

An analysis of the current infrastructure and facilities provision for basic education within the context of policy and constitutional obligations in the Republic of Botswana.

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Abstract

The government of Botswana has been lauded with the message that it has managed to achieve ten years of basic education in line with the dictates of the Millennium Development Goal number three. The enrolment in primary schools is said to have exceeded the one hundred percent mark by almost six percent; qualified teachers (both diploma and sometimes graduates) are not employed because there are more than enough qualified teachers. Are these the only and main indicators of basic education? Of what quality is the basic education offered? Are the quality-enhancing educational inputs in place? This paper attempts to situate the Botswana government's legislative obligation in respect to the right to basic education of her children, with particular reference to the quality and adequate provision of educational infrastructure and facilities as a way of improving the quality of basic education in Botswana primary schools. Legislative and policy documents are analyzed to establish the impact of legislative and constitutional obligations on the general status of infrastructure provision in Botswana primary schools.

Key words: Infrastructure, facilities, equipment, Botswana Government, Basic Education.

Introduction

As a signatory of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a shining example of democracy, Botswana supports and is expected to abide by it. In Botswana, "the first ten years form the period of Basic Education to which all children of school going age have a right" (Republic of Botswana, 1997, p337). The emphasis of this study is Primary Education which is the first seven years of "elementary education".

This study looks at the legislative and policy frameworks that under gird the provision of infrastructure and facilities in the primary schools in Botswana. Then statistical data from the Ministry of Education Statistics Office is presented to showcase the current status of infrastructure nationally. Finally, the implications, conclusions and recommendations of infrastructure on the quality of basic education are presented drawing from both the ministry data and empirical one.

Constitutional obligations

The right to education is enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Botswana where the "fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual" are spelt out. These fundamental human rights are also derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly resolution 217 A (111) of 10 December 1948. There is a specific link between the Millennium Development Goal 2 which calls for the achievement of universal primary education and Article 26 of the Declaration which stipulates that:

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. ...
- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In order to achieve universal primary education, governments and other partners need to ensure that all children of school going age have the care in their earliest years that prepares them for success in school and also have safe water and adequate sanitation in their schools. These can only be achieved if there are legislative and policy frameworks guiding their implementation.

Legislative and policy framework for infrastructure provisioning

Legally, education in Botswana is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education guided by the Education Act, "an Act to provide for the proper development of education and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith" (Republic of Botswana, 1976, p2). This duty is further emphasized in Section 3 (1) of the Act which unequivocally states that: "It shall be the duty of the Minister (of Education) to promote primary and post-primary education, educational research, and the progressive development of schools, consistently with the powers of direction and control vested in him by this Act".

However, primary education is a dual responsibility between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government; with the latter responsible for the development of the physical facilities while the former is responsible for the professional development of the primary sector. The Ministry of Local Government is responsible for the "efficient provision of infrastructure, equipment and supplies among others" (Republic of Botswana, 2003, p287). This may be interpreted as in line with Section 6 which stipulates that:

Every local education authority shall exercise its powers so as to promote primary education within its area and to assist, in such manner as may from time to time be approved by the Minister, in the promotion of education in other respects, and shall carry out such other functions as are conferred on it by or under this Act.

This duality of management is the one that has led many teachers and other people who have an interest in education to cry foul that primary education is not being properly serviced because the Ministry of Local Government has its own priorities and education is but one of the services provided such as RADP, Social Welfare and Primary Health. Due to a likelihood of conflict of priorities between the two ministries, especially where resources are involved, the achievement of universal basic education may be a mirage, particularly with the Ministry of Local Government under pressure to tackle issues such as HIV/AIDS and its resultant increase of institutions such as orphans and destitute.

Legislative and policy obligations are also clearly in place as all schools in Botswana are registered by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education after satisfying himself/herself of the following:

- a) the teaching and accommodation are or will be adequate to the class of school it purports to be;

Classroom accommodation provides the security the students need to perform well. The legality of provision of the security for the individual is given in Chapter 2 of the Constitution as one of

the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. It reduces the impact of the external environment such as inclement weather and events in the community which are destructive to the learning process. In a classroom situation, effective use of tools such as chalkboards and teaching aids including furniture is enhanced. The importance of classrooms in the achievement of Universal Primary Education was also realized by the government as emphasized that:

The achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) will be pursued through building more primary schools and additional classrooms where appropriate to keep up with increasing enrolments and reduced class size from 40 to 30 (Republic of Botswana, 2003, p286).

