

Policy Development for Lifelong Learning in Botswana

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline policy orientations in Botswana which serve to promote lifelong learning. It will therefore provide a case study of a developing country in which lifelong learning is gaining increased significance as a strategy for economic and social development. The focus of these orientations is on the life-span learning needs of youth and adults in a modern, changing society, and as yet little attention has been given to the implications for young people in initial education.

Botswana is a land-locked country in the centre of the Southern Africa sub-region. It has a large land mass (the size of France) but a small population of only 1.7 million. At Independence in 1966, it was one of the world's poorest countries. However, it has experienced sustained economic growth (based mainly on diamond production) and it is now a middle-income country with a GNP per capita of US\$3,650 and a strong international credit rating. Significant social inequalities remain and 47% of the population were below the national poverty datum line in 1993 (Government of Botswana and United Nations Development Programme, 2000). It is a liberal democracy and free and fair multi-party elections have been held every five years, though a single party has won all the elections. The Constitution has been upheld and a good record on human rights maintained. Starting from a very weak human resources base (only 35 people held university degrees at Independence), there has been significant and sustained investment in education and training. For example, in the 2002/3 Budget the Ministry of Education was allocated 28% of the recurrent expenditure (Republic of Botswana, 2002, p.33). (It should be noted that seven other ministries also have education and training programmes.) Although there are undoubtedly economic, political and social problems (such as unemployment, ethnic tensions, and HIV/AIDS), the overall situation of economic success, stability, and political commitment to human resources development provides a propitious context in which to promote lifelong learning.

The need for lifelong learning in Botswana is created by the same social trends that have given lifelong learning prominence on the policy agenda of the advanced industrial countries. These trends are: economic changes in the employment structure and nature of work;

technological changes driven by information and communication technologies; demographic changes leading to an older population; massive educational expansion creating the social demand for more education; growth and change in consumer culture; and political concerns for greater social inclusion (Youngman, 2001). It can be seen from the comparative analysis in Table 1 (see Appendix) that the trends of social change which have propelled lifelong learning in the advanced industrialised countries obtain in Botswana. These social forces are an integral part of the country's development process. It can be predicted that the pressures they generate for appropriate policy responses will intensify. Thus policy development for lifelong learning is an increasingly important area for public policy.

The Policy Situation

The policy environment of lifelong learning in Botswana can be considered at three levels. Firstly, there are general economic and social policies which are conducive in a broad sense. Secondly, there are educational policies which support lifelong learning in a general way. Finally, there are specific policies targeted at particular aspects of lifelong learning. Each of these is considered in turn.

General policies

The most important over-arching national policy is the document Vision 2016: Towards Prosperity for All, which was published in 1997. This provides Botswana society with seven key goals:

- An educated and informed nation;
- A prosperous, productive and innovative nation;
- A compassionate, just and caring nation;
- A safe and secure nation;
- An open, democratic and accountable nation;
- A moral and tolerant nation;
- A united and proud nation.

The strategy for building an 'educated, informed nation' embodies the concept of lifelong learning: 'Education must be made more flexible, so that people can enter and leave the education system at different times in their lives.' (Presidential Task Group, 1997, p.30). But it is also significant that the strategies to achieve the other goals of the Vision all imply the need for widespread learning in the society if they are to be achieved. For example, it is made clear that meeting the economic goal is dependent on the widespread acquisition of new attitudes and skills. Thus the Vision provides a powerful reference point for advocacy for lifelong learning as a necessary component of many economic and social policies.

Educational policies

Botswana's education and training system was reviewed by a Presidential Commission in

1992/3. The philosophy of education articulated by the Commission in its Report contained a clear commitment to lifelong learning:

... the nation's human resources must be valued at all stages of life and the goal of educational development must be to establish a learning society... The modern Motswana will be a life-long learner who is creative and innovative and has the competency and confidence to contribute to the betterment of Botswana society and humanity at large. (National Commission on Education, 1993, p.37)

A full chapter in the Report was devoted to Out-of-School Education and it elaborated the idea of education as a lifelong process contributing to a learning society. It proposed actions in four areas of significance for lifelong learning: out-of-school education for children, adult basic education, extension education, and continuing education. The chapter on Vocational and Technical Training also embodied a lifelong learning perspective. The majority of the recommendations in the Commission's Report were included in The Revised National Policy on Education, April 1994 (Republic of Botswana, 1994) and hence the Policy contained a number of recommendations that promote lifelong learning. These included the establishment of the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning and the Botswana Training Authority, and the development of a facilitatory regulatory environment for private training institutions). The document remains the major long-term policy governing education and training.

