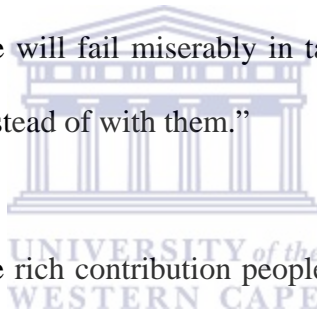
Such arguments are indicative of the rich contribution people at the local level of an organization can make if they are accorded the right or opportunity to make decisions that will affect them and the people close to them. Third, innovations and ingenuity are more common and more appreciated in decentralized institutions than in centralized institutions. It emerged, from research on the Ford Foundation's Innovation Awards, for instance, that innovative ideas usually come from people who do the actual work and who deal with clients on a frequent basis. It is the people on the ground who tries out different ways of solving problems at hand that end up with the best solutions. Fourth, decentralization boosts morale and commitment, and increases productivity. When an employee is entrusted with the power to make decisions, he/she will feel respected, recognized, engaged and

most importantly appreciated by the institution. He/she will see him/herself as an important part of the institution. This is especially true of institutions that depend on skilled workers.

When given an opportunity to make decisions, employees give their all. Therefore, employers have to learn to grant skilled employees the authority to make decisions because this is one of the most effective ways to tap their skills and commitment. Organizations have to adapt to new realities or risk facing demise. In the past educated employees were in scarce supply in government institutions. There was only a small core of intellectuals heading public institutions. Since they were better equipped and had more skills than those they were leading, leadership was organized in vertical structures of command and control. African countries often exhibit such characteristics. After independence there is usually a dearth of skilled manpower with the skilled usually assimilated into the very top structures of the public service. This is the group that tends to provide advice and leadership to the less skilled employees.
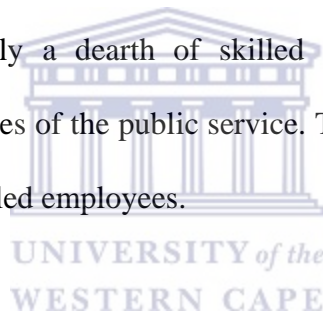
Cleveland (cited in Osborne, 1992:253) stressed the point that unlike in the past when the majority of the workforce was semi-illiterate and had to be led by command, the new workforce is literate. Leading them requires persuasion. Authority is thus, increasingly, characterized by an increasing downward delegation. This calls for a collegial approach to decision-making in organizations. In decentralization, therefore, a sincere effort needs to be made to bring into consultation those who will make sure that the decisions taken will work. The previous governor of the Hardap Region, Pieter Boltman, supported this view when he said:

> "…I believe that government should be brought closer to the people, and this is one of the
> most important reasons for decentralization. But to make it a success, and to convince the

many skeptics who see it as another way to waste the taxpayers' money, levy more taxes from the people or open the doors to more corruption, we will have to work hard at building trust in our institutions, namely the Regional Councils" (Boltman, Opening Speech, 1997:7).

Speaking at the same conference, Isaac Kaulinge, previous secretary to cabinet and secretary to the presidency remarked that:

" in accordance with the Decentralization Policy Document, the appropriate guarantor for a functional democracy shall be people themselves making their own political and developmental decisions at their own level and the only guarantee for sustainable development can only be when our citizens participate in setting their own priorities, implementing them and evaluating these themselves, i.e. devolution of responsibility, power and resources to the levels closest to the people where these are amenable to their influence and control (Kaulinge, Welcome Address, 1997:20).

Conferring and networking, as opposed to command and control must become the norm. On the traditional ways of making decisions in organizations, Cleveland (cited in Osborne, 1992**:**253) notes that junior employees were often warned as follows:

"Follow orders. Don't use your head, don't think for yourself, and don't take independent actions. If something goes wrong that is not strictly your responsibility, ignore it. If you absolutely have to make your own decision, choose safety. Never, ever, take a risk".

Cleveland views such statements as the reason why, for decades, many public servants became docile, passive and bitter. Much waste of talent resulted from this approach. In contemporary organizations, therefore, such a message to employees is enormously destructive. It deprives them

from any sense of responsibility, let alone the urge to be independent and innovative. Pichot (cited in Osborne, 1992:254) agrees with Cleveland when he says that such waste of human resources usually calls for, or solicits, more stringent control through centralization. Indeed, such practices only aggravate the situation because government created the problem in the first place by removing those individuals who are closer to the problem and who can do something to solve it.

Even though studies by Oyugi (2000:11) reveal that a survey by Olowu involving a number of African countries suggest that 30 to 75 per cent of urban council revenue is derived locally, usually from property taxes, direct taxes, and fees and charges. The bulk of this revenue does not benefit government at sub-national levels. Thus, there is a strong need to build the capacities of these institutions to not only generate resources, but to also capacitate or empower them to be in a position to make decisions pertaining to the utilization of the resources accrued to them or generated by them. This is at the centre of the argument by Musgrave and Musgrave (cited in Oyugi, 2000:10-11) that central government which has a tight grip on the bulk of revenue generated, redistribute this revenue according to national interest which may not necessarily be of immediate interest to governments at sub-national levels (Oyugi, 2000:10-11).

Capacity building is also essential to extend, enhance and guarantee participatory democracy as stated in Namibia's policy document, entitled "Decentralization in Namibia: Situational Analysis" (Government of Namibia, 1998b:5). One may want to investigate this issue with a certain degree of caution, especially in areas that exhibit some socio-economic volatility. This is true where the country or countries under investigation have just emerged from the yoke of colonialism, for example, Namibia. Tötemeyer (2000:100) noted in a journal article that:

"…the underlying policy is to relate decentralization to development and promote empowerment of people at the local level. The government, however, constantly emphasizes that the decentralization policy may not at any stage contradict the principle of a unitary state as enshrined it the Constitution. Some government spokespersons, including cabinet ministers have expressed the fear that decentralization will not only undermine the central government authority but will also contribute to the development of authority-seeking politico-administrative entities, which may develop their own political agendas and interests comparable with those during the apartheid era, dividing the country into separate and administrative areas".

The author mentioned earlier that one of the goals of decentralization in Namibia is to ensure, and safeguard rapid and sustainable development. A need, therefore, exists to create the necessary capacity to ensure and sustain development. Sharma (2000:177) is of the opinion that this goal can be achieved through good governance. He noted that:

"…good governance is one of the main expectations of the people in all countries throughout the world. This is an essential requirement for the satisfactory realization of development goals. Failures or ineffectiveness in governance have not only made the task of development more difficult, they have also resulted in denial of justice, the practice of nepotism and corruption, lack of accountability, and deterioration in law and order. Poor governance has been a major factor in the deterioration of the economic situation in African countries. Denial of democratic rights, misguided public policies, management and misuse of scarce resources, inequitable distribution of wealth and income, lack of a conducive environment for development, and limited foreign and domestic private investment have been obvious manifestations or consequences of poor governance".

Sharma, (2000:177-178) also noted that the ideals of democracy, e.g. good governance, have been gaining momentum during the last few years. People are now more than ever calling for open and transparent political and economic systems. Not only are the people taking part in the decision making process, but the values of public accountability and good governance have become important ingredients of sustainable development. Thus, there is a need on the part of central government to improve the capacity of both regional and local government to enhance their abilities to plan, implement and eventually manage the delivery of public services at their levels.

Entrepreneurial leaders employ a number of strategies to encourage those who are involved in decision-making and policy implementation. They utilize participatory management, through decentralized decision-making and encourage teamwork to enable the institution to go beyond the rigid barriers that separates people in hierarchical institutions. Institutional "champions" are thus created to guard those who are responsible for innovation through their newfound authority. Most importantly, they invest in their employees by arming them with the right skills and by boosting their morale in order for them to reap the benefits of their newly found authority.

Organization for the implementation of decentralization

The concept of decentralization can be used to refer to a territorial or geographical phenomenon or to refer to a functional phenomenon. Territorial decentralization centres on the transfer of responsibility and authority of public functions to organizations within well defined sub-national, spatial or political boundaries such as provinces, regions, districts, municipalities, etc. The transfer of authority is usually to an institution that may legally perform those functions within specified

geographical or political boundaries. This implies the transfer of authority to specialized organizations that operate nationally or at least across local jurisdictions to perform specific tasks. The authorities created to deal with functions such as highway construction, electricity supply, or healthcare, are examples of forms of functional decentralization. Thus, a territorial entity can be divided into both deconcentration and devolution.

The functional organizational model

Smith (1967) discusses three useful models of field administration. The first is the "functional model". In this system, the chief agents of central government in the provinces and districts form part of separate functional hierarchies responsible for distinct aspects of governmental activities such as health and agriculture. The administration of these activities is not "integrated' into central administration as each one operates independently. The lines of command and channels of communication run directly between the departmental headquarters and the local field units. Each line ministry creates geographical units suitable for its own purposes. Their geographical boundaries are not necessarily shared by other departments or by local government structures. Local government, where it exists, operates independently using the power devolved from central government. Smith claims that this type of field administration is a rare phenomenon in Africa.

The integrated prefecture organizational model

This model most closely resembles the French system of central administration. It is prefecture because the principal agent of central government in the field exercises control over all other field officers, as well as supervising locally elected authorities. This model is not indicative of the situation in Namibia because no agent or agents are appointed by central government in Namibia to

oversee the activities of either the local or regional government on behalf of central government. The people duly elect authorities at the different levels of government as determined by the relevant laws. These elected authorities then become part of the chain of command between central headquarters and the field administrative staff. The prefect is a generalist administrator who embodies the authority of each ministry and the government in general. He/she is also the chief executive of the territorial assembly to which specific power is devolved (Smith, 1967). Alderfer (1964) observes that the French used a variant of this system of local administration in their African territories. The basic feature of the integrated prefecture model was retained even after the achievement of independence in Francophone Africa.

The unintegrated prefecture organizational model
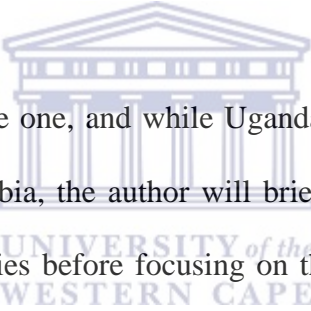
According to Smith (1967) the "unintegrated prefecture" model is a hybrid between the functional and the integrated prefecture models under which the prefect is the central figure in the field. However, he/she is by no means as powerful as the prefect in the French integrated prefecture system. In this system the prefect is but only one channel of communication among many and each specialist functionary in the field administration maintains independent links with his/her departmental headquarters. The prefect also has no overriding authority over field staff although normally there are contact between him/her and the field officers. Moreover, he/she does not occupy the position of chief executive in the local government system despite the fact that he/she supervises it. This is the model which the British tried to institutionalize in their colonies in Africa (see, for instance, Wraith, 1964).

Implications of the preceding discussion for this study

This study recognizes the fact that deconcentration and devolution are not mutually exclusive forms of decentralization. It also recognizes the fact that administrative decentralization occurs in political contexts and, therefore, the implementation of deconcentration and devolution assumes some political significance and implications. Thus, while devolution and delegation may analytically be distinguished, they are in praxis two sides of the same coin. This viewpoint means that both delegation and devolution are interrelated. In other words, before the government devolves certain functions to the lower tiers of government, which in fact is more permanent than delegation, it first delegates certain functions to those levels. This is the case in Namibia where according to the former minister of regional and local government and housing, Dr. Nicky Iyambo, the government's intention with decentralization is devolution. However, according to him devolution would not be easy, as the necessary capacity needs to be developed ahead of the devolution. Thus, the government of Namibia decided to first delegate certain functions before the ultimate devolution (Government of Namibia, 1998). Thus, what is important to ensure effective decentralization, is the number of and the functions which government structures perform, the skills and professionalism of officials, their sources of funding, and the effectiveness with which they carry out their responsibilities. This is a significant departure from the focus on the legal status or independence of government units in the implementation of decentralization policies and programmes.

Thus, there are at least three implications that emerge from the foregoing discussion and analysis. The first implication is that the discussion has helped to conceptualize the nature of decentralization in Namibia against the backdrop of the experiences of Uganda and Zambia. In particular, it will be

interesting to probe the different meanings attributed to the concept of decentralization in national contexts. The second implication is that the discussion has assisted in highlighting decentralization goals. Thus, it is intended to seek to reveal the extent to which the decentralization goals of promoting national development, making public administration more responsive to citizens, organizational effectiveness and efficiency, and giving "power to the people" or democracy at grassroots level are achieved, as well as the attendant implementation problems. Third, the discussion has pointed out contending organizational models in the implementation of decentralization programmes and, therefore, this study has the conceptual basis to explain which of the decentralization organizational models was adopted and the underlying socio-economic and political conditions for different, if any, policy choices.

While this study is not a comparative one, and while Uganda and Zambia were chosen to inform the decentralization process in Namibia, the author will briefly take a look at decentralization in other African and developing countries before focusing on the two countries that were chosen to inform this study. In Botswana, one of the reasons why decentralization was introduced was to enhance popular participation. Sharma (2000:177) is of the opinion that the warranted result of decentralization around the globe is good governance, and popular participation is one of the goals of decentralization that could lead to good governance. As such one would like to see how good governance and decentralization in general were implemented in Botswana. Sharma (2000:177) identified a number of problems and limitations of development planning in district decentralization in Botswana. As in many other third world countries, decisions pertaining to formulation, implementation, monitoring, guidance and vertical and horizontal two-way

communication were identified as problematic. This is a result of central government making decisions pertaining to local government with little or no involvement from the districts.

Even when the districts came up with priorities, these were re-prioritized by central government because central government decides how to allocate the resources. Similar to Namibia, where development committees in the regions transfer plans to central government, Botswana's District Development Plans (DDPs) are formulated by central government. However, central government in Botswana consults with districts to explain policies and to elaborate on plans that are decided upon at higher levels. Central government instructs the ministerial offices. This tendency has led to the districts becoming depended on central government for all their development plans. The result was that officers in the districts did not even read the DDPs because they would not use them. In fact, Sharma notes that apart from the fact that some officers had not consulted the development plans, some were oblivious to their existence. Information dissemination remains a problem for the districts to such an extent that some of the officials in the districts do not know who to contact in central government if they have any questions.

In Ghana the functions and staff of central government are spread out into the field. Nkrumah (2000:52) argues that deconcentration and devolution are the major components of decentralization in Ghana. Through deconcentration the central government seeks to achieve administrative efficiency. This is achieved by taking those who make decisions closer to the location of action. With devolution on the other hand, it seeks to achieve political decentralization. The idea is to develop and empower political structures lower down, including regional, district and local structures, all with legislative powers. Unlike in Namibia and Botswana, they have the power to

generate their own revenue and to appoint staff members. Deconcentration and devolution put together, according to Nkrumah (2000:52), is vital for decentralization in that they enhance participation, effectiveness and responsiveness which leads to democracy. He is also of the opinion that there is a link between decentralization and good governance, because good governance creates the enabling environment that creates opportunities for the citizenry to partake in the decision-making process. Hence, decentralization allows for the efficient mobilization of communal resources, e.g. human, financial and material, that could improve service delivery and the resolution of developmental problems such as inequality and poverty. In Ghana, apart from improving democracy, decentralization has been accredited for the enhancement and sustainability of human development. Ghana like many other developing countries still has its fair share of centralistic tends. It still favours the appointment of district chief executives (DCEs) rather than having them elected. In general good governance is not yet fully realized and according to Nkrumah (2000:54) one could safely say that decentralization in Ghana is far from being fully implemented and fully accomplished.
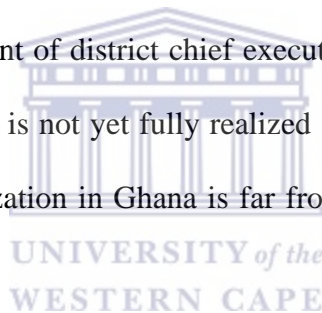
With the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela on the 10th of May 1994, the multiparty government in South Africa headed by the ANC embarked on the transformation of the country from the remnants of protracted years of Apartheid-based administration. The South African transition is of keen interest to this study, given the fact that both countries were subjected to the same form of governance based on ethnic persuasions, commonly known as Apartheid. When SWAPO came to power in Namibia, it had already mapped out strategies on how to transform the public sector to be representative of all the country's people (Nujoma, personal interview, 7/9/2006). SWAPO's ideas on the transformation that led to the formulation and implementation of

decentralization were reflected in the party (SWAPO) manifesto on Local Government and Housing of 1989 (Mukwena & Drake, 2002:47).

When the ANC came to power it embarked upon a transformation exercise of the public sector through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP was designed to serve as an integral, coherent socioeconomic policy framework aimed at informing development and planning in general and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Similar to Namibia, South Africa had to deal with the scrapping of thorny issues such as the Homelands or Bantustans to make way for the development of regional and local institutions not based on ethnicity. The regional institutions in South Africa are referred to as provinces. As a result, nine new provinces were created based on geographical and economic concerns as opposed to racial concerns as in the past. The Commission for the Demarcation and Delimitation of States/Provinces/Regions came up with the following nine provinces for South Africa: Western Cape, Northern Cape, North West, Eastern Cape, Orange Free State, KwaZulu/Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng.

It was the intention of the framers of the new South Africa to provide equilibrium in the distribution of wealth in the country in order to overcome the patterns of uneven development. Thus, apart from providing coherent spatial coordination aimed at the reconstruction of the country, the RDP also aimed to overcome the inherited patterns of uneven development. The new provinces were accorded both legislative and executive powers, of course within the parameters of a unitary state.

Since 1950 the South African government pursued an active regional development policy of decentralization. This form of decentralization was geared towards the establishment of manufacturing industries in the peripheral areas of the country, usually in the middle or on the outskirts of the Bantustans. This regional development policy was conflated with Apartheid's social engineering as decentralization programmes. To siphon the industries away from South Africa's major metropolitan-industrial regions (most notably Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging), a more vigorous regional industrial development programme (RIDP) was developed in 1980. However, the eighties were turbulent years in the history of South Africa and tremendous onslaughts leveled at the enormous financial cost of the state-sponsored decentralization strategy led to a decline in the overall demand within certain sectors in the metropolitan-based enterprises.

Based on the exponential performances of the sectors mentioned above, a panel of experts led by the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) was put together at the end of the 1980s to revamp the development policy. Their findings and recommendations led to sweeping changes in 1991. As a result, there was a shift in the focus from a locality-related focus to a production-oriented one that included the core metropolitan regions. This period according to Rogerson (1994:110) saw the de-industrialization of the former South African Bantustans. In other words the factories in the former homelands either relocated or they simply close their entire operations. Such drastic measures resulted in the loss of jobs, and in Ciskei for example, 10 000 jobs were lost between 1990 and 1992, while Transkei had lost 4 000 jobs by the end of 1992. Bophuthatswana's manufacturing workforce was reduced from 10 088 to 7 223 (Rogerson, 1994:110).

With China being a communist state, decentralization as a form of public sector reform took quite a long time before tangible changes could be noticed. As a communist state all activities of government were centralist. In fact, popular democracy and entrepreneurial freedom were viewed with some degree of hostility as they posed challenges to the old ways and thinking of the Communist Party. According to Paralejas (2003:14) changes in both regional and local government were experienced in China from 1978 onwards. At this time the regional and local governments in China assumed vital control over budgets and enterprises. These changes resulted in the attainment of some measures of freedom on the part of the people and households to pursue wealth-creating activities. In general, decentralization even though it is gradually being implemented in China in different dimensions and is yielding some results, it is creating greater challenges. As noted by Paralejas (2003:14) "with the fruits came greater challenges". What this implies is that while decentralization brought about needed changes in the Communist state, it also resulted in problems for the government of China. By relaxing bureaucratic controls and at the same time pursuing market reforms through decentralization uneven progress was created in China. In fact, some regions and layers of government even have uneven powers.

However, it must be noted that the problems of reform the central government of China are experiencing are typical problems experienced by other countries during the initial stages of the implementation of decentralization. Some of the thorny issues faced by China are macro-economic and fiscal balancing and a tug of war among upcoming entrepreneurs, bureaucrats and some old party stalwarts. China also has to deal with competition between central government and the local governments, as well as competition among the local governments themselves. Furthermore, China also has to deal with the issue of corruption. Again these are normal problems associated with the

early stages of decentralization in any given country. An exploration of the relationship between

the processes of decentralization and democratization in Uganda will follow.

CHAPTER THREE

REGIONAL, DISTRICT AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER DIFFERENT REGIMES IN UGANDA

This chapter identifies and analyses the main developments under successive regimes in Uganda. It is arranged in six sections. The first section briefly describes the British colonial administration which mainly focused on law and order. This forms the background against which administrative changes were undertaken immediately following Independence. The second section looks at the administrative changes under the first Obote presidency, 1962 – 1971 and it is followed by a discussion of changes under the presidency of Amin, 1971 – 1979. The fourth section focuses on the second Obote presidency, 1980 – 1985. The fifth section looks at the decentralization and democratization efforts under the Museveni presidency since 1986. The last section provides a brief analytical summary of the chapter.

The British colonial administration

The colonial government had a three-tiered administrative authority structure. At the apex was the governor who exercised almost unlimited authority subjected only to checks from Whitehall in London. The governor had direct access to the advice and counsel of senior civil servants but, in practice, he relied on the advice of the permanent head of the civil service and chief secretary to the protectorate government. The central government secretariat included a number of technical service departments with permanent secretaries in charge of their activities, each with its own representative at district level such as the district agriculture officer and the district veterinary

officer. In the district, the work of these field officers of the central government departments was co-ordinated by the district commissioner (DC).

The provincial administration occupied the second tier of central government. The provincial commissioner (PC) supervised the work of DCs and co-ordinated the work of technical departments at provincial level. The third tier of central government was the district. The DC was the official centrally concerned with the execution of government policy and, to a certain degree, even the formation of policy at the level of the district. British colonial administration revolved around the district. As a minister of internal affairs in post-colonial Uganda remarked in retrospect:

> "Thus, one paradoxically comes back again to the administrative structures existing before June 10, 1960, that is, a central and strong authority basing itself on decentralized provincial administrations that realize through district commissioners and territorial administrators all the options of economic and social progress" (Quoted in Kasfir, 1976: 236).

In some districts different ethnic aggregations co-existed, but in others there were ethnic groups with different traditional political systems. The kingdom districts of Buganda, Toro, Ankole and Bunyoro, for example, had a traditional chieftain hierarchy which the colonial administration incorporated without difficulty. The DC had the sole effective power to appoint, promote, punish and dismiss chiefs. Chiefs were the main intermediaries between the government and local communities. They were salaried permanent government officials and in a position to send their children to school, often beyond primary level. Unfortunately, this placed a burden on the chiefs in the sense that unpopular policies affected their popularity more than it affected government. This was a tendency which was to become somewhat exaggerated during the first decade after independence.

Administrative changes under the first Obote presidency (1962 – 1971)

Party politics influenced district council and local government elections. Similarly, district government officials and chiefs increasingly were subjected to the impact of local politics. The two contending political parties were the Democratic Party (DP) supported mainly by Catholics and Obote's Uganda People's Convention (UPC). The Kabaka Yekka (KY), a Buganda monarchical party, was the third major political party. These parties dominated the 1961 and 1962 National Assembly elections and, in turn, national politics also dominated the deliberations of district councils. Thus, post-colonial Uganda was born out of a coalition between the UPC, which was a national populist party with an egalitarian ideology, and the KY, which was a traditionalist royalist party, based almost exclusively in Buganda. In 1966 the UPC mustered the necessary support to eliminate the KY and to impose uniformity of administration throughout Uganda. But the UPC did not have a popular broad base in the rural areas, neither was it popular in the Catholic-dominated northern parts of the country. Mamdani (1976) and Sathyamurthy (1982) clearly explain how the UPC and central government made certain concessions to local governments and encouraged direct approaches by local authorities and local personalities to members of parliament to secure additional financial assistance for social services in their districts in order to win political support in these areas.

At the same time, central government pursued a policy of bringing local governments under its control as part of its fight against separatism and tribalism. In support of this, the ministry of regional administration sent as many DCs as it could from different ethnic groups to all the areas

they administered, except to Buganda. There was thus an underlying conflict in the relations between the central and local administrations, especially over rights of personnel appointments. Central government also had a strong inclination to bring local government civil servants under the control of officials outside the bureaucracy, namely, the influential members of the ruling UPC. Local government legislation actually reflected these apparent contradictions and tensions.

In 1962 a DP-controlled caretaker government, just before the UPC-KY coalition took office, tabled the Local Administrations Ordinance. The final legislation passed exempted the Western Kingdoms and Busoga on the account of UPC opposition and Busoga district's demand for special status. According to Sathyamurthy (1982: 442-460) the power to appoint chiefs was vested in an appointments committee in Buganda whilst in other parts independent appointment boards were set up under the Public Service Regulations of the Government of the Uganda Protectorate. Between 1948 and 1962 the colonial government introduced far reaching changes to the structures of local government. In 1948 it passed the African Local Governments Ordinance with the purpose to strengthen councilor bodies in the districts.

This was done by increasing the proportion of elected members as opposed to the existing appointed members of the district councils. At county level, the proportion of elected to nominated members of county councils was also increased. However, the DC continued to be the pivotal figure in local administration but he removed himself from the councils where active politics increased as candidates put forward the policies of their political parties. The position of chiefs was being undermined while the influence of political parties increased in the councils. The 1962 Local Administrations Ordinance was opposed because it had the potential to remove the privileges to

which they were now accustomed, as each district was now to have a democratically elected council.

In the rural areas government policy under the 1962 Local Government Administrations Ordinance was to be implemented by a secretary-general, an assistant secretary-general and a financial secretary. These were political appointments as they were UPC supporters and they were also drawn from outside the civil service. In fact, many secretaries-general of district councils and other officials in 1967 were absorbed into the Uganda civil service and became DCs when the bureaucracy was politicized. The 1963 Local Administration (Amendment) Act stipulated that the direct majority in the district council should elect these officers.

However, barely six months later, the minister for regional administrations announced that the system had failed and had intensified sectional conflicts and that new legislation empowered him to appoint the secretary-general and financial secretary of each district from a list of names submitted by each council. The power to remove these officials was modified from a simple majority to a two-third majority vote of the district council. Eventually, other officers including the chairman and the deputy-chairman of the district council, and the administrative secretary were also selected from the list sent by the district council to the ministry of regional administrations. This greatly increased the degree of politicization of local government by central government.

The position of the DC was reduced to an advisory role. Regional inspectors from the ministry of regional administrations instead of the DC carried out the bulk of inspections of local government records and accounts. Local government did not always respond to these changes in a predictable

fashion. Thus, stability was generally impaired by factional conflicts which increased the level of

political intervention in the local civil service. The transformed services put new burdens on weak

and poorly trained local authorities that found it hard to compete with central government for

experienced personnel in short supply. The lack of financial control and incidence of petty

corruption thus often plagued field administration. By 1965, therefore, central government was

prompted to appoint a financial relationships commission charged with reviewing the powers and

obligations of local governments.

The Kingdom of Buganda was abolished by force in 1966 and under the 1967 Constitution the

president's office enjoyed increased power in the determination of policies affecting district level

administration (Cliffe, Coleman & Doornbos, 1977: 36). The district government officers, the

secretary-general, the assistant secretary-general and the financial secretary were to be appointed by

the minister of regional planning and administration as before from names submitted by the district

council. However, a new proviso was that if a single party had a clear majority in a district, such a

party would choose all the names. In effect this made local government appointments party-

political appointments. The administrative secretary, the chief officer in charge of the executive

functions of the district council and the head of the local civil service, was to be appointed by the

president through the public service commission and the district service commissions.

The appointment of chiefs and administrative secretaries was directly under the control of the

president's office. Only the district officers whose function was to advise the district councils

remained directly under the minister of regional planning and administrations. The UPC structure

expanded so rapidly that it was difficult to distinguish between its executive functions and those of

central or local government organs at any given level. At the lower levels there were undoubtedly considerable overlap between UPC officials and government officials. Civil servants were openly told to abandon the notion of civil service neutrality. They were instead encouraged to join the UPC. Each district had to influence central government policies in order to obtain what it regarded as a fair share of financial allocations. But within the district itself, new cleavages developed which had their origins in such factors as ethnic, clan-based and religious rivalries that had a considerable impact on the political competition for planning and development resources, the allocation of which was controlled almost entirely by central government.

Thus, attempts were made to shift the balance between the functions performed by district administrations with locally recruited personnel and central government with field officers stationed in the districts. On each occasion, the move towards a greater degree of decentralization and then towards a greater degree of centralization gave rise to new patterns of communication and relationships between local government officers and central government officers working in the field. This was the situation at the time when Idi Amin overthrew the Obote government.

