

Leading UB's Faculty of Humanities as Dean and The Botswana Society as Chairman

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Whereas the title of this piece is confined to the role I played as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Botswana (UB) and chairmanship of The Botswana Society, I also touch on roles I played in other institutions as part of my service to my country -Botswana. I was born in Ramotswa and brought up in its environs. The highlights of my educational progression were forged at Bamalete National Primary School (now Mokgosi Primary School) in 1969. Upon completion of my primary schooling I proceeded to a multi-curricula education system at Moeding College, offering the 3R's and extra-curricula training in agriculture, carpentry, mecano, mechanics education, electronics and music –a true blend of an education skills system that I still put to good practical use today. Based on secondary school performance in mathematics and science, I was hand-picked for engineering training at the Botswana Meat Commission in Lobatse. After this stint, I proceeded to the then University of Botswana and Swaziland (UBS) in 1979 for degree training in the humanities, specialising in English, Sociology and Education, following which I was recruited into the University of Botswana Staff Development (SDF) programme in the English Department.

After spending one year as a staff development fellow I proceeded to read for a Masters in Applied Linguistics at the University of Concordia in Canada from 1980 to 1982. The latter year is of great significance in the historical development of the University of Botswana (UB). At Botswana's Independence in 1966 Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland had a joint university project called University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS) which had started in 1964 before Botswana's Independence. Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland had a common history of having been under the British High Commissioner in South Africa, hence they were called High Commission Territories (HCTs). As the British rule neared its end the joint UBLS project was conceived with much of its facilities and assets in Lesotho. In 1975 Chief Leabua Jonathan's government in Lesotho unceremoniously appropriated the UBLS facilities in Lesotho leaving Botswana and Swaziland and their students in the lurch. The government of Botswana, which was desperately poor at the time, initiated what it styled Botswana University Campus Appeal (BUCA),

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whereby individuals and institutions across the country voluntarily contributed cows and other resources for construction of a meaningful campus in Gaborone. This was a hugely popular initiative that was fully embraced by most Batswana throughout the country. This spirit of patriotism has since been immortalised in the form of a statue of a man driving an ox in front of the University of Botswana (UB) library.

The result of Lesotho's action was the creation of a new institution called University of Botswana and Swaziland (UBS) in 1976. In 1982 Botswana and Swaziland amicably went their separate ways in terms of the joint university project, and the UB came into existence in the same year. This is how my return from Concordia in 1982 coincided with a key development in the history of our country's university.

Upon my return I transferred to the Department of African Languages and Linguistics commonly and popularly known as ALL for African Languages and Linguistics. After spending two years as a lecturer in ALL I proceed to read for PhD studies at the State University of New York, at Buffalo from 1984 to 1988. I rose to the level of senior lecturer accumulating a publication record that grew to over 20 book and refereed journal publications in Linguistics and Education. I co-authored a bilingual dictionary over a ten-year period with a maverick called Mr Morulaganyi Kgasa. As part of my academic work, I supervised numerous master and doctoral research activities at universities in the United States, South Africa, Germany, Australia, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Using several languages I acquired skills in computer programming which include C++, Xerox Finite-State Transducers, and lately Scratch as well as Python.

Part of work at UB involved providing non-academic service to the University, different communities in the country as well as professional bodies and institutions both locally and internationally. Therefore, I was involved in provision of service to the University, community and institutions in Botswana. One of my most memorable involvement was in fundraising for the construction of a big hall of residence for students at UB and the subsequent establishment of the Alumni of the University of Botswana Development Trust of which I am currently Chairman. Working with team comprising the late Moses Lekaukau, Esther Seloilwe, Burton Mguni, Naomi Seboni, and Mphoeng Tamasiga made conducting the trust's business a greatly enjoyable exercise.

