


Chapter 12


In–Service Teacher Training for Local Languages Teachers in Botswana as an Enabler for Inclusive Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

B. Gabanamotse-Mogara, University of Botswana(mogarab@ub.ac.bw), A. Chebanne, University of Botswana (chebanne@ub.ac.bw) In 2022, the Botswana Government adopted a Languages Policy in Education, introducing thirteen (13) local languages in lower primary schools from Reception to Standard two. However, the absence of a dedicated and enabling curriculum for training teachers in these languages at existing teacher training colleges posed practical and logistical challenges. To address this, the government opted for in-service training for local languages teachers. This option raised several practical and theoretical issues such as the question that in-service training could not be as comprehensive as pre-service training. This could potentially leave these languages teachers under prepared, and resources allocated for training and materials could be complex and costly.

BACKGROUND

Botswana is a multilingual country (Kamwendo et al., 2009; Smeija, 2003; Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003). However, its languages are not regarded as a resource in education (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2010; Chebanne and Moumakwa, 2017). The minimalist use of languages in education, favoring only Setswana and English, has been criticized for being a challenge as it persists to disadvantage learners from other local language backgrounds as they are not catered for in the curriculum (Gabanamotse-

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Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne and Gabanamotse-Mogara, 2022; Kamwendo et al., 2009; Chebanne and Moumakwa, 2017). Research globally and in Botswana indicates that school performance is adversely affected when children are taught in languages unknown to them at an early stage of schooling (Chebanne and Kewagamang, 2020; Chebanne and Moumakwa, 2017; Chebanne, 2015 a & b). These children from languages that are not included in the curriculum, take longer to master the languages of medium of instruction (English and Setswana), impacting their understanding of concepts and mastery of subjects in the school curriculum. In 2020, the President announced in the State of the Nation Address the Government's intention to introduce mother tongue education in schools. Following this announcement, the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department conducted a series of surveys (Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne, 2020), revealing that Botswana has over 30 languages. The first 13 languages to be implemented, selected for having resources such as community orthography and religious and social literature are Afrikaans, Buga Khwe, Mbukushu, Yeyi, Chiikuhane, Naro, Herero/Mbanderu, iKalanga, iSiNdebele, Chishona, Shekgalagari, and Sign Language. Other languages, including Sebirwa, Chegwapong, Nadzwa, Jun/'hoasi (!Xu), Ts'ixa, !Xóõ (Taa), Shua, and Tciretcire, will follow in the second phase (Mogara et al., 2023; Mogara and Chebanne, 2022).

Subsequent to the ETSSP (2015–2020), the President of the Republic of Botswana announced in 2020 the government's intention to introduce mother tongue as the medium of instruction in education during the State of the Nation Address (Botswana Government, 2012). This announcement was followed by national consultations, culminating in the development of the Botswana Languages Policy in Education, which was approved by parliament in February 2022 (Mogara and Chebanne, 2022). UNICEF supported this initiative by funding the development of local languages literacy materials, as research by UNESCO and other organizations has shown that the medium of instruction without literacy in the language does not adequately equip children and teachers (Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne and Moumakwa, 2017; Nyati-Saleshando, 2010). In preparation for the implementation of the Botswana Languages Policy in Education in 2023, the Ministry of Education, through the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, organized a series of workshops to capacitate teachers for the 13 languages pioneering the policy.

Although the current practice employs the Breakthrough to Setswana approach, which uses various strategies to help children grasp Setswana concepts in preparation for English, the main language of instruction (Chebanne and Moumakwa, 2017; Nyati-Saleshando, 2010), children from rural areas of Botswana often do not achieve this breakthrough and are consequently left behind in their education (Jotia and Jankie, 2015). The current curriculum strategies of Breakthrough to Setswana and English do not enable the pedagogy for non-Setswana and English speaking children. Some children even leave school because they cannot follow what their teachers are teaching (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne and Gabanamotse-Mogara, 2022; Chebanne, 2022). Despite various policies implemented to address these issues, the lack of the integration of mother tongue pedagogy in teacher training has been a barrier in the mother tongue medium of instruction. Although research and experiences from other countries have demonstrated the impactful use of mother tongues, Botswana education polices have been very hesitant to include other languages in the school curriculum. Botswana's public schools are often congested, preventing teachers from adequately addressing each child's language challenges in the classroom (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne and Kewagamang, 2020; Chebanne and Moumakwa, 2017). Using a child's mother tongue as the medium of instruction is therefore, the most inclusive, and effective tool for grasping concepts and ensuring that every child feels included in the educational process (Chebanne and Mogara, 2022).

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