Administrative changes under the Amin presidency (1971 - 1979)

A few months before the overthrow of Obote's government, the National Assembly passed the Representation of the People Bill, 1970 as a prelude to calling general elections at national and district levels. This would make all Ugandan men and women over the age of 18, representing 4.7 million voters eligible to vote, but Obote's government was overthrown before the president could give his consent to the Bill. Idi Amin was quick to point out that the Representation of the People Bill, 1970 was "unconstitutional". Furthermore, five of the eighteen points put forward by the

military after Idi Amin took power directly or indirectly referred to the "unrepresentative" and "corrupt" nature of local administrations. Local administrations were blamed for the unrealistic economic policies of the previous government. The district councils and the National Assembly were dissolved. The posts of secretary-general, assistant secretary-general, mayor, town councilors, district chairman and councilors were abolished. At the same time vague promises were made about future local authority elections.

The move towards centralization was significantly promoted under the Obote government. Districts were placed under a DC who became the head of central government administration in the field. The DC was bestowed with enlarged powers akin to those in the colonial period, including power over local government expenditure, subject only to the intervention of the military. Amin's policy of suspending the political element from district administration by reverting to a system of direct rule by the DC served to undermine these institutional links which were still being developed by means of a slow evolutionary process.

While abolishing the district administrative posts and legislative bodies, Amin promised to appoint local leaders or traditional elders to head committees at district, county, sub-county and village and "parish" levels. These nominees would in turn select the individuals who would constitute the various committees. The envisaged tasks of these committees included maintenance of security in the districts, agriculture, education and other problems affecting the districts. In 1972 President Amin issued a decree aimed at the reorganization of local government. The country was reconstituted into nine provinces with a military governor appointed as administrative head.

The multi-ethnic districts were split up into small districts with the purpose of meeting the aspirations of small communities which in the past had been part of a much larger geographical unit. In this regard, Amin claimed to provide a new political identity to those peoples who had previously been dominated by neighbouring ethnic groups. This restructuring of government was designed to bring the people closer to the military regime and, thereby, ensure both its legitimacy and the popularity of Idi Amin. In the process, all the mediating political and administrative structures built over several decades were systematically destroyed.

Administrative changes under the second Obote presidency (1980 - 1985)

The political impact of Amin's re-organization of local administration increased discussions about the economic and other needs at grassroots level. He at least encouraged this development by deliberately reviving the "elder" tradition in several districts, more so because the military did not intend to hold national elections under any circumstances. Real and imagined political opposition was stifled and opponents of the military regime were killed with impunity by a private army of thugs who placed themselves above any legal, moral or social control. Central and local government administrations were overshadowed by the military. As a result, structural innovations failed to give rise to any substantive improvements in the relationship between grassroots and government.

In 1979 the Uganda National Liberation Front, supported by Tanzanian troops, defeated Amin's military forces and Obote's UPC formed a government after the December 1980 election. Its main task was to address central and local government administrative paralysis. Not only did Obote inherit a disastrously weak economy in which planning, development, trade and growth were

virtually stagnant, but he could no longer impose a single coherent political strategy on the country. The country had become largely ungovernable as a result of political factionalism into which it had degenerated during the Amin regime.

Administrative changes under the Museveni presidency (since 1986)

Yoweri K. Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) came into power in 1986 after a 5-year guerrilla war against the Obote government. Its reconstruction programme for Uganda included a focus on decentralization and democratization. This was partly to improve the interactions between government and the people. Kalema (2005**:**187-188) lists at least six arguments put forward by the NRM in favour of its new political system whereby political parties would exist, but would not be allowed to organize beyond their national headquarters:

- Equitable sharing of national resources and development throughout the country would be the norm. This was to do away with a system whereby the party or military regime in power could choose to reward its supporters while neglecting the rest.

- Leadership would be based on individual merit and not on party affiliation. The belief was that non-partisan organization held the potential promise to accelerated socio-economic development.

- National unity was best guaranteed by a "no-party" arrangement. The belief was that the party politics of the past caused much misery and suffering among the people.

- Class interests and differences akin to experiences in western countries were not a conducive basis for political party organization. This was a dangerous syndrome in the historical experience of the country.

- Consensus rather than confrontation typically resembled the African values of solidarity, reconciliation, peace and togetherness.

- Political party competition would undermine consensus-building processes and reconciliation.

Motivation for the policy on decentralization

The NRM made a clear policy pronouncement that it was committed to decentralization and that it would make serious efforts towards its implementation. However, the motivations for embracing decentralization were quite complex. The support for decentralization was partly motivated by subtle political goals. President Museveni's and other NRM leaders' reasons included improved governance; local democracy; and increased efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. The stated aims of decentralization which were expressed in the speeches delivered at the official launching of the decentralization policy where

> "President Museveni and Minister of Local Government, Jaberi Bidandi Ssali, talked of giving power to the people to move further on the path to democratization; promoting equitable distribution of resources between and within districts; improving public sector performance through less centralized decision-making and local political control; increased transparency and accountability in handling of public funds" (Uganda, Ministry of Local Government, 1993 cited in Regan, 1995).

These viewpoints indicate that the senior leaders of the NRM supported decentralization and more opportunities for citizens to participate in government, the development of their regions, and the

delivery of social services. The decentralization policy as declared provided evidence of the Museveni government's commitment to participatory democracy.

The scope of the policy on decentralization

The NRM had been promoting a form of decentralization during its guerrilla war against the Obote government. The resistance council (RC) system provided the institutional foundation for the system of local government and the policy on decentralization that was now being implemented. Kasfir (1998:55) suggests that the RCs primarily began as administrative institutions and were organized "to enlist sympathetic civilians in the acquisition of food, recruits and intelligence for the National Resistance's war effort".

The NRM shifted the membership and focus of the RCs toward broad-based citizen participation at village level and introduced the election of RC leaders to make these councils more democratic. Apter (1995) explains that once elected, the RCs were responsible for maintaining security, law and order, and providing a few basic services to local communities in their areas. Brett (1994) observes that the RCs functioned as self-help organizations and primarily relied on voluntary contributions from the community to carry out their tasks. In many parts of the country, therefore, RCs constituted the only functioning government during the guerrilla war.

After January 1986, the NRM formalized the RC structure through the National Resistance Council and Committees Statute of 1987. RCs were then instituted throughout the country. Support for the RCs was increased by government's tendency to use the RCs to distribute basic commodities such as sugar, paraffin, soap and salt, especially in areas where the RCs did not exist previously

(Tidemand, 1994). The 1987 Resistance Council and Committees Statute represented the NRM's first attempt to implement decentralization in Uganda. Lubanga (1996:51) explains that the 1987 Statute was designed to formally transform the RCs into new local government institutions, as well as to empower local communities, secure local participation in decision-making and development, and improve service delivery.

However, despite the above noble intentions the 1987 Statue failed to empower the new local governments. On the contrary, it actually reinforced the power of central government civil servants in the field. Some apparently contradictory features of the Statute explain this situation. According to Lubanga (1996: 50- 52), while the Statute established the RCs with locally elected political leaders and gave "extensive political powers to oversee civil servants and guide the local development process", it denied them any real authority over personnel and staffing decisions as well as any control over finances. Moreover, district civil servants directly appointed by President Museveni served as "the political heads of districts" rather than the elected leaders within the RCs. The Statute also denied the RCs any revenue generating authority although it claimed to support decentralization. It claimed to promote devolution when, in reality, it furthered centralization by empowering central government representatives at the expense of RCs.

As a result of the above failures the government appointed a committee of inquiry in 1989 which proposed corrective measures to address the inconsistencies in the 1987 Statute and to achieve the primary decentralization objective of transferring real power to the local level (Regan, 1995). The 1993 Local Government Statute flowed from the proposals of this commission of inquiry which found that there was a need to move away from deconcentration or delegation to devolution of

powers. Apter (1995) and Regan (1995) believe that the 1993 Local Government Statute created the institutional and legal framework for a more genuine and complete transfer of power, responsibility and resources to local governments and reassured the importance of local government prior to the adoption of the new constitution in 1995.

The RCs officially became local councils (LCs). The LC system was a 5-tier hierarchical system from the village to the district level: -

- District (LC5)

- County (LC4)

- Sub-county (LC3)

- Parish (LC2)

- Village (LC1)

This pyramid-like structure of the LC was designed to bring together, systematize and present citizen priorities to district LCs in order to ensure that the demands of citizens were effectively addressed. All persons 18 years and older residing in a village were automatically members of the village council (LC1). The inclusiveness of the village councils was designed to enable the community to meet monthly to discuss concerns of an individual and communal nature. Direct participation at the village level sought to guarantee every citizen the opportunity to participate in political decision-making. Local councils in the higher levels were formed by a number of elected representatives, including directly elected councilors and a chairperson who headed local government and led the executive in the implementation of council decisions. Only the district, sub-county and urban councils were local governments and, therefore, benefited from the enhanced

powers and authority given to local governments under decentralization. Local councils at all other levels were considered administrative units and were only minimally affected by the policy of decentralization.

The years after 1993 showed significant progress in the devolution of power and authority down to local governments. The 1995 Constitution and the 1997 Local Government Act addressed the policy of decentralization by strengthening LCs and ensured a more permanent legal basis for their authority. The Local Government Act was designed to implement the provisions of Chapter 11 of the 1997 Constitution. Article 176(2) (a) and (b), for example, states that:

> "Decentralization shall be a principle applying to all levels of local government and in particular, from higher to lower local government units to ensure people's participation and democratic control in decision-making…system shall be such s to ensure full realization of democratic governance at all local government levels".
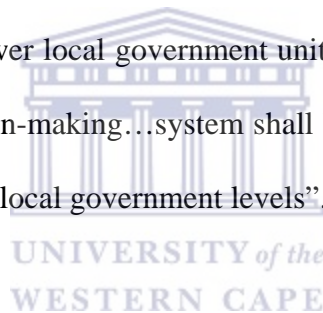
The 1997 Local Government Act conferred legislative and executive powers on local government to serve as the primary planning and budgeting authority in their jurisdiction, responsible for supervising, hiring and firing local administrative personnel, and holding revenue generating authority. For instance, the chairperson and the executive committee elected by the council were responsible for overseeing the work of the local administrators who were to implement council decisions.

President Museveni's commitment to decentralization seems to reflect the intention of permitting local participation without opening the political system to multiple parties. According to the NRM

government the new system incorporated all Ugandans and encouraged broad-based citizen support through LC institutions, eliminating the need for political parties and party competition. In this way, decentralization created alternative centres of power; dividing potential opponents and reducing their power. Regan (1995: 287) aptly concludes that decentralization could be viewed as part of a political settlement to provide a permanent solution to longstanding conflicts in Uganda. The NRM sought to create institutions that could act as a check on the national government and in particular on any group seeking to capture state power on behalf of any narrow interest group as was the case in the past. This is a compelling explanation given the fact that much of the political conflict in Uganda's history was rooted in the struggles between different groups based on ethnicity, religion and region over the control of the state and the accompanying resources.

Decentralization and democratization

Decentralization and the LC system

The decentralization policy in Uganda provides for limited democratization as the Museveni government appears to be opposed to full democratization. This is illustrated by the existence of tight restrictions on open competition at all levels of politics. According to Diamond (2002: 26) Uganda has a "hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime" in the sense that while electoral and other democratic institutions exist, they are "largely facades". There is little real opportunity for the opposition to seriously criticize or challenge the regime. There is a practical ban on political party activity in the country and the continuation of the NRM system of government. This ban was instituted shortly after the NRM assumed power on the grounds that this was the only way to avoid past sectarianism and violence associated with political party competition.

However, in reality these restrictions on political competition were mostly intended to either weaken or eliminate potential political competitors. Kasfir (1998) explains that the rationale for the political ban has changed over time, and suggests that currently the NRM inaccurately claims that economic cleavages do not exist in Uganda's largely peasant society, which means that if political parties were allowed to operate they would rekindle sectarianism. Research conducted on this no-party political system suggests that Ugandans are generally supportive of the participatory aspects of democracy inherent in the decentralization policy while less concerned with competition (Bratton et al., 1980).

It is further explained that the attitudes and beliefs of Ugandans at the local level support Western liberal democracy while they appear to be "illiberal democrats" at the national level (Ottemoeller, 1998). This could be the main reason why there is general satisfaction with the decentralization policy, namely, it fulfils those aspects of democracy most important to Ugandans; providing local communities an opportunity to participate at grassroots level. A discussion of demands for a return to a multiparty political system in Uganda is beyond the scope of this study. It is worth noting, however, that the current no-party system tends to undermine the democratic influence of the decentralization policy by limiting the electorate's choice of leaders, freedom to elect leaders of their choice and democratic controls over elected leaders; by making the LCs dependent on and accountable to the NRM leadership and/or the central government; and by reducing the autonomy of the LCs.

As was indicated earlier, there is a strong structural linkage between the NRM and the LC system. The LCs and their officials form part of the NRM structure and Articles 16 – 19 of the Movement

Act of 1997 establish Movement committees at various levels of the LC system. In fact, the Movement Act of 1997 stipulates that LC chairpersons and councilors are automatically members of the Movement committees at these levels. This raises the question as to whether LCs exist as autonomous political institutions, or merely serves as channels through which the Movement government entrenches its power. Dicklitch (1998) even contended that the no-party Movement system steers local communities in the direction of central government plans and policies through the co-optation of LCs. But the extent to which the Movement has succeeded at controlling the LCs has naturally varied across districts and across time.

Fiscal decentralization

Decentralization usually entails the shifting of resources from central government to sub-national level governments. In principle, therefore, decentralization empowers local governments. The contrary is true in Ugandan, however. The LCs are dependent on central government for policy direction, information, training, resources and even monitoring which, in turn, provides an opportunity to the Movement to exert considerable control over the LCs. It is true that the Local Government Act gives revenue-generating authority to local governments and that this is an expression of fiscal decentralization. The legislation in Uganda, for example, gives LCs the power to levy and collect various fees such as licenses, rates, rents, and graduate and property taxes, but these sources of revenue comprise an extremely small percentage of district revenue.

Steffensen and Trollegaard (2000) point out that on average less than 10 per cent of district revenue comes from local sources, compared to countries such as Senegal and Swaziland where over half of the local government budget is generated from local revenue. Thus, most local governments in

Uganda remained highly dependent on central government transfers. LCs depend on central government grants, on average, for almost 75 per cent of their annual budgets. The block grants transferred to the districts also comprise the largest pool of resources that central government control and allocate, not on the basis of local needs but according to political considerations. Equally important, Part 78 of the Local Government Act makes local governments responsible for formulating, approving and executing their own budgets.

But these budgeting and planning powers are constrained by the extremely small amounts of revenue that are actually made available for the discretion of LCs. Conditional grants arrive in the districts with guidelines on how they may be used. They therefore provided few opportunities for decision-making by local governments and offer LCs no discretion in budgeting or planning. During the 1998/99 fiscal year, for instance, conditional grants constituted about 77 per cent of central government transfers to the districts. These transfers, however, had strict requirements built-in on planning, spending and accounting for the funds.

The above conditions and requirements tended to reduce the power of LCs. A district would, for instance, received grants for primary healthcare, primary education, and rural road infrastructure with the amount of each grant determined ahead of time by the appropriate line ministry often with limited consultation with local government structures. The LCs were involved in national budgeting through the annual Local Government Budget Framework Paper workshops and conferences. But this involved local governments in ministerial planning for only a few days in a year, providing the only avenue for LCs to influence the central government budget process where the ministries determined the amount of the conditional grants that would be transferred to each

district in the next fiscal year. The LCs received their budget ceilings from central government officials and are presented with the guidelines to plan for those amounts. In the same way, districts may not use the funds for a specific grant for any other use. Line ministries determined how much districts would receive for each of the different conditional grants. This resulted in district councils not focusing on projects that the local communities requested.

A large percentage of district council budgets came from central government. This exacerbated the problem of establishing downward accountability, an important ingredient for the success of decentralization. Downward accountability entailed a situation where local political leaders were accountable to the people they represented rather than being accountable to, say, central government ministries. Indeed, the conditional grants to districts required detailed reporting which represented an effort to limit financial mismanagement or the corrupt uses of public funds. While districts reported and accounted for their spending to sectoral ministries in charge of each grant, the local communities had little knowledge or control over how those funds were utilized.

It was noted earlier, that LCs had perhaps the greatest decision-making power and discretion with regard to the local revenue base. The graduated tax, comprising about 80 per cent of local revenue, was the most common source of local government revenue. But there were problems with the districts' administration and reliance on graduated tax. Livingstone and Charlton (1998) say that graduated tax was extremely difficult to administer, assess or collect. The localized assessment and collection processes were susceptible to corruption. The amounts assessed usually differed from the funds that were actually collected, depending on the relationships between the assessor and the individual who was assessed.

Furthermore, individual LC officials regularly complained about their lack of authority to collect taxes such as VAT or income tax which they felt would increase the amount of local revenue and would reduce their dependence on central government transfers. It seems that the decentralization policy was designed so that LCs would remain dependent on central government for most of their revenue and their only significant source of local revenue was the politically and administratively difficult to handle graduated tax. In 1999, the ministry of local government, with the support of the World Bank, began the Local Government Development Programme that was designed to decentralize the development budget. Hitherto, districts had only received funds from central government to cover recurrent expenditures such as operational costs and teachers' salaries. They did not receive any of the donor funds designated for development projects. These funds and development expenditures had historically been the responsibility of central government who used its own discretion to spend these funds. Donors or 'co-operating partners' were now seemingly getting interested in issues of democracy and good governance in Museveni's Uganda.

Citizen participation

One of the goals of decentralization policy was to create opportunities for local communities to participate in government and influence the decision-making process. All Ugandans were automatically members of the LC1 in their villages, but since the LC1s were not specifically covered under the decentralization policy and since they did not play a major role in service delivery, they exercised very little decision-making at that level, except in matters of local security and dispute resolution among villagers. Moreover, their meetings were less frequently held and less attended by villagers. The situation was mostly the same with respect to LC2s, LC3s and LC4s.

Voting for representatives to higher levels of the LC system was the most common form of indirect citizen participation. But the relatively low level of participation in LC elections meant that local communities often exercised little check on the activities of local leaders. These local elections, besides, were an inadequate measure of accountability due to the Movement's influence and involvement in the campaigns and voting processes. The LCs was quite supportive of government decisions and policies because of the link between the Movement and central government. This made it problematic to indisputably talk about manifestations of citizen participation in Uganda.

Analytical summary

Much of Uganda's post-colonial era was marked by civil war, authoritarian rule and economic stagnation. The institutional arrangements under the Obote, Amin and Museveni regimes meant that political institutions no longer provided basic services, yet these institutions were engaged in the extraction of resources from the poor citizens (Brett, 1994). More importantly, authoritarian tendencies of the Obote and Amin regimes largely excluded and marginalized the majority of the people. The Obote and Amin regimes used coercive instruments of the state to deal with the public in general, and their opponents in particular. But the period under Museveni has been described as one of social, political and economic reconstruction and nation building.

Decentralization policy went a long way in building democratic institutions after years of turmoil in Uganda. The LC system sought to empower local governments and increase the opportunities for citizens to participate in government. The power and influence of Ugandans over their own government improved under Museveni's Movement, but the mechanisms for holding local leaders

accountable remained weak largely due to the Movement's efforts to hold on to power which tended to limit the impact of the process of democratic decentralization. Finally, local governments appeared to be much less autonomous *vis-à-vis* central government and less powerful than provided for in the 1997 Local Government Act. On the one hand, the processes of decentralization and democratization supported and reinforced each other and, on the other hand, they appeared to be in conflict. Nonetheless, it is safe to conclude that the Movement government did its best to institutionalize both decentralization and democratization albeit with certain limitations dictated by local conditions and political considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE ONE-PARTY STATE IN ZAMBIA

Zambia achieved Independence from Britain on 24 October 1964. The new government almost immediately sought to modify the inherited administrative structure in order to meet the requirements of the new political dispensation. The system of provincial and district administration was found to be too preoccupied with law and order functions and thus unsuited for the new tasks of effectively implementing the socio-economic goals of the new government. Against this background, the present chapter will look at government efforts to decentralize the inherited administrative system in Zambia. The issues discussed include the evolution of decentralization policy; the motivation for decentralization; the nature and scope of decentralization; the development committee system; the monitoring and evaluation of decentralization; and the integrated local government administration.
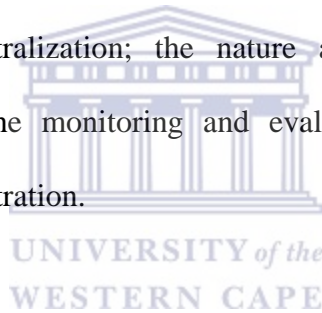
The structure of government and its standards of operations

The structure of the central government

Central government was divided into specialist departments, some of which had personnel posted to different parts of the country. Although these departmental personnel received technical guidance from their respective departmental headquarters in Lusaka, they were required to work as a team. Thus, the structure of government in the immediate post-independence period was still derived in many ways from colonial experience, and reflected a great deal of the centralized structure which prevailed during British rule. The ministries in Lusaka represented a tremendous concentration of power at one centre. But many complaints were voiced in the provinces and

districts against the practices adopted by the ministries in Lusaka (Tordoff & Molteno, 1974: 258). Decentralization was considered as the solution to addressing these complaints.

Internal standards of administration

The institutionalization of participatory democracy needs also to come to terms with standards of administration, which are designed for the internal convenience of government administration, rather than for the promotion of participation by the people. Positions in civil service are ordered and every civil servant is often well informed about the arrangements that govern his/her position. However, this does not apply to the civil servant's position within the structure of grassroots participation. For many civil servants, participation was still something external to government administration. For example, the attendance of civil servants at grassroots committees was apparently discouraged by the fact that these meetings were normally convened on weekends when civil servants were often off duty. This suggested the need to stipulate what sort of administrative behaviour would support popular participation in administration for rural development. This called for a deliberate organization that would facilitate the process of interaction between government and people. This is the matter to which attention is now being paid by considering the changes that were undertaken to streamline government structures and procedures.

Evolution of the policy on decentralization

Provincial and district administration

The role of the provincial and district administration was to co-ordinate the work of personnel in specialist departments. This structure was only abolished in 1964 and many of the functions performed by the district commissioners were attributed to specialist departments with their

headquarters based in Lusaka. Before these changes, Taylor (1972:15) clearly explained how the district commissioner was the hub of the colonial administration:

> "The whole nature of the old Provincial Administration assumed that the man in the district would get things done on the spot, in the light of his own resources and his knowledge of legal and procedural norms. He was not expected to seek higher authority in anything except a most unusual situation. He was expected to take the necessary decision himself and to take responsibility for it".

Subramaniam (1972: 281 – 99) also observed that Britain had produced a strong pattern of field administration in Zambia, but a weakly articulated central administration under the governor in Lusaka. Zambia was divided into eight administrative provinces under this system of provincial and district administration. These provinces were under the control of provincial commissioners to whom all heads of specialist departments at the provincial level were accountable. In turn, provinces were divided into districts each of which was under the administrative care of the district commissioner. Thus, departmental personnel posted to the districts were accountable to the district commissioner who, in turn, was responsible to the provincial commissioner who ultimately reported to the governor.

The Zambian police within the ministry of home affairs were responsibility for law and order. The ministry of justice assumed the supervision of local courts. The ministry of finance took over the collection of most kinds of revenue and the issuing of many types of licenses. Labour, agriculture, forestry and similar functions were placed under their respective departments. The ministry of local government took over the training and supervision of local authorities. These structural changes

were accompanied by a change in titles as the provincial commissioner became resident secretary and the district commissioner became district secretary (Tordoff, 1968: 425).

Despite the foregoing loss of power, the provincial and district administration were required to continue with the co-ordination of field administration. This was a difficult task because the provincial and district officials had no disciplinary powers over personnel in the civil service. Nonetheless, the provincial and district administration were progressively brought under political control. In 1964, for instance, a minister of state was posted to the provinces to represent the president and the district secretary, as the provincial head of the civil service.

In 1969 this political control was strengthened by the appointment of a cabinet minister as the political head of every province. The permanent secretary as the administrative head of a province replaced the post of resident secretary. The ministry of provincial and local government was a line ministry without any supervisory powers over provincial cabinet ministers under the office of the president. The political control of the provincial and district administration was carried further in 1969 by the establishment of the office of the district governor as head of district administration, replacing the district secretary, who now worked under the district governor in the same way as the provincial permanent secretary worked under the provincial cabinet minister. This staffing of the system of provincial and district administration with generalist administrators implied that specialist and technical staff were now subjected to dual control. On the one hand, they were required to report to their respective Lusaka-based departmental headquarters, and on the other hand, they were subjected to the on-the-spot-control of provincial cabinet ministers and district governors as the backbone of field administration. A further implication was that the provincial and

district administration was virtually insulated from any form of public or community participation and, as such, the national political leadership perceived the situation as being a constraint to the achievement of accelerated socio-economic development of the country.

Urban and rural local authorities

Zambia at independence in 1964 had two types of local government, namely, urban and rural authorities. The urban local authorities were initially introduced by, and for White settlers. The African residents in towns were only allowed to participate in the affairs of urban local authorities through the advisory African housing boards in 1956. In the rural areas, the British policy of indirect rule led to the establishment of tribal native authorities. These traditional authorities were designed to assist the government in the maintenance of law and order and in revenue collection. Whereas the urban local authorities had an elected element by 1964, the contrary was true of rural local authorities (GRZ, Cabinet Office, 1979: 7).
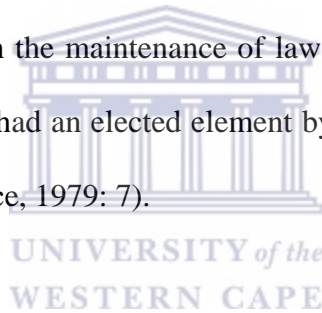
The Local Government Act of 1965 extended the principle of elected local government to the rural areas. This legislation grouped native authorities into rural councils for each district, and provided for elected councilors. It further provided for three kinds of councils, namely, the municipal council in big towns, the township council in smaller towns; and the rural council. These councils were corporate bodies; was a legal person and, therefore, could sue or be sued in a court of law; and could own property. Some of the main powers the Local Government Act conferred on these councils were: -

- to provide and maintain streets, bridges, and water supplies;
- to collect personal levies from their inhabitants;

- to establish markets;

- to act as licensing authorities; and

- to preserve and improve public health.

All three kinds of councils were re-grouped under the ministry of local government. This move made it easy for central government to monitor, control and direct their activities. Moreover, the move was to root out any form of duplication of functions, to minimize redundancies, and to ensure that the activities of local government structures were executed in the most efficient, cost-effective and orderly manner. There was also an attempt by the government to make local government structures responsive to the demands of local communities. This was based on the principle that local government had to be closer to the people at grassroots levels in the administration of their affairs.

Nature of the policy on decentralization

Motivation for decentralization

The then ruling party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), set the tone for decentralization when it accepted Humanism as its guiding philosophy. One of its objectives was that "popular participation in the decision-making processes of government should be secured not only at the level of the central parliamentary process but also down to the very grassroots of the society itself" (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 25). Another important objective of this philosophy was that in the interests of national development, greater efficiency and economy in the operations of government should be sought. The centralized structure of government contrasted sharply with the aim of transferring power to the people, and President Kaunda who defined "decentralization in centralism" has repeatedly stipulated decentralization as:

"…. a measure whereby through the Party and Government machinery, we will decentralize most of our Party and Government activities while retaining effective control of the Party and Government machinery at the center in the interest of unity" (quoted in Mutahaba, 1989: 98).

Some idea of the meaning of decentralization in Zambia can be gleaned from the report of the working party appointed to review the system of decentralized administration (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 25). One of its terms of reference was to "analyze the possible advantages of more radical decentralization of administrative, financial authority and senior supporting staff from Lusaka to both the Provincial and the District level". The working party made a distinction between decentralization and delegation. Decentralization was "the creation of institutions outside the Ministries which are legally vested with responsibilities for defined functions within the totality of government while delegation was conceived to be the transfer of authority within the bureaucratic hierarchy. While declaring that decentralization meant much more than the simple devolution of authority down the administrative hierarchy, it rejected the notion of regionalism" (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 24).

The above meaning of decentralization left room for many interpretations, making it applicable to a wider set of formal arrangements and types of behaviour that could accordingly be qualified as "decentralization". This equated the decentralization definition of Mawhood (undated mimeograph: 7 - 9) who took decentralization to mean "units of local government in which the formal decision-making power is primarily exercised by ('devolved upon') local representative councilors or officials". In his concept of decentralization, such units have their own budgets and a separate legal

existence, with authority granted by central government to allocate substantial material resources in a range of different functions.

