

Marginalisation and Ethnic Identity Politics in Schools: A Challenge for School Leadership in Botswana

The existence of marginalization and identity politics issues is forever a complex challenge in schools for educational leadership particularly in post-colonial nation states. One's identities are constructed through societal interactions and determined by wider social, cultural, political and economic values and perceptions. Through a comparative qualitative case study of a multi-national and a Tswana-medium school, this study examined the way school leadership manages issues of marginalization and identity politics. While in the multi-national school, issues are mainly associated with unfavourable policies, in the Tswana-medium school they arise mainly from cultural practices. Participants were members of school leadership team, teachers, learners, and parents. They participated in individual interviews and focus group discussions. The case study confirms that issues of marginalization and identity politics in schools are rampant, and that school leadership need to be better trained in transformational leadership to be able to deal with context-based challenges.

Keywords: Marginalisation, discrimination, identity politics, minority groups, school leadership, moral indifference, early school withdrawal

Introduction

School leadership' overarching mandate is wholesale inclusivity, which includes protection of all cultural identities, promoting non-discrimination, inculcating inter-cultural understanding and ensuring poverty reduction for minorities (McDougall, 2010). However, to successfully fulfil this mandate school heads should be able to identify and address diverse cases and practices of marginalization and identity politics in schools. Marginalisation is a social inequality concept that laments the absence of justice.

According to Messiou (2006), the term the marginalisation was derived from the 'marginal man' theory which initially focused on individuals and the way they developed personality traits when placed between two incompatible social positions. But as the theory evolved, Messiou (2006) suggests that emphasis shifted towards the sociological perspective of the marginal situation, and in particular how it affects the structure and functioning of groups. Similarly, Ormond, Cram and Carter (2006) argue that marginalisation occurs when a group of people are pushed to the periphery of a society. For example; Messiou (2006) talks of pupil marginalization in school contexts. Subrahmanian (2003) links marginalization to intersecting inequalities identified while trying to understand 'exclusion' and made apparent through the application of concepts of, for example, class, gender, race and other concepts such as "(in)justice, (dis)empowerment, (in)equity and (in)equality" (p. 4).

1 There is a thin line between marginalization and identity politics in the
2 sense that identity politics provides a means to organize through lived
3 experiences and marginalized identities (Messiou, 2006; Ormond, Cram &
4 Carter, 2006; Hess, 2019). According to Hess (2019), the term “identity
5 politics” emerged in the late 1970s to describe the phenomenon of organizing
6 around identity. Hess (2019) argues that identity politics was a mode of
7 organizing around shared identities as sites of oppression, especially by major
8 political movements in the second half of the 20th century,

9 Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Todd (2018) link the concept of identity
10 politics to identity language which can be understood at face value, assuming
11 homogeneity rather than heterogeneity in the society. They argue that identity
12 language homogenizes diverse phenomena from discursive framing to
13 identification, from valuation to classification and to feelings of belonging
14 (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Todd, 2018). Identity in this case is an essential
15 human element viewed as a rationale for societal action (Todd, 2018), and as a
16 concept, requires either a stable or strategic identity from which to mobilize.

17 18 19 **Historical background to marginalization** 20 **and identity politics in schools** 21

22 There are numerous marginalization and identity politics practices and
23 cases in schools that negatively affect learners. The United Nations (2005), for
24 example, observes that cases of bullying, aggression and other forms of
25 violence in schools ruin students’ abilities and opportunities for learning.
26 Violence against students contribute to higher levels of disengagement with
27 learning, absenteeism and greater truancy (Green, 2006). It also increases
28 likelihood of early childhood withdrawal (Leach & Mitchell, 2006). These in-
29 school negative practices have been shown to increase with the severity of
30 victimisation which in turn has been associated with causes of depression,
31 anxiety, sadness, loneliness and general low self-esteem (Bond, Carlin, Tomas,
32 Rubin & Patton, 2001; Rigby, 2003). However, the extent to which school
33 leadership pay attention to these issues in order to reduce incidents of violence,
34 learning disengagements, absenteeism, marginalisation and identify politics is a
35 universal concern.

