

ISSUES OF EQUALITY AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION- THE FATE OF MINORITY LANGUAGES OF BOTSWANA

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Abstract

If a consideration is made about language as a human right, the right to learn in one's language becomes critical. Indeed, issues of equality and equity in education are subsumed in many policies and laws that define the education of a nation. Education therefore concerns itself with the societal knowledge systems and values that derive from its culture and the world. Philosophies of education, especially those that define it as culture-based holistic process, view education as concerned with the representation of self in learning and how that self-integrates in a meaningful and harmonious way in the socio-economic and national processes. If in Botswana there is equal access, there is no equity in access. Equality as expressed in Botswana is vague and a less effective means to achieve equity in learning. This is so because the current system operates under the generalization of the philosophy of homogeneity which benefits the majority and the powerful. When minority language speakers, such as the San, are considered, they suffer marginalization and irrelevance of educational values, at least at the formative stage of schooling. Issues of mother tongue education, culture-infused curriculum, and teacher training which take into account the social realities of inequities can enhance equity, self-actualization, mutual responsibility and common belongingness in Botswana. A worthwhile education should therefore underscore values that bring about positive development of the self, democracy, self-reliance and cherishing of unity in diversity.

1.0 Introduction

Botswana, as the country name suggests, is a homeland for Batswana, yet there is a lot that can be said contrary to this iconic and idealized homogeneity (Mazonde, 2002). What is often ignored is that Botswana is home to many ethno-linguistic communities. The country is therefore not linguistically and ethnically monolithic. Botswana is a country of many vibrant San (Khoe and San ethnic languages) communities such as; !Ani, Buga, Cua, Tsua, Glui, Glana, Naro, #Hooa, !Xóǒ, Jul'hoan and dynamic Bantu ethnic languages like Shiyeyi, Herero, Shekgalagari, Ikalanga, Mbukushu, and Ciikuhane (Subiya) (Andersson & Janson, 1997). There is also Afrikaans which is a language widely spoken in the South Western parts of Botswana. These ethno-linguistic communities are what is now commonly referred to as minorities or marginalized groups of Botswana (Mazonde, 2002). The San derive their name from the Khoekhoe word *saǒ*, which means 'gather' or 'gatherer.' Historically and culturally the San have lived in small groups as nomads, freely roaming in the desert environment of Botswana. This situation has been a factor in their dominance or marginalization. However, San languages are still vibrant and serve as practical tools for cultural expression and communication in their communities.

The current situation in Botswana is that multilingualism and cultural diversity are seen as a problem, not a resource. While it is readily accepted that languages falling under what is advisedly called Bantu group are languages in their own right, and that they have their authentic culture, the same is not

easily said of San group of languages. They are almost always lumped together under the generic name *Sesarwa*, as if they are one and the same (Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003). Linguistic and ethnographic research makes a difference between the Khoe and the San (Güldemann & Vossen, 2000). Except for some few lexical borrowings and the phenomenon of clicks which characterize Khoe and the San languages, they belong to different language and cultural groups. Research by Anderson & Janson (1997) and recent surveys by Chebanne & Nthapelelang (2000) as well as RETENG (2006) have demonstrated that Botswana is a multilingual and therefore a multi-cultural nation. These and other researchers put the number of languages in the country at 25+. However, with regard to educational processes and accessibility to cultural knowledge, only Setswana has the means and privileges that accrue to it from the Education Policies and several mentions in the Constitution (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1991; 1987). It is also common knowledge that of all these languages, only Setswana benefits from the socio-cultural developments of the last three decades. The language situation of Botswana is that of serious language shift that could lead to language death (Batibo, 2010) with all the nefarious consequences imaginable. Table 1 shows the language situation in Botswana and domains of use of Setswana, the national language, English the official language as well as San as an example of a marginalized/minority language.