Although the above illustrates the practice of local government in Zambia, decentralization was not normally taken to mean local government only, but also included the transfer of power from Lusaka to the provincial and district administration, or to village and ward institutions. Decentralization was yet to acquire a fixed meaning as a result of the need to justify the discrepancy between the realities of a centralized structure of government on the one hand, and the concept of participatory democracy on the other. The situation was compounded by the fact that even delegation of power within the bureaucratic structure was interpreted as "decentralization".

The working party identified additional motivating reasons for the need to decentralize government administration (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 27). First, the implementation of the First National Development Plan was falling behind schedule. The government in its 1969 national budget decided to control inflation by cutting down on capital expenditure rather than recurrent expenditure. Second, farmers responded poorly to government encouragement to grow more food in addition to the exodus of White expatriate commercial farmers. And third, the effect of Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in the then Rhodesia led to the diversion of expenditure into unplanned projects such as the airlifting of crude oil into the country.

President Kaunda provided other motivations for decentralization. One was the criticism of the civil service by UNIP and the public. Civil service was blamed for the shoddy performance of the First

National Development Plan. President Kaunda summarized the government's intentions with the committees as follows:

> "Development programmes and participatory democracy require an administrative machinery which is efficient and effective as a means of not only transferring power and responsibility to the people but of guaranteeing that such power and responsibility are exercised fully by the people for their own individual and economic welfare" (Kaunda, 1968:34).

At the Kitwe National Convention in January 1967 complaints were raised by a cross-section of people against the civil service. In particular it was accused of not properly identifying itself with the aspirations of UNIP. These complaints, in part, compelled President Kaunda in November 1968 to declare that the time had come for the civil service to openly accept the supremacy of UNIP over all public institutions (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 32). As Mphaisha (2000: 3) aptly observes on the role of the civil service:

> "The Civil Service…is part of the executive branch of government…. [it] exists to implement the policies of the ruling political party. It is for this reason, to a large extent, that political leaders become too sensitive to the attitudes of civil servants towards the policies of their regimes. As such, they wish to ensure that those identified attitudes, and orientations are in harmony with the philosophies that underlie their public policies. The corollary is that any failure, on the part of the Civil Service, to efficiently carry out policies frustrates those policies and undermines the stability of the government of the day".

Thus, civil servants in the line ministries and departments increasingly came under political pressure and those who overstepped their operational boundaries soon discovered that their stay in government service meant avoiding risks and deferring even the most routine of decisions upwards.

The civil service itself also favoured some form of decentralization. This was why a working party had already been examining the role of provincial and district government with a view of finding ways and means to, not only make the civil service more effective, but also responsive to the demands of citizens. It called for a strong office of the district secretary and the abolition of the dualism between the district secretary and the district local authority. It also argued that central government should have an office in the district to ensure that the government machinery worked effectively. Such a strong district secretary would supervise all civil servants in the district and co-ordinate them.

Scope of the decentralization policy

President Kaunda responded to the above calls for decentralization by announcing the January 1969 administrative reforms. These measures led to the establishment of the earlier mentioned provincial ministries, with the intention to accelerate the decision-making processes in rural areas. For example, the provincial cabinet minister was not to shy away from making decisions in a province, as fewer questions would in future be referred to Lusaka. Indeed, a member of UNIP's central committee replaced the provincial cabinet minister. The 1969 changes let to a further superimposition of political control over the civil service although at the district level the political leaders initially lacked statutory powers that would have enabled them to perform their functions as co-coordinators of government business.

The 1969 decentralization measures also led to the establishment of giant Lusaka-based central ministries by grouping together departments that dealt with similar matters. This was designed to

promote co-ordination and it led to the reduction of the number of central ministries form fifteen to eight. However, the net result was the overloading of the top-most levels of the ministries, a development that delayed, rather than speed up decision-making. By 1970, therefore, some of these ministries were split up, and the number of central ministries outside the offices of the president and the vice-president increased to eleven. Central ministries were responsible for formulating policy and for planning departmental programmes on a national scale after consulting with provincial ministries. This consultation was the first aspect of decentralization. The office of secretary-general to the government was another product of the 1969 policy changes. The secretary-general to the government, as head of civil service, was responsible for securing the efficiency of the civil service.

Government and people at the grassroots

The government started setting up provincial, district, ward and village development committees in 1965. Thus, the 1969 measures only gave further impetus to the development committee system. The committees were to be concerned with general development at their respective hierarchical levels, and the task of organizing them met with varying degrees of success.

Ward and village committees

Participatory democracy at the grassroots level was formally institutionalized with the Registration and Development of Villages Act, 1971. This Act laid down an ambitious design of village and ward committees under the respective chairpersonship of the village headman/woman and the councilor elected to the rural council. The committee system was expected to meet high objectives

as contained in "Village Productivity and Ward Development Committees: A Pocket Manual" (GRZ; 1971: xii - xv) and were the following: -

- Improvement in the administration of the village and establishment of effective channels of communication between local communities and the government leaders in Lusaka;

- Improvement in the maintenance of law and order to ensure national security for all the people;

- Efficient and effective organization for the supply of farming requisites and improvement in the marketing system for agricultural and industrial products;

- Improvement in the protection and exploitation of regional natural and human resources to increase the level of production;

- Efficient utilization of village and ward resources by the inhabitants;

- Improvement of the standards of living of the people;

- Revival, reconstruction and maintenance of the highest standards of culture;

- Increase in investment and employment opportunities in the area; and

- Clear establishment of priorities in each village and ward in order to provide a basis for the determination of national priorities and to ensure that national decisions are based on the real needs of the people.

The committee system was essentially designed as a means to increase self-help and self-reliance in local communities and, at the same time, as a tool for interaction between government and the people at grassroots level. It was emphasized that in order to strengthen participatory democracy the administrative machinery had to become one with the people. In fact, they should see it as their own.

Village productivity committees (VPCs) and ward development committees (WDCs) were established in the rural areas under the Registration and Development of Villages Act of 1971. For each village of at least 20 households a VPC was to be formed, presided over by a village headman. A combination of villages in the event of villages having less than 20 households was also to constitute a VPC. The chairpersons and secretaries of all the VPCs in a ward formed a ward council whose chairperson was the ward councilor. A WDC was formed, comprising not more than ten members elected by the ward council from among its members. There were no fees, allowances or other emoluments paid to WDC members as their work would be a voluntary service to the local communities. In addition, the WDCs were advisory and had no statutory power or authority. In 1971 the central government issued the "Handbook or Pocket Manual of Village Productivity and Ward Development Committees" in order to give strong impetus to the slumbering existence of most VPCs and WDCs. The pocket manual stipulated, in detail, the membership and responsibilities of these committees. As one of the goals of the committee system, the pocket manual stated:

> "...to create machinery through which the Village communities can shoulder effectively…more and more for the development of their areas, and also provide machinery through government assistance as well as assistance from non-governmental sources can be channeled with maximum efficiency and effectiveness" (GRZ, 1971:1).

Traditional leaders

Chiefs and headmen were ascribed formative roles with regard to ward and village committees. The headman was chairman of the VPC. The role of the chief was less explicit but he/she was expected to ensure that the committees were established and that they functioned effectively. Within his/her

area, the chief may at any time attend the meetings of committees and address their members on any subject conducive to the well being of the people. Rural councils also drew upon chiefs for their membership as a number of chiefs whose areas fell within the council boundaries were appointed as members. The legal basis of the appointment of chiefs to councils was the Local Government Act, 1965, Cap. 480, 16(1), which stated:

> "Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Minister may appoint to a council as appointed councilors thereof such persons, including Chiefs as he considers it desirable in the interests of local government to appoint".

Chiefs, under the Chiefs Act of 1965, were responsible for law and order in the areas under their jurisdiction. Furthermore, and based on long-standing tradition, chiefs and headmen were recognized traditional authorities in the rural areas. They embodied the relationship with the ancestors and, as such, they personified the cultural wisdom of the people. They were respected by their people and it was for this reason that the colonial government anchored its local administrative structure in the chieftainship.

Some knowledge of chiefs and headmen is harnessed to help identify and register people, most of who are listed for national registration purposes in the name of a chief's area and the village in which the father was born. In addition and under the Registration and Development of Villages Act, 1971, village headmen are required to maintain a village register and to furnish the chief with information relating to any changes in the population.

Political organization

The centrally appointed district governor and the regional secretary held the most important political party positions at the district level. The district governor was the personal representative of the president and was head of both the party and the administration in the district. He/she was also chairman of the regional committee that supervised the work and activities of the constituencies and branches. At the sub-district level, the constituency chairman and the councilor elected to the rural council were the most prominent party officials although it was not unusual for the same person to hold both positions. These party officials could, and did exercise considerable formal and informal influence on government administration.

Local government

As indicated earlier, rural councils were established as successors to the pre-independence native authorities, and were local authorities in terms of the Local Government Act 1965. Their limited responsibilities in rural development were mostly concerned with public works, e.g. the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, welfare halls, vegetable markets and fishponds. In addition, rural councils issued all sorts of licenses and were charged with preventive health care tasks such as the inspection of villages, water supplies and business premises in order to check cleanliness and safety. Rural councils were allowed to operate taverns and bars and, occasionally, other businesses such as rest houses and shops in order to raise additional revenue.

The council areas often coincided with the district areas of central government departments. These areas were divided into wards representing the voting districts for the councilors elected to the rural council. In addition to the elected councilors, a few traditional leaders from the council area were

appointed to the council. Each rural council had two committees, namely, the finance and general purposes committee, and the works and development committee that drew up and revised capital and maintenance projects. Membership of a committee was important for the representation of ward interests, and also because it was an opportunity for greater contact with council officials, central government departments and the regional UNIP officials.

Each large rural council was further sub-divided into sub-centres headed by administrative assistants. These individuals were in regular contact with the ward councilors residing within the sub-centres. Administrative assistants re-drafted letters written by ward councilors and also ward development committee (WDC) minutes. They usually attended WDC meetings and were generally well-informed about WDC affairs.

Central government

Many ministries and departments had their offices at the district level. Central government personnel stationed in the rural areas were normally referred to as extension workers. They were at the bottom of a range of parallel hierarchies and, as UNIP officials, were formally not available for election to councils, WDCs and the rural council. They were accountable to the district office of which they formed a sub-establishment. Yet, political leaders believed that extension workers needed to work hand-in-hand with ward and village committees frequently emphasized it, and encouraged them to attend WDC and VPC meetings. They were required to extend technical/professional advisory services to ward and village committees (GRZ. 1971: 33-36). This did not always happen in practice, as the extension workers believed that they were primarily accountable to their departmental hierarchies and, more importantly, their low positions in the
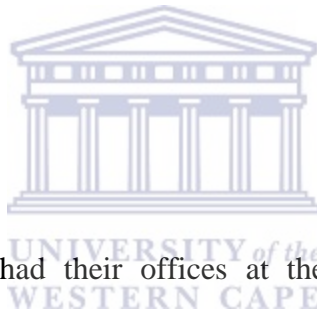
hierarchy did not offer them the power to enforce action in response to grassroots demands. Furthermore, extension workers were widely dispersed and almost invisible to local communities. Supervision was difficult. A high degree of motivation, responsibility and initiative were needed if they were to work well (Chambers, 1974: 78).

The nature of decentralization

Government policy was to improve the standard of living of the people, especially in rural areas. By 1972, however, the government felt that the envisaged benefits of the 1969 decentralization reforms were not being achieved. This prompted the office of the secretary-general to the government to appoint a working party to review the system of decentralized administration. Members of the working party, with the exception of one University of Zambia professor, were drawn from the civil service. Hence, it could be said that the civil service greatly contributed to the monitoring of the system of decentralized administration.

The working party toured all the provinces and received both oral and written submissions. It reported that of the 60 people who sent in written submissions, 85 per cent were civil servants, and of the 371 people who made oral submissions, close to 91 per cent were civil servants. These statistics demonstrate that the civil service contributed much to the generation of information towards the evaluation of the decentralized administrative system.

The working party concluded that the establishment of the posts of cabinet minister to the province and of district governor did not do much to improve the administration system of provinces and districts:

"The hierarchy of decentralized authority is not really an authority at all. There has been some decentralization of the day-to-day control of minor operations but decision-making powers are, in the main, as closely vested in Lusaka as they were before. The participatory organs of government from village, to ward, to district and provincial level exist largely for the expression of opinion and not for deciding what is to be done" (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 27). This was due to various factors. First, the permanent secretaries of central ministries were often reluctant to sub-warrant to the provincial ministries funds for the implementation of local projects. Hence, provincial ministries lacked sufficient funds to execute their programmes. Second, the permanent secretary for the ministry of provincial and local government kept a very tight control over provincial secretaries. He/she controlled their policy-making, appointment, accounting and other administration. Third, provincial heads of departments remained responsible to the permanent secretary of their own ministry and, therefore, could not be responsible to the provincial permanent secretary. Fourth, district governors lacked statutory powers over civil servants and had no role in financial and accounting matters. They could not effectively co-ordinate governmental affairs. And lastly, the development committees were operationally weak. They, like the district governors, had no statutory powers over heads of departments who remained responsible to their ministries' headquarters.

It should be noted, however, that while the civil service played a significant role in initiating ideas for decentralization and in monitoring its implementation, senior civil servants, especially in the

central ministries, were apparently reluctant to delegate sufficient responsibility to their officials in the field. This made it difficult for field officials to be responsive to development committees. Decentralization had to go hand in hand with commensurate delegation in order to succeed. Hence, the working party called for two far-reaching changes in provincial and district administration. The authority of the province, especially with regard to public finance, was to be enlarged. This was because an essential feature of decentralized administration was the drafting by the province of its own budget and recurrent estimates for all the activities of sectoral ministries and departments that would now come under provincial rather than Lusaka-based control.

The government mainly interpreted the above proposals as giving more authority to provincial and district offices at the expense of central government bureaucracy. In respect of financial authority, however, the province controlled only a small fraction of the national budget and recurrent funds. An ad hoc committee was appointed in 1973 to implement the recommendations that were accepted by government. The committee consisted of the permanent secretaries of provincial administration, finance, development planning, personnel division, and the principal of the National Institute of Public Administration. The committee secretary was the assistant secretary in the ministry of provincial and local administration.

The ad hoc committee met regularly to review progress and consider the implementation of some recommendations. It succeeded in transferring some legal powers to the provinces, for example, with regard to the Marriages Act and the Club Registration Act. It also enabled the delegation of disciplinary functions to permanent secretaries in the provinces and district secretaries as responsible officers for disciplinary matters of civil servants in the field administration. Capital and

recurrent expenditure matters were decentralized, and in 1978 a Department for Decentralization, headed by a minister of state was established.

District Councils

In 1968 the Civil Service Working Party made the following observation:

> "Rural Councils were often weak because of their limited finances, poor staff and often-uninterested Councilors. Also, the Rural Councils might tend to have a parochial outlook i.e. they will not always put the national interest first. For these reasons, the Central Government ought to control Rural Councils closely. This required both a merger of Provincial and District Government and the Ministry of Local Government, thus having a strong field level officer" (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 28).

In 1972 the working party considered the above situation regarding decentralized local government. It stated that a local authority structure, which subsisted almost entirely on central government grants, was the antithesis of what autonomous local government was supposed to be. Observing that the idea of autonomous local government had become unrealistic as a result of over-reliance on central government funding, the working party proposed the amalgamation of central and local government through the re-constitution of the district development committee into an executive committee of a new district council under the chairmanship of the district governor (GRZ. Cabinet Office, 1972: 65 and 94). The aim was to address the duplication of functions and conflict between rural councils and the office of the district governors.

Inadequate progress was made in the amalgamation of central and local government offices in the districts suggesting that the central government did not wholeheartedly accept the proposal of an

integrated district administration. Instead, local authorities were to be delegated more functions rather than being submerged by central government (GRZ. Information Services, 1975: 53). This also meant that funds and personnel had to be transferred to local authorities from central government. At the same time, local government institutions would increasingly have to comply with national policies and standards of administration at the expense of their autonomy. Thus, it was obvious that the strong departmentalization and the division between local and central government at grassroots level impeded accelerated rural development. The restricted discretion of provincial and district civil servants and the limited range of local government functions significantly impeded the effectiveness of public participation. The lack of information and communication bottlenecks seriously affect co-operation between government officials in the field and local communities.
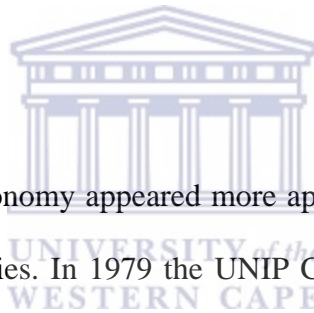
The notion of local government autonomy appeared more appealing than could be justified by the actual performance of local authorities. In 1979 the UNIP Central Committee's Research Bureau conducted research on the functioning of the district and local government administration. After the bureau's report and proposals were discussed, they were passed on to the minister of state for decentralization. Two major anomalies were identified in the functioning of district and local government administration. One was the large number of departments and organizations in each district. The other was the fact that each department appeared to have a separate administrative organization. This had led to excessive overlaps of functions, administrative delays in decision-making, and a proliferation of discord. Naturally, local communities were faced by a multiplicity of specialist government officials in the field.

In addition, it was found that district development committees were never informed about how much of the available public funds they were to plan for. Quite often, this resulted in districts having to drastically cut their plans. Similarly, central government departments duplicated the functions of the inadequately funded and understaffed rural councils. Hence, the next government effort to decentralize administration was the replacement of the tripartite local government structure of township, rural and municipal councils and the district development committees with a single structure, namely the integrated district council. The district council would have statutory authority over all the affairs of the district and would be accountable to the provincial headquarters. It would decide on policy and formulate regulations for the efficient running of the district, authorize annual district budgets, ensure compliance with provincial and national plans, maintain law and order and ensure national security. It would also approve the operations of parastatal and private enterprises in its area of jurisdiction.
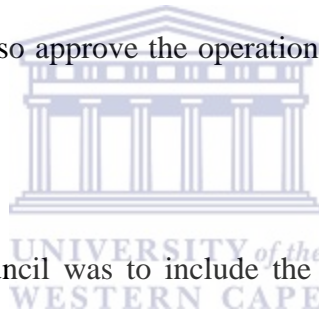
The membership of the district council was to include the district governor as chairperson, the provincial secretary, two district trustees, councilors, members of parliament in the district, one representative from each of the trade unions operating in the district, one representative from each of the security forces, namely, the Zambia Army, Zambia Air Force and the Zambia Police Force, and one chief elected by his/her fellow chiefs to represent them. The secretariat of the district council included the following civil servants: Administrative secretary, political secretary, social secretary, financial secretary, development secretary, and commercial and industrial secretary.

Before the national assembly could pass the necessary enabling legislation, a three-member committee, presided over by the former chairman of the Local Government Service Commission,

had been appointed to work out implementation strategies. It recommended a phased programme of implementation: -

- Stage one was the integration of city councils into district administration which would take two years;

- Stage two was the integration of municipal councils and this would take one year;

- Stage three was the integration of municipal councils into rural provincial headquarters lasting one year; and

- Stage four was the integration of the rest of the rural districts requiring one year.

The success of proposals on decentralization measures such as these depended largely on the preparedness of central government ministries to further delegate responsibility. In practice, however, it was evident that although greatly contributing to intentions to decentralize government administration senior civil servants were unwilling to delegate effectively. Furthermore, the availability of finances also hampered the implementation of effective decentralization, especially in view of the fact that many development projects depended on foreign aid. In the absence of adequate funding, therefore, district councils inevitably ended up under the close supervision of central government ministries. In addition, the tendency among civil servants to work in urban rather than in rural areas seriously deprived district councils of qualified personnel. But this system of an integrated local government administration was abandoned in 1991 when multi-party democracy was re-introduced in Zambia.

Analytical summary

The preceding discussion and analysis implicitly assumed that decentralization of government administration directly ensured participation at the grassroots level. On the one hand, decentralization meant delegation of power within departmental hierarchies to provincial and district offices. On the other hand, decentralization meant devolution of more power to representative local government councils. The transfer of some members of the UNIP central committee to provinces was thus referred to as "decentralization". It is in this context that the introduction of the offices of cabinet minister to the province, and district governor to the district became known as "decentralized administration". This was generally understood as promoting public participation. Consequently, senior UNIP personnel leading the provinces and districts had many and varied functions (Mphaisha, 2000: 21). First, they supervised the activities of all government ministries and departments as well as local government. Second, they were chief government co-coordinating officers of economic development programmes on behalf of the president. Third, they maintained the well-being and morale of the civil servants. Fourth, they ensured that the presence of government was felt and appreciated. And, finally, they ensured that both civil servants and the people understood government policies and procedures.

To this extent, decentralization through devolution and deconcentration of power was in principle a very good idea for purposes of bringing power to the people and promoting development. In practice, however, government structures still derived in many ways from colonial experience, reflected a great deal of the centralized structure of the early years of independence when most functions of provincial and district commissioners were taken away by central government. This contrasted sharply with the government's desire to transfer power to the people and

decentralization. Thus, the frequency at which decentralization reforms were introduced appears to be an indication that these measures were usually not preceded by comprehensive research. As such, these reforms resulted in a certain amount of unwillingness on the part of senior civil servants to sufficiently delegate responsibility.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRE-INDEPENDENCE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO DECENTRALISATION IN NAMIBIA

This chapter traces important socio-economic and political issues in the pre-independence Namibia pertinent to the nature of decentralization policy with which the future central government had to deal. The discussion is arranged as follows: a brief colonial overview; South Africa's direct rule and its implications; South Africa's futile efforts towards a multi-party government; the "AG8" regional policy arrangement; and an analytical summary.

Brief colonial overview

Namibia was inhabited by a variety of indigenous peoples, namely the San, Nama and Damara, Herero, and Owambo, to mention just a few, who were cattle farmers and small stock herders of sheep and goats and agriculturalists. Namibia was first colonized by Germany and later by South Africa. Germany controlled the territory from 1884 until 1915, when it lost its control to South Africa. During German rule, the government used deceptive treaties and military force to suppress and oppress many of the indigenous groups.

The majority of the people were removed, through military invasions led by the elite German cavalry unit, the Schutztruppe, from the central and the southern regions to the west-eastern part of the country. The Hereros and the Namas were chased from their land, which had stretched from the Orange River in the south-west to an area now called Gobabis, up to the northern part of Namibia, at Namutoni, an area close to the Etosha Pan Water Basin. While between 1904 and 1915 the

Hereros fought the Germans, the Namas were already involved in guerilla warfare against them. Although both groups suffered heavily, the Hereros had the worst casualties. It is estimated that they lost eighty-six thousand people out of an estimated population of one hundred thousand. The land taken from the Hereros was sub-divided into state controlled territories that were used for private farms and the rest was distributed among German agricultural settlers. The Black majorities dispossessed of their lands found themselves in small fenced-off enclaves, on the outskirts of German-occupied lands. These areas were called the native reserves, a later manifestation of British rule, organized distinctly on ethnic lines. Specific chiefs were designated to maintain law and order and to ensure compliance with colonial laws and statutes.

Werner (2001:260) noted that the dispossession of African lands was deliberate to provide agricultural land to White settlers and also to force them (the Africans) into wage labour. This argument was supported by a Kaiyamo (2006) in an interview that was conducted by the author in Windhoek. He was of the opinion that the Whites exploited the majority of Africans in Namibia as they were forced to work on White owned farms for meager salaries. According to Werner (2001:260) the indigenous pastoralist communities comprising the Herero, Nama and Damara livestock farmers were affected more than their northern and northeastern counterparts who practiced rain fed cultivation and livestock husbandry.

It was during German rule that Windhoek was transformed from a small trading village to a modern colonial city. The ministries of the colonial government oversaw this transformation. Windhoek was supplied with urban water supply systems, dams were built, state-run agronomic farms, dairy and food supply services, and veterinary programmes were established. As a colonial state,

German South West Africa, as Namibia was then known, was constructed with a specialized public sector to support the commercial development of other vital sectors. These sectors included the development of livestock, food and crop-growing farms. Programmes were also initiated leading to the expansion of Windhoek and other urban areas in the southern, eastern, northern and central regions. In this German occupation lay the origins of the first Namibian state.

But this development came to an abrupt end with the seizure of the territory by the British/South African armies in 1915. In a political compromise, and as a token of appreciation for South Africa having participated in the war on the side of the allied powers, Namibia was handed over to South Africa as mandatory territory for administration. Werner (2001:261) noted that most of the Herero's and the Namas' land was expropriated by the Germans through regulations enacted in 1906 and 1907 respectively. With the outbreak of World War I the troops of the Union of South Africa conquered German colonial forces in South West Africa. After 1915 the new colonial regime went ahead with the establishment of White farms in the Police Zone. By the end of the1950s the resettlement of Whites concluded with the establishment of 5 214 White owned farms. The division of Namibia was a result of the Odendaal Plan of 1964 which disrupted the natural population distribution patterns of Africans in Namibia. It was noted in the SWAPO Political Manifesto (1989:14) that by 1989 Whites in Namibia owned 65 per cent of the land. From 1920 to 1930, South Africa started to shape the development of the territory, administering it directly from Pretoria. In fact, the power invested by the League of Nations mandate on South Africa gave South Africa unlimited control over the territory. It was the view of the League of Nations at the time that the inhabitants of Namibia were not yet ready to stand on their own given the strenuous conditions of the modern world. Thus, the Union of South Africa was entrusted with a supervisory role to take
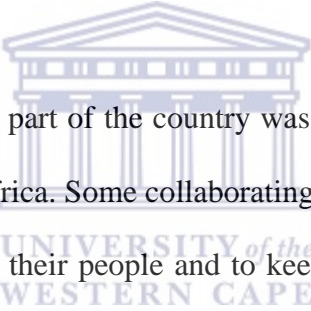
the country to self-determination. However, presented with the opportunity, the Union of South Africa under General Smuts, armed with this C-type mandate administered the territory as an integral part of the Union of South Africa. In fact, the Union of South Africa went a step further in their annexation attempts to make the territory of South West Africa its fifth province (Diener & Graefe, 2001:22)

But from 1919, in terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the South West Africa Mandate Act (Act No. 49/1919), until the termination of military government on 1 January 1921 (under the Indemnity and Withdrawal of Martial Law Proclamation, 1920) (SWA-Proclamation No. 76 of 1920), South West Africa was administered by the South African governor-general (Tötemeyer, 1992:4). The Dutch-Roman judicial system was also shaped during this period and this legal system, with only minor adjustments such as the amendments of most "apartheid legislation" has remained in Namibia to today.
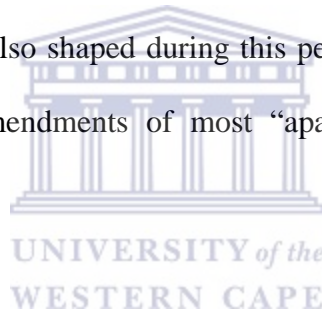
It was easy for the government of South Africa to administer the territory because they had the same judicial system. In addition, most of the administrators were recruited from South Africa. The recruitment of the civil servants was carried out by South Africa in order to keep a tight grip on the administration of the country. South Africa recruited only White South African bureaucratic managers predominantly from Pretoria. The South African regional policy in South West Africa was reminiscent of German colonial rule. Between 1920 and 1940, South Africa consolidated and extended the land grabbing practices that were initiated by Germany. The Apartheid regime, with its emphasis on ethnic and racial desegregation, left its mark on the future regional government in Namibia.

