

POTENTIALS FOR THE BOTSWANA BASIC EDUCATION: LESSONS FROM SHANGHAI BASIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

China has intensified its relationship with African countries through the China-Africa Universities 20 + 20 Cooperation Plan established in Egypt in 2011. A collaboration between University of Botswana (UB) and Shanghai Normal University (SHNU) was established as a result. Given the challenges that Basic Education in Botswana is faced with, Six Botswana teachers (four primary and two junior secondary) from selected schools and two UB academics visited SHNU on a benchmarking exercise and research collaboration on why Shanghai schools were excelling in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). For its methodology, a qualitative approach to data collection was adopted to investigate the Shanghai secret to teaching and learning. Data collection was done through the Botswana team engaging in focus group discussions with teachers, SHNU academics, education officers and policy makers. Classroom observations were also conducted on education innovations, actual teaching and learning in different schools ranging from kindergarten to high school. The findings revealed a variety of strategies contributing to Shanghai education excellence ranging from the use of teacher research groups, discipline, good classroom management practices, peer assessment and team planning. This paper recommends that if these strategies could be adopted and /or adapted in local schools in Botswana, academic performance could be improved.

Keywords: Botswana; China; academic performance; discipline; class observation and assessment.

Introduction

Since independence, and based on its steady political environment, good governance and rich diamond resources, Botswana has experienced rapid economic development. On the basis of this growth and as an attempt to provide strong human resource base, the Botswana government put education as one of its top development priority areas. As early as 1981, the admission rate for Botswana primary schools was already as high as 90.86%. Since 1987 the admission rate has remained high ranging between 90.86% and 100% whereas the admission

rate of junior secondary schools has been at 72.25% and continues to grow steadily (MoE&SD, 2015). Botswana is, therefore, one of the most advanced countries in the field of basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa. In January, 2015, Botswana issued the National Education For All (EFA) Review Report, which indicates that the country was able to perform generally well in a majority of the goals as compared to other sub-Saharan countries despite poor performance in Goal 1...and Goal 3...(MoE&SD, 2015).

A decline in the quality of Botswana's basic education is typical of Southern Africa's basic education systems. For example, as reported by the Department of Education (2009) of South Africa, during 2008 national examinations, the number of schools with a pass rate of less than 60% was half of the total number of schools. The number of schools with a pass rate between 40% and 59% was reported as 23% of the total number of schools while 9% of the schools registered the pass rate lower than 19% (Department of Education, 2009). This decline in the quality of education has therefore become a focus of public scrutiny and interest as well as their governments in all Southern African countries. In the *Sunday Standard* newspaper of 6th, August, 2012, Dr Sereetsi, Director of Research Policy Development at the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) is reported as emphasising, at the 30th conference of the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa, that the decline of education pass rate is a regional issue, which calls for a systematic approach to research for more feasible solutions (Dlamini, 2012).

Shanghai in China, unlike Southern African developing countries, has witnessed a sound development of quality basic education and accumulated rich experience during the process of implementing Education for All (EFA) and The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). When Shanghai schools topped the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) global rankings for scholastic achievement in 2009, there were some who thought something must be amiss as it was Shanghai's first year of participation in the study, and it was thought maybe something was wrong with the numbers. Then, in 2012, it happened again, Shanghai students topped the charts, and the world started to take notice. Writing on the Shanghai secret Tucker (2013) notes that what Tom found about Shanghai excellence is not a secret "deep commitment to teacher training, peer learning, constant professional development, a deep involvement of parents in their children's learning, an insistence by the school leadership on the highest standards and a culture that prizes education and respects teachers" are the secret of the Shanghai success.