The status of classroom available in 2004 is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Accommodation In Schools And Streams By District 2004

District	No. of Classes	Number of Streams	Shortage of Classrooms	Number of Streams on double Shift	Percentage of Shortage
Gaborone	880	891	11	22	1.2
Francistown	437	447	10	20	2.2
Lobatse	195	187	-8	-16	-4.3
Selebi-Phikwe	285	278	-7	-14	-2.
Orapa	85	65	-20	-40	-30.8
Jwaneng	112	107	-5	-10	-4.7
Sowa Pan	28	23	-5	-10	-21.7
Ngwaketse	1,073	1,163	90	180	7.7
Borolong	163	182	19	38	10.4
South East	380	347	-33	-66	-9.5
Kweneng	1,221	1,459	238	472	16.3
Kgatleng	527	528	1	2	0.2
Serowe/Palapye	1,020	1,120	100	200	8.9
Central Mahalapye	729	833	104	208	12.5
Central Bobonong	482	533	51	102	9.6
Central Boteti	330	382	52	104	13.6
Central Tutume	846	926	80	160	8.6
North-East	510	468	-42	-84	-9.0
Ngamiland South	838	830	-8	-16	-1.0
Ngamiland North	142	147	5	10	3.4
Chobe	119	120	1	2	0.8
Ghanzi	237	246	9	18	3.7
Kgalagadi South	225	223	-2	-4	-0.9
Kgalagadi North	142	152	10	20	66
Total	11,006	11,657	651	1,302	506

During National Development 8, Government had envisaged to put a number of measures in place to ensure improved quality and effectiveness of primary education. On the infrastructure and facilities in schools, it was intended that:

Facilities of primary schools will be improved by adding libraries, providing electricity, adding more classrooms to ensure reduced class sizes from 40 to 30, and procurement and distribution of school supplies will be improved (Republic of Botswana, 1997, p379-60).

Some of the specialized facilities in the schools are illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Specialized Infrastructure per District - 2004 Library

District	No. of Classes	Special Units	Halls	Computer Rooms	Admin Block	Resource Room	Kitchen	Pit Latrines	Water Closets
Gaborone	880	13	19	25	43	21	51	4	1,415
Francistown	437	10	6	4	20	19	22	-	656
Lobatse	195	6	3	2	10	14	10	-	245
Selebi-Phikwe	285	4	2	4	14	10	14	-	428
Orapa	85	9	4	4	4	3	6	-	64
Jwaneng	112	3	6	3	5	6	5	79	643
Sowa Pan	28	-	-	2	2	2	2	-	55
Ngwaketse	1,073	8	1	2	47	1	87	768	249
Borolong	163	-	-	-	9	-	19	162	12
South East	380	9	6	4	20	5	24	71	453
Kweneng	1,221	3	17	7	38	5	99	811	863
Kgatleng	527	10	2	1	32	3	34	456	288
Serowe/Palapye	1,020	3	4	6	38	4	57	482	686
Central Mahalapye	729	-	3	3	20	4	48	442	357
Central Bobonong	482	-	-	3	20	3	28	261	1,415
Central Boteti	330	-	-	3	16	2	25	216	138
Central Tutume	846	-	3	2	29	-	55	513	622
North-East	510	-	3	-	2	4	34	261	269
Ngamiland South	838	5	1	5	44	13	52	624	199
Ngamiland North	142	-	-	4	8	2	35	101	173
Chobe	119	-	7	-	10	4	9	78	77
Ghanzi	237	2	1	7	23	1	22	125	148
Kgalagadi South	225	-	1	1	24	2	21	138	143
Kgalagadi North	142	1	-	1	13	1	15	90	93
Total	11,006	86	89	93	491	119	771	5,682	8,645

Source: Ministry of Education Statistics, 2006.

