

**BOTSWANA FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS  
(BFTU)**



**POLICY ON EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA**

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## **FOREWORD**

Education is the foundation of any modern society. Botswana can never hope to achieve sustainable development without education. It is now well acknowledged that knowledge, and not capital per se, is the most important resource and ingredient for socio-economic development. Investment into human development can reduce poverty and enhance the economic well being of a nation. The progressive expansion of education and the improvement in its range and quality should be at the centre of the development any country. The development of education and human resources should be regarded as a precondition for enhancing the pace of economic growth and development. It is education and technical know-how, which should determine the frontiers of transformation of the Botswana society and shape the configuration of the overall competitiveness of our nation. Education thus remains a key enabler in a nation's collective resolve to fight hunger, disease, poverty and ignorance. As has been stated elsewhere in the world, the best economic policy is, in actual fact, education.

The Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU) recognizes the value of education and is critical of the extent to which the education system is an effective vehicle for sustainable development in Botswana. The labour movement is concerned whether the production of human resources or capital is aligned with social demands and market expectations in the national economy. Thus, the integration or alignment of the educational system into productive labour systems or trends in the country is of strategic focus to the labour movement in Botswana.

This policy paper articulates a unified labour perspective on education and puts forward policy guidelines of how the labour movement can deal with the challenges of integrating the education system in the labour trends in Botswana.

It is my sincere hope that this policy document will not only raise the threshold of labour concerns but also ignite the path for more constructive engagement with government and other relevant stakeholders in making education respond to national needs and purpose.

Long Live the Workers Struggle, Victory is Certain!

**Henry Tebogo Makhale**  
**SECRETARY GENERAL**

**March, 2007**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This document is the BFTU policy paper on education in Botswana. The policy paper arises out of the methodical engagement of the BFTU affiliates and represents a unified position regarding the education system in Botswana.
- 1.2 The development of the paper involved research work and consultations with a sample of BFTU affiliates and other key stakeholders in the education sector.
- 1.3 The policy paper is conceptually from a labour perspective and presents policy guidelines on strategies for dealing with the challenges of the integration of education in the labour trends in Botswana.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION: EDUCATION TRENDS**

- 2.1 Botswana has a population of about 1,640,115 (approximately 1.7 million) people. It has maintained a stable and steady economic growth since 1966 thus transforming itself into a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of income at market exchange rate averaging about P33,000 [\$5,300] (Ministry of Finance, 2007) while per capita GDP at purchasing parity power (PPP) is estimated at \$11,200 (World Fact Book, 2007).
- 2.2 Botswana largely depends mainly on the extraction of diamonds for export. Over the years, Botswana is said to have scored some impressive gains in the development of the economy and its social sectors such as education and health.
- 2.3 The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) Government Paper No. 2 of April 1994 has been the guiding basis for the implementation of providing quality education and training. Thus in NDP 9, the emphasis has now been placed on equipping learners with skills to enable them to enter into self-employment as well as create an opportunity for lifelong learning.
- 2.4 It is also important to note that the RNPE is founded on the country's long term vision 2016 which accentuate the need to have "an educated and informed nation". Thus the Government has committed itself to improve access to pre-school education, provision of ten years of basic education for all, increase access to senior secondary education, expansion of vocational and technical

training and promotion of lifelong learning. The core drive is to focus the education system on mainly providing programmes that will lead to higher quality of human capacity and productivity, leading to a better quality life and prosperity for all (NDP9).

- 2.5 The thrust of such programmes have been envisaged to combine knowledge skills, values and attitudes in a form that prepares learners for changes in the world around them, for the world of work and lifelong learning. The realization of the educational vision was well expressed in the Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2001 – 2006, as “to offer equitable lifelong education and training that is relevant and responsive to the rapid technological development and the changing socio-economic environment, and that produces knowledgeable, skilled enterprising and independent individuals” (NDP 9).

### **3.0 THE REVISED NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION**

- 3.1 The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), Government Paper No. 2 of April 1994, has guided the programme activities of the Ministry of Education in terms of curriculum reforms and ongoing improvements in the education system since NDP 8. The implementation of the RNPE was intended to cover a timeframe of 25 years given that its recommendations had been classified for implementation in the short, medium and long term, respectively. The following key recommendations of the RNPE have been implemented:

- Re-introduction of the three years Junior Certificate Programme.
- Achievement of universal access to 10 years basic education
- Review of the basic education curriculum and development of core instructional support material
- Introduction of the three year Diploma in Primary Education Programme and phasing out of the former two-year Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) in all the primary colleges of education
- Localization of the senior secondary examinations through the introduction of the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE).



