

Educating for Peace: Politics and Human Rights in Botswana

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Introduction

Botswana is a Southern African nation which has not engaged in civil or international war either prior to or after independence from Britain in 1966. It is a country which has sought to develop along peaceful lines and has the reputation of being a successful democracy on the continent of Africa. In its development plans Botswana has always promoted the significance of education in helping it to achieve its goal of *kagisano* (peace building) based on four national principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity. Education plays a major role, too, in the development initiatives of civil society as well as international partners operating in the country.

This paper is a preliminary overview of recent research into some of the major influences in the process of promoting education for peace and human rights in Botswana and the relationships that have developed or are developing between a number of the main players within that process. The extent to which the process of peace education promoted by all the players may be a political exercise or an emancipatory pedagogy is considered. Is the nature of the relationships 'peaceful'? To what extent is conflict and balance contained and maintained within the relationships to enable Botswana to reach a new stage or level of peaceful existence?

In attempting to address these questions the paper focuses on Education for *Kagisano*, the philosophical underpinning of Government policy on education for the last quarter of a century, Political Education and, Human Rights Education, both of which are primarily initiatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and are viewed as contentious developments by some authority figures in the country.

These three areas also serve to explore the concept of peace in Botswana and how popular and official notions of peace influence attitudes towards peace building and the

promotion of education for peace in the country.

The conclusions of this overview and brief analysis of the data collected and generated from fieldwork at various sites in Botswana from August 2001 to March 2002 may be different in many instances from those drawn from a more detailed analysis and evaluation at a later date.

1. Education for *Kagisano*

The report of the National Commission on Education (NCE) known as Education for *Kagisano* (1977) and the subsequent Government Paper No.1, The National Policy on Education (NPE) set the agenda for educational developments in Botswana up to the 1990s. *Kagisano* literally translates as “making peace” and Education for *Kagisano* or Education for Social Harmony emphasises education for personal development that will ultimately lead to a better society.

While individual development is stated as the principal aim of education in the NPE it also clearly states, “Education must reinforce the aim of national unity.” (NPE, 1977,p.12:1.12). Nation building was the primary aim and was based on the four national principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity, which in combination produce the national philosophy of *Kagisano*, meaning social harmony, and embracing the concepts of social justice, interdependence and mutual assistance.” (Ibid, p.24)

The 1994 Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), which is the current policy on state education, reiterates the goals of education for *Kagisano* and adds the goal of preparing “Batswana for the transition from a traditional agro-based economy to the industrial economy that the country aspires to”. It also states:

Besides the demands of the economy, Government considers access to basic education a fundamental human right. The education system must develop moral and social values, cultural identity and self-esteem, good citizenship and desirable work ethics. (Ibid: 5)

Language and Culture

The Government of the day was committed to the ideal of a democratic, non-racial society in a unified nation. The political situation and apartheid in most of its neighbouring countries, particularly South Africa, was influential in discouraging the promotion of education along ethnic or linguistic lines (Parsons, 1983; W. le Roux, 1999; Interviews with MoE personnel and NGO staff). The goal of ‘education for all’, advocated and supported by international aid from UNESCO and Western aid agencies, and the use of one major language was seen as instrumental in achieving this. Language was acknowledged as “one means by which cultural identity is strengthened” (NPE, 1977). This view has been retained in the RNPE (1994) even though the report of the First National Commission acknowledged criticisms of education in this respect:

It tends, in the opinion of many observers, to alienate students from their cultural roots and to create, not appreciation of their background, but rather a tendency to look down upon it. The education system should orient young people towards the social, cultural, artistic, political and economic life of their unique society and prepare them to participate proudly in it.

The criticisms continue to the present and have become a point of contention between Government and other interest groups including academics at the University of Botswana, NGOs, and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Today accusations,

which were levelled at the 'colonial power' of the pre-independence period concerning institutional and cultural imposition and the submergence of indigenous culture, are being directed towards the BDP Government and the Tswana groups. The creation of "modern tribalism" has been attributed to the BDP, which has been the ruling party in Botswana since Independence, through the Constitution, especially sections 77, 78 and 79, and through its language policy "which attempted to transform this country into a homogenous society" (Molapisi, Mmegi, 9-15 Nov 2001).

The current debate on language and culture concerns those at the extremes of Botswana society. At one end of the spectrum the discourse concerns those for whom Setswana is not their first language but who occupy a marginal position in terms of socio-economic status and geographical location. It concerns the plight of some of Botswana's poorest of the poor living mainly in remote areas of the country.

For the remote and marginalised people in Botswana accessibility to education is restricted because of Government policy which allows only Setswana and English to be used for teaching in schools denying them their basic right to education as advocated in the RNPE. In addition children in these remote areas are boarders in hostels at the site of the schools and there are several reports of children having run away because of abuse and discrimination in these institutions (Willemien le Roux, 1999). Le Roux who is the regional Programme Co-ordinator for Education and Culture with the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) argues that "Western and formal notions of education have weakened the traditional and community-based" education of the San and "thereby contributed to their marginalisation and alienation" (le Roux, 1999:5).