By 1930, for instance, the Hereros and the Namas had lost all their land to the South African administration in Namibia. Similar to the situation under German rule, they were confined to small areas known as "native reserves". The land previously seized by the Germans and any additional land seized by the South African administration, especially in the southern and the central regions of the country' were redistributed as private farms amongst White settlers. Between 1940 and 1950, the remainder of the land was also distributed as private farms to Whites, mainly Afrikaners, who had migrated from South Africa and Angola. The regional policy on native reserves was extended to cover areas that saw populations forced out of the then Owambo Land, Okavango and the Caprivi Zipfel.
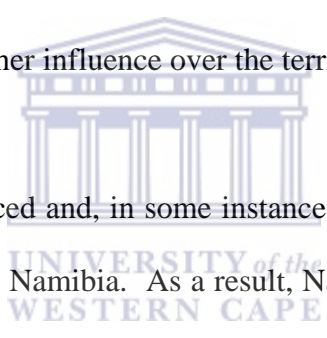
Between 1915 and 1930 the northern part of the country was conquered and governed through the military by the British-ruled South Africa. Some collaborating chiefs performed certain government functions. They were used to control their people and to keep law and order under South African rule, as was the case under German rule. For example, the chiefs provided the colonial government with migrant workers or contract workers as they were called. These workers were essential for the mining industry and White-owned commercial farms. Kaiyamo (personal interview, 18/9/2006) noted, as previously stated that the majority of indigenous Namibians were exploited as cheap labourers on White owned farms through the forced labour system. Other forced labourers were utilized in the mines both in Namibia and in South Africa. According to Kaiyamo the majority of these forced labourers hailed from the northern part of the country through a system of forced labour that was commonly referred to as the contract system. This led to the destruction and division of many families, as husbands and fathers were taken away from their families for

prolonged periods of time. The system did not allow the wives of migrant workers to follow their husbands. This led to the establishment of so-called "single quarters" which were characterized by the inhumane treatment of Blacks. People were crowded into small rooms and had to share toilets and bathing facilities. According to Kaiyamo, the government also owned a number of bottle stores. These bottle stores were used, as watering holes were the majority of contract labourers spent most of their hard earned money, leaving little money to support their families back home. However, these harsh conditions endured by the migrant workers were later used as the breeding ground for popular resistance against the Apartheid system and also fueled growing support for the liberation movement, SWAPO.

The collaborating chiefs were rewarded for their provision of the necessary manpower to the government. Those who proved more reliable to the colonial authorities were given wide-ranging powers and a large degree of operational latitude. However, such benefits and privileges were confined only to those communities that were directly under the chief's authority or in certain designated communities. Behaviour varied from one chief to another. Some used their positions for personal gain and were able to amass vast personal wealth. Their positions were elevated by their newly found wealth above the rest of the indigenous people but still lower than those of the colonizing Whites. This could be viewed as a "two-society" system. As Forrest (1998) noted, the newly found wealth placed the chiefs in a privileged position as economic intermediaries between the colonial Whites and the local Africans. The other chiefs, who did not opt for self-enrichment, used their positions to protect the interests of their communities. This was done in a rather subtle way so as not to arouse the suspicions of the colonial authorities.

The Native Administration Proclamation No. 15 of 1928 brought about further changes. It was through this proclamation that the South African government appointed a "chief native commissioner," "native commissioners," and "assistant native commissioners". The administrator's chief executive officer, the secretary for South West Africa, directly supervised these officials. But these changes were not made to ensure that the territory was administered separately or in a more autonomous manner. Instead, they served to strengthen South Africa's grip on the territory and it retained direct control. This situation prevailed throughout South African ruled administration. As such the territory's domestic trading policy, international trading affairs and foreign affairs, as well as matters pertaining to the military and the police were either controlled or, to a greater extent, influenced by South Africa. In fact, South Africa needed to control all important socio-economic sectors to guarantee and consolidate her influence over the territory.

During the 1960s South Africa reduced and, in some instances, completely eliminated commercial crop growing and dairy farms within Namibia. As a result, Namibia began to import two-thirds of her food and commercial products, as well as finished industrial goods from South Africa. The SWAPO Political Manifesto (1989:12) noted both the economic exploitation and the dependency of the Namibian economy on South Africa. While Namibia is a thriving country in terms of mineral resources, the 1989 SWAPO manifesto noted that the Namibians owned no single mining company in Namibia, a situation which had led to the monopoly of mining activities by some western countries and South Africa. The distribution of the wealth generated from these and other economic activities were skewed in favour of the White minority. It further argued that 85 per cent of all the goods that could have served to strengthen Namibia's economic prosperity in the form of beneficiation are exported from the country.

The SWAPO Political Manifesto (1989) further noted that the Namibian economy is inextricably bound to the economy of South Africa. Thus the country was forced to toe the Pretoria line if it was to survive economically. Crop production and cultivation of cash crops were discouraged leaving Namibia in a position were she had to import all her cereals, fruits and vegetables from South Africa. This situation gave South Africa a benign economic leverage over Namibia, a situation that led to the country's dependency on its former colonial master. Unfortunately, this practice also deprived the country of the opportunity to produce for herself and from adding value to her produce. This remains the situation at present, with Namibia's economy still inextricably tied to the economy of South Africa. Namibia still experiences a lack of the necessary capacity to produce its own manufactured goods, including food not to mention the reality that the goods that are locally produced are pricier than those produced in South Africa. One may speculate on the price of locally produced goods when compared to that of South Africa. However, it has been the desire of the SWAPO government to break South Africa's dominance over the Namibia's economy, which it termed freedom from "imperial control" (SWAPO Political Manifesto, 1989:17). The ruling party aims to ensure that the Namibian economy produces for both the domestic and the regional market. It is also an aim of the ruling party to explore markets as far a field as the lucrative markets in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and other world markets. During the 1960s, South African corporations did not only control the extraction but also the marketing of the lucrative uranium and diamond deposits at the expense of Namibians. Indeed, the infamous labour contract system that involved some collaborating chiefs played an instrumental role in the continuous supply of cheap labour to the mining sector.

South Africa's direct rule over Namibia began to wane towards the end of the 1960s. In fact, its administration was reduced to an indirect administration, although it was not the Africans that were gaining control of the country but rather White Namibian officials within the different echelons of the bureaucracy. The major institutions that were controlled by White Namibians included agriculture, water resources, public works, education, and health while White Namibians essentially also dominated the civil service. White Namibians of German descend were not left behind either in the process of shaping the present day bureaucracy of Namibia. In fact, unlike the Africans who occupied the lowest positions in society, the Germans created niches for themselves in among others veterinary services and fisheries. Thus, at independence the Namibian public administration reflected a combination of German and British-ruled South African administrative traditions, namely, a culture and character of local Afrikaans speaking Whites and German speaking public servants were equally important in the commercial sector.
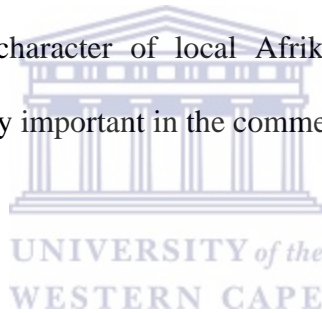
South Africa's direct rule

But the above-mentioned "indirect rule" by South Africa was short lived because by the late 1960s South Africa had started to reclaim direct rule of the Namibian public bureaucracy. South Africa instituted a new administrative system in the governing of the affairs of the native reserves. The system was a mere duplication of South Africa's policy of Apartheid. This led to the creation of 'Homelands' for Black Africans in South Africa and Namibia. South Africa wanted to make Namibia its fifth province and therefore an integral part of South Africa. This was the official justification for the racially motivated policy of Apartheid in Namibia. However, the practical reason for South Africa's direct presence in Namibia was that Namibia was being used as the military launch pad for South Africa's destabilization policy of the southern African region. In

1969 South Africa also used her presence in Namibia to establish military camps against the insurgency and attacks by the then newly formed guerrilla movement, SWAPO. Under the new arrangement, all White employees of the Namibian administration were incorporated into South Africa's public service. The affairs of the country were from that point onwards placed under the direct supervision and control of Pretoria-based officials. With this direct rule, public servants used to tease when knocking off, that it was 'five o'clock in Namibia, because it is five o'clock in Pretoria.' This was because Namibia could only do what South Africa said, and could not determine what the time was, unless that time was predetermined by South Africa.
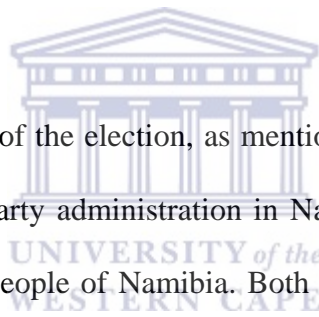
Forrest (1998) observes that even the letterheads on official correspondence within the Namibian bureaucracy were those of South Africa. The majority of the parastatals in Namibia were also subjected to the same treatment by South Africa. For example, the Postal Services of South Africa and Namibia shared every thing from the uniforms its officers wore to the official letterheads and envelopes. The police force, even though it was not a parastatal but part of government, shared everything from guns, uniforms to letterheads. Some services that were deemed not to erode the power base and control of South Africa, such as nature conservation, tourism, health, education and public works were executed by the Windhoek-based civil service, through programmes in the predominantly White 'commercial' farming, mining and residential areas. Motivated by its relentless effort to institute its Bantustan policy, South Africa not only remained in control of the "native reserves" but it also began to implement the recommendations of the three-person Odendaal Commission of 1964 (Werner cited in Diener & Graefe, 2001:259).

The Odendaal Plan instituted the forced removals and relocation of Black people. This resulted in the relocations of Africans from their areas in order to make way for White families. Namibia was subdivided into ten "Homelands". The Homelands were soon referred to as the "native reserves", and later renamed "communal areas". As per the recommendations of the Odendaal Commission, Whites were settled in the best parts of the country and Africans in the most arid areas. This policy resulted in the starvation of Africans, as the semi-arid and arid areas where they were relocated to, were neither fit for crop production nor for animal husbandry.

In 1968 South Africa introduced a governing structure that consisted of an executive and legislative assembly. The administration of the "native reserves" was now the responsibility of chiefs and headmen either handpicked or elected by government. These chiefs and headmen had no mandate from the people and, therefore, no support from their subjects. The majority of the populace viewed these chiefs and headmen as political puppets of the South African government. The only chiefs that remained popular among their people were those of the Hereros and the Damaras, and among the Ovambos, Kavangos and Caprivians. As a result, the central government's department of education and department of works had no major administrative presence in Hereroland and Owamboland. Nonetheless, each "Homeland" had a tiny bureaucratic agency consisting exclusively of the department of education and department of works. South Africa retained direct control of those institutions it deemed too essential to be left in the hands of the "natives". These included security, land use and water resources which were controlled from Pretoria. This complex Pretoria controlled apartheid framework of government, which stretched over a period of ten years, operated on the logic of limited government in the "Homelands"

South Africa's futile efforts towards a multi-party government

To give legitimacy to the leaders it had placed in power, and in a bid to deflect some of the mounting pressure from the international community, South Africa created a multi-party administration in Namibia in 1977. Different ethnic groups were brought together to form an ethnic-based administration. This is how the ethnic coalition, the Democratic Turnhale Alliance (DTA), was formed. To achieve its goal, and to show that South Africa was being transparent and fair, an election was called in 1978. The DTA won this Pretoria-engineered election. SWAPO boycotted the election, arguing that it would neither be free nor fair. According to SWAPO, only elections conducted under an international body, e.g. the United Nations could be considered free and fair.

Notwithstanding SWAPO's boycott of the election, as mentioned above, South Africa went ahead and formed an ethnic-based multi-party administration in Namibia. But no genuine efforts were made to transfer real power to the people of Namibia. Both the election and the formation of the new multi-party administrations were a bluff aimed at appeasing the international community which was at the time calling for the total emancipation of the Namibian people and the unconditional transfer of power to the indigenous people of the country. The election was actually not meant to lead to the granting of independence to Namibia but was a mere international public relations exercise by South Africa. In 1979, for instance, a symbolic legislative assembly was established with legislative powers limited to nature conservation, tourism, health, education and public works. South Africa reserved the right to veto any activity that was beyond her interest.

The establishment of the legislative assembly was preceded by the appointment of an administrator general, (AG), to replace the administrator in Namibia. Again, South Africa was busy with a public relations campaign aimed at deflecting the attention of the international community. South Africa sought, through the appointment of the administrator-general to show the world that indeed it had embarked upon a gradual institutionalization of national autonomy. While the title administrator implied direct control, the term administrator-general was expected to imply a temporary arrangement. It was on the basis of this understanding that the first administrator-general, Judge Jan Steyn, was sent to Windhoek. He came to Windhoek with two major mandates. The first was to reform laws and codes that had been enacted to uphold racial segregation and discrimination in Namibia and the second was to help Namibia in setting up a multi-party parliament and cabinet.

The tendency towards "direct rule" by South Africa was once again changed to an indirect one. All these political changes were not necessarily because South Africa wanted to cede some de facto control over Namibia, but to reduce criticism leveled against her by the international community. But between 1977 and 1980 Namibia became inundated with some of the most rigid racially motivated laws and South Africa's stance on communal areas remained unchanged. The administrator-general remained in firm control of the territory as South Africa's man on the ground. Thus, there seemed to have been anything but cosmetic changes introduced in Namibia as South Africa's imposition of Apartheid over the territory remained intact.

The "AG8" regional policy arrangement

South Africa was pressurized from two sides despite the cosmetic political changes that accompanied the 1978 Pretoria-engineered elections. Pressure by SWAPO, supported by the United

Nations, mounted. In addition hard-line White Namibians also started to exert pressure locally. They wanted to protract the liberation process of Namibia so that their privileges could be perpetuated because they viewed the transition as a danger to their interests. As a result, they rigorously opposed any reform of the Apartheid system and they enlisted the support of the National Party in South Africa in order to bolster their political cause. South Africa was consequently compelled to revamp the Homeland-based administration. This system was replaced by a new system based on "geographic regions" or "AG8" while simultaneously retaining ethnic identities. The "AG8" was the administrator-general's policy that provided the legal basis for the establishment of the new administrative structure or the establishment of second tier authorities.

The second tier government administration was based on the eleven main ethnic groups in Namibia. The San was the only ethnic group that was not represented by an authority. All the other groups were given mini-administrations that saw each second-tier authority presiding over a given ethnic jurisdiction. In fact, all the ethnic groups with the exception of the so-called coloureds were assigned 'homelands'. The emphasis was on race and tribe rather than on "geographic region". Thus, it did not matter where an individual physically found himself/herself at any given time, his/her welfare, under the new system, became the responsibility of his/her respective ethnic administration. The headquarters of the second tier administration were based on ethnic designated areas. In areas where ethnic administration already existed, South Africa simply renamed them to correspond to the new social order. Compliant chiefs and headmen were put at the helm of these new mini-governments. The second tier government also included a separate White authority. These organizational arrangements facilitated the perpetuation of White economic privileges rather than abolishing racial discrimination and establishing a multi-racial parliament.

Unlike their White counterparts who were accorded real institutional and economic power and authority, the collaborating Blacks were accorded only symbolic power in the new legislative assembly. Forrest (1998) called the system a "dirty deal", in that White Namibians continued to be privileged while disadvantaging Black Namibians. Whites were funded generously and their institutional resources by far surpassed those of their Black counterparts.
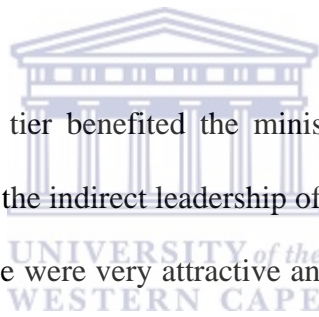
The system also deliberately benefited White Namibians through lower personal income taxes. The central government collected personal income taxes on an ethnic base and then redistributed such revenue to the respective groups using the same criterion. But given the fact that the economy of the country was skewed in favour of the White minority, and the per capita income of White Namibians by far exceeded that of Black Namibians, Whites were the wealthiest of all the different ethnic groups in the country. Thus, this ethnically based second tier government was more of a problem than a solution to Namibia's problems. As was indicated earlier, each government was responsible for its ethnic group, e.g. it catered for the welfare and the provision of services to the Herero speaking Namibians everywhere in the country. A Herero, whether in Windhoek or in a small town like Gobabis or in any rural area or on a commercial farm would have his/her services provided for by the "Herero government". In fact, each ethnic group was given a distinguishing number that set it apart from other ethnic groups. The distinguishing number for the Hereros, for example, was six (6). Thus, each Herero would have an identity card with a six. If an individual did not have a number 6 on his/her identity card it became difficult to prove that he/she was a Herero. In this regard the second tier government created more administrative complexities than solutions.

These ethnic complexities also resulted in the duplication of functions. For example, in the town Gobabis, one would find different administrations for the Hereros, Whites and Tswanas. In the case of government departments, such as the department of works, there were different departments of works for the Hereros, the Tswanas and for the Whites in close proximity of each other with neither of these departments having anything to do with one another, nor anything to do with the people represented by the different ethnic groups. Each one of them would provide the same service but to its own group. For example, each of the three departments built schools, each one for its own group in a given area of the town. The understanding at the time was that by giving each group its own resources to provide services, the central government would be able to determine the quality and quantity of services through the funding which at the end of the day proved to be less than equal amongst the ethnic groups.
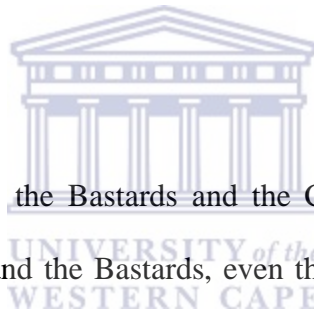
The administrations for the Whites, the Bastards and the Coloureds were, for obvious reasons, generously funded. The Coloureds and the Bastards, even though they are the same people, were divided into two groups with separate second tier governments. The only difference between Coloureds and Bastards was that the Bastards were originally from Rehoboth and the Coloureds were from anywhere else in the country. Yet both groups were the offspring's of "mixed" relationships between the Whites and the Khoi Khoi or Hottentots. The rationale for the separation of these two groups appeared to be largely for funding purposes so that the total funding levels to them could be increased. Correspondingly, the educational facilities in White areas were excellent, followed by those of the Coloureds and the Namas.

The ethnically based second tier government also created problems of accessibility to services by people in the remote areas who were far removed from their own administrative authorities. The Nama communal village of Hoachanas in Southern Namibia clearly illustrates the problem. Hoachanas was situated in the commercial farming district of Mariental that fell under the authority of the White administration. Because the White authorities never provided for the Namas' needs, the Nama communities of Hoachanas had to look for administrative assistance in Keetmanshoop, about 300 kilometers away where the Namaland second tier government headquarters was located. This was a cumbersome administrative system because under normal circumstances the inhabitants of Hoachanas could easily have received the same services from the town of Mariental, only a few kilometers away from their village.

Apart from the Whites, the second tier benefited the ministers who headed nominal ministries created by central government under the indirect leadership of the South African government. Their emoluments and conditions of service were very attractive and included a modern house, usually a Mercedes-Benz car, and a farm or grazing land. These were luxuries that made them stand out in their communities. In some of the communities the local people looked at them with respect and admiration as the majority of people were impoverished. This was largely the situation amongst the Hereros, Namas and Tswanas. In the northern part of the country, the former Owambo Land, the ministers never had it easy due to the popularity of SWAPO. The second tier government ministers came to represent an extension of the Apartheid system among the Owambo people. The majority of the population rejected such government ministers. In some cases they were hunted down or were the targets of assassination by the liberation movement, SWAPO.

The public stance of the last administrator-general of Namibia, Louis Pienaar, signified a desperate man trying to stay on. At the dawn of the first national election, Pienaar tried to justify the legitimacy of the second tier government by saying that it was vital to all groups of the populace, as it provided essential services and protected the cultural rights of the peoples of Namibia. The South African engineered second tier government was demised in the late 1980s. Although both South Africa, and those African leaders whom it appointed, would have liked to prolong the situation in Namibia, international events were unfolding that prompted South Africa to abolish her ethnic-based second tier government in anticipation of the 1989 elections.

Analytical summary

This chapter focused on selected aspects of socio-economic and political developments in pre-independence Namibia. From the preceding discussion, it is clear that both the German government and South Africa helped to shape the present day regional government in Namibia. This is a colonial legacy that has had a significant impact on the decisions that influenced the regional policy decision-making process during and after the transformation of Namibia into a majority rule constitutional democracy. However, given the fact that these were loose arrangements and the fact that no credible regional government was established prior to independence, it has become a daunting task for the government of Namibia to formulate policies to provide the legal framework for the establishment of a regional government. The colonial authorities concentrated on Bantustan and local government, but no formal structures were put in place to facilitate the process, because the majority of the functions were conducted from Pretoria. The regional government was thus only created after independence. The South African established and imposed "Homelands" (Bantustans) could at no stage be considered as legitimate regional entities.

CHAPTER SIX

CENTRAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NAMIBIA

This chapter addresses the nature and scope of the policy on decentralization, paying particular attention to the roles of central, regional and local government, as well as the legislature, namely, the national assembly and the national council. The sub-topics of discussion include central government re-organization after independence; motivations for the policy on decentralization; the nature and scope of the policy on decentralization; a situational review of the policy on decentralization between 1998 and 2001; the role of the MRLGH; regional government and regional councils; regional and local government; the legislature and decentralization; and an analytical summary.

Re-organization of the central government
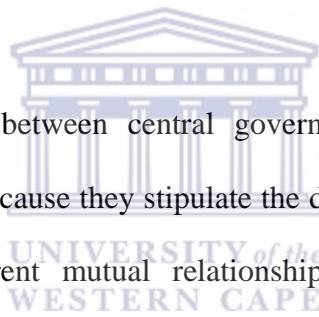
After the 1990 elections and before the establishment of a new regional administrative structure the president appointed regional commissioners to head the old regions. The commissioners were to provide a modicum of regional authority over the regions. Their mandate was simply to provide leadership in the regions during the 1990-1992 period. This was followed by the abolition of the old second tier of government. Its bureaucratic departments were converted into regional offices of the central government. This was an outflow of the negotiated settlement leading to the independence of Namibia. It was then decided that all former employees of the second tier government would be integrated into the new public service. One major consequence of these changes was that the central government ended up with a huge civil service, one that required constant reduction. Correspondingly, the government embarked upon a number of reforms aimed at downsizing the civil service. Two of these reforms were referred to as "Rationalization" and

"Wage and Salary Commission" (WASCOM).   Both commissions recommended cost saving measures to government to be implemented without delay. One of the measures was the reduction of the public service. The majority of its employees lacked both the technical know-how and the necessary skills needed for some of the complex tasks that they had to perform.

Each regional commissioner was assigned a chief control officer who served as the administrative officer of the regional office and a secretary. He/she reported directly to the president and to the MRLGH which eventually became the line ministry for both regional and local governments. The MRLGH as the "responsible", ministry was expected to provide logic and administrative assistance to the commissioners. However, because the ministry lacked the necessary staff to assign them to the regions, its direct management of regional affairs became nominal.   Most regional commissioners cultivated a friendly and consultative working ethic which won them the trust and respect of the people. They were involved in resolving some of the daunting tasks referred to them by their communities, e.g. drought relief programmes. Some areas such as Ovitoto were hard hit by the drought and required a speedy solution. Thus, the commissioners were expected to lobby both the president and relevant ministry for the needed relief. The regional commissioners also played an adjudicating role in solving disputes amongst people. Others used the opportunity to work hard and create a reputation of being effective. Those regional commissioners were rewarded for their efforts, as some of them became the governors of their respective regions, while others were given ministerial posts.

Central government is charged with the responsibility of providing services to all the people. It is also responsible for assuring and nourishing democratic governance and economic development.

Given these formidable tasks, it is imperative to create structures that will enable it to provide the required services to all segments of the populace. As Godana *et al*. (2002**:**2) also noted, a healthy relationship should be created and maintained between central government and the lower levels of government for government to execute its obligation of providing public services. Central government relies on the support of regional and local governments to execute certain agreed functions and to bring government closer to the people in all the regions of the country. It is because of this understanding that government introduced decentralization as a vehicle for administrative reform. Decentralisation was designed to relieve central government of the burden of having to deal with the activities of people at local and regional levels, as well as to improve public service delivery.

Laws determine the relationships between central government and the other two levels of government. These laws are vital because they stipulate the division of tasks. They provide a legal framework for clear and transparent mutual relationships between the different layers of government. The cardinal principle guiding this relationship is a commonly shared vision of good government and effective administration. The lower levels of government must be empowered to such an extent that they become autonomous and self-sufficient. The relationship between the participating parties is based on the notion of equality. Autonomy and self-reliance are assured if the lower levels of government are provided with sufficient financial resources to render their services. Central government must ensure that the functions devolved to the lower levels of government commensurate with the financial resources at their disposal, and the prevailing levels of capacity at those levels. Thus, fiscal decentralization requires special attention, if the lower levels of governments are to play a meaningful role.

Central government is responsible for generating all revenue, either directly or indirectly. It remains the engine of operations, whose policies go beyond the public sector. It also influences the activities of the private sector and non-governmental organizations through regulations and policies. The overriding concern of the relationship between central government and regional government is the "control factor". In an interview with Ms. Erica Ndiyepa, deputy permanent secretary of the MRLGH, it was explained that government still wanted to control the activities of the regions. For example, government decided to change the position of all regional officers to that of chief regional officer to give more status and relevance to the executive heads of the regions (Ndiyepa, personal interview, 22/9/2003).

Despite opposition by these entities, the ministry went ahead and imposed its will on the regions. This case illustrates the extent to which the national government was prepared to exert control over the regions. The chief executive officers, in some benign solidarity with the national council, took the government to court. Furthermore, all the decrees and directives that where put in place at the initial formulation of the decentralization policy, placed a severe strain on the regions. However, it appears that government has put them in place to control the political and administrative activities of the councilors.

The reason why some regional officers took the MRLGH to court was that the incumbents of the posts of regional officer wanted to automatically become the chief regional officers and did not want to relinquish their positions as regional officers and loose the accompanying financial benefits attached to their jobs. The intention of the MRLGH was to elevate the position of the regional

officer to that of chief regional officer (i.e. equal to the status of an under-secretary in a ministry) in order to enhance the level of decentralization by giving a higher status to the executive head of a region. The posts of chief executive officer were advertised and not nominated by central government.

The government deemed it appropriate to change the system to bring it in line with the new obligations brought about by independence. As a result, Namibia constituted its first delimitation commission with the view to create new regional borders in line with the new government's desire to unite and provide services to all the people in a more equitable manner. New regional borders were essential to, for the first time establish a regional government in Namibia.

The immediate mandate of the delimitation commission was to abolish the Bantustan colonial policy that was based on ethnic/tribal/racial criteria. It used the Constitution and Proclamation No. 12 of 1990 as the basis for the establishment of both regional and local authorities. The borders of the regions were no longer based on race, colour or ethnicity, but on geographical jurisdiction. The central principle that constitutes regional and local authorities became territorial coherency.

The first person to advocate the establishment of a delimitation commission was Moses Garoeb, the president of the United Democratic Front (UDF) during constituent assembly debates. He suggested that the cabinet appoints a delimitation commission with the sole mandate of demarcating Namibia into nine to ten regions. He further suggested that the size of the envisaged regions should each not constitute a size bigger than 140, 000 square kilometers. Articles 103 and 104 of the Namibian Constitution basically make provisions for a delimitation commission to

delineate new regions that would have to be approved by cabinet, and these regions would form the basis for the establishment of regional councils. In 1990 government enacted Proclamation No. 12 of 1990 that made provision for the establishment of the delimitation commission. This was the first move towards devising new administrative regions for Namibia. The first delimitation commission was constituted in 1990. The founding president of the Republic of Namibia, by virtue of the power vested in him by the Constitution of Namibia Articles 103 and 104 appointed the first three members of the delimitation commission.

It was important that the first delimitation commission was composed of the right people to deal with the task at hand. The following people were appointed on the basis of their envisaged contribution: G.K.H. Tötemeyer, at the time professor of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Namibia, Judge Johan Strydom, later the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Namibia and Mr. Martin Shipanga, a businessman. All three of these officials were expected to rely on their vast and varied experiences to help Namibia draw up regional boundaries that were practical and economically viable (Tötemeyer, 1992:1).

Thus, blended together for a single purpose were a professor who not only partook in academic discourses and extensively published on the issue of regional and local government but a person viewed by many as an authority on the issue at hand; a judge, a person who was not only an authority on legal matters but, who was also expected to play an adjudicating role between the commission and the different communities; and the other member, a retired teacher, turned businessman who had taught many of the country's leaders and has built a reputation for himself as an intellectual in his own right, coupled with his public persona as possessing qualities of even-

handedness. He was to calm the fears of those who may have been skeptical of the commission and was expected to install neutrality and righteousness in the activities of the commission. He was also expected to bring business acumen to the activities of the commission by ensuring that the newly created regions were economically viable.
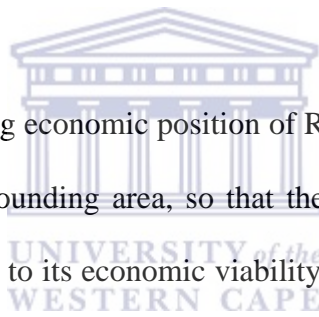
Given past colonial practices, when the previous commission consulted with communities for the "sake of convenience", the communities in Namibia had become weary of repetitive consultations by commissions that solicited information from them, but never utilized their recommendations. This gave rise to a general belief that commissions usually made up their minds before consulting with the people and the whole exercise was seen as just another "formality". On the basis of such skepticisms, the president appointed a commission that the people would not only respect, but one that they could also trust. Thus, the delimitation commission had to first consult the people to ascertain what they want and how any changes to the existing regional boundaries would affect them, before new ones were demarcated. In order to steer clear from any issues of ethnicity the commission decided to use names for the regions that were in no way associated with any ethnic group.