36 In the United States of America, issues of racism, marginalization and
37 identity politics in schools have become social justice concerns, dating as far
38 back as 1849 when the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that segregated
39 schools were permissible under the state's constitution (Orfield, 2001;
40 Frankenberg, Lee & Orfield, 2003). In subsequent years, the U.S. Supreme
41 Court used that particular case to support the "separate but equal" doctrine,
42 paving the way for contemporary school segregation to escalate. Orfield (2001)
43 and Frankenberg et al (2003) cite Harvard's Civil Rights Project which
44 suggests that schools were more segregated in the 2000s than in the 1970s
45 when busing for desegregation began. The project holds that racism scourge
46 continued to soar and spread globally, post colonisation in Africa and
47 elsewhere.

1 Cline, de Abreu, Fihosy, Gray, Lambert and Neale (2002) appreciated that
2 schools viewed aspects of ethnicity as central in the pupils' self-identification.
3 Cline et al (2002) noted considerable variation in how far the minority ethnic
4 pupils would have liked to see their ethnic identity expressed more fully and
5 openly at school. As observed, schools faced a challenging task in attempting
6 to respect diversity because a significant proportion of the minority ethnic
7 pupils reported race-related name calling or verbal abuse at school or while
8 travelling to and from school. For example, 26% of the survey sample
9 indicated that they had had such experiences during the time of the study. The
10 study (Cline et al, 2002) argues that no school fully developed strategy for
11 preparing pupils for life in a diverse society through the curriculum. Schools or
12 classroom practices try to treat all children equally and down-play ethnic and
13 cultural differences.

14 In Hong Kong there is no specific policy formulated for the promotion of
15 ethnic minority or multicultural education (Hue & Kennedy, 2014). Even
16 though the government offers some measures to support ethnic minority
17 students in adapting to Hong Kong schools, the policy of support for ethnic
18 minority students has been made very political and less educational (Hue &
19 Kennedy, 2014). It is argue that school practitioners of both the majority and
20 minority ethnic groups have been mainly silent, and rarely involved in
21 discussions or debates concerning issues of race and discrimination. As a
22 result, the teachers' struggles, experiences and concerns about ethnic minority
23 education have not been effectively explored or made known to the public
24 (Hue & Kennedy, 2014).

25 As a developing country in sub-Saharan Africa, Okilwa (2015) opines that
26 Kenya has fared comparatively well in educating its young people though the
27 country still remains very undeveloped, under-resourced, and impoverished.
28 Okilwa (2015) argues that the region and its people have been marginalized for
29 many years, dating back to the colonial era. The endemic discrimination and
30 marginalization of the nomadic people of north-eastern Kenya, has bred
31 challenges that minimize educational opportunities for young people in the
32 country because of the historic political isolation and marginalization,
33 sociocultural practices (e.g., nomadic lifestyle, female genital mutilation),
34 resource deprivation and poverty, harsh geographic conditions, and poor
35 infrastructure (Okilwa, 2015).

36 In Botswana schools where value of cultural diversity is ignored by school
37 leadership, the experience is the same with that in Kenya. Practices of
38 marginalization and ethnic identity politics are cultural, but arguably linked to
39 the aftermath of the colonial era in Botswana. Colonisation has imagined and
40 privileged only eight Tswana tribes (a numerical minority in the country) with
41 culturo-linguistic capital of official recognition, while many of the other 38
42 tribes were constitutionalised to experience culture and language loss,
43 disproportionate poverty, and invisibility on the national scene (Nyati-
44 Ramahobo, 2008; Mokibelo, 2015; Tabulawa & Pansiri, 2013; Pansiri &
45 Majwabe, 2019). The implication of this ethno-cultural classification of
46 majoritisation and minoritisation of tribes may also explain trends in learners'
47 performances in schools. Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) national

1 examination reports consistently present lower learner achievement in schools
2 that serve tribally minoritised communities. These are rural non-Tswana
3 minority-dominated areas such as Kgalagadi, Ngwaketse West, Kweneng East,
4 Ghanzi and Ngamiland. School results in these areas are always lower than
5 elsewhere. These areas are also overrepresented in the highest number of early
6 school withdrawals (school dropouts) and repetition rates (Pansiri, 2011a;
7 Pansiri, 2011b; Republic of Botswana, 2017). There is therefore, a linkage
8 between poor performance and issues of marginalization, and those of identity
9 politics in schools.