As the only local teachers' university in Shanghai, Shanghai Normal University (SHNU) provides more than 80% of teachers in primary and junior schools in Shanghai and therefore deserves the credit for the outstanding performance of basic education in Shanghai. With Shanghai's outstanding performance, it has gained reputation all over the world. For instance, United Kingdom (UK) and Australia have been reported by some interviewees of this study as having sent more than 200 mathematics teachers to receive training at SHNU sponsored by their respective ministries of education. In one of the interviews, it was pointed out that UK has also invited 30 Chinese mathematics teachers to teach in UK schools so that more of its teachers could benefit on a multiplier effect onsite. As Shanghai education system is considered a model for improving the academic achievement in many countries, developed and developing, a team of researchers from Botswana initiated a systematic plan to improve the performance in basic education through capacity building focusing on teachers with the support of stakeholders in both Botswana and Shanghai, China. This was planned in a few selected schools. It is hoped that through two to three years' implementation and assessment of this experimental plan a good solution to improve student performance through leveraging teachers' professional skills may be found. This solution would therefore be applied to other schools in order to make the whole education system change for the better.

Statement of the Problem.

In recent years basic education in Botswana has faced various challenges. At a Botswana Sector of Educators' Trade Union (BOSETU) conference held at Majestic hotel in Palapye on 25th August 2017, its president Mr Modukanele outlined a number of challenges that have engulfed Botswana's basic education such as delapidated infrastructure, inadequate furniture, large school enrolments, lack of inservice training in schools, lack of involvement of teachers in curriculum development, students' indiscipline and disparities between assessment and the taught curriculum. Among a myriad of such challenges, the most outstanding one since 2007 is the decline in pass rates of Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) and Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) which decline increases year by year. This state of affairs has raised a lot of public concern. Since SHNU has a close relationship with the University of Botswana (UB) under the 20+20 cooperation plan, this project, through close collaboration with UB experts, tried to identify the challenges that Botswana's basic education faces. It is against this backdrop that Botswana's education system can understudy the Shanghai education model to draw lessons from with regards to its achievements in basic education, in order to improve on its policies and practices that can enhance performance in basic education.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was used for this investigation as Gay, Mills & Airasian (2011) point out that, "qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth understanding about the way things are and how the participants in the context perceive them" (p.12). Further more, Wiersma & Jurs (2005) substantiate that "qualitative research is done for the purpose of understanding social phenomena and it is done to determine relationships, effects and causes" (p.14). Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010) further describe the purpose of qualitative approach by saying "*the goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data*" (p.82). Sprinthall, Schmutte & Siros (1991) concur to this as they say, "*descriptions are holistic, yet detailed and may lead to generalization of theory*" (p.12). Furthermore, qualitative research follows the naturalist paradigm that research should be conducted in the natural setting and meanings derived from it should be specific (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). In qualitative research, reality is socially constructed, focuses on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in the natural setting and is based on the notion of context, sensitivity, the belief that the particular physical and social environment has a great bearing on human behavior (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010; Walton, 2008; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

The above methodological literature points to getting deep into the views of the participants, which in this case are the Shanghai education stakeholders on how they conduct their education system. The research team had to understand the practical phenomenon of teaching in the schools as demonstrated by the teachers, thus observation of classes. The reasearch team had also to engage in intense discussions with the participants, who are teachers, school leadership, SHNU teacher trainers, policy makers and other professionals in education , thus informal indepth interviews were used to collect data. The unsolicited documents were also made available to the researchers on literature relating to what makes Shanghai education system excel. The data collection was characterised by lots of open ended interactions which led to social construction of meanings derived from natural school settings in a holistic manner.

As the purpose of this study was to investigate the teaching approaches and learning environments of schools in Shanghai the qualitative approach was regarded as the most appropriate to dig deeper in order to establish why the Chinese schools in Shanghai were performing well including in PISA examinations. The situation needed the researchers to interact with all stakeholders on site.

Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of students and teachers from selected schools in Shanghai, China. Lecturers and student teachers from SHNU were also part of the study population. SHNU, a collaborating institution with UB was targeted because it trains school teachers and therefore the researchers believe that Botswana teacher training might benefit from this experience of teacher training and school practices in Chinese schools. The researchers chose teachers, students and lecturers because they are the key drivers of pupil's academic performance, therefore, in a better position to showcase the strategies they use to improve learners' academic performance. Learners were included in the sample so as to observe their response on what is imparted to them. The purposive sampling procedure was used by selecting schools which were used by the SHNU as teacher training practice schools and therefore performing exceptionally well.

