

## Special Education in Botswana: Social inclusion or exclusion?

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### **Abstract**

*This study focuses on Government policy and practice in Special Education in Botswana since independence. Using official, secondary and unpublished sources, Government policy and the practice of the Ministry of Education is described and analysed. Attention is paid to practice prior to and after the 1993 second Education Commission and the subsequent revised plan published in 1994. The Government's intention of using Special Education as a vehicle for social inclusion is noted, and then assessed in accord with practice. To facilitate the discussion a hypothesis is offered: whilst Government policy is aimed at social inclusion, in practice it effects social exclusion. Policy is evaluated in the light of operational practice, and the factors that impinge on this are taken into account. Particular attention is paid to socio-economic and cultural factors and the Government's middle- and long-term plans. The evidence suggests that the hypothesis is valid. In conclusion, suggestions are offered as to what would have to be done to ensure that Special Education could become a vehicle to social inclusion in Botswana.*

### **Background**

This case study focuses on Government policy and practice in Special Education in Botswana since Botswana attained independence. There was no formal Government provision in colonial times, and only in the last two decades has there been Government commitment to the education of children with special needs. This neglect is not because the Government and people of Botswana have willingly neglected those in need of special education. One key to this is that at independence Botswana was amongst the poorest countries in the world: in less than four decades it has become a middle-income country (The African Exception, 2002).

This transformation is the result of identifying mainstream education as a priority area. In developing an appropriate educational infrastructure prior attention has been given to general education and, more recently, to education for economic growth (Government of Botswana, 1977; Government of Botswana, 1993). Consequently the Ministry of Education has not given priority to the children with Special Education needs, but it has not been ignored. Before 1984 non-Government and voluntary bodies dominated this field. In that year the first formal Government commitment was made to special education by moving "the Special Education Unit from the Department of Primary and upgrading it to a Department" (Matale, 2002:1).

The Ministry of Education has been proactive in this field for less than twenty years, and this is reflected in both policy and practice. Lessons have been learned from the experience of others. From the outset, the Government was committed to integrating or including those with special needs in mainstream education.

Unlike developments in other countries where special schools preceded integrated programmes, Botswana's first provision adopted the "open" system of special education in which children with special needs are mainstreamed or integrated into ordinary schools. Thus, Botswana is said to have short-cut history by learning from the mistakes committed by others. (Matale, 2002:3)

Learning from others has had benefits and advantages in formulating policy and practice. In promoting integration or inclusion, Botswana has gained experience that may be relevant to other countries in a developmental context. But in deciding whether this is so, it must also be remembered that Botswana is a parliamentary democracy with a stable economy and that it has a small population. This context has implications for those responsible for educational policy and practice (Bray & Packer, 1993). The operational milieu must be taken into account when assessing the relevance of one country's experience in relation to another.

In assessing Government policy and practice in special Education it is important to bear in mind the context of policy and practice. This includes the country's size, history, culture and economy, as well as the educational infrastructure within which Special Education provision is made. It must also include the factors that underpin policy, such as quality assurance and related educational practices. To facilitate analysis the following hypothesis will be explored:

Whilst the policy of the Government of Botswana towards Special Education is commitment to social inclusion, its operational practices effect exclusion.

### **Policy, Practice And Terminology**

The operational milieu of any educational system governs policy and practice, including provision for Special Education. This milieu includes features that determine what a system, or a component of it (in this case Special Education), may be allowed or not allowed to do; what is expected or not expected of Special Education; what Special Education is permitted or not permitted to do; and the possibilities that can be achieved through Special Education (Hopkin, 2003).

