Holistic Education: Blending the *Botho*, Human Factor Ethos of Basotho Traditional Education, with the Scientific Perspectives of 21st Century Western Education

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Abstract

This paper posits that it is the blend of *Botho,* or Human Factor ethos of Basotho traditional education with the scientific perspectives of 21st century western education, that can effectively lead to holistic education. The methodology is basic research, while the theoretical framework is critical theoretical analyses articulated around triple axes of the traditional Basotho educational system, the modern western educational system, and a hypothetical third perspective or holistic education. This paper will highlight the *Botho* tenets of Basotho traditional education, 21st century skills, and resultant holistic education. This paper proposes educational transformation or holistic education through the integration of both the experiential, participative, and social learning orientation of traditional Basotho education, with the scientific, virtual, technological and entrepreneurial perspectives of modern western education. The paper proposes policy recommendations for the development of holistic education in modern Lesotho.

Keywords: Basotho traditional education, *Botho*, experiential and participative approaches, entrepreneurship, human factor, holistic education

1. Introduction

This paper aims to address the notion of holistic education, which is premised on the blending of both *Botho,* or Human Factor ethos of Basotho traditional education, with the scientific orientations of 21st century western education. Holistic or total education which is proposed by this work is an attempt to integrate the homocentric and scientific perspectives of traditional African educational systems exemplified by *Botho*, and the 21st century skills and competencies of western education. It is the firm conviction of the researchers that only holistic education can resolve issues of unemployment, underemployment, and unemployability that plague graduates from the modern, westernized Basotho educational system. This paper posits that the way forward is through holistic education, that is, the harmonious symbiosis between both the experiential, participative, and social learning orientation of traditional Basotho education, with the scientific, virtual, technological and entrepreneurial perspectives of modern western education.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper is to propose holistic education as an educational paradigm which unites the *Botho* or Human Factor ethos in Basotho traditional education, with the scientific tenets of western education. In other words:

- What are the contributions of *Botho* to holistic education?
- What are the contributions of 21st educational skills and competencies to holistic education?

3. Research Questions

The following are the research questions of the paper:

- What is holistic education?
- How does the Human Factor element of *Botho* contribute to holistic education?
- How do the 21st century skills and competencies contribute to holistic education?

4. Methodology

The methodology of the study is basic research, while the theoretical framework is critical theoretical analyses articulated around the traditional Basotho educational system, 21st century skill of the modern western educational system, and holistic education.

4.1 Basic Research

Basic research, also called pure research or fundamental research, has the scientific research aim to improve scientific theories for improved understanding or prediction of natural or other phenomena (National Science Foundation, 2014). Basic research in this paper is descriptive and exploratory, in relation to highlighting the tenets of the Human Factor ethos in Basotho traditional education, and the scientific 21st century skills and competencies of western education. This paper also generates a new educational paradigm or holistic education, which is a hybrid perspective for educational research and policy.

4.2 Critical Theoretical Analyses

Critical Theory is a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it. Critical theory basically seeks 'to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (Horkheimer, 1982). This paper utilizes Critical Theory as a 'research lens' through which holistic education, the blend of both traditional African and western educational systems, is proposed as the most realistic, effective, and efficient educational system for present day Lesotho.

5. Holistic Education

Holistic education as defined within the context of this paper implies a blend of 'homocentric and scientific' perspectives derived from the Basotho traditional education and western education. Holistic education posits the combination of learner centeredness, character transformation, and 21st century skills and competencies.

Botho or Human Factor Ethos in Basotho Traditional Education.

Botho is the 'vital energy and substance' whose quantity and quality are indispensable for the 'humaneness' of human persons. According to Shutte (2001, p. 2),

> *… the concept of Botho embodies an understanding of what it is to be human*
> *and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfillment.*

For Shutte (2001), although people are born human (have the *Botho* potentials), their humanness *can either be enhanced or depreciated* by the individuals themselves or by other people. In other words, the quantity and quality of *Botho* determine the degree of expression and experience of humanness. The preceding is confirmed by Ntsiki (2015) when he states that the Basotho considered the essence of being a human being, *Botho*, to be the embodiment of spiritual values demonstrated in life through deeds. He further affirms that those whose *Botho* was highly developed were closer to God both in this life and in the next, while those oblivious and negligent of their *Botho* strayed far from God and risked sinking lower than animals.

Botho hinges on the following maxim, *motho ke motho ka batho* (a person owes his/her social being to other social beings). According to Mahao (2010), the latter aphorism is the epistemological paradigm and cornerstone of a homocentric, sustainable, and resilient social and ecological equilibrium. In other words, *Botho* is never the fruit of a spontaneous generation, as much as it is the logical product of peace and reconciliation, or the reintegration of all energies and vital forces at the individual and collective levels. *Botho* is essentially the imperative transpersonal call to form caring relationships, co-creations of intersubjective space in which each and all patiently and in a disciplined fashion listen for the reverberations of soul, while carefully attending to the resonances that emerge (Rieger, 2009).