Data Sources

For data collection interviews and observations were utilized. The benefits of using these approaches include richness of data and deeper insight into the phenomena under study. The combination of interviews and observations from the field along with reviews of relevant documents increases the likelihood that the phenomenon under study is understood from various angles and various ways of knowing (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001). The researchers visited classrooms and observed teachers teaching and students participating. They also observed teachers in seminars discussing feedback from lessons. Interviews were utilized to enable the phenomena under investigation to be explored in breadth and depth getting feedback in a short time (Ainsworth, 2009). The interviews worked well as the interviewers had already identified a number of aspects they wanted to address emanating from observations.

Procedures

A team of two UB academics and six basic education school teachers (two from junior secondary and 4 from primary schools) visited Shanghai and conducted the study for a total of seven days in 2015. A second visit took place in 2016 by two UB academics and a director from Ministry of Basic Education, Botswana. The teams were each joined by their counterparts from Shanghai Normal University one of whom was an interpreter. The interpreter enabled both teams, the UB and the SHNU teams to understand each other and most importantly to communicate with the sampled respondents at the Shanghai schools. Data collection involved interviews with the school management, teachers and education officers. Data were also collected through observation of classes in session. Observations also included moving around to see the physical school environment including buildings, classroom set-ups, learner appearances, office spaces, school grounds, conducting of assembly as well as the flag raising ceremony. Lectures were also presented by professionals and/or academics for the research team on Shanghai education system. As this study dealt with people from different cultural backgrounds, for ethical reasons, the

researchers relied on the China collaborating team for guidance to avoid cultural conflicts and violating of any any Chinese rules, regulations and/or cultural practices .

Data Analysis

Since the study was qualitative in approach, themes were deduced and constructed as a way of fully interpreting what came out of the interviews, lectures and observations. With the general intention of wanting to find out what made Shanghai excel, and from the literature on what makes school perform, there were some preliminary ideas on the fact that for example, the school plant as well as technology could be some of the factors. While some of the themes were constructed beforehand, the exercise ensured that the researchers remained as open minded as possible to allow for factors that could emerge. As interesting and most relevant issues emerged, the researchers had an opportunity to probe further and even delve more into these areas as they wanted to examine them in more detail. The researchers continued to conduct debriefing exercises in order to have a collective understanding of the phenomena at hand. This allowed them to unpack some of the salient issues that needed further interrogation and clarification. Therefore, other themes were constructed afterwards to cater for unstructured data. On another level of analysis was the interpretation which was concerned with implications of the responses for Botswana's education system.

Findings, Discussions and Conclusions

During the visit to China in September , 2015 and April, 2016; the following were observed as making the Shanghai Education system excel:

School Infrastructure

School infrastructure is very important in the teaching and learning process. The school buildings in Shanghai were found impressive, intact and beautiful. They were well maintained with no falling ceilings and broken windows as is generally the case in some Botswana schools. The classes are well swept. The furniture was also well kept with no broken chairs found in Botswana schools. The learning environment was conducive to students' learning. The grounds of school visited were well kept with no papers scattered all over the school grounds. The grounds were spacious enough to accommodate the large numbers of students as no play and all work makes Jack a dull boy is true. It was revealed through interactions with school staff that there are specific workers responsible for ensuring that the school grounds are kept intact with lots of ornamental plants.

Use of ICT in the Schools

The schools visited had robust ICT infrastructure. ICT is seriously infused as part of learning and teaching an element which is seriously wanting in Botswana schools. For instance, at the start of some classes, there are ice breakers led by some students some of which use the radio, the TV, the computer. The activities performed come through the smart boards and the students use pictorial demonstrations through the use of these smart boards, videos etc. In some cases the walls of the classrooms are computers. Students are encouraged to use their mobile phones as learning tools in class. The contrary is the case in Botswana where children are forbidden to use or let alone bring cellular phones to schools.