These features of the context may be political, cultural, economic and others, including legal ones. Societal expectations are important, so Special Needs Education has to take note of stakeholders and all involved. The Ministry of Education's responses to these should help determine how Special Education is delivered and its functions in the education system. In Botswana Special Education is perceived in conventional terms, and is mainly restricted to those of school age. The mentally handicapped and retarded, those with visual and hearing impairments and the physically handicapped are all included in this (Ministry of Education, 2001: 29). In practice the principal focus is to ensure that those covered have: equality of educational opportunity; are prepared for social integration through being in mainstream schools; are assessed at an early stage so that they receive individualised education; and community and parental support is sought when educating them. Gifted and talented learners are not included so the concept of special needs in Botswana is limited (Government of Botswana, 1994: 8).

In providing places, the Government's commitment is primarily to the mentally retarded and the mentally handicapped (Dart, 2000). Some provision is now being made for children with visual and hearing impairments in units in a few state primary and community junior secondary schools.

Non-Government agencies, those with experience and expertise in these areas, cater for most learners with visual and hearing impairment, and the severely disabled. Grants-in-aid are made to the controlling authorities, thereby extending provision. Pupils in these and Government institutions are enabled to take public examinations and to move to the next stage schools if they satisfy the entry criteria. Government provision of diagnostic and testing services has increased, and this is aimed at detecting handicap and early detection. In addition the Ministry of Education collaborates with the Ministry of Health to identify learners with severe problems to enable them to receive education outside the country, mainly in South Africa (Ministry of Education, 2001). But the demand for these services exceeds the supply, and too few places are available for the learners needing Special Education.

Government policy does aim at social inclusion for the mentally retarded, and those with visual and hearing impairment. Policy also decrees the inclusion of others in the Special Needs category: they are prepared for life and living at home. How effective this policy is in practice is open to question:

While the policy guidelines and recommendations have been clearly articulated, the implementation of special education has been fraught with numerous challenges (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 1)

### **Socio-Cultural, Economic, Historical, Demographic And Geographical Factors**

Any analysis of Special Education policy, provision and practice in Botswana must take into account cultural, economic, historical, demographic and geographical factors, and their implications. Too little attention is paid to traditional mores in the research and writing on Special Education in Botswana, yet these are features of Government policy and long-term planning (Presidential Task Group, 1997). Traditional mores, practices and relationships are important features of the lives of the Batswana. They feel a clear obligation to attend funerals where traditional practices are observed whereby all who attend are fed. Principals of colleges are reluctant to engage in open days because the colleges are unable to cater for visitors as tradition requires. The democratic spirit of the *kgotla* appears to prevail in meetings even in modern organisations, and there is strong but silent pressure to follow due processes when decisions have to be made (Stedman, 1993). Even individuals working in the modern sectors seem to be conscious of their obligations, and engage in traditional economic practices such as the keeping of cattle and maintaining a cattle post.

Vision 2016 aims at maintaining tradition and cultural norms (Presidential Task Group, 1997). Dart and his colleagues (Dart & Keerate, 2002) invoke the spirit of *kagisano* (social harmony) in concluding their work on School Intervention Teams. However, the study took little note of such practices. Surprisingly little reference is made to tradition in policy and practice in Special Education. Yet the policy commitment to social inclusion exemplifies the spirit of *kagisano* which implies that society has obligations to the halt, the lame and the mentally retarded. This reflects the Tswana concept of *botho* (respect for the humanity in all human beings), a concept incorporated in Vision 2016 (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 59). This elusive concept, akin to the Zulu term *ubuntu*, places an obligation on individuals to acknowledge the essential humanness of others. A

participant in a Special Education seminar in 2002 encapsulated this in the following:

I would like to start with a word of caution, that as we discuss the problems experienced by implementers of Special Education we should avoid the temptation of turning the students into problems....they too are human beings created in the image of God like you and me....at times, we talk about them as if they are a burden to society. Let us separate the people from the problems they experience. (Kauraisa, 2002: 1)

Any critique of Special Education in Botswana must take into account traditional mores and values. But Botswana has been and is modernising at an astonishing speed (Lewis, 1993). The shift to an increasingly urban and wage-earning population has brought strains on traditional relationships, especially the extended family, and this has been exacerbated by the AIDS crisis. In the 'nineties the life expectancy of females and males in Botswana was 69 years and 66 years respectively. Today it is an alarming 34 years and 35 years (The Economist, 2003: 77). These socio-economic factors impact on Special Education, as AIDS directly or indirectly affects learners.

