



Botswana's Education System: A Relative Analysis with South Korean Education System

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Any education system has its advantages and disadvantages and the Botswana education system was developed to produce critical thinkers, problem solvers and innovative students. The system was framed to provide opportunities for all learners in order to develop their capabilities. However, the system is currently faced with a myriad of challenges as there are unprecedented proportions of graduates' unemployment, poor performance from national examinations, and dropping out of school. To bring this discussion into perspective, this paper adopts a narrative approach using literature and document analysis to examine Botswana's education system in comparison with the Asian education system. The paper seeks to learn lessons from the Asian education system; in particular, South Korea as its education systems is known to be robust and efficient in producing learners who continuously make positive changes in transforming their nation. In this regard, recommendations on what could be done to rectify the situation in Botswana in light of the South Korean education system have been made.

Keywords: Education system; education policy; transformation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, education is a very powerful tool that has been used over the centuries to transform economies by being at the core of every nation's system from sports, politics and law to culture and business. As a matter of fact, education is one of the vital endeavours in the world that without it, there is no guarantee that the youth would have any guidance to survive in a very challenging and multi-faceted world. Notably, in this globalized world where cultural dynamics of one country seem to consistently affect that of another, education systems are in themselves not universal and unfortunately, some are better than the others. The latest challenge in Botswana's education system for instance, is nothing new, as the education system is collapsing before all of us and the nation is just watching helplessly [1]. Noticeably, the results have been declining for years now in a row, and without the slightest show that they will improve in the near future. The nation has been suffering from the negative effects of the past poor programmes which include a two-year junior certificate; the double shift programme; automatic progression of standard seven students, but to mention a few. The effects of the programmes are already felt as the country experiences the extraordinary effects of crimes and other social ills [2]. Based on the foregoing, this paper seeks to identify gaps in the current education system and influence policy in addressing these gaps by using a comparative analysis report of the South Korean education system in conjunction with Botswana's education system.

2. BOTSWANA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM HISTORY

In Botswana, the formulation of policies is informed and guided by four national principles namely: democracy, unity, development and self reliance. These principles are rooted in the traditional culture of Botswana and, when applied together in practice, are supposed to achieve the national philosophy of *kagisano* which means "social harmony" [3]. Broadly speaking, *kagisano* embraces concepts of social justice, interdependence and mutual assistance. These principles have been emphasized and used in the various National Development Plans (NDPs) since independence. Through them, the Government of Botswana has committed itself to achieve four national planning objectives, namely: economic growth, social justice,

economic independence and sustained development [4].

Botswana has got one of the best education policies in Africa, but unfortunately, the policy has been poorly implemented. According to [5], the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994 is lying at the government enclave and its recommendations selectively implemented. The RNPE has got more than 20 years without proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The recommendations of the pre-independence 1965 Hutton Report, a commission that studied the teachers' salaries and other conditions of service, were not implemented by the colonial government then [6]. In 1969, just after independence, President Seretse Khama reflected on the plight of the teachers and was worried that they had been neglected for too long. It was in 1976 that President Khama commissioned Education for Social Harmony, popularly known as Education for *Kagisano* and this served Botswana relatively well. Education for *Kagisano* was revised in 1993 by the Kedikilwe Commission, hence the 1994 RNPE [7]. Notably, over 3 decades have gone by and there is a need for the RNPE to be subjected to expert national evaluation and revision and a fresh policy document produced. It is the argument of this paper that failure to subject RNPE to a national commission will lead to perpetual poor results at all educational levels.

Interestingly, education in Botswana is free for the first 10 years, which completes the cycle through middle school [5]. In these 10 years, the first 7 are spent on Primary School, where the pupil-teacher ratio is approximately 13 to 1 in theory, but classes can have up to 40 pupils per 1 teacher. The medium of education is the local language for the first 4 years, thereafter the English language takes precedence. Accordingly, progression to middle school is no longer dependent on a pupil passing their primary school leaving examination hence every student, regardless of whichever grade is obtained, automatically progresses to middle school (also known as Junior Secondary School). The Junior Secondary School period comprises of forms 1, 2 and 3 of which, when a student completes their form 3 year, they must sit for their compulsory Junior Secondary Examination (JSE). If they pass this exam, then they can progress to study at the Senior Secondary Schools in the country. If they do not pass however, they may also go to work, because their compulsory education program is complete. However, many opt to continue as they are normally not of working age.

Senior Secondary School, where the pupil-teacher ratio has increased to 40 to 1, usually takes 2 more years to complete. It is at this stage of a student's academic life where a final examination, called the Botswana General Certificate for Secondary Education (BGCSE) determines whether the student is eligible for tertiary education or not.

