

San Children: Resistance to the Education System

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Abstract

This paper discusses how San children for decades resisted Botswana educational system silently in various ways. San education has been an issue of debate amongst researchers for decades. There have been obstacles that made San children not to achieve educational goals despite the fact that educational authorities were aware of it. The paper used secondary data from research papers on San educational issues. The researchers used the qualitative approach and data collection tools such as open ended questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and focus group discussions. The findings indicated that indeed San education was marred by problems such as poor hostel conditions, language barrier, communication problems, use of corporal punishment and a culture that is alien to theirs, and in response they resisted the type of education offered in various ways. The conclusion is that appropriate remedies have to be provided such as a suitable educational policy that is inclusive.

Keywords: San education, resistance, silent, education system

Introduction

San children have resisted Botswana educational system in a silent way. Silent resistance in this paper is viewed as not being aggressive, avoiding strikes, not talking about problems that affect your livelihood, showing actions without necessarily voicing your opinion out or not taking to the streets to make noise about what is affecting you. The Soweto Uprising of 1976 where South African students took to the streets in response to introducing Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools is an example of resistance. This was not silent resistance, they made their voices heard by the world and blood was shed. Therefore, for this paper, the San children and their parents are viewed as a group that quietly or silently ignore what the laws and expectations are and do what they think is best for them without making noise or making demonstrations. Although the purpose of education is to provide knowledge and skills for learners to discover their full potential and become successful members of the society, this was never the case with San children. San children have been left out of the education system due to a number of reasons that this paper shall high light. The Botswana education system kicked them out early due to amongst other things language barrier and communication problems (Chebanne, 2002; Mokibelo, 2006; Mokibelo, 2014; Polelo, 2005; Le Roux, 1999; Ketsitlile, 2009; Pansiri, 2009), hence, their silent resistance to the education system offered. Very little or nothing was done to address the problem. San education has been marred by problems for decades. The San children found the education system not favouring them, not meeting their needs and therefore most of them decided to silently leave school and go back home. Although, researchers unearthed such problems and presented to the Ministry of Education, the problem

seemed to be too complex for the ministry to address. Whatever that was put in place did not work out. All that was on the surface was the erroneous conclusion that San children did not want to be educated. But what was not tabled for discussion was why the San children resisted schooling silently. Silently in this paper means without war, without a fight, just disappearing without a word, disappearing with unknown reasons and leaving teachers to speculate.

This paper therefore discusses ways in which San children and their parents resisted the education system in retaliation to the unfair learning environment silently. The silent resistance was shown in various ways and to date the Botswana education system is still looking for ways to retain San children in school but failing. The silent resistance to education was a sign that ‘no, we cannot swallow what you give us’. The San children’s rejection of any educational engagement offered by the ministry was silent resistance to a possible mismatch of two environments. The dynamics of this silent resistance to education are discussed in this paper because they have persisted for decades without any remedial action. The result of this neglect was that most San children have been left out of the education system uneducated, and therefore failing to contribute towards the development of their country effectively.

Background

Botswana, like other African countries has been going through undocumented language-in-education policies that are implied. The Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) favour the dominant languages as well as the language of the colonisers. In this regard, most of the African language policies are characterised by the national languages and a foreign language. In Botswana, the national language is Setswana while English is the official language. Ever since independence in 1966, these two languages have enjoyed recognition in the education system and only change positions in the education system depending on what the decision makers believe would help students. The policies went through three stages with only two languages being dominant in the education system. In the first stage, during the colonial era, English dominated and the use of some indigenous languages in the classrooms (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999; 2010). The problem identified was that Setswana was not given attention and therefore, for the sake of national unity and identity, it was decided that Setswana should be given recognition. This led to the second stage to establish a commission in 1977, which was called Education for Kagisano. In this commission (which was developed into a policy called by the same name), Setswana was given recognition in the education system and the curriculum. From that time Setswana was used as a language of instruction from Standard 1-4 and English from Standard 5-7 (National Commission, 1977). The policy however, had its own problems. It was soon realised that, pupils use English as a language for the examinations, but they acquire the language very late and learn to use it for only two years. This impacted negatively on their examination results and therefore there was another shift of the policy. The third stage reversed the situation and Setswana was used as a language of instruction from Standard 1 and English took over from Standard 2 – 7 (Revised National Policy on Education, 1994). Undoubtedly, the changes made in these transitional stages of the educational policies did not come out clearly about the use of indigenous languages for learning and teaching or restructuring the education system to include San learners and other ethnic minority groups affected by the same problem. Therefore, students who benefited from the education system were the ones who spoke the national language as a first language and learning English as a second language. Further, both Setswana and English basically used the same

characters of alphabets and therefore, it was not so difficult for the native speakers to acquire English and apply the basic language skills.