According to Matsela (2006), prior to the nineteenth century and even early twentieth century, the indigenous Basotho education consisted of prerequisite rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood. The indigenous Basotho education system had a pragmatic orientation, because it envisaged cognitive, affective, practical, social, and consciousness transformations (Matsela, 2006). From the aforementioned, Basotho traditional education placed emphasis on maximizing personal and group effectiveness, socio-culturally responsible and accountable behaviour, as well as cooperative and collaborative efforts in all community undertakings. By extension and deduction, the indigenous Basotho education system prioritized the Human Factor element as primordial in the development process (Adjibolosoo 1999, 1998, 1995, 1994, 1993).

The central tenet of the Human Factor literature which is inseparable from *Botho* in Basotho traditional education, states that qualities such as responsibility, accountability, trustworthiness, integrity, motivation, commitment, emotional maturity, honesty, love, tolerance, loyalty and personal caring, hold the key to all forms of authentic

development (Adjibolosoo 1999, 1998, 1995, 1994, 1993; Chivaura and Mararike, 1998). In other words, the traditional Basotho educational system essentially highlighted Human Factor variables which are fundamental prerequisites for individual and collective flourishing. Characteristics of Human Factor ethos in Basotho traditional education include (Adjibolosoo, 2000):

- Knowledge of one's rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities as a member in a community

- Willingness to contribute to societal integration and nation building

- Extensive personal loyalty and commitment to trust in a common and/or shared historical civilization

- Development of well-adjusted and robust citizens

- Development of the virtue of hard work, commitment, integrity, trustworthiness, responsibility, dedication, loyalty, and self-respect

- Development of worthy citizens guided by decent moral precepts, that is, good citizens who can live, work, contend and cooperate in a civilized way, and who are loyal, patriotic, filial, respectful to elders, law-abiding, and humane, caring of family, parents, neighbours, friends, tolerant of all people, and well mannered.

In other words, the foundations of holistic education as rooted in the *Botho* Human Factor ethos of Basotho traditional education, consist of character transformation, social education, positive ethics, and higher order cognitive and behavioral skills.

For the researchers, the kingpin of Basotho traditional education is individual character transformation, which is the principal behavioural driver forged through the *Botho* Human Factor ethos for 'creating a person out of the untamed and unmoulded body of a child' (Masolo, 2010:242). Secondly, in relation to social education, the Basotho youth were taught about the structure of their social environment, their place in that structure, and how they were expected to behave towards everyone within it (Marah, 2006:15; Masolo, 2010:251). In other words, the 'African youth's ethnic group and community were held by rules and regulations, values and social sanctions, approval, rewards and punishments, etc., into which he was inducted' (Marah, 2006:17).

Thirdly, concerning positive ethics in Basotho traditional education, Mapesela (2004:322) argues that Basotho indigenous education inculcated good ethics, morals and values such as humaneness (ubuntu), neighbourliness, responsibility, and respect for self and others. It is his view that Basotho indigenous education 'can still be used to encourage people to become better members of society, as well as to help curb certain social problems like the lack of neighbourliness, heartlessness, theft, killing and rape, uncaring and unpatriotic attitudes, and lack of good ethics.' Lastly, the Basotho traditional education inculcated into learners, higher order cognitive and behavioural skills, such as *thuto-kelello* (cognitive engagement) or the ability to think strategically and at the highest level through a pragmatic problem-based education; *makhabane* (virtues), which included industry or hard work; *leruo* (wealth), *makunutu a sechaba* (national secrets or classified information), *bonatla* (warriorship), and *boqapi le bokheleke* (creativity and eloquence) (Letseka, 2013).

Now, the question arises: Is it possible for the Basotho to dissociate themselves from the prevailing western educational system? The answer to the question is clearly no, because the world is now a global village where cultures co-exist (Welsch, 2004). According to Mosweunyane (2013:57), Africa will never escape from the western globalized educational system, but that the Basotho can employ the latter to effectively and efficiently address and further African issues and interests.

Moreover, the western education system could also be used as a scientific prism through which learners can critically reflect on the *Botho* worldview. Literature and critical reflections on *Botho* philosophy will result in its continuous refining, adaptation, development and effective application within Lesotho, Africa and beyond. In this manner, the teaching of *Botho* worldview in association to the 21st century skills will effectively foster the development of holistic education. Thus, the latter becomes the result of a judicious blend between moral regeneration acquired from *Botho* worldview and scientific enlightenment through mastery of the core skills of western education.

In the light of the foregoing, the teaching of *Botho* worldview from primary to tertiary levels is ethically good and worth doing. The philosophical justification for the teaching of *Botho* worldview rests on the Utilitarian point of view. According to this view, an action is morally good as long as it promotes human happiness. Britton (1969:59) observes that 'Utilitarians profess to hold that there is one and only one basic moral law: that it is right to promote human happiness'. This means that, an action is good as long as it promotes the well-being of people. On the contrary, this moral law implies that, an action or behavior is bad as long as it produces pain or suffering. Therefore,

the teaching of *Botho* worldview from primary to tertiary levels in Africa in general, and Lesotho in particular can significantly contribute to the promotion of African and Basotho well-being. At this point, we shall consider the 21st century skills, which derive from modern western education, as the complementary axis of holistic education.