Teacher Qualifications

In order to improve the quality and calibre of its teaching force, in 2012, the Implementation Plan for Pilot Reforms on the Qualification Examination for Teachers in Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary Schools in Shanghai was formulated by the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. The plan stipulated that all candidates who wanted to teach

... from kindergarten to senior secondary school, must undergo a selection certificate examinations, which consist of both a written test and an interview. The written exam usually includes two or three tests covering pedagogy, teaching methods for a particular subject, and psychology, each lasting 120 minutes. The 20-minute interview includes a structured interview protocol along with a teaching-scene simulation (Educhina 2012:1).

From the interviews, it was established that the process is intended to select prospective teachers on the basis of the right attitude and aptitude.

In Botswana to become a teacher is just a matter of someone looking for a job, thus responding to an advert for teacher training and getting enrolled if they meet the entry points of Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education. There are no pre-tests for both aptitude and attitude of a prospective teacher.

As is shown in the global literature, the quality of an education system reflects the quality of the teaching force. The teacher is at the core of any school system. In the Shanghai education system, the entry qualification for all teachers was found to be a degree. They were found to be specialists in the subjects they teach. Teaching in China is a very attractive career. Every teacher teaches one subject in which they specialized. The contrary is the case in Botswana where teachers teach all seven subjects as there is no specialisation especially at primary schools, the foundation of education. Teaching is usually considered by many as a last resort and is not the most attractive in terms of remunerations.

Professional Development

From interviews with some teachers and school heads, the researchers established that there is intensive professional development. For instance it was gathered from the interviews and lectures that after qualifying, a newly qualified teacher is assigned a mentor for three terms to observe teaching and other teaching related activities. After one year in the service, the teacher is assigned to two mentors, one for pedagogy and the other for class management. This information was buttressed by Zhang, Ding, & Xu (2016:3) who emphasise that:

in-service training in Shanghai is the glue that holds the system together. Teachers enter the profession as apprentices with a full-year induction before they are certified as teachers. [Those who are at the senior teacher rank would have] received specialized training in mentoring. Mentors have release time from teaching for this work. Mentors are evaluated on their work as a mentor in addition to participating in the evaluation of new teachers.

It was further established that inservice training is also provided by Universities and Colleges and the inservice teachers put a lot of effort into their professional training spending their weekends and summer holidays in the courses (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2016).

It is evident that teacher professional development is highly regarded in the education system of Shanghai. Unlike in many countries globally, in Shanghai, teaching is viewed as a long-term professional career. Zhang, Ding, & Xu (2016:10) posits that in contrast to systems that suffer from pervasive teacher attrition,

...Shanghai teachers expect that they will devote 30 to 40 years to the profession. Therefore they need ongoing professional development, recognition of their achievements and their devotion to the cause of teaching. ... To achieve these goals of making teachers feel supported, recognized, and valued, Shanghai created a career ladder system for professional development. It is a comprehensive career framework that spans entry level to senior classroom teachers as well as school principals.

This is supported by Liang quoted by World Bank (2016:1) who highlights that

one of the most impressive aspects of Shanghai's education system is the way it grooms, supports, and manages teachers, who are central to any effort to raise the education quality in schools. The reason the teaching profession is regarded with a lot of respect in Shanghai is not just because teachers earn reasonable and stable salaries—it is also because of how well they teach. They are true professionals.

Another strategy used to strengthen the teaching force was found to be benchmarking with international institutions. For instance, during the team's last visit to Shanghai, 30 Chinese teachers were reported to be in an exchange programme in the United Kingdom for benchmarking purposes. It was also noted that some benchmarking is also done with education systems such as that of Israel who the Chinese education system revere very much. Yet another inservice strategy to enhance the teacher quality was reported as holding of seminars by teachers who teach the same subject, stream or class to discuss teaching styles, challenges and strategies to address these challenges.

Action Research

From interviews and lecturers, it was noted that Action Research is a must for all school teachers at all levels of the education system, that is, primary, junior secondary and senior. As a result, research informs teaching. Teacher research teams are established in all schools for collaboration and support purposes, all intended to facilitate teaching. All schools work closely with tertiary institutions in their their respective areas. Teachers, it was reported, are expected to publish their research as promotional prospects are tied to research and publications as well. School based research, it was found out that, has been institutionalized and there is a lot of collaboration among colleagues. One can only become a senior teacher after publishing one's research work.