- Diversification of the Vocational Education and Training curriculum through introduction of competency-based and modular programmes like the Botswana Technical Education Programme (BTEP), as well as increasing access to this level of the education system through expansion of technical colleges.
- Increased access to senior secondary education beyond 50%.
- Establishment of the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) to co-ordinate the development of tertiary education.
- Establishment of the Botswana Examinations Council to manage and co-ordinate the conduct of all national examinations/assessment programmes.
- Establishment of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL).
- The Ministry of Education has also attempted to raise a lot in terms of awareness on HIV/AIDS through infusion of HIV/AIDS matters into the school curricula.

## **3.2 REVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BOTSWANA**

Like most modern nations, the formal education system is from pre-school to tertiary levels and has, relative to other SADC countries, enjoyed a consistent and favourable position in the national budget with margins of 20-25%. Below is a review of the highlights of some of the latest achievement as per NDP 9.

### **3.2.1 Pre-school Education**

There has been exponential growth in the number of education institutions that offer pre-school education with predominance of private individuals and organizations. The following are said to have been achieved during NDP 8:

- A Partnership has been established with the Ministry of Local Government for a shared management system in pre-school education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for policy formulation while the Ministry of

Local Government is responsible for policy implementation.

- A draft Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education has been developed to address implementation strategies for the pre-primary programme.
- The Ministry of Education provides an enabling environment through pre-school grants to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) as well as the coordination and professional support of the programme. Training of teachers continues to be offered at Lobatse Day Care Training Centre at the level of certificate.

### **3.2.2 Primary Education**

There has also been expansion of primary school education with targets of achieving universal access to primary education. Thus from 250 primary schools in 1966, there over 770 schools, with a teaching forces that has risen from 1624 to over 12,000 primary school teachers (Ministry of Education, 2006). According to the NDP 9, the following are said to have been achieved during NDP 8:

- The provision of resource units in select primary schools to meet the needs of disabled learners;
- The upgrading of Primary Teachers Training Colleges (PTTCs) from Certificate training into Colleges of Education offering post-secondary diplomas, has enabled increased production of teachers trained at a higher level;
- In addition, serving PTTC holders are being upgraded to diploma through distance education offered by the University of Botswana.

### **3.2.3 Secondary Education**

Efforts to expand secondary school education have also been momentous. Thus, from having nine schools in 1966, there are now over 239 secondary school, with five more planned for 2007/08 fiscal year (Ministry of Education, 2006, Ministry of Finance (Budget Speech), 2007). The teaching staff has also grown to over 9,000 secondary school teachers. According to the NDP 9, during NDP 8:

- 100% transition rate from primary education to junior secondary education has been achieved. This means that universal access to ten years of basic education is now possible. The main emphasis during NDP 8 was to improve the quality of education by provision of additional facilities and equipment through the upgrading of all Community Junior Secondary Schools (CJSSs).
- Diversification of the curriculum has been vigorously implemented at both junior and senior secondary education. A computer awareness programme was introduced in some junior secondary schools and will be offered in all junior secondary schools by the beginning of NDP 9.
- The senior secondary curriculum has also been diversified to include more practical and business subjects. The department is also working towards complete decentralization of the supervisor of secondary schools.

### **3.2.4 University Education**

The emphasis to expand access to University Education has remained on course. Apart from the expansion of the University of Botswana facilities, plans are underway to build a second University with special focus on science and technology in the Serowe/Palapye area. According to the NDP 9, during NDP 8, University of Botswana undertook the following activities:

- Implemented new undergraduate degree programmes in Nursing Science and Special Education, a Postgraduate Diploma in Statistics and 19 new Graduate programmes at Masters/MPhil/PhD level in a number of disciplines. Approved for implementation in 2002/2003 are new undergraduate programmes in Educational Management, Population Studies, Information Systems, and Finance and new semesterised curricula across all Faculties;
- Continue to enhance the capacity of the Centre for Continuing Education through the construction of a new building.
- Commenced a major physical expansion of the library.
- Achieved the target staff-student ratio of 1:16 across all Faculties and reached a localization rate of 59% citizen staff in the academic establishment, against a target of 70%, and developed a staff training policy and training plans;

- Established three new departments to strengthen institutional and academic support – Research and Development Institutional Planning and the Centre for Academic Development;
- Established the University Foundation; initiated a number of privatization pilot projects;
- Established partnership agreements with four South African medical schools, which commenced in 2002 and enrolled 29 students in medical studies programmes;
- By 2001/2002, enrolled 72% (31,822) of NDP 8 enrolment target of 43,946 full-time undergraduate students;
- By 2001/2002, graduated 73% (7,979) of NDP 8 enrolment target of 10,872 full-time undergraduate students.
- The overall current number of students is 15, 710 with staff of 2, 217.