10 Drawing from their vast experience as teachers in public primary schools
11 in Botswana, the authors have since established that students from
12 marginalized groups were easy targets of negative beliefs, behaviours, and/or
13 judgements from others. Individuals and groups are marginalized on the basis
14 of multiple socio-economic aspects of their identity, such as race/ethnicity,
15 sexual orientation/gender/sexuality, economic status, age, religion and cultural
16 practices. These inevitable social relations result in children becoming victims
17 of practices of moral indifference and silent exclusion in schools (Pansiri,
18 2011a; Marumo & Pansiri, 2016).

19 Pansiri (2011a) argues that, teachers in schools that were serving ethnic
20 minority communities play a blame-the-victim game. That is, they perceive the
21 affected learners and their parents as subjects for accusation when all is not
22 well in schools. In other cases teachers feel disempowered to take necessary
23 actions against issues or cases of marginalisation of other children (Garegae,
24 2008). To uphold the moral values that underpin the basis for morality in
25 schools, Mogami (2001) argues that education in every society should be an
26 institutionalised means of 'enculturation' or cultural transmission, something
27 that has since proved to be a challenge to the school leadership. Reflecting the
28 context of classroom teaching in Botswana, Mulimbi and Dryden-Peterson
29 (2017) argue that individuals of ethnic minority backgrounds do experience
30 varying degrees of shame, discrimination, and a sense of exclusion from
31 learning. The need to address the issue of total inclusivity by Botswana school
32 leadership remains a challenge for both policy and practice.

33 34 35 **Theoretical Perspective** 36

37 The constructionism theoretical perspective to ethnic identity, is helpful to
38 open up lenses for which this study should be understood. This perspectives
39 allows one to appreciate perceptions that a school culture is man-made through
40 social interactions by the various participants of the school community. The
41 concept 'constructionism' is borrowed from Berger and Luckmann (1966).
42 They argue that all knowledge, including the most basic, taken-for-
43 granted common sense knowledge of everyday reality, is derived from and
44 maintained by social interactions. Various social constructionists argue that,
45 when people interact, they do so with the understanding that their respective
46 perceptions of reality are related, and as they act upon this understanding their

1 common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced (Berger & Luckmann, 1966;
2 Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009; Garcíá, 2015).

3 It is argued that human beings together create and sustain all social
4 phenomena through social practices. Social constructionists uphold the belief
5 that the way we understand the world is a product of a historical and social
6 processes of interaction and negotiation between and amongst groups of
7 people. This perspective appreciates that knowledge and reality are social
8 constructs of experience and language. Language is an essential device that
9 enables groups of people to engage in successful coordination that is employed
10 in contexts or in reference to create shared understanding or meaning (Ary,
11 Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014).

12 Social constructionism is here contextualised to school establishment
13 settings. The language of teacher pedagogy, community relational linguistic
14 practices, culture of team work and the school social practices inevitably
15 contribute to practices of marginalization in schools. The socio-behavioural
16 practices in the school environment can either depict and regulate a culture of
17 love or hate; unity or disunity; equality or marginalisation; total inclusivity or
18 exclusion.

19 Even so, it should be noted that issues of ethnicity are multi-faceted, and
20 date back to the 1970s. From another theoretical angle, Adlparvar and Tadros
21 (2016) argue that there are four main theoretical approaches that underpin the
22 study of ethnicity, namely - primordialism, instrumentalism, materialism and
23 constructionism. Primordialism is a perspective that views ethnic identity as
24 innate, fixed and permanent social practice. It implies that ethnic identity
25 serves a fundamental human need for belonging and meaning. Instrumentalist
26 view is a claim that the more privileged and dominant groups in a society
27 psychologically agitate and provoke ethnic tensions as a method to seize
28 power. The present and protect their authority as natural, and defend
29 themselves against the minority group threats (Fearon & Laitin 2000;
30 Kaufmann 2005; Adlparvar & Tadros, 2016). Materialistic perspective it's a
31 view that ethnic tensions and/or cases of marginalization exist between
32 ethnically aligned groups, and are a result of economic inequalities and elite
33 exploitation.