The Government of Botswana commitment to capacity building also affects Special Education. However, expenditure on education is seen as economic investment, and in this field the Government's record has been commendable since independence. Emphasis has been placed on human resource development, good fiscal practices and good governance (Stedman, 1993). Budget surpluses were a feature of the Seventh and Eighth National Development Plans, and impressive economic growth of at least 6% per annum was achieved (University of Botswana Department of Institutional Planning, 2001). In the 1994 Revised National Policy (RNP) on Education the Government committed itself to a forward looking and comprehensive policy for Special Education. Seven pages of the 43 devoted to educational planning dealt with Special Education (Government of Botswana, 1994: 13-56). When the Government undertook to significantly expand provision for Special Education the economy had been and was buoyant, and funds were available.

Historical factors have affected Special Education provision. Before 1984 Government involvement was minimal (Dart, Didimalang & Pilime, 2002). It was only from 1969 that voluntary and non-Government groups started their work when facilities for educating blind children were set up in Mochudi, and later for deaf children at Ramotswa. It was another decade before the Government became involved and this set a pattern. An inclusive policy was to be followed for the mentally handicapped who were normally taught in ordinary schools. Learners with hearing or sight impairment were the provinces of grant-aided non-Government organisations: the severely handicapped would be sent to institutions outside the country (Government of Botswana, 1993).

Special Education units were henceforth to be set up in primary and junior secondary schools. The aim was to raise the standards of the learners in these units so that they could be relocated to mainstream classes. Furthermore, responsibility for Special Education was to be shared. The Ministry of Local Government was to become responsible for maintaining and equipping primary schools. The Ministry of Education's responsibilities included employing and paying teachers (Ministry of Education, 2001). The Ministry of Health also had responsibilities with respect to diagnosis and care of the severely disabled. This sharing of responsibilities was to

have important effects on putting Special Education policy into practice.

Geography and demography also affect provision for Special Education. Botswana has a small population scattered over a large area, and this has its impact on Special Education provision (Bray & Packer, 1993; Dallas, 1995: 47). Many live in villages, and in 1993 it was estimated that nearly 40,000 children were in need of Special Education (Government of Botswana, 1993: 315). Demographic factors mean that it would be uneconomic to set up day schools for many in the Special Education category. They have to be taught in expensive residential schools.

Compared with others in Africa, Botswana may well be a middle-income, well-managed and wealthy country. But Government policy and practice in education can only be assessed in the milieu within which it operates. The factors that operate in this milieu may enhance the obstacles facing the Government in the Special Education field.

### **Official Goals**

Two documents encapsulate current Government policy and planning. The National Development Plan Nine deals with the short and middle term from 2004 - 2009 (Government of Botswana, 2003). Vision 2016 looks to the long term and envisages Botswana after fifty years of independence (Presidential Task Group, 1997). Each is forward-looking; the vision statement is courageous and perspicacious. Botswana, in 2016, will be a modern state, yet it will feature traditional values including *kagisano* and *botho*. Those who need Special Education will be catered for and should share in and contribute to the country's anticipated development.

The Ministry of Education and its Special Education Unit will play key roles. The policy initiated in 1995 will be the basis for expansion to ensure that Special Education will promote social inclusion. Government provision will continue to focus on the mentally retarded, the provision of specialist support and diagnostic services. Support will continue for non-Government organisations through grants-in-aid, and bursaries being provided for those needing care both within and without the country. Limited provision will also be given to educate audio- and vision-impaired learners in Government schools. In addition, allocation of resources and suitable monitoring practices will remain the domain of the Department of Special Education and other Ministry of Education Departments as appropriate (Ministry of Education, 2001).