### **3.2.5 Vocational Education and Training**

The transformation of the vocational education and training has also continued with emphasis on unified policy on restructuring of content and quality assurance. Under the vocational education and training, the following have been cited as key achievement during NDP 8:

- Development of the Botswana Technical Education Programme (BTEP). The programme was developed to offer foundation and certificate levels and covered the following vocational areas: Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Building Construction, Information and Communications Technology, Multimedia, Business, Clothing Design and Textiles, Hospitality Operations, Tourism with Travel, Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy. These programmes have been developed in cooperation with the employers and the private sector in Botswana to meet the local industry demand.
- A vocational teacher-training programme was started in interim facilities in Gaborone pending the completion of a College of Technical and Vocational Education in Francistown. An advanced certificate programme of high quality has been designed and is presently undergoing assessment by the

University of Botswana for the purposes of UB affiliation/accreditation.

- Some efforts were made to open up technical education to previously disadvantaged groups. A departmental equal opportunities policy was developed, awareness workshops were conducted and new admission policies in line with the policy have been implemented.
- The brigades' movement underwent a comprehensive evaluation. The evaluation was intended to find a solution to the problem of poor management and mismanagement of funds in the brigades. Government through the Ministry of Education is poised to take over the operation of the training units in the brigades this year (2007). External audits were introduced as one of the measures to improve on financial management in the brigades training institutions.
- Human resource development programme was undertaken to upgrade technical and vocational lecturers and support staff to diploma and degree level. It is believed about 15% of all the staff has had the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications through this programme.
- The National Policy on Vocational Education and Training was passed by Parliament in 1997; the National Training Act was passed in 1998 after which the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) was established in year 2000. The Authority is still in the process of recruiting staff needed to fulfill its functions.

### **3.2.6 Special Education**

Education for the people with disabilities has also received attention over the years. According to the NDP 9, during NDP 8:

- Notable achievement was the establishment of additional special education units within the conventional school system to ensure inclusive educational provision. The Division also offers sponsorship to children with severe and multiple handicap for placement in South Africa and Zimbabwe where appropriate facilities exist. The number of children who benefited from the bursary scheme for placement in South Africa and Zimbabwe rose from 10 in 1997 to 24 in 2002.
- A degree programme in special education was introduced at the University

of Botswana. The number of teachers trained in special education increased from 45 in 1997/98 to 170 in 2001/2002. Some efforts were made to increase access to tertiary education, which resulted in 50 students with various disabilities being offered sponsorship to pursue diploma and degree programmes in the country, region and abroad.

### **3.2.7 Non-Formal Education**

Non-formal education has also been part of the drive to have lifelong learning. The NDP 9 highlights that during NDP 8:

- The Department of Non-Formal Education fully achieved the de-linking, expansion and transformation of the Distance Education Programme and the establishment of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning and the objectives that specifically addressed the Distance Education Programme were shifted to BOCODOL for implementation.
- BOCODOL was established by an Act of Parliament in 1998 and the institution became operational in November 2000. The mandate of BOCODOL is to extend education and training for out of school youth and adults using distance education learning methods.

### **3.3 Cost Sharing and Cost Recovery**

3.3.1 One of the areas in the Mid-term Review of National Development Plan 8, which the Ministry of Education was asked to address during NDP 9 were the cost recovery/cost sharing in the provision of education. It has been argued that this was due to the fact that the levels of investment in education that Government had made over the years could no longer be sustained unless alternative avenues for complementing Government efforts were established.

3.3.2 Research shows that in the past 20 years, the Ministry of Education's share of the national budget has consistently been over 20%, and even reached a 28% mark in the Financial Year 2002/2003.

3.3.3 It has further been argued that though Government would continue to have a major stake in educational development, the policy on free education which has served the country well, is no longer sustainable and that Government on its own can no longer afford the full cost of providing education.