At the more affluent end of the socio-economic spectrum success in the mostly academic

oriented education system by Ikalanga speaking people is perceived by some as having led to their achieving favourable positions in the civil service and other stable and well-paid positions. Two cultural organisations, the recently formed Pitso Ya Batswana (PYB) and the more established Society for the Promotion of the Ikalanga Language (SPIL) are engaged in an argument concerning the perceived numbers of Kalanga people employed in prime positions in the country, and PYB accusations of nepotism and abuse of positions of power and authority. Although some observers have dismissed the debate as a dispute between very small numbers of people, others, including political leaders, have condemned the debate and the manner in which it is conducted because they believe it fans the flames of tribalism in the country.

NGO and CBO Involvement

According to the Draft National NGO/CBO Policy for Botswana (2001) the guiding principles of the NGO/CBO sector are seen to be the same as the National Principles that guided government in its development planning for *kagisano*. However, evidence from interviews and participant observation indicates that there is an ambivalent attitude by Government to NGOs. Media and other reports have also suggested that the relationship is an uneasy one with NGOs being viewed negatively by those in authority in Botswana (Molutsi, 1995; Derefeldt, 1997; Daily News on line, 27 June 2000; BOCONGO, 1999).

At the forefront in developing and promoting minority languages to assist in educating people in Botswana's remote areas are the Kuru Development Trust of the Dutch Reformed Church and the University of Botswana. One of the programmes set up by Kuru to help prepare children in these areas for easier transition into the formal educational sector is the *Bokamoso* pre-school training project. This trains local people, chosen by the community, to teach children in pre-schools in the Gbantzi District settlements in the Western part of Botswana.

Willemien le Roux (1999) points to the success of the Bokamoso programme in preparing San children for the transition to the primary schools. Her report also highlights the use of language as a political tool for both oppression and resistance. On the issue of language she states:

Although the issue of language discrimination was one of the clearest causes for San's educational problems, it also seemed to be one of the easiest one's to address due to the concrete nature of the matter. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is the one area where concerted effort from the San's side to rectify the situation has already started. The cost and human resources needed as well as the political will to enable such a process, however, remain an inhibiting factor. (Ibid:81)

The Bokamoso programme is also used by the Tirisanyo Catholic Commission (TCC) of the Roman Catholic Church, which supports the running of pre-schools in the Kgalagadi District in the southern part of the country. The Government's proposed introduction of guidelines for teaching standards at the pre-school level is not welcomed by TCC who see it as a problem for many reasons. The introduction of the proposed standards will jeopardise the programmes because of its insistence on minimum qualifications for the teachers. Teachers currently chosen by the communities and who speak the local language would not be able to meet Government criteria in terms of qualifications. Bringing in outsiders with the required qualifications has its own problems in terms of attitude and discrimination and also effects the empowerment of the local communities who currently have some choice in their own teachers. (Interview with TCC Representative, October, 2001)

Recent Government Initiatives in Schools

Subjects such as Social Studies, Cultural Studies and Moral Education have been introduced into the school curriculum so that issues relating to culture, citizenship, democracy, development, human right and related areas may be addressed in the formal education system. However, many problems hamper progress in these areas.

Ministry of Education personnel consider the shortcomings unfortunate, but believe that the problems, such as shortages of staff or lack of training in these areas, will be overcome with time and as the teaching profession, which comprises mostly young staff, will improve with teacher age and maturity. In the light of the current ethos in many of the schools it is difficult to envisage this taking place to meet the educational aims of Vision 2016.

In order to address this issue the Department of Teacher Training and Development has introduced training for the Management of schools to provide support and encouragement for newly qualified teachers and teachers who are motivated to introduce new ideas and progressive thinking into schools. However, if recent developments in curriculum change are any indication of this new thinking there is need for concern. For example, the current introduction of Cultural Studies into the Primary Curriculum has not benefited from the lessons learned from the introduction of Moral Education into the Junior Secondary schools in 1999. The latter exercise highlighted the unpreparedness of teachers due to poor planning, a lack of in-service prior to the introduction of the subject, and little or no support thereafter.

Critical Issues

A question that has arisen since the early 1990s concerns a choice between education as a right or as a means for meeting human resource requirements. This has led to the view

that "where education is not available to every child as that child demands it, then those who receive it must regard it as a privilege and not as a right." (Masogo, 1993 in Brothers et al, 1994:427) In this view economic needs take precedence over education as a fundamental human right:

A developing country such as Botswana faces a dilemma in the provision of education. Should it be a priority? ... Developing countries must face up to the fact that the provision of too much education may create yet another problem, that of the educated unemployed made much more restive by unrealised expectations."