Language	Language use domain	Comment
Setswana	School; public information; national programmes	Used by public and private information systems especially in rural areas
English	School; public information; national programmes	Limited usage in rural areas
San & marginalized/minority languages	Family and personal domain	Mainly used in rural and family domains. Children under 6 years would have rarely heard Setswana and English spoken

As can be observed from Table 1, San and other marginalized languages are confined to rural and family domains and this situation leads to serious linguistic difficulties in accessing school. Chebanne (2015) described the situation of Khoesan languages in Botswana as fateful with tragic language death consequences (Batibo, 1998). Monaka and Chebanne (2005) identified these consequential problems as psychological, cultural and educational in the school process for the marginalized community child (Cassidy et al., 2001; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997; WIMSA, 2000). Insisting on the exclusive use of English and Setswana as the only school languages as presently provided in the education policy is to insist on language handicap and trauma for San children and exacerbate their social exclusion. Elsewhere one can find that the villagization drive associated with San populations lead to alienation through the school, which further makes the San fragile, socially and linguistically (Cassidy, Good, Mazonde & Rivers, 2001; Monaka & Chebanne, 2005).

The aim of this discussion is to situate the San lack of linguistic and cultural representation within the social framework and the education system that exclude their most important resource: language. The delimitation of the discussion to the San communities is a conscious one and is done in view of the prominence of the problem for all indigenous minorities and marginalized ethno-linguistic groups in Botswana (Batibo, 1998; Chebanne, 2015). The San present a peculiar problem because of their ethnic and linguistic precariousness. There are reasons for this situation. Firstly, their indigenous way of life and their ethnicity are factors that possibly contribute in their marginalization. Secondly, because of the school system, San languages are side-lined in the school system and in domains that should be reserved for personal and family use. Thirdly, without a conscious policy undertaking to correct the situation, San languages and identity are threatened with extinction as they become assimilated into the mainline society. Therefore, the objective here is to persistently feed on the debate on the situation of the minority

San languages in Botswana. The very fact that these tiny communities' speech and cultures still exist begs the question of whether they have any representation in the education system (Chebanne, 2015).

2.0 The education policy: the architect of inequality and inequity

The social and pedagogical consequences of the Botswana education policy is documented and analysed by Nyati-Ramahobo (1991, 1997) and central to this policy is the idea of mono-ethnicity and mono-culturalism. In fact since independence in 1966, the education practice and policy formulations thereof in the curriculum development and teacher training processes (Education for *Kagisano*, 1977; RNPE, 1994) have underscored this agenda. Thus the de facto monolithic ethno-linguistic state policy on education has relegated into oblivion anything to do with indigenous languages and associated cultures in the country other than Setswana. Effectively, the country has upheld a megalomaniac, hegemonic and supremacist view in matters of language and culture in formulating the philosophy of education and access. This has happened even as the world is replete with alternative experiences of educational policies that favour mother tongue in formative years of education.

Since independence in 1966, policy documents such as the National Development Plans (NDP) have been unambiguous on the issue of creating an enlarged school access, and importantly on the question of equality in access and the guarantee of ten years basic education for all (RNPE, 1994; National Development Plan Eight (NDP 8, 1997). All policy evidently refers to a power, and in matters of education this power is the State (Fairclough, 1989) and its political vision. Therefore, education policy in Botswana encounters theoretical challenges of which an assessment must be made to progress in this discussion. An allusion was made earlier on that education in Botswana has been characterized by the 'education for all' (Education for *Kagisano*, 1977) type of mass education where the state by all means bearable, financially speaking, went on even to provide free education at all levels of school. This approach has created a belief that there was equality in education and provided arguments for it. This socio-political strategy has for a long time determined the framework and the scope of educational processes. From the humble beginning of the independent Botswana in 1966, education has taken a centre-role in national development. Even from the first National Development Plan (see Education for *Kagisano*, 1977), education was viewed largely as an engine of development, and impressive services and amenities in the provision thereof as has been evidenced by the sustained budget allocation for re-current and developmental expenditure. In the echelons of African development therefore, this achievement has been spectacular and convincing. If one is right to rejoice about this state of things, the flipside is inequity. For, the great means put at the disposal of education do not guarantee the equitable and quality nature of the system (McCarthy, 1999). What needs to be underlined is that the educational landscape of Botswana is characterized by the mismatch of the national ideals of democracy and the minority aspirations of self-identity (Lauder, 1999). And this utopian ideal is never in touch with the objective outcomes in the educational processes. What can be seen is a system that does not dispassionately evaluate itself by critically looking for quality and equitable outcomes in the curriculum.

