

# ***Every Generation Must Plant a Seed***

**Remarks by *Kgosi Leruo Tshekedi Molotlegi***

**Launch of the RBN/DOE Partnership for Bafokeng Schools**

**Lebone II College**

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[OFFICIAL SALUTATIONS AS PER PROTOCOL]

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming today, and for all that you do every day to contribute to the education of our children. It is truly an honour to have you here with us.

As others have mentioned, today is a historic occasion. We are marking the beginning of a new chapter in our efforts to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to make a contribution in the world. If I may, I'd like to put our new partnership with the Department into perspective by taking you back through the history of our journey as educators. I think you'll agree with me that while we're making real progress as a community of lifelong learners, we are at the same time carrying on a proud tradition of strategic

partnering to make sure our children receive the best possible opportunities. Generations of Bafokeng have given serious and sustained thought to how to teach and mentor their children and grandchildren, and every generation has had an opportunity to plant a seed, leave a legacy, make a real difference in the life of our schools. Today we are here to witness and document our generation's contribution to the upliftment of our schools, our community, and our nation.

In different forms, education has always been part of our tradition. Most people are familiar with the concept of initiation schools (*lebollo, bogwera, bojale*), where we used to gather groups of young people together to teach them what they needed to know to be successful adults in our society. Some of the pedagogy used at that time would seem jarring to us now, for example the use of pain to teach endurance, but the objective was to help children make their way over the threshold to adulthood. As Batswana, we have always been storytellers and praise singers and poets, and these were some of the many ways we passed down our history, our values, and our creativity. By watching, asking, and imitating their peers and their parents, our children learned to take care of cattle, to weave baskets and make pots, and to plant and harvest crops. These forms of education persisted after the arrival of European missionaries, but suddenly in the mid-nineteenth century, we also had new forms of

learning. The first formal schools in the Bafokeng community were built by German missionaries at Kana and Saron. These schools were seminaries, and their aim was to train young Bafokeng to teach in other areas. That's right; our first forays in formal education were focused on teacher development! As early as 1885, eight students from the seminary in Bethanie were sent to work in other communities around Rustenburg. They taught catechism, biblical history, writing, maths, Dutch, and the violin. Parents in Phokeng also sent their children to training institutions outside the community. Early starters included Mr Jonathan Mokgale, who went to Morija, Lesotho; Chief Frank Mogale, who went to Lovedale in the Eastern Cape; Mr Frank Mafatshe and Mr Daniel Rangaka, who went to Healdtown in the Eastern Cape; and Mr Casper C. Makgala, who attended Kgaiso in Pietersburg. Every year batches of students were sent to various colleges, and these young men returned to teach in the various mission schools in this area.

In 1885, a teacher named Paulus Senene was teaching a class of one hundred near Saron. There was also a certain W. Tsikane, who taught adults, and a Reuben Mokgatle, who taught in Saron in the 1890s. Our historians tell us about those who taught children as well, including Titus Natuloe and Herman Pooe, who are described as "being especially good at winning the children's hearts and making them eager to learn."

There was another teacher at that time names Johannes Mahuma. When the German missionary tested Mahuma's students in 1882, he found them very knowledgeable in reading writing, maths, geography and singing.

In other words, one hundred and thirty years ago, our community began its journey of teacher training in partnership with German Lutherans, we sent our children to institutions of higher learning throughout southern Africa, and we excelled in literacy and numeracy, languages and music. I hope that sounds inspiring, and a bit familiar?

By the turn on the century, Bafokeng were already regarded as very well educated. A woman born at that time reflected that teachers were highly respected, being considered second only to the *kgosi*. The Lutheran missionary at the time, Reverend Penzhorn encouraged students to complete their studies, telling young people "If you leave school without completing, you are already lost." Let's pause and consider that for a second: More than one hundred years ago, teaching was the most highly regarded profession in this community, and the message to young people was that finishing their education was critical to their success.

The foundation laid by the missionary schools led to the formation of Bafokeng High School, one of our new Section 14 schools, in 1937. The school was founded in response to the lack of schools available to students who had

completed Standard VI in the mission schools. Bafokeng High, which was originally called Bush High School, was established by Thomas Rangaka, Mrs H. McGregor (who became the superintendent of the school), and James Manotshe, Kgosi August Molotlegi's son and his eventual successor.

Rangaka recalls that the school started with five students: Mr M.

Mokgatle, Mr Hamilton Mokgatle, Mr Simon Mooketsi, Mr Philip Nameng, and Mr M. Malefatsa. Rangaka notes that the financial burden, in the initial stages, QUOTE "was carried by us (Rangaka, Mrs McGregor and James Manotshe) until the end of 1938 when the tribe took it over. In 1945 *Kgosi* Manotshe Molotlegi started to build the imposing school of eight classrooms, complete with offices and store rooms. Four specialized rooms housed the science laboratory, library, housecraft room and woodwork room. Two toilet blocks with flush toilets were built. A large school vegetable garden was fenced off for the teaching of agricultural science. The recreation area had an athletics track, a football ground, netball court, softball ground." UNQUOTE

It's worth mentioning that this recreation area was upgraded a bit in 1990 and again in 2009, when it became the venue for six matches of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The first principal of the newly built school, renamed Bafokeng High School, was Mr Sefora. The original buildings remain next to the stadium

today, and will be eventually house a museum of Bafokeng History and Heritage.