Regrettably, San children have been struggling and are still struggling with the content and structures of the languages of instruction in the education system unlike their counterparts who only struggle with content. For San children, they struggled with understanding the structure of the two languages together with content, more so they learnt the languages simultaneously for one school calendar year and this was a heavy load on them. This is where their problems (silent resistance) with the education system emanated. They were not allowed to use their languages in schools with internal policies being all over the school environment demanding the use of English in specific zones. They had barely anything to relate their lives within the school environment and therefore felt unwanted and alienated from education as a right. In this regard, they developed resistance to the school system; they resisted the policies used in schools in various ways.

Review of Literature

San education has always been a controversial issue in Botswana. San children have been facing a number of challenges in the education system for decades. The challenges have been multifaceted. But the critical challenge has been the Botswana language-in-education policy which recognised only two languages of instruction, Setswana and English. This restriction to only two languages frustrated learning experiences of San children (Ketsitlile, 2011; le Roux, 1999; Mokibelo, 2014; Pansiri, 2008 & Polelo, 2005) because most of them do not speak these target languages. Botswana LiEP prescribed that at Standard One, learners should be taught in Setswana while English is taught as a subject. At Standard Two, English language now becomes the language of instruction while Setswana is taught as a subject (Revised National Policy on Education, 1994). For decades the policy has been silent about the use of indigenous languages in the classrooms. The policy was meant to assimilate all student population to Setswana culture and introduce a foreign culture while ignoring the San children's identity and historical background.

The frustrating experiences in the classrooms meant that San children struggled with acquiring knowledge and basic language skills in the classrooms (Molosiwa & Galeforolwe, 2009; Monyatsi, 2009; Peke, 2020 & Polelo, 2005) as well as the structure of the two languages of instruction (Ketsitlile, 2011; Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2006; Mokibelo, 2014) while their counter parts struggled with understanding content only. This did not only handicap San children's learning but it brewed other problems such as poor academic performance (Wagner, 2006; Ntseane, 2011; Mokibelo, 2014). The problem was further perpetuated by the fact that children learnt Setswana for only one year of the school calendar and before they could master Setswana, they switch on to English, which was another burden.

The problem of languages of instruction was further complicated by the fact that there was no common language between teachers and San children. This led to communication problems in the classrooms because there was no effective communication taking place, there was silence in the classrooms because San children could not express themselves and hence, they could not exchange ideas and teaching was a frustrating exercise for teachers. The lack of communication with students frustrated their teaching profession as they could not deliver effectively and efficiently their pedagogical practices (Mokibelo, 2010; 2014). In this regard, teachers failed to provide anything extra to guide the San children to acquire

and develop proficiency in the two target languages (Ketsitlile, 2011). Their teaching profession was frustrated by reality on the ground, they could not communicate with the learners and learners could not communicate with them defeating the very purpose of teaching: to impart skills to the learners.

Although there was a breakthrough to Setswana programme used at Standard One for children to break through to the national language, the exercise proved futile because, the distance between San languages and Setswana in terms of morphology and syntax contributed to acquisition of Setswana sounds (Mokibelo, 2014; le Roux, 1999). San languages use clicks and the letters of alphabets are used differently in their language. Further, the programme was designed for first speakers of Setswana who already were familiar with speaking some of the sounds of Setswana from home. Therefore, San children failed to break through to the Setswana programme, as it was done for only one school calendar year in Standard One.

Another challenge was that San children's culture was not shared in the classrooms. The education provided in the classrooms was alien; San children could not relate with the concepts taught, their history and cultural background was regarded as unimportant in the classrooms and therefore could not see the relevance of education. They were taught the culture embedded in the target languages only (le Roux, 1999). Hence, there were inequalities in the classrooms since San children could not make sense of the Setswana and foreign culture embedded in the schooling languages.

The consequences to the above challenges meant that San children did not find any reason to sit in the classrooms without benefiting from the education system. Some San children decided to drop as early as Standard One, Two, Three and Four. At the end of Standard One each year, about seventeen children would have dropped (Mokibelo, 2010). By the time children reached the final primary schooling year, the classrooms would be half empty with about twelve children who would also get the lowest grades in the final year.

To add on to the high school dropout, where there were San preschool initiatives, a gap was created between the preschools and government public schools. Bokamoso preschool in Ghanzi initiated San children in the education system in San language - Naro. The school trained its own San teachers and the learning materials produced were in Naro language. When these children graduated from Preschool to Standard One, they were frustrated by the languages of instruction because they had knowledge from Preschool in their Naro languages but could not use it because the language of the school was Setswana. Although they were excited to start schooling, they were frustrated by the fact that their languages were unwanted in the school system and most of them decided to silently drop from school in large numbers (Nguluka, & Gunnestad, 2011). There was a gap between Bokamoso Preschool learning and Botswana public primary school learning which was difficult to close because of the languages of schooling.