A forward-thinking policy for Special Education is critically important. Present and future policy distinguishes the roles of the various stakeholders, and puts in place developmental plans that identify resources needed, and how they are to be generated and deployed. Thus the supply of teachers is planned for, and the roles of the Government institutions and the University have been identified (Abosi, 1996). Constraints on provision for Special Education have been taken into account. In short, the short-, middle- and long-term strategies in place for Special Education are comprehensive and imaginative.

### **Government Operational Practices**

The 1993 Commissioners were frank about the state of Special Education: the Government of Botswana had neglected it. From 1977 the Government had focused on universal access to education, but "its provision for children who require special education remains largely unrealised."

(Government of Botswana, 1993: 307) Only 339 learners attended the eighteen Government aided institutions that offered Special Education (Government of Botswana, 1993: 310). The data available was poor but the Commissioners accepted that UNESCO was realistic in stating that 10% of a school population needed Special Education. In accepting this they acknowledged that, in Botswana in 1994, 377-367 places were required (Government of Botswana, 1993: 315).

Proposals were made to remedy the shortage of places. A comprehensive scheme was drawn up to make up this deficiency over the next fifteen years. This scheme included the provision of remediation places, the setting up of units, the allocation of bursaries, the further development of the Central Resources Centre and the setting up of others, and the training of teachers specialising in Special Education (Government of Botswana, 1993: 329-330). This comprehensive action plan was based on a policy of social inclusion. Whilst the essence of these recommendations was incorporated in the subsequent plan, the time frame was not included (Government of Botswana, 1994: 45-46). Furthermore, the RNP also ensured that responsibility for Special Education would be shared between the Ministries of Education, Health and Local Government (Government of Botswana, 1994: 43). Policy implementation and practice from 1994 was divided between stakeholders, the two main ones being the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government.

### **Putting Policy into Practice**

It has been a decade since the RNP was implemented, and its effects on Special Education can be assessed. In 1993, 339 were catered for. By 2000 this had increased to 558: the number of institutions (Government and non-Government) had increased by one to 19 (Ministry of Education, 2000:29). These figures suggest that the anticipated increase to about 37,000 places is not being realised. Furthermore, the impact of a population increase and of HIV/AIDS probably meant that the demand for Special Education had increased. The number of places available for Special Needs learners was 1% of the number required.

Stakeholders have not fulfilled expectations. The Ministry of Local Government and the local councils have been particularly remiss. Local councils have provided erratic and inconsistent support: they have allocated few resources; budget ceilings hamper the implementation of the RNP provision for Special Education; and some local councils have not budgeted for Special Education. Lip service only has been paid: "all the local authorities interviewed spoke vehemently about the need for Special Education to be provided for" (Ministry of Education, 2001: 26). The Ministry of Education has yet to convince their partners about why Special Education should be supported:

most stakeholders do not understand the benefits that will accrue from a comprehensive implementation of the Special Education programmes to both special needs learners and the mainstream learners. It is important that all stakeholders should be sensitised to these benefits as well as the need to support these programmes. (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 9).

Policy has been put into practice in one area - the training of teachers for Special Education

– an area that received considerable attention by the Commissioners in 1993 and the RNP in 1994. This key area had been neglected prior to 1994. Only 44 Special Education teachers - all trained abroad - were available in 1992 for the 18 units and schools (Government of Botswana, 1993: 310 & 312). From 1994 a range of training programmes up to the M.Ed. level was set up to satisfy anticipated requirements in Special Education. This programme was to cover the institutions and services, and all teacher trainees were to be exposed to Special Education programmes. These recommendations were broadly endorsed in the RNP (Government of Botswana, 1994: 42-3).

Since that time appropriate programmes have been developed in the Primary and Secondary Colleges of Education. Pre-service programmes leading to the Diplomas in Primary and Secondary Education include Special Education as a mandatory component (University of Botswana, 2001). A Special Education option is available in the Diploma in Primary Education. Programmes offered in the University of Botswana now include a range of Special Education training programmes from Diploma to Masters. As a result, by 2002, fifteen were graduating each year in Special Education in three special areas - the mentally handicapped, and the audio- and visual- impaired (University of Botswana, 2002).

