Exploring the Teaching and Learning Quality Question in Technical Education in Botswana:
A Case Study of Gaborone Technical College

Lentswe Sokwane, Gaborone Technical College, Gaborone, Botswana

Gbolagade Adekanmbi, Botho University, Gaborone, Botswana

ABSTRACT

Due to a perception that the quality of their certificates was in question, students of the Gaborone Technical College (GTC), along with their counterparts in similar institutions, went on a strike in 2016. Based on a subsequent case study of the college, completed in 2018, this article examines the quality question in technical education in Botswana. The study set out to assess the implementation of policies guiding teaching and learning; examines the quality of resources for teaching and learning; appraises the nature and use of support systems for teaching and learning; investigates the views of lecturers and students on the quality of teaching and learning and identifies the factors which inhibit the quality of teaching and learning. Using a mixed method approach, the study collected data from students, lecturers and college managers through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results show the absence of a specific teaching and learning policy, thus questioning the quality of the implementation of the policy itself. The study shows that the availability of resources for enhancing quality teaching is questionable, and the general perception by staff and students is that the overall quality of teaching and learning is average. However, most staff have the required qualifications for quality teaching, adequate support services exist, but a low utilization of the support services is observed. Factors inhibiting the quality of teaching and learning include inadequate library reference materials, the slow pace of internet connectivity, the absence of technical support for staff and inadequate resources in laboratories. In line with the literature, the article recommends a prioritization of quality teaching as a strategic objective, the establishment of a teaching and learning framework and the continuing professional development of staff, among others.

KEYWORDS

Botswana, Evaluation, Quality, Teaching and Learning, Technical Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the provision of access is generally a desired goal in education in many parts of the world, the pursuit of quality in such provisions, especially in teaching and learning, is always a major consideration, for theorists as well as practitioners alike. This is more so in vocational education and training, where the thrust of provision is expected to reflect clearly defined outcomes and ultimately, a practical application of the knowledge gained. Various attempts to explore the quality question have zeroed in on issues of exceptional performance, a zero tolerance for faults, a fitness for purpose, and a pursuit of transformation (Gibbs, 2010; Mok & Jiang, 2016). Attempts have also been made to try and focus on the possible quality of the students and lecturers, the effectiveness of teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2013), the nature of the environment of teaching and learning as well as the totality of inputs that go into the administration of learning. While these issues are vital, the pursuit of quality appears to be strongly tied to the existence of a platform for making that happen, often seen in the existence of a policy framework upon which quality issues are to be explored and addressed. Added to the issue of a policy is the degree to which such a policy is implemented.

Following from the above, the quality dimension to teaching and learning becomes inextricably tied to the quality of resources which the policy implementing institution avails in human, material and financial dimensions, to the institution. In addition to this, support systems are expected to be put in place to ensure the success of the educational endeavor. Also, users of a system also often are able to say how a system is fairing, by commenting on its activities and its general fitness for purpose. Tied to this is also the constant evaluation of the system to see what factors hinder the quality of an educational endeavor, and to proffer relevant solutions to such.

In exploring the quality question in teaching and learning in vocational education and training in Botswana, this study aims to focus on the Gaborone Technical College, one of the many such colleges in the nation, and to assess the quality of its provisions. To this end, it is necessary to examine aspects of the background to the nation's vocational education and training agenda.

1.1. Background to the Study

Botswana, the context of this study, with a population of 2.2 million, is one of the fastest growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa. It is the fifth ranked economy in the sub-continent, coming after Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Cape Verde (ITU, 2017). With a corruption perception index of 61, it is the least corrupt nation in Africa, doing better than such OECD countries as Italy, Hungary, Spain and Greece (Transparency International, 2017). The nation recorded a high secondary enrolment ratio of 81.4 in 2017 and within the same period, a relatively high tertiary enrolment ratio of 27.5, when compared with many other sub-Saharan African countries (ITU, 2017). Botswana is rated as number 105 out of 176 countries in the ICT Development Index, with an IDI ranking of 4.59 and a related sub-index ranking of 5.37 (ITU, 2017). Botswana has an ICT policy, established in 2007 with a goal of economic diversification and that of providing universal access to information (Adekanmbi, 2016).

Although access has been a key issue in education, the concern about quality has also been raised, especially in technical educational provisions in the sub-continent (Henard, 2013). The need to enhance quality education at the tertiary level in Botswana has also been a major subject. Some of the steps that have been taken have included the establishment of the Botswana Qualifications Authority, the merger of a number of institutions and bodies, and in enhancing the nation's distance education strategy, the establishment in 2018 of the Botswana Open University (BOU).

Technical education in Botswana was pioneered by Patrick Van Rensburg in 1965 (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2006). He started it on the concept of training with production at Brigades and was called vocational education (Nthebolang, 2013). Vocational education is the provision of skills and knowledge below the technician level (Tertiary Education Council, 2005). In the early 1980's, the Ministry of Education introduced Vocational Training Centres, which are now

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/exploring-the-teaching-and-learning-quality-question-in-technical-education-in-botswana/225049

Related Content

Participatory Action Research as/in Adult Education: Offering Three Methods Anchored in Vivencia, Praxis, and Conscientization
Meagan Call-Cummingsand Melissa Hauber-Özer (2020). *International Journal of Adult Education and Technology (pp. 21-33).*
www.irma-international.org/article/participatory-action-research-asin-adult-education/264173

Spirituality: The Bridge Between Engagement and Resistance in the Workplace
Dianne Ford Lawton (2017). *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology (pp. 29-37).*
www.irma-international.org/article/spirituality/192148

Gamification in Adult Learning
Abdulmenaf Guland Cigdem Uz Bilgin (2021). *Research Anthology on Adult Education and the Development of Lifelong Learners (pp. 905-932).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/gamification-in-adult-learning/279764

Web 2.0 Technologies and the Spirit of Online Learning
Viktor Wang, Valerie Bryanand Krista Steinke (2013). *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology (pp. 44-53).*
www.irma-international.org/article/web-technologies-spirit-online-learning/78271

Online Communities of Practice as Vehicles for Teacher Professional Development
Maria Meletiou-Mavrotheris (2014). *Adult and Continuing Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1791-1815).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-communities-of-practice-as-vehicles-for-teacher-professional-development/105341