The government has a policy of dropping and picking up children from Remote Area Dweller Settlements (RADS) at the end of each school term and at the beginning of the school term. The school trucks that picked San children to go back to school at the beginning of the school term became a monster which learners had to run away from. When the children heard the trucks coming, they hid in the bush until the truck leaves their place. Parents did not reprimand their children to go back to school because of their children's bad experiences with the school. Hence, not all children were picked up by the trucks to go

back to school (Mokibelo, 2010, 2014). Once the trucks leave, the children would come out from their hiding places.

The other unpleasant experience in San education was the hostels. Most San children stay far away from school and therefore were forced to stay in school hostels built for them in order for them to access education. The hostels too became a nightmare and inhabitable especially for young and older female San children (Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2007; Mokibelo, 2010). Sexual abuse that was done indiscriminately was the order of the day especially when older boys came from a drinking spree and would force female students to have sex with them while they were under the influence of alcohol. Even intruders from the village took advantage of the situation and would come into the hostel to pick their prey because supervision was minimal if not none. These stories went unreported because San children have a low self-esteem.

As for the young ones, their food would be eaten by the older children especially bread and meat and care takers were not supposed to know this because the children knew how they would suffer in the evening from older boys. Although the hostel is supposed to be part of the school where staff members would take routines in supervising and monitoring it, this was the opposite. Students silently ran away from the hostel and education because the two made their stay in school an unpleasant experience.

Another problem that kept children away from school was corporal punishment. Students from one Remote Area Dweller school complained about beatings from older boys at night when they refused sexual advances. When they over sleep and arrive at the school late, they were beaten for late coming at the school gate (Mokibelo, 2010). During lessons when they did not provide correct answers they were beaten. Also, they were beaten for being silent and not providing answers. According to the students, the whole day they were beaten in Science and Mathematics lessons because the concepts seem to be difficult for them because they were taught in English, a language they did not understand. Hence, the chain of beatings made them decide to leave school.

Although parents willingly registered their children to go to school every year, they could not assist their children with school work because of low literacy or being illiterate (Mokibelo, 2022). The languages of the school kept parents at a distance because the parents were not familiar with the languages, hence, it was difficult for them to assist with homework given to the children. In addition, when parents see the condition in which children are dropped from school trucks at the end of the term with lies, dirty and dehydrated and some of them even pregnant from unknown people, they do not want their children to go back to school. The school management lamented that when they call parents for school meetings they come under the influence of alcohol and disrupt meetings (Peke, 2020). But in actual fact, the parents too do not understand the languages of communication in school and therefore do not attend PTA meetings. This means that efforts by parents to educate their children is also sabotaged by the school languages.

Therefore, the above, disempowered and disqualified San children from the education system before they could even start learning because of the language barrier, no common language between themselves and their teachers, lack of expression even though they had knowledge from home and the distance between their language and the languages of the school. The system silently drove them away from learning at the

initial stages of learning and therefore, remained missing in the education system of Botswana (Pansiri, 2008; Monyatsi, 2009). In this regard, this paper views the findings from a different perspective and orchestrates the findings as a way of silently resisting the policies provided by the government to improve the San lives. This is the gap identified from the review of literature discussed above. None of the researchers came out clearly on San children's silence and as a way of resisting the education offered to them by Botswana's Ministry of Education. Therefore, the discussion in this paper closes this gap.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This conceptual framework has been coined by the authors using some principles of silence and resistance to change by Roberts (2000). Roberts discusses silence from Professor Margaret Montoya's article on *Silence and Silencing: Their Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces in Legal Communication, Pedagogy and Discourse is a fascinating exploration of the many possible interpretations of silence in legal arenas and discourse.* Tapping a rich literature on silence, Professor Montoya demonstrates that silence has many meanings. Therefore, this article, highlights some of the key points raised on silence from Prof Montoya. Roberts cites Montoya as saying that silence is not just the absence of voice, it is an interactive process that responds to conduct of other human beings. Roberts argues that dominant groups are often ignorant about the multiple meanings of silence and therefore tend to misinterpret it. Roberts also notes that silence may be a product of oppression or it may be a means of resistance against oppression. In this regard, the subordinate groups may even be reluctant to express their opinions in class, therefore making their silence a non-verbal communication strategy. Montoya emphasises that dominant groups must learn to listen to those who have been silenced so that they learn how to work towards a just society. Another important factor raised by Montoya is that silence may be a sign of subordination rather than liberation. This could be brought about by the dependency on government subsidies that subject them to humiliation. Silence is seen as a language of power and resistance (Khanday, 2020).