The only problem the commission encountered was when it suggested changing the Caprivi region, named after a German Chancellor, to Lake Liambesi, the largest lake in the Caprivi region. Members of parliament from Caprivi opposed the change of name. The Waterberg region was also not acceptable to parliament and was changed into Otjozondjupa region. The delimitation commission derived names for the regions from an activity or a characteristic in a particular region. For example the Hardap region was named after the Hardap Dam and the Hardap Irrigation

Scheme. Another example is the Kunene region. Its original name, Kaoko, is associated with the Ovahimba tribe and the commission decided to rename it after the Kunene River.

Economic logic was employed when the towns of Rehoboth was incorporated into the Hardap region and Ruacana into the Kunene region. Rehoboth was a thriving town during the Apartheid years as a result of the distribution of wealth under the former Apartheid administrations which were based on race, and also given the fact that the Coloureds/Bastards were the second most privileged group in the country and Rehoboth the capital of their former second tier government, the town was well-developed and it had facilities that could only be emulated by other surrounding towns.

It was because of the rather promising economic position of Rehoboth that the commission decided to tie it to the not so fortunate surrounding area, so that they too could reap benefits from their viable economic neighbour. Coupled to its economic viability was its population make up. Similar to the rest of the country that was divided on an ethnic basis, the Rehoboth population consisted mainly of Coloureds/Bastards, who for years had considered Rehoboth to be more than their administrative capital. It was the capital of a separate state for Coloureds/Bastards. The Apartheid administration condoned this idea of a "separate state within the state".

Therefore it did not come as a surprise, when the then Bastard leader, Captain Diergardt, called for a separate state of Rehoboth, comprising the immediate areas surrounding the town. But government swiftly silenced this rather peculiar stance. Diergardt's secessionist utterances were not to be tolerated, as Namibia was a unitary state. The commission was also determined to put an end

to the perception that Rehoboth was a state within a state. The other region to have its boundaries re-drawn on the basis of economic activities in the adjacent region was Ruacana. Geographically, Ruacana was logically in close proximity to the Kunene region. Ruacana traded mainly with the Kunene region. The Kunene region's cattle farmers had been selling their excess stock to the people of Ruacana. Thus, the delimitation commission decided to integrate Ruacana into the Kunene region. The members of the delimitation commission were convinced that such a merger was mutually beneficial to both regions. This decision was to consolidate the two and further enhance their existing trading relationships (Tötemeyer (1992:40).

The delimitation commission also employed economic logic when they created the Oshikoto region with Tsumeb as its capital. Historically, Tsumeb was a trading town instrumental in linking the economic activities of the south with those of the northern parts of Namibia. The present day Tsumeb is a thriving commercial farming town. The commission decided to combine the town and its surroundings to the poor areas of the Oshikoto region. The intention was that a symbiotic relationship would pay dividends for both areas in the long run. In the immediate future, however, this linkage was important to help the weak regions economically. In the case of the former Owamboland, population numbers were the overriding criterion given the fact that the region is the most densely populated area in the country, with a total population of more than half a million. This led the commission to divide the region into four separate regions. However, this author believes that while the delimitation commission solved a numerical problem, it did not solve the ethnic issue. The four smaller regions are about 90 per cent ethnically homogeneous with the Owambos by far the largest ethnic group in the region.

But, given the fact that during the colonial past the majority, if not all members of the same ethnic group was concentrated in one specific area, it may now not be possible to strike a perfect ethnic balance without having to relocate great chunks of the population and resettle them in other areas. Such an exercise would prove too costly to implement. In a bid to draft an administrative framework with clear-cut racial and ethnic divisions, the delimitation commission held 41 meetings during the course of 1991. These meetings were attended by between 50 and 3 000 people and were geared towards soliciting views and suggestions from the affected citizens. The meetings provided the members of the delimitation commission with ideas which they utilized to determine where to draw the regional borders. The mass media and the regional commissioners were utilized as conveyer belts to disseminate information about the meetings to the different communities countrywide. The delimitation commission also utilized the expertise of technical staff from the different ministries and specialists on regional and local government.
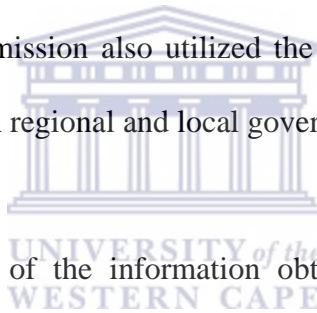
It was, for example, on the basis of the information obtained from these meetings that the boundaries of Omaheke region, a focus area of this study, were drawn. The Omaheke people made it clear that the centre of their affairs revolved around the shopping, trading, high school and hospital facilities offered by the town of Gobabis. Gobabis was the focal town of the majority of their activities and it was made the capital of the Omaheke region. The factors that guided the decisions of the delimitation commission were economic rather than geographic factors. Article 3, Section 2, of the schedule of Proclamation No. 12 of 1990 uses the number of eligible voters in a given constituency as criteria for the demarcation of regions. A sub-article of the same article goes further to include geographic features, demographic distribution of eligible voters, and the relevant infrastructure as additional factors that the delimitation commission could use when delineating

regions. While adhering to the aforementioned factors, the delimitation commission used the concept of "rationalization with development" as a central theme (Government of Namibia, 1991).

The relevant infrastructure and resources were thus assessed with a view to improving development in the regions. For example, the delimitation commission examined the communication facilities that were in place, the level of interaction, the accessibility of the capital of the region to the surrounding areas, as well as the economic viability of the region. It was hoped that if a region were demarcated with these factors in mind, its administrative efficiency and socio-economic development would be improved. It is important to emphasize that this was a new approach towards the establishment of regions.

On the 30th of June 1991, the commission presented its report which recommended 13 regions, 96 constituencies and 45 local governments to the president after which it was made available to the members of cabinet who discussed it in two cabinet sessions, over a period of one week. Although there were some reservations about some of the names proposed by the commission, the report was accepted by cabinet on 15th July 1991 with no further amendments. The acceptance of the report was followed by the establishment of the recommended regions and local constituencies by the president under Proclamation 6 of 1992. The proclamation was published in Government Gazette No. 368 of 3 March 1992 and became law at that point.

The Regional Council Act No. 22 of 1992 created the regional governments and the Local Government Act No.23 of 1992 created the local governments. As per the provisions of the Regional Council Act, each region is expected to have a regional council. The mandate of each regional council is to respond to the needs and development of all the areas in the region, excluding areas within the municipalities, towns and villages. The regional council has as its most important task the responsibility to embark upon socio-economic planning.

The regional council is responsible for the upliftment of the people of their region. At the same time the regional council is expected to motivate the people in the region to participate actively in the administration and development of defined local areas such as the villages and other settlements. The regional government acts as an agent of central government because it remains responsible to the MRLGH for all its actions. Thus, it remains the responsibility of the MRLG to ensure that all planning initiatives by the regional government to develop the region are brought to the attention of both the sectoral ministries and the National Planning Commission. The minister and officials in the MRLGH took into consideration that the regions were not quasi-federal entities with powers, as this would remove them from direct autonomous central government control.

As noted by Tötemeyer (1997:9) some people were of the opinion that a federal dispensation would have been appropriate, given the vastness of the country, coupled with the spatial and unequal distribution of the population. However, a number of factors counted heavily against such suggestions. These included among others, the following factors emanating from a protracted and brutal apartheid system: disparities and inequalities prevailing between Blacks and Whites in terms of disempowerment and empowered, rich and the poor; differences in the quality of life among the

different groupings in Namibia as a result of skewed levels of development; and divergent opinions held by the different peoples of Namibian.

The delimitation commission felt that the regions and their governing authorities needed to lead to a strong integrative and regulative political system. Such a system would be better suited to reconcile and unify a disunited and conflict-ridden population in Namibia. While Articles 68 to 77 of the Constitution called for the institutionalization of decentralized power and authority they do not, however, explicitly indicate the degree of power and authority of the regional government *vis-à-vis* the central government. It was not until the Regional Council Amendment Act of 2000 that the parameters of power of the regional government were determined. Despite the fact that the regional councilors were the only politicians who were popularly and directly elected through "a winner-take-all" electoral system, they were not granted full-time political status until 2001. They are now the only politicians in Namibia who represent given constituencies in the thirteen regions.
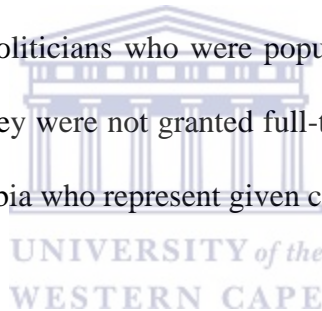
Regional and local government

The Local Government Act No.23 of 1992 created the local government. As per the provisions of the Local Authority Act, 1992 (Act 23 of 1992), local government in Namibia includes all the municipalities, town and village councils. According to the Act, the councils are expected to provide services to all the people who reside within the boundaries under their jurisdiction. They provide such vital services as water, sanitation, streets and public places, roads and electricity, cemeteries, public transportation and housing. Apart from these responsibilities, local governments are used as instruments of central government to take democracy to the people at grassroots levels Tötemeyer (2003b) argues that for local government to become effective in rendering or carrying

out this responsibility it must constitute an institutionalized form of local democracy. Such a system should be aimed at enhancing community-based citizen participation. Thus, active participation must be encouraged and entrenched in the new system.

However, for such a system to work, local initiatives and needs must be considered to institute a local system and structure that are locally driven for the benefit of the local people The system should be open to all people at local level. What would inhibit the activity of such a system is the dependency syndrome currently haunting both the regional and local governments in Namibia. As long as local government continues to depend on central government for the formulation and implementation of policies, and for decisions that include personnel and finances, local government is unlikely to become operationally sound. In general, therefore the system should be structured in such a way that all the segments of the different communities can reap socio-economic, political and other benefits accustomed to any democratic state (Tötemeyer, 2003a).

The regional council is required to assist local government in executing its powers, duties and functions. In that regard regional government may make submissions to cabinet or to any relevant ministry on local authority pertaining to matters within their respective regions. Apart from the submissions, the regional government may discuss matters of concern to local authorities with a given ministry. However, such interventions by regional government are limited to the degree of autonomy that each of the two institutions enjoys. In fact, local authorities are autonomous bodies with regard to the regional councils on the principle of non-subordination.

The legislature and decentralization

The legislature in Namibia comprises two houses of parliament, namely, the national assembly and the national council of regions. The main function of the legislature is to make laws and to exercise oversight over the executive branch of government. However, the two legislative houses did not appear to have performed well *vis-à-vis* issues of decentralization policy and its implementation. Instead, the political parties represented therein as well as their leaders exerted their efforts on "survival issues" rather than on the exercise of legislative oversight on how the central government and the regional governments handled the implementation of decentralization.

To understand the role of political parties and especially the role of the members of the national council, which acted as the political organ of government among others charged with the responsibility of running government at regional level (governors and the council) one needs to understand the constraints under which they had to operate. The constraints included the battle between two political parties; party loyalty and partisan politics; lack of clear identity; and lack of access to the media, compounded by the lack of coverage by the media. Until the emergence of the Congress of Democrats during the national elections in the year 2000, politics in Namibia was contested and dominated by two political parties, namely the ruling party SWAPO and the main opposition the DTA, to the detriment of the other smaller parties. A sharp division existed between the different political parties.

There was in fact, a lack of harmony between the different political parties in Namibia. There is still not that much emphasis on organizational unity in the country since all the political parties vote and articulate issues on partisan basis. Party loyalty is unfortunately more important than the

wishes and aspirations of the electorate, because the majority of the country's leaders will prefer to toe the party line. Politicians in Namibia tend to agree with whatever stand their political parties have taken, rather than disagreeing with their political leaders.

This is a situation that haunts both the national assembly and the national council. The national council was established four years after the establishment of the national assembly. Ever since its establishment, it has been fighting an uphill battle to establish an identity for itself, let alone its credibility. Despite the fact that the national council is the only branch of government in Namibia that is popularly elected, it remains the least recognized and appreciated by the nation. Members of the national council are not regarded with the same seriousness as their counterparts in the national assembly. This could be partly due to a lack of power and the fact that they occupy subordinate positions to those of the national assembly. They only review bills passed by the national assembly. The councils are to a certain extent seen as a rubber-stamping institutions rather than policy-making institutions. This belief emanates from the fact that the national council mainly reviews bills and legislation enacted by the national assembly. Their emoluments are also inferior to those of members of the national assembly. While members of the national assembly were previously issued with Mercedes Benz cars as their mode of transport and their transport bills footed by government, members of the national council had to find and fund their own transport. Each minister is now entitled to a Toyota Camry, while councilors are left to fend for themselves.

To enhance the roles of councilors as well as their executive functions, the MRLGH decided to provide them with office buildings in their constituencies as part of the implementation of the decentralization policy. While the members of the national assembly are given spacious modern

office facilities, with secretaries and assistants, most members of the national council have to operate with skeleton staff and are not accorded as fancy offices and other facilities as their national assembly counterparts. Some councilors do not even have offices. The lack of these facilities and material goods, indirectly contributes to the inferior standing of the councilors in the eyes of the people. Until recently, the media had also not been devoting adequate time to cover the proceedings of the national council. This deprived the national council of exposure. In the initial stages, the obscurity of the national council was perhaps in the best interest of this relatively new institution, as it gave it sufficient time to institute greater institutional capacity before being subjected to intense media scrutiny.

However, this missed "opportunity" was also costly as it deprived the institution of adequate exposure of its activities to the public. The councilors, as noted by Forrest (1998), identified two problems that could be attributed to the lack of media coverage as: (1) it undoubtedly attributed to the national council appearing irrelevant and invisible when compared with the national assembly; (2) media coverage is vital to help the national council consolidate its ties with the public, and so be availed the opportunity to fulfill their mission as grassroots elected officials linked to the average citizen. The MRLGH provided office buildings in the constituencies to enhance the role of councilors. This was also done as part of the implementation of the decentralization policy.

As discussed earlier, the majority, if not all the political parties were highly partisan. The councilors as well as all the other politicians adhered to the same pattern of thought. However, as early as the establishment of the national council, there has been a sincere effort by the different political parties to nourish organizational dynamics and interpersonal relations which in a way

explained their solidarity with the second house of parliament. Political parties caucused before tackling any bill in the house using these caucuses to find strategies to deliberate the issues at hand and to ensure that their political identity remained salient. The majority of the political parties emerged from these caucuses with a common front, exhibiting political unity.

Such approaches based on strict party loyalty and pre-conceived decisions on the issue to be deliberated, reduce independent thinking and action by members. In fact, apart from such issues as abortion and corporal punishment, members of parliament have taken united decisions usually previously decided upon during party caucuses or at other party meetings. Thus, when it came to deliberating the issues in parliament, the arguments and decisions were made according to political party thought. Even the seating arrangement in the national council is done on party lines. Members of the same political party are seated together, usually facing members of the opposing political parties. Such an arrangement is not conducive for open deliberation. They always debate in line with what their political parties have decided.

The national council now seems to becoming politically mature and members are realizing the need to rise above party politics. The council is realizing that in order to become a credible institution it has to develop itself into an institution capable of making laws rather than having a lame duck approach. Equally important is the desire of members of the national council to step from the shadow of the national assembly and become an independent body capable of influencing, if not enacting, its own bills. Neither the Constitution nor the regional council and the local government Acts can assist them in this regard, because these legal instruments created the second layer of government to play a subordinate and complimentary role to parliament.

The members of the national council, however, see this tendency as not befitting them. The words of Henock Ya Kasita, a SWAPO member of the national council from Oshana region echoed this concern saying "Those who are here as members of the Opposition must be reminded that they are not here to defend what their colleagues in the National Assembly have defended. They have to be independent. The same applies to those who are ruling [i.e., SWAPO national council members]. Only if we are capable of doing this will we convince those who say that we are rubber-stamps [of the national assembly] that we are not" (Forrest, 1998). In fact, the tough stance by some of the ruling party's national council members did not spoil their chances of joining the ranks of deputy ministers. Those who worked hard not only won the admiration of their colleagues in the national assembly, but in some instances it resulted in them being appointed as deputy ministers.

The period that followed saw the members of the national council developing interpersonal relations, as they realized that they did not share the same institutional interests as those of their political party leaders. In fact, a sense of common purpose was developing among the council members. In spite of fierce debates and mud slinging in the chamber, their unofficial dealings were marked by an aura of collegiality. One would have thought that the fierce debates and strong politicking that prevailed in the chamber would culminate in unhealthy relations between the members of the national council. However, for the sake of the common goal to uplift the standing of their institution, the members worked together harmoniously.

When observing the members of the national council and the national assembly during either the tea or lunch break, one is amazed by the degree of friendship that exists among them. They use

these occasions to embrace each other. It is a time when all of them are removed from the political pressures of their respective political parties and they can give their real opinion on issues at hand. Members of the different political parties also use this time to discuss issues openly and to convince each other.

Thus, these breaks play a vital role in facilitating intra-organizational bonds and a shared, unified institutional culture marked by a sense of group interest. Joint and extended trips by parliamentarians also play a major role in ameliorating differences between the different political parties. These trips help to ease tensions among members of parliament and are instrumental in affording the members an opportunity to get to know each other and feel at ease with one another. These bonds are essential for the development of a distinct organizational culture and a strong sense of loyalty to the council that goes beyond party lines. This approach is better than the one which prevailed at the inception stage of both houses of parliament. Namibia's political spectrum is uneven, because the ruling party SWAPO enjoys an absolute majority. It has a more than two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament. The modus operandi at the inception stage was that whatever motion was introduced by the opposition would be hammered down by the ruling party and whatever motion introduced by the ruling party would face severe opposition from the opposition parties.

But SWAPO had something the opposition parties did not have, namely a clear majority and it continues to enjoy it today. It uses its numerical strength to bulldoze its way through and always gets its way. The opposition can make a lot of noise, but in the final analysis it is the number of votes that each political party can secure to block or pass a particular bill. SWAPO has the clear

majority and it will use it against the opposition. A common phrase from the ruling party benches was, "keep on shouting, that's all you can do, and we will out vote you anyway". Not much has change because SWAPO still enjoys the majority in parliament. However, of late there seems to be a feeling of collectivism among the members of the house. SWAPO, realizing that it has a government to run and that its support base, at least for the foreseeable future, will remain intact, saw the need of soliciting the input of members of the opposition to allow for checks and balances, an ingredient of multi-party democratic systems.

The role of the political parties in Namibia is limited by the number of votes they have in parliament and there seems to be little compromise from the ruling party. This is a result of the opposition parties being too weak to force the ruling party to change its stance on given issues. However, in cases where there seem to be a clear violation of the Constitution or in cases where a given branch of government violates the Constitution or any other laws, there are institutions in Namibia that serve as watchdogs that may institute corrective measures and force the perpetrators to abide by the laws. A good example is the president's handling of the appointment of the ombudsman. He was eventually compelled to reverse his decision, as a result of pressure being exerted by the different watchdog groups.

Motivations for the policy on decentralization

Government embarked upon a decentralization programme immediately after the establishment of the regional and local government structures. To kick-start the process, government first tasked the MRLGH with the responsibility to formulate a decentralization policy that would give impetus to

the efforts to come up with a decentralization programme for the country. The policy document was first introduced in 1997, with the theme "Decentralization, Development and Democracy". Since then, the concepts "Development" and "Democracy" have become synonymous with the process of decentralization. The introductory remarks by the minister of regional and local government and housing, Dr. Iyambo, highlighted the reason for embarking upon a decentralization programme for the country as follows. "There are different reasons for decentralization of the central government functions. Depending on why the system wishes to decentralize, the choice of how it is done varies accordingly from country to country. In Namibia we have two very important concerns, which have historically been denied to the majority of the people-democracy and development. While all our national endeavors are directed at achieving an ever higher state in this respect, there is none as crucial for the attainment of those noble objectives as decentralization, which we committed ourselves to by constitutional provisions" (MRLGH, 1997).

Immediately after independence the new government led by SWAPO, set itself the goal to take democracy to the people. Its intention was to take government to grassroots levels and the vehicle to achieve this objective was decentralization. It was committed to it via the Constitution.

The majority of the population of Namibia had hitherto been left out of the decision-making processes, especially at local level. The colonial masters neglected governance at the regional level, and even though some form of government existed at the local level, the majority of Namibians, especially Black Namibians where completely left out in the cold. Thus, the new government sought to redress this. To guarantee the people democracy, they had to make their own decisions aimed at developing their communities. Thus, by taking government to the people it does not only

avail the people the opportunity to make their own decisions, but it also gives them the opportunity to own those decisions. Their participation becomes meaningful, because the decisions impact them directly.

Another goal was to develop the people through public projects. Government realized from the beginning that to achieve this objective, there had to be supporting structures at the locality of the problems in order to resolve the problems effectively. These were the issues that were to be addressed through decentralization. The people were to be given the opportunity to participate in setting priorities, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development programmes. The decentralization programme in Namibia was thus aimed at developing the political and economic self-reliance of the people at local level. It is important to note that the decentralization policy is based on Chapter 12 of the Constitution which makes provisions for government to enact laws through parliament aimed at the implementation of decentralization in the country. As per the provisions of Article 108(c) of the Constitution the regional councils have the power to raise resources that commensurate with the responsibilities that central government bestows on them. Under the same provisions they are also supposed to share in the resources of central government. Apart from the constitutional provisions, parliament passed several acts that set the stage for the formulation and implementation of decentralization. They include the Regional Council Act of 1992, the Regional Council (Amendment) Act of 2000, the Regional Council (Amendment) Act of 2002, the Local Authorities Act of 1992, the Traditional Authorities Act of 1995, the Council for Traditional Leaders Act of 1997, and the Trust Fund for Regional Development and Equity Provisions Act of 2000.

Traditional leadership

According to the founding president of the Republic of Namibia, Dr. Sam Nujoma (personal interview, 7/9/2006), and both the SWAPO party whip, Hon. Ben Amathila (personal interview, 15/8/2006) and Kaiyamo (personal interview, 18/9/2006), traditional leaders played a pivotal role in the liberation of Namibia. To support this claim Nujoma cited the examples of the Reverend Hamutumangela, Iupumpu ya Shilongo and Chief Hosea Kutako. He said in the case of the late Chief Hosea Kutako, who also played an important role in Nujoma's departure from Namibia into exile, that Kutako did not only petition the League of Nations but participated in the battle against colonialism and was wounded during the battle of Ohamakari.

Kaiyamo (personal interview, 18/9/2006) noted that the traditional leaders played a major role to support the liberation struggle inside and outside the country as they encouraged their subjects to join forces with SWAPO in exile to fight for the total liberation of Namibia. This was also supported by Nujoma (personal interview, 7/9/2006) who said some of the traditional chiefs sided with the colonial masters against the liberation movement SWAPO and did more harm to the liberation efforts than others. They were, in his own words, "puppets of the South African regime" (Nujoma, personal interview, 7/9/2006). It must be noted, however, that evidence in countries such as South Africa (Ismail, 1999: 89-100) indicates that not all traditional leaders accepted or collaborated with the colonial regimes. Traditional leaders performed certain roles and functions in the areas under their jurisdictions. In Namibia, according to Kaiyamo (personal interview, 18/9/2006), the traditional leaders, especially in the northern part of the country, played an important role in the allocation of land and controlled most aspect of life, e.g. keeping law and order. In Zambia, like in many other African states, people held rights over land according to

various local customs. Therefore traditional leaders, apart from the distribution of land and the maintenance of law and order as in Namibia, were also responsible for the collection of dog levies and head taxes. The author is also of the opinion that as was mentioned earlier in the case of both Zambia and Uganda, the countries that are cited in the study to inform the decentralization processes in Namibia, the colonial masters also used the traditional leaders in Namibia to appease the masses. Tötemeyer (2006:1) also noted that the traditional leaders under both the German and the South African colonial governments played some roles in the Homelands/Bantustans. According to him both governments adopted a form of indirect rule and entrusted some responsibilities of governance on the traditional leaders as dictated to by some rules that where geared towards the perpetuation of tendencies to foster ethnicity and tribalism. As was noted in the case of Zambia and Uganda the same methods were used to keep the Black populace in check.
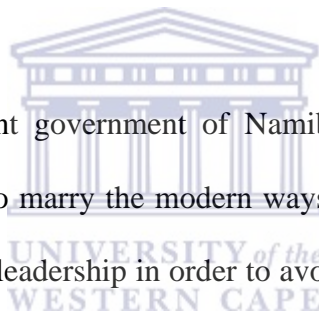
It is thus an irony that in the initial legislation on regional and local councils, the traditional leaders, whom the author considers important stakeholders of government at local level, were not enjoying the center stage. Even though the Constitution (Government of Namibia,1990: 38) Article 66 refers to customary and common law, something that is close to one of the responsibility of traditional leaders, there is no specific section reserved for traditional leaders or their roles. However, even this stipulation is subject to the fact that the execution of such function is valid only if it does not conflict with the Constitution or any other statutory law or as stipulated in Section (2) of the said article on common law or customary law which may be repealed or amended by an act of parliament. Also, the application of such laws may be limited to particular parts of the country or even particular periods.

This leads the author to conclude that traditional leaders do not enjoy much influence under the current dispensation. However, one could not say that they are completely left out. According to Article 102 sub-article (5) of the Constitution of Namibia as noted by Tötemeyer (2006:1) a council of traditional leaders was to be established by an act of parliament. However, it was only in 1995 that the Traditional Authority Act was promulgated into law and later amended in 2000 as Act 25 of 2000.   Other relevant acts that were passed are the Council of Traditional Leaders Act of 1997(Act 13 of 1997) and the Community Court Act of 2003 (Act 10 of 2003). It is also important to mention that the roles of traditional leaders were restricted to an advisory nature. As stipulated under sub-article (5) their roles are limited to advising the president on matters pertaining to the control and use of communal land. As correctly noted by Tötemeyer (2006:1) the traditional leaders are not reflected in the Constitution as state institutions, but rather as cultural institutions. The Traditional Authorities Act of 1997 Section 102 (4) vividly stipulates the role of traditional leaders as custodians of culture and tradition.
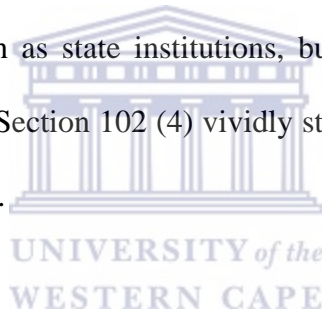
In general the traditional authorities are not accorded any formal structure under the Namibian Constitution or under any legal prescription. Thus, as noted by Tötemeyer (2006:2) there is no legal relationship between the traditional authorities and instituted sub-national structures. The existence of traditional structures is vital especially in remote villages and in sparsely populated vast countries such as Namibia. They are the preservers of customary laws and traditional values, norms and customs and can make a difference. But while traditional authorities are entities in their own right, they are not independent from the state in which they are operating.

On the other hand, the transfer of the majority of the administrative responsibilities that were carried out by the traditional councils to regional councils was intended to monopolize the social control and to take democratic governance to the population in rural areas. This tendency has led to the belief by the majority of traditional leaders that Sections 10, 11 and 12 of the Act in fact serve as basis of the erosion of their power base, since these sections of the Act cede most of their powers to the local and regional authorities. Tötemeyer (Op. Cit) further notes that notwithstanding the fact that the majority of the traditional leaders viewed this change in status with skepticism, the ruling party still believes, that some of the kinship accustomed to traditional leadership remains vital because some social and economic networks are formed and manifested around these cultural identities and relationships.

The author believes that the present government of Namibia and the majority of third world governments have a yearning urge to marry the modern ways of governance with the old ways of leadership which include traditional leadership in order to avoid conflicts and unnecessary tensions between the different layers of governance. At times traditional leadership can provide the necessary glue to keep the people at the periphery in touch with the activities of central government. A case in point is the Caprivi uprising, where some degree of the restoration of peace and tranquility in the area was as a direct result of the traditional authorities.

