

A Conflict Between Aims and Outcomes: Comparison of one Cohort's Primary School Leaving Examinations and Junior Certificate Results of 2003 and 2006

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ABSTRACT The primary objective of this paper is to evaluate the outcomes of the 10 year- basic education policy in Botswana through comparison of one cohort national results of School Leaving Examination (PSLE) of 2003 and its Junior Certificate (JC) of 2006. The main assumptions of this policy are that all children will have gone through a quality education. The PSLE (2003) results indicate that most pupils passed their examinations and proceeded to junior secondary education level. However, the problem is that the JC national results of 2006 show that most completers have poor results which do not allow them to proceed to senior secondary education. This is an indication of poor quality education. The observation is that class sizes at junior secondary education are huge (45 - 51) and there are inadequate teaching resources at junior secondary education. The Ministry of Education should take cognizance of the educational problems at this level and make efforts to reduce class size, provide adequate teaching resources so that teachers could be able to give each student the attention she/he deserves. These have affected students' performances and it is therefore important for the Ministry of Education to introduce Regional examinations at Form 2 in order to monitor each individual performance and provide remedial if it is necessary. These may improve quality education at this level.

INTRODUCTION

The 10 year basic education in Botswana has been introduced for the following reasons: to provide access and equity to education for all Botswana children as well as to improve the quality of education provided. This policy was influenced by the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights (1948) Article 26 which states that: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages (<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>).

In addition Botswana attended the World Conference on Education for All where all participating countries agreed to provide basic education to their citizens (Hadad et al. 1990). Botswana's policy on basic education is inline with the global understanding that education plays an important role in developing individuals which might result in national developments and that is why education is taken as a central contributor to national economic development (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1985; Lekoko 2006). This perception is driven by world bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, United Nations

Children's Fund and the World Bank through world forums like the World Education Forum held in Dakar (2000). The major education policy from WCEFA forum was to make education accessible to all in developing countries (Rose 2003) and as Botswana participated she adopted and amended the policy to suit its own needs by providing 10 years of free basic education (Pheko 2006). The basis of the adoption of the World policy was that such an educational policy might result in the improvement of the human resources skills. This assumption is captured in the Report of the National Commission on Education (Botswana 1993: iv) that "there is now a general recognition that education should meet the personal, social and economic needs of the future". Some researchers, who have worked for the World Bank in different capacities, such as Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) expressed the same view.

The expectation by Botswana is that completers of the 10 years of basic education should be able to read, write, compute and acquire information technology skills and to innovate for future developments. Such an expectation is premised on the view that education's principal aim is to enable individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour that will give these individuals successful lives with potential for

high productivity in the future. The question is has this been achieved? In order to interrogate the outcomes of this policy this article sets to evaluate the 10 year basic education on the following aspects that affect quality education: students' national results, infrastructure and teacher-student ratio.

BACKGROUND

As the education system in Botswana grew and changed in relation to global and national demands, the Government of Botswana responded to these needs by setting up the second Education Commission in 1993. The Commission's views reflected two major influences. First, it was from the declaration of the World Conference on Education for All which, required that "basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults" Article 3 (Haddad et al. 1990: 44). This is coupled with a stance taken by the Botswana Government as a result of Botswana's unhappiness with the outputs of the 9 years of Basic Education. The 10-year basic education therefore was a result of multiple influences both nationally and internationally (Ham and Hill 1993). In order to ensure access for all, the Botswana Government continued with the policy of non-payment of fees. This gave children of both the affluent and poor families' free access to 10 years of basic education. The second perception, which influenced the Government, was to continue with automatic progression to secondary education. The implementation of these policies became central pledges, which were to ensure the development of individual students through quality education. However, there is an argument that quality education should begin from primary to all levels of education. The failure to acquire such a foundation at primary might negatively affect what one can achieve at other levels of education. In addition, there is a general perception by Botswana that when the Government implemented automatic progression in order to achieve 10-year basic education the quality of education was diluted. Literature on quality education advances multiple factors that indicate what is regarded as quality education. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) emphasises that when the following outcomes are realised then quality education is achieved: an increase in children's cognitive development; a general fundamental determination to have good enrolment; good student's retention and good

students' achievement. However, a detailed discussion on quality is carried under literature review.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to find out whether results of the junior certificate examinations for the 2006 cohort indicate or display factors that this cohort has gone through quality education after 10 years of basic education? In this study, quality education is measured by the following variables; final national examination results, adequate teaching resources and teacher-student ratio.