3.0 The problems and challenges for San in the national education for all perspective

While awaiting the overall assessment of all actions which were undertaken through the education Commissions (RNPE, 1994), one has the impression that what really prevailed during the last decades was an adumbrative conception of education, in the main still captivated by neo-colonial power, and policies that seek to annihilate San languages and cultures by making the speakers assimilate into the mainstream society. These are perspectives and strategies that are rather outlandish, static and widely detrimental to ethno-minorities such as the San. In the assessment made by the Working group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA, 2000), it became evident that the gap between ethno-

minorities and national ideals in education was not closing. The national development and education aspirations were not shared by the San, and their integration had nothing positive for their development, neither was their future as ethnic entities granted. WIMSA (2000, pp. 17-19) listed the following problems and litanies:

- a) Education in the current policy formulation, regardless of the efforts to promote access, did not improve the lot of the San. It was alienating, assimilating, and tearing apart families (p. 17).
- b) Education was the source of social crisis and cultural trauma, especially at the primary school going age (p. 18).
- c) Language of education was found to be foreign to the children who were starting primary school. None of the San language is used in Botswana schools (p. 19).
- d) Abuse and discrimination (emotional, sexual, corporal punishment) were rife in educational institutions (p. 19).
- e) Education of the San was characterized by massive abandonment (school dropouts) at very early stage (p. 19).
- f) Education system was perceived as source of oppression and parents were powerless to intervene (p. 18).
- g) Parents reeled under serious conditions of poverty and suffered from lack of self-esteem to meaningfully participate in the education of their children (p. 18).

The above problems are also corroborated by empirical evidence by Odotei (1991) who gave statistics to show that in year 1990, the Primary School results were such that the lowest grades were in the Kgalagadi, Ghanzi and Ngamiland districts, where minority groups predominate. Leaving other factors aside, one could say that most learners in these areas have communication and interactive problems at school which could have impacted on their performance. The consequence of this situation is that education for certain communities in Botswana is not attractive. For instance (Polelo, 2005) showed that among the Khoesan communities who are characterized as remote area dwellers, there was high numbers of school dropouts as children and parents believed that the school experience was culturally and linguistically hostile. Further, Chebanne (2015) argued that the lack of mother tongue education for linguistic minorities had negative consequences for their education.

These are serious challenges and strategies that can be devised to resolve them will be daunting. However, things cannot be left on their own account, and the solution lies with the enabling environment in the education system that will see San ethno-minorities valuing the education they receive and through it participating in a meaningful way in the development of the country. In the assessment of the San in Botswana (Good, 2001, p. 73) had this to say:

Indigenous languages should be integrated into school curriculum, and respected and developed within national formal education. Incorporating San culture, languages and history in school teaching is an essential step towards according recognition to San national affairs, and more importantly, towards providing an education system that is better suited to the special needs of some San learners. Quality education is vital if San are to be better equipped to lift them out of poverty and powerlessness (Good, 2001, p. 73).

Education is not just opening the admissions ajar for all to come in, as equals, but providing an equitable learning environment that every learner would find welcoming and relevant in life. Mother-tongue education is the one important way to ensure that every learner finds less traumatizing learning experiences in education. Therefore, when one is seized with defining the objectives, outlines and the

conditions of success of an education policy, the issues of equality, equity and quality are ever present, and equity is primordial. This is so because education is critical in the development of an individual (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997). Educational values are not exoteric but come from within the positive learning experiences of the citizen—when education responds to aspirations, when it re-confirms the cultural values and when it empowers the communities to be self-reliant and not depends of the state. The importance of this cannot be overstated as it has already been shown in some reports.

Formally education sector is another special area in which San perceive themselves to be clearly discriminated against by the more powerful non-San Batswana (Mazonde, 2001, p. 64).

When a non-San goes to school, s/he arrives with advantages that the San child does not have—language and culture which are used in school. For the San education is not just a hegemonic force, but a nefarious, alienation and elitist force. This can only change if in the domain of education there is language inclusion and consequently the elimination of ethnic stigma (Mazonde, 2001, p. 65). Monaka and Chebanne (2005) also revealed that the education process among the San communities was one that was fraught with stigmatization, traumas, domination and altogether alienation. Pupils felt that they did not belong, and the school environment was the most hostile and inhospitable. These negative experiences corroborated the findings of WIMSA (2000).