However, the author is of the opinion that the other point of concern is the acknowledgement of chieftaincy. While some chiefs in Namibia tend to believe that the reason why they are not acknowledged is because of their affiliation to the opposition parties, Kaiyamo (personal interview, 2006) is of the opinion that the way in which leadership was bestowed on some traditional leaders

is perhaps the root of this frustration. In Namibia traditional leadership have been hereditary. However, there are those who believe that they should be elected. The author believes that the current friction among traditional leadership is among those who are acknowledged because they hail from traditional households and those that are popularly elected. Those who are the direct descendents of royal houses are convinced that they are the legitimate leaders of their people, and those who do not hail from royalty but are popular, are of the opinion that the days of hereditary leadership are over. This is also the conviction of Kaiyamo (personal interview, 2006). In the final analysis, however, traditional leadership is here to stay. What is important is for the governments of the majority of the third world countries to find a suitable structure for them to make a meaningful contribution. A number of African governments do want to subtly do away with traditional leadership. But traditional leadership is increasingly proving to be a force to be reckoned with. In fact, in the case of South Africa, Chief Buthelezi of the Inkata Freedom Party is still a formidable force in the South African political system.
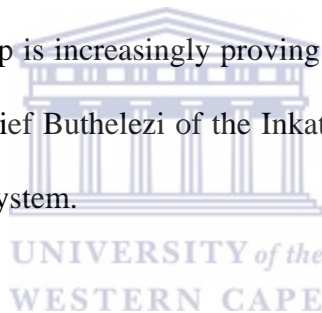
The author is of the opinion that the unrest that one sees nowadays is a result of regional government (in the Bantustans/Homelands) and local government (especially in the municipalities were people are divided and governed on racial/tribal basis) being far removed from the majority of the people who were closer to their traditional leaders. When these traditional practices were abolished in the new Namibia, the people were removed from the people that they knew best, their traditional leaders. Although most of the traditional leaders were collaborators and paid by their colonial masters, as was rightfully alluded to earlier by Nujoma (personal interview, 2006), they remain popular among their people and unless handled with care could become a headache for

government. It is partly for this reason that Ismail (op. cit.) persuasively calls for the integration of indigenous and contemporary local governance.

Nature and scope of the policy on decentralization

The key elements of the policy on decentralization were many and varied. First, certain responsibilities, functions, authority, resources and/or resource bases were to be delegated and devolved by the state. This was to be done in accordance with certain criteria related to the functions to be decentralized and the pace and the timing of such decentralization. Second, democratic and participative considerations were to be taken into account when assessing the pace and the content of devolution. Any devolution was to further take cognizance of political and technical feasibility and system and individual capacity. Also, closer attention was to be paid to the macro-economic and fiscal environment, public sector and economic reform policies and other activities in the country. Third, decentralization was to be implemented gradually and systematically. Not all the functions were to be implemented at the same pace, with some functions being implemented faster than others, while other functions were to be implemented in part and others in their entirety. Some implementation was to commence sooner than others, depending on the preparedness of the parties or institutions involved. All in all, participatory democracy was to remain a top priority. Fourth, institutional and organizational change at both the regional and local levels was considered vital for decentralization to be implemented effectively. This was to pave the way for the restructuring of responsibility and functions, and the changes would emphasize the role of local government as the delivery arm of central government. Coupled with this, an increase in capacity at both the regional and local levels would warrant different institutional and

organizational requirements. Changes were also to be made to existing legislation in order to bring the law and other legal provisions in line with decentralization policy.

Fifth, it was assumed that decentralization would be cost effective, given the fact that there was a close correlation between those collecting the revenue and those utilizing the revenue. In fact, financial discipline was to be positively affected by the fact that the local authorities, some of which are self-sufficient, would partly be responsible for meeting their own needs with the resources they collect, compared with the regional councils that are fully dependent on central government resources. Thus, wastage of revenue and services was to be minimal and cost recovery more feasible. The localization of technical personnel for service delivery would undoubtedly translate into cheaper services. More vital to decentralization was the fact that the people would see how their resources are being utilized. Thus, there was to be prudent handling of resources. It was also to be easier to identify new sources of revenue, as well as to extract additional resources from the people. In this way a mutual co-existence and autonomy between the regional councils and the local councils would be feasible and within the parameters of the law.

Finally, central government institutions were barely coping to manage the affairs of the country given the lack of knowledge and skills emanating from the Apartheid era. Thus, the following were to be done, namely identifying the key players; demarcating the roles and responsibilities of the key players; stipulating the mission statement and setting the strategies; stipulating how interwoven activities are to be executed; and measuring the capacities, whether individual or collective, of all key players and stakeholders alike, including the coordinating and collaborative roles they will have to play for decentralization to proceed without a hitch.

The enabling decentralization legislation indicates that the implementation process is expected to take considerable time for all the functions to be decentralized (see Government of Namibia, Decentralization Enabling Act, 2000). According to the MRLGH, some functions would be decentralized over time, while other functions would be decentralized immediately. The following functions were to be decentralized immediately: community development; early childhood development; the administration of villages and settlement areas; rural water development and management; primary health care; forest development and management; physical and economic planning (including capital development projects); emergency management; resettlement and rehabilitation; regional council personnel responsibility; vehicle testing and licensing; responsibility and accountability for electricity distribution; full responsibility for town planning schemes within the framework of approved master plans; business registration; housing provision; liquor licensing; full responsibility for environment and conservation; social services; youth, sports and recreational activities; collection of some taxes; non-personal health services; libraries; agency services to towns, villages and settlements; traffic control; and the control of aerodromes.

Situational review of the policy on decentralization, 1998 – 2001

The supporting actions for decentralization included the Situational Analysis of April 1998, the Policy Implementation of March 1998, and the Decentralization Implementation Plan of December 2001. The Situation Analysis of April 1998 was an analysis of decentralization in Namibia since its inception. The following shortcomings in the implementation of decentralization were identified: the technical details of decentralization on financial and personnel decentralization remained vague; the draft bill was in place, but the actual legislation, at the time of the analysis was not in

place; and problems with the simultaneous introduction of decentralization and other public service reform programmes that should have been used to support decentralization. The programmes included civil service reform, macro-economic reform, democracy and good governance, human rights and poverty reduction. Problems were encountered with some ministry officials' opposition to the changes brought about by the policy; assignment of functions agreed upon lacked finer details of implementation; the fact that immediate decentralization and devolution functions have been entrusted upon the regional and local structures since April 1, 1998.

The policy outlines the development of decentralization since 1989. It states that the government has developed and refined its decentralization policy, taking into consideration the views of all the stakeholders. The consultations and preparatory activities ended with cabinet's approval of the policy in 1996, the national assembly's adoption of the policy in 1997, and the approval of the implementation strategy and the work plan by cabinet in March 1998. The decentralization implementation plan is the main monitoring tool of the MRLGH, and its division committee for decentralization policy implementation. The committee is responsible for co-coordinating the implementation of the decentralization reform process. It was a necessary step in the preparation of the different layers of government for the actual devolution of power and transfer of responsibilities.

The opportunities to be derived from decentralization are immense. For the first time in the county's history all sectors of the population are to be given the opportunity to be heard. The framers of the policy directly consulted them and they also consulted them indirectly through the people they elected to serve them in government. Thus, they exercised their democratic right by

making their decisions known on issues affecting their communities. More importantly, they are given the opportunity to participate in both the decision-making process and the development programmes. Through decentralization people are enabled to control both the direction and the pace of change because they are now engaged in the development programmes that address their problems and their needs.

Nonetheless constraints remained. In the first place the political will to devolve some of the powers to the regions remained a thorny issue at central government level. Some officials also remained unenthusiastic about decentralization and through delays and other means they deprive the majority of the people from reaping the fruits of decentralization. Power struggles between central government officials, the regional authorities, and some key players constituted a daunting problem that affect the effective implementation of this policy.
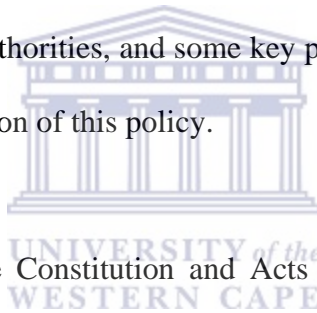
Most of the legal provisions in the Constitution and Acts are vague leaving room for various interpretations. In some instances they appear to be giving the same power to central Government and to regional and local governments. Given the fact that Namibia is a unitary state and by virtue of constitutional provisions, both the regional and local governments are given subordinate positions in that they are to form the second and third level of the government. Central government is thus placed in a superior and influential position. In instances where the provisions appear vague, or in situations where the different layers of government are accorded the same power, central government tends to negatively sway the activities of regional and local government.

The role of the MRLGH

To further understand the relations between central government and the regional governments, one has to examine the role of the MRLGH *vis-à-vis* the activities of the regional governments. This is important because the ministry represents the national government in dealing with the regional governments. It is understandable that the national government should identify a responsible ministry to steer the activities of decentralization, and since the MRLGH was the ministry closest to the activities of both the regional and local governments (the newly and emerging regional and local governments depended on the MRLGH for the provision of all infrastructure and logistical support) this responsibility was bestowed on it. As a result this "mother ministry" developed a tendency to control and direct the activities of the lower layers of government instead of only providing essential resources and technical staff to kick-start the decentralization process.
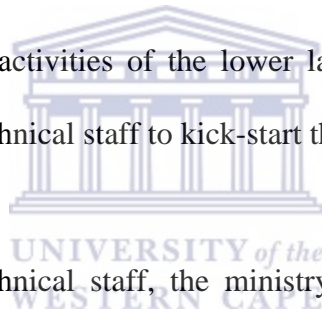
In addition to the provision of technical staff, the ministry provided vehicles and made other infrastructure arrangements for the new lower levels of government. During the early years of decentralization, the MRLGH also assumed the responsibility of establishing regional councils. This arrangement did not put the regional councils at the centre of the regions where they were popularly elected. Neither were they endowed with significant policy/decision-making responsibilities on the contrary it appeared as if they were subsidiaries of the MRLGH, responsible for the implementation of the "mother ministry's" directives.

It is less clear as to what control the MRLGH is supposed to exercise over the regions and their bureaucracy. The policy instruments that established the legal framework of the functional and

operational activities of the regional and local governments are not that specific. Equally vague is the Regional Council Act. This is exacerbated by the imprecise definition of the powers and functions of the regional and local governments in the Constitution. As much as the Constitution underpins the importance of the regional government to generate revenue as stipulated in Article 75(7) of the Constitution, for example, it also grants the same power to central government. This provision puts both layers of government in direct confrontation as no distinction is made as to which of the two branches of government should collect which resources and when either one of the two should collect it, if it is going to be done on an alternate basis. But it should be kept in mind that central government occupies a superior position over the regional governments.

Moreover, the legal instruments are not clear about the structure of the new regional government. The objectives, functions and administration of the regional governments were not clearly stipulated and this lack of clarity created dilemmas for the officials who were charged with planning. Also affected by the lack of clarity was the office of the prime minister that is tasked with the responsibility to coordinate, monitor and supervise the activities of all the ministries. Thus, the MRLGH was left with the daunting task of filling the policy gap and solving the dilemma by default. However, the regional government and indeed the people, for who this branch of government was being developed, had little input, if any, in shaping the policy decisions that will influence the nature of services to be delivered to them at regional level.

Forrest (1998) observed that there would be immediate contradiction if and when the MRLGH were to go beyond getting the regions started. The members of the national council were the only group of officials elected by the people that they were expected to serve. Thus, they enjoy

particular legitimate democratic status. This is further supported by the fact that, they are empowered by the Regional Council Act and other provisions embodied in the "Delimitation Commission Report" to stimulate economic activities in the regions and to take care of the general administration of the regions. The question then remains as to how these elected officials could uphold their mandate to the people if whatever they did had to be sanctioned and steered by central government.

At independence the MLGH was established encompassing posts that were transferred from the central departments and the former second tier authorities. This new structure included the directorates of housing, community development and local government. The new directorate of local government, later renamed the directorate of regional and local governance was a totally new institution. The MRLGH found itself involved in activities that overlapped with those of other ministries. Thanks to the superb leadership of the minister, Dr. Libertina Amathila, and the team she had put together, the ministry found itself at the centre of donor sponsored projects, even projects that were supposed to have been carried out by other ministries.

Between 1990 and 1992 the ministry achieved extra-ordinary efficiency and reliability because she had set high standards for her employees and was intolerant of incompetence. The ministry was free of racial tension, something which engulfed most of the other ministries, and it was the only ministry to achieve "indigenous authenticity" status. This was due to the fact that it was the only ministry that was staffed by officials who were appointed after independence. These qualities became so legendary that the ministry was accorded an exemplary and senior status. Being a powerful ministry and known for its exceptional leadership qualities, did not avail the regional

government a bit. It was Minister Libertina Amathila's personal opinion that regional councils should not be accorded too much power. The more powerful the ministry became, the more it stamped its authority on regional government. The ministry was convinced that it had more expertise than the regional government and was more capable, for example, to draft regional policy than the regional governments and the people residing in the regions.

It was only in 1993 that the de-facto policy direction of the central government concerning the activities of the regional councils was refined and precisely defined. This was also when those who were in a position to make decisions concerning policy exerted their influence and opinions. Thus, the MRLGH's policy decision regarding the roles of the regional council and the regional governors, and the bureaucratic staff of the councils were determined. With these attitudes the officials from the MRLGH repositioned themselves to control and structure the behaviour of regional councils.
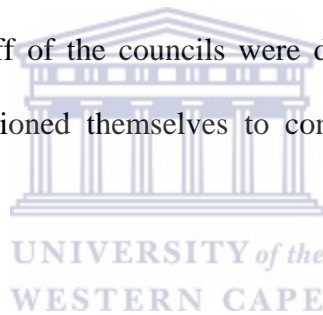
At this point the MRLGH had assumed a unique position. It became the ministry's responsibility to administer the activities of the newly elected regional councils and it was armed with the necessary legislation and authority to determine the way and pace of change in the regions. The skepticism (in giving the regions autonomy) showed by the founding MRLGH, was a further indication of the ministry's desire to control the activities of the regions, and the ministry was convinced that no infrastructure existed at those levels. It also emerged that the minister was not much impressed with the whole idea of regional councils. While addressing the national assembly, for instance, she made it very clear that the framers of the Namibian Constitution should have better empowered the existing local governments rather than coming up with a new structure in the form of regional

government. She also showed lack of support for regions when she suggested that she might have to get rid of the "regional government story" after five years. This was partially because the establishment of the regions proved too expensive and added more responsibilities to an already overburdened MRLGH.

The minister's policy position had a "ripple down effect", as her officials also started to express similar negative attitudes towards the regional councils. Perhaps some interviews with the officials of the MRLGH conducted by Forrest (1998) hold the key to understanding the initial thinking of these officials. The interviews revealed the following views: the futility of the regional councils, more like an "experiment"; councils' relatively powerlessness, partially blamed on their limited constitutional status as part of the unitary state; the councils' dependence on the MRLGH for all their pragmatic, budgetary and regional policy decision-making; regional councils' less superior position as opposed to that of the "parent ministry"; the council's lack of authority to interfere with decisions made by local councils, which include, municipalities, towns and villages; the notion of officials of the MRLGH that councils were ill-equipped, and should be trained before being further empowered (Forrest, 1998).

It is important to mention that the type of decentralization in Namibia was not as a direct result of SWAPO. As noted by Tötemeyer (2003a:111) the kind of decentralization in Namibia resulted from the negotiated settlement between the ruling party SWAPO, and the country's first main opposition, the DTA. The concerted pressure that led to the compromise, apart from the internal political the role of the DTA, was also exerted by the United Nations and South Africa during the 1970s. Tötemeyer (2003a) also noted that a United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN)

publication, entitled "Namibian Perspectives for National Reconstruction and Development", set the tone for the negotiation of possible legal and institutional arrangements for the future governance of Namibia. The discourses that were to follow during the framing of the Namibian Constitution in 1989 were based on the aforementioned publication. If SWAPO had its way during the negotiations it would have liked to have had a unitary centralist form of government. However, the 1989 compromise paved the way for **a** regional dispensation with the regions as a second tier government and the local authorities as a third and lowest tier of government.

Joseph Diescho (1994:14-15), a renowned political analyst, noted that a number of compromises were made even before Namibia gained independence. He argued that because Namibia shares its border with Angola, and the MPLA government enlisted the assistance of the Cuban forces to fight UNITA, pressure was exerted on both the USA and South Africa to opt for a negotiated settlement. This situation was further aided or propelled by the rapid changes in the Soviet Union which led to a decrease of hostility between the superpowers, resulting in the USA-brokered agreement between Angola, Cuba and South Africa for an UN-supervised withdrawal of all Cuban forces from Angola. In general, both the minister and the permanent secretary viewed the regional councils as being integral parts of their ministry, rather than autonomous institutions. There was no doubt in their minds that autonomy, as far as the regional government was concerned was a no-go. Their arguments were based on the fact that Namibia is a unitary state with no room for autonomous structures at regional levels. The minister was still convinced that the economic development of the regions would be better served by the strengthening of local councils and central government rather than the regional councils.

The MRLGH permanent secretary was not sure whether or not the regional councils were accountable to his ministry. He felt that regional councils had a political role, while the administration of the activities in the regions was to be conducted by the ministry or its appointees. The ministry's position was that the regional councils were not autonomous entities. As such, the ministry did not entertain any idea of according autonomy to the regional governments. The ministry was also not keen to commit any power to the regional councils. The officials in the MRLGH were quick to point out that the regional councils' principal powers were restricted to the election of the members of the national council and to make by-laws pertinent to their respective regions, to generate revenue, and to participate in the regional development planning activities with of course, the approval of central government.

Regional government and regional councils

The same officials were of the opinion that the regional council was expected to act in an advisory capacity to central government. Thus, they could not possess any public-policy making powers. It was their understanding that the only autonomy that the regional governments might be deemed to have was that they were not officially units within the ministry. In fact, the ministry officials stated that the regions were only free to initiate projects at the behest of central government. Administrative arrangements where made to improve the capacity of regions through the transfer of staff from different ministries. Nonetheless, the understanding of the MRLGH was still that control of, and instructions to, the transferred officials had to come from central government. And adding insult to injury, a deputy minister and a deputy director agreed that regional government could not intervene in the activities of other ministries and that the regional councils lacked the necessary power to rule and supervise national ministerial officials, even those that were working in their

regions. Communication between the regional councils and the offices of other ministries were to take place only with the expressed authorization of the MRLGH.

Forrest (1998) states that no regional government ever existed in Namibia prior to independence. Tötemeyer (2003a) indicates that no legal framework for the establishment of regional government existed in Namibia before independence. Namibia inherited an ethnically based administration which did not equitably cater for all her people.

Analytical summary

This chapter discussed the broad administrative/institutional setting for decentralization in Namibia. The significant role of the MRLGH in the origin and development of the policy on decentralization has been noted. So, has the status of regional and local governments. The latter two have almost operated independently of one another. Nonetheless, regional government is allowed to discuss matters of concern to the local authorities with a given ministry. However, such interventions by regional government are limited to the degree of autonomy that each of the two institutions enjoys. In fact, local authorities are autonomous bodies with regard to the regional councils on the principle of non-subordination. They do, however, communicate on a frequent basis and exchange minutes of their respective council meetings and attend each other's meetings on a voluntary basis.

The regional and local governments have become synonymous with central government's policy on decentralization. In fact, both became the "central theme" of the decentralization exercise and the Regional Councils and Local Authorities Acts were amended to accommodate the new

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responsibilities of both layers of government. As the responsible ministry, the MRLGH made it its task to facilitate the establishment of effective regional and local governments capable of bringing the government closer to the people and to enhance service delivery. This is because central government saw the need for decentralization, and the MRLGH adapted its approach accordingly.

The foregoing pattern of inter-governmental relations is complex and has been the source of confusion over the responsibilities of each layer of government. This could also be the root cause of the lack of clear-cut mechanisms of consultation, communication and participation among the different stakeholders in the decentralization process. There are no formalized channels of communication and consultation. Communication happens on an ad-hoc basis because the decentralization policy does not make any provision for establishing a mechanism for regular consultation and communication between the different stakeholders. And, as Godana and Mukwena (2002:17) argue, even in situations where the stakeholders are consulted, there ought to be a mechanism in place for communication and consultation. Such a mechanism would ensure that the result of the consultation inform and influence the policy. In other words, Namibia should create an enabling environment to allow it a chance to institute a mechanism that would ensure consultation, communication and the participation of all stakeholders. Such a mechanism will undoubtedly put to rest the occasional claim by both the regional and local government authorities that they are not informed nor consulted on given issues.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECENTRALISATION IN THE OMAHEKE, OSHIKOTO

AND OTJOZONDJUPA REGIONS OF NAMIBIA

This chapter looks at the implementation of decentralization in the Omaheke**,** Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions. There will be a brief introduction to the three regions followed by discussions that will revolve around the following sub-topics: short and long-term development objectives; regional councils and decision-making; duplication and overlapping of functions; human resources and constraints; institutional/logistic resources and constraints; financial resources and constraints; community perceptions about decentralization; and an analytical summary.

Introduction

It was correctly pointed out by Tapscott (2003:1) that 'one size might not fit all'. While articulating the South African situation he argued that while transforming the second and third tiers of government one has to take cognizance of the disparities between regions. This argument also informs the three regions under study because they are diverse in both their economic make-up and population density. Thus, what is good for one region may not necessarily be good for another. The three regions in this study base most of their economic activities on agriculture. While Omaheke and Otjozondjupa are rearing cattle, Oshikoto concentrates on cash crop farming of *omahangu* which is the principal crop in the northern part of Namibia. However, to a lesser extent, farmers in some areas of Oshikoto in the Mangetti and Tsumeb districts do rear cattle. As shall be discussed later in the chapter, had it not been for the redline restrictions on cattle farming, the Oshikoto region could have been better off than the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions. Nonetheless, two other economic activities helped to place the Oshikoto region at more or less the same economic

level as the other two regions, namely crop production of Omahangu millet in the Mangetti and the Tsumeb districts and mining in the Tsumeb district even though, according to Tötemeyer (1992:104), the lifespan of the Tsumeb Mine is limited. Omaheke has Otjiwarongo as its seat of governance, while Otjozondjupa has Gobabis and Oshikoto Tsumeb as their seats of governance. All three regions, as will be discussed later, practise communal and commercial farming. However, the three regions differ in terms of their population profiles. The population density of Oshikoto by far surpasses that of both Omaheke and Otjozondjupa, with Otjozondjupa having the second largest population. The Herero population constitutes the majority in both Omaheke and Otjozondjupa, while the Oshiwambo speaking groups form the majority in Oshikoto.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a large number of the marginalized San people also reside in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions, even though they are also found in other parts of the Namibia. According to the deputy prime minister of Namibia, Dr. Libertine Amathila (personal interview, 20/9/2006), decentralization should address the plight of the San community. She informed the author that it is one of her primary tasks to ensure that the San communities are accorded their rightful place in society. She also said women should also benefit from decentralization as the majority of women were left behind in the development process and that the majority of them are still far removed from the axis of power and decision-making processes in the country. She is also of the opinion that through decentralization, these groups should acquire pieces of land, as land is the basis of all wealth.

Short and long-term developmental objectives

The Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions set short-term as well as long-term objectives in their bid to reach their goals. The short-term objectives were to establish regional and constituency structures in most if not all the regions; to produce regional plans and agree on the implementation thereof; and to develop mechanisms to register all non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in the region. The long-term objectives were to ensure the functioning of the regional development coordination committee and the constituency development committees; to educate the communities on their civic rights and obligations and decentralization policy and programmes; to educate the community about services rendered to them; to develop relationships and work with non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in order to secure development for the region; to promote, maintain and implement anti-litter campaigns in each constituency; and to promote information technology (IT) throughout the region. In principle these are well-intended short and long-term developmental objectives. However, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that these objectives actually guided regional governments to implement the policy on decentralization (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004; Tjihoreko, personal interview, 4/4/2004).

Regional councils and decision-making

There are seven staff members who are currently serving on the Otjozondjupa regional council namely, the chief executive officer (CEO), the chief controlling officer, two chief clerks, a personnel officer, a development officer, a regional development planner and a private secretary. Such a small group of workers are in no way capable of effectively running the entire region, which

include seven constituencies. Due to the lack of staff the entire region is manned from Otjiwarongo, the seat of regional government. The nature of decisions varies, because decisions are based on the needs and problems of the respective regions. The decisions also depend on the urgency of the matter at hand and the magnitude of the problem. Thus, the decisions taken by the regional council emanate from the nature of the problems and needs it faces.

There are, however, problems that cut across all the regions. To illustrate this argument, the author can cite the case of a reported water shortage and the immediate possibility of a total lack of water in the Kalkfeld constituency, one of the seven constituencies of the Otjozondjupa region. The number of people affected by the lack of water was not that many. In fact, it was only four thousands, but, this number did not warrant their problem to be overlooked or not to be resolved expeditiously. The Constitution protects all and guarantees equal treatment to all irrespective of size. Thus, the magnitude and the urgency of the problem should be used as criteria for action. It is perhaps the reason why the CEO of the Otjozondjupa region upon receiving the report, on the 30th of March 2004, that the Kalkfeld constituency is experiencing a severe water shortage and that it was on the brink of a complete breakdown in its water supply, took a helicopter to assess the situation for himself (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

His trip to Kalkfeld was followed by a team of Namwater, the company responsible for the supply of water in the region along with the chief clerk of Kalkfeld. The decision to restore the supply of water to Kalkfeld was based on a number of factors. It was clear to the regional council that some people could die from thirst while others could become susceptible to disease because they might resort to using unhygienic water out of desperation. Water shortages could affect schools and

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businesses in the settlement area. The factors mentioned above warranted immediate action on the part of the regional council, because a delay could be catastrophic. Apart from the lives that could be lost, the leadership and management of the region could be questioned if problems of this nature are not solved in the shortest time possible. The roles and responsibilities of management are thus dictated by the realities on the ground. Fortunately, major problems of water supply were averted when Namwater restored the water supply to Kalkfeld (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

A system is in place whereby decisions are dictated to by the resolutions of the regional council. As per the provisions of the Regional and Local Councils Act of 1992, a management committee of the regional council has to be put in place. It undoubtedly eases the burden on council and complements the activities of regional council. The governor chairs both the regional council and the management committee of the council who is responsible for the management of the entire region. However, to make sure the needs and the problems of the settlements are accorded the kind of attention they deserve the settlement management committee has been made part of the management committee of the council since 2004. Thus, whenever the management council meets, representatives of the settlement management committee attend the meetings. Given the fact that representatives from the settlements are represented on the management committee, they are thus given the opportunity to partake in the decisions that could impact service delivery in their areas.

According to the CEO of the Otjozondjupa region, it is cost effective to have the settlement management committee represented on the management committee. He is convinced that the cost is minimal for members of the settlement management committee to attend the meetings in Otjiwarongo or Gobabis, as opposed to the cost that will be incurred if he or his counterpart in

Omaheke attends meetings in all the different settlements. It also reduces the time the CEO has to spend away from other responsibilities in his/her office, while he/she is traveling through the settlement areas. Instead of him/her going from one settlement area to the other to establish needs and to respond to problems, they can attend the management committee and the CEO will receive all the information in one go. Most pertinent, they have to participate in the decision-making process so that they can see how decisions are made. They also receive their information first hand, which is very important, especially for the very remote areas where communication is a problem due to lack of the necessary infrastructures and long distances.

Duplication and overlapping of functions

Government transferred many functions to the newly founded regional councils. But, at the same time, the line ministries continued to perform these functions because they had the staff, financial resources and equipment the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regional councils lacked. This created not only duplication and overlapping of functions between the central and regional governments but also a lack of clarity in the command chain. For example, the CEO is the accounting officer of the regional council who is expected to merely play a supervisory role, but under decentralization he/she is expected to implement policy adding more responsibilities to his/her portfolio. In an attempt to ease the added burden and for him/her to remain effective, he/she in turn passes some of his/her own responsibilities to the chief controlling officer (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004; Ndiyepa, personal interview, 22/9/2003).

The chief control officer who also feels the burden, in turn passes some of his/her functions to lower level officials who do likewise. In the end, the additional weight of decentralization seems to

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be causing a chain reaction in terms of decisions and responsibilities especially in the Otjozondjupa regional council. To ensure that every employee is reminded of his/her responsibilities, the Otjozondjupa management committee holds weekly meetings. These meetings are also important to ensure that tasks are well understood by all to avoid breakdowns in the chain of command and in internal communication. These weekly meetings are attended by all heads of departments, who in turn remain in touch with the chief clerks of all the constituencies. For similar purposes the Otjozondjupa regional council maintains constant interaction with central government (Uandjarakana, personal interview, 6/4/2004; Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

The CEO of the Otjozondjupa region believes that there is a reasonable division of labour under decentralization. Some activities that might be misconstrued as duplication of functions by some people are, in his opinion, delegations that are catered for and dictated to by relevant laws. As per the treasury instructions, for example, the CEO has the right to delegate some of his/her functions to other officials when the need arises. It is within the provisions of the aforementioned legislation that the CEO could delegate his/her authority to sign and/or approve cheques whenever he/she is absent from office. He could do so by simply writing a letter to the delegate asking him/her to perform those tasks in his/her absence.

