

EXPLORING SELECTED SETSWANA DRAMA TEXTS AS THE PRINCIPLE OF UBUNTU/BOTHO IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

Talking about the importance of Ubuntu/Botho in any educational system “Authentic humanism consists in permitting the emergence of the awareness of full humanity, as a condition and as an obligation, as a situation and as a project”. To inculcate a sense of values at schools, is intended to help young people achieve higher levels of moral judgement. This belief is that education does not exist simply to serve the market, but to serve society, and that means instilling in students a broad sense of values that can emerge only from a balanced exposure to the humanities as well as the sciences. Enriching the individual in this way is, by extension, enriching the society. This carries the involvement within the teaching and assessment of Setswana drama texts with third year (BEd) students. Ubuntu is a Nguni term while Botho is a Setswana term from the Southern African region that means a belief in a universal relationship of sharing that connects all humanity. The researcher takes note of the key element of Ubuntu/Botho, understood as “motho ke motho ka batho” (in Setswana). The English translation of this expression is “a human being is a human being because of other human beings”. The participants in this study were 24 BEd students from the language department. The comprehensive analysis includes data gathered from students: peer observation and interviews. Text analysis was used to analyse and interpret qualitative data obtained through interviews and observations with the aim of investigating the principle of Ubuntu/Botho in the characters of the two drama texts and how could students apply Ubuntu/Botho in their teaching to illustrate each theme.

Keywords: Drama texts, principles of Ubuntu/Botho, Setswana, educational context.

1. Introduction

The educational upshot of this paper’s argument is that South Africa’s educational policy framework not only places a high premium on Ubuntu/Botho, which it conceives as human dignity, but it also requires the schooling system to promote Ubuntu/Botho-oriented attributes and dispositions among the students. The drama text should form a meaningful whole. Students are advised to use an entire text rather than a section of a text. This is essential because the texts contribute to understanding the text, and an excerpt does not always depict the contexts adequately. The texts must relate to the theme dealt with, such as the elements of Ubuntu/Botho in selected drama text. The main point is the thinking reader who notices all the different factors that determine and influence written communication in the character i.e., tone, persuasive, power, purpose, target group, expertise, background, sources consulted, and responses.

Studying literature expands students’ knowledge of people, they learn to appreciate and understand the views and behaviour of others and to evaluate their own behaviour in relation to that of the characters in the text. Van Tonder (1994:54-60) explains that students should feel involved in what they are reading, this involvement is only possible if individual students experience the reading activity as something personal and if they have an opportunity to express what they feel about what they read.

According to Mangwegape (2019) it is important to determine the general behaviour of the characters in the selected Setswana drama texts as revealed through character’s actions and to what extent the characters maintain or contravene the core values and principles of Ubuntu/Botho. The characters as actors in the development of theme and conflict in drama texts be the key figures for the success or failure of the philosophy of Ubuntu in the above-mentioned drama texts where the student could discuss various works simultaneously in class. The best is to allow students to work in groups and to get each group to do a different drama textbook. Then give a set of general questions to be answered in the group (or by each individual group member).

2. Ubuntu/Botho as an educational value

Nkondo's concern about the role of Ubuntu/Botho in education should be noted that South Africa's Department of Education's (DoE) (2001:12) report, *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* identifies ten fundamental values in the South African constitution that pertain to education. These are democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism, and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation. The report states that Ubuntu/Botho embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference (DoE, 2001:3). It posits that out of the values of Ubuntu/Botho and (human dignity) flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect, which are at the very core of making schools places where the culture of teaching and the culture of learning thrive (DoE, 2001:14).

Another report of the DoE (2001:10), *Values, Education and Democracy* proposes that education should equip young people with values such as honesty, integrity, tolerance, diligence, responsibility, compassion, altruism, justice and respect which are deemed necessary for a democratic livelihood. The report states very clearly that the schooling system should actively promote these values. It posits that, and educational philosophy of a democracy should develop intellectual abilities and critical faculties among children and young adults in schools. It deems this necessary, first, because a democratic society flourishes when citizens are informed by a grasp of their history and of current affairs, where nothing is beyond question, and where ideas are explored to their fullest extent (DoE, 2001:6). Second the report states that such an educational philosophy should include all learners irrespective of their backgrounds

The following should be pursued when students are taught to disseminate the elements of Ubuntu/Botho to learners at school. Kuhn (1989: 89-92) states that:

- The emotional component should be developed. Students' affective (emotional life) development is enhanced by the fact that they enter or transfer themselves to the situations, feelings, thoughts, or actions of the characters in the text.
- Students should be able to verbalise their response to and their stance (attitude to, preference for or rejection of) towards the text. As readers, the learners' feelings are important, they are free to like or dislike a text, to attach their own interpretation to it.
- It is necessary to expand students' experiential world. They should be guided to notice relationships between the text and their life world, or between the text and other books to which they have recently been introduced.
- Students should eventually be able to read independently and to absorb, process and judge information from any text on their own.

This paper will discuss the elements of Ubuntu/Botho as depicted in the following drama texts: *Botsang Rre* (Ask my father) by GS Gaetsewe (1991) and *Kaine le Abele* (Caine and Abel) by G Mokae (1995). This paper will explore the extent to which characters maintain and /or contravene the principles of Ubuntu/Botho. It is therefore important to determine the general behaviour of the characters in the selected Setswana drama texts as revealed through character's actions and to what extent the characters maintain or contravene the core values and principles of Ubuntu/Botho. The characters as actors in the development of theme and conflict in drama texts be the key figures for the success or failure of the philosophy of Ubuntu in the above-mentioned drama texts where the teacher could discuss various works simultaneously in class. The best is to allow learners to work in groups and to get each group to do a different drama textbook. Then give a set of general questions to be answered in the group (or by each individual group member).

