

CAREER INTERESTS AND INSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCES OF STUDENTS IN BOTSWANA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This paper surveys higher education career interests and institutional preferences of some senior secondary school students. It also discusses students' views about the funding of their tertiary education. The research design is both quantitative and qualitative. A questionnaire that combines the two approaches was used to collect data from a representative sample of 101 students from 27 senior secondary schools in Botswana. The findings of the paper are in line with global trends. The career interests of students in Botswana, as elsewhere, cluster around few high-status courses, especially those in the health sciences, business, law, and engineering. Similarly, their institutional preferences are mainly public, government-owned schools that are well-resourced, reputable, and recognised internationally. Most of the students indicate that they require financial assistance to pursue their studies. However, while financial aid is available to all, the Government of Botswana disproportionately distributes it to students whose career interests would help engender economic development.

Keywords: Botswana, career interests, government sponsorship, institutional preferences, tertiary education

1.0 Introduction

The tertiary education landscape in Botswana, an upper-middle income economy with an estimated population of 2,417,596 as at 2023 (Botswana-The World Factbook (cia.gov), has changed tremendously in the last two decades. One of the more visible changes has been the proliferation of government and private tertiary educational institutions in the country¹. The most obvious consequence of this proliferation is that government-owned institutions such as the University of Botswana (UB), the Botswana Accountancy College (BAC), and the Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) (formerly Botswana College of Agriculture), hitherto the main providers of tertiary education in the country, appear to have

¹ Some of the new tertiary institutions are Baisago University, Botho University, Botswana Open University (formerly BOCODOL), Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (formerly Botswana College of Agriculture), Botswana International University of Science and Technology, International Aviation School – Botswana, and Limkokwing University of Creative Technology.

lost their dominance. Senior secondary school students across Botswana now have more choices in terms of their institutional preferences and career choices.

In the past, many qualified senior secondary school students found it difficult to gain admission into UB and its (most sought-after) programmes. This was especially so for prospective students with low admission points.² The proliferation of tertiary education institutions has therefore opened the admission process into those courses that had been restricted to very few high performing students. In other words, students can now access some of the restricted programmes in institutions other than UB, BAC and BUAN.

In addition to the proliferation of institutions, there are now other factors influencing the career choices of students and the institutions in which they wish to pursue their career goals. One of the most important is the accreditation of educational programmes by the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA), established through the BQA Act of 2013. The main objective of the Authority is to “provide for and maintain a national credit and qualifications framework and to co-ordinate the education, training and skills development quality assurance system” for the Botswana nation (BQA Act, 2013, p. A.362). In other words, prospective students are constrained to apply for tertiary admission into programmes approved by the BQA only. The second important factor is the inclusion of BQA approved programmes in the top occupations in high demand in Botswana (Human Resource Development Council (HDRC) (HDRC, 2016). HDRC “provides ... policy advice on” and “co-ordinates and promotes the implementation of” all matters of national human resource development (and strategy) (p. 1). It also prepares “the national human resource development plan and plans” (p. 1) and advises on “tertiary education financing and workplace learning” (p. 1). It should be noted that the Botswana government through the Department of Tertiary Education Financing (DTEF) gives sponsorship priority to occupations that are in high demand. Funding, however, is generally available for all programmes although DTEF determines the extent to which particular programmes are funded. In view of the foregoing, it seems necessary to survey career interests and institutional preferences of senior secondary school students and to examine some of the factors at play in the choices they make in the context of the now expanded tertiary education landscape in Botswana as well as the BQA and HRDC national developmental activities. Specifically, the objectives of this paper are to determine the programmes the students prefer, to specify the tertiary institutions in which they wish to study and to examine the role funding plays regarding both objectives.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature on career choices and tertiary institutional preferences of secondary school students is extensive. The accent has been on factors that affect such choices and preferences. The factors include, in no particular order, availability of programmes, school reputation, size and location of schools, counsellor and parent recommendations, students’ own

² Admission into tertiary institutions in Botswana is based on a point system calculated according to the performance of prospective students in the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent Ordinary level qualification in six subjects relevant to their proposed programmes. The minimum score is 34 points while the maximum is 48. Advanced level qualifications may improve students’ chances of admission.

initiatives, gender differences, cost of attendance, financial aid/scholarship, faculty/staff reputation, days/times of needed classes, getting better jobs, gaining general knowledge, enhancement of self-esteem, safety, social life/social class, peer influence/friends attending, and sports (Adebayo, 1995; Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006; Broekemier, 2002; Broekemier & Seshadri, 1999; Erdmann, 1983; Flint, 1993; Kern, 2000; Mtemeri, 2020; Naz et al., 2014; Paulsen & St John, 2002; Shumba & Naong, 2012; Watson et al., 2010). From a broader perspective, these choice criteria can be summarised into eight factors, following Lee and Kyung (n.d.)³: student background characteristics, aspirations, educational achievement, social environment, financial variables, net cost, institutional climate, and institutional characteristics. Nazareno et al. (2021) has a summary of five: socio-demographic characteristics, academic performance, personal interest, parents' influence, and other support systems. Although they are not exhaustive, the foregoing indicates that there is a long list of complex and significant factors that underlie programme and institutional selection especially for senior secondary school graduates seeking admission into tertiary institutions in the world.

