



International Journal of Education and Teaching

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

Enhancement of Sustainable Education for All: A Reality or Illusion in Botswana

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Article Info

Volume 2, No. 2, December 2022

Received : 01 July 2022

Accepted : 16 November 2022

Published : 05 December 2022

doi: [10.51483/IJEDT.2.2.2022.41-49](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJEDT.2.2.2022.41-49)

Abstract

Unless the education system in Botswana begins to adopt and apply sustainable inclusive education practices to cater for all, the objectives of having sustainable development will remain an absolute nightmare. This paper registers that there is a strong affiliation amongst the prevailing global dialogue on Education for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Education. As such, in order for any nation to be seen to be having a relevant and quality education, its education system should be seen to be inclusive. The role of education in advancing the global dream of sustainable development which of late is also marshalled at all levels of education cannot be overemphasized. Utilizing the conceptual approach to research, this study probed into practices and processes in place at learning institutions in Botswana that relate to supporting diverse learners. As such, the purpose of this paper is to intrinsically investigate how inclusive education can be made practical in Botswana with a view to mainly come up with feasible strategies that could be used to accommodate all learners. Literature reveals that the impending issues restraining functional implementation of inclusive education in Botswana include; educators lack of deeper understanding of the ideals of inclusive education along with their negative attitudes to LWD,s, the shortage of critical resources and disability friendly institutional environments. The study ends by recommending to policy makers to support curriculum developers in designing holistic and relevant school curricular that includes transformative educational & teaching approaches.

Keywords: *Inclusive education, Education for Sustainable Development, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Teacher development, Ddisability*

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1. Introduction

Within the global discourse, relevant and quality education is undoubtedly a significant factor in the improving of the human conditions in both the socio-economic and political spheres (Jotia, 2010). In order for this change process to be effective, the ways of doing education has to change in order to align with the global dictates of producing citizens who are self-confident and also morally and socially responsible irrespective of their physical, environmental and mental conditions. Education for Sustainability (ES) can be viewed as a transformative/reorienting the learning process that equips students, teachers, and school systems with the new knowledge and ways of thinking to achieve economic prosperity and responsible citizenship while restoring the health of the living systems upon which our lives depend. Botswana, thus as a country need practices and programs and initiatives of societal transformation that empower all learners of any age, in any education setting, to transform themselves and the society they live in. Educational strategies

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simply should not be discriminative as education is the strongest force capable of bringing about real human dignity, enlightenment and empowerment and pave way for a better future.

The concept of inclusive education was first implemented in Western countries in the 1980s, and it has become a matter for the global agenda (Singal, 2005). According to Bryant, Smith and Bryant (2008) inclusion or inclusive education can be interpreted as the philosophy and practice for educating students with disabilities in general education settings. Inclusion is a widely accepted phenomenon according to UNESCO (2005) for two reasons: firstly, education is a right that is part and parcel of modern society. Secondly, it is a feasible option, and an integral part of the principles of equality of opportunity in education. Fundamental to this study is the fact that access and participation of Learners with Disability (LWD) in various institutions of learning such as the basic education level, Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET) in Botswana as well as the world at large has always been encountered by challenges. This is despite the fact that inclusivity in education and training provision is linked to lifelong learning that can lead to qualifications, foster employment and promotes inclusive sustainable economic growth for competitiveness. The Inclusive Education Policy of Botswana (IEPB) (2011) requires that all children regardless of their disability be given the opportunity to access education in the general education schools (Government of Botswana, 2011). However, there are many barriers to the realisation of this right in the lived experiences of children and families (Mukhopadhyay, 2009). It follows that education is the key that will allow many other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved as once people are able to get quality education that can breakdown the cycle of poverty.