The issues of silence and resistance are seen as relevant because there is evidence of resistance to the Language-in-Education Policy through certain actions displayed by San children. Secondly, the San children seem to use silence as a way of resistance to policy in education, that is, even if the policy oppresses them, they leave school in silence and do not make noise about why they leave school. Lastly, the San children suffer the imposition of languages they do not speak and understand in the classrooms and they are and become powerless such that they are unable to learn, they are unable to make changes in their lives as educated people and they are unable to contribute towards the development of their country. This is simply because they are powerless; they become helpless with what is imposed on them. Furthermore, the powerless often fear voicing their disagreements or dissent to a situation given decades of oppression by the power holders (Gaventa, 1982). Their quiescence in the face of the injustices is exacerbated by the previous experiences of oppression and defeats which then makes silent subtraction from the oppressive situation their last resort. Gaventa (1982) concludes therefore that "in situations of inequality, the political response of the deprived maybe seen as a function of power relationships" (page, vi). Unequal power relations presupposes that the deprived or powerless lack the means to present their perspective/needs nor do they often understand the mechanism of the situations they find themselves in. Challenging or participating in that which you are not a part of its creation which at the same time you have no power over can be a daunting task and close to impossible to defeat. Having experienced decades of defeat and exclusion from mainstream development makes the deprived resign to silence. "Silence"

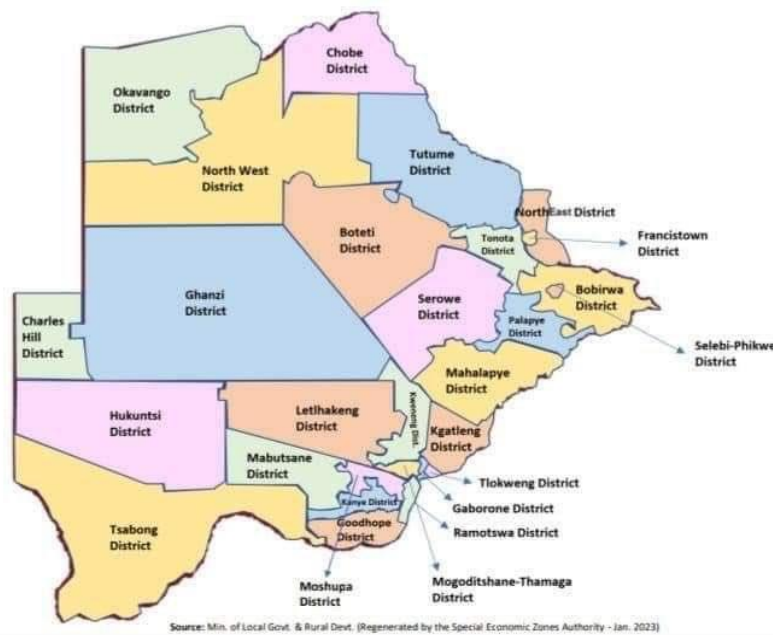
speaks of an “action”; therefore, their unheard voices, their silence in the wilderness is not really silence, and this paper assumes that it is an action of resistance (Khanday, 2020).

The San children may be considered to have been silenced in the classrooms because they cannot effectively communicate with the languages of instruction imposed upon them. Their silent mode presupposes that a lot could be going on in their minds, they have untold stories that eat inside their being about the education system and why they cannot learn. They are devastated by the LiEP that are imposed on them. They are puzzled by educational policies that make them feel unwanted. In essence, the educational authorities believe that San children resist change, they do not want to get educated but they never look beyond this resistance. Therefore, it would be vital to look at the causes of resistance to the educational system and why the San are not receptive to what is being offered in educational circles.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on secondary data with reference to previous research conducted on San education to investigate their silent resistance to the education system in Botswana. The research is based on work done in newly different regions of Botswana where San population are found such as Ghanzi, Serowe, Letlhakeng, North West, Kgatleng, Hukuntsi, and Tsabong and Kweneng. The population of San communities differs in these various regions.

Figure 1: Showing the recent recommended Districts of Botswana



The map above shows newly recommended districts of Botswana where San research was done. The researchers used mostly the qualitative research approach to collect data mainly because they wanted to be participant observers, ethnographers and get the feel of the research. Most researchers, solicited ideas from the participants to get first-hand information and therefore, used: classroom observation, interviews, open ended questionnaires and focus group discussions.

The population has been San children, San parents, children from ethnic minority groups, teachers and care givers who worked in hostels or taught San children at different levels. The sample size has been

limited by the purpose of the study. The samples ranged from 5, 10, 15, 25, 32 and 63 teachers and Standards 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 attended by San children. The number of children in each classroom was not really a concern, because researchers looked at children's artefacts, observed classroom teaching, scrutinised Standard 4 National Examinations as well as the results of the Primary School Leaving Examinations.