(Masogo, 1993: 426)

This view is also contrary to the humanistic aims of education as outlined in the National Commissions' Reports of 1977 and 1994, and is at odds with the concept of education for empowerment and full participation in the political process of the country, i.e. education for democracy. It also highlights the fact that an educated and restive population is perceived as much more difficult to govern and, unrealised expectations arising from political or pre-election promises increases the demand for transparency and accountability on the part of those in power.

Nevertheless, education receives the largest share of the national budget and investment in education is seen as vital to the development of the country. But so far economic development, which has been extensive in Botswana, has not alleviated the problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality in the country which are considered destabilising factors and confirm Botswana's status as a country with 'negative peace'.

2. Political Education

The political and directional nature of education whether consciously or unconsciously planned can be used as a lever for social change or for maintaining the status quo (Curle, 1973; Thompson, 1981; Freire, 1992; Youngman, 2000). In the context of Botswana, the question is, "Does the relationship between present day rulers and civil society in the educational process follow a similar pattern to that in the pre-independence eras?"

Historical Lessons

Christianisation and Western education reflected the "patriarchal" nature of both Tswana and Western societies, and led to the development of attitudes towards education of female members of society, which are currently being addressed in terms of gender issues in formal and non-formal curricula.

A historical review from colonial times to the present shows not only the colonial legacy and the expansion of education in Botswana since the colonial period, but also the debates about whether the initiatives since Independence have led to more of the same or charted a different path (Parsons 1983). The contradictions that have arisen are between quantity and quality; between democratisation and elitism; and, how education not only contributes to development but also reflects the nature of development (Parsons 1983; RNPE 1994; Youngman, 2000). History also points to the prejudice and discrimination exercised against certain groups which existed prior to colonial influence and which continues to the present (Parsons 1983; Good, 1999).

History also shows that leaders believed in the transformative nature of education that could lead to social change. Botswana royalty and other leaders were opposed to the education of children of the Basarwa and Bakalagadi under their rule because they believed that education would give subject people the same social status as themselves or

give them ideas of social climbing (Parson, 1983; Tlou and Campbell 1997). They also feared that the Christian teaching about the equality of all people might cause their subjects to revolt against their rule, especially those subject to Tswana power.

Challenge and Change

The transformative ability of education, particularly that promoted by NGOs dealing with human rights, democracy and political education, has led to serious accusations being levelled against NGOs by authority figures. Such civil society activity is not welcomed by the state (Olsen, 1993; Molutsi 1995). NGOs have been accused of giving the impression that their ideas represent the majority view in the country and such claims to representation have been rejected by some politicians and members of the judiciary because of a lack of public consultation and defence of wrongdoers at the eleventh hour. NGOs have also been accused of promoting alien cultures that sometimes brought the government into collision with the nation when their role should be to function as part of a system that could enrich democratic principles of good governance and peace (Daily News on line, 27 June 2000). However, the work of NGOs such as *Emang Basadi* and *Metlhaetsile* has now become more acceptable because of their collaborative efforts with Government, chiefs and other authority figures at many levels.

Representatives from many NGOs dealing with political and gender issues have responded to the challenge to their mandate by emphasising their legitimacy through their membership and saw themselves as having as much right to represent their clients and members as churches, for example. Given the low turnout at the recent election (1999) and referendum (2001), some argued that their mandate to represent the people who turn to them for help and those who support them in many ways was as good as, if not greater than, that of some elected representatives in politics.

The Political Education Project (PEP) initiated in 1993 by *Emang Basadi*, a local NGO, represents a major NGO challenge. This project represents a shift in strategy “from the legal awareness campaign to the political empowerment of women” (*Emang Basadi*, 1998:3).

During the pilot phase of PEP the Women’s Manifesto was written in order to educate politicians who often trivialised women’s issues and concerns during public rallies or failed to address them by claiming ignorance of them. Through the Manifesto the intention was to not only “demonstrate that women’s issues are political issues” but also “to convey to the politicians that they could not count on the women’s vote unless they made a commitment to address women’s issues as outlined in their manifesto” (Ibid, p.4)

Since the first edition of the Women’s Manifesto was written in 1994 many of the demands have been addressed “to varying degrees of satisfaction” and include, issues relating to citizenship, gender and discrimination against women, women’s rights and gender equity, and issues relating to rape (*Emang Basadi*, 1999).