Three of the factors in the list seem to be particularly germane to this study. The first, which relates to the students' own initiatives, is "the ability of the learner self (sic) to identify his/her preferred career choice" (Shumba & Naong, 2012, p. 173). Students' own initiatives are related to the students' academic experiences and self-efficacy (Chinyamurindi, et al., 2021). As Shumba and Naong (2012) note, however, "career choices are decided long before the learners come to universities" (p. 173). This implies, as some scholars (Chinyamurindi, et al., 2021; Kern, 2000) have noted, that students' decisions may have been influenced by a variety of factors, including their parents, siblings, teachers and peers. In addition, Shumba and Naong (2012) report that the majority of their respondents "attribute their career choice at universities to subject choices they made whilst they were still in schools" (p. 173). The major interest here are the courses which the students choose to study.

The second important factor is aspiration. According to Watson et al. (2010) cited in Shumba and Naong (2012, p. 169), "the majority of aspirations were for social type occupations followed by investigative type occupations" The same study also reported that more than 80% of the respondents in the sample aspired to high-status occupations. The foregoing is related to the factor of availability of courses. From our experience working at UB, it is usually the case that students are not always admitted into the courses that they aspire to study. This research therefore ascertains how the expanded education opportunities have impacted on the career choices and tertiary education preferences of the aspiring students.

As already indicated, the cost of attendance or the availability of funds is an important factor in determining students' career choices across social classes (Ngesi, 2003; Paulsen & St John, 2002; Shumba & Naong, 2012; Zuker, 2006). Like some of the scholars, Shumba and Naong (2012) found that inadequate funding of students from disadvantaged communities prevented them from making appropriate career choices. Such students tend to avoid careers

³ See The analysis of factors affecting choice of college: A case study of UNLV hotel college students (umass.edu).

which require a long period of training that their finance cannot support (Ngesi, 2003). This suggests that funding disadvantages students from lower socio-economic families and constrains students from such families from making appropriate and or preferred career choices. In the Botswana context, university education is sponsored mainly by government. In the recent past, however, the funding for sponsoring students in tertiary education has shrunk considerably. A large chunk of the available funds is for students admitted to courses that the government believes will enhance the economic wellbeing of the country (HRDC, 2016). The effect of the deployment of funds in this manner is yet to be researched. This study, therefore, also examines the impact that government funding has on the career choices of graduating senior secondary school students.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research design

The principal research design of the study is quantitative. The particular quantitative format used is the survey, whose purpose, as Pickard (2007, p. 59) notes, is to “gather and analyse information by questioning individuals who are representative of the population.” It is particularly good for a study when the researcher wishes to be objective rather than subjective. As Taylor (2010) observes, a quantitative design reduces subjectivity and increases the reliability and validity of the research. The study is also qualitative to a much lesser degree. In this study, for instance, it was necessary to solicit respondents’ views and opinions regarding their tertiary education career choices and institutional preferences. On the one hand, this enabled the researchers to gain a full understanding of the motivations of the respondents, and, on the other, it enabled them to present a full picture of the subject matter from the students’ points of view as well. This combination of the quantitative and qualitative research design is now increasingly used in Humanities and Social Sciences research.

3.2 Data collection instrument

The questionnaire, which is our data collection instrument, is in five parts. The first part solicited information on the respondents’ demographic details. The second solicited information on the students’ academic and career choices. The questionnaire provided for a first choice and a second should the first not be available to the respondents. The third asked students to specify their institutional preferences. The fourth dealt with sponsorship. This part ascertained how students would fund their education and how they would proceed should funds not be available. This aspect was particularly important for the Faculty of Humanities where student enrolment has been drastically reduced⁴. The fifth is a ‘General Comments’ section that elicited issues requiring research attention.

3.3 Sample and sampling procedure

The study sample consisted of 101 students from 27 senior secondary schools in Botswana⁵. The sample’s gender ratio was 57 females (56%) to 44 males (44%). The bulk of

⁴ The 2022-2023 academic year admission process at UB shows that the Faculty of Humanities had the lowest enrolment figures.

⁵ The (senior) secondary schools are in alphabetical order: Boesele Private, Botlhale Cambridge International, Francistown Senior, Gabane Private, Kagiso Senior, Kgari Sechele, Ledumang Senior, Legae Academy,

the students (96 or 95%) fell into the 17-21-year age group. The rest (5 or 5%) were 16 years (2 of them), 22, 25 and 26. The population, from which the study sample was extracted, comprised a large but indeterminate number of all the eligible students from both public and private senior secondary schools seