


# Chapter 16

## A Case for the Inclusion of Ikalanga and Shekgalagari in the Education System of Botswana

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The language policy of Botswana is not overtly articulated; it can only be inferred, understood, or observed from practice. For example, Section 6.1(d) and 79(c) of the Constitution states that competence in English is a requirement for one to be a member of the House of Chiefs or of the National Assembly. Setswana was added in 1988. Other documents also refer to the policy without stating it, defining or making it a topic of discussion. English and Setswana have thus been covertly selected in this manner as the two languages of use in the country. All ethnic groups in the country were required to use Setswana and not their own languages. What has resulted has been language decline, dearth and death, decimation of linguistic variety. The chapter outlines in detail the enablers, barriers and challenges in inclusive education in Botswana, present a detailed account on how two marginalized languages, Shekgalagari and iKalanga, have fared in the face of six decades of marginalization, and how they could be incorporated in the education system to*

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*realize inclusive education.*

## INTRODUCTION

In various social and historical literature on Botswana there is a perception that the country is monolingual where Setswana is the only ethnic language (Nyati-Saleshando, 2020; Chebanne & Kewagamang, 2020). This multilingualism is not reflected in official pronouncements (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000, 2002; Batibo, 2015a). From the socio-historical perspective (Bennett, 2002) and from the perspective of policy (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002), it can be averred that the misconstructions of linguistic realities of Botswana ensued from two socio-historical reasons. First, during the colonial period most of the government activities were centred around the southern part of the country, which was and is predominantly Tswana speaking. The colonial government was more directly involved with Tswana chiefs in their governance and assumed no other ethnic group existed in this region or had chiefs. This assumption was based on the fact that all non-Tswana ethnic groups in the south were already in one way or the other subjects of the Tswana chiefs and not worthy of recognition or self-governance. The northern part of the country, which is also multi-lingual, was incorporated into the protectorate much later (Ramsay, 1998) after the establishment of Tswana hegemony. Second, the subjugation of non-Tswana ethnic groups and the deliberate hegemonic policies in post independent Botswana resulted in the spread of Setswana as a *lingua-franca* and the subsequent suppression of other languages and cultures (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000). In official discourse, most non-Tswana speaking groups have now become assimilated and are referred to by the name of the Tswana groups which subjected them to slavery before and during the colonial period. For instance, most of the Hambukushu, the Wayeyi, the ovaHerero and others in the Northwest district are referred to as Batawana, which is a sub-group of Tswana speaking (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002). Chiefs from these non-Tswana groups are considered and paid as sub-chiefs since they are subjects of the Tswana Paramount Chiefs (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2001). The Bakalanga in the Central District are referred to as Bangwato, another sub-group of the Tswana. The Bakgalagari in Kweneng West and Ngwaketse West regions are called Bakwena and Bangwaketse. Thus, some of the non-Tswana groups in some regions of the country are generally invisible.

Notwithstanding the official indiscernibility of other Botswana ethnic groups, most of their languages were and still are spoken in Botswana and some of them had a literary history before independence. For example, in preparations for the first elections for independence, election materials were prepared in Setswana, English, Afrikaans, iKalanga, Lozi, and Otjiherero. However, instantaneously after inde-

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