Coupled with good classrooms is the need for adequate information communication technologies' infrastructure and facilities such as computer laboratories and the computers themselves to improve the delivery of teaching services and make the pupils' learning more interesting (Ministry of Education, 2004). The Government of Botswana is trying its best to make available these specialist facilities to enhance the quality of primary education as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Specialized Facilities

District	Swimming		Video		Electricity		Solar	Power
Gymnasium	Pool	Television	Machines					
Gaborone	10	41	34		42	-		4
Francistown	3	19	15		21	-		-
Lobatse	2	9	7		10	-		-
Selebi-Phikwe 3	14	10	15	-		-		-
Orapa	3	4	4		4	-		-
Jwaneng	1	5	4		6	-		-
Sowa Pan	1	2	2		2	-		-
Ngwaketse	1	29	16		37	15		-
Borolong	-	2	1		2	3		-
South East	2	21	9		22	-		-
Kweneng	3	40	23		53	24		-
Kgatleng	-	27	16		29	8		-
Serowe/Palapye	1	36	17		41	13		-
Central Mahalapye	1	20	8		27	17		-
Central Bobonong	-	19	14		19	10		-
Central Boteti	-	8	4		8	9		-
Central Tutume	-	22	14		23	12		-
North-East	-	9	5		11	-		-
Ngamiland South	3	24	22		27	24		-
Ngamiland North	-	1	1		1	7		-
Chobe	-	4	2		6	2		-
Ghanzi	-	4	3	9		-		-
Kgalagadi South	-	8	4		12	8		-
Kgalagadi North	-	5	3		6	7		-
Total	34	373	238		429	175		6

There is an imbalance in the distribution of classrooms and specialized facilities even in the only two cities of Gaborone and Francistown; for instance in Gaborone there are only twenty five computer rooms out of forty two schools while Francistown has four out of twenty one schools despite the fact that all schools are electrified (Ministry of Education, 2005). There are also forty one television sets and thirty four video machines in Gaborone schools while in Francistown there are nineteen television sets and fifteen video machines. This uneven distribution of facilities is also shown in Table 3. The uneven distribution can be considered as a violation of the basic human rights of equity espoused in the Constitution.

Another category of facilities needed for the achievement of universal primary education is adequate and relevant furniture which would allow students comfort in order to concentrate in class. This calls for the provision of adequate students' desk where they can sit comfortably

without being crowded on one desk resulting in copying; chalk boards which are in good condition which are not slippery or mounted on easels which may be a hazard to both the teacher and pupils; and the availability of usable teachers' furniture and lockable drawers for security. These will add to the friendly environment that schools should offer. The status of furniture in primary schools is illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: First Level: Furniture And Other Facilities By District 2004

<u>District</u>	<u>Desk Sitting 1 Pupil</u>	<u>Desk Sitting 2 Pupils</u>	<u>Desk Sitting 3+ Pupils</u>	<u>Benches Sitting Up to 6</u>	<u>Benches Sitting Up to 7+</u>	<u>Tables</u>	<u>Radios</u>	<u>Chairs</u>
Gaborone	10,430	2,473	764	24	4	6,353	165	29,789
Francistown	6,273	1,459	46	15	-	3,346	123	13,880
Lobatse	1,809	152	-	-	-	2,970	34	5,054
Selebi-Phikwe	1,084	836	50	-	-	3,312	162	8,056
Orapa	1,105	334	-	-	-	396	51	2,541
Jwaneng	471	-	64	-	-	668	14	2,982
Sowa Pan	155	-	-	-	-	89	12	74
Ngwaketse	4,233	870	2	-	-	13,055	368	32,050
Borolong	946	198	-	-	-	1,296	30	4,186
South East	3,753	630	175	72	-	3,935	118	12,505
Kweneng	5,039	1,389	245	2	-	14,388	441	40,563
Kgatleng	2,915	982	-	-	-	5,568	123	15,932
Serowe/Palapye	5,113	2,674	64	-	-	9,240	488	34,532
Central Mahalapye	2,514	1,299	154	-	219	7,636	348	25,569
Central Bobonong	2,467	1,968	77	-	-	3,936	203	6,178
Central Boteti	2,682	817	-	-	-	3,763	131	13,249
Central Tutume	3,387	2,691	31	173	-	7,207	217	28,132
North-East	2,05	726	44	-	-	4,874	175	14,071
Ngamiland South	2,194	1,04	-	-	9	6,501	282	4,703
Ngamiland North	721	84	11	23	-	1,204	62	4,443
Chobe	699	276	2	-	-	1,089	20	3,175
Ghanzi	326	327	22	1	-	2,492	191	6,619
Kgalagadi South	1,101	313	-	-	-	2,268	79	5,471
Kgalagadi North	2,014	27	-	1	-	877	23	4,054
Total	63,486	21,816	1,754	311	232	106,461	3,860	347,808