If Botswana must characterize itself nationally, its constituent parts, made of ethnicities, languages and social organizations must be accounted for in the equitable definition and provision of education. The contribution of the curriculum content in the definition of an education program is critical and fundamental in any education system. A country without a sound curriculum development is a country in serious educational crisis. Without a curriculum it is difficult to talk about a quality assurance instrument or even to determine educational outcomes. The curriculum is the means of seeking fulfilment and responsiveness to challenges of development and learning (McCarthy, 1999). Most of the challenges that Botswana faces are developmental, and its education curriculum is called upon more than ever before to proactively and innovatively respond to situations that if unchecked lead to intricate crises which get construed as developmental crisis or the failure of policies on education (Cassidy et al., 2001). The experiences of the San children are described thus:

- a) The San educational status is intimately tied to their relative economic poverty, their socio-economic relationship with others and the livelihood strategies necessitated by this.
 - b) The language issue is a major problem for San learners, who must of necessity study in either English or Setswana ... moreover, there are few teachers proficient in any of these languages.
 - c) The abuse of and discrimination against San learners in school are widespread and are practiced not only by other students, but in some instance by staff.
 - d) The existing school system lacks the flexibility necessary to accommodate the special needs of San learners for whom the formal education process is often alienating and socially disruptive.
- (Cited from Le roux (1999), by Mazonde, 2001, p. 66, cited in Cassidy et al., 2001)

Language policy has evidently not responded to these issues. Language pluralism seems to present an undeclared obstacle or problem under the guise of fearing the risk of ethnic conflicts and social quandary. All seems to be revolving around the ideal which refuses cultural pluralism in favour of “national construction” and “national unity” and “national education” (RNPE, 1994). But the question is what kind of unity and equality when there is no equity in education? Instead of appealing to indigenous content in its education development by integration what constructs or constitutes a people’s identity and value, it takes wholesale the western model and lets it to permeate all sectors of development (Okoth-

Okombo, 1999). However, if the country wants to sincerely talk about education for all and the equality issues, it needs to understand the elements that factor equity. In the context of our discussions, these elements must be explicit in the Education and Curriculum Policies—language must be an issue of equity. The assumption here is that Botswana ethno-linguistic communities have developed throughout their history, cultural knowledge and technologies which make them educationally viable, and their languages provide the most vivid and practical way of communicating their vision of the world and the understanding of their existence. This is what elsewhere Nyati-Ramahobo (1997) qualifies as education and quality of life for all citizens of Botswana. It is when equitable elements of education feature in the education of Botswana pupils in their ethno-linguistic diversity.

4.0 Strategies towards integrating the San in the national education system

Research in the social processes in Botswana indicates that Botswana minority groups are in many accounts second class citizens if not worse (Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004). All aspects of their existence are impacted negatively by historical relationships with more powerful ethnic groups. Their land resources are hoarded by greedy pastoralists (Nthomang, 2004), while their languages are put out of community usage by the powerful ethnic languages. In the area of education they do not compete as equals because the imposed languages of education traumatize and incapacitate their children. In the context of the foregoing, can the proponents of this education system believe there is equity? In Motshabi and Saugestad (2004) it becomes clear that the dialogue on these issues is viewed at variance by the government and the spokesperson of the San communities. Motshabi and Saugestad argue that:

A participant challenged government's boast that it does not have separate programmes because it wishes to treat everyone equally (...) we must recognize that Basarwa are unique and should be treated accordingly...making the government aware that RADP (Remote Areas Dwellers Programme) needs to be made ethnic-specific to truly assist Basarwa (San) (Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004, p. 72).

Within the current framework, the education system in Botswana is in deadlock situation and cannot creatively cater for the San without an education reform. In education, all the perspectives for education development refer back today to the curriculum domain as the only place where change may be initiated (Hargreaves, 1999, pp. 338-340). It may be that before the curriculum can be adjusted to deal with new dictates of change, the whole conceptualization on an education policy should cater for the new developments in culture, democracy and education (Lauder, 1999). However, as indicated earlier, the education system is oblivious of this reality. When the country affirms in a national Vision, 2016, that it wants to be educated and informed, no voice seems to ask how and by what means. Education cannot just be a question of budgets. Education, above all, is a human value justifying its processes by relevance to the nation and its constituent communities.