### **The Effect of Policy on Practice**

Government policy and practice in Special Education takes place within a milieu, and are critically important for those working in the field of Special Education. A comprehensive analysis of the factors underlying this milieu is beyond the scope of this paper. It is, therefore, proposed to assess three strategic areas when considering the validity, or otherwise, of the hypothesis proposed earlier. These are: measures taken relating to Special Education in Basic Education; curricular factors; and teacher training for delivering Special Education.

Provision of Special Education in Basic Education has been undertaken through a two-pronged approach. The first to expand provision through increasing the number and the size of units attached to schools, and to support voluntary agencies in providing for hearing and visual impaired, and disabled learners. Government provision would focus on the mentally retarded and, where possible, getting learners back into mainstream education (Government of Botswana, 1994: 40). Since 1992, one unit has been added and enrolment has increased by nearly two-thirds. This has led to over-crowding and increased strain on provision of resources.

In practice there has been no official monitoring of these units. One investigation shows that the units are under-resourced and over-crowded (Dart, Didimalang & Pilime, 2002). If quality is perceived as “fitness for purpose” (Newton, 2002: 45), it is clear that these institutions are not quality institutions, and are wanting in nearly all respects. Furthermore, the vision and mission statements of the Ministry of Education include commitment to a Performance Management System (Ministry of Education, 2001: 23). There are neither internal nor external quality assurance or performance management processes in place to determine whether performance is in accordance with vision statements or pre-determined criteria.

A second prong in the strategy to promoting Special Needs Education was using School Intervention Teams (SIT). SIT is a strategy through which schools are empowered to meet the educational needs of all learners. This programme is intended to improve performance of special

needs learners. (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 5)

Senior teachers trained in this field were expected to take responsibility for Special Education in their schools through setting up School Intervention Teams. These would cater for remediation, assessment of educational needs and the needs of learners in their schools. This seemingly attractive and straightforward policy has not been taken up in the schools (Dart & Keerate, 2002). Furthermore, the “programme has not been successful because stakeholders have not been active in the monitoring of its implementation” (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 5).

Dart & Keerate’s case study shows how effective such a team can be. But it is atypical: it had strong support from a College of Education with a committed Special Education Department. In addition, five schools showed interest in setting up SITs, but only the school in the case study installed one (Dart & Keerate, 2002). The outcomes of this case study are encouraging, and the efforts of the school and college bore fruit. But if the SIT strategy is to become widespread then coherent direction, support and monitoring from outside the schools is required in the middle term. This has not been widely available to date.

Social inclusion in Special Education means all learners should follow the same curriculum but adaptations should be made as required. Learners need to be removed from mainstream classes if necessary, and then returned when feasible. The rationale for this offered by the 1993 Commissioners is ambiguous (Government of Botswana, 1994: 326). Furthermore, the official stance is that no separate curriculum should be offered for Special Education learners, and that adaptations be made to the curriculum used at each level (Tlale, 2002). This can disadvantage those at whom Special Education is aimed. Furthermore, some units followed the inappropriate South African curriculum. As there are no guidelines on how to modify syllabuses, adaptation has been haphazard and unsystematic. It has emerged that Special Education requires: “The development of a curriculum suitable for the Botswana context and based on the Botswana Primary Curriculum should be an urgent priority” (Dart, Didimalang & Pilime, 2002: 43).

At the secondary level some Special Education learners take public examinations such as the Botswana Junior Certificate Examination, an examination where candidates take a cluster of subjects. No concession is made to Special Education candidates, and visually impaired students are seriously disadvantaged when taking practical subjects. These examinations may assess competencies that are beyond the capacity of a candidate with visual impairment. Good candidates are, therefore, unable to satisfy the criteria for moving on to the next stage of schooling. In addition, the design of question papers is such that visually impaired candidates are unable to do themselves justice: “All concerned should be educated about the need to level the playing fields by doing more for students with special education needs” (Tlale, 2002: 7). That which is being asked for is justice, and not the lowering of standards.