Literature Review - Understanding Quality Education

The word quality means different things to different people. The meaning is contextual. By contextual means that quality may be understood differently by people in Botswana from those in South Africa. The Commonwealth (2006: 4) concludes that "research and scholarship show no single definition of what counts as a quality learning experience and no single meaning of achieving quality". However in this article this word is associated with 'good' results, ability to read and write and general abilities to improve one's life. Good results in the context of secondary school students' means mastery of contents, which is measured by good final grades while ability to read and write is determined by an ability to read and understand concepts, taught. In a case of general abilities to improve one's life, students are expected to pass their final examinations, pay attention to their health and be employable or be self-employed. This understanding of quality education seems to be accepted worldwide as crucial because in the EFA Global Report of 2005 it is argued that quality education is based on the following four pillars: "learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others and learning to be" (UNESCO 2004: 30). This seems to be the international agenda particularly from the point of view of the universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1985) and Education for all (Hadad et al. 1990). Therefore quality education is that type of education, which gives one the skills to survive academically and outside the educational sector.

From the beginning of the quantitative

expansion of education in developing African countries quality education was not a major focus but access was. Hence, when most of the African countries obtained their independence around the 1960's, their main objective was to make education free and accessible to all children in all their nation states in order to improve their own human resources skills. This objective was adopted by the all independent African states in 1967 at a meeting held in Addis Ababa – Ethiopia (Niewenhuis 1997). This influenced Botswana to establish its first national Commission on education which was carried out in 1977 and resulted in the provision of free education to all children by 1980 at primary level and in 1989 at secondary level. Its aim was to increase skilled manpower to carry out Government activities. By 1990 most children had 9 years of free basic education. But Botswana began to question the quality of the 9 years of free education because most of the completers of the two year junior secondary education were not employable when they did not proceed to Form 3 at that time. The Government then established the second national commission on education in 1993. Its recommendations resulted in the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994. It was from this policy that the Botswana Government decided to introduce a 10 year free basic education policy which was implemented in 1996 (Botswana Government 1994). One of its goals is “improvement and maintenance of quality of the education system- the success in the quantitative development of the school system has not been adequately matched by qualitative improvements” (Botswana Government 1994: 2).

The focus of this study is on a group of students who completed its primary school in 2003 and they were automatically admitted to do their junior secondary education in 2004 (Ministry of Education 2003). These were enrolled in this level with various grades ranging from A to E. Grade A being the best while grade E is a failing one. This admission procedure does not address issues which relate to quality education such as, improved students' national final examination results (JC) and adequate teaching facilities. The EFA sixth goal as contained in the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2005: 28) states that desirable outcomes of quality education are: “improvements of all aspects of education, better learning outcomes, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills”. In addition, literature has shown that factors like small class

size and adequate resources are fundamental contributors to provision and acquisition of quality education (Pheko 2006).

The assumption is that if the above factors of quality education are not achieved then poor quality education exists because participation in education has not been meaningful and learners' experiences are not valuable (Commonwealth 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The research was based on two methods. The first was secondary data of documented results of the 2003 PSLE completers and 2006 JC completers from the Ministry of Education (2003; 2006). This cohort is made up of boys and girls of mixed abilities, who were automatically proceeded from standard 1 to 7 and continued until Form 3.

Punch (2001: 190) indicates that “documents are a rich source of data for social research”. They are sources of information that have been established for centuries especially in the social sciences research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1993; Punch 2001). In this study, the researcher has used “all manner of written resources such as reports” (Punch 2001: 190) and government of Botswana's pronouncements which focus on students' national results. The second was observation of teaching and school facilities during the teaching practice of 2007 in order to assess teaching facilities and class sizes in five different schools. The reason for the methods was to validate the information from Ministry of Education documents.

FINDINGS

Findings below are divided into four categories of national primary school leaving examinations (PSLE), junior certificate (JC) examinations results, infrastructure and teacher – student ratio.

National Primary School Leaving Examinations Results (2003)

The Primary School Leaving Examinations indicate that there were 41,056 students who sat for their national examinations in 2003. Pupils in this group obtained various overall grades, which range from A- E and ungraded. The table 1 shows the students' number and percentages on their overall performance.

Table 1: 2003 PSLE overall national results

Grades Obtained	Number	Percentage
A	3 934	9.6
B	13 187	32.1
C	16 036	39.1
D	7 603	18.5
E	267	0.65
Ungraded	29	0.07
Total	41 056	100.00

Source: Ministry of Education (2003: 3)

It is important to note that percentages used above do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding to the nearest decimal point. Table 1 indicate that there are few students whose overall grade is A as they are 3 934 out of a total of 41 056 pupils. The number of students who obtained the B grade is 13 187, while 16 036 got C and 7 603 obtained the D grade. A total number of 269 pupils obtained the E grade. Those whose grades are unguarded are 29. In sum, pupils whose grades range from A to C are in majority as they are slightly above 80 percent. Generally the output for the year 2003 was good.