34 Eriksen (2002) argues that ethnicity is not a product of class relations, and
35 that there is no direct link between the two categories, but rather a resource
36 relations based perspective. Constructionist approach then emerges to dispute
37 the other three views of ethnicity and identity. It perceives ethnicity and
38 identity as 'socially constructed' positions. It is argued that this approach
39 continuously develops through social interaction, and in this cases, by both the
40 dominant and minority ethnic tribes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Garcíá, 2015;
41 Adlparvar & Tadros, 2016). As such, the constructionist approach to ethnicity
42 initiates a shift of focus into what ethnicity, ethnic identity politics, and
43 marginalization are, in school systems. Settling for constructionism as an
44 epistemological argument that provided varying perspectives of viewing
45 ethnicity as a knowledge development phenomenon, it is reasonable to
46 appreciate that it is difficult to deal with cases of marginalization in schools
47 where ethnic diversity is inevitable. As such, the constructionist approach to

1 ethnicity and the authors' vast experience in school leadership have also shifted
2 focus into the belief that marginalization in schools is man-made and can
3 therefore be overturned. However, it should be noted that cases of
4 marginalization may emerge unconsciously, as a result of the diverse socio-
5 cultural interaction between teachers, pupils and parents construct, through
6 language and shared meaning.

7 8 9 **Methodology**

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11 This study adopted a qualitative approach to data generation and analysis
12 with much influence from the work of Mogami (2001), Pansiri (2011a) and
13 Mulimbi and Dry-Peterson (2017), and together with the works of Mulford
14 (2008), Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) and McDougall (2010). These works have
15 based their methodological emphasis on the context of the research topic and
16 constituencies of their studies. In this case study, the authors' personal
17 reflective experiences in both teaching and school leadership, and their
18 exposure to educational research, directed their focus towards the need for a
19 more qualitative-focused research design. Through a blend of lecturer-student
20 collaborative strategy where the lecturer brought in rich research knowledge
21 and experience, while the in-service students contributed phenomenally from
22 their practical and working knowledge as deputy school heads, this study
23 became interestingly action research, attempting to address a practical problem
24 in school leadership. The qualitative approach anchored more on critical
25 literature review and grounded on developing action leadership defined by acts
26 of collaboration and openness to collegial learning with and from others in the
27 school set up. It is testimony of democratic decision making processes where
28 voices of others are valued.

29 Two linked public (government) primary schools in Botswana were used
30 for the comparative case study. These were a multi-national school and a
31 Tswana medium school. Multi-national here refers to a school that has more
32 children of refugees from different countries. The Tswana medium school is
33 one with local (Batswana) children of mixed ethno-linguistic background. The
34 participants were selected through purposive and convenience sampling
35 methods. They were twenty-five (25) children aged between 9 and 14 years.
36 From School A, ten (10) multinational children who participated in the study
37 comprised 1 Zimbabwean, 1 Congolese, 2 Somalis, 2 Namibians, 3 Rwandis,
38 and 1 Burundian. There was no representation from Botswana, Eritrea and
39 Ethiopia in this particular study. From School B or Tswana medium school,
40 fifteen (15) children participated. Five (5) PTA members and ten (10)
41 Batswana teachers were purposively and conveniently selected. In approach,
42 the methods of Bahar and Bilgin (2003) and Alkan (2016), of concrete
43 experience and active participation of individuals in the activity, as well as
44 reflective observation for the development of various perspectives were
45 applied. Researchers were on the ground observing and interacting with the
46 school community.

1 The researchers observed and studied the behaviour of teachers, parents
2 and children. The participated in one-on-one interviews, focus group
3 discussions and intensive case analysis (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). To
4 build rapport and trust with the participants, self-introductions by the
5 researchers and preliminary one-on-one interviews with the teachers from both
6 School A and B were conducted. Follow-up questionnaires were also presented
7 for the participants' own interpretation of issues to be further discussed. An
8 interview was held with a Principal Education Officer (PEO) of the research
9 constituency. Follow up discussions were conducted with more participants in
10 their focus groups of parents, teachers and pupils, to get more insightful
11 interpretations and opinions about social relations and behavioural practices in
12 their schools.