The interviews and lecture information on research is corroborated by Zhang, Ding, & Xu (2016:17) who point out that

Action research has become a crucial part of Shanghai's schools. A survey of principals found that almost all schools have drafted regulations about the conduct of educational research, supported teacher's participation or applications for research projects, set up research teams on teaching various subjects included teacher's research performance in their performance evaluations, and/or allocated funds for the research.

Career Progression

It was found out that the Shanghai education has a career ladder system. All teachers start as Junior Teachers, proceed to Senior Teachers, Special teachers, Mentor Teachers, and then Professor Grade Teachers. The career ladder is an incentive because for one to be promoted, they have to perform well in both research and teaching. Teachers are expected to publish their work to be promoted through various ranks mentioned above.

Career Ladder for Primary and Secondary School Principals

The career ladder does not only apply to teachers, but school leadership as well. According to Zhang, Ding & Xu (2016) there is a career ladder for principals of primary and secondary schools which was established in 1995 and is made up of five levels of 12 grades, with a Master Principal at the highest level. Under normal circumstances, a principal typically spends about three years at each grade for about three years, but excellent performance means he or she can be promoted one grade band a year. A high Master Principal title honors outstanding first-level principals. By implication, there is a pool of principals from which to choose and the promotion is based on merit and performance, thus a non performer is clearly vetted out such that a mistake can hardly be made of promotion of those who do not deserve. This is therefore critical for preserving the dignity and integrity of school leadership.

The contrary is the case in Botswana where, when there is an opening of a principal's position, an advert is sent out and those who can speak very well at the interviews and of course also having recommendations from their immediate supervisors get it. This does not seem to be a rigorous promotion process. There are not systematically profiled and articulated credentials of prospective school heads. There are no succession plans on school leadership as in prior preparation of potential school heads. Candidate only starting preparing for their interviews when they have been shortlisted. Preparation by a candidate for an interview within a short period of time may not necessarily reflect what the particular candidate may be in terms of their profile prior to responding to an advert or what they are capable of as a potential school leader. Therefore one feels there is a lot that the Botswana education system can learn from the Shanghai education system practice of selecting school heads. A clear career ladder in Botswana for school leadership to which many may aspire, could serve as an incentive for hard work.

One of the findings from this study is that schools reflect the Communist Party principles and authority. In every school there is a Party Secretary who is more powerful than the principal in terms of authority. The purpose, it was learnt, is to ensure that the Communist Party's ideals are not compromised. The Principals are empowered to run the schools and they enforce discipline even among teachers. It has to be noted however that in Botswana schools, there is no such an arrangement.

Monthly Themes and Teacher Professional Development

According to the World Bank Group (2016) teachers in Shanghai spend about a third of their time teaching in class and the rest in preparing lessons, grading homework, observing and mentoring other teachers and engaging in other forms of professional development. They are also evaluated systematically, required to go through a year of probation, rewarded for good performance, have opportunities to move up the ladder based on merit, and are led by principals who are themselves instructional leaders. Teaching is driven by monthly themes. For instance, if the monthly theme is 'Water' all schools in the Shanghai education district will be addressing the same. One school may deal with water conservation while another deals with building of dams and so on. By implication, the thematic approach makes learning very real as it relates to daily living and makes learners link what they learn with the realities of life because such a theme is related to every subject being taught, be it Mathematics, English, Chinese, Science and so forth. One must note that many a time, learners in Botswana are taught concepts with little or no linkage to the learner's real life experiences and the tendency is to memorise rather than internalise meanings. As noted by West (2011), such practice can have crippling effect on a learner's ability to think critically, be analytical and creative thus rendering such future leaders to be poor decision makers. It is noted that teaching in Shanghai tends to approach education from the 21st century concepts. The thematic

approach makes education very meaningful and an approach of this kind would no doubt benefit the education system in Botswana. Professional development as indicated above will be a precursor to such an approach because unless teachers are trained in the thematic approach, not much can be expected from them. A question of re-tooling of the teachers as well as a re-focussing of the teacher training programs will be imperative and benchmarking with Shanghai could be a good option.