3. Literature review

Ubuntu/Botho articulates social interdependence and a deep rootedness in community (Adonis, 2008; Chachine, 2008). The notion of social interdependence is central to theologian and philosopher Mbiti's (1971) maxim we are because you are and since you are, definitely I am. As Eze (2016:192) believes that humanity is not embedded in a person solely as an individual but that it is also bestowed upon people in relation to those around them. Furthermore, Gade (2012:487) explore the view that Ubuntu/Botho is a moral quality of a person and phenomenon through which persons are interrelated. It is a kind of empathy, compassion and a divine element that warns people against doing evil. Letseka (2000:180) argues that Ubuntu/Botho has normative implications in that it encapsulates moral norms and values such as "altruism, kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and respect and concern for others". For Letseka (2000:188), persons living in communities that embrace Ubuntu/Botho would be marked by a commitment to treating others with a sense of Ubuntu/Botho, which entails treating them with justice and fairness. Broodryk (2002:13) conceives Ubuntu/Botho as a comprehensive ancient African worldview based on the values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion, and associated values. Ubuntu is particularly important to South Africa's young democracy where is struggling to comprehend the enduring legacy of

apartheid, which left it fractured and with no shared moral discourse. As Morrow (2007:7) points out, “apartheid was a form of the politics of difference in that it deliberately prevented the development of social cohesion and hindered the development of a shared moral discourse”. On the other hand, South Africa is attempting to mobilise its peoples to embrace the constitutional values of non-racialism, non-sexism, non-discrimination, and respect for freedom, human rights and dignity. Therefore, the promotion of Ubuntu/Botho through education is critical for South Africa given that the country has only just emerged from a political era that was marked by civil strife, racial segregation and discrimination, subordination and domination, and exclusion.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 24 BED students. Our comprehensive analysis includes several different sets of data gathered from students: peer observation and self-reflective statements, a focus group and interviews. All data were collected in accordance with an approved ethics protocol. We analysed all qualitative data according to the two prescribed drama texts: Botsang Rre (Ask my father) and Abele le Kaine (Abel and Caine), reflective practice and conceptual expansion, and looked for the principle of Ubuntu/Botho in the characters of the two drama texts and where students mentioned applying in their teaching. We each independently analysed the data, then together reviewed and agreed on the data we had coded to each theme and selected quotes to illustrate each theme.

5. Results and discussion

The peer observation of teaching activity allowed students to experience first-hand how the lecturer presented discipline-specific content and engaged students in the learning process. Observation enabled the lecturer to reflect on her own teaching practice, as the lecturer could relate the material and experiences to her own classroom. Students revealed changes on how the principles of Ubuntu/Botho could be implemented in their teaching and ways in which they intended to change, in their teaching.

Students found great benefit in being able to see the values and the principles of Ubuntu/Botho features in the two drama texts. Ten students spoke or wrote about the importance of disseminating the principles of Ubuntu/Botho to learners in schools enabling contextually meaningful reflection on their teaching for example:

Students showed by quoting examples from the Setswana drama texts that they can determine the general behaviour of the characters’ actions and to what extent the characters maintain or contravene the core values and principles of Ubuntu/Botho.

The exercise was also important in terms of the content... I think sharing contributes a lot with regard the principle of Ubuntu/Botho to the South African context. Within an Ubuntu environment, it is normal to donate to those with no income, the disabled, and influences the orphans in a spirit of sharing. I regard respect as one of the principles of Ubuntu. Respect applies to the way elders are treated, what I know is elders are regarded as wise people due to the knowledge they have acquired over the year. The principles of Ubuntu/Botho are maintained in the selected Setswana drama texts by showing respect. Thinking of that, the student is referring to Boikobo when he did not want to be rude to the Minister who was expecting a response from him when he was tying the knot. He responded by saying “ask my father.

If the characters in the drama contravene the principles of Ubuntu/Botho. For example, Boikobo’s father (the birth father) was selfish to send his children to Boikobo to take care of them. He knows very well that Boikobo has never approved Seikokobetso to be his wife, he never stayed with her after the marriage that was arranged by his father, suddenly, he sees three children that he does not know and told that they are his children.

Human rights is one of the principles of Ubuntu, humanness is protected by the highest legal authority, and he further says the constitution is characterized by its Ubuntu/Botho influences. I believe that Human Rights play a big role as far as the principles of Ubuntu is concerned. For example, in Botsang Rre (Ask father) Boikobo has the right to choose a partner for getting married. His father (Goitsenna) was adamant that Boikobo will marry Seikokobetso because according to his culture, fathers choose marriage partners for their children. It is heart-breaking because Boikobo does not have a say, instead he refers the answers that was asked by the minister to his father by saying ‘ask father’. In Kaine le Abele Pule, the elder brother to Katlego, hated his brother to the extent that he did not want Katlego to marry Jo-Anne because she’s white, he was influencing their mother not to accept Jo-Anne Katlego’s fiancé in their home. He was forgetting that, in Setswana we say: “Pelo e ja serati...” meaning the heart goes to the person you love, irrespective of colour.

The main characters fail to maintain the principles of Ubuntu/Botho, in the two selected drama texts. They both meet with disaster and tragedies as a result of a disregard for the core principles of Ubuntu/Botho.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, Ubuntu/Botho is a philosophy and a way of life that has held society together due to its beliefs practices, which have consequently put the main character at the centre of all things. There is a clear concept of morality in Ubuntu/Botho which contradicts the manner of behaviour which is often prevalent today. Ubuntu/Botho has values that are concerned with both the character and behaviour of a person in the drama texts. Furthermore, a person has rights to be respected, and is to be helped, protected, and shown compassion and love. There should be no discrimination when it comes to respecting these rights, one qualifies because one is a human person.

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