The achievement of women’s NGOs in promoting democracy has been attributed to “a favouring international climate” (Derefeldt, 1997:1). International support has also been used in the political organisation and in the defence of the rights of the Bushmen. The Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) tries to pull together a number of organisations that network on the issues of politics, education, and rights in general encompassing human rights, land rights, and resource rights for the San people. Concerned with issues of culture and education the Botswana Chapter of WIMSA advocates strongly on behalf of the Bushmen in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) and other remote areas of Botswana and raises awareness of the day-to-day situation of these people. By trying to prioritise the issues confronting their own people

the Bushmen themselves hope to “learn lessons and ... also teach other people about the situation so there can be a change in attitude” and “in the long term there will be a change in policies and so forth nationally or even internationally.” (M. Ngakaeaja, WIMSA Botswana, Interview, October, 2001)

Tensions in Relationships

Freire (1970:107) argued that “a revolution is achieved with neither verbalism nor activism, but rather with praxis, that is, with reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed. The revolutionary effort to transform these structures radically cannot designate its leaders as its thinkers and the oppressed as mere doers”. Ngakaeaja of WIMSAB presented the tensions and the position of the Bushmen in this regard in the following way:

... if you speak at community level I think it can generate some kind of a tension because obviously the oppressor does not accept the situation that he is oppressing. And then the oppressed also doesn't want to accept that he is being oppressed so in this regard there will be tension. ... if you talk [about] a system of power I can also draw the same collateral. Because now the government will say, I mean the big officials will say, "No we are doing everything for those people. I mean they are just being spoiled those guys. They are just being spoiled." But then we are also getting vocal. That is why we have to organise ourselves through these organisations. We have to do campaigns and so forth because we are feeling it, we are at the receiving end. (M. Ngakaeaja, WIMSA Botswana, interview, October, 2001)

The authoritarian actions and attitudes of those in power in Botswana (Molutsi, 1993; Good, 1999) is being challenged by organisations such as First People of the Kalahari

(FPK), a local NGO, that focuses on political education. This organisation is supported by Survival International, a British based International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO), in its efforts to fight for the cultural and ethnic identity of the Bushmen and their rights, and to promote political education among such so-called minority groups. This has led to tensions between Government and the Bushmen and Government and Survival International. The campaign outside the Botswana High Commission in London (2001) led to “very sour relationships with our government because the government felt that that was not necessary”. (Ngakaeaja interview, 2001) Whether the Government’s current stance is a result of the action taken by Survival International is difficult to say.

The actions and comments by Survival International have also led to poor relationships developing between them and *Ditshwanelo* (The Botswana Centre for Human Rights) who have been accused by Survival International of letting the Basarwa down.

Ditshwanelo on the other hand felt that Survival International have tried to impose their view of the situation and their methods of dealing with the situation onto local NGOs without finding out the local context and the complexity of relations between the different groups involved (*Mmegi* 17 -23 August, 2001; Interview with *Ditshwanelo*, 2001).

The position adopted by Survival International has the potential to create serious economic as well as political problems for Botswana internationally, especially since Survival International is attempting to associate Botswana’s situation with ‘conflict’ or ‘blood’ diamonds.

The tensions that affect the relationship between Government and the organisations that give support to development work among the Bushmen is explained by Ngakaeaja (Interview, 2001) in the following way:

Often they are seen as the perpetrators, as the ones who spoil the oppressed.

Because of the support that they give they are seen as the ones who are spoiling the people. They are making them active and whatever.

Other tensions arise because of the history of colonialism and the link between missionaries and colonialism in the country. Initiatives to bring a positive social change, such as the Kuru Development Project in D'Kar, are not interpreted as attempts to really transform the structures that oppress people. Missionaries or church organisations are seen as promoting neo-colonialism and perpetuating the old ideas.(Ngakaeaja interview, October, 2001; Mmegi, October, 2001) The reluctance on the part of those in authority to engage in dialogue with the disadvantaged stems from the hierarchical nature of Botswana society and from the historical and cultural perceptions of the Bushmen as being inferior to other groups in that society (Parsons, 1983; Good,1999;) According to Good (1998:38):

Passivism, and a large gulf between the ruling elite and the mass of the population, have characterised Botswana's democracy since independence in 1966. ... Poverty and inequalities were structural features of the political economy, and wide values of deference - women to men, the young to the old, the poor to the rich and powerful, etc. - have accompanied them.

Freire (1970:107) has argued that the praxis of the dominant elites and the praxis for liberation of the oppressed are antithetical by nature. This means that the praxis for liberation "cannot tolerate an absurd dichotomy in which the praxis of the people is merely that of following the leaders decisions - a dichotomy reflecting the prescriptive methods of the dominant elites. Revolutionary praxis is a unity, and the leaders cannot

treat the oppressed as their possession.”

Education for Whom?

While external actors such as INGOs need to be educated about the local context, within country there is also the need to educate those in authority, especially decision-makers in the capital, Gaborone, on issues affecting people in remote areas. Strategies for dealing with the tensions between NGOs and the church and the government, and also the tensions between the different NGOs include initiatives that involve NGOs educating the Government. Ngakaeaja feels that it is “the responsibility of NGOs on the ground to educate Government [about] the situation on the ground”. He advocates dialogue and the promotion of a reconciliatory and reconstructive environment:

So to offer your support to be partner to the government is sometimes better and it makes you and government feel you belong to the same camp other than when you stand back and point fingers at each other. With regards to NGOs, I think generally it is the same thing. We have to follow the same strategy of educating, because I personally believe information is power. A lot of the things that are said are 90% based on misconception and people's perspectives rather than on the reality so when you educate and people get to know these things you sort of get a bit closer each time.