The activities for the development of San languages have essentially remained the pre-occupation of linguists, NGOs championed by RETENG and religious organizations, and indeed all kinds of outside country activists (WIMSA & RDU, 2000). The lack of actions in the education and development of an ethnic-language based curriculum content and cultural domains may suggest that these socio-educational issues are felt with distrust or altogether there is no will in putting them into an agenda for national development and democratization of education. This contrasts with the good number and sophistication of initiatives in other developmental domains (NDP 8, 1998, pp. 8-9) in which technology has been presented as the priority in development. Yet technology without human values of language, culture and respect of people's identity becomes a destructive monster. A curriculum reflecting some cultural pluralism has never been envisaged. Even some good faith recommendations from the Revised National

Policy on Education (RNPE, 1994) for a third school language from an ethnic minority have been handled with reluctance as there has been cold feet in implementing such recommendations.

If the Botswana educational theories and paradigms (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997) are subjected to rigorous critique; it will turn out that the policies of education (language minimalism in education) have exacerbated linguistic marginalization (Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003). These policies have produced blinkered and buckled conceptions of educational attainments and values. The consequences have been characterized by failure of an otherwise free spending educational system in the world (National Commission on Education, 1993). The idea of a well-educated citizen is difficult to characterize socially. What has emerged in the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) (1994) is a system that is constantly seeking direction and inspiration, commissions after commissions. A consultancy on the third language at school (Batibo et al., 1996), provided some interesting recommendations on Botswana languages in the education plan, but it has hitherto remained in the shelves. Its implementation would have meaningfully responded to the issues of equity and equality that are argued for here. However, policy makers and curriculum developers content themselves with underscoring the phenomena of numbers accessing schools, one curriculum good for all, and the subsequent rates of literacy without so much looking into the issues that will make these strategies applicable and beneficial to all the learners (Chebanne, 2015; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1995). Nothing much will happen without addressing the issues of equity and equality in these three processes: language use, curriculum content and teacher and classroom practice. These are the core of an equitable education process:

- a) Classroom processes: Ethnic minorities such as the San should as much as possible be taught in their languages at formative years; that is, at lower primary. This will improve retention by lessening linguistic and cultural trauma. The provision of a viable approach to the definition of our national culture through the curriculum will create identification and association with the education system;
- b) Curriculum content: In the areas where the San are a majority, curriculum content must reflect their cultural values to link school knowledge with social and cultural experience. The development of a curriculum that systematically promotes the use of traditional and cultural knowledge and know-how is optimum.
- c) Teachers' adaptability: Teachers all over the country in general, and those assigned to teach among the minority San communities in particular, must undergo a culture and ethnicity tolerance training to improve relationships between them and the minority pupils.

The tangible means by which an equitable curriculum policy argued for here could be brought about are contained in the agendas of both national Visions, 2016 and 2036 which purport to make the nation see a better social future. Vision 2016 called for language and cultural policies to be put in place to operationalize the vision, that is, for Botswana to become a truly educated and a caring nation. Similarly, Vision 2036 Pillar 2 is concerned with issues of human and social development and argues for a Botswana that should aspire to be a moral, tolerant and inclusive society, providing opportunities for all its people irrespective of social status. Vision 2036 argues that:

Social inclusion is central to ending poverty and fostering shared prosperity as well as empowering the poor, and marginalised people, to take advantage of burgeoning opportunities. People should be capacitated to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives (Presidential Commission on the long-term Vision, 1998, p. 18).