In desperate attempts to attain universal access in line with the Education for All (EFA) goals, government of Botswana through the Ministry of Education has compromised quality in many respects. One such compromise is manifested by governments move to push all students through the academic route in spite of their deficiency or incapability to pursue that route. This has been done through the automatic promotion policy of government, where irrespective of students having challenges and having failed the academic theoretical orientation, they would be promoted automatically to pursue that route of education. It implies that the focus on access and attainment until now has generally overshadowed important factors such as the actual content of curricula, the real-world application of what is learned in school, and teacher competencies. With regard to tertiary and vocational institutions, Moswela (2008) argued that educational policies are silent on matters of access to education for all Learners with Disabilities (LWDs). The author further explained that educational policies did not make deliberate efforts to address inclusion of these learners while enrolled in tertiary and vocational education (VET) and this resulted in the education of LWDs remain marginalized. As a result, among other students those with learning disability benefit very little from the system. It is based on this observation that this study seeks to investigate on viable strategies that could be used to include learners with disability practically in schools and other institutions of learning in Botswana. It is believed studies such as this, would influence policymakers to avail critical resources for effective and functional implementation of inclusive education in institutions of learning in Botswana.

2. Socio-Cultural Nature and Dynamism of Botswana Society

Batswana, a word normally used to signify all citizens of Botswana, originally referred to the country's major ethnic groups. These are the ethnic groups which came into present day Botswana from South Africa in the early 1800 in fear of the Zulu-led wars. According to Wagner (2006), at independence in 1966, the government of Botswana declared that its people will be called "Batswana" regardless of their ethnicity in outlook of national unity. This resolution was largely influenced by the history and practices of the then apartheid regime in South Africa that had torn the ethnic groups in that country apart and followed a policy of segregation that divided people on the basis of race (Wagner, 2006). This resolution had profound impact on school curriculum since curriculum developed appeared to be homogenous in nature.

The treatment of some ethnic groups as major and others as minor in the Constitution of Botswana by then contradicted the essence of social equity (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000). Arguably, it is this segregation and adjuration of some tribes which resulted to the marginalization of some sub-cultures such as people with disability. It then followed that people with disability were denied opportunity to access and enjoy the national provisions such as education. It is clear that the recognition of some groups as major and the marginalization of the so-called minor groups is problematic in that it negatively impacts on their identity as Botswana. It makes other citizens with disability in Botswana to be of a lesser citizenship. The negative views about disability, misconceptions and lack of proper understanding about disability affected the education of LWDs in Botswana. Disability in Botswana society was viewed as a burden, evil, and incapable of contributing to the familial, communal and national development. As such, disability in the past regarded as witchcraft, evil, curse for the past deeds and a disease that might be transmissible. As a result, educating LWDs remained at the

side-lines due reluctance by authorities to make the relevant disability specific policies and playing a role in educating in these learners. As such I believe an aggressive educational campaign can be instituted to bring a paradigm shift in the state of affairs before the wealth of talent implanted in people with disability perishes.

Like indicated above, despite the enactment of various policies and interventions in education, historically, education in Botswana as it was the case with other African countries and the world at large did not include LWDs due to social and cultural beliefs about disability. Jonas (2014) deliberated on this matter and highlighted that LWDs were denied opportunities to attend formal schools, removed from public view, hidden as well as isolated because they were considered to be a curse and a disgrace from God. Disability in Botswana was viewed as bad luck, a stain in their social status and as a result of these beliefs, a child with disability was excluded from education hence not expected to learn (Abosi and Koay, 2008). It is indicative that LWDs in Botswana have long been denied access to participate in education because even in the traditional society where children were taught at initiation schools namely *bojale* for males and *bogwega* for females, there is no record that exists as to how children with special needs were incorporated. Disability in Botswana, when using the Tswana word *segole*, does not necessarily represent any category of disability; but rather embraces all types of disability (Coleridge, 2000). On the other hand, beliefs of witch-craft as a manifestation of disabilities are still eminent. A study conducted by Moswela (2011) indicates that 'female students with disabilities in Botswana are generally perceived as asexual, barren...' and thought not to be able to 'perform the traditional roles of a woman' (Moswela, 2011). This correlates with the study by Chimhenga and Musarurwa (2011) that reported that African societies place a societal function to people with disability.

Based on the above argument, Kalabula (2000) and Abosi and Koay (2008) indicated that misconceptions about disability resulted in major impediments to the successful development of education of these learners in Botswana since it was believed that they cannot plough back to the national economy hence exclusion from the education system. It is against this background that various learning institutions in Botswana lagged behind in making these institution's curricula accessible to all learners regardless of one's disability.

