

Tuesday 27th August 2002

**Botswana Federation of Secondary School Teachers (BOFESETE)  
6th Biennial Congress**

**Presidential Address  
Baboloki Tlale**

Molefi Senior Secondary School  
Mochudi

Theme: Public Sector Economic Reforms for Teacher Advancement: Myth or Reality?

Director of Ceremonies,

Honorable Minister of Trade Industry Wildlife and Tourism Ms P. Venson

Distinguished Guests.

All Protocol Observed.

It is my honor and privilege to welcome you to BOFESETE Congress on the occasion of the 6th National Biennial Congress. The Congress is the supreme body of the Federation, a kind of parliament of secondary school teachers. This is the forum that chooses a new executive, amends the constitution among other things.

One may wonder why BOFESETE found it fit to have a Minister who has no portfolio responsibilities for education, performing the task of officially opening the congress BOFESETE strongly believes that Cabinet has an important responsibilities because ultimately policies are decided at Cabinet level.

BOFESETE is a teacher's organisation, which is committed to education and its members and customers. Education is at the heart of our core activities. Education is a very important industry if one could call it that. One aspect of education is the teacher. It is a truism that teachers are at the center of the process of education and education cannot happen effectively without teachers. We all know that all other professionals and citizens go through the hands of a teacher. We are not glorifying ourselves when we assert that we as teachers are the engines of Botswana's development. It has to be understood that development is essentially about human development, and human development happens because of teachers.

The Ministry of Education, through Teaching Service Management, manages a very large number of teachers in the primary, secondary and tertiary level. The sheer size of the number of teachers is in itself a major challenge for the authorities that are responsible. This makes one wonder if Teaching Service Management has got the requisite manpower that is needed to do the job. Do we

have enough professional manpower, which services the teachers? To what extent are the other Ministry of Education departments well equipped to conduct their mandate well? What are the manpower constraints that hinder TSM from effectively providing for teachers. Human Resource Management is a science on its own. There has been a move to staff Teaching service Management with teachers on the understanding that teachers would best understand the peculiarities of teaching. The question is has the appointment of teachers as heads of TSM been a major benefit to teachers? We wonder if teachers could not have been better served by having some Human Resource Managers at the high level perhaps working with the teachers as Director and deputy.

Teacher organizations have been concerned about the manner in which TSM delivers its services to teachers. Teaching Service Management has on many occasions blamed the lack of delivery of services on the Directorate of Personnel Service Management. BOFESETE is saying that the Director of TSM has the responsibility and the power to deliver policies without undue reference to DPSM. We have said in the past and we say it again that the Director TSM must not be a shrinking Director in relation to DPSM, in the same way that the commander BDF delivers services to soldiers in line with the BDF Act.

Take the example of Department of Student Placement and Welfare as an example. They deal with a lot more students than they are capable of handling. Hence the committees of enquiries that are currently taking place. This begs the question is the Ministry (Minister of Education) capable of handling the work load? Shouldn't we be having a deputy Minister of Education or even better still another Ministry of, say Higher Education? Just consider those services that need the personal attention of the Minister, some things end up taking too long to effect because the Minister is committed somewhere. We are constantly told that education takes the largest share of the recurrent and development budget, we therefore think that it is fitting for education to have two Ministries, if you take students from preschool up to tertiary and include teachers from primary to tertiary you will appreciate that the Ministry of Education is responsible for the largest human resource. It is true that the Ministry of Education is in charge of a significant part of the population of Botswana, more so that ours is a very young population.

Director of Ceremonies, Honorable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, the importance of education in national development can never be over emphasized. Development itself is all about advancement, upgrading, improving and uplifting the lives of citizens. This cannot happen with an illiterate person. Botswana has had tremendous development of the education sector since independence. The country is one of the leaders in Africa in terms of access to education. This is a commendable achievement, which we should all be proud of. BOFESETE is happy to have been a part of this development of the education sector. We learn from statistics people that close to 95% of the children of Botswana do find their way into schools and most of them go into secondary education. There is the missing 5%, which is unaccounted for. The transition rate to senior secondary education school is around 50% and this is increasing.

Education continues to receive the highest allocation of the national budget. This is all well and good and BOFESETE would like to encourage the government to keep on spending more on education, as this is a worthwhile investment.

A number of new subjects have been introduced at both the junior and secondary school levels. It is fitting that the curriculum is constantly being monitored and developed to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to the needs of the learners environment. There are however, concerns that curriculum changes are perhaps are too much to be covered in a number of subjects areas resulting in too much stress on the teachers, uncompleted material before the exams, lack of sufficient modification for learners with special needs, inadequate teaching and learning materials, inadequate staff etc all bedevil the schools.