(M. Ngakaeaja, WIMSA Botswana, Interview, October, 2001)

The kind of education required for promoting human rights is going through a process of change and ultimately government has to be educated as much as the people. The view that everything comes from central government or that government provides and that government must set up the structures (Views expressed at a Teacher education

Conference in Tonota, Aug, 2001) must be challenged. Education is a multi-faceted process. Government, INGOs and NGOs must be willing to learn as well as providing education to the local communities. Communities need education for rights, “like electoral rights, like educational rights and so forth so that they can team up and join in this process to determine their way forward.” (Ngakaeaja Interview, 2001)

3. Human Rights Education

Human rights education offers many challenges (Starkey, 1991; Rendel, 1991). For Starkey the concern for justice and peace implicit in such education may be a challenge to political and economic priorities, but conversely, ‘the fact of liberal economic policies and the political movements and parties associated with them may, in the end, be a challenge to human rights education itself’ (Starkey:1991, p.133).

Rendel, in considering the contribution of human rights education to the achievement of equality for women, points out the need not only to have and understand human rights but also to use them. By highlighting the poor understanding that many school-leavers have of the connections between political ideas, institutions and rights and their expression in political life (Fisher & Rendel, 1988) she argues:

Such education, in turn, depends on the knowledge and expertise of teachers and through them on the population as a whole. ... The meanings of democracy, freedom and the processes which protect them are not related to issues of equal opportunity. The damaging consequence is that even [the] isolated expressions of equal opportunity are not related to and embedded in the structural and conceptual concepts of democracy and freedom in which they belong.

(Rendel in Starkey (ed) 1991, p.160)

***Ditshwanelo* and the Formal System**

A three year Commonwealth study (DFID, 1997) indicating that human rights education was seriously lacking in Botswana and that children in Botswana have little knowledge and understanding of human rights concepts was exploited by *Ditshwanelo*, the Botswana Centre for Human Rights, in promoting their Human Rights Education Programme (HUREP). As a response to the Commonwealth study a textbook called *Tsa Bana* was produced for schools and the formal sector. The material was reviewed by the Curriculum Department in the Ministry of Education and was accepted and passed without piloting or trial runs in the schools. The book was launched by the then Minister for Education and is now on the prescribed reading list for state schools. However, none of the schools visited at different sites throughout the country during this research was using this text and few had even heard of it.

Although *Ditshwanelo* would like to see a component of the curriculum specifically named Human Rights the Government preferred to have human rights incorporated into existing subjects like Religious Education, Social Studies and Moral Education and looked at how the *Ditshwanelo* books could fit into these. The fact that human rights education was being incorporated in some form was seen as a step forward:

So in a sense without naming the beast they have accepted it. But it is the naming of it by saying human rights which puts people off. So in a sense we are happy it is taken on board that way.

(*Ditshwanelo* Interview, 2001)

Human Rights Education is quite an integral component of the Community Junior

Secondary School curriculum, but confusion arises from an unclear policy on whether the subjects dealing with human rights and peace are core or option subjects on the curriculum. The situation in Primary and Senior Secondary schools is even less clear.

Human Rights and Discipline

Echoing Rendel to some extent *Ditshwanelo* argues that “there is no point in producing material if teachers themselves don’t have a clear understanding of the philosophy of human rights” (Alice Mogwe, *Ditshwanelo*, September, 2001). A recurring theme experienced by *Ditshwanelo* in the human rights education field has been the resistance, usually from some heads of schools. This resistance arose "because of their understanding of the philosophy of human rights and what underlines or underpins human rights concepts". Mogwe points out the misunderstanding:

They [schools] believe that children become unruly, that *Ditshwanelo* teaches people to focus on their rights and to think they’re allowed to do anything they want to do, and some might even have chosen to attribute school strikes etc. to the effects of this human rights awareness issue. ... It’s not a matter of just saying you have entitlements, you also have duties towards others around you. So clearly that is an area which we’ve identified as requiring attention, even at the teacher training level, so that teachers themselves are eventually steeped in the whole human rights culture. If they are expected to teach something they don’t understand obviously it poses some difficulty.

(Interview, Alice Mogwe, *Ditshwanelo*, Gaborone, September, 2001)

The perception that educating for human rights in some way exacerbates the discipline situation in schools was mentioned by NGOs involved in Human Rights Education and by teachers at a number of schools visited. The fact that some students demand their

rights and use knowledge of their rights as leverage against the authority of the teachers in the schools greatly exasperates teachers and led to at least one NGO terminating its human rights education for students in schools because of the complaints of disruption following such sessions.