A shorter policy cycle is to be found in the six yearly National Development Plans. Each Plan has a chapter on Education which restates or updates educational policy and identifies the projects (and funding requirements) needed for implementation. Currently, National Development Plan 9, 2003 -2007 is being prepared with the overall theme of 'Towards realisation of Vision 2016: sustainable and diversified development through competitiveness in global markets.' The preparation of the Plan has provided the opportunity to give a new emphasis to lifelong learning. A draft paragraph for inclusion at the beginning of the Education chapter has been prepared which identifies the promotion of a culture of lifelong learning as a key component of national human resources development, which will involve Government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations. It is expected that lifelong learning will be an element of the education strategy for National Development Plan 9, and that the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with relevant partners, will develop policies, programmes and projects that will enhance the environment for lifelong learning.

The current situation indicates that educational policy contains a number of statements that promote lifelong learning. But the situation is deficient in that there is no specific national policy on lifelong learning. However, a project has been included in National Development Plan 9 for a Human Resources Development Strategy Study, and it may be that the outcome will be a framework policy transcending the education and training sectors and promoting a philosophy of lifelong learning for all. The danger is that the study may

focus only on the skill needs of the economy, and neglect the significance of other important areas of learning, such as active citizenship, and fail to address wider issues, such as equal access in the context of unequal social conditions.

It should be noted that Botswana's participation in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) has been influential in promoting the lifelong learning agenda (UNESCO, 1997). There is a CONFINTEA V Follow-up Committee that reports to the UNESCO National Commission. It developed and monitors a National Plan of Action for Adult Learning, which contains twenty three activities related to the ten thematic areas of CONFINTEA. However, no follow-up action has yet been taken on the Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All (UNESCO, 2000), so that there are no policy links between lifelong learning and the goals of Dakar.

Lifelong learning policies

Although there is no general framework policy on lifelong learning, a number of policies are evolving that target specific aspects of lifelong learning. These policies include recommendations within the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) which are currently being implemented, and newer policies, such as those initiatives to be included in National Development Plan 9. The policies below are particularly significant and illustrate a range of options.

National Qualifications Framework

One important measure for promoting lifelong learning is to ensure an integrated system of educational and training qualifications. The current situation in Botswana with regard to qualifications is characterised by inconsistency and fragmentation, which leads to confusion and lack of comparability for learners and institutions. One policy option is to create a framework that makes clear and coherent the relative value of all nationally approved qualifications, and which validates prior learning and experiential learning within an overall system of accreditation. A feasibility study for a National Qualifications Framework is due to be undertaken in 2003 as the basis for a policy decision.

Shared Educational Resources (Local Learning Centres)

One goal of the RNPE is to provide access to learning opportunities outside the main structure of schooling. An important policy recommendation in this regard was that there should be shared use of educational resources, enabling programmes to be offered to learners not in full-time education, for example in the evenings and at the week-ends. A recent national conference on the implementation of the recommendation recognised the need for a broader perspective on the concept of shared resources, that would embrace not just the facilities of the Ministry of Education, but those of other public sector, private sector and community organisations, such as libraries, company training centres, and churches. The key idea is the development of local learning centres where youths and adults can undertake face-to-

face learning, distance learning, and self-directed learning (Youngman, 2002). The Conference agreed on action for further policy development on this aspect of lifelong learning promotion.