13 To uphold research ethical considerations, the following codes have been
14 used to refer to the participants cited in this paper:

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16 **School A** – multinational school, **School B** – Tswana medium school, **S** =
17 Student, **T** = teacher, **P** = parent and **F/G** = Focus Group

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19 Descriptive analysis was used, where different responses to a given
20 research question were grouped and discussed together, to try and understand
21 the underlying reasons for the observed behaviours, thoughts and feelings
22 (Creswell, 2002; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). In presenting the findings,
23 some quotations or verbatim presentations are used. In terms of limitations, it is
24 noted that interpretations of findings could be viewed differently by another
25 researcher. It is also possible that during transcribing informants' comments
26 from the vernacular to English very significant intended meaning could lost.
27 The actual data collection was conducted between the 26 November 2018 and
28 11 January 2019. The time frame presented itself as a limitation to the study.

29 The overarching goal of this study was to investigate how school
30 leadership understood and mediated issues and cases of marginalisation and
31 identity politics. The guiding research questions were:

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- 33 1) How does the school leadership deal with issues and cases of
34 marginalization and identity politics in schools?
- 35 2) Are school leaders aware of practices that constitutes silent exclusion as
36 a phenomena of identities and marginalization in schools?
- 37 3) What kind of a school leadership model would be best suited to assist
38 school leadership to effectively manage cases of marginalization and
39 identity politics in their schools?

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42 **Data Analysis**

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44 Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are widely recognised
45 for being transparent and systematic in terms of research processes
46 (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). The analytical importance
47 of theme is based on the research participants' subjective meanings and social

1 reality as appropriately conveyed in research report (Braun & Clarke, 2006;
 2 Vaismoradi et al, 2016). As such, the data collected from the interviews and
 3 observations has been categorized into themes. Table 1 shows the themes
 4 derived from the participants' verbatim responses, and their behaviours as
 5 observed by the researchers during the interviews. Table 2 displays a
 6 comparative analysis of the researchers' interpretation of the themes.

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 8 **KEY: School A – multinational school, School B – Tswana medium school, S**
 9 **= Student, T = teacher, P = parent and F/G = Focus Group Student from a**
 10 **multinational school**

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 12 *Table 1. Participants' verbatim statements and observed behaviours*

Themes	Verbatim Statements	Observable Behaviours
<i>Insecurity (trepidation and fear)</i>	<p>"I like school but I don't like this school because I don't feel safe"(SAS I)</p> <p>"Here, we live in fear. For some days peace would prevail, but for some there would be so much tension that we even fear for our lives. We even feel we might be attacked in our houses. But we put all our security in God's hands as we strive to give these people normalcy in their lives, to the best of our abilities" (SAT 1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwillingness to talk openly to the researchers - Avoidance to talk about certain events
<i>Inequity (no hope)</i>	<p>"Our lives end here. Form five is like the end of school. You watch your friend who was here in school with you become a president"(SAS 4)</p> <p>"Some [of us] came here for independence and running away from civil wars" (SAP 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shaky tone (of voice) - Nervousness of the speaker - Faint voice
<i>Alienation (deprived)</i>	<p>"Because we are regarded as BaSarwa, even our children are intentionally deprived of education" (SBP 1)</p> <p>"We want to have rights, the right to movement"(SAS 4)</p> <p>"You have intentionally separated us [from the rest of the village]" (SAP 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Divisive and identity of deprivation through social interactions between the students
<i>Averseness</i>	<p>"May be we fear that we are not educated and would not know what is inside the children's books) (SAP 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Avoidance identity to participate in school activities - Lack of enthusiasm
<i>Attention seeking</i>	<p>"We don't want Teacher X because when we were doing standard 5, he gave us 24% because he was always on the phone or is out to town" (F/G)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Making pleas (e.g. to be transferred elsewhere for better living conditions)

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1 *Table 2. Comparative Analysis of the Findings*