During the nineteenth century, when missionaries were the educational drivers in our area, students were expected to perform to the same standard as European students. This changed when, after 1948, the Bantu Education Act was passed, the apartheid state took control of the schools, different levels of educational opportunity were offered to blacks, whites, Indians and “Coloureds.” The Act was meant to hinder the independence of mission schools, which were considered elitist, but also to encourage more universal (if elementary) literacy among blacks. Rather than offering a range of subjects including sciences, and classics, and the arts, the new centrally controlled curriculum emphasized technical subjects designed to make graduates employable.

There were differences between the Department and the Bafokeng Tribal Authority from the start of Bantu Education. Thomas Rangaka, who, in 1955, was working as School Board Secretary for the Bafokeng area, remembers the cause of the differences: QUOTE

*“My work as School Board Secretary for Bafokeng was not easy, particularly in the sphere of relationship between the Board and the Tribal Authority. The reason was, when the Board and Committees system was introduced to the Tribe, the Department made the people*

*understand that each tribe would run its own schools and handle its own school finances. The administration of schools, however, did not literally run so. Actually the Board and the School Committee did the work with the Board handling the finances. Then the Bafokeng Chief (the late James Manotshe) felt he had been hood-winked. From then on, they looked on the Board system with suspicion and cooperated with it reluctantly.” UNQUOTE*

By the 1960s, however, we as Bafokeng were already finding ways to complement the efforts of the Department by using our own resources to build additional schools, establish early learning centres, and provide additional teachers where needed. A magazine article dating back to 1967 notes, “...*Mo mading a morafe, go rafiwa a mangwe a go duelwang barutabana ba poraevete ka ona ba ba rutang mo Sekolong se Sogolo, ka gone barutwa ke ba bantsi thata. Le gale madi ao ke a a oketsang a a ntshiwang ke Lekgotla la Dikolo.*” These interventions took place during my father Lebone I’s reign, and the partnerships he established between the community and the Department of Education of that time were real and designed to offer the best possible opportunities to the young people of the community.

The Bophuthatswana government took over our schools in the 1970s and 80s, and that brought with it a whole host of new challenges. While the Bop schools originally followed, and were governed by, the principles of Bantu Education, certain shifts took place over time. Mother tongue education in the primary grades was the policy under Bantu education, with English and Afrikaans being

the mediums of teaching and learning in the higher grades. Many people resented this approach, understanding it to be an attempt to divide the black population of South Africa according to language and ethnicity. The demand for English was high, and the Bop schools gradually began introducing English earlier and earlier in the curriculum, and formally scrapped the Bantu Education laws in 1977. This was no doubt related to the Soweto riots of 1976, which were caused in part by unhappiness with Bantu Education. Bafokeng High School got caught up in the turmoil. In September/October 1976, students at Bafokeng High School went on a rampage and the school was completely disrupted for about six weeks. Recalling the strike, a staff member at the school remarked that it was QUOTE *"a...bad, bad time ... teachers were chased through the bush by angry students...one gentleman who knew he was not able to run fast took shelter in a house ... he was dragged outside and stoned until he was unconscious...he spent several months in hospital and never came back to teaching ..."*UNQUOTE

For the Bafokeng community, where much emphasis is placed on respect for elders, it was a great shock that young people could rise up against their teachers and undermine the authority of their elders.

Nevertheless, the Bop schools also established a number of progressive approaches to education, including Outcomes Based Education, which was then adopted by the post-1994 Department of Education.

The Bafokeng community's desire for a greater range of educational alternatives led to the founding of Lebone II in 1997. An independent school focused on training leaders from the Bafokeng and neighboring communities was established by my brother. Three venues and four principals later, we are proud of the educational excellence taking place in this beautiful school, not far from where the Germans built their first school in 1876.

Building a school of excellence can uplift some, but the need for a wider impact was clear. We conducted independent research and concluded that the RBA's limited role in education was an obstacle to the provision of quality education in the area. At the time, RBA's contribution was limited to the provision of social services and maintenance of the schools. One researcher explained that

QUOTE

*“According to the Rustenburg Education Department the RBA is limited in their contribution to schools. They cannot select teachers or influence the OBE curriculum determined by the South African Schools Act. They also cannot change the student to teacher ratio, which is 35:1 in high schools nationally. The department provides*

*learner materials and books while the RBA funds the electricity, water and maintenance bills.” UNQUOTE*

Changing RBA’s contribution to education in the Bafokeng area, would, according to education officials at the time, assist in changing the current situation. They reasoned that the RBA was best placed to know the gaps that would, if attended to, help the education department.

This was the reason we established the Royal Bafokeng Institute in 2007, and why we began to seek a closer partnership with the Department of Education.

Today is the culmination of that quest, and I am extremely proud to invoke the words and intentions of *Kgosi Mokgatle, Kgosi August Molotlegi, Kgosi Manotshe*, my father *Kgosi Lebone I* and my brother *Kgosi Lebone II*, and to honour and commemorate the efforts and dreams of every storyteller, missionary, seminarian, teacher, pastor, and parent who has invested himself and herself in the education of our children, as I accept responsibility for stewarding our 43 schools under the auspices of Section 14. I do so with a keen appreciation of the critical importance of education in the life of our community going back many generations, and with the humility of one privileged to plant a seed for future generations. Mr MEC, we are sincere in our wish to grow the future together with you, as symbolized by our educational motto: *“Re aga isago mmogo.”*

THANK YOU.