Important Subjects

However, tables (2, 3 and 4) show students' grades in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science which are generally used in evaluating students' abilities in most educational levels especially in developing countries that use English as an official language.

From Table 2 few students 5 293 out of 41 056 passed English with grade A. The group which obtained B grade comprised of 9 293 students, the number of students who got a C grade is 11 706, the D grade group is 14 215 in number, while the E group comprised of 549 students. This means that the A and B grades make up 35 percent of 41 056. Quite a significant number of students got D (35%) and this number is equivalent to the number of those who obtained A and B combined (35%).

Table 2: 2003 PSLE national English results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
A	5 293	12.0
B	9 293	23.0
C	11 706	29.0
D	14 215	35.0
E	549	1.0
Total	41 056	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2003:3)

Table 3 indicates that a good number of pupils passed mathematics. Out of a total of 41 056 who wrote the PSLE examination, the data indicate the distributions of students' pass rates as follow; A = 6 425; B = 9 498; C = 16 830; D = 8 034 and E = 258. The performance in these categories indicates that the grade A and B groups constitute 38 percent and they are lower than the group, which obtained the C grade because it is 41 percent. This means that majority of pupils are of average ability in mathematics.

Table 3: 2003 PSLE national mathematics results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
A	6 425	15.6
B	9 498	23.1
C	16 830	41.0
D	8 034	19.6
E	258	0.6
Total	41 045	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2003:3)

Table 4 indicates that most of the students did not pass science because the numbers which obtained the following categories are as follows: A = 3,970; B = 13,244; C = 16,679; D = 6,890 and E = 287. The general performance of students in science is lower than their performance in English. More than 13,000 students obtained the B grade while over 16,000 obtained the C grade. This means that those who obtained A and B grades are slightly over 16,000. The results show that the number of pupils whose results are good and average is 81.9 percent.

Table 4: 2003 PSLE national science results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
A	3 970	9.7
B	13 224	32.2
C	16 679	40.6
D	6 890	16.8
E	287	0.7
Total	41 050	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2003:3)

Generally most pupils have passed with good grades their PSLE. The next discussion evaluates their JC performances.

National Junior Certificate Results (2006)

The cohort which proceeded to Form 1 after

their PSLE (2003) were 37,216 and they completed and wrote their three years of junior certificate examinations in 2006. Their overall results are presented below as well as their results for three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. First, it is important to note that the numbers in the tables below were first presented as percentages to the first decimal point by the Ministry of Education in the JC Result report (2006). In this study those percentages were converted into actual numbers of students who passed the examination and this has resulted in students' numbers, which have fractions. Such numbers were then rounded to the nearest number.

Table 5: 2006 Junior certificate overall national results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
Merit	26	0.1
A	651	1.7
B	9 442	25.3
C	18 406	49.4
D	8 736	23.4
Total	37 261	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2007: 3).

The indication from Table 5 shows that only 26 students from 37,261 who sat for JC examination were able to obtain merit, which is the highest grade at this level. The grades are distributed as follows: A = 651; B = 9,442; C = 18 406; D = 8,736. In sum students whose grades range from merit to C are in majority as they are 75 percent. Further disparity is shown below by analysing grades obtaining in the following subjects of English, mathematics and science.

From Table 6, 224 students obtained A grade from a total of 37,261 students who sat for the examination. The percentage of 224 is less than 1. This number is far less than the number of pupils who wrote the same subject at PSLE (2003) because they were represented by 12 percent. The group that obtained grade B is 2,907 while

Table 6: 2006 JC national English results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
A	224	0.6
B	2 907	7.8
C	7 713	20.7
D	16 246	43.6
E	10 172	27.3
Total	37 261	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2007: 3).

the ones who had the C grade is 7,713 and they represent 20 percent. Those who obtained grades D and E comprised 71 percent of the 37,261. The overall results show that most students have failed English language.

The indication from Table 7 is that 1,565 students obtained A grade. This is less than the number of pupils who obtained the same grade in PSLE (2003) because they were 3,934. Those who obtained grade B are 2,347. The total number of students who obtained grade A and B is a quarter of 37,261 while the ones who have the C grade are less than a quarter of 37,261. Those who have the D and E grade represent three quarters of the 37,261 as they are 28,654. This indicates that most of the students have failed mathematics like they did with English.