In other situations, however, officials may be called upon to perform a function at national level. The CEO will call upon other officials to carry out the functions of their colleague until such a person resumes his/her normal duties. To illustrate, the chief controlling officer of the Otjozondjupa region was occupied with the drought relief programme in the region during the time this research was conducted. This was a responsibility that took him from his usual job as he was

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entrusted with another responsibility at the national level. However, even though such activities could benefit both the respective region and the country at large, such tendencies reduce the ability of the regional council to render an effective service, let alone the burden it places on other officials who have to stand in for their colleague(s).

Human resources and constraints

Similar to the Omaheke regional council, both the Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regional councils found themselves in a serious predicament with regard to the performance of certain duties. Not only were they under-staffed, but they were also ill equipped to execute their functions efficiently and effectively in their Otjiwarongo and Tsumeb offices, neither did they have enough employees to deploy in the Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa constituencies of the regions under the decentralization programme. What central government failed to do before it transferred certain responsibilities to the regions such as Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa was to provide sufficient personnel for the duties at hand. A related problem was the lack of skills and knowledge in the workforce. They were thus compelled under the prevailing circumstances to adopt a "adapt or die" attitude (Uandjaraka, personal interview, 6/4/2004; Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

It was due to the lack of skilled personnel in its workforce that Otjozondjupa region established a human resource plan. This plan included both the short and long-term strategies of the regional council. Before initiating the training programmes for the Otjozondjupa regional council, for instance, a needs assessment was conducted to ascertain the magnitude of the human resource problem and to prescribe the right remedies. In the initial stage, the Otjozondjupa regional council's strategy was to embark upon programmes that were aimed at impacting immediate skills and

knowledge shortages. To reach that objective, and as part of its short-term objective, the regional council introduced short training programmes. Under the same strategy, the regional council identified employees who could benefit from attending relevant workshops and conferences. Such employees where given the time off to attend relevant workshops, seminars and conferences.

In the short-term strategy, in addition to on-the-job training, the employees are rotated from one job to another to equip them with the necessary well-rounded hands-on skills. This strategy makes employees versatile so that they can execute any function when called upon to do so. Versatile employees can be utilized virtually anywhere in the institution. The rationale behind this strategy, according to the CEO of the Otjozondjupa regional council, is to make sure that employees are knowledgeable to be used in different positions. For example, if the CEO is not available, the chief controlling officer can take his place, or if the chief controlling officer is not available, the chief clerk can perform his duties. What is interesting about the short-term training programme introduced by the Otjozondjupa regional council is that it is tailor-made to the specific needs of the officials involved.

The long-term strategy of the Otjozondjupa regional council is to develop individual employees in the hope that the entire institution will benefit in the long run. Unlike with short-term training which is expected to take little time and to yield immediate results, long-term training takes years to complete. The organization will also only feel its impact after several years. As a result, the regional council approved both the funding and study leave of certain employees to study for diplomas and degrees at various tertiary institutions. The study areas included, although not necessarily confined to, public administration, budgeting, planning, and personnel management.

Institutional/logistic resources and constraints

The activities of the Otjozondjupa regional council were hampered by many logistic problems. The most serious was lack of transport. Between 1993 and 1998 the entire region, including its seven constituencies, relied on one vehicle for transportation. This continued until 2001 when the current CEO bought five vehicles by bypassing the normal procedures for procuring vehicles for government entities. He took advantage of a provision within the Finance Act that allows the CEO the right to procure certain goods, including vehicles, in the absence of the Tender Board. The regional council's headquarters in Otjiwarongo often lend motor vehicles to constituencies. This dependency on borrowed equipment was more the rule than the exception thereby creating implementation problems regarding decentralization. Whenever a vehicle from either one of the constituencies breaks down, the headquarters provides them with another vehicle until theirs is fixed. However, while the constituencies have one vehicle each, a solution to their transportation problem remains elusive.
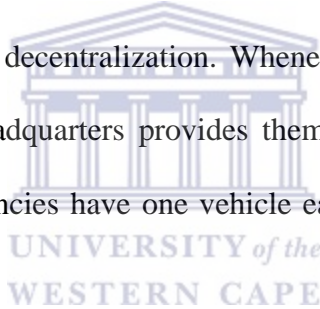
The region is expected to cater for all its own needs under decentralization with little logistical support from central government. Take for example electricity failures that are the most daunting problem the regional council has to deal with on a frequent basis. This problem is even more acute in the informal settlement under the jurisdiction of the Otjozondjupa regional council. As the informal settlement does not have any transport whatsoever, it relies on the regional council office for assistance. Thus, when failures occurred, and it so happens that the vehicles are engaged in other official activities, there is no vehicle available to respond to the electricity failures in the informal settlement. There are only two individuals who are responsible for attending to electrical

faults in the whole region, namely, a technician and a driver. If these two individuals are already in the field in a particular area, any other problem elsewhere has to wait. But because the solving of these and other problems still remains the responsibility of the regional council, it is the council's responsibility to find solutions to them.

Oshikoto experienced its own problems. The communication networks in the area is good, the tarred trunk road that links both the south and north of the country runs through the region which comprises a great number of farms. This road is also in future to link the Oshikoto region to the Kavango region. Its population is also increasing faster than that of Omaheke and Otjozondjupa. With the exception of Tsumeb that also serves as the seat of government and Oniipa, an area in the extreme northwest, dense population concentrations are to be found in the corridor along the trunk road (Tötemeyer, 1992:104).
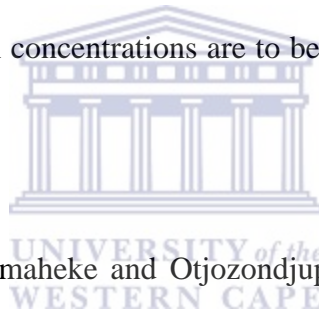
Wherever the author went in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions he learnt that there was a serious lack of qualified personnel, a situation similar to that in the Oshikoto region. If one was to look at the current staff of both regions as compared to the proposed personnel structure of central government it is quite clear that both regions are gravely understaffed. This situation is perhaps a question of political will, or the lack of social responsibility on central government's side. If central government was at all serious about taking the government to the people and to improve service delivery at the locality, it would have dedicated capable staff to regional government. Indeed, central government had many options at its disposal. It could have hired enough staff and could have deployed them in the regions. Such a move would have won the hearts of many university graduates who are largely unemployed. It would undoubtedly reduce the country's high

unemployment rate that is estimated at 38 per cent. Alternatively, the government could have implemented the Wages and Salaries Commission's (WASCOM) recommendation of deploying staff from the line ministries to other layers of government were they were needed most.

The WASCOM report found that the Namibian public service was "bloated". Its sheer size was said to be responsible for the under-utilization of most of the public servants and the duplication of functions and redundancy. The option of re-arranging existing staff and transferring them to regional governments would have reduced the number of employees in central government, sending them to the newly created regional governments.

Another option for central government would have been to train the staff members of the new regional government before the actual decentralization was implemented. This would have eased the burden on the newly created regional government by not having to use their meager resources to sharpen the skills of their skeleton staff. Apart from the financial obligations, regional government has to release some of this small group of workers for training when the need arises and when the situation presents itself. While tasked with immense duties, it is quite obvious that the release of any staff member incapacitates these institutions to render an effective service, let alone any service at all. When one takes a closer look at the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions, it is clear that they do not have the resources to train all the staff members that they would want to train. Their efforts are further hampered by the fact that they do not have additional staff to substitute those who go for training (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004; Tjihoreko, personal interview, 4/4/2004).

In the three regions studied, as in other regions, central government did not embark upon decentralization programmes that would have resulted in the necessary institutional changes. This was a serious omission but not surprising given the initial policy position of the MRLGH. Nonetheless, central government should have made sure that real or fixed assets such as buildings and other office accommodation were in place for the activities of the new layers of government. This resulted in a continued state of insufficient office buildings. Office accommodation is sometimes leased from private individuals on a long-term basis.

The lack of offices caused many operational problems for most regional councilors. This concern was echoed by a former regional councilor saying that by not having offices, and having a mandate to govern those who had elected them to office, they were forced to operate "from their brief cases". This was not an appropriate way to serve the public. In some of the areas that the researcher had visited, the regional councilors depended on the generosity of some central government ministries for office facilities in their areas of jurisdiction, but in the remote areas there are no such luxuries and there even the ministries have inadequacy facilities. However, it is important to note that government has now provided office buildings in almost all the constituencies as part of the implementation of decentralization.

Related to the lack of office space is the general lack of housing accommodation for staff, including regional councilors. While the situation at Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa is not as acute as in other regions, there is an acute shortage of houses for staff members in the constituencies of the three regions. The housing problem is so severe in some areas of these regions that some officials have had to erect their own houses of sub-standard quality. It needs to be mention that regional

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councillors were part-time politicians and, as such, they do not qualify for official housing. But as stated by the Founding President, Dr. Sam Nujoma, in his 1993 New Year speech, there was a change in the government position on the status of the Regional Councils:

> I am convinced that the present position of regional councillors as part-time politicians is in need of reappraisal. Having had the opportunity to travel to all corners of the country, assessing the work of regional councillors, their opinions and the prevailing expectations in the populations, I am convinced that the regional councillors' position should be elevated to that of full-time politicians.

Apart from a lack of offices and housing, there is also a lack of other infrastructure in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions. The greater parts of these regions lack important equipment such as computers, printers, fax machines and, in some instances, telephone facilities. There are no proper facilities for the safekeeping of monies in the three regions. Thus, the regional councilors or the relevant officials have to devise their own means of safeguarding the financial resources of the regional government. The lack of office space and the unavailability of safes, undoubtedly contribute to the financial irregularities haunting most of the regional government entities in Namibia.

Financial resources and constraints

Besides inadequate transport and office facilities, the Otjozondjupa regional council's activities are also hampered by both the lack of funds and untimely apportionments of funds by the MRLGH. According to the CEO of Otjozondjupa region their operational budget projections and actual expenditure by far exceed the central government allocations. However, even the way in which the allocated funds are apportioned to the regional councils is not conducive to the efficient

administration of the regions, not to mention the need to respond spontaneously to the emergency needs and problems of the people. The current arrangement is that the MRLGH transfers the funds to the regional council on a quarterly basis. For example, funds that are needed to defray the cost of goods and services commencing in January and ending in March are transferred to the regional council's office in December of the preceding year and at the latest are received in early March.

Thus, in many instances funds are received very late and after the procurements of goods should already have been made. This leads to delays in the acquisition of major goods and in the delay in the delivery of some vital services. To deal with this problem the Otjozondjupa regional council appointed a finance task force which recommended that funds should be transferred directly from the ministry of finance to the respective regional councils rather than through the MRLGH and then to the regions (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004). Should the recommendation of the finance task force be accepted by central government, the role of the MRLGH in allocating resources to the regional councils would be reduced and the regional councils will receive their funds on time. Most importantly, it will speed up the process of transferring funds to the regional councils and, in turn, this will enhance the ability of regional councils to respond expeditiously to the needs and problems of the people in their regions. It is unclear as to how the MRLGH will react to the potential reduction of its supervisory powers over regional and local government structures.

The CEO is the accounting officer of the regional council. He/she is responsible for the handling of the finances of the region. His/her activities depend on the services of internal accountants and auditors, auditors from the MRLGH, the auditor-general's office, as well as external auditors. As was mentioned before, only some functions have been decentralized, and staff is a function that has

not yet been decentralized. Thus, it is the responsibility of the CEO to do what he/she can with the few staff members at his/her disposal. This also affects financial matters. In the Otjozondjupa regional structures, the staff members who are responsible for financial matters and are expected to ensure compliance are still not in place. There are three types of funds that the regional council deals with, namely the funds allocated to the regions by central government, contributions from local authority councils, (not applicable in all regions) and income from the services rendered in the settlement areas. The revenue allocated to the regions by central government is apportioned to them as earmarked revenue. Thus, the officials in the regions do not use their discretion to decide how to utilization the said revenue, but they are responsible for the handling and accounting of the revenue allocated to them (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004; Uandjarakana, personal interview, 6/4/2004). As far as the revenue generated from municipal activities such as electricity and refuse collection are concerned, the regional councils are required to collect these revenues and then pass them on to the ministry of finance. Some of the proceeds, for example, are used by the regional council to pay for water and electricity consumption. There is really no *quid pro quo* in the case of the funding of the regional councils by government. In fact, nothing is required in return for the funding received by central government.

The management committees of the regional council, chaired by the governor of each region, are responsible for the overall supervision of expenditures by the regional councils. Their work is greatly aided by the activities of the economic committee headed by the CEO. The procurement of goods must be approved by the economic committee. Treasury instructions, enforced by the economic committee, require that before the regional council procures any goods, three quotations should be obtained from different suppliers and the lowest of the three should be selected. The

ability of the selected company to supply the goods is also taken into consideration in the allocation of contracts to vendors. The CEO remains at the centre of all expenditure and must approve all expenditures of the regional council affording him/her the opportunity to monitor all expenditures. To further ensure compliance and to avoid unnecessary and unauthorized expenditures, the CEOs rely on the services of the internal auditors. However, in the case of the Otjozondjupa and Omaheke regions the positions of internal auditor are vacant. Thus, these regions are not yet benefiting from such services (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

The regional council deals with two different types of budgets, namely, a recurrent budget and a development budget. The planning and projections for the recurrent budget fall within the domain of the regional council. The regional council does the planning and the projection of the cash flow and then forwards its findings to central government for funding. In the case of Otjozondjupa and Omaheke, the CEOs send an internal circular to all the settlements and regional councilors in February each year to establish the funding needs of their respective areas of jurisdictions. Some funds are requested occasionally on the basis of need, while others, for example, the funds needed for the independence celebrations are requested each year. Nevertheless, funds made available for the same function could vary from year to year. In 2006, in particular, the funding for the independence celebration was less than usual as only N$20 000 was made available to the Otjozondjupa region, with its seven constituencies. The amount came to an insignificant N$2 857 per constituency after it was subdivided. It was clear to the constituencies that they could not do much with such meager resources. Thus, it was the responsibility of the regional council to find supplementary funds for an event of national importance.

Planning for the development budget is done by central government. However, all stakeholders are afforded the opportunity to provide government with their projected expenditures and needs. It is a kind of chain reaction, with local needs passed on to the constituencies, who then pass them on to the regional government. The regional council then passes the expenditure projections on to the ministry of finance. It is on the basis of this information that the ministry of finance decides on the level of funding for a particular region (Kazombiaze and Ndiyepa, personal interviews, 2/4/2004 and 22/9/2003 respectively).

It was highlighted as early as 1992 that Namibia lacks the necessary financial system to enable the country to control, let alone track down, all financial transactions. The author interacted with one of two Namibians, working with a Canadian consultant to the Namibian government to examine Namibia's financial system and recommend an integrated financial control system. This opportunity availed the author unhindered access to documents and the relevant officials. It not only provided him with a wealth of experience, but also gave him the opportunity to assess the country's ability to deal with its financial resources.

Some consultancy reports on decentralization processes released by government structures, focused on the capabilities of the regional councils to handle their finances. The government was often urged to immediately embark upon financial reforms. Thus, it became crucial for central government to ensure that the necessary financial reforms were undertaken to bring about an efficient, equitable and transparent financial system. The report requested government to clarify the distribution and allocation of financial resources. This is important as was shown in the case of Otjozondjupa. Clearly stipulated levels of funding and timely apportionment of the allocated

resources are crucial to ensuring the prudential handling of financial resources. There currently exists no formula to allocate resources to the regional entities. As was stated earlier, formula driven allocations are important to ensure optimal use of resource. The absence of an allocation formula makes it difficult for the recipients of government revenue to determine their revenue bases and to plan within their means.

Monitoring and inspection of financial transactions are also vital and should have been instituted by central government before the implementation of decentralization. This is surely an area of concern and it was instituted in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions. It became clear that the majority of positions that would facilitate adherence to prudential financial management were still to be filled, even though they are provided for under the new regional structure. While the business of setting standards still falls under the jurisdiction of the line ministries, it remains important to beef up the accounting staff of regional government, and at the same time, install a monitoring system. This would enable the regional governments to monitor their financial transactions. A combination of the two, namely the provision of accounting staff and the installation of a monitoring system are important in that they root out unauthorized expenditures, fruitless spending, inflationary spending and most of all corruption (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004; Tjihoreko, personal interview, 4/4/ 2004).

Some of the regions like Omaheke and Otjozondjupa took note of the aforementioned shortcomings and instituted their own control measures. Apart from training their staff members to better handle their financial resources, both regions created economic committees. Given the fact that the auditor-general's office, which is entrusted with a watchdog role, is stressed to its limit the

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economic committees are playing a vital controlling role in the utilization of resources by the regions. The economic committees enforce compliance to financial procedures and regulations.

However, the role of the auditor-general should still be strengthened to ensure transparency and central government should transfer some of its staff to the regions. It will be wise to enlist the services of the auditor-general's office to provide the necessary training to equip the regional officers with sufficient auditing skills. By doing this, the auditor-general's office does not have to spread its wings much wider to capture and monitor the activities of the regional governments in addition to its other responsibilities. If this is done, the regional governments will be in a position to do most of their own auditing.

The Association of Local Government (ALAN) should also have played a role before the implementation of decentralization, but ALAN was unable to make a contribution due to internal incapacity and thus failed to make a contribution to an efficient decentralization process (Tötemeyer, personal interview, 22/9/2006). ALAN should, for example, have been empowered to ensure that its members' financial transactions were in line with the relevant laws guiding their financial actions. There is also no clarity regarding the amounts of money the respective line ministries are to transfer to the regions with the exception of salaries and wages in some isolated situations. The Association of Regional Councils also played a significant role in the strengthening of the Regional Councils, especially in the decentralization process. In his 1993 New Year speech the Founding President of Namibia, Dr. Sam Nujoma, stated that when accorded full-time politician status they will be able to play a pivotal role in clearing the backlog of development in many parts of Namibia because it is through the Regional Councils that the people's interests will be

encouraged to participate in regional and local governance. And during a consultative conference in 1996, the Executive Director of the Namibia Institute for Democracy, Mr. Theunis Keulder, stated that the relationship between the Regional Councils and their electorate had been strengthened by the availability of information on the needs, demands, expectations and natural and human resources development in the region (Namibia Institute for Democracy, 1999: 44- 45). Speaking at the same occasion, G. K. H Tötemeyer stressed the important role the Regional Councils were playing in forging a close relationship between democracy and decentralization (Namibia Institute for Democracy, 1996: 44-46). The founding Prime Minister of Namibia, Dr. Hage Geingob, stated that after the establishment and the conduct of Regional and Local elections, the Regional Government was poised to carry its responsibilities by addressing the needs and the expectations of the people (Namibia Institute for Democracy, 1999:7).
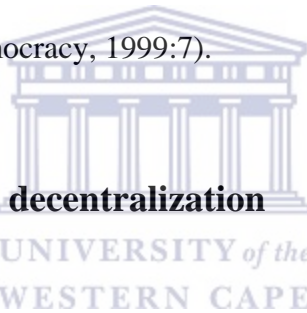
Community perceptions about decentralization

On the one hand, decentralization is invariably undertaken to increase the prospects of mass representation, including the neglected groups such as women. But, on the other hand, the decentralization structures may not command sufficient authority or resources to stimulate popular participation. Central government pretty much had the same thinking about decentralization. Its intention with the implementation of decentralization was to improve service delivery. It was hoped that if the regional structures became the ones to render services in the localities and to make decisions that have a bearing on the people at grassroots level, it would speed up the delivery of service. Central government hoped that the speeding up of the delivery of service would eventually translate into the improvement of services.

Furthermore, central government hoped to take democracy to the people or to grassroots levels. Decentralization was one way of getting previously disadvantaged groups involved in the decision-making process. The idea was that if people in the regions were given the opportunity to take their own decisions, they would make conscious decisions. For example, central government believed that when people are given the opportunity to make their own financial decisions, such as the amounts they are required to pay for school fees, they would do a better job than having central government making those decisions for them. The other intention of central government with decentralization was to develop the regions so that people would not have to swarm to the bigger cities in search of work. Thus, the author had to find out from the people for whom decentralization was engineered in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions what their perceptions about decentralization were.

It is important to establish whether the beneficiaries understand decentralization, what expectations, they had, and what their actual experience was. This is a concern also raised by Kaiyamo (personal interview, 18/9/2006) who noted that the majority of Namibians do not know the meaning of decentralization. To support his claim he cited the example of the different schools he had recently visited of which the majority was sinking into decay. Kaiyamo argued that while the regions are supposed to be helping themselves, the majority still expected the central government to do everything for them. He said that at some of the schools, some chairs that simply need screws were stored in the schools' storage rooms waiting for central government to provide the screws and to replace them. The majority of the people interviewed by the author in both Omaheke and Otjozondjupa did not know what decentralization was about. As a result they did not expect

anything. A few understood what decentralization was - just an extension of the services that regional government is supposed to be rendering. They did not see it as a separate programme aimed at beefing up the activities of the regional government. However, those who did not know what decentralization was, and those who understood it, were in agreement that it would be better for the services to remain under central government control. They do not see regional government as being capable of running their affairs effectively (Kaiyamo, personal interview, 18/9/2006).

Most of them noted what the author had highlighted above, namely that the regional governments are ill equipped to execute the functions that they are entrusted with. Some who spoke to the author are of the opinion that the elected officials are doing "nothing" and that the little work they do, does not warrant the hefty salaries they are earning. The actual situation on the ground is not encouraging for the future of decentralization. In fact, the socio-economic conditions in the three regions are quite deplorable, and are a living testimony to the author's assertion that decentralization was implemented prematurely in Namibia. A large majority of the people of the three regions are not convinced that the regional government in Namibia can provide them with the services that they require.

Most of them are of the opinion that central government transferred its responsibilities to the regions before the regions were ready for additional responsibilities. In fact, while the information sharing and the decentralization campaign were sufficient, the regions studied were robbed of the opportunity to gain access to the said information as a result of the absence of both the printed media and television. While the radio plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information in remote areas, adequate coverage by both the printed media and television could have enlightened

the populace in those areas more. Kaiyamo supported this view as stated in the preceding paragraph. Central government should have transferred any responsibility gradually, giving the said authority time to prepare and to ready themselves for the challenges lying ahead. Instead, they rushed into situations that many are now finding to be insurmountable. As a result some of the regional administrations have started to cave in and some regional councils are finding it impossible to run their administrations. Some of the people interviewed indicated that the regional governments were so poorly equipped that they are incapable to collect the monies that are due to them.

The above claim is a reality, as many of the regional councils are failing to collect their revenues, e.g. General Sales Taxes, Value-Added Tax etc. The author is convinced that should regional councils be empowered to collect and decide on the allocations of certain taxes, their financial positions will improve. While the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions have not yet collapsed in terms of their administrations, both regions have towns whose debts are growing larger by the day until it will become impossible for them to control, and Otjozondjupa is currently the worst off. The debt crisis of one of its towns, Okakarara, was so poorly handled that the MRLGH was forced to intervene.

The debt crisis of Okakarara made headlines in the local daily newspaper, while the CEO of the town shunned all allegations vehemently. The problem in Okakarara is threefold. One of the problems is that the town's debt grew so large that it became impossible to repay in the foreseeable future. The debt stems from unpaid utility services. The second problem is the town council's inability to run the affairs of the town. The accounting section of the town is so poorly equipped,

that it is not in a position to determine who owes what in terms of utilities. The third problem is the council's failure to account for the funds that the residents have paid to date.

The author is of the opinion that if an appropriate core of professionals, such as internal accountants, is transferred to the regions, as alluded to earlier for the regions under discussion, the debt crisis of some towns in these regions could have been avoided. The fact that the colonial administrations in Namibia neglected governance at local government level and that the majority of public institutions are understaffed and ill financed, an injection of both human and financial resources could help to turn the situation around for the better. Presently one has a situation in Okakarara where the residents want to know what they really owe the council so that they can honour their dues. At the same time some of the residents rightfully demand to know on what the monies they have previously paid were spent before they further service their arrears. In both situations the council is not in a position to answer them, because it does not have the answers. Given the council's inability, the MRLGH requested a forensic audit of the finances of Okakarara. It is also expected that as a result of the inability of the system to track down the financial resources some of Okakarara's officials could have been involved in some kind of financial improprieties.

While the town of Okakarara and the MRLGH are addressing the financial crisis, the residents are being deprived of some vital services. This is because utility suppliers, NamWater and NamPower have cut their services to the town affecting the business community, the residents and everyone in the town. The town went dry, relying only on one borehole that was expected to dry up soon. All institutions were affected from hospitals to schools. When the author visited the town at the end of

July 2004, it was quite evident that the patience of everyone in town was running out after weeks of going without electricity and water.

The only secondary school in Okakarara was hit hard. The sewage system was clogged and there was hardly any running water. As a result, the pupils were allowed to leave the school at certain intervals to use the bush as toilets. There was also not enough water to cook food for the pupils and there was no water to bath or wash clothes. As could be expected students became annoyed and on the 28th of July 2004, the school board of Okakarara Secondary School had to averted a school boycott by their students. It emerged that the students were fed up with the situation and did not see any eminent solution to the problem. They wanted to boycott school, because the lack of facilities was having a negative impact on their studies while they were also busy writing their mid year examinations (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

This was not the only problem facing the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions. The farmers in these regions were facing another problem. Central government had recently introduced a prepaid water meter system. As a result, farmers were now required to pay for the water they and their animals used. This created a big problem, because the majority of the farmers were unable to pay the hefty bill they received. While some intentionally refused to pay for the water, there were others who could not really afford to pay for the water. Some resorted to other means to get their water, including digging their own boreholes, while others made use of whatever water they could find. The problems of Oshikoto were also exacerbated by the redline - a veterinary control fence. According to Tötemeyer (1992:104) the redline restricts the development of the cattle industry in the communal areas. Since the three regions under study are known to have a thriving meat

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industry and are known to encompass a dualistic economy based on commercial and communal farming, the redline was putting the Oshikoto region at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions.

Given these and other problems, the whole process of decentralization was not receiving a favourable response from those who are supposed to benefit from it. Some were of the opinion that decentralization brought them more hardship than help. One could find the root cause of these negative feelings from the fact that some services such as education, medical care and water (particularly in the so-called homelands) were provided free of charge by the colonial power. This strategy was used to solicit political support for apartheid development from the African population. After independence the people wanted those free services to be continued by the new SWAPO government. However, the government's attitude was that the population should make some contribution to the development of the country, even if such a contribution was to be minimal. Cattle owners who could afford to pay for water, for example, were making it a principle not to pay for such services akin to the colonial period. This stance was unacceptable to the SWAPO government. As previously stated, for example, the people interviewed by the author expected more qualified personnel to be transferred to the regions. They also expected central government to release its grip on tax collection. Some have taken a radical approach to the issue. In fact, some of the people in Otjozondjupa who the author interviewed went as far as to suggest that even the colonial government was better than decentralization. They claimed that some services were rendered free of charge or in such an indirect way that the beneficiary either did not have to pay for them or couldn't feel the financial burden. These included such services as the provisions of water and school fees. They held the view that the decay of most of the regional structures was the

root cause of many of them being unable to provide even the most basic services (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004).

Hence, it can be safely said that decentralization did not improve service delivery as central government had intended. Neither did it improve democracy, nor did it improve regional development to hold off the tides of migration to the urban areas. Thus, decentralization really achieved very little. The improvement of service delivery that should have been the driving force behind decentralization was not realized. In fact, service delivery, at least in the two regions discussed seemed to have taken a step back rather than a forward leap. The individuals interviewed by the author indicated that the hospital in Okakarara could serve as a good example. There were hardly any medicines in the hospital, let alone the clinics in both regions. Apparently during the colonial period the clinics and the hospitals were well equipped and the services were better. They also mentioned the fact that since independence these facilities had become less hygienic. While these situations could not have resulted from decentralization, many had hoped that decentralization would improve the situation (Kazombiaze, personal interview, 2/4/2004; Tjihoreko, personal interview, 4/4/2004).