3. Development of Inclusive Education in Botswana

At independence in September 1966, Botswana was young and one of the poorest countries in Africa. In terms of education, the education system at independence was inherited from the British who had colonized and ruled Botswana from 1885 to 1966. The inherited education system had several features which were not applicable and therefore not beneficial to Botswana. One area in which the educated elites in Africa succumbed westernization was in the acceptance of the Western formal education with its emphasis on literacy and academic work as a model of education for Africa (Adeyinka and Major, 2006). This form of education gradually led to an almost wholesale acceptance of the Western culture and ways of life and values. The outcome of this condition was that the then government had a huge task to revitalize, restructure and design an education system that would be relevant to the nation and bring about a shift in the country's social, economic and political outlook.

It was because of colonial influence that after independence immediate efforts were undertaken through various education policies (Republic of Botswana, 1994; Republic of Botswana, 1977; Republic of Botswana, 1996) for the building of a politically, socially, economically and educationally strong nation envisaged by the then government. The first document, the National Policy on Education, or the Government Paper No. 1, known as Education for Kagisano (Education for Social Harmony) spells out the four national principles of education for the transformation of the country. These principles are seen as a foundation for nation building. They included democracy, development, self-reliance and unity (Botswana Government, 1977). A subsequent review of the policy on education culminated in the production of another document, the Government Paper No. 2 of 1994, known as, the Revised National Policy on Education. This review was propelled by the recognition that the country's socio-economic situation had changed significantly, requiring a reassessment of policies and strategies for Botswana's educational development. As such the policy set out to prepare citizens for transition from a traditional agro-based economy to the industrial economy that the country aspires to. The third document, popularly referred to as Vision 2016, envisions the effective preparation of students for life, citizenship and the world of work (Republic of Botswana, 2016). It is summed up in the local concept of *botho*, which refers to a person with a well-rounded character, well-mannered, courteous and disciplined, and who realizes his or her full potential both as an individual and as a part of the community to which he or she belong. Following these policies, several other initiatives and policies were enacted by Government of Botswana to ensure all access quality education. These include vision 2036, Inclusive Education Policy (2011) and Education and Training Sector strategic Plan (ETSSP) (2015) to mention but a few.

Education of LWD remained at stake until in 1948 when the Human Rights movement lobbied states to guarantee the fundamental rights and freedom of all people including those with disabilities (UNESCO, 2015). According to UNESCO (2015, Article 26) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed thus, “Everyone has the Right to Education” and education shall be free and compulsory at all levels. Due to the emergence of the human rights movement (Jonas, 2014) argued that LWDs began to be recognized as worthy to be educated hence Botswana made significant strides to move from exclusion to inclusion of these learners. Based on this, Abosi (2000) elaborated that education of LWDs including Botswana officially started in 1966 in segregated special schools settings which were mainly built and operated by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In 1969, the first school for the blind was established by the Dutch Reformed Church and in 1970 the school for the deaf was opened by the missionaries from the Lutheran church (Mukhopadhyay, 2014). These schools were established to cater for different categories of disabilities within the country.

However, as time went on special schools began to be recognized as a form of segregation (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2010) and this led to the rise of the terms integration, mainstreaming and inclusion in Botswana’s education system and that of the world at large. The integration phase according to Sharma and Deppeler (2005) is a process whereby LWDs are confined to a special class within a regular school set up but these learners meet with those without disabilities during recess, sporting activities and clubs for socialization purposes as well as to build their skills. According to Chhabra *et al.* (2010) the movement towards integration started in a few countries like the United States of America and other developed countries around the 1960s and 1970s. In the case of Botswana integration began in the 1980s. During the period of integration, Botswana took a step and withdrew the idea set by NGOs of building more special schools and opted to build special units in already existing primary schools. The idea of integration was to make learners adapt to the program but not vice-versa and LWDs were under the responsibility of a special education teacher (Sharma and Deppeler, 2005). Thus Botswana introduced a mainstreaming policy in the Ministry of Education in 1984 which advocated for educating LWDs in regular classrooms with their non-disabled peers. Thus inclusive education in the context of Botswana involves addressing the barriers that prevent students with disabilities from fully participating in the activities of the general education schools (Boitumelo *et al.*, 2020). However, lamentably, the mainstreaming policy from close look did not clearly show who should be taught in special schools and who should be taught in normal schools. It is against this background that mainstreaming policy was not oriented towards transformation, critical empowerment and enlightenment of LWDs.