Part of the blame for the disturbances and the lack of control in the schools has been attributed to teachers themselves, to their poor understanding of both the philosophy of human rights and to their own perceptions of the positions of authority that they hold as teachers in schools. Cultural contradictions regarding children also add to the problem.

I think it goes back to the extreme contrast between a culture which does not have as part of its basis certain notions of human rights. ... there are certain aspects particularly in relation to children, in relation to how you relate to authority, how you relate to individual rights, and respect of individual rights, which may well clash with the cultural way in which both the teacher and the child have been brought up. And that may well be why one tends to see this reaction and this tendency on the side of the child to focus on rights. Because all they've been told is responsibility and duty: to respect your elder, your teacher, your culture, your this, your that and suddenly you are told you actually have a right to do ... (Ibid)

In an attempt to overcome this *Ditshwanelo* used integrated methods that involved both teachers and students working closely together and encouraged the establishment of human rights clubs in schools. However, it was pointed out during this research by a number of headteachers that any initiative of that kind, even where the head of the school was in favour of it, would not only require the backing of the staff in the school but also the support of the parents. And these were not always forthcoming because of the

experiences referred to above and also because of attitudes to discipline among parents and teachers, especially the use of corporal punishment. The perception among the teaching profession at tertiary level, especially in some teacher training colleges, that *Ditshwanelo* promotes the cause of wrongdoers rather than those of the victims of violence and crime does not help the situation.

The Question of Culture

The alleged value differences between African and Western societies and the concomitant cultural relativism regarding human rights (Howard, 1986; Mogwe 1993; Kaballo, 1995) is a recurring theme in interview data for this research. The view that individual human rights and issues relating to human rights are alien concepts that contradict culture is one that Human Rights educators must grapple with. This is another issue taken up by *Ditshwanelo* who encourage those involved in building a human rights culture to "to look within the broader context of the culture" and to look for "those positive elements where there are examples of rights which are balanced with responsibilities" and to point out that it is "not such an alien concept" (Mogwe, 2001). Mogwe considers it very unfortunate that human rights education at the international level often contributes to the problem:

... Sadly you find even in Europe when you attend human rights courses, we are taught that human rights started in Europe [which] reinforces that idea that our own cultures don't have a human rights perspective. And of course internationally one has seen the development of human rights beyond the first and second generation rights [and] towards the third generation but they've been greatly influenced by countries in the South.

(Alice Mogwe, Interview, September, 2001)

Comparative politics questions the appropriateness of Western derived rights concepts and standards to societies with different political traditions and levels of economic development. International Relations emphasises the practical limitations of any human rights project in a world in which national and ethnic loyalties remain pervasive, and individual states still control the means of effective law enforcement (Beetham, 1992). The tensions that human rights education can give rise to in Botswana was clearly stated by Ngakaeaja of WIMSAB (2001):

So that kind of education it brings you to know, to accept, to understand somebody else. A likely threat when you talk about this kind of education is, you know, Africa is known to be a country that was torn by civil war which was largely related to tribalism. So often when marginalised groups or minority groups or indigenous communities are advocating for their right of identification and acceptance and tolerance this often confuses with tribalism and people try to shy away from it.

This observation is borne out in interviews with Ministry of Education personnel who believe that the discussion concerning tribalism or ethnicism should be toned down because most people tend to focus on the negative aspects of the debate rather than on the positive. This stance, they assert, is adopted by politicians and senior civil servants because of their own education and experiences of travelling abroad which brought home to them the dangers of tribalism and ethnicism.

Scepticism about the philosophy of human rights has a long history from Burke and Bentham's critique of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man to present-day political theorists, including Marxists and Feminists. Marginal status is further reinforced by an academic division of labour, which has assigned the study of

human rights to the discipline of law rather than politics (Beetham, 1992). In interviews Alice Mogwe and Unity Dow pointed out that because the study of human rights is assigned to the discipline of law does not mean that lawyers are interested in human rights *per se* but that the law is necessary for the protection of human rights. The distinction between the disciplinary perspectives are identified as follows by Beetham (1995:6):

For law the central focus is upon justiciability For lawyers the challenge of human rights is to render them justiciable.

For political science, on the other hand, the central focus of the discipline is upon the struggle to influence and control the exercise of public power. From this standpoint, a number of distinct perspectives on human rights emerge. ...

One is the way in which the language of human rights is appealed to and becomes a subject of contestation in the process of political struggle, whether between states or within them.

This distinction is reflected in the views of Patrick van Rensburg (1998: 109) who states that “human rights have largely had to be fought for, and need at all times to be defended and extended, in specific, concrete, socio-economic, material and cultural conditions. ... Moreover, contests over human rights are usually political, pitting left against right. ”

The role of culture in human rights discourses raises many questions. Different perspectives were presented in interviews concerning the importance of culture, some in favour of preserving traditional cultural practices while others argued that culture is not static and is constantly changing in the light of other developments taking place in the country. The situation in Botswana is compounded by the existence of two legal and political systems operating in the country. Problems arise when there is insufficient

debate about the issues and when there is reluctance to make decisions about what needs to be rejected or retained by the culture.