This leads the author to conclude that perhaps the residents of those areas are correct when they say that services have not been improved by decentralization. In fact, the improvement of service delivery was one of the pledges of the central government when it introduced decentralization. One would have expected decentralization to translate into tangible and measurable improvements in service delivery. Tapscott (1999:21) noted that ten years after independence SWAPO leaders still saw the need for the devolution of power to the regions, if only administrative capacity can be

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improved as it still served as a major constraint. He further argues that regional governments and the majority of the smaller municipalities operate with meager resources and limited authority. He also noted that while local support is important to many in national government, only a handful of them rely solely on this source of support. He saw the ability to generate financial resources as the basis of power as shown by the municipalities of Windhoek, Swakopmund and Keetmanshoop. Ajam (2001:125) also supports this view, but went further by saying that the greater the discretion of sub-national governments to generate resources via taxation, borrowing or other means and the ability to spend those resources, the greater their propensity to decentralize.

Analytical summary

This chapter analyzed the factors that constrained the implementation of the policy on decentralization in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions. Between 1998 and 2001, central government undertook a review of decentralization implementation across the whole country. A number of implementation shortcomings were identified, one of which was the fact that there was a disjuncture between the introduction of decentralization and other public programmes such as civil service reform, macro-economic policy reform, democracy and good governance, and human rights and poverty reduction. In the context of this multiplicity of public programmes, central government, through the MRLGH and regional governments, went ahead with the implementation of decentralization. It has been noted in this chapter that there were immense opportunities that were to be derived from decentralization. However, there was also equally enormous structural, administrative, human resource, institutional and financial resource constraints against the implementation of decentralization in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa

regions. These constraints combined to create disillusionment among local communities who were,

in essence, the intended beneficiaries of decentralization.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the research findings on the nature and implementation of the policy on decentralization in Namibia in general, and in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions in particular. It sought to identify and critically analyze institutional and organizational factors that constrained the implementation of the policy on decentralization. While the period of interest extended from 1990 to 2004, certain aspects of the pre-independence period were also described for their implications on the post-colonial administrative system in Namibia. The study was anchored on a critical review of decentralization models in the politically centralized states of Uganda and Zambia. This was intended to shed light on how both countries resolved the issues of decentralization, deconcentration, devolution and political control. The premise of the discussion on Uganda and Zambia was that Namibia stood to benefit from the decentralization implementation models and/or strategies which both Uganda and Zambia employed at the various stages of their socio-economic development or after regime changes.

In addition, the study was premised on the fact that decentralization takes place in particular political contexts. As such, policy implementation cannot be a mere matter of the government choosing between centralized and decentralized organizational forms of government. In practice centralization and decentralization tendencies within a government paradoxically co-exist as policy strategies. This situation raises the need for governments to establish a "proper balance" between centralization and decentralization to ensure effective policy implementation and the delivery of required services. It also means greater inter-ministerial and inter-organizational co-ordination in

terms of requisite competencies and resources. A discussion of the objectives and the research findings of this study will now be presented.

Summary and findings of the study - An executive summary

The first objective of the study

The first objective of the study was to provide a critical understanding of the theoretical foundations of the concept of decentralization. Hellman (1971:4) is of the opinion that the critical test for decentralization is "whether the persons concerned have substantial discretion in decision-making and action, not where they are located'. He thus suggests at least three main mutually inclusive aspects of decentralization. The first aspect is delegation of authority between various levels of government. This is often characterized by a relatively high degree of control by officials, discretion and responsibility over functions like budget allocation, personnel recruitment, retention and promotions, purchasing and programme operating policy at the lower levels of government. The second aspect is the redistribution of functions, essentially as a result of work overload at the top, from upper to lower levels of the bureaucracy without changes in authority, structure, size of personnel and other factors involved in handling these functions. The third aspect is the geographical redistribution of administrative facilities, personnel and services from central government to regions/provinces and districts. While all these aspects of decentralization are relevant to this study, the author found that both scholars and government officials tend to discuss the concept of decentralization without an indication of its meaning and without a real understanding of its alternative forms.

Chapter Two, therefore, looked at the definitions of the concept of decentralization by different authors. For instance, Rondinelli (op. cit.) defined decentralization as "the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or non-governmental private or voluntary organizations". This definition is similar to the one by Mutahaba (1989) who also viewed decentralization as "the transfer of legal, administrative, and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from the central government to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide development authorities, functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or non-governmental organizations". Nonetheless, while the forms adopted are generally a function of the motive to decentralize, the degree of political and legal authority that are transferred or delegated is a way of differentiating between the approaches or forms of decentralization. Therefore, the author believes it worthwhile to discuss the question of degree of decentralization, and the form of decentralization in a particular country.

Chapter Two also identified two forms of decentralization, namely deconcentration and devolution. Decentralization by deconcentration involves only a minimum of power transfer within a single unit of the public bureaucracy, and often entails the shifting of the workload from a central government ministry or departmental headquarters to offices outside the headquarters. On the one hand, this transfer could be a mere shifting of workload on a temporary basis without the accompanying authority to decide how the delegated functions are to be performed, and on the other hand, it could involve a greater degree of deconcentration by formalizing the "hiving off" of functions through the creation of a field administration system with decision-making discretion

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given to staff in the field. This allows the units concerned the latitude to plan, make decisions, and adjust the implementation of central directives to local conditions (Mutahaba, 1989.). However, the field staff remains employees of central government under whose control and direction they operate.

Decentralization by devolution in the reviewed literature was considered as the more extreme form of transfer of governmental power and authority to lower level government and grassroots institutions. It involves the legal conferment of powers upon formally constituted local authorities to discharge specified or residual functions. Devolution involves the inter-organizational transfer of power to geographical units of local government outside the command structure of central government. In many instances, devolution mainly prevails in the urban areas. Other functions are usually delegated to project implementation units at the national level. Thus, devolution should be viewed as discretionary authority. Central government assigns to local governments, multiple projects for execution and coordination, through this, and especially because of the devolved functions, local authorities are empowered. Local government can make somewhat independent decisions. However, when making a decision local government ought to take cognizance of the prevailing national policy guidelines, its own capacity in terms of manpower, financial resources and materials. Central government, under decentralization by devolution, has a "hands-off" approach except when it has to ensure local government's compliance with national policy guidelines. Thus, two approaches could be employed, the centralization of the project management at local government levels or the delegation or deconcentration of project management to project managers by local governments.

In an ideal situation, devolution would exhibit certain characteristics. First, the local units ought to be given corporate status and the power to raise sufficient resources to perform specified functions. Second, devolution in this sense would imply the need to develop local government structures as autonomous institutions belonging to local communities. These structures would deliver services and goods to the satisfaction of the local communities and would be controlled, directed and influenced by them. Third, devolution is not the same as a federation, since local government structures remain closely linked to central government through mutual support and reciprocity arrangements. Fourth, local government structures ought to have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they would exercise authority and within which they would perform public functions. And last, devolution would imply a serious intent on the part of central government to grant local government structures full autonomy and independence from its direct control.
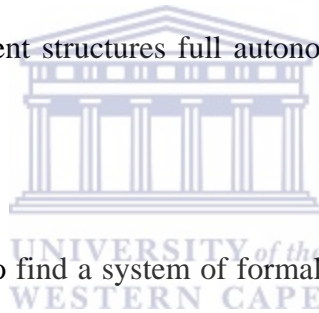
In practice, however, it is difficult to find a system of formal devolution that meets the above five conditions. In local government, for example, decentralization by devolution must be seen as a form of decentralization in which the central government retains some supervisory powers over local government structures. This is the reason why central government tends to play a major role in the financing of local government activities. Central government tend to ensure that local government structures comply with national development policies and plans in the performance of their functions. Central government maintains both formal and informal control over local government. This is the reality of any democratic political system.

It is important to realize that decentralization by deconcentration and decentralization by devolution **can** take place at the same time, or take place in isolation from one another. Central government officials can be transferred to the lower tiers of government and at the same time remain accountable solely to the higher tier of government. However, this is done without an increase in the influence of organized interests at those levels. Central government does not give up any authority. It merely re-assigns, repositions, and at times deploys, its officers at different levels or points in the country. This could be construed as centralization, because instead of empowering the lower levels of government, it enhances its leverage over those institutions at the periphery of the system.

This phenomenon is more prevalent in developing than in developed nations. In the former the ordinary people are far removed from the axis of power. They are deprived of the necessary information to take part in the decision-making process. The rural communities depending on a subsistence economy are usually deprived of making any meaningful contributions as they are insolated from the decision-making centres as a result of poor communication. Thus, these people have little opportunity to influence resource allocation to conform to their needs. They also have little, and at times no influence at all on those who govern or lead them, not to mention the lack of influence on the appropriation of finances and the placement of skilled manpower. In fact, central government is in a stronger position as it makes demands and offers directives. Mawhood (1983) persuasively argues that unlike their western counterparts, field officers in developing countries are less secure, and often work to please their political leaders. The author believes that this is a moot point, and beyond the scope of this study. It is important, however, to note that governments that

decide to decentralize their administrative systems and structures seek to achieve certain goals.

In Chapter Two four categories of goals of decentralization were identified, namely to promote national development, to make public administration more responsive to citizens, to make organizations more effective and efficient, and to promote democracy at the grassroots levels. With regard to the first goal of promoting national development, Lele (1975) says decentralization allows local leaders to locate services and facilities more effectively within their communities; enable them to integrate isolated or lagging areas into regional economies; and enable them to monitor and evaluate the implementation of development projects more effectively than central government.

The second goal of decentralization is to make public administration more responsive to citizens. Public administration has to be sensitive to the views and needs of local communities and its programmes and personnel should serve the needs and represent the interests of citizens. Its interaction with various stakeholders, and their effective influence on administrative decisions, are also a manifestation of a responsive and responsible public service. Thus, decentralized administrative systems tend to bring the government into close contact with local communities, improve stakeholders' positive views of government and government's response to policy problems can be more effectively focused through the establishment of social space or territories.

The third goal of decentralization is to improve the quality of decision-making in central government and to enable better upward information flows from field administration to government. Decentralization has the potential to motivate field personnel by increasing their participation in decision-making through delegated authority and responsibility. It is argued that

only through decentralization is it possible to have a much more productive organization with improved motivation and commitment among public servants. In this regard, organizational effectiveness is characterized by relatively high levels of public servants' motivation and productivity; their participation in decision-making in field administration offices; smooth communication between various levels of the public service hierarchy; and increased capacity to achieve organizational goals at reduced overall cost to government.

The fourth goal of decentralization is to yield democracy at grassroots level or "give power to the people" through the establishment of committee systems. Decentralization improves local governance by increasing the opportunities for citizens to participate and hold their leaders accountable for their actions and omissions. In this regard, Nsibambi (1998) advanced a quite compelling argument about the relationship between decentralization and democracy claiming that decentralization serves as a tool of empowerment and, therefore, enhances democracy and good governance when local governments and institutions at lower levels as well as the people at the grassroots are involved, not only with responsibilities, but also with the legal authority to decide and commit allocated resources in the execution of these responsibilities. This implies that deconcentration embarked upon simultaneously with devolution is a crucial condition for the success of decentralization in a country. A final point that emerged from the literature in Chapter Two was the organization model for the implementation of decentralization. The first is territorial or geographical decentralization, which revolves around the transfer of responsibility and authority for public functions to organizations within well-defined sub-national, spatial or political boundaries such as a province, region, district, municipality, etc. This transfer of authority is usually to an institution that may legally perform those functions within specified geographical or

political boundaries. The authorities created to deal with functions such as highway construction, electricity supply, or healthcare is some of the forms of functional decentralization. A territorial phenomenon can be divided further through deconcentration and devolution.

The second is functional decentralization. In this system, the chief agents of central government in the provinces and districts form part of separate functional hierarchies responsible for distinct aspects of government activity, e.g. health care and agriculture. The administration of these activities is not "integrated" into the central administration as each one operates independently. The lines of command and channels of communication run directly between the departmental headquarters and the local field units. Each line ministry creates geographical units suitable for its own purposes. Their geographical boundaries are not necessarily shared by other departments or by local government structures. Local government, where it exists, operates independently employing power devolved from central government. However, this type of field administration is a rare phenomenon in Africa.
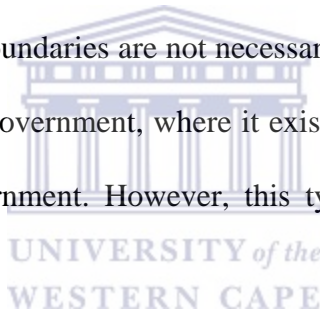
The third is prefectoral decentralization, which most closely resembles the French system of central administration. It is prefecture because the principal agent of central government in the field exercises control over all other field officers, as well as supervising locally elected authorities. These then become part of the chain of command between central headquarters and the field for all government services. The prefect is a generalist administrator who embodies the authority of each ministry and the government in general. He/she is also the chief executive of the territorial assembly to which specific power is devolved.

The fourth is hybrid decentralization, which is essentially a combination of the functional and integrated prefecture systems. The prefect in this system is the central figure in the field, and he/she is the only channel of communication among others and each specialist functionary in the field administration maintains independent links with his/her departmental headquarters. However, the prefect has no overriding authority over field staff although normally there are contacts between him/her and the filed officers. Moreover, he/she does not occupy the position of chief executive in the local government system despite the fact that he/she supervises it. This third organizational form of decentralization is the one that is quite common in countries that decide to decentralize their public bureaucracies. Decentralization as practised in Uganda and Zambia cannot successfully be transplanted to, or contextualized in Namibia due to differences in the historical and socio-economic circumstances of the three countries. Nonetheless, the main lesson learnt from the experiences of Uganda and Zambia is that decentralization is not a panacea to managerial problems in the public service. Decentralization programmes appear to be measures intended to serve the interests of the government of the day. More importantly, the decentralization experiences of Uganda and Zambia and the constraints which hampered the implementation of their programmes are similar to those in Namibia, namely, an unclear definition of the functions to be decentralized, a skills shortage, inadequate financial resources, inadequate guidance from central government and inadequate public participation.

The second objective of the study

The second objective of the study was to examine the decentralization strategies of Uganda and Zambia, and to assess their relevance, if any, to the national/organizational setting of Namibia. Chapter Three focused on the decentralization experiences of Uganda. It was indicated that in

Uganda after 1965, central government increasingly found itself in conflict with district and local administrations. The conflicts arose from the tensions between local leaders with power who were appointed to key positions within the district administration and Obote's Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) leaders prominent at the national level. The main conflict revolved around who should control the appointment, promotion and dismissal of chiefs at the higher levels of local government, especially in the case of Buganda where political conditions were different as a result of colonial history.

It was amidst these conflicts that Idi Amin overthrew the first post-independence civilian government. There was hardly a consistent central government policy on decentralization during the eight years of military regime, but decentralization recaptured its place of importance with Obote's second return to power after the defeat of Amin. However, some of the ideas generated during his first term of government in the context of a predominantly one-party democracy could not easily be applied in the altered context of a multi-party competitive political system. This was fertile ground for the military defeat of Obote by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM). It is under the NRM that sustained efforts in the implementation of decentralization were made.

Chapter Four considered the decentralization experiences of Zambia. It was indicated that the country achieved political independence in 1964 under a multi-party system which lasted eight years, with Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) the dominant ruling party. UNIP wasted no time in embarking upon an ambitious programme of national development. A combination of factors created the pressure for administrative changes. These factors included the

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desire of national leaders to involve local communities in decision-making structures and processes, the expanding scope of government programmes, the demand for public goods and services, and the rising expectations that accompanied the attainment of political independence. Above all, the reason for changing administrative structures in Zambia was UNIP's quest for political legitimacy and control of the "masses". It was obvious that UNIP was irritated by the inherited colonial prefectoral system of provincial and district commissioners, who had exercised considerable control over local communities during the pre-independence period.

Zambia, like Uganda, is a multi-ethnic country. Political conflicts arose mainly from inter-ethnic and inter-group rivalries within UNIP and government departments, and from inter-party competition. The critical issue regarding central government revolved around the allocation of resources to the provinces, and the distribution of top government posts among various ethno-regional groups. Ethno-regional sentiments caused further problems for the UNIP leaders when opposition parties started to mobilized support on ethnic affiliation. Ethno-regionalism also manifested itself within government departments where departmental heads tended to give preferential treatment to members of their own ethnic groups. The effect of these and related events was to reinforce tendencies of "decentralization in centralism", especially after the one-party state, in the name of national unity, was introduced in 1973 and which lasted until the re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1991.

The Zambian decentralization experience demonstrated the difficulties that had to be overcome before effective implementation could be achieved. These included the inherited administrative structures, inadequate skilled human resources, the socio-economic imbalance between the rural

and urban areas, inadequate funding, inadequate confidence in the new administrative machinery and the reluctance of senior civil servants in Lusaka to delegate powers and responsibilities to those in field offices. These difficulties were compounded by the ill-defined relationship between decentralized central administration and local administration and by the ever-present acrimony between the civil service and the politicians. Politicians and the people alike accused the civil servants of not identifying with the ruling UNIP.

Strong politicization of the civil service followed and new structures were created. Despite these changes, decentralization became less successful and civil servants were tasked with the responsibility to seek remedies. Commissions of enquiry were set up, but it seemed that one set of changes hardly had time to settle down to produce the desired results before another set of changes was implemented. This situation pointed to a lack of proper research and planning and monitoring of anticipated progress. The position and role of decentralized administration *vis-à-vis* local councils, for instance, defied a good solution. Central government only paid lip service to decentralization as it provided no resources to the rural areas to enable the centrally planned programmes to be implemented.

Personal antagonisms prevailed as local politicians abused the civil servants seconded to backup the local development effort. This made civil servants reluctant to serve in the rural areas. In a similar fashion, local political interference in legally established procedures concerning personnel selection did nothing to improve relationships between politicians and civil servants in the field administration. UNIP interpreted the proposals of civil servants as a mark of political disloyalty, even opposing the proposals, and thus, the crisis of identity persisted. This situation erodes the

promise of decentralization as an "organizational imperative" in a sea of central government ministries that had become powerful as the providers of goods and services to citizens.

On the one hand, the processes of decentralization and democratization tend to support and reinforce each other and, on the other hand, they tend to oppose each other. This is the main lesson drawn from the experiences with decentralization in both Uganda and Zambia. The discussions in the preceding paragraphs and elsewhere in this study have shown that the implementation of their well-intended policies on decentralization achieved limited success because their implementation strategies resulted in increased centralized administration. They also introduced very little large-scale local participation in development programmes on the ground. One major explanation for this state of affairs is the attitude and behaviour of politicians and senior civil servants at the various levels of government, who were quite negative towards decentralization and public participation in administration. Furthermore, there were apparent antagonisms between civil servants and politicians especially at the provincial and district levels of the public bureaucracy. Poor intra and inter-organizational co-ordination, inadequate staffing and funding compounded the situation in the LC system in Uganda and ward development and village productivity committees in Zambia. These are some of the administrative/institutional problems which the government in Namibia needed to understand in an attempt to avoid similar pitfalls in the implementation of its policy on decentralization.

Uganda and Zambia, after their independence from Britain, experienced a strong push towards the centralization of government functions in the interests of national integration and nation building. But as time went by, the governments of the two countries saw the need for decentralization as a

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means to encouraging grassroots participation in the decision-making processes and the provision of services. Similarly, Namibia was reluctant to decentralize government structures and functions after independence. The need to improve service delivery partly compelled central government to adopt the policy on decentralization. Decentralization basically entailed the transferring of certain responsibilities to regional and local government structures, while central government retained a tight grip on the allocation of resources, planning, and other vital decision-making activities. This is done in such a way that regional government would still owe their allegiance to central government as the provider of virtually everything.

Similar to Uganda and Zambia, Namibia also have a diverse multi-ethnic population. Thus, it stands to reason that Namibia could learn from these two countries how to handle multi-ethnicity in development processes. In Namibia certain regions are dominated by certain ethnic groups. These regions may not only differ in terms of political constituencies, but may also exhibit elements of competing socio-economic interests requiring prudent political actions in resource allocation. This suggests that decentralisation ought to be a partnership between the central government and regional councils. Full consultation must take place both on policy formulation and implementation.

An important lesson from this study is that more than one form of decentralization could result from any implementation of decentralization. By looking at Uganda and Zambia it became clear that both devolution and concentration were used in the implementation of decentralization. Decentralization by default could also result from government actions in the sense that some regions were able to generate a great deal of resources, even though it was not the intended purpose

of decentralization. More importantly, Namibia could learn from both the experiences of Uganda and Zambia about issue of ethno-regionalism. Some areas are not only homogeneous in ethnic composition but they are also strongholds of certain political parties. In the case of Namibia, this reality is further compounded by the fact that most, if not all political parties in Namibia were initially created on ethnic/tribal lines. Consequently, it would be a sad development if this were to be condoned by the government.

The third objective of the study

The third objective of the study was to describe, analyze and explain the nature of policy on decentralization and its implementation in Namibia in general, and in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions in particular. The study sought to find answers for the following questions: Was central government in Namibia ready to implement the policy on decentralization, or not? Alternatively, what nature of decentralization did central government envisage for Namibia? And, secondly, in what ways and with what results, did the MRLGH implement the policy decision on decentralization in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions? At least four statements were made to guide the study.

The first guiding statement: Policy on decentralization preparation, design and implementation strategies were not preceded by in-depth feasibility studies, thereby creating confusion over the meaning of decentralization as well as the balance between the requirements of the elements of deconcentration and devolution. Chapter Five discussed the historical background of the policy on decentralization in Namibia. It was noted that the Apartheid system maintained pseudo-autonomous racially or ethnically-based local government institutions in Namibia. These institutions were meant

to entrench the relative isolation of the Black African majority and the Coloureds from the privileged White minority. Therefore, no regional government-structures existed in central government and ethnic or racial local authorities. Yet Forrest (1998) observes that the re-arrangement of government structures after independence, rather than the establishment of new regional administrations, was part of the pre-independence political negotiations. This suggests that the premise of the negotiations was that the future democratically elected government of Namibia would not have to establish regional administrations. All it needed to do was to restructure them to fit the new socio-economic and political realities of 1990.

The SWAPO ruled government was convinced, given the country's troubled history of racial and ethnic divisions, that the way to effectively govern Namibia was through a centralized system that would do away with race and ethnicity as criteria for people's access to economic opportunities and service delivery. The immediate action by the SWAPO government was the scrapping of the second-tier government and the appointment of regional commissioners as the political heads of the regions. In doing this, the SWAPO government appears to be using "decentralization" as a means to achieve greater political centralization and control in the country. But this decentralization for the purpose of central control tended to militate against the deconcentration of power to field officers whose behaviour SWAPO may have perceived to undermine its position. But by 1992 the SWAPO government began to explore different ways of organizing the governmental structures in the interest of national development. It sought to adopt and/or adapt structures in Namibia that would contribute to the realization of general national development aims.

The second guiding statement: The colonial administrative legacy and the ruling SWAPO's centralist tendencies, as well as the constitutional provisions on the system of government, influenced the "top down" ambivalent nature of decentralization which central government envisaged for Namibia. Chapter Six examined the nature and scope of the policy on decentralization in Namibia. A variety of dynamic features of decentralization and its implementation in Namibia were shaped by central government, through the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing's (MRLGH) view of decentralization. The MRLGH seemed quite opposed to the notion of transferring power to regional councils and local authorities. Thus, paradoxically, much initial central government thinking was, and remains rooted in SWAPO as a centralist party, which essentially found it difficult to decentralize its authority. Also, patronization thrived and decentralization thus became viewed by some SWAPO leaders as one way of not sharing central government authority with the opposition parties. From the outset, therefore, there has been little political will to support the decentralization process. On the one hand, central government seemed to be telling the people that decentralization is good for them, and that it would improve service delivery, but on the other hand, it increasingly seemed as if central government was reluctant to ease its grip on the activities of the regional and local governments.

The third guiding statement: Local government legislation and other related pieces of legislation, and subsequent amendments, neither clearly established the legal and institutional frameworks for a complete transfer of power, responsibility and resources to regional and local governments, nor did it clearly provide for grassroots participatory structures. The government enacted various pieces of legislation, including the Regional Act No. 22 of 1992 and the Local Authorities Act No. 23 of 1992. Both Acts established and empowered the regional councils and local authorities in Namibia.

At the same time, they provided the legal instruments to allow for the transfer of central government powers to lower layers of government. The Local Authorities Act No. 23 of 1992 strengthened the local authorities by giving them the power to borrow funds that would enable them to develop areas within their jurisdiction.

These, and related Acts were expected to lay the legal ground for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of decentralization; to have the new regions demarcated; and to make provisions for officials to be elected to head the envisaged regions at the time; to establish the local associations that would coordinate the activities of the different councils; to inform the populace about the importance of decentralization and to explain how the people at the locality could benefit from decentralization; and to create an enabling environment in which decentralization would flourish *vis-à-vis* other public sector institutional, administrative, and financial reforms.

The fourth guiding statement: Namibia was not ready to implement a policy on decentralization. As such, the interaction between administrative structures and processes, conflicting decentralization goals and role confusion on the status of regions, inadequate staffing, poor co-ordination and communication on the one hand, and socio-political elements on the other hand, compounded the implementation of decentralization in the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions. The evidence in Chapter Seven indicates that Namibia in general, and the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions in particular, were not ready to implement the policy on decentralization. In principle, it can be said that Namibia has done a superb job with the formulation of policies. The government's effort to create the legal instruments to guide the decentralization process is laudable. The relevant acts on regional and local government, which are the embodiments of the decentralization programme in
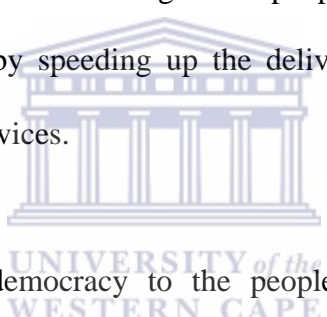
Namibia, will stand the test of time. However, these superb strides are exclusively confined to the relevant acts and other pieces of legislation.

At the implementation of decentralization the necessary infrastructure was not in place in the newly created regions. The infrastructure had to be created from scratch. However, in the case of local government the situation was not that bad. In fact, while the regional governments had to start from scratch, local government structures benefited from the infrastructures inherited from the old municipalities created under the previous colonial regimes. A track record existed illustrating the fact that local government having inherited the facilities of the old municipalities was indeed in a position to render sophisticated services such as the supply of water sewage systems, street lighting, sanitation systems and the maintenance of roads within the areas of their jurisdiction.

Little has been done on the reform side of the decentralization programme in Namibia. The author is convinced that the decentralization exercise in Namibia would have been a resounding success had the government first opted for institutional, administrative and financial reforms. In fact, the bone of contention is that no credible reform was embarked upon prior to the eventual implementation of decentralization in Namibia. The implementation of decentralization in Namibia was thus pre-mature because government did not first embark upon the necessary institutional, administrative and financial reforms. The author believes that had this been done, most of the bitter harvest of the ill-implemented decentralization programme in Namibia would have been averted.

Conclusion of the study

The progress in the implementation of decentralization programmes in the Omaheke, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions has been painfully slow. Admittedly, decentralization was invariably undertaken to increase the prospect of mass involvement, including previously neglected groups such as women. At the same time, decentralization structures did not command sufficient authority or resources to stimulate popular participation. The government of Namibia pretty much has the same thinking about decentralization. Its intention with the implementation of decentralization was to improve service delivery. It was hoped that if the regional structures became the ones to render services and to make decisions that have a bearing on the people at local level, this would speed up service delivery. They hoped that by speeding up the delivery of services it would eventually translate into the improvement of services.

Government also hoped to take democracy to the people, or to the grassroots levels (i.e. participatory/cooperative democracy at local or sub-national levels). This was one way to get the previously disadvantaged groups involved in the decision-making process. The hope was that if people in the regions are given the chance to make their own decisions and to exercise control over the implementation of the said decisions, they would make conscious decisions. For example, it was the belief of government that if people are given the opportunity to make their own financial decisions, they would do a better job than central government making the decisions for them.

The other intention of government with decentralization was to develop the regions so that people from the regions will not necessarily migrate to the bigger cities in search of work. This could not

be achieved under the conditions described. Furthermore, it is important to note that the majority of the people for whom decentralization was to improve service delivery did not know what decentralization was about. As a result they did not expect anything from its implementation. Those who had some knowledge of decentralization did not see it as a separate programme aimed at beefing up the activities of regional government. But while most local people did not see how regional government could be capable of running their affairs effectively, the author's view is that the capacity of regional councils needed to be enhanced, both to cope with their existing functions and to deal with the functions which central government will decentralize to them in future. This will largely depend on the co-operation and consultation between central government and the regional and local governments to redress the institutional and administrative problems of decentralization policy implementation in Namibia.

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