When Botswana endorsed Salamanca Statement of 1994, there was much hope. The statement by UNESCO (1994) setup to reaffirming the right to education of every individual, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and renewing the pledge made by the world community at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All to ensure that right for all regardless of individual differences. With respect to people with disability, the statement encouraged countries to prepare for adult life by establishing decentralized and participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluating educational provision for children and adults with special education needs. Further, the statement maintained categorically that persons with disabilities should be given special attention in the design and implementation of adult and continuing education programmes and those special courses should also be designed to suit the needs and conditions of different groups of adults with disabilities. *These we are not aware if Botswana has done!!* For this reason this study wants to explore the practice and process of education and training provision for LWDs in various institutions of learning in Botswana.

4. Challenges to the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Botswana

Challenges facing concrete inclusive education initiatives in Botswana surface from a few areas that receive attention in this section. The first challenge has to do with teachers’ conceptualization of the concept of inclusivity. Inclusive education is a relatively new concept in Botswana hence majority of teachers and instructors have limited experiences of managing learners with disabilities (Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 2012). Given that teachers are instructional gate keepers when it comes to delivery of content, it becomes problematic when teachers themselves have limited experience and proficiency. This paper registers an argument that the main challenge hindering resolute provision of education and training to learners with disability lies on educators who are not proficient in handling LWDs and as such loose track in content delivery. However, this paper sets out to unveil various possible challenges teachers and learners face in an endeavor to bring them to the attention of policy makers for amends.

One key challenge educators have relates to their perceptions of disability and education. It is evident from research findings that teachers/educators have different views about learners’ with disability. Simply put, some teachers just do not believe that learners with certain disabilities are not supposed to be found in schools. It is thus evident that although

the fight for 'inclusivity in education' is part of a broad human rights agenda, many educationists have serious uncertainties about accepting the placement of learners with disability in mainstream schools. Research undertaken in Australia about professional attitudes towards integration education has provided a range of information in this regard. For instance, studies undertaken between 1985 and 1989 reveal that teacher attitudes to integration/inclusion attitudes of head teachers (Pieterse and Bochner, 1989) and demonstrated that professional groups vary considerably in their perceptions of which types of children are most likely to be successfully integrated. Kempton (2006) indicates that teaching of students with different levels can create unique challenges for the teacher. The state of affairs therefore calls for the teacher to be fully capacitated on the profits and constraints of teaching LWDs in order to proficiently plan and teach the learners. Specifically, teacher training for inclusive education should be preceded by profiling teachers and analyzing needs so that strategic decisions can be made to vary the depth and nature of the training based on the profile and specific needs. This means it would be unfair to execute similar training for teachers while they differ. That is, teachers without any training background in special education should preferably receive intensive training in all content knowledge and pedagogical areas, while those with some training background, only specific gaps and emerging issues in the field should be addressed in the training. However, efforts made towards the progressive development of special education for teachers in Botswana are highly noted. Overall, development of special education and provision for people with disabilities are topmost priorities of the government of Botswana. Despite government commitment to special education development, numerous factors could delay quick delivery (Abosi, 2000).

Policymakers in the Ministry of Education are the second area under the spotlight. Authorities can also be blamed for failing to implement ratified policies both local and international. While it is clear that Botswana has shown commitment to education for all, the looming issue restraining reform of the inclusive education policy in Botswana is failure to tailor policies to local context. Existing empirical data designates that while many factors play a role in the state of affairs of non-inclusive settings in education, disability stands out as a critical obstacle in attaining equity for the affected students (Harley, 2015). The study by Mukhopadhyay *et al.* (2012) established that students with disabilities pose challenges for teachers in the regular classroom and this affects their learning adversely. This demonstrates that although inclusive education has been rapidly gaining acceptance in Botswana academic circles, government texts, and mass media, there is a lack of shared understanding of the implication of the concept, as neither the government nor academics have been able to engage critically with the meanings and relevance of the concept within the context of Botswana (Mukhopadhyay, 2009). Lack of understanding by instructors about the students' disability and the kind of support they need is one important aspect that makes it difficult for educator/instructors to adapt the curricula and make it accessible to LWDs. In view of this, it is worth noting that some institutions of learning are disabling environments by not providing the reasonable accommodations to LWDs for them to be at par with their colleagues.