THEMES	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
<i>Insecurity</i>	Socio-political influences lead to ethnic tensions/rivalry – hence fear identities	Pedagogically teacher-influenced (e.g. what the teacher(s) might say or do to the students, leading to early school withdrawals)
<i>Alienation</i>	From unfavourable education system, resulting in: - some pupils deliberately failing themselves – protest behaviour	From uncondusive school environment(e.g. degradation/humiliation) of those in disadvantaged positions)
<i>Alienation & Inequity</i>	-Desire for equal treatment like the locals -Wish to enjoy both human and civil rights alike just like the locals (e.g. right to free movement)	The minorities feel oppressed by those from the dominant groups (from discrimination, prejudice & othering them)
<i>Averseness</i>	Lack of parental involvement due to: -illiteracy – identity social and symbolic capital	Lack of parental involvement due to: Illiteracy – identify with no qualification for better job opportunities in the society
<i>Attention Seeking</i>	Unfavourable education system, teacher pedagogy (e.g. silent exclusion)	Uncondusive school environment (e.g. practices of moral indifference)

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Findings and Discussions

The fieldwork data gathered from different sources has led to the main argument that marginalisation and identity issues, including ethnic identity politics are common in schools. The findings have established new emerging themes of identity centred on economic, educational and social-cultural factors of marginalization, leading to the school leadership's inability to gel well within the communities they serve. Not to blame the school leadership, it has also been found that groups display certain types of behaviour, beliefs and values that are unacceptable to the broader community (Petkovska, 2015), consequently leading to social stereotyping of identity among people. Key identity themes, although closely related in meanings and implications to behaviour of identity, were drawn from the field work data as illustrated in Tables 1 – 2. The discussion below is an interpretation of each theme of identity.

Insecurity

The results are raising the issue of insecurity propelled by fear or trepidation.. The voices of the pupils raise an alarm that both the teachers, pupils and parents alike live in fear almost every day. For example; a pupil from School A said, "I like school but I don't like this school because I don't

1 feel safe.” This voice attaches a clear message of a cry for help. Literature has
2 indicated that children dislike school due to fear of being marginalised, abused,
3 bullied or discriminated against, in any form. The feeling of fear, usually
4 attached to emotional experiences, has a significant role in organising the
5 construct system, and hence regarded a result of conscious construction (Kirsch
6 & Jordan 2000; Walker & Winter, 2007, Butt, 2008; Lester, 2009). Lester
7 (2000) further suggests that fear is experienced when people fail to resolve
8 inconsistencies that occur amongst them. Lester (2009) talks of social
9 intelligence. He views social intelligence as competence and success in social
10 interaction that is adaptive, and allows individuals to understand others’ hopes,
11 fears, beliefs and wishes. The school leadership, therefore, has a mammoth task
12 of creating safe havens for children to co-exist through the use of social
13 intelligence.

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15 **Inequity**

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17 Sahlberg and Katzenbach (2012) argue that transformational leadership
18 should characterise proficiency and aptitude to translate education into
19 intangible benefits for political stability, social well-being, and a more
20 innovative approach to solving problems. In Botswana for example, there is
21 need to ensure that a school provides all children with a free ten-year basic
22 education as per the Revised National Policy on Education (1994). Schooling
23 would be unfavourable to some children, if policies and practices restrict or
24 limit their progression. For example, drawing from the experiences of children
25 in School A who are predominantly refugees, they can only enjoy their
26 privilege to free education here in Botswana until they reach Form Five.
27 Speaking in a shaky tone of voice, one child had this to say, “Our lives end
28 here. Form Five is like the end of school. You watch your friend who was here
29 in school with you become a president.” Education, as they put it, “is their only
30 hope” towards meaningful lives. Due to inequity, some learners resort to
31 desperate measures of protest behaviour such as deliberately failing
32 themselves, so as to hopelessly ‘cling’ to the education system for a little
33 longer.