Table 7: 2006 JC national mathematics results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
A	1 565	4.2
B	2 347	6.3
C	4 658	12.5
D	18 444	49.5
E	10 210	27.4
Total	37 261	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2007: 3).

Table 8 shows performance of students in the science subject. Students who obtained grade A in the JC examination are 1,118. Those who obtained grade B at JC are 3,353. However, there is noticeable difference between performance at PSLE and JC because at primary there were 16,679 while at JC they are 5,402. The students who obtained grade D at PSLE were 6,890 while at JC they are 16,022. The number of D grade holders increased at JC by 9,132. This increase is more than 90 percent. Those in the E grade at PSLE were 287 while they are 11,365 at JC. The increase in number of those who obtained the poor grade E is 11,078. This increase is more than three fold

Table 8: 2006 JC national science results

Grade obtained	Actual number of students per grade	% per grade obtained
A	1 118	3
B	3 353	9
C	5 402	14.5
D	16 022	43
E	11 365	30.5
Total	37 261	100.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2007: 3).

and therefore quality education from these students' performance is poor.

Infrastructure

The observation from five schools that were visited indicates classrooms were inadequate for the number of students who have been taught in them. Some students were taught in the pavilion due to class shortage.

The other finding was that teaching materials such as textbooks were not enough to go around in a class during lessons. Some students had to share a book in order to do the class exercise given by the teacher. This led to some students not doing their class exercises.

Teacher – Student Ratio

It is indicated from the Botswana Education statistics that teacher – student ratio at primary and junior secondary schools are 1: 28 and 1: 40 respectively. But the reality in most school that the researcher visited is that the teacher – student ratio at junior secondary is higher as it was 1: 51. This made it difficult for teachers to give most students the attention they deserve in explaining difficult concepts. In addition teachers found it difficult to manage students' behaviour effectively.

DISCUSSION

Discussions below focus on lessons learnt from statistics based on national results at PSLE (2003) and JC (2006) as well as observations on what goes on in schools. The discussions centre on the three following factors of quality education; students' final results, infrastructure and teacher – student ratio.

Students Overall Results

The overall performance of pupils at PSLE in 2003 shows that 3 934 obtained the A grade while from the same cohort 677 students obtained both the Merit and A grades from their JC final examinations in 2006. The overall pass show that less than a thousand students obtained the A grade and this means lower performance therefore poor quality education at JC. This is clearly in contrast to the EFA Global Monitoring Report's (UNESCO 2004) view that there would be quality education if students' performance is improved and there are desirable outcomes.

Students who obtained grade B at PSLE were 13 187 while they were 9 442 at JC. There is a drop of 3 745 students who did not obtain the overall B grade. Pupils who obtained the C grade at PSLE (2003) were 7 603 while the same students at JC (2006) were 8 736. There is an increase in number by 1 133 students in this category. The indication from these results is that students' performance at grade A and B has declined from 41.7 percent at PSLE (2003) to 27.1 percent which is made up by students with Merit, grades A and B at JC (2006). The overall decline in these categories is 14.6 percent. The decline in the upper grades has resulted in an increase in the lower grades for example, at PSLE (2003) there were 16 036 pupils who obtained grade C and this number has increased at JC (2006) to 18 406. The general patterns of outcomes at JC are not desirable and may have not contributed to improvement of human resources skills as perceived by Rose (2003).

Final Results of the Three Subjects

The increase of lower grades obtained by JC students indicates that these students have not gone through a quality education programme because grades obtained at PSLE have not been maintained but rather they have gone down drastically. This same problem is exhibited by lower grades obtained in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The PSLE and JC English results show low performance at JC than at primary (Commonwealth 2004). This means that these students ability to read and write is below satisfactory. These results are in contrast to the intentions of the Botswana Government policy (2004) that education should result in personal improvement (Botswana Government 1994). The pupils who obtained grade A were 5 293 while those who obtained it at JC were 224. There is a decline of students' performance in this category by 5 069. It can be argued that these students seem not to have acquired skills for personal development. These results do not concur with Pheko's (2006) view that education should contribute to individual development.

Pupils who obtained the E grade at PSLE in mathematics were 258 while at JC they were 10 210 students. This is an increase in the lowest grade by 9 952. This means that over one quarter of the students who sat for the JC (2006) examinations failed mathematics more than when

they sat for their (2003) PSLE examinations. Their ability to numerate as part of quality education is low and from EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2004) it can be concluded that these students do not have the desirable outcomes of quality education. In the science subject 8 736 students obtained a D grade in their PSLE (2003) while their number increased to 11 365 in their JC examination results. There is an indication here that these students ability to conceptualise is low. From the analysis of these subjects it is clear that these students have completed the 10 years of basic education of lower quality because their participation and learning experiences have not been valuable (Commonwealth 2006) as their reading writing and numeracy skills have not improved (Pscharopoulos and Woodhall 1994).