The next area to unveil relates to lack of critical resources in schools to support LWDs. Like has been alluded above, teaching and learning of people with disabilities has proven to be a difficult accomplishment, and even worse, due to the lack of knowledge and relevant resources on how to assist students with disabilities in the classroom. According to Moswela and Mukhopadhyay (2011) students with disabilities are underrepresented in their education. The latter further reiterates that the struggle of students with disabilities to access and take part in education remains an issue of great concern for disability activists and researchers. Moreover, many people with disabilities do not have equal access to education, and employment opportunities, do not receive the disability-related services that they require, and experience exclusion from everyday life activities (World Report on Disability, 2011). The Education for All (EFA) initiative from the United Nations is an essential element of the Millennium Development Goals, in part because education is seen as being crucial to human development, and also because so many children do not have access to education, especially children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2005).

This study was triggered by the above situation to explore practices and processes in place at in learning institutions through a desktop search with a view to come up with feasible strategies that could be used to accommodate LWDs. The study registers an argument that learning institutions at all levels are custodians of formal, informal, and non-formal education and thus need to be cognizant of the national impact contextualized inclusive education has and relentlessly work towards raising the level of awareness to this important but missing service to our nation. In view of the above captured socio-cultural setup and dynamism of citizens of Botswana and educational development initiatives for learners with disability this far, the notion of diversity in education curricular at various level of educational provision is an absolute necessity. We argue that it is only through responsive and relevant educational programs that the nation can contribute positively to change the mind-set and socio-cultural practices of a society of Botswana. That is to say, an education curriculum and learning environment that orient learners towards the social inclusion will promote national unity and empowerment of all in an endeavor to building of a democratic, accountable, just and caring nation. As such

this study is also motivated by Mosalagae's (2014) thesis recommendation that highlights the fact that a successful inclusive education needs to be context specific.

5. Operable Strategies for Inclusivity in Botswana Learning Institutions

The above discussed socio-cultural setup of Botswana society and its associated challenges to functional implementation of inclusive education initiatives have fundamental implications on how to approach inclusivity in education in Botswana. This assertion directs the arguments to what we call *curriculum alteration with the learner with disability in mind for institutions in Botswana*. To realise the mammoth task for catering for various learner diversity and variability, curriculum in this conceptual paper is viewed from a broad perspective. A broader definition of the concept of curriculum includes the goals, pedagogies, assessment strategies and material resources. The argument made in this paper is that for effective implementation of practicable inclusivity in education in Botswana there is need for a wholesale paradigm shift with a view to create learning spaces for all and in the process empower them. It is by making major changes as oppose to pieces of initiatives that the needs of LWDs can be addressed. This goes in line with the conception of curriculum as a social construct at the heart of the educational system that gives shape and form to much of what happens in educational institutions at all levels. Hence, with a renewal of curriculum at all levels, institutions will be forced to follow suit.

This paper does not only advocate for curriculum amendment at all levels but for quality education which can be enhanced by application of ESD recommended pedagogies that are progressive, emancipatory and empowering to produce graduates with disability who will consciously and competently take on various positions of employment/self-employment in society. It thus imply that deliberate efforts are needed to make education interactive and holistic, crosscutting and interfacing—involving all sectors of society and all forms of education (not children alone, not schools and institutions only but let the society be a learning platform for sustainability. We argue that the need to reorient and restructure existing educational and training platforms and frameworks in favor of learners with disability needs no overemphasize.