The Botswana Qualifications Authority [BQA] regulates the standard of vocational training across the entire spectrum, in order to promote the development of an integrated system that is accessible to all [8]. Noticeably, there are a variety of tertiary education institutions in Botswana, including colleges of accounting and agriculture, and institutes of administration, commerce, and health sciences. However, due to failure in the education system at all these levels, poor education results are produced [9].

3. BOTSWANA GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION

Evidence abounds to the fact that Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination results has been declining since 2006 [10]. In February 2016, the 2015 Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (BGCSE) results were released by the Botswana Examinations Council, (BEC) and there were 38,796 who sat for the examination. Of this group, candidates in full-time attendance in Government schools numbered 25, 186 while 2,936 were in full-time attendance at privately owned schools [11]. Furthermore, it is important to note that each year the number of students sitting for the BGCSE increases. In the overall performance of the total students who sat the 2014 examination, only 5, 796 obtained Grade C or better, this number constitutes only 25.75% of the whole population of the students. The rest of the candidates obtained Grade D or below. Based on the foregoing the country should point out that these disappointing 2014 results are not an isolated or exceptional development. For instance, in 2013, the decline in performance for Government schools at Grade C or better was 2.02% [12].

It is the contention of this paper that school performance for government-owned schools is disturbing, schools in major cities and towns perform better than those in rural and remote areas. For example, St. Joseph's College tops the list at a 38% pass rate for 2014. The same

school was on top again in 2013 at a somewhat similar pass rate. Shakawe Senior Secondary School, in the far North West District, once again sits at the bottom of the ladder with a pass rate of just 7% as was the case last year [13]. Similarly, its pass rate has not improved in any significant way at all. Furthermore, praised pass rates below 50% of schools like St. Josephs Collage and others in the country are unacceptable in a country in which more than two-thirds of the annual budget goes to education. With the public investing so much in education, surely better returns on this investment are expected. What is most disturbing is that no serious measures have been taken to address the problem despite the avowed status of education as the engine of socio-economic development. Thus the declining performance of the education system has far reaching implications for the country.

Although education is the most potent vehicle for upward social mobility in this country [14], this emerging narrative signifies tragedy, as rural schools are consistently underperforming in particular regions of the country. Botswana is already a country characterized by gross income inequalities between rural and urban areas also known as the centre-periphery thesis. Education. The poor have pinned their hopes for a better life on their children performing well at school and ultimately landing jobs or other opportunities with a sustainable income. Painfully, these hopes are being ruined by the poor performance of Government schools generally and the rural based schools in particular. The BGCSE results are a crushing blow to the hopes and aspirations of a whole generation of young people [15]. This unfolding narrative scripted no doubt by the present education system and this might imply that the poor are being denied the opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, meaningfully rewarding economic activities. The result is an ever-widening gap between the better off urban and the desperately poor rural populations.

The schools in the western and north-western parts of Botswana especially Shakawe Senior Secondary School are the ones that underperform, in contrary schools north-eastern and northern in the *Kalanga* areas are performing better than the western and north-western schools. Drawing on the logic of education as a means of unlocking people's potentialities, it stands to reason that residents of these regions are marginalized economically relative to their counterparts in the eastern parts of the country where overall school performance

is far much better. It is therefore urgent to ensure that this emerging trend does not wreak havoc in our country. According to [16] when properly run and fairly distributed, education is a potent nation-building tool.

There is a substantial body of evidence showing that private schools have now become the default destinations for children of the poor, further sinking them into the manure and swamp of oppressive poverty. In Botswana, privately owned schools in comparison to those owned by the state are performing very well, for example, Maruapula, Westwood International, Legal Academy and others. Hence the system is in a state of near paralysis and something drastic needs to be done. A change in strategy is needed. It is clear that grand systemic interventions are failing. It is about time the country focused on local, school-based reforms that will target areas of weakness in the schools for attention and intervention.

4. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH KOREAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

South Korea has been praised for having an education system that helped transform the country and rapidly grow the economy over the past 60 years. Today, its high-performing students are the envy of many nations worldwide [17]. In 2015, South Korea's population was estimated to be around 50.6 million [18], with the continuing decline of working age population and total fertility rate. The country is noted for its population density, which was an estimated 505 per square kilometre in 2015 [19], more than 10 times the global average. Most South Koreans live in urban areas, because of rapid migration from the countryside during the country's quick economic expansion in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s [20]. Notably, the capital city of Seoul is also the country's largest city and chief industrial centre, according to the 2005 census, Seoul had a population of 10 million inhabitants. The Seoul National Capital Area has 24.5 million inhabitants (about half of South Korea's entire population) making it the world's second largest metropolitan area.

