

# Symposium on Education for Development Gaborone, August 1983

The role of education in development is an important issue facing the nations of independent Africa. Investment in education is usually seen as a major solution to the problems of under-development. But the optimism about education's effects which characterised the early years of independence has begun to give way to a concern that the nature of education itself may be a source of problems.

These trends can be discerned within Botswana. The situation at Independence was poor - as President Khama said at the United Nations in 1969: 'in contrast to other British colonies, there had been practically no attempt to train Batswana to run their own country. Not one single secondary school was completed by the colonial government....' It was therefore inevitable that a massive expansion of all sectors of education took place, and this was sustained throughout the 1970s by a high rate of economic growth.

But after ten years of independence, questions about the direction of educational development began to be raised and a National Education Commission was established to identify the major problems and make recommendations. The Commission's report, published in 1977, noted that there was a 'growing sense of dissatisfaction and frustration' resulting from whether the quantitative expansion had been matched by qualitative standards. It made recommendations for the future that firmly related education to national development, to the 'kind of society Batswana want to create.' However it also pointed out that education cannot of itself change society and that 'educational reform must be part of broader social and economic reform.' The basic problem of how to improve education as part of the process of building a better society remains.

The Botswana Society has decided that the time is ripe for another review of education as questions are still being put insistently about all part of the system, formal and non-formal. Problems such as the quality of primary schooling, the future of the brigades, and the shortage of secondary school places are of great public concern. The Society is therefore organising a symposium on 'Education for Development' to be held in Gaborone in August 1983. The symposium will bring together educationists, planners, administrators, researchers and politicians to present papers which will later be published in book form. The Society has previously held similar symposia on major issues of national development, such as drought and settlement, and feels that they have had a significant impact on government policy.

The Symposium will address the major issues of education and development in Botswana today, but will also have papers of comparative interest from Kenya, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. It will open with an analysis of the concept of development in the Botswana context and with historical overviews of the education-development relationship before and after Independence. Subsequent major themes will be the relationship of education to social justice, rural development, cultural identity, and employment. The final day will look forward to the problems and prospects of the rest of the 1980s.

The Botswana Society hopes that the symposium will provide an open forum for a full and frank discussion of all aspects of education and its role in national development. It therefore invites all interested people to attend and join in the discussion. Contributions from the floor will be welcome and will be included in the published proceedings.

The Botswana Society hopes that the Symposium will have a beneficial impact on the policy-making process in Botswana. It also hopes that the published proceedings will provide a useful case-study on education and development in Africa. The full programme will be available in May and further information is available from the organising secretaries:

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