Curriculum alteration is inseparable from teacher development. Teachers are instructional gate keepers and hence need to be at the forefront of any curriculum initiative. Simply put, teachers are the major pillars in the teaching and learning process and without doubt, the most important stakeholders in the practice of curriculum making and delivery. With their knowledge, experience and competencies teachers are central to any curriculum improvement effort as they are responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom and outside the classroom as well. Hence, Taba (1962) in her inductive approach to curriculum design emphasize that, teachers be given greater role by not just making them implementers of the curriculum but also developers. Taba thus argues that teachers are aware of the students' needs therefore they are the ones that should develop the curriculum. It is through the process and engagement in curriculum alteration activities that teachers' attitudes among others towards learners with disability will be transformed. Over and above all, literature has shown extensively that majority of teachers in schools in Botswana lack deeper pedagogical content knowledge relevant for teaching learners with disability. Thus, a rigorous pre and in-service training is needed to address the situation. This paper recommends that, teacher continuous development has to be at the heart of all initiatives for developing inclusive practices in schools. Therefore, no matter what their subject specialities are, all teachers play a key role because it is them that determine what will be taught and how it will be taught regarding support given to learners with disability. This shows that the most important component of the formal education for inclusivity is the teacher.

In this paper the authors are of the view that as oppose to small piece meal approaches to inclusive education which has been the main strategy in Botswana, a comprehensive approach is needed for purposes of sustainability. Scholars Kemp *et al.* (2017) suggest the need to look at the big picture when one thinks of learning difficulties. They argue for the need to think life success, rather than school success. What can be erudite from their argument is that inclusive education initiatives should be comprehensive such that they are sustainable and can therefore enable learners with learning difficulties to make it in life after school. That means activities and inventions should not just end at school sitting. In other words, a comprehensive inclusive education program should cover school life and life after school with a view to enable the out of school person with disability to get a fulfilling job and satisfying relationships, for example, or a happy family and a sense of gratification. This is the concept of quality education which is a fundamental ingredient for sustainability. Enhancing quality education should become a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it helps achieve progress across all dimensions of sustainable development. Quality education does not only support more employable but also offers skills and values to address the tensions between human development and terrestrial limitations. This goes to point out that, the establishment of the stand-alone education goal as part of the 2030

SDGs ratified at the United Nations on September 25, 2015 is a very welcome development. Goal 4 in particular stipulates thus: *Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning* (UNESCO, 2015). What is the goal here? The goal is to focus on the whole child and encompass the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. Further, the goal promotes the utilization of provision of excellent teaching; utilizing and providing access to developmentally appropriate and effective learning tools; and establishing supportive learning environments for LWD with a view to ensure education provides the outcomes needed for individuals, communities, and societies to prosper. It was based on the realisation of the power of education that Irina Bokova Director-General of UNESCO (2015) had this to say: There is no more powerful transformative force than education—to promote human rights and dignity, to eradicate poverty and deepen sustainability, to build a better future for all, founded on equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, and international solidarity and shared responsibility, all of which are fundamental aspects of our common humanity.

The other viable strategy that could be utilized is the school library as a resource. Recent research has revealed that school libraries are very imperative in teaching and learning as they are places of information access. Information is increasingly ubiquitous and with information, people are able to make better informed decisions. As such there must be facilities in school libraries to guide students with learning disability for easy access to information materials. First and foremost the school library building should be accessible to all and welcoming. The school library must not be intimidating to some learners, but should be a welcoming space and an inclusive domicile of diversity and comfort. On the same vein, Krolak (2005) suggests that school libraries should create literate environments where all students will be able to access information relevant to their needs. These places should motivate LWDs by ushering them to specific services attuned to their needs and abilities. Specific services in this regard refer to preferred formats within the collection that support physical and intellectual access to information resources. These include but not limited to some formats such as e-books, talking books and other digital media. In support of this argument, Krolak (2005) suggested that school libraries should provide access to extra materials that complement and enhance materials provided by their specific subjects. These materials motivate struggling learners to understand what they were taught in class better. These are critical changes which need to be embedded in the curriculum as opposed to leaving it for interested teachers or school librarians as is the case currently in Botswana. We argue that deliberate and planned strategies to integrate school libraries into school curriculum need to be considered urgently.