I was appointed Dean of UB's the Faculty of Humanities in 1998. I quickly gained experience in leadership and governance of corporates, policy formulation, strategic organisational management, change management, project management, implementation and monitoring, promoting shared organisational and employee values in a reputable organisation, which appreciates professional approach and good quality work. I presided over the establishment of new programmes including Media Studies and a cross-faculty programme on Information Technology (IT) and Business studies. We Established linkages with sister universities such as the University of Tromso and funding of the San Research Project.

A memorable and humbling experience was having to serve as Dean of my former Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professors Thomas Tlou and John Melamu. The two had retired in their respective positions and returned to the Faculty of Humanities where they had previously been Deans. Prof. Melamu had also had a stint as Vice Chancellor of North West University in Mahikeng, South Africa. As the historian Part Mgadla demonstrates in two articles in this volume, Mahikeng which is outside Botswana had been the capital of colonial Botswana from the establishment of the colonial enterprise by the British in 1885 to 1965 just before Independence. Leading my former leaders at UB is a turn of events which is unique to universities and very inspirational in leadership development.

I also served as a member of the UB governing Council for a period of five years and periodically acted as UB Deputy Vice Chancellor on a number of occasions as well as brought to fruition numerous new academic programmes.

During this period, I served also as Chairman of the Independent Complaints Review Committee at Public Procurement and Disposal Board (PPADB) and founding Chair of the Gamalete Development Trust.

Despite the onerous task of being a scholar and academic administrator I was able to acquire some

professional qualifications. For instance, in 1997 I received a certificate in Higher Education Management from IIMA in India. I also obtained a qualification in Higher Education Management from the Botswana National Productivity Centre (BNPC) which is a stone's throw away from UB campus in Gaborone. In 2000 I was part of Senior Management Workshop organised by Association of African Universities in Gaborone. In 2014, 2015 and 2016 I obtained a qualification in Advantage Training on Corporate Governance.

Following my deanship role, I was appointed the founding Director of the UB Foundation in 2003 raising funds in the order of several million Pula. During this period I managed to raise the fundraising profile of the University against a skeptical background stemming from years of lavish government funding. In collaboration with the Vice Chancellor's Office, The UB Foundation Board and dedicated volunteers, we established enduring annual fundraising activities such as the annual dinner dance and the golf-day event, which drew high profile international guest speakers like Sir Samuel Jonah of Jonah Capital as well as Presidents of Botswana. I left service of the university in 2010 to pursue business interests.

I was instrumental in the establishment of a one-stop business solutions centre (The Business Place in Gaborone) and mentored aspiring entrepreneurs.

In 2008 I assumed chairmanship of The Botswana Society (TBS) whose founding and long-term member Sandy Grant describes as having been on the doldrums at the time. Perhaps, it should be noted that during this period not only TBS was in such a situation since many other non-governmental organisations also struggled financially while others even had to fold up. TBS's objective is to encourage research on various aspects if not all aspects of Botswana which are then published in books, seminar proceedings, and its flagship *Botswana Notes and Records* journal. To this end TBS has published many books and seminar proceedings some of which were done in collaboration with UB. One project which stands out was a big symposium titled 'Democracy in Botswana' held from 1 to 5 August 1988 at UB and funded by the Friedrich Eberly Foundation. This drew participants from all walks of life and the result was a book edited by American political scientist John Holm and Motswana sociologist Patrick Molutsi who were based at UB. The book also went by the title *Democracy in Botswana* and it was co-published in 1989 by Macmillan Botswana on behalf of TBS and UB. In 2013 TBS also partnered with the Department of History at UB and the Southern African Historical Society (SAHS) to host the latter's conference for the first time outside of South Africa in close to 50 years –half a century. This was a hugely successful and well publicised international conference which was held at UB.