34 There is no doubt that a school culture which depicts an uncondusive
35 learning environment also drives some children to despondency (Loukas, 2007;
36 (Jacobson, Riesch, Temkin, Kedrowski, & Kluba, 2011; McLaughlin, Uggen &
37 Blackstone (2012). This, therefore, is a clear indication that some government
38 policies need to be revised, not only for the benefit of the children, their parents
39 and the community, but for the agenda to create better opportunity for learners.
40 Likewise, there is great need for a paradigm shift in the way school heads run
41 their schools. Walter and Griffin (2014) submit that, if transformational leaders
42 are to address evolving economic and societal demands, they must adopt a
43 holistic approach that covers all aspects of schooling. When seeking support
44 for education transformations with the government, leaders have to convey the
45 importance of reforms for the overall socio-economic benefit of the country,
46 and not just for the education sector (Sahlberg & Katzenbach, 2012; Walter &
47 Griffin, 2014). As such, leaders should seek to depoliticise issues and utilise

1 evidence to prove the relevance of education reforms, if effective inclusive
2 education is to be achieved in schools.

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4 **Alienation**

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6 Increasing access to schooling has been a major priority of government
7 (Republic of Botswana, 1994; 2014). Despite the achievement of increased
8 school enrolments, research shows that there are considerable disparities and
9 imbalances in the educational system which leads to some learners feeling
10 alienated. Alienation explains pain of rejection and hopelessness. Identity of
11 marginalisation cuts off someone from the rest, rendering a person loveless and
12 isolated. Provision of education to children, especially from vulnerable groups
13 such as the “so-called minorities” remains a great challenge in Botswana
14 (Pansiri, 2008; Republic of Botswana, 2014; Marumo & Pansiri, 2016); which
15 Nyathi-Ramahobo (2008) noted that education standards in rural minority-
16 dominated areas are generally lower than elsewhere, and fit the definition of
17 education of alienation.

18 In this study, one parent in School B said, “Because we are regarded as
19 BaSarwa, even our children are intentionally deprived of education,” while a
20 student in school A said, “we want to have rights, the right to movement [like
21 all the other children who enjoy the freedom to travel to any part of the
22 country].” Those from marginalised communities feel discriminated against,
23 and one cannot ignore the fact that both statements above carry a strong
24 connotation of alienation in divisive social interactions between and among
25 both parents and children in schools. The minorities feel alienated by those
26 from the dominant groups (from discrimination, prejudice & othering), and
27 leave them in rejection and despair (Pansiri, 2008; Nyathi-Ramahobo, 2008).
28 Transformational approach would expect school leadership to level the
29 education playing ground for all children, thus eliminating possibilities of
30 learner alienation, lest the goals of RNPE (1994), Education for All, Vision
31 2036 and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) remain a far-fetched
32 vivid dream.

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34 **Averseness**

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36 The statement, “maybe we fear that we are not educated and would not
37 know what is inside the children’s books” as uttered by one of the parents in
38 the study, overtones the effects of fear or uncertainty. This is compounded by
39 parents’ lack of social capital, not literate, hence inability to help their children
40 to effectively participate school assignment. In light of this, averseness is
41 linked to student and school performance. Plagens (2011) argues that, despite
42 the equal distribution of resources across schools, some students and schools
43 do perform better than others. Plagens (2011) contends that even though it is
44 often difficult to identify the exact reasons why that is the case, such a fear or
45 uncertainty can be attributed to variations in levels of social capital. Similarly,
46 the current study findings have revealed that avoidance to participate in school

1 activities and lack of enthusiasm displayed by parents in both schools may be
2 due to lack of education and /or illiteracy.

3 The differences in educational success can be attributed to different levels
4 of existing social capital, which is produced in the networks and connections of
5 families that the school serves (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016). As such, when
6 experienced, weak networks and connections between the school, the parents
7 and the community at large can present themselves as factors to ‘educational
8 marginalization’ that affects children. The role of the school leadership should
9 therefore, ensure that schools become more than learning factories where
10 inputs are used to generate outputs (Plagens, 2011); but also are essentially
11 crafted to child-friendly social environments. Consequently, schools should put
12 in place strategies that can be employed to deal with averseness and academic
13 marginalisation that tend to detach schools from the communities they serve.