Implications of the findings for Botswana Basic Education System

The study has implications for the education system of Botswana. For instance, while China is doing well in ICT, much cannot be said about Botswana. The Government of Botswana has, however, joined the global bandwagon by adopting the use of technology into all the sectors of its economy. The Government created a conducive environment by developing a National Technology Policy called *Maitlamo* to give guidance to its citizens in the area of technological advancement. *Maitlamo* is an ICT policy that is intended to provide Botswana with a clear and compelling roadmap to drive social, economic, cultural and political transformation through the effective and efficient use of information and communication technology (Republic of Botswana, 2007).

Some of the aims of the policy that are relevant to education are as follows:

- All teachers to receive ICT training by December 31, 2010
- ICT content and curriculum development available at all levels of the Education system by December 31, 2010
- A recommendation that a 1:7 computer to student ratio be introduced into all schools by December 31, 2012.

Through the *Maitlamo* Policy, a number of schools were provided with computers for use by members of staff and students. Tertiary institutions are tasked with training pre-service and in-service teachers in ICT. For instance, Colleges of Education have a course in Communications and Study Skills (C.S.S) which is aimed at equipping teachers with computer literacy skills. The University of Botswana offers General Education courses such as GEC 121 and GEC 122 which provide teachers with computer awareness skills. There is also a course in the University of Botswana EDT 310 (Educational Technology) that further promotes computer literacy among student teachers. However, there are some implementation challenges such as teacher illiteracy on technology, technophobia and lack of internet facilities in schools where trained teachers are subsequently posted to. In some instances, some schools are outside the national power grid-line; as such whatever limited computers that may be given to a school are found stacked and covered away in the school head's office without being used.

Much as there are ICT courses in tertiary institutions, some lecturers do not utilize the infrastructure available to empower the students as most of them (lecturers) do not even use this ICT. This is an experience that the authors of this paper have as part of the tertiary institutions. The collaboration through Education in Botswana and Shanghai in particular, through the Botswana-China project may help the objective of teacher capacity building in ICT through comprehensive teacher professional development which has been found to be a viable venture in the Shanghai education system.

Teacher professional development in Shanghai was found to be very systematic and well structured. It is embedded in the career development of a teacher which practice is very

wanting in the Botswana education system. For instance, while in Shanghai mentors play a significant role in teacher professional development because of their training and expertise in specialized and specific areas; this is not the case in Botswana. Such mentor teachers undergo training in the art of mentoring and this is not the situation in Botswana where those considered mentors do it by virtue of having been so designated but not so trained. This view is elucidated in a study on professional development of Physical Education teachers in Botswana, where Shehu (2009) notes that in Botswana there are some occasional talk-shops rather than workshops which are for most part conducted by poor instructors with no internal or external coaching or mentoring. Shehu further realised that some of the workshops conducted would necessarily not be relevant to curriculum. By implication, this irrelevance may point to lack of defined direction to which professional development of teachers should take in order to make a positive impact in academic performance. Lessons from Shanghai are, therefore, critical in this case.

One of the positives that was observed in Shanghai education system is the integration of culture in education. This is presented in the form of a 4 + 8 model where four signify the four traditional cultures and the eight modern techniques as the Shanghai secrets for success. Some of these are discussed below.

With regards Reverence of Chinese culture, there is high expectation of respect for culture in education with many Chinese stories and legends used, thus making education friendly and interesting to the learner as it is not detached from the Chinese culture. The mother tongue is used in schools as a medium of instruction and Chinese aspects of culture such as the flag raising ceremony are practiced. Yet another orientation of Shanghai education with respect to culture is a strong believe in diligence, perseverance and hard work which are typical of Chineseculture. These attributes as catalysts for change of the individual and the family as far as the Chineseculture is concerned. This is no doubt a motivation for every learner thus leading to good academic performance.