At the continental level the shortcomings of adopting the dualistic approach to culture in Africa are highlighted by Sidgi Kaballo (in Beetham, 1995:190): He argues that such an approach assumes that “culture is a static unitary whole unaffected by changes in economic and social structures”, but the reality is different:

... cultures change due to changes in economic and social structures, to education and to interrelation with other cultures. Cultures are not closed systems, though they differ in their degree of openness and the speed and extent to which they respond to changes. ... African societies are not any more communal, consensual or egalitarian. The second shortcoming of the relativist approach is that it is inconsistent in dealing with other cultures, especially Western culture. The authoritarian elites select what they adopt and what they reject of ‘Western culture’. (Ibid)

Human Rights and Politics

To understand why Government doesn't have a history of human rights promotion there is a need to look to the broader historical experience of Botswana and political perceptions of Botswana internationally (Interview with *Ditshwanelo* representative, 2001).

We haven't had a struggle culture using struggle in the way in which it is used in Southern Africa, if you like. South Africa has a struggle culture, Zimbabwe, Namibia. We didn't go through that and I believe that has led to a lower level of political consciousness, of political awareness

than you find amongst average groups of people in [these] countries. That has tended to of course be exacerbated by the fact that Botswana is a liberal democracy and for a long time has been the 'darling of the North' or the West because of the kind of political policies which our government has followed right from 1966. ... So Botswana was, as they often say, the shining example of democracy on the continent of Africa.

(Interview with Alice Mogwe, *Ditshwanelo*, 2001)

The link between human rights and politics is what makes human rights such a contentious topic in Botswana. Most NGOs do not refer to human rights even though they deal with human rights issues in their training and capacity building programmes. When asked about the absence of any reference to human rights in some NGO programmes, even though human rights issues were addressed, it was stated that reference to human rights would suggest that something was amiss and it was not the intention of the organisation to present such a view. On the contrary most NGOs wanted to stress Botswana's excellent record on human rights and that it had never been accused of violating anyone's human rights.

Such views are problematic given the accusations levelled at the Botswana Government by both local and international NGOs (*Ditshwanelo*, *Emang Basadi*, Survival International, Amnesty International) with respect to the rights of women, the rights of the San or Bushmen, and capital punishment. Criticisms have also come from U.S. State Department and the United Nations regarding the rights of prisoners, women and, according to the UN, the failure of Botswana's constitution in terms of provision for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although these reports have in turn been questioned by some in Botswana because of the representative sample of data used and the criteria used for analysis (Interview with representative from the Women's Affairs

Department, 2002, The Botswana Guardian, 2 Nov. 2001)

However, the recent admonition of Botswana by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) for failing to present regular country reports on human rights serves to illustrate the point even further. It has been reported that "Botswana has not been depositing reports with the ACHPR because it is happy about its human rights records. The country took it for granted that it had no human rights violations to report" (Mmegi Online, 24 - 30 May 2002).

The impression gained is that talk of human rights is too political in Botswana and therefore it is best to refer to issues of social development in less political terms such as empowerment, capacity building and skills training, voter education, gender issues and so forth.

The political association with any human rights discourse therefore inevitably affects discussions about education for human rights. The strong association between human rights education and political education is pointed out by Ngakaeaja:

I think there is a very strong relationship between human rights education and political education. Because once you realise that your rights are being trampled on or are being violated and you are being disadvantaged somehow you would somehow try to seek for a redress on the status of your rights. And one option of doing that is through politics, becoming vocal and active in the politics. In this way you may make a change on the situation of your rights.

But the role of human rights in political discourses is marginalised not only because human rights occupies a marginal position within the discipline of political science and

the existence of “a persistent scepticism about the status of human rights within all the main branches of the discipline” (Beetham, 1995:1). Beetham’s view that “political theorists are uncomfortable with the philosophical presuppositions of human rights” also compounds the issue by offering possibilities for politicians to dismiss a philosophy of human rights in the first place and thereby casting doubt on the value of human rights arguments in political discourses. However, whatever the perspectives of political scientists, political activity amongst Botswana communities does take into consideration human rights thinking and incorporates it into analysis of current situations and in political education as indicated by Ngakaeaja above.

Nevertheless the way in which discourses can be manipulated by those in positions of power, as expounded by Foucault, and bearing in mind Freire’s theories of cultural action which develop from antialogical and dialogical matrices we need to consider human activity in terms of praxis and not just in terms of theory.

Education for Human Rights has had to grapple with such issues in the context of Botswana and the process is an on-going one.