14 15 **Attention Seeking**

16
17 The study has revealed that the unfavourable education system, ineffective
18 teacher pedagogy and uncondusive school environment continue to lead to the
19 withdrawal of many children from schools. Kristić, Ilić and Videnović (2017)
20 are of the opinion that low motivation, educational expectations, as well as low
21 participation in school and extracurricular activities are some common risk
22 factors that lead to children seeking attention for inclusion. As such, the use
23 children’s voices is essential, not only as a tool for gathering information, but
24 also a critical way of proving that schools are truly engaging with those
25 involved in the process of inclusive education.

26 For example; when the focus group used in the study said, “We don’t want
27 Teacher X because when we were doing standard 5, he gave us 24% because
28 he was always on the phone or is out to town,” it became quite apparent that
29 the children are in need of help because they lack the necessary attention they
30 deserve. Literature indicates that children’s voices can be viewed as the
31 challenging starting point for the creation of more inclusive practices within
32 schools, and as such, can no longer be ignored (Messiou, 2006). All forms of
33 exclusion should be dealt away with, and this means continually engaging
34 children on issues that matter the most regarding their education (Messiou,
35 2006; Kristić, Ilić & Videnović, 2017). Therefore, the children’s attention
36 seeking tendencies are indisputably a critical wake up call for the school
37 leadership. Appropriate action towards ensuring effective teacher pedagogy for
38 the inclusivity of all children has now become a priority.

39 40 41 **Managing Marginalisation and Identity Practices**

42
43 Hallinger (2010) suggests that the suitability or effectiveness of a
44 particular leadership practice is linked to factors in the external environment
45 and the local context of a school. The marginalisation and identity cases in the
46 two schools are influenced from both environments. In School A, cultures from
47 politically challenged experiences bother all – teachers, parents and learners. In

1 School B the bigger cultural challenge is associated with sociological and
2 psychological issues of social and symbolic capital. So in both schools
3 marginalisation and identity behaviours come as challenges to school
4 leadership. Leadership practices show desire for help to acquire skills on
5 inclusivity to satisfy the learning needs for all and motivate improved quality
6 parental participation in children's education. There is great need for the school
7 leadership and teachers to acquire mind-set change training. Much has to
8 change the status quo through critical thinking and reflective practices in
9 managing marginalisation and identity behaviours. This would, optimistically,
10 lead to adoption of pragmatic, progressive and modest school leadership that is
11 inspirational, and values total inclusivity and learner empowerment for
12 sustainability.

13 Marginalisation experienced in both schools is a manifestation of identity
14 politics that is not effectively mediated by school leadership practices. Both
15 external and internal school environments could be controlled through
16 transformational leadership activities, as Hallinger (2010) argues, by more
17 constructive context-based strategies. Evidently marginalisation breeds a
18 variety of social and psychological ills amongst members of a community, and
19 affects children the most. The resultant identity politics behaviour results in
20 insecurity, inequity, alienation, averseness and attention seeking. As such, a
21 shift in school leadership culture from one that is only interested in academic
22 performance, to a transformative culture that pays attention total inclusion of
23 learners and parents from diverse cultures is required. This begins with,
24 according to Petkovska, (2015), developing the right attitude towards
25 differences in people who might result in preventing socially unacceptable
26 behaviour in certain individuals, their desire to condemn, exclude or in other
27 way discriminate their peers who, for any kind of reasons do not fit into what at
28 some point is considered a norm.

29

30

31

32 **Conclusion**

33

34 The study has benefited from a reflective and collaboration qualitative
35 research for school leadership and school improvement. Kindon, Pin and
36 Kesby (2008) argue that the primary goal of a participative qualitative research
37 as a method is to create an environment and process where context-bound
38 knowledge emerges to develop 'local theory' that is understandable and
39 actionable by the school itself. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) maintain that
40 the researcher and participants should collaborate actively in a loosely defined
41 group process to study and change their social reality. In this study the
42 reflective, collaborative and participative qualitative research approach was
43 able to assist school leadership to better improve attention to practices of
44 marginalization and identity politics in their schools. This comparative study
45 therefore avails opportunities for further studies in schools across the country.
46 The emerging themes from this study also provide a philosophical background
and framework for policy and curriculum development that may motivate

1 proactive measures of dealing with cases of marginalization and identity in
2 schools.

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