Progress has been made in preparing teachers for Special Education. The Diplomas in Primary and Secondary Education programmes of the Colleges of Education offer courses in Special Education for all students. From 1994 the University of Botswana installed a specialist diploma, and first and higher degree level programmes in Special Education (Abosi, 1996). Bursaries are provided for students to specialise in areas for which training in Botswana is not available.



The attitude that Special Education meant preparation for teaching mixed ability classes no longer prevails in Colleges of Education. Indeed, in numerical terms, the aim specified in the Revised National Policy on Education of producing an output of ninety teachers for Special Education has apparently been achieved (Government of Botswana, 1994: 43).

In reality recruiting and retaining teachers for Special Education remains largely unsatisfactory. College programmes are designed to raise awareness. Even the “specialisation” offered in the primary colleges does little more than introduce students to the basic competencies for this field. The lack of specialist equipment and staff prevents more being done (Nwaogu, 2001; 2002). In 2003 the secondary Colleges also lacked the equipment necessary to train Special Education teachers (Quality Assurance and Standards Review Committee, 2002). Furthermore, when appointed to posts, some products of these programmes “tended to conceal their knowledge on special education” (Ministry of Education, 2001: 26).

Specialists trained in the University have also faced disadvantages. In 2002 there were less than twenty institutions concentrating on Special Education. Furthermore, these were treated like ordinary schools when allocating posts of responsibility. Consequently, these schools had unsuitable staffing ratios.

Internationally 6-8 special needs education learners constitute a class equivalent to 40-45. In Botswana this is not the case. Since the criteria for determining posts of responsibility is based on the size of an ordinary school, the special schools therefore end up as group three schools which do not have posts of responsibility (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 3). This limits opportunities for promotion, and “this results in qualified teachers leaving the special schools on promotion to become Senior Teachers, Heads of Department and Deputy Heads of ordinary schools” (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 3).

Specialised training may not be utilised, and University graduates use their second major as an avenue for promotion. This absence of a career structure is a major barrier to the extending of Special Education, as “Special education teachers are perhaps the quintessential case of ‘scarce skills’” (Tlale, 2002: 3). Yet teaching in this field is unattractive. Furthermore, the absence of incentives has discouraged individual teachers from implementing the School Intervention Team strategy. The few Senior Teachers (Special Needs) and Heads of Department (Learning Difficulties) who have been appointed face demanding teaching loads (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001). In short, the Ministry of Education has been blinkered in the way in which they have used Special Education staff.

### **Deficiencies In Special Education Provision**

Dividing responsibility between the Ministries of Education and Local Government for primary education has not worked. Primary education was severely criticised by the 1993 Commissioners. In consequence Special Education has suffered. Special units have not been built; facilities have not been provided and, despite protestations by individual councillors and some councils, few goods have been delivered: indeed, “Some Councils had not prepared for Special Education in their NDP8 budgets” (Ministry of Education, 2001: 26). Matters are unlikely to improve in Special Education if dual control is retained.

Bureaucracy and “playing by the book” is a feature of small states (Bray & Packer, 1993). Botswana is no exception, and this handicaps Special Education. Transport is a major problem for children who are in this category, especially those in wheelchairs. Schools have authority to make provision for these but:

Unfortunately, very few schools provide transport. The majority of students struggle to reach school every day and end up dropping out of from school. Those who have attempted to use taxis especially the wheelchair users have not been successful since taxi drivers are not willing to transport them. (Division of Special Education Task Force, 2001: 1).