The findings were reported according to each key research question and also using the SPSS software to easily identify the themes and sub themes emerging. The themes that emerged from the studies were followed and the key themes that were related to the San education were identified such as language barrier, high school dropout, languages of instruction, hostel conditions, parents being unable to participate in their children's education. The themes that emerged are the ones that are followed in this paper and form the line of argument.

The results from previous research reported by participants were that: First, San children do not learn effectively because of the language barrier, the recognition of only two languages in the education system for decades has disadvantaged San children. Secondly, those who stay in the hotels are exposed to abuse of different kinds. Third, the high school dropout was still prevalent due to overlapping reasons like the ones already mentioned here. Four, the results also indicate that San children hide in the bush when the school trucks come to pick them up at the beginning of the school term. Again, the results also indicate that even though San children no longer attend school, they still go to school to get their meals unlawfully. The results indicate that San children always find ways to do things their way and ignore what has been put in place for them. Therefore, the writer found the research approaches and methodology used to collect data satisfactory to make an argument.

All the researches cited in this paper have gone through ethical considerations from the Office of Research and Development and got permissions from the Ministry of Education - Research Unit and satisfied the human research ethics through the use of gate keepers in each district and school.

DISCUSSION

The discussion in this paper is based on an analytical lens from previous research that says volumes about silently resistance of the school system by San children. The discussion below will focus on the writers' own analysis of the silent resistance.

Silently resisted the target languages

San children have silently resisted acquisition of language skills and competence in the target languages: English and Setswana. The findings of the study indicated that San children were silenced by the target languages in the classrooms due to language barrier and decided to silently disengage from school. The issue of language barrier has been the key problem in San education (Chebanne, 2002; Bolaane & Saugestad, 2006; Polelo, 2005; Ketsitlile, 2009; Mokibelo, 2010; 2014; 2019). The language barrier issue has made San children to silently resist what was stubbornly forced down their throats to swallow for decades – the LiEP. It has made the San children to silently say 'no' and demonstrated that they cannot allow to be called names and misinterpreted as not wanting to be educated, not wanting to learn, not being interested in education and yet, their parents willingly registered them for schooling and the children

agreed with their parents to go to school. If they did not want education, they would have refused to start schooling. But every year, they are registered and the Standard One classes are full of students who disappear with time. The question is what were they expecting from schools that is not there? Where is the education system failing them? The government never took the trouble to cross check why San children come to school and immediately dropout after seeing what is inside the classrooms. The issue has become too complex for the government to understand. Possibly, they could be silently resisting what the government is offering, they could be resisting the target languages prepared for them under the one size fits all, they could be resisting the alien cultures that come along with the languages that are not related to theirs, they could be resisting the language pedagogical structures put in place that are not working for them. They could be resisting the attitude of teachers towards their languages. They may not find words to describe this situation because they are too young, but they have become too intelligent and complex for the naked eye to see. Freire (1976:3) argues that *'in the circles, the learners identify their own problems and concerns and seek answers to them in the group dialogue'*. This is what San children do once they realise that they cannot learn using the target languages of the school, the answer they sought was to disengage from school. Children should learn to speak in confidence, clarity, fluency using a variety of speech in their languages (Kyriacou, 1986). The language barrier issue is complicated by unrealistic time lines. San children have to learn Setswana for one school calendar year and switch to English the following year. The timeline does not favour the San children's cognitive development. This means the government get tunnel vision and neglects the important elements that could promote and nurture learning in San children's language learning, hence, learners find ways of resisting education by dissenting school. Contrarily, in 1976, the Soweto Uprising occurred where South African Black children resisted the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in local schools. Students took to the streets to resist this law. Unlike the San they retreat to their destinations without a word.

Silent resistance to inappropriate interventional strategies used

Linked to the above point, learners have silently resisted the interventional strategies used to address the language barrier because it did not work for them: cooks, cleaners, and Covid 19 Safety Health Officers interpreted and translated concepts in the languages they did not understand and therefore they decided to drop out of school. The interventional strategies used to address the problem of language barrier have not worked for San children (Mokibelo, 2014). For example, research indicates that cooks, cleaners, teacher aides, Covid – 19 Safety Health Officers have been deployed to translate and interpret information and instructions in the classrooms to ease communication between teachers and San children (Mokibelo, 2020). Although this practice could have given San children a ray of hope for learning, it seems to be another pushback. The exercise has proved futile so far because all the efforts made were not channeled towards assisting San children, other ethnic groups benefited from such services. Further, the interventional strategies did not work because once the cooks, cleaners, teacher aides and Safety Health Officers leave the classrooms to go back to their duties, the language barrier creeps in like light and darkness. Things go back to where they were - communication becomes a problem. The outcome of such a practice is poor output and poor quality learning and teaching. This is a challenge to the government of Botswana to train San teachers to address such problems. It's an indication that the teachers as agents in the classrooms found ways that did not effectively work for San children. The strategies did not favour San children but other indigenous groups. Although Freire (1976) characterises the traditional education system as seeing learners as 'empty containers that are filled in' with information without dialogue, with