Respect for teachers in the society draws from teacher Confucius legendary as that focused on social teachings, which deal with proper behaviour of the individual in society thus recognising that every social being belongs to a society and ought to pay allegiance to it and abide by its norms and standards. The second focus of Confucius teachings dealt with what he referred to as political teachings, which deal with the art of governance and the proper relationship of the leader and the led. He viewed education as central to achieving proper conduct within any given society and its government.

Contrary to what happens in Shanghai schools which draw a lot from the Chinese culture and the Confucius teachings, indiscipline in Botswana schools is a cause for concern particularly where as noted in Garegae (2007) teachers feel disempowered because the measures of discipline are removed from their cultural practices making children take advantage of that and undermining the authority of teachers. Therefore where learners display acts of indiscipline, it normally becomes difficult for teaching and learning to take place. The adage of the Confucius teachings of proper relationship between the ruler and the ruled applies to a school situation with respect to relationship of respect between the teacher and the learner or between the teacher and school leader. Further to the teachings of Confucius is that although the subordinate members of a relationship are required to be obedient, their obedience is not absolute. Even the superior member of the relationship needs to show respect to the junior. A reciprocal relational respect is behind Confucius concept between the ruler and the ruled, the teacher and the taught the elder and the youth.

Where there is disrespect between the teacher and the taught, the leader and the led, there is a high likelihood of poor governance, poor teaching and poor learning, hence a possible reason for poor academic results in Botswana schools which are inundated with cases of indiscipline. Reverting to culturally relevant pedagogies could probably be one of the important ingredients of education which could provide a leeway to better education. This is because, even though not clearly documented, the Botswana culture is characterised by values of respect for age, reverence of wisdom and obedience. In actual fact, the very values that are propounded by the Confucius legendary values of humanity are typical of the traditional Botswana culture except that these are no longer adhered to under the pretext of modernisation. The current education system ignores that students bring with them to school a cultural milieu which is important to their learning processes. Lessons could probably be learnt from Shanghai especially with regards the modalities of infusing these cultural beliefs into the Botswana modern education system. Botswana has the five national principles which must of necessity find their way into the curriculum. The experiences of Shanghai of infusing these values into the curriculum to make them realised by the learner would go a long way into rescuing the decaying disciplinary situation in Botswana. Lessons from Shanghai provide a potential for Botswana education system.

Some of the eight modern techniques regarded as the Shanghai secrets for success which Botswana could learn from also relate to emphasis on open door policy as regards both the education governance as well as teacher accessibility to the learners. The Shanghai education system believes in benchmarking with other international systems such as the Israel education system. Yet another factor regarded as leading to excellence in the Shanghai education system has to do with frequent education reviews which happen in less than 10 years of the previous one. This is some activity that Botswana could learn from as the economic, social and political landscapes locally and globally continuously change and as long as these are dependent on the education system, the education systems must be reviewed as frequently as possible. It is observed that Botswana takes ages before the education review can take place. So far, since Independence in 1966, there has been two major reviews, the 1976 and the 1993 and this is 18 years apart. Botswana can learn something from the Chinese practice of continually reviewing the education system to match with the changing educational landscape and current demands as well as drawing from its cultural practices.

Botswana's curriculum is centralised and does not take cognisance of the different social and/or education contexts. While Shanghai has a common national curriculum, it also provides for school based and project based or community based curriculum. The Shanghai curriculum arrangement does recognise the need for uniformity in education but also appreciates and recognises as well as addresses the uniqueness of needs of schools and localities which speaks to questions of relevance of curriculum. As a way of improving on the Botswana education system, the secrets of Shanghai success can be considered and through the collaboration plan, Botswana could benchmark with the Shanghai system and experiences.

As noted in the findings, teacher professional development with attention paid to contributions teachers make towards the system is treated as a critical component of the teacher career development. From the findings of the study, it is noted that in 2013, a career ladder was developed comprising of Junior teacher, Senior teacher, Special teacher, Mentor teacher and Professor grade teacher levels. It was found out that from this structured teacher development, teacher profiles are developed and their promotion from one level to the other is

very systematic and well informed based on concrete performance recorded over time. Botswana has an opportunity to benchmark on this properly structured way of teacher professional development so that the right personnel is appointed to the right positions for better performance. The outcry on poor academic performance in school is no doubt a result of multiple flaws in the Botswana system amongst which is the possible wrong placement, undefined teacher career ladder coupled with unsatisfactory incentives.