In most African countries, school libraries lag behind in supporting students effectively because they are inadequately resourced (Moswela, 2010). As such one can suggest that in order for school librarians and the library staff to be able to serve students with various learning challenges, it is of importance that they be offered some training in school librarianship. This will allow them to assist all learners effectively and efficiently. Research has shown that students with learning difficulties exist in countries across the world and that they are not effectively supported (Subramaniam, 2012). Subramaniam (2012) argued that staff development for school librarians is very important; it may include pre-service training through an accredited library graduate program or an in-service professional development. This means that there is need for school librarians, teacher librarians and the whole library staff to be equipped with skills of how to assist learners with challenges.

Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) is the latest strategy in place to support schools so that they support learners with challenges. According to the document there shall be Specialized Training Facilities, wherein the Department of Teachers Training and Development in collaboration with regional in-service officers should organize continuous professional development opportunities on inclusion strategies of learners with special needs (Republic of Botswana, 2015). However, it is important to note that in-service training programs alone rarely result in teacher behavior change. As such, multiple components of professional development that include training, implementation guides, classroom materials, instructional coaching, and performance feedback for teachers are needed. In addition, workshops should equip teachers with practical skills on instruction, collaboration, alternative forms of evaluation, classroom management, and conflict resolution, and on how to adapt the curriculum. At the same time, the teachers' initial training programs should incorporate inclusive education components.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have raised and deliberated on the issues that surround inclusive education in Botswana. The study revealed that Botswana culture has been influential as a decisive element in shaping the challenges faced by people living with disabilities. Key contributor is the mythical attitude and behavior, which portrays disability as caused by witchcraft, curses from god or supernatural forces. The study also unearthed that although, Botswana has ratified and

enacted national and international policies as a way to respond to inclusive education, attaining the objectives of the said policies needs government to do what Jonas (2014) terms “inclusive policies attainable priorities than a policy flourish”. We argue that, the realisation of these policies needs the government to consider the concept of ‘humanness’ which has the same meaning as the principle of *Botho* (well-rounded character, well-mannered, courteous and disciplined). Critical in humanism or *botho* in local context is social justice which is a doctrine of inclusive education. *Botho* says to community members that the essence of being a human being is seen through a community that cherishes and lives the ideas of *botho*. Thus *botho* is a communal way of life which deems that society must be run for the sake of all, requiring co-operation as well as sharing and charity (Broodryk, 2006). The doctrine of *Ubuntu or botho* calls on Botswana society and policy makers to come to a consciousness that people living with disability are equal citizens and as such should receive equal treatment in the provision of education and training as other citizens. With this approach the nation of Botswana would be caring community

7. Further Recommendations

- Ministry of education policy makers should support curriculum developers in designing holistic and relevant school curricula that includes transformative educational and teaching approaches and along the same strengthen teachers’ competency for ESD through training on the complex sustainability concepts and its application that apply to LWDs. In their study, Mangope *et al.* (2020) revealed that in Botswana there is Limited policy guidelines and this pose a challenge to teachers regarding strategies to include students with disabilities.
- Institutions of learning at large should be transformed and developed to become safe learning environments that serve as models of sustainability and support experiential education for all learners including LWDs. in their study, Afolabi *et al.* (2013) argue for the creation of inclusive service delivery models that provides support to staffs, students and parents and thus increase the likelihood of successful implementation.
- Because the pedagogic practice for LWD differs from previous practice of teachers, intensive, continuous professional teacher development is imperative to prepare teachers for the implementation of functional inclusive education. Additionally, school regions may be prompted to develop professional learning communities for teachers who work in an inclusive setting (Mangope *et al.*, 2020).
- School libraries should have relevant infrastructures in order to support learners with disabilities and the national curriculum should embrace school libraries as spaces where learners of different abilities are brought in for learning commons. A study by Totolo and Oats (2020) study has demonstrated that the support given to students with reading difficulties in school libraries is very inadequate. Authors argue that this might be due to lack of imperative tools such as policies, facilities, specific services and lack of expertise from most of teacher librarians. These are critical in school libraries as they are the means by which school librarians support all library users including those with reading difficulties.

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Cite this article as: Reginald Oats and Lillian K. Oats (2022). *Enhancement of Sustainable Education for All: A Reality or Illusion in Botswana*. *International Journal of Education and Teaching*, 2(2), 41-49. doi: 10.51483/IJEDT.2.2.2022.41-49.