This failure to cater for relatively simple needs is manifested in other ways. Children in wheelchairs are neglected in classrooms, and minimal motivation is offered to children with Special Needs. Moving from primary classrooms means that such children “graduate to their homes” (Dart, Didimalang & Pilime, 2002: 50). Prior to leaving primary school children normally take the Primary School Leaving Examination. Where opportunity for certification was offered it was noted that:

some heads of schools were putting pressure on units to enter them for the PSLE even though they could barely write their names. This was so that once the pupil had sat and failed the exam they could be asked to leave the school to make room for other children. (Dart, Didimalang & Pilime, 2002: 79)

These cases may be a minority, and they contrast with the work of the many committed individuals, schools and organisations working in Botswana in Special Education. But negative attitudes shown towards children needing Special Education by students in a College of Education in one study are a cause for concern. What is alarming is that the researchers concluded that their views were far more positive than those of the public at large (Hop & Grol, 2001). Unfortunately negative public attitudes are reinforced by traditional attitudes in Botswana as a whole. Despite the commitment to *botho* in the past, parents and communities perceived handicapped children as a punishment, and those afflicted were and are hidden from public view. Whilst demands are being and continue to be made on the diagnostic services provided by the Government, anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of learners and children in need of special education and treatment is far greater than any official figures suggest. The absence of reliable data, plus the lack of services in rural and remote areas, continues to cloud the picture.

Government practice in Special Education is totally inadequate, yet its policy continues to refer to social inclusion. The specific objectives for Special Education during NDP9 are to:

Develop special education as an integral part of the regular education system to promote inclusive practices. (Government of Botswana, 2003: ch.15)

Experience during NDP8 suggests that this laudable objective will not be achieved.

### **Contrast Between Policy And Practice**

Since independence the Government's record in Special Education compares unfavourably with those of non-Government organisations, and with its other achievements. But the Government recognises that it, through the Ministry of Education, has to be the senior partner in Special Education provision. Furthermore, the Government has committed itself to traditional values, including the notion that social harmony (*kagisano*) and respect for the humanity in all human beings (*botho*) should underpin modern Botswana ethics and social relations. Whilst the Government's commitment to social inclusion through Special Education is manifest, too little hard data is available pertaining to issues in Special Education, such as dropping out, absence from school and practice in educational institutions.

As far as practice and future prospects are concerned, what is reviewed in this paper is bleak. Botswana's economy has been robust (University of Botswana Department of Institutional Planning, 2001). Botswana has continued to allocate a quarter of its expenditure to education, whereas in most countries this spending has gone down with the deterioration in the world economy (Colclough & Lewin, 1993). Since 1994 the number trained to teach in Special Education has steadily increased, and all teacher trainees on Government programmes take courses in it. The 1994 RNPE included excellent plans for Special Education. Social inclusion underlies Special Education provision in the Eighth and Ninth National Plans. After fifty years of independence *Vision 2016* envisions that "All Batswana will have the opportunity for continued and universal education" and "No Motswana will be disadvantaged in the education system" (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 5).

But those in need of Special Education are little better off now than they were ten years ago. Nominal enrolments have increased but not the number of institutions providing Special Education. Quality of provision has deteriorated, as the increase in enrolment has outweighed the increase in institutions, resources or infrastructure. At just over 1%, enrolment is pitifully small in relation to demand. Despite some Government provision for the visual and hearing impaired, Government still focuses on the mentally retarded: the disabled, the visual and hearing impaired still have to rely on non-Government provision. It is still not possible to obtain reliable data in this field, in spite of more attention being paid to diagnosis, assessment and placement (Ministry of Education, 2001: 26-28). This is exacerbated by an absence of systematic and professional monitoring practices. Better teacher preparation has been installed. But this is offset by teacher drainage, as there is no career path in Special Education. In the mainstream schools lack of support and guidance mitigate against the implementation of measures to promote Special Education.