Yet other modern secret for good performance in Shanghai schools relate to improving hardware and conditions of schools in poor areas, tackling low academic performance in various ways eg empowering management, moving teachers around and transforming of local education levy from rich districts to poor ones. Issues of equity are therefore taken very seriously and concretely. Botswana has a policy on equity in the distribution of educational resources. What is a challenge is the actual implementation of such a policy. As benchmarking is one thing that both Botswana and Shanghai believe in, it plays itself very well as an opportunity for Botswana to benchmark with the best, which is Shanghai education system, which in the expression of the World Bank, (2016:1) “translates smart education policies into excellent learning results.”

Teacher Research Groups (TRG) is a concept in Shanghai education system encouraging research-led teaching by primary and secondary teachers. This concept is actually put in practice and also contributes to the definition of the teacher career ladder in that to be a super teacher or an outstanding teacher, one has to research and even publish their work. The culture of research in Botswana school teachers' fraternity is still at its infancy. Teaching is not informed by research, instead, there is too much reliance on text books and old notes, or yellow notes. It must be appreciated however, that, the Botswana Educational Research Association (BERA) is trying to instill a culture of research amongst teachers as the Ministry of Basic Education (MoBE) engages it in conducting action research workshops for basic education teachers. There is however, still a lot of apprehension and fear of research by most teachers. This is not only a challenge for teachers but even for the whole system itself. To this extent, benchmarking on the actual modalities of encouraging teacher research is important. Significant to this is provision of funding for research even at school level so that the concept of teacher research groups can be implemented with mentorship provided by the research institutions such as BERA and the University of Botswana.

There are methodological implications that can be drawn from this project with regards to conducting research. Most research studies in Botswana have tended to utilize the quantitative more than the qualitative approach, the former with predetermined variables to be either verified or disconfirmed by the investigator. These variables mainly come in the form of a close ended questionnaires. The current research team adopted the qualitative approach, thus visiting Shanghai China, with an open mind as dictated by the holistic nature of the qualitative method. The study adopted the interpretivist approach in order to understand the subjective meanings of the Shanghai education stakeholders (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The open mindedness allowed many issues which the researchers may otherwise, not have unravelled, had they come with predetermined variables of study. Therefore, the motives for doing things such as including cultural practices in education and the raising of the Chinese flag at assembly for instance as a sign of instilling patriotism in learners, are some of the variables that the team would have not unravelled had they adopted the predetermined variables approach through a close ended questionnaire.

Yet another advantage derived from this methodological approach was the ability for the Botswana team to have an opportunity to interview the respondents on the basis of issues that were emerging from the interactions, which issues had not been pre-planned for as they were not thought of initially.

Conclusion

The strength of the the interpretivist paradigm of approaching situations from a phenomenological stance cannot be underestimated in this respect. Studying structures or consciousness as experienced from the first person point of view (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (2013) is very important for the meaningfulness of information and its utility. The revelations through this research approach should be a lesson to researchers in the Botswana context if the subjective meanings of events must be captured through the eye of the participant. A collaborative approach was adopted as the team moved around with colleagues from Shanghai who knew and understood the local situation. This helped in unearthing some local nuances through their own language which the foreigners (Botswana) could probably not have been able to. Insiders, that is the respondents, through interaction in their local vernacular with people of their own kind (the Chinese research collaborators), revealed that which they would probably not have been able to, under normal quantitative circumstances with strangers from Botswana. The interpretation by the Shanghai education stakeholders on how they go about their education system, why they do things the way they do, was very meaningful and such interpretations influence their actions. One can draw from a methodological point of view that probably the reason why research does not seem to be making an impact in the Botswana education system is the general methodological approaches which are mainly quantitative in nature. It is probably time to be pragmatic in our research approaches in order to maximise the impact of research. There is definitely a lot that can be learned from Shanghai Education approach by the Botswana education system.

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