During my tenure as TBS Chairman it grew from its previous perception of an expatriate dominated organisation to one that is authentically Botswana by drawing more younger citizens into the organisation. We continued to forge links with strategic partners to ensure continuation of TBS activities including publication of the *Botswana Notes and Records*, special volumes and holding public lectures on critical topics such as water in Botswana. The dwindling financial support for TBS posed a major threat as is currently the case with production of printed *Botswana Notes and Records*, but nonetheless TBS carried out its business –credit to a very committed and conscientious board that worked tirelessly around the clock.. Working with devoted stalwarts and volunteers like Derek Jones, Sandy Grant, Margaret Russell, Fred Morton, Doreen Nteta, Terry Cockburn, Rahim Khan, Sheldon Weeks, Part Mgadla, Jeff Ramsay, Bongi Radipati, Julian Nganunu, Rapelang Tsebe, Christian John Makgala and Gabofete Makgala as well as corporate sponsors made the running of the board easy. A lot of energy and enthusiasm was derived from having two former state presidents of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire and Dr Festus Mogae, as honorary members and patrons.

The indefatigable and extremely hardworking Christian John Makgala became the editor of the *Botswana Notes and Records* in 2008. In addition to the already onerous task of the editing the *Botswana Notes and Records*, which is the country's oldest surviving journal, he sought funding from the corporate entities and embassies for the publication of the journal. As was the case with all members of the TBS

board Makgala's work was purely voluntary without financial payment –the spirit we would like to see more and more Botswana professionals embrace. The association between UB and TBS led to the former kindly agreeing to treat the *Botswana Notes and Records* as one of the UB-based journals. John Makgala, Fred Morton and Danny Wilson from TBS attended seminars and training on online journal system (OJS) organised for UB-based journal editors by Office of Research and Development (ORD) at UB. Through this development UB extended a lifeline to the *Botswana Notes and Records* because it became available on UB's OJS free of charge. However, there is still a need for printing of the *Botswana Notes and Records* for people and institutions preferring hard copies.

Cognisant of the lack of intimate knowledge of cultural tourism and training, TBS embarked upon a project to promote awareness of cultural tourism and training through collaborative work with the various corporates and the Ministry of Tourism officials to sell the idea following the production of a business plan done with the help of Zwide Mbulawa and Olufemi Falebita at the The Business Place. The Cultural Tourism Training project was also undertaken in order to shift from the culture of asking for funding cap-in-hand, but instead engender a ethos of a self-funding model and self-sustainability of TBS. Fred Morton played a critical role in advancing this project and forging strategic linkages. Now people have access to knowledge about the significance of the big morula tree by the US Embassy for Botswana politics, the military trenches in the Village area, and Willoughby street by South Ring Mall.

At the end of my chairmanship, I passed the baton onto the former Vice Chancellor of the UB Prof. Bojosi Otlhogile –cementing a strategic linkage between TBS and UB.

In 2011 I assumed the chairmanship of the Botswana Examinations Council. The main challenge was to turn-around a government department and infusing corporate governance code of conduct/practice. This entailed instituting an uncomfortable thorough external audit into the organisation, undertaking a painful change management process, of the type not common in Botswana's parastatals and galvanising a solid board team. These processes entailed the organisation's commitment to international standards such as ISO certification and risk manual development. Because of the sensitivity of examinations, we had to pay particular attention to IT systems integrity and cybersecurity. Despite the current funding woes, BEC remains committed to third-income generation streams, promoting commitment to excellence and personal growth.

I remain committed to family businesses in real estate and commodities, both within and outside Botswana. Another area of interest is in two agro-businesses, with a commitment to utilisation of sustainable/renewable energy. I have acquired experience on land use and development, ownership, dispute, claims issues as evidenced development of two private townships in Gaborone North and the return of Mogobane Irrigation Scheme to the hands of Balete. I have an uncompromising commitment to turning Botswana into a net exporter of finished goods and services –material and intellectual. I am an ordinary member of a number of boards of governance. My hobbies include playing guitar and reading wisdom literature, quantum mechanics, multi-verse theory as well as space-time travel. I am greatly inspired and driven by Vince Lombardi's immortal words of wisdom: 'The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence regardless of their chosen field of endeavour'.