Also, the RNPE (1994), under recommendation 32 which addresses the issue of the third school language, can provide a way out of stagnation and inertia. The Botswana national ambitions and

orientations need redefinition and reorientation from focusing on infrastructure to focussing on the person. To look developed does not necessarily entail a well-dressed person who has a feeling of emptiness within his or her soul; to have free-for-all education, but without any social value; and to be certificated than educated. Further, it is not gain to be counted among those nations that have made strides in infrastructural development, but have citizens without an authentic ethno-culture and language in life. The San have been adversely put at a detriment by this developmental approach. Botswana has been characterized by homogeneity for unity than unity in diversity (Chebanne, 2002), and this at the risk of losing small yet valuable things which make a proud nation (Vision 2016). National objectives on education are grandiose, but they achieve pittance. Resources are strained and constrained for something that is difficult to determine as social gains (NDP9, 2003-2008), and as M'bokolo (1995, p. 86) puts it, "we are getting tired before we can even manage to grasp something. We get out of breath for running after distant objectives we do not have the means to achieve". Success in equality and equity will depend, to a large extent, on a change of language in education policy in Botswana. Only if pupils from minority communities use their mother tongue and culture in school and in public can there be achievement (Chebanne, 2015).

With regard to what could be a constructive San education, an innovative policy is desirable in the area of national languages that are mother tongue languages for many pupils. This policy should acknowledge that languages are important for democratic development and social advancement. All that is needed is a political will and an appropriate curriculum that integrates ethno-knowledge and cultures. Objectively, this does not even call for the suppression of the current language policy in education, but the integration into it of hitherto excluded ethnic languages. There is need to look creatively and proactively to those issues that will make the curriculum content more representative and humane. A culture-infused curriculum requires also that teachers should be prepared to deal with their community issues in education, especially the recognition that if the talk is about the importance of mother tongue education, it should essentially entail, without demagoguery and utopia, the facilitation for the integration of San teachers at certain levels of education, such as primary schools (Good, 2001, p.74, cited in Cassidy et al., 2001).

What has been submitted in the foregoing sections clearly demonstrates an insidious and surreptitious agenda which would see in education or the formulation of the policy thereof, a one-shoe-fits-all approach in which the praxis of educational processes are synonymous to linguistic, cultural and political policy homogeneity and identifiable to political ambitions or illusions of a homogenous nation. However, this perspective is flawed, for a minimum of information demonstrates that no matter how nations are composed, there is never a complete and attainable situation of homogeneity. Even as Botswana would have itself considered homogenous with a mono-cultural dispensation, derived from mono-ethnic framework, there are diverse differences in terms of social class and status, socio-economic access, language and political situations; and all these need specific developmental responses. The issue of ethnic differences in Botswana is exacerbated by the political perspective that was carefully crafted to avoid the situation of linguistic diversity, but rather opt for the infamous linguistic inequity of the status quo. This position seems to suggest that linguistic diversity will negatively impact the system by removing common standards in education. But that is far from the truth (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997; Chebanne et al., 1993).

It is in the background that the discussion submits that the current education policy that forms the architecture of the education system needs reforms so that it can objectively empower the curriculum development to embark on programs and actions to respond to the ambitions of the national Visions 2016 and 2036 claims of social equity and development. On the domain of education, mother tongue/ethnic language education with its concomitant culturally relevant pedagogy, will be the most practical way to

operationalize this vision. Curriculum content, in terms of what makes an education system relevant, must integrate cultural knowledge and ethnic practices in the formulation of a curriculum policy. Recommendation 32 on the third language would significantly respond to arguments made here if this third language would be a community language such as San languages however small their community is. Mother tongue would effectively respond to some of the concerns and guarantee educational belongingness, at least at elementary levels, for ethno-linguistic communities of the San. Inequalities in the educational and curriculum processes already noted in the discussion would be less glaring and make the definition of education not a mockery but a necessary concession.

Further, departments such as the Curriculum Development and the Teacher Training should be capacitated to undertake research-based processes. This will enable them to face the challenges of education with responses derived from researched and objective facts on ethnic community language. Research and educational facts should reject the dominant ideology on education because hitherto the educational perspectives existed in an ideological backdrop which was perhaps necessary at independence. But it is evident that it was not based on the elaboration of authentic facts by educationists and policy makers. The socio-political approach of a desire to manage ethno-linguistic diversity of the population by prolonging and forestalling dealing with human rights of all citizens in their diversity is not acceptable. Many crises and problems have their source from such policies. But since this favoured philosophical approach has not brought greater crises of chaos and fiasco, it is often glorified. However, its gains are not gains at all.