Inadequate Infrastructure in Junior Community Schools

The comparative analysis on both results at PSLE (2003) and JC (2006) clearly indicates that students enter junior secondary school with good grades and there is clear evidence of free access as intended (Niewenhuis 1997). The pass rate at PSLE (2003) should have created a conducive learning and teaching environment, which should have contributed to the improvement of grades or their maintenance at JC. From UNESCO's (2004) view that will be an indication of quality education. But this is not the case as most students' grades have dropped at the end of JC. One of the reasons why students perform poorly in their final examinations at JC is that there are inadequate classrooms for the enrolled students. Students who attend some lessons in the open pavilion do not pay much attention to what is being taught due to distraction around them. Inadequate textbooks for students use in doing their homework or class exercises also compound the non-attentiveness. Therefore there is lack of fundamental contributors to acquisition of quality education (Pheko 2006)

Teacher – Student Ratio

It can be deduced from Botswana Government documents and observation by the researcher that class sizes at primary and secondary schools are different. At primary school the student teacher ratio is 26 or 28, while the teacher - student ratio at junior secondary level is 1: 35 (Ministry of Education 2003: :xi).

However, the reality from observations made during the 2007 teaching practice assessment in five community junior secondary schools are that the actual class size ranges from 45- 51. In addition the incorrect assumption of the number of student per teacher has resulted in over crowding in classrooms. This is the case because classrooms were originally built to accommodate a maximum of 35 students. This over crowding has a negative impact on the way students learn because research has shown that adequate teaching resources and small class size contribute to a good learning and teaching environments (Pheko 2006). Small class sizes give teachers opportunities to give each student attention on their learning needs. This is not the case at junior secondary schools in Botswana except at primary school. These results show that Botswana's 10 year basic education is not a quality one because it failed to improve most of the students knowledge and skills as well as having better learning outcomes. (UNESCO 2004; Commonwealth 2006).

CONCLUSION

It is evident from national examination results statistics that there is adequate access to 10 year basic education in Botswana (Botswana Government 1994). But its aim of providing students with quality education is not fully achieved because the overall results of the PSLE (2003) show that most pupils who passed with good grades at primary have lower grades at junior certificate examinations. This shows that the aim of the ten year basic education, which is to provide quality education, is not realised because of the poor results and this show conflict between the aim and its outcome. This is not a desirable outcome because the learning outcomes are not better (UNESCO 2004).

This study shows that there are certain factors, which are not adequately provided for at junior secondary such as adequate classrooms and lower teacher – student ratio. The adequate infrastructure has a negative impact on student learning and teaching at JC. Improvement on provision of this may improve the current JC results. The second inadequacy is found in teacher- student ratio at JC. There are more students in the classrooms, which make it impossible for teachers to give these students individual attention in explaining concepts during

the lesson. Teaching students in the open spaces does not provide a conducive learning environment where students could concentrate on what is being taught. The other problem at JC is lacked of textbooks which does not allow students to do their independent reading to improve their reading abilities.

Furthermore, it is clear that majority of students are failing at JC (2006) and therefore what they are getting is not quality education. The intake for senior secondary education indicates that some of these students have proceeded to senior secondary education while half of the same number which completed JC (2006) has not been able to proceed to any level of education. The implication is that these students will join the world of work. But they are not able to do so because the job market in Botswana is not even able to absorb graduates (Lekoko 2006). This means that these JC completers are not employed (Psachoropoulos and Woodhall 1994).

These factors show that there is need to improve students' performance at junior secondary level by providing; adequate teaching infrastructure, adequate textbooks and by reducing teacher – student ration to 35. As a temporary measure, the Ministry of Education need to consider introducing Regional examinations at Form 2 level. These should be marked within the school. Regional examination at Form 2 could help to gauge the level of each' individual students' performance in their respective schools as well as gauging each individual school's performance within the Region and eventually at the national level. This measure might improve students' national examination results at JC and their ability to write, read and numerate.

IMPLICATION

As the evaluation only focused on a single cohort of the 2003 PSLE who completed their JC in 2006, it is not possible to draw concrete conclusions on specific major problems contributing to poor quality of education that results in the failure of students at JC despite their good grades at PSLE. Further research is necessary which will engage students, teachers, head teachers and all stakeholders on why this is the case. This will then inform policy makers on how they can best address the problem in order to improve outcomes of the 10 year basic education at JC in Botswana.

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