b) the physical health and moral welfare of the pupils will be adequately provided for.

Educational facility planners should concentrate on issues related to the health and safety of both the students and teachers, including visitors to any school. Issues such as lighting, temperature and humidity control, sound pollution, water quality, ventilation, and potentially dangers need to be improved maximally. Like in the olden days, some school buildings have small windows and there is very little ventilation; there are no ceilings and when it rains there is a lot of noise leading to the abandonment of teaching (see picture below).



Mapoka school in 1962

Section 19 (1) of the Act in part stipulates that the Permanent Secretary with the approval of the Minister may make regulations for health and safety to which the premises of every school conform, and such regulations may prescribe different requirements for different classifications of schools. The section further states that if it appears to the Permanent Secretary that in the case of any school premises thereof do not conform to any regulations made under this section, he may order, and in the case of a primary school require the local education authority to order, the owner or manager thereof to execute within a reasonable period to be stated in the order, such specified works as are necessary to secure conformity.

Section 29 (1) also states that the Minister may, by statutory instrument, make regulations prescribing any matter or thing which under this Act is to be or may be prescribed and generally for the better carrying out of the objects and purposes of this Act. (2) such regulations may prescribe among others:

- (b) the requirements for school buildings, premises and equipment;
- (h) safeguards for the health of pupils and staff in any school, and the manner in which school medical inspection shall be carried out.

Furthermore, the Education (Primary Schools) Regulations which apply to every primary school which is: a Government school, a local government school; or an aided school in Section 38 states that it shall be the duty of every head teacher to take all reasonable steps to ensure that conditions at his school are at all times such as not to pose a threat to the health of the pupils, and in discharge of this duty the head teacher shall pay particular attention to the conditions under which school meals are prepared. From Table 1 above, it is clear that some schools do not have kitchens while most schools, particularly in rural areas still use pit latrines which can be a health hazard. Much as the regulations empower the head teacher "to take reasonable steps to ensure that conditions at his school are at all times such as not to pose a threat to the pupils", the head teacher can only write to the authorities but cannot do anything beyond this reasonable step.

The health and safety of individuals are also protected by the Constitution in section 3 (a) which stipulates that "... every person in Botswana is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, namely – (a) life, liberty, security of the person and the protection of the law."

The 'recognition of the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world' (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The teaching of children under trees and denying them access to using current technologies' infrastructure in a way violates pupils' dignity and is a disregard and contempt for human rights. It is barbarous and ancient as illustrated in an article that appeared in one of the Botswana Mid Week Papers where one parent lamented:

Nkoyaphiri School Bogged In 'Stone Age Era'

By Lekopanye Mooketsi

Correspondent

9/11/2006 5:18:12 PM (GMT +2)

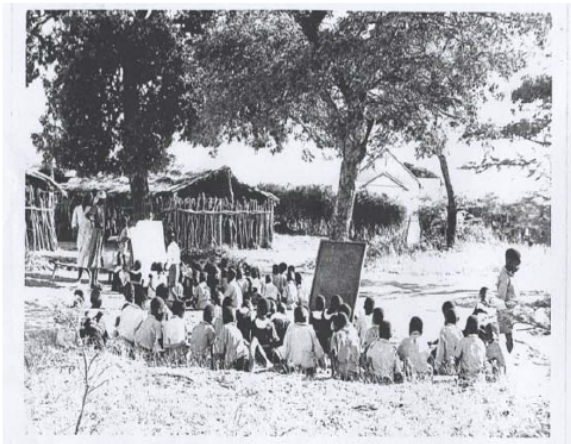
At a time when other primary school children are using computers, those at Nkoyaphiri are still bogged in what can be described as the 'Stone Age' era. The pupils at the Mogoditshane school are learning under very deplorable conditions 40 years after independence. They still attend classes in the open due to lack of classrooms.

