

BOFESETE



BOTSWANA FEDERATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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BOFESETE PRESS RELEASE ON VISION 2016 AND INDEPENDENCE

Dear Sir/Madam

Botswana Federation of Secondary Schools (BOFESETE) embraces and accepts the ideals of Vision 2016. The seven pillars of Vision 2016 have helped the organisation to grow, albeit systematic resistance from some government officials. We cannot dispute that the country has since independence, grown in leaps and bounds. The country today is prosperous and the envy of others. Unlike other countries who inherited fat accounts and a developed infrastructure, Botswana inherited nothing from the colonial British government. Our grandparents worked tirelessly to raise this country from abject poverty to the current prosperity. We should forever hail them and further dismiss foreign sceptics who have the audacity to label Botswana as lazy. No one was interested in a poor country that did not even have the characteristics of hidden wealth.

Publicising Vision 2016 this week, though belated, coincides very well with the 37th independence celebrations. Our independence was bloodless. We should applaud ourselves as Botswana that we have enjoyed so much tranquillity and social harmony since independence. Other countries within the region are still reeling under civil strife, where valuable lives are lost even today. The sacrosanctity of life cannot be overemphasised. That we have been peace loving in a region whose history has been turbulent and thousands of lives lost is remarkable.

The nation also rejoices that it has developed an impressive network of roads, telecommunications and electrical services. Other infrastructural development includes schools and health institutions.

However, BOFESETE feels that a lot still need to be done in terms of human development and implementation of government policies. Most Botswana are not confident enough to start their own businesses. Even small businesses like hair saloons, catering and takeaways, panel beating and so on are run by expatriates. Botswana are not enjoying the wealth they created. It only comes to them in drips and trickles.

Our education system still emphasises on theory and does not provide life long skills for the world of work. This is a serious deficiency in our education system.

We also have serious problems of poor implementation of policies. Of special concern in the education sector is the key two commissions of Education for Kagisano (1977) and the Kedikilwe commission (1994). There has been a systematic implementation of the commission's recommendations. Government has ignored the recommendations that sought to improve the general welfare of teachers. Both the 1977 and 1994 commissions recommended the importance of motivating teachers by putting in place a number of

packages and incentives. The recent NDP 9 has also argued in favour of teachers that there is need to “to improve teacher motivation through providing better conditions of service and other incentives” (chapter 15). NDP 9 further calls on the government to “intensify both short and long term training to ensure teacher motivation”. The government should therefore move speedily to realise these recommendations. The teachers will forever remain the pillars of this nation and therefore we cannot afford to ignore teacher development and motivation. Currently teachers’ morale is at its lowest ebb due to lack of incentives. Some of the policies that have further demotivated the teachers include poor implementation of parallel progression, scarce skills, refusal to pay teachers overtime while other government employees are paid, the Tsa Badiri Consultancy and De Villiers commission, recent unexplained salary deductions for secondary school teachers, lack of progression and a host of others. The recent probe of maladministration at the Ministry of Education indicates that all is not well there.

While Vision 2016 calls for an educated and informed nation by 2016, NDP 9 on the other hand introduces school fees. BOFESETE feels that the government must introduce compulsory education first. School fees will give parents an option of sending their children to school and hence deny some youths education. Bursaries were there in the past but many youths never benefited from this. By 2016 we should be able to use education for prosperity, fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and unemployment.

As elaborated in NDP 9, BOFESETE welcomes the setting up of Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL). We hope it will be able to train the out of school youth and adults through distance learning. Hopefully this will be complimented by the Botswana Technical Education Programme that was introduced in NDP 8. NDP 9 now states that the programme has been developed to foundation and certificate level to cover electrical and mechanical engineering, building, information and communications technology. These should be upgraded and accounts courses added to them to prepare youth for own businesses and subsequent self-employment. Currently Botswana have been pushed to the periphery and most run substandard businesses due to poor training.

BOFESETE is equally saddened by the HIV/AIDS scourge in the country. The schools have different clubs, the guidance and counselling programme, debates and discussions as well as general sharing of information by teachers and students about the scourge. As teachers we believe that everyone has a responsibility to fight the scourge and not leave it as a government problem. As part of social responsibility, BOFESETE has donated to some orphanage homes in Palapye and Maun and will continue to compliment what the government and other NGO’s are doing.

We also condemn the continued transportation of students in open trucks. Many lives have been lost so far. The student indiscipline on the other hand has become uncontrollable.

Although BOFESETE is vision 2016 compliant, indications are that some government officials are not. The openness and democracy that BOFESETE has picked from the vision cannot be stood by some officials. We only hope that officials will not bring in their personal motives upfront to hinder the progressive policies and plans. We call upon Botswana to read all these documents because of their overlapping nature. In fact, NDP 9 captures RNPE, Vision 2016, Botswana National Youth policy and others.

Let us all enjoy our independence and adopt Vision 2016. It will however be interesting to know what the vision 2016 council , our vision’s custodians, will do if some government institutions go against the spirit of the seven pillars.

BOFESETE National Executive Committee