Tertiary Education and Lifelong Learning

At the moment, the University of Botswana is the single national university. It adopted in 2000 a Vision, Mission and Values Statement which placed a high priority on lifelong learning:

The University will fulfil its Vision and Mission by:

- Offering quality academic and professional programmes that ensure a commitment to and mastery of life-long learning skills as well as encouraging a spirit of critical enquiry...
- Extending access to higher education through the utilisation of information and communication technologies, within the framework of life-long and open learning. (University of Botswana, 2001, p.3)

Although a number of programmes and sections of the University currently seek to operationalise these policy statements, the University is proposing within National Development Plan 9 to establish a School of Lifelong Learning that will promote lifelong learning on and off campus in a more concentrated way. Lifelong learning is now one of the strategic areas of focus for the University's long term development. This example of an institutional policy could be extended to other tertiary level institutions in the country when the new Tertiary Education Council begins work, as it has the mandate to formulate policy for the tertiary education sector as a whole. Institutions could then be benchmarked, for example, against the criteria set in The Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution (UNESCO and the University of the Western Cape, 2001)

eLearning

The RNPE placed great importance on the incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies in education, and further investment is planned during the period of National Development Plan 9 to develop a national e-learning strategy and strengthen the technological infrastructure. National and regional resource centres for e-learning will be established. E-learning policies envisage that it will become an increasingly important mode of lifelong learning, especially through the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning and the University's Centre for Continuing Education.

Adult Basic Education

A National Literacy Programme has been in existence since 1978. It has contributed to the steady improvement in the national adult literacy rate, which is now 77% (World Bank, 2002). A comprehensive evaluation is planned for 2002/3 to ensure its curriculum and organisation are updated to be responsive to current learning needs. The programme provides basic skills of literacy and numeracy. As part of the RNPE, an Adult Basic Education Course

is being developed that will provide adults with the equivalent of primary level education, thus providing a bridge between basic literacy and access to secondary education. The curriculum will cover life skills such as business management, reproductive health, environmental conservation, and civic education. The policy on adult basic education enables widespread learning opportunities to be provided for the acquisition of the foundational competencies of lifelong learning.

Vocational Training Fund

The Vocational Training Act of 1998 provided for the establishment of the Botswana Training Authority under the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and, inter alia, for a Vocational Training Fund 'for the purpose of reimbursing employers who have incurred training costs for apprentices or trainees' (Republic of Botswana, 1998, p.A.189). The Authority was set up in 2000 and is currently planning for the introduction of a training levy as a major contribution to the fund. Although many trainees will be young full-time learners, the Fund also provides an incentive for in-service vocational skills training of employees, which is a key form of work-related lifelong learning. It therefore exemplifies a policy that seeks to generate the necessary resources for the provision of lifelong learning opportunities as an investment in human resources.

From these examples, it may be concluded that Botswana has in place a number of policy tools for the promotion of lifelong learning. Some of these, such as Vision 2016, provide a broad, high-level rationale for the significance of lifelong learning for economic and social development. Others are specific and provide the basis for mobilising resources and undertaking direct implementation.

Policy Co-ordination Mechanisms

Lifelong learning opportunities are provided in a great diversity of settings, including the home, the community, and the workplace besides institutions of various kinds. Thus by definition lifelong learning is cross-sectoral by nature (involving the private sector and civil society organisations as well as the state) and, within the government sector, it is inter-ministerial. This conception was articulated by the National Commission on Education and an important recommendation in its Report was the establishment of a co-ordinating mechanism to achieve cohesion at the level of policy direction and strategic planning for adult learning. It proposed a specialist sub-committee of the National Council for Education for Out-of-School Education. This was established in 1999 with broad-based representation, and it has monitored the implementation of relevant recommendations within the Revised National Policy on Education. But it has remained within current policy parameters and it has not taken on the role of new policy development within the perspective of lifelong learning.

This role has been assumed by a new committee established by the Ministry of Education in November 2001, the Lifelong Learning and National Qualifications Framework Planning

Committee. This new Committee has the mandate 'To propose the development of appropriate policies and strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning', as well as to oversee the feasibility study on the National Qualifications Framework and initiate follow-up. Its composition is designed to provide an integrated approach to the promotion of lifelong learning by involving key stakeholders from different sectors, as shown below:

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education - Chairperson
Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs
Deputy Director, Directorate of Public Service Management
Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Botswana
Chief Executive Officer, Botswana Training Authority
Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Council
Chief Executive Officer, Botswana Examinations Council
Director, Botswana Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Manpower
Representative, Botswana Federation of Trade Unions
President, Botswana Association of Private Vocational Schools
Director, Department of Vocational Education and Training (Co-secretary)
Representative, University of Botswana (Co-secretary)

The Committee provides an important structure for promoting and co-ordinating new policy initiatives on lifelong learning. The membership listed above gives a concrete example of the kind of representation necessary for an effective policy co-ordination mechanism.