This was once a common practice during the early years of independence when the country was still poor.

It is not a new thing as illustrated by the caption below dating back to 1998:

Earlier, the parents teachers association (PTA) chairman, Mr Gotaaya Matseke and the school's headteacher, Ms Lucia Moloi lamented that there was lack of classrooms, teacher's accommodation, inadequate students toilets, delay in delivery of stationery and lack of reprographic machines such as photocopiers and typewriters. In response, MP Merafhe promised to enquire about the long standing uncompleted buildings at Xhosa whose aim was to alleviate shortage of accommodation. BOPA 1998

Some of the facilities in the primary schools really resemble the pre-independence structures such as the one below.



Mapoka School in 1962.

Since independence in 1966, the education system in Botswana has been guided by two policies, namely, Education for Kagisano (Social Harmony) of 1977 and the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994. The two commissions identified the following as among the critical issues:

- the considerable differences in physical infrastructure;
- availability of school materials;
- schools in remote areas lack basic supplies;
- school facilities built in the 1970's and 1980's are in need of refurbishing;
- the backlog of classrooms;
- difficulties in procurement under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Government. (Republic of Botswana, 2000 – 2000 – 2002 country strategy paper, p26).

The Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 also recommended that:

- basic education be a right for all children of school going age. According to Mogami (2000), the then Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, “Botswana is committed to the ideal of education as a basic human right, and a free 10 years of basic education”.
- class size be reduced from 45 to 40 (short term);
- class size be reduced from 40 to 35 (medium term);
- class size be reduced from 35 to 30 (long term).

Among the strategies to improve primary education were:

- Increase access and equity in order to achieve universal access to primary education;
- To improve the quality, and effectiveness of primary education.

The policies envisaged to utilize the following strategies:

- Building more primary schools and additional classrooms where necessary;
- Reducing class size;
- One/two teacher schools (never implemented due to difficulties in providing infrastructure to the target settlements. School facilities can only be provided to settlements with village status which requires a population of over 500 people. (This is an example of a clash of interests between the two ministries);
- Boarding schools.
- Facilities of primary schools will be improved by adding libraries, providing electricity, adding more classrooms to reduce class sizes.
- Procurement and distribution of school supplies will be improved (how?).

Conclusions

It is apparent from the above that there sufficient policy and constitutional obligations in place to facilitate infrastructure and facilities provision in Botswana schools. The constitution of Botswana succinctly protects all the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. Legislative obligations are also provided for in the Education Act while policy obligations were provided by the 1977 and 1994 policies. Teaching students under trees clearly violates students constitutional rights of safety and dignity as students are exposed to hazards. Their dignity is compromised as other students are taught in real safe classrooms.

There are relatively sufficient infrastructure and facilities in the schools. However, the educational environment may not allow for the sustenance of equity distribution as parents have a choice for their children and students can move from one school leaving empty buildings and going to a different school which may result in shortage. Infrastructure cannot be transferred whereas students and teachers can. Sometimes some policies work against the provision of facilities as according to Local Government settlement policies, infrastructure can only be

provided in areas where the population is 500 and more. It was therefore not possible to build two teacher schools in some areas.

There is also some mismanagement of resources as some schools had more furniture when others had none. Officers should have moved some of this furniture as students moved.

There is a need to concentrate on the provision of specialized facilities in line with the changes globally so that our products can be compliant. Those in authority should start thinking of moving from access and equity to adequacy so that no children, wherever they find themselves by reasons of birth or otherwise are disadvantaged. This will also mitigate against possibilities of litigations in future as is happening in other developed countries where violations of rights are settled in courts.

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