the San children they were never filled with anything and nothing effective went into their brains. The teachers also get frustrated by this exercise because the situation challenged their profession that they were unable to deliver, they were at the mercy of people who have not been trained for teaching. Again, it sends a wrong message that teaching can be done by untrained people anytime and anyhow. So the education system in this regard posed serious issues that leave stakeholders with no answers. Therefore, San children silently resisted by disengaging from school because they see no reason to sit in the classrooms without education reaching them, whether there were interpreters or not to alleviate the communication barrier problem.

Retaliation by high School Dropout at lower and subsequent levels

Disengaging from school was another way of silently resisting the education system. The high school dropout is at the centre of the silent resistance. Every year, the government recorded high school dropout in schools where San children attended. At Standard 1 about 10-15 children would drop from each Standard One class; at Standard Two, the disengagement continues, about 10 children would drop. By the time the San children reach the primary school completing level, there will be only One class of 17 -25 students instead of two classes of 30 as initially registered at Standard One (Monyatsi, 2009; Gunnestad and Nguluka, 2010; Pansiri, 2011; Mokibelo, 2014). The same applies to junior secondary, about 17 students would drop out at Form One to go back home. An analysis of such an unpleasant situation is only dismissed with reasons that are one sided – from the teachers. This is a badge that cannot be ignored. Some researchers have called them the ‘missing children’ in schools (Pansiri, 2011). They are missing because young as they are, they do not attend schools although education is seen as a human right, compulsory and free. The high school dropout starts in Standard One despite the fact that government provides them with good meals at schools and makes them sleep in beds. In the Soweto Uprising of 1976, Winnie Mandela, a leading member of the Black Parents Association of Soweto witnessed the students’ demonstrations and declared, ‘the *language issue was merely a unifying factor in black resistance, it could have been anything...*’ Pg 5. Therefore, the high school dropout is a sign of unhappiness and resistance to the education system. The San uprising may not be now, but we may be brewing hate, political struggles in future to now violently resist the education system.

Resisting the School Culture

An additional point to the one raised above, the school culture has been mentioned as different from that of the San children and that in most cases and San children resist it (le Roux, 1999; Chebanne, 2002; Polelo, 2004). For example, there are regulations in school such as, no smoking within the school premises and going out of the school fence during school time. San children are often punished for smoking in the school toilets. They ask for permission to visit the toilets and smoke there, against the school regulations. The education system seems to impose a culture that is not theirs on them and they resist it, they refuse to absorb it, they retaliate by doing the opposite. Smoking in the school premises could be punishable in many ways, beatings, weeding the school grounds and even calling parents to the school to reprimand the student. Some San children decide to renegade. Therefore, a comprehensive plan to retain children in school is necessary where their cultural practices would be accepted and nurtured.

Another example that indicates silent resistance to school culture is done during the hunting season where half school decides to ‘pause’ despite the strict school regulations to attend school regularly, San children

go away for three months to go for hunting with their parents. In other regions such as North West, some children leave school for some time to go with their parents during the hunting season. They decide to come back after three months of staying away. When they come back they sit in the classrooms as if they have never been absent, without parents coming to report their absenteeism. Some decide not to go back to school or decide to drop after the three months of hunting and gathering food. Being absent for almost three months frustrates the efforts of the teachers to cover content material in the curriculum as they plan for National Attainment Tests and Primary School Leaving Examinations. Again, it means the class register records absent children for three months, this could be the entire class of three quarter of the class and it is against the school regulations. Such cases are regarded as having automatically having dropped from school. In this regard, the high school dropout without advancing reasons comes about due cultural misfit. Therefore, San children decide to silently resist the system imposed upon them by dropping out. But are we not seeing the handwriting on the wall? The San children may not stand aside and watch this situation go on forever. The government is denying them their right to education through a curriculum that ignores who they are.