Some Conclusions to date

The extent to which Education for *Kagisano*, as it is outlined in the NPE and the RNPE, has contributed to Botswana's peace building in terms of Galtung’s definition of positive peace over the past twenty five years is difficult to assess. Evaluation of personal development that leads to the betterment of society is relative and depends on how personal development and/or the betterment of society is defined. Even using the national principles and the concepts of social justice, interdependence, and mutual assistance can lead to different responses. Botswana is known as a democratic country with adult

suffrage and a free press, and has been hailed as an economic success story with little or no open internal strife (Harvey & Lewis, 1990; Molutsi & Holm 1990; Molutsi, 1993). Therefore, it could be argued that there has been a real contribution to *kagisano*. However, Mannathoko (1994:481) argues that Botswana's democracy is "under threat because the evolution of democracy at the macro-level has not been matched by a concomitant development of democracy at micro levels - in institutions such as schools, colleges, the university and in civil society".

My own observations and interview data from educators in both the formal and non-formal sectors support this view. In this research, recurring themes frequently referred to in interviews include, social breakdown, especially that of the extended family, rising crime rates, increased individualism and competitiveness among people in the country. All have been attributed to the demise of *botho* (humaneness and respect) because of education and educational policy, which has promoted competition and rapid economic development above social justice.

Reconciling the aims of education for *kagisano* and social justice and education for manpower planning and economic development has not been successfully accomplished. In the formal sector, which is mostly controlled by government, emphasis has been on preparing the youth for "the world of work" (RNPE, 1993:21) even if employment prospects for the majority of school leavers look bleak. Less importance has been put on the social and moral aspects of the curriculum as evidenced by the quality of preparation and input into this area of formal education.

There is also doubt about the extent to which educational policy has contributed positively to nation building. The Government's language policy, as it currently stands, is increasingly being seen by educators and others as a major barrier to the realisation of

access to education and education as a right for all Batswana citizens (le Roux, 1999; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999). This in turn affects the promotion of education for peace and human rights in the country.

The extent to which social developments leading to structural and institutional change are the result of state education or of education promoted by other bodies and non-governmental organisations is difficult to assess. Evidence from interviews, participant observation and literature reviews in this research suggests that the educational input of the latter has had a major influence particularly with regard to gender and other equity issues relating to social justice, perhaps more so than the state sector through formal education.

Evidence from this research also indicates that civil society is hampered by financial constraints, which prevent the promotion of education for peace and human rights. NGOs operate with few staff and limited resources. This curtails their ability to raise sufficient awareness among the general public not only about the issues but also about the nature of their work, which is sometimes portrayed in a different light by the media and others who have greater access to resources and means of communication.

There is a general reluctance to talk about human rights in Botswana, not only in schools but also among the NGO and CBO fraternity. Ignorance about the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) means that the legal implications of the Government having ratified these conventions are not understood. All of which points to serious misunderstandings regarding the philosophy of human rights and its role in the democratic process.

The interaction of Government with INGOS and NGOs, raise further issues relating to dependence, interdependence and exploitation. In terms of democracy there is a greater need for more open dialogue and a willingness to address the issue of human rights in general in Botswana, particularly where matters of culture and education are concerned. Botswana has to grapple not only with its domestic understanding of peace and human rights but also with how such understanding can contribute to a universal perspective. It is in this regard that the role of international organisations and their relationship to both Government and local NGOs in the context of Botswana can be more fully understood.

Notes

1. A person who is a Botswana national is known as a Motswana. Batswana is the plural of Motswana.
2. According to the Draft National NGO/CBO Policy for Botswana, "The majority of NGOs found in Botswana today are a result of post-independence development while Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have always existed at grassroots level in a variety of forms. Their formation was based on community needs." (<http://www.bocongo.bw/NGO/cbo1.htm>)
3. The Twana groups refer to those who belong to the eight tribes mentioned in the Constitution of Botswana, namely the Bakgatla, Bakwena, Bamelete, Bamangwato, Bangwaketse, Barolong, Batawana and Batlokwa. Many other ethnic groups exist in Botswana and outnumber the eight mentioned in the Constitution.
4. Setswana is the national language of Botswana whilst English is the official language of the country. Setswana is spoken as a first language by those belonging to the eight groups referred to above, but it is also used by other groups in the country as a second or third language. Some people in Botswana, including indigenous groups and some foreigners, have little or no knowledge of Setswana.
5. Ikalanga is the language of the Kalanga people, mainly located in the north-eastern part of Botswana and who share this language with other groups in parts of Zimbabwe.
6. Vision 2016 is the name commonly used for the document entitled *Towards Prosperity For All*, the Long Term Vision for Botswana which sets out what kind of society the people of Botswana would like to have by the year 2016 when Batswana will be celebrating their fiftieth anniversary of independence.
7. By local NGOs I mean those non-governmental organisations set up and run by Batswana individuals and groups operating in Botswana only, as opposed to NGOs set up and supported by international operators such as churches and international aid organisations.
8. Some authors refer to the indigenous groups of Southern Africa as the San people. During this research the people concerned preferred to be called Bushmen.

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