Noticeably, 2015 saw the rise of South Korea's educational system as the number one educational system in the world. It managed to bump its way from the second best to the best system, all in the span of three years. Korea does this for two reasons. First, they believe in working hard. Students spend seven days of the

week in school and are educated thoroughly in everything they study. This is totally different from Botswana education system, where the pupils have a two days weekend which is not mandatory for students to go to school. On another note, just like in Botswana, South Korea also spends a lot of money on its educational system. The yearly budget for the system is slightly more than 11 billion dollars [21]. The other Asian countries are major competition for South Korea but unfortunately in Africa, there are no competitive academic scholarly tests that the authors can strongly say Botswana is a part of, hence there is low motivation in students at all levels of educations. A noticeable statistic about the South Korean educational system is that the country is nearly 100% literate, 99.2% of males in South Korea are literate while 96.6% of females are literate. In the case of Botswana however, literacy rate is at 83.3% [22] which is not bad for a developing country.

4.1 High Investment in Education

It is the contention of this paper that education is a serious matter for both Botswana and South Korea, where the latter has invested heavily in education during the second half of the 20th century, and in 2010, spent 7.6% of its GDP on all levels of education significantly more than the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average of 6.3% [23]. During that same year, South Korea spent 2.6% on tertiary education, a figure also above the OECD average of 1.6%. In 2009, spending on private tuition in South Korea was the highest as a proportion of GDP among OECD countries, and according to [24], South Koreans spent 19 trillion Won (US \$17.9 billion) on private tuition in 2012. Overall, education accounted for nearly 12% of consumer spending in 2012 a large amount of which went toward extra English classes.

Based on the foregoing, it is thus pertinent to ask, "what's driving these levels of investment on education in South Korea?" The answer to the question as reported in [25] is in its competition for college places throughout their children's school years. South Koreans spend an extraordinary amount preparing them for the brutally competitive day-long university entrance exam, the *suneung* and exam preparation begins early. According to [26] in South Korea, four out of five primary school children receive a private education, typically in pack schools known as *hagwon*. Private schooling in South Korea

operates on an "industrial scale," with 75% of all South Korean children attending one of the country's 100,000 *hagwons*.

The outcome of this huge investment in education has been high academic performers. South Korean students consistently rank at the top of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey results in reading, mathematics, and science. South Korea is also one of the highest educated nations in the world: in 2011, 64% of its 25-34 year-old population had university degrees, the most in the OECD, and well above the average of 39% among OECD states. Entry to a top university has traditionally led to a prestigious, secure and well-paid job with the government, banks, or one of South Korea's Chaebol family-owned conglomerates such as Samsung and Hyundai. As such, South Korea's zeal for education and individuals' desire to get into a prestigious university is higher than in any other country in the world [27].

Increased uncertainty about job prospects may do little to quell national anxiety around a college entrance exam that is already regarded as having lasting consequences for one's career and life. Whereas some believe that the entrance exams help ensure fairness and objectivity, others have compared them to a "fever." Despite a government-imposed 10:00 p.m. curfew on cramming schools, students often spend long hours from studying at home, at school, at expensive *hagwon* and online. This can also work for Botswana students as most of them have a lot of idle time without assignments and homework's which are a positive reinforcement for better learning outside school as they require a lot of research.

5. IN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF HIGH FAILURE RATES IN BOTSWANA IN RELATION TO SOUTH KOREA HIGHER PASS RATES

Botswana needs to understand that the educational crisis is not simply a matter of the education budget or budgetary constraints of running a well-functioning education system. The cyclical crisis in education means needs to confront challenges in the country's education system aggressively and systematically. The ministry of education skills and training in the 2016 budget was conferred with P10.64 billion or 28.8% of the total proposed budget but in order to succeed in producing quality education Botswana needs to address the following;

5.1 Unsatisfactory Management at the School Level

It is worth noting that in Botswana, schools are not empowered to make their own decisions and budgets of some of their basic needs, due to the fact that it takes a long time to undertake any other type of maintenance work. Furthermore, the management system at schools is not geared at driving a vision that is shared at the lowest levels by teachers. Most teachers are not aware what the overall vision of the Government is and how it translates into their day to day work, assuming there is any such vision. Education should therefore, be at the centre of national development as it has more advantages. Based on anecdotal evidence glanced from government reports, teachers' welfare has been appalling in Botswana. The 1994 Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), which was the best policy, was poorly implemented, leading to the current poor standard of education. As a matter of fact the policy did warn that "*teachers can make or break the education system in a country*". The policy called for a package of incentives for teachers, but 20 years later the packages are not delivered. The teachers have called for better salaries and clear progression, decent accommodation, for overtime pay and reasonable class sizes.