Running away from school hostels

The hostel has been one of the boarding facilities that San children resisted. The hostel has been mentioned as a contributory factor to the high school dropout (Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2006; Mokibelo & Moumakwa; 2007; Mokibelo, 2010). The San children stay in Remote Area Dweller hostels to enable them to attend school. However, the government did not give it further thinking because the children leave their parents for the whole school term, they stop living their culture for the whole school term and they are denied to speak their home languages for the whole school term and caged in the hostels. Instead, the hostel became a toxic place where there is lawlessness: sexual abuse, fights, pregnancies, drinking, smoking, bullying, vandalising hostel structures and all these stories go unreported to the school administration due to San children's low self-esteem. Hence, without entertainment and monitoring to keep San children busy, they find other ways to keep themselves busy. They manufacture, develop and implement survival skills that may not favour other members of the hostels and the government itself. Therefore, such a situation cannot be blamed on the learners alone, further debates are necessary to relook at the hostel issue and its advantages to check whether it is really serving its purpose as an integral part of the school. Again, this is a change on their usual environment and they silently resist the hostel (Scott, 1987). Hence, when parents hear such stories they do not allow their children to go back to school (Mokibelo, 2014). Such a situation is unwarranted. It makes the San children to devise ways in which they can get themselves out of it and it is in most cases too complex for the government and education system to understand and provide appropriate remedies. Therefore, the San children also resist such a hostile environment by not wanting to come back to school when the school reopens or they simply disappear from the hostel.

Resistance to boredom and delay in toiletry supply

Silently resisting boredom and delay in toiletry supplies in the hostels is shown in different ways. The use of mattresses for sanitary pads and play balls is another serious problem that has shown that San children silently resist boredom in the hostels. They think and are able to solve their problems and resist lack of entertainment and support (Mokibelo, 2009). They are too intelligent for the system they are in. The government has pledged to provide toiletry and sanitary pads to San children and in most cases there are

delays in delivering them. This delay in delivery of toiletries makes the girls cut mattresses and use them as sanitary pads (Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2006; 2007). Who came with the idea that mattresses could be their solution to menstrual problems and they could replace sanitary pads? In addition, they cut the same mattresses to use as playing balls. Therefore, some of the beds in the hostels San children sleep in would have no mattresses at all. This could mean to the government the delays in providing them with sanitary pads would be silently replaced by available devices in the hostel – now some that is too expensive to replace. It could be a way of taking punitive measures against the government to pay more by buying more mattresses to replace the empty beds. Further, the fact that the government does not provide entertainment to children who stay alone in the hostels at a tender age of six and seven, they have to find ways of entertaining themselves by designing their own playing balls with available means and the mattress would be the immediate solution to this problem. Therefore, it is not that San children are not intelligent as some people think, they are too complex for our thinking. It becomes an expensive exercise for the government to replace mattresses when they could have provided the young girls with sanitary pads on time to use or bought them balls to play with.

Rebuking the transportation system of open trucks

Silent resistance has been demonstrated through dodging the use of trucks to go back to school. Transporting San children in trucks at the beginning of the school term has become a serious hassle (Mokibelo, 2018). Trucks come back empty from San children's destinations. Children hide in the bush because they do not want to go back to school. Parents also support their children because they do not call them in their hiding places when the trucks arrive! All these happens after the government has spent fuel, time and paid drivers over time because in some cases the trucks pick up children over the weekends. This should be a loud message to the government. It is not said in words but actions. Who is fooling who? What are these children saying to the government? There have been cases of abuse along the way when children are driven back home to their destinations. Because the drivers have been dropping San children alone, there have been cases of sexual abuse, snakes dropping inside the trucks, hikers being given lifts to pay and now being in control of the truck, children carrying babies whom they do not know their fathers and mechanical faults that make children stay in the bush for days without food until the mechanical problem has been resolved. The transportation system now becomes survival of the fittest. San children silently planned for the government, they found ways to resist being transported this way, they refused to be abused and therefore, think ahead and education authorities realised that there are problems when the damage has already been done (Scott, 1987). The refusal to go back in school trucks can be interpreted in many ways: refusal to go back to the violent activities of the hostel, resisting school languages, being abused along the way by truck drivers and many other things that go unreported.

A signal of resistance by burning learning materials

There has been an indication that San children and their parents abuse school books when they were given to children to take home and do homework or study. It has been reported that San children's parents make fire with school books, make cigars with them and leave them in the rain (Molosiwa, 2008; Mokibelo, 2012). Although these cases did not happen from the same reasons, on May 10th 1933, in Germany after Goebbel's speech, an organised book burning took place in all universities to destroy German literature. What is important here is that books were burnt by other citizens of the same country because they did not see their value. This is a symbol of unity and reacting to political rigidity, rigid attitudes that are

inconsiderate of the education of the San. Of course school books are expensive, but why are they not valuable to San children? How do they view books, what are the contents of these books such that they can be destroyed? Further, those who carry school books to school and back home, leave them along the way because they are too heavy to carry in the long distances (10 or more kilometres) they walk to and from school. In the eyes of educational authorities, this is carelessness at its best, both the San children and parents are inconsiderate. However, the problem could be deeper than that. Firstly, they can't read them because of the language barrier. Secondly, the books portray the history and background that is alien to them, they don't understand the contents of the book, they cannot relate to the culture written in the books. They cannot study on their own and understand and again, parents cannot help them to read because of illiteracy and language barrier. So the school books become useless. School books are also a constant reminder of the dehumanizing environment of the school system. Hence, they find other ways of making use of them, they plan and find it fit to make fire with them and make cigars with them. In their context, that is what they could be immediately used for, they are an alternative for using grass to make fire and also using newspapers for making cigars. This could be a regression of political tendencies which had cast the shadows of the San. This may require change, change in the way we view the San. One day the San may have the fighting spirit and where ever they are they must see the San culture, San literature, San history, a history that they may relate with, not a derogatory one.