The Sub-regional Context

Botswana is a member state of the 14 member Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which seeks greater regional integration to promote the prosperity and stability of member countries. It is a signatory to the 1997 SADC Protocol on Education and Training (SADC, 1997) which aims to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to education and training policies and programmes within the sub-region. Article 9 of the Protocol is entitled 'Co-operation in Life-Long Education and Training'. The Protocol makes provision for seven Technical Committees. Several of these committees are relevant to the promotion of lifelong learning (such as the committees on Distance Education and on Certification and Accreditation), and one is specifically designated the Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training. This committee was formed in November 2001 and has met twice. It has prepared a Strategic Plan for 2002-2004 for submission to the Committee of Ministers in July 2002 which focuses on four issues, namely, a) policy, systems and provision; b) co-operation and collaboration; c) capacity building; and d) academic freedom and collaboration.

The policy and programme initiatives being undertaken through the structures of SADC are an important part of the context within which lifelong learning is being promoted inside Botswana. They support and facilitate national developments in lifelong learning, whilst

furthering important goals of regional integration to which Botswana subscribes. The Lifelong Learning and National Qualifications Framework Planning Committee intends to become the national contact point for Botswana's representatives on these committees, to ensure co-ordination of national and regional efforts.

The Role of International Agencies

In the period from Independence in 1966 to the mid-1990s, development assistance played an important role in supporting the expansion of Botswana's education and training system, including aspects of lifelong learning provision, such as support by UNICEF, Germany and Sweden to the National Literacy Programme. Since the mid-1990s, aid to Botswana has been significantly reduced because of Botswana's economic success and shifts in the policies of international donor agencies. However, some lifelong learning projects have attracted agency funding since then, such as British support from 1998 to 2002 for the establishment of the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning. A significant agreement has just been agreed with the European Union for support to the Human Resources Development Sector. A number of the projects within this agreement promote policy development for lifelong learning, such as the studies on a Human Resources Development Strategy and a National Qualifications Framework, and the assistance to develop a national e-Learning strategy. It is evident that targeted development assistance which is supportive of the country's own policy requirements can be effective in the promotion of lifelong learning. The recent agreement with the ILO for a feasibility study within SADC on a Southern African Qualifications Framework indicates that this principle also extends to the sub-regional level.

It is suggested that international agencies may provide useful development assistance at three levels by support to:

- a) International meetings, capacity-building, research and other activities that advance the international policy discourse on lifelong learning, enable exchange of information and experience, and build capacity for the implementation of lifelong learning (for example, through funding for CONFINTEA + 6, and for research and training activities by the UNESCO Institute for Education).
- b) Regional or sub-regional initiatives to develop lifelong learning policies and implementation capacity (for example, through technical assistance to the SADC Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training).
- c) National policy development and related initiatives for the promotion of lifelong learning (as in the example of European Union funding to Botswana's Human Resources Development Sector).

Conclusion

The paper has provided information and analysis on policy development for the promotion of lifelong learning in Botswana, thereby giving insight into an example of what policy options

can be followed in a developing country context. Considerable progress is being made at the policy level, and lifelong learning has the potential to provide a unifying vision for education and training and their role in national development. The case study shows that the major focus in Botswana is on lifelong learning with respect to adult learning, vocational training, and tertiary education. This suggests that an outstanding issue is that of the implications of the lifelong learning perspective for initial education, including early childhood care and education. This gives particular significance to the need for conceptual and policy development that links lifelong learning to the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF SOCIAL TRENDS