The legal basis for education in Botswana is the Education Act. The Education Act is hopelessly out dated and long over due for overhaul and modernization. The Ministry of Education has at long last started the process of reviewing of the Education Act. This is a commendable step. BOFESETE is however unhappy that the initial spade work to review the Act is being done without the involvement of teacher unions. We call upon the Ministry of Education to involve teacher unions in the process of consultations regarding review of the Education Act as a matter of urgency.

Another piece of legislation that is in the process of review is the Code of Regulations. The process to review the code of regulations by TSM has been rather slow, like most government processes. We as BOFESETE were not entirely satisfied with the limited involvement of teacher organizations in the review process. What makes us unhappy is that very few representatives are invited from each organisation and also the fact that organisations are given very little time to comment on the draft documents. Teacher organisations are made to comment on drafts without the benefit of legal input. This means that the teacher organization input is not informed.

The government has introduced a contributory pension fund called Botswana Public Officers Pension Fund, which offers much better leaving of service benefits. This scheme is part of economic empowerment of public officers and it is inline with the theme of our Congress. What is disappointing is that the uptake of the scheme is rather slow among teachers. One would expect teachers as intellectuals to quickly recognize the benefits of a defined contributory scheme as opposed to the defined benefits scheme. The time for inducement of public officers is running out, and teachers seem to need a lot of convincing about things like participation in the stock exchange. I call upon all teachers to join the Pension Fund without undue delay and TSM to expedite all measures to encourage teachers to join the fund.

Bagaetsho, moseka phofu. We have been talking about the Unique pay structure for teachers and other public officers as was recommended by Tsa badiri and duly accepted by the government in a white paper. We have talked, then we recently took the step of marching in the afternoon after lessons, we were giving the authorities time to deliver and maybe even talk again. This Congress is going to resolve on the next higher means of negotiation. The next step, if we are pushed to taking it, will certainly be disruptive of the services that we offer to our clientele. The Minister of Education has promised (at the just ended school heads conference in Francistown) that he will try his best to ensure that the unique pay structure is in place in good time and that he will release the report for public consumption. What was perhaps startling about the Ministers report was that he said that the Tsa Badiri white paper did not bind Gov't to April as the target implementation date. The Minister has obviously misread the report. The Minister has also intimated that people should not necessarily expect higher salaries because the exercise is not a salaries review but a structural adjustment. While we appreciate that the new structure is not a salaries review, we know full well

that this is the opportunity for the government to improve the very depressed salaries of teachers and other public officers. Let me make it abundantly clear that BOFESETE and other teacher organization will not accept any dispensation that does not go back to April and also any dispensation that does not result in a substantial improvements in teachers salaries. Anything short on those issues will be unacceptable and the issue will be taken up with more militant methods. I wish the Honorable Minister should take the message to his colleagues in cabinet, that teachers are angry now and they can no longer accept to be taken for granted and lightly. I have said that the Minister of Education promised us the structure will be looked at by the Cabinet within 3 weeks. I wish to convey to you that the Minister did apologize sincerely for the delay caused to teachers and he promised that he will ensure the structure is in place.

I wish to say to the honorable Minister here that, Minister Kgoroba will be judged on his delivery, not on his promises and apologies. We wish Minister Kgoroba to know that teachers also have a promise to make to him, a promise which we will keep, and that promise, not a threat, mind you, is that if he fails to deliver we will also fail to deliver certain key things.

Director of Ceremonies, the suspension of Parallel Progression by Cabinet some few years back, has caused untold suffering and demotivation for teachers who have long been due for progression but could not because Parallel Progression has been abruptly suspended for no good reason. The suspension of Parallel Progression is one of the issues that are burning in the teaching service. We pray that the Pay Structure will incorporate elements of Parallel Progression. We as teachers have seen govts policies being introduced but not benefiting teachers in any way. The classic example is that of leave encashment. This policy was never meant for teachers, and up to now not a single teacher has been paid leave encashment, even those who qualified I stand to be corrected. When teachers were about to paid leave encashment, our permanent secretary said that, regions should ensure that there are adequate provision for leave encashment and ever since that circular no leave encashment has been paid.

There seems to be a pattern that teachers grievances and issues do not receive the due expeditious attention. This is a concern to all of us and we wish the minister to take this message that teachers are no longer prepared to endure the injustice that we are often subjected to. We are saying enough is enough.

Director of ceremonies, Honorable Minister, ladies and gentlemen teachers immense contribution to the economy of the country cannot be taken for granted. The sacrifices of the past and the injustices that we have suffered in the past cannot be allowed to go on. We have turned a new leave and we have had a paradigm shift and we would like authorities to take note that BOFESETE and other teachers organizations want teachers to be taken seriously. Director of ceremonies the concerns of teachers are many and have been articulated by many people in many for a, suffice to say that we need action and delivery by the authorities.

I thank you.

PULA!!!

Viva BOFESETE Viva