- 3.3.4 It is on this basis that payment of school fees by foreign students was introduced and that it also became necessary that Batswana should also share the cost of education for their children as well. Government has however, stressed that introduction of cost-sharing measures in education would not result in the exclusion of Batswana children whose parents/guardians are unable to pay school fees. Government also advocates having safety nets through the social welfare system for those children who come from needy backgrounds.
- 3.3.5 Government is also exploring cost-sharing measures such as the payment of students' allowances in the tertiary education system. The argument is that the increase in the number of secondary school leavers who have to be sponsored by Government for tertiary education and training payment of such allowances is no longer sustainable nor justified. Other areas that lend themselves to cost sharing are the introduction of examination fees, stationery fee, and caution fee. In pursuant of the recommendations of the Revised National Policy of Education (1994), the Department of Secondary Education has introduced payment of a standardized development levy of P60 per year at Junior Secondary level.
- 3.3.6 BOCODOL has been progressively increasing the fees paid by secondary education out-of-school learners as part of cost sharing. However, the fees are to remain modest so that they are affordable to most out-of-school learners. The contracted vocational, management, professional and post-basic extension courses will, as much as possible be offered on a full cost recovery basis. Where these courses target disadvantaged sectors of the community, collaboration with the private sector and donor community will be sought, for the latter to assist in payment of fees.

#### **4.0 EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT/LABOUR TRENDS: BFTU CONCERNS**

- 4.1 It is clear from the trends presented above that since the adoption of the Revised National Policy on Education in 1994; significant efforts have been made by government to improve the quality and relevance of education to enable children to acquire relevant skills and knowledge.
- 4.2 Increasing access to schooling has been a major priority of government. Measures that were earlier adopted to improve access included: the abolition

of school fees from primary to tertiary institutions; buying school uniforms and other items for destitute persons and remote area dwellers; providing school feeding programs; providing assistance to private and aided schools and establishing the national literacy program and other free distance learning programs.

- 4.3 However, despite the achievements in educational provision, research shows that there are considerable disparities and imbalances in the educational system. There are still problems of children that attain their first ten years of basic education, being able to proceed to senior schools. Access to tertiary institutions is equally limited due to the fact that there are few institutions to absorb from five school leavers with a high preponderance of out of school youth who have no employable skills. Provision of education to children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups such as remote area dwellers, orphans and cattle herders remains a challenge.
- 4.5 There have also been other problems experienced such as a shortage of professional staff for supervision both at regions and headquarters; insufficient teacher supply in new subjects introduced by RNPE, shortage of housing for teachers and insufficient facilities (NDP 9). During the NDP 8 period, several projects on quality improvement and upgrading of teaching facilities in colleges of education could not be implemented due to shortage of financial resources. Only one Education Centre in Kanye was constructed. (NDP 9).
- 4.6 Ultimately, critical questions have been raised whether the education system in Botswana is an effective vehicle for the development of a critical and sustainable human resources/capital that would be productive drivers of the national economy. It is in this context that the integration of the educational system into productive labour systems/trends in the country has been of great concern to the labour movement. The need to align education to employment generation is thus a critical focus for the BFTU. The BFTU's critical analysis of the education policies vis-à-vis the development of human resources within the context of labour market issues has revealed the following concerns:
- The education system in Botswana is an academically oriented schooling system that does not encourage diversity of career opportunities and tends to follow formal paths oriented toward academic achievement. In this context, it can further be argued that, it this bias towards the academic



excellence and training which is not market based that has led to an increase in unemployment (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, 2004). This is even supported in the National Youth Policy that emphasises the need to diversify training and education to provide young women and men with knowledge and skills relevant to the labour market expectations. (BIDPA,2006)

- The National Vocational Education and Training Policy (1998) seeks among other things to deliver training that meets the requirements of the industry, thus making people employable; and to provide initial training to school leavers to enhance their opportunities for employment and self-employment. In principle, this provides a platform for launching programs to facilitate self-employment among young people. However, Vocational Training is often given less emphasis than formal education. Government has also supported its development even though accessibility still remains limited, i.e. out of the primary school leavers; only 6.7% are likely to have access to vocational training centres and brigades (Ministry of Labour & Home Affairs, 2004)
- There is limited financial assistance for the establishment of small businesses for the youth that drop out of schools. Micro and small-scale enterprise promotion has emerged as a key objective in Botswana's economic and industrial policy. The government is involved in the promotion of small business development through various programmes such as the Out of School Youth Grant and Botswana National Youth Service Awards. Other programmes, though not specific to youth, include the SMME Finance Scheme with subsidized loans through Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency, Credit Guarantee Scheme through Botswana Export Credit Insurance. In most cases, these schemes generally lack flexibility and hence have had limited success. (BIDPA,2006)
- The government announced (Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2006) the setting up of Young Farmers' Scheme with an initial capitalisation of P50 million (about \$9m) to improve access to finance and entrepreneurial training for those pursuing farming. The programme will be operated by the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA). Though applauded, the BFTU is concerned as to whether, like other programmes under CEDA, it may be subjected to bureaucratic red tape, shrinking investment portfolio and markets, risky nature of agric-business and sheer negative attitude of the youth towards agriculture may hamper the efforts.