6. 21st Century Skills

Core 21st century skills include: critical thinking and problem solving; communication and collaboration; creativity and innovation; information literacy; media literacy; ICT literacy; flexibility and adaptability; initiative and self-direction; social and cross-cultural; productivity and accountability; leadership and responsibility (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2000). The revised version of the 'taxonomy for learning' uses the updated terms remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create, which "… processes can be learned at the same time or even in reverse order" (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2000). 21st century skills can be summarized as follows:

1. Communication and Collaboration or the ability to communicate clearly and collaborate with others.

2. Creativity and Innovation or the ability to think creatively, work creatively with others, and implement innovations.

3. Information Literacy Skills or the ability to access and evaluate information, and use and manage information.

4. Media Literacy Skills or the ability to analyze media and create media products.

5. ICT Literacy Skills or the ability to apply technology effectively.

6. Flexibility and Adaptability, entail the ability to adapt to change and be flexible.

7. Initiative and Self-Direction are the aptitudes for managing goals and time, work independently, and for becoming self-directed learners.

8. Social and Cross-Cultural Skills or interacting effectively with others, and working effectively in diverse teams.

9. Productivity and Accountability Skills involve the ability to manage projects and produce results.

10. Leadership and Responsibility Skills imply the ability to guide and lead others, and be responsible to others.

On the basis of the positive values of *Botho* and Human Factor ethos found in the Basotho traditional education, and the scientific, virtual, and entrepreneurial core skills associated with western education, the blend of these two educational systems, will lead to holistic education. In other words, the teaching of *Botho* worldview will lead to acquisition by learners of the following *Botho* virtues: responsibility, honesty, competence, (Shutte, 2001), unity, respect, compassion and human dignity, (Murove 2013:233), moral regeneration Metz (2011), and happiness and well-being (Britton, 1969). The aforementioned virtues should be blended with the core subjects and the following 21st century themes: global awareness (multicultural awareness and understanding); environmental literacy (ecological awareness and understanding of energy and resource sustainability); financial literacy (economic, business, and entrepreneurial knowledge); health literacy (health care, nutrition, and preventive medicine); and civic literacy (civic engagement, community service, ethics, and social justice); learning and innovation skills; information, media, and technology skills; life and career skills.

7. Policy Implications of Holistic Education

This paper proposes policy reforms in the case of Lesotho, which will act as drivers of the holistic education project:

7.1 Quality Assurance and Strengthening Partnerships

There is need to strengthen existing partnerships as well as scouting for new partnerships to enhance the effective blending of traditional and modern curricula elements. Mechanisms should be put in place to involve employers and businesses in needs assessment and development of inclusive curricula.

7.2 Research and Database Management

Research and credible database development and management, in line with the specificities of both traditional and western educational systems. Coordination and networking for purposes of identifying capacity building and training needs for learners, graduates, decision makers, and potential employers. Government should facilitate the compilation and sharing of best practices, by encouraging public and civil society stakeholders to plan events to develop awareness of the mutual interdependence of core values and skills of both traditional and western educational systems.

7.3 Graduate Networking Clubs

Graduates should organize themselves in establishing organized structures like Graduate Clubs which can facilitate projects like networking and capacity building programs that focus on highlighting core traditional and modern life skills development.

7.4 Development of Graduate Development and Employment Programs

Graduate development and employment programs should facilitate holistic education through mentoring and counselling programs.

7.5 Policy on Technical, Industrial and Vocational Education and Training (TIVET)

There is need to promote technological proficiency by training learners to develop skills to produce competitive products for domestic and international markets. This will imply the development of training systems and mechanisms to facilitate linkages of the informal sector and standards of skill acquisition with those of the formal technical and vocational system. There is need to improve access and relevance of education and training provided to the youth with more focus on technical and vocational skills as well as development of soft skills.

7.6 Government Commitment through Budgetary Provisions

There is need for the Lesotho government to promote policies that increase awareness, development, and valorisation of both the homocentric values of Basotho traditional education, and the scientific skills of western education.

8. Conclusion

This paper concludes that *Botho* is an authentic African Basotho worldview which can be understood in terms of the establishment of a continuous relation of interdependence and interconnectedness between individual human beings. In this regard, *Botho* worldview is characterized by the notion of relatedness. *Botho* worldview was important since it traditionally introduced children to real life issues so that learners could pragmatically, effectively and efficiently solve their individual and social problems. Western education, on the other hand, lays emphasis on scientific, virtual, technological, and entrepreneurial considerations. The way forward, as proposed by this paper is the development of holistic education, which entails a harmonious symbiosis between both the experiential, participative, and social learning orientation of traditional Basotho education, with the positivist and pragmatic values of modern western education. Holistic education entails a judicious blend between core *Botho* values that lead to moral regeneration and character transformation, and 21st century skills, which are the bases for logical and rational enlightenment.

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