School management does not utilize or deploy teachers effectively and the top down transfer and redeployment approach of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development frustrates efforts to build effective teams in the schools. Management of schools is highly centralized. Class sizes are too large [27]. As much as motivated teachers are really needed for a good education, they are not deployed and capacitated to unlock their best potential. Accordingly, the leadership is not adequately empowered among school management to ensure that they impart and inculcate, and consistently, to teachers and students alike, a compelling vision for an enriching and exciting learning experience. In service workshops and subject, associations have been the key to quality education in the past. Most newly employed teachers go for years without such workshops, which are meant to help provide modern management skills, quality tested content, teaching and learning pedagogies and methodologies. In addition, at the centre of good quality education, the teacher's morale and skills should be seriously considered. Professionalism is equally critical at the centre of quality education [28]. The

Teaching Council should take off as a lot of work has been produced. Incentives must be put in place for teachers, high standards of professionalism should be expected and those not fitting should be procedurally removed.

5.2 Curriculum (Content) and Teacher Training

The world advocates for the social constructivist model which is believed to be learner centred. This model dwells on the socialization part of learning, which gives the learner an ultimate opportunity to acquire knowledge through interaction, under a natural environment. From this, the learner can sieve and sift their acquisition and pick the best method that has proven comprehensible for application. The findings made by Major et al. [29] have shown that in Botswana schools learners spend too much time in the teacher preparation classrooms learning the theories and less time practising those theories. In this regard, the learners are, therefore, deprived of the hands-on experience which is essential for their professional know how. The primary reason for teachers' failure in educating students with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes is the anti-democratic school management and closed system of communication no rights (given to teachers), then no responsibilities [30]. While in the U.S., corporal punishment of children blares "lawsuit", the Korean educational system and parents have less of an issue with physical discipline in school classrooms. Corporal punishment used to be allowed, and now, is somewhat tolerated, covertly just like in Botswana. Corporally disciplining a student should not be viewed as abuse but as a way of positively re-enforcing bad behaviour.

5.3 Unfavourable Working Environment for Teachers

The never-ending tug of war and conflict relations between teachers and Government must give way to a harmonious relationship forged on mutual respect. Working conditions, working hours, remuneration, housing and other non-monetary incentives rarely afford the perfect solution, but Government can offer the requisite soundness and seriousness to in-still or restore confidence among teachers that they are treated with the seriousness they deserve. Teachers need to enjoy their profession and derive satisfaction in order to offer their very best to students.

5.4 Direct Enrolment of Pupils into All Levels of Educations

Botswana is predominantly poor at primary school; the preparation ground for secondary schooling and the worse part these children regardless of whether they have excelled or not they are automatically enrolled into higher learning institutions [31]. This is not surprising given the relatively low outlays in both teachers and facilities at the primary school level, like students being taught outside in very bad weather conditions and the notion that students must start school at the age of 7 years hence the re-enforcement of early childhood education should be put in place at government school like in South Korean schools.

6. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The constitution of Botswana must instil that education should be compulsory for all students in the country just like in the western countries. According to the Republic of Botswana Children's Act 2009 section 18 (i) every child has the right to free basic education. This is not in practice as basic education begins at pre-school according to the Report of National Commission on education of 1993. This also includes the disabled children who stay at home due to inadequate facilities and trained personnel who can deliver quality education to them, hence promoting inclusiveness in the country.

This paper concludes that elected representatives such as members of parliaments, ministers, permanent secretaries in different ministries should be based on merit in order for them to be able to deliver on policies and relevant programmes that contribute to the growth and development of the education system. Failure of students cannot be praised, students who cannot perform well in schools need to be taken into assessment and discover their other abilities especially after junior school level. This would decrease the failure rates and promote these children's talents and other abilities instead of forcing them to attend academic education where they will still get D's and X's. The teachers have lost morale; hence the officials in government should make sure they create a bridge between the government and teachers in order to praise this fallen morale. At all levels, education is more focused on theory. The shift from theory to a more practical curriculum would enhance entrepreneurial skills for the youth, hence combating the scotch of

unemployment and poverty in the country which is currently at high levels.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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