- There are currently lack of adequate training opportunities for junior and secondary school leavers. For example, there is inadequate development of business skills to facilitate sustainable income generating activities for the youth.
- There is the lack of the exploitation of the rural areas to create job opportunities for the youth.
- The loss of productive youth due to HIV/AIDS has had an impact on having an active, productive and renewable labour.

## **5.0 BFTU POSITION ON EDUCATION**

- 5.1 The BFTU believe that Botswana's human resource strategy should underscore how education and training can increase the country's capacity to structurally adjust and adapt to the changing competitive world.
- 5.2 The BFTU believe that education increases the capacity to learn, and be innovative and that quality skilled human resources are vital for successful transition to sustainable development.
- 5.3 The BFTU believe that education can play a cardinal role in nation building through the promotion of democratic values which are the fountain of any modern states.
- 5.4 The BFTU believes that the development of education and human resources should be regarded as a pre-condition for enhancing economic growth and development. The BFTU's policy on education is therefore fundamentally based on social and economic empowerment of Batswana through increasing access to quality education. To this end, the BFTU **observes** and **advocates** that:
- Education is a strategic investment which government must continue to undertake for the country's present and posterity and will support programmes that pay attention to the enhancement of teaching and learning at all levels of education.
  - Free compulsory education should be guaranteed to all Batswana and therefore abhors any discriminatory measure of access to education such as cost recovery tactics.

- There is a need to increase local participation at primary and secondary levels by empowering Batswana through smart partnership in the management and ownership of private schools.
- In addition to improving the quality of education at primary and secondary levels, efforts should be made to raise the standards of teaching and learning so that the majority of the students must have strong literacy and numeracy skills.
- Government must speed up efforts to roll out computer technology in primary and secondary schools to deepen the information literacy skills critical for life learning in a modern society
- Government should deliberately encourage the piloting of special science-oriented senior secondary schools or “science academies” that should be nurseries for the new Science and Technology University in order to boost the science and technology base in the country
- Government should encourage primary and secondary curriculum that promotes education with production and life-long skills.
- There is need to strengthen career counselling through the development and/or improving systems and knowledge for job counselling, job search, job placement and training in schools, colleges and universities.
- Since the youth are facing difficulties in entering the labour market; there is need for a detailed research and analysis of the “school-work” transition process; including the recommendation of specific strategies such as apprenticeship, and other youth training programmes.
- Tertiary education remains one of the key vehicles to modernizing the economy through the provision of quality human resources in the country. Thus the BFTU implores and encourage government to continue strengthening the quality assurance in institutions of higher learning
- Government needs to find lasting solution in the decongesting of the University of Botswana by increasing the budget threshold for expansion in staffing levels as well as continuing the upgrading of the existing facilities.

- Human resources development planning to forecast labour market demands and supply of labour should be reviewed and strengthened
- Development of Labour Information System for forecasting demands and supply of training requirements in the formal sector should be encouraged and supported.
- Programmes such as the levy-grant system, where employers pay into a skills development fund should be encouraged
- Incentives of employer-based training such as tax rebates, cost sharing; subsidies should be encouraged to increase multi-skilling of workers that should fit in the knowledge-intensive world.
- Vocational training should take the form of training for social demand as well as emphasize training that loops people in self-employment when they cannot be absorbed in the formal sectors
- Specialized training or training of high technology trades should be aligned with human resources requirement in the country since lack of this alignment has always led to unemployment
- The major problems experienced such as shortage of professional staff for supervision both at regions and headquarters; insufficient teacher supply in new subjects introduced, shortage of housing for teachers and insufficient facilities should receive urgent attention.
- There is need to review the subject load for students at secondary level (reduction from 9 to 5) so as to give students time to internalize the subject matter as well as give room for the introduction of research skills.
- The pilot double shift system is opposed since it is not a viable solution and has worsened the quality of education since its inception.
- There is need to review the dual management of primary school education between the Ministries of Education and that of Local Government.
- There is need to consider the question of specialization in teaching at primary school level to entrench depth of subject matter in pupils at an early stage.

- There is need to place more emphasis and resources to enhance the quality of special education in the country.

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