ADVANCED INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES	BOTSWANA
<p>1) Economic: Changes in the employment structure and in the nature of work have accompanied economic development. Increasingly, economic competitiveness in the globalised marketplace is seen to depend significantly on the skill and flexibility of the work-force and on human resource development. This generates demands for adult training and re-training programmes, employee development schemes, and lifelong learning conceived in terms of human capital formation.</p>	<p>1) Economic: There has been a major shift in the occupational structure with a massive expansion in formal sector employment and decline in subsistence agriculture. 71% of the labour force engaged in work for cash in 1991 compared to 7% in 1971. The continuing diversification of the economy and creation of employment opportunities are major development priorities. The effects of globalisation are increasingly being felt, making demands for enhanced productivity and competitiveness. These economic trends create pressures for new skills and work-related lifelong learning.</p>
<p>2) Technological: The pace of technological innovation has speeded up dramatically and the information revolution quickly renders obsolete the knowledge and skills gained in initial education. The inadequacy of initial education produces the need for learning opportunities to be available throughout life. Information and communication technology skills become new basic skills required in the knowledge economy and the information society.</p>	<p>2) Technological: Information and communication technologies are as yet quite restricted in geographical and income terms. However, access to new technologies is expanding rapidly. In the period 1995 to 2000, landline telephones per 1000 people rose from 41 to 93, mobile phones per 1000 people rose from 0 to 123, and personal computers per 1000 people rose from 10 to 37. This trend will undoubtedly create expanding lifelong learning needs.</p>
<p>3) Demographic: Life expectancy and health status have improved so that the proportion of the population over 65 is expanding and is in better health. The aged experience a longer post-retirement phase and make heightened educational demands, as shown in the expansion of Universities of the Third Age.</p>	<p>3) Demographic: Major changes have taken place. Life expectancy rose from 56 years in 1971 to 68 years in 1999. However, because of the rapid population growth, the proportion of the population over 65 remains small (5% in 1991). The aged have the lowest levels of schooling because of the limited opportunities in the colonial era and are unlikely to articulate a strong demand for further formal education. Nevertheless, because of their social roles they do have significant needs for non-formal learning.</p>

ADVANCED INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES	BOTSWANA
<p>4) Educational: The massive growth in primary, secondary and tertiary education has created a large population which has the motivation and capability to continue with their education. There is an increasing social demand for continuing education opportunities.</p>	<p>4) Educational: There has been an enormous expansion of all levels of initial education since Independence. For example, the proportion of the eligible age group enrolled in primary school had reached 98% in 1997, whilst the proportion of the population over 15 who are literate rose from 40% in 1971 to 77% in 2000. This increase in education levels already creates a significant social demand for lifelong learning.</p>
<p>5) Cultural: Lifestyles and recreational pursuits have changed as the use of leisure time becomes more important, often manifested in new forms of learning. In general, the development of an affluent consumer culture has encouraged the supply of lifelong learning in the marketplace of personal services and self-development activities on sale to individual consumers, epitomised by the increased marketing of open learning.</p>	<p>5) Cultural: The urban population as a percentage of the total grew from 9% in 1971 to 50% in 2000. Annual per capita GDP grew from US\$60 in 1966 to US\$3650 in 2000. These trends contribute to major changes in ways of living and in consumption patterns. The rapid expansion in urban areas of private colleges and institutes, and of leisure courses, indicates a growing marketplace for certain forms of lifelong learning.</p>
<p>6) Political: Some major political parties have promoted social goals of equal opportunity which include the provision of second chance education for adults. The new forms of political activism linked to social movements for the environment, women's empowerment, peace, the rights of the disabled, ethnic identity and so forth create demands for new learning through popular education. The concept of active citizenship and the goal of increased social inclusion create a political will to extend lifelong learning opportunities to all sectors of the population.</p>	<p>6) Political: The party which has ruled Botswana since Independence has had a social welfare ideology which has generated adult education programmes such as the National Literacy Programme. The rapid expansion of the organisations of civil society since the mid-1980s has been accompanied by many educational activities for adults. The national Vision 2016 document envisages a more equitable society and specifically promotes continued educational opportunities for all. Its goal of an open, democratic and accountable nation relies on well-informed and active citizens, knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities, and equipped with skills of participation.</p>

Source of data on Botswana: Central Statistics Office, 1972 and 1974; Edge and Lekorwe, 1998; Government of Botswana and United Nations Development Programme, 2000; World Bank, 2001 and 2002.

[Note: This table updates the one presented in Youngman (2001).]