Education should not be far from the principles of equitable and harmonious experiences in learning. Any prejudice, any antagonism and any ethnic conflict in the place of learning do not make a good learning experience. Therefore, education cannot justifiably be separated from the value-base of a society. Education is the whole means by which life evolutions and mutations affecting the techniques and the technologies are mitigated (cf. M'bokolo, 1995). As a consequence, neglecting the positive aspects of culture in education has led to the loss of value in the education system resulting in worthless outcomes. Students are certificated rather than being educated; curriculum is a rubber stamp and not a critical reviewer of educational policies. In this regard there is no way we could objectively deliberate on issues of quality assurance when the whole presentation is not equitable. Education in this regard is at the same time the mediation of social inequalities rather than an institution of an equitable socio-development programme. In such a perspective, education cannot be viewed solely as the successful provision of amenities, but as a humane system that should look into the totality of concerns and needs of all citizens in their ethno-linguistic diversity.

The considerations on language policy, curriculum content modernization, teacher training and indeed the complexity of the educational processes on the ground have been central in this discussion. It is the position of this paper that the dominant socio-political thesis of the country pits the Government and marginalized communities in an ideological confrontation which will be inexorable. Without a well-articulated mother-tongue education, it was difficult for the country to fulfil the requirements and expectations of the just ended Vision 2016, which was the national gauge for democracy and development. Vision 2016 had this to say about the country's dream and what would have been achieved by that year 2016 when independent Botswana turned fifty:

- a) an educated and informed nation
- b) a prosperous, productive and innovative nation
- c) a compassionate just and caring nation
- d) a safe and secure nation
- e) an open, democratic and accountable nation

- f) a moral and tolerant nation
- g) a united and proud nation (Vision 2016, pp. 5-13)

The seven pillars of the Vision presented a seemingly progressive dispensation of democracy that had lofty ideals that were to cater for rights of all the citizens. The issues of ethnic and language realities of Botswana are alluded to in pillars 6 and 7, that is, under tolerance and united and proud nation, and stipulate that “no Motswana (citizen of Botswana) will be disadvantaged in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country’s two official languages” (Vision 2016, p. 5), and “..the country will still possess a diverse mix of cultures, languages, traditions and peoples... we will harness all that diversity” (Vision 2016, p. 5) respectively. However, it should be stated that Vision 2016 was not a policy, and did not legally commit the government to fulfil it. The point is that the San come to school without any knowledge of any school language and therefore how they are expected to learn and be educated becomes a real life challenge, and this marks them for life (Monaka & Chebanne, 2005). Their own languages will be the sole formidable means to extricate and present them with real equitable and equal opportunities in education and social advancement.

5.0 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has been predicated on the principles of equity over and above equality, and for natural and national justice in the provision of education and the formulation of its policies. Cogitatively and cogently, the abandonment of the philosophical reflection on education that favours dominant socio-political establishments is liberating. Until the education system intimately engages the people in their ethno-cultural diversity, majority and minority, rich and poor, there can never be any collective ownership of education and the assured quality value thereof, neither can it benefit us all equitably. Education should be a deliberate entailment of the provision of basic ethno-linguistic and cultural liberties and choices that make a human person respecting and respectable, and self-identifying. For any human community to thrive in its ethnic choices, it has to have the right to learn and to be taught in one’s language, the right to self-identity, the right to protection from the generalizing and the globalizing effects of the present world order and the right to one’s meaningful language culture.

Botswana, with its current development strides is at an opportune situation to implement a curriculum that takes minority languages and culture into account, and to train teachers in better strategies to face deficiencies related to linguistic and cultural challenges. Quite evidently, what is being argued for here is that the activities of the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department must be refocused on primary research on the materials developed, and their outcomes critically assessed through objective research instruments, region by region. Mother tongue is core in the innovative approach to San education. The discussion has identified the salient issues that need to be underscored in an educational transformation towards equity. The fear that such a liberal policy will increase tensions is not true. Everything depends on governance modalities, the manner and the spirit with which the policies of education are designed and implemented. The San people remain illiterate and marginalized. Therefore, the only way forward is the rejection of the current philosophy of education with the view of ushering in a system that will be more humane and humanistic in its educational perspective and enterprise.

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