Future prospects are disheartening. In the next development plan less will be available for social services, including education. The Government will "focus mainly on providing programmes that will lead to higher quality human capacity and productivity" (Government of Botswana, 2003: ch.15). Investment is being concentrated on vocational education, improved access to pre-school education and basic education for all (Government of Botswana, 2003: ch.15). Current trends exemplify these aims, and others contradict them. Greater emphasis is being placed on cost recovery and sharing in educational provision. For example, from 2004 fees will be charged for basic education. This and similarly regressive steps suggest that the lack of priority given to

implementing the policy commitment to social inclusion through Special Education is likely to continue. The lack of specific commitment to Special Education at the pre-school and basic education levels suggest that provision in these areas will remain totally insufficient.

Vision 2016 features commitment to *botho* and traditional values: there is little in the document to encourage advocates of Special Education. *Botho* and *kagisano* will continue to be undermined by bureaucratic practices in the case of Special Education. It is also the Government's intention to reduce those below the poverty line from 46% in 1994 to 23% by the end of the Ninth Development Plan (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 8). No reference is made to Special Education's role in promoting economic growth and social justice. This reflects the low priority that the Government has given to Special Education to date. Much of the evidence reviewed above upholds the hypothesis put forward earlier: whilst the policy of the Government of Botswana towards Special Education is commitment to social inclusion, its operational practices effect exclusion.

### **Prospects For Special Education In Botswana**

Perhaps the above suggests that the Government's policy in this field is unrealistic and should be drastically changed. This means, in effect, that social inclusion is an unrealistic aim for the country. However, this presupposes that the factors that determine Special Education provision are immutable and permanent. Despite the claims of some historians (Dance, 1960), historical factors must be taken as given, and so must the country's physical and demographic characteristics.

But other factors can be manipulated and changed. Structural features of Special Education, such as the curriculum and teachers, are subjected to bureaucratic processes and modes of thinking that are inimical to social inclusion. These could be changed, especially if infused with traditional mores such as *botho*. To date too little reference has been made to the moral and spiritual dimensions of Special Education. *Vision 2016* does place emphasis on ethics, morality, tolerance and compassion, and how traditional factors in Botswana reinforce these. Increasing this emphasis could lead to Government practice becoming aligned with policy in Special Education.

Modifications must be made to the educational infrastructures in place. By 2016 Botswana wants "a system of quality education that is able to adapt to the changing needs of the country" (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 5). Quality education is an elusive concept (Harvey, 2002) but, for the purpose of this paper, it is understood to be fitness for purpose (Newton, 2002). Quality Special Education should "deliver the goods" in accord with the policy statements of the Government. In order to bring this about, much more attention has to be given to accountability, the fulfilment of mission statements and to the processes and outputs related to Special Education.

But there has been little monitoring of Special Education provision in Botswana: this must be remedied. If Government and non-Government provision were to be subjected to quality assurance processes, such as institutional and programme review, the short-term outcomes would be discouraging. But the installation and monitoring of standards and performance-based management can be an incentive to improve performance (Quality Assurance and Standards Review

Committee, 2002). Furthermore, associated publicity should generate lobbying and the development of Special Education interest groups (MacLaren, 1974). Special Education could greatly benefit from this in the way that judicial review has markedly increased in the UK because “there are more single-issue pressure groups around to back such actions” (Wigs on the warpath, 2002: 35). These activities, plus the application of quality assurance techniques, could lead to Government policy becoming practice in Special Education.

Further research and evaluation is needed to subject Special Education in Botswana to scrutiny and analysis. Repetitive scholarly discourse of the sort that Ibn Khaldun railed against is not required because: “The great number of scholarly works available is an obstacle on the path to scholarship” (Mackintosh-Smith, 2001: 43). Research outcomes must be accessible, and the Government’s ineffective record to date must be made public. Without this, and the remedies suggested above, provision for Special Education in 2016 will still be deficient. George Santayana (1979: 414) has warned that “progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness....Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to fulfil it”.

The Government and Ministry of Education must take heed of this critically important lesson. Without realistic appraisal of the recent history of Special Education in Botswana, history will repeat itself and Special Education in Botswana will continue to be socially exclusive.

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