Eating meals at school after dropping out

The San children and their parents resisted the school regulations, eating meals when they are no longer bonafide students and using ungazetted routes to get into the school for meals. The findings indicated that San children who left school for one reason or another, still came back at break and lunch time to have meals in the school (Mokibelo, 2014). Since parents were not conscious about the school time. In the morning they would wait with their children outside the fence until break-time and they would drop their children inside the school fence to go and have meals inside and bring them bread for their own consumption. Again, at lunchtime the same would happen. Parents did not use the school gate because there was a security officer at the gate who registered every visitor who enters the school (Mokibelo, 2014). Obviously they would not allow parents to come into the school compound just to idle. Further, teachers were aware of the situation but could not do anything about it, they were tired of such scenes. The school fence is high, and in some cases, they opened holes in it. Since children are not allowed to have school meals when they do not attend, let alone parents, both the parents and children resisted this rule and continued to enjoy school meals while coming from home.

Preferable method of curing their ailments

San children resist going to the local medical clinic and prefer their traditional herbs for curing their ailments. The findings also indicated that when San children fall sick at school, they refuse to go to the local clinic nearby, they disappear from school without permission and go back home (Mokibelo, 2010). Children would walk long distances while ailing to seek attention for their ailments from their parents. Parents use traditional herbs to cure their ailments. The other critical point is at clinics are consultation measures where the patients may be expected to undress for examinations. One of the children once said that they are uncomfortable when nurses or doctors have to do examinations on their bodies especially

their private parts. Therefore, they prefer to go back home. In most cases, such children do not go back to school even after being cured.

An example is used by the author to show resistance to law, though the example is not related to education. The issue of resistance has been displayed by the current issue of the burial, where the government refuses to allow the San people to bury their loved father inside the CKGR where the deceased wanted to be buried next to his ancestors. The San resisted the law. It has been over a year now with the body lying in the mortuary. The government has threatened the eldest son with imprisonment if they do not bury their father within a specified time. The burial has not taken place yet. No one wants to be accountable for the burial within the government structures because the San claim that if the government intends to bury their father outside the CKGR they will not attend the funeral. This is a dilemma indeed for the government. The world is watching with interest, especially the human rights affiliations to see how the issue is going to end. The San have resisted the threats and law. This resistance has been displayed in school system. It may be rather difficult to link it now, but this resistance comes from far with the government undermining the intelligence of San children.

Implications

The paper has implications on San children. Their resistance to the Language-in-Education Policy has been noted and therefore, they should come out and be advocates to their communities instead of withdrawing back to poverty. But they can be able to do this when they learn in their familiar languages and understand the concepts.

The stakeholders need further reflection on inclusive policies that will exercise equality to accommodate all the student population and provide equal opportunities when it comes to education.

Also, the Ministry of Education has to utilise research outcomes and provide pedagogical practices that are relevant to San children as well as address their long standing problem of communication barriers in the classrooms by training San teachers.

Conclusion

In essence, the San children have been silently resisting the education system offered in various ways. Although, the silent resistance only liberated them temporarily, it sends a loud message to the Ministry of Education, stakeholders and decision makers on reviewing rigid practices that are not inclusive. To avoid such resistance, silence and withdrawal, it is critical to dialogue on how to improve the current Language-in-Education Policy, pedagogical practices in the classrooms and outside for the benefit of all the students' population, San children included. The government may be slowly producing oppositionists. This involves political will to raise national and community awareness of the constraints and challenges facing the education system to change the current situation. The government has to commit itself to resort to an inclusive language policy and education that will include the use of San languages and culture in the classrooms and the curriculum. Further, we need to change our mind-set to be tolerant and accommodative of our differences. Our differences should help us to work towards a common goal. Therefore, a San Education Policy that will clearly articulate their needs in the education system is necessary. The other critical issue is to train San teachers to teach at the initial stages of learning. There are San people who

completed secondary education, they could be included in special training programmes tailored to enable them to teach at early learning. This will enable San children to learn in their languages and understand the concepts better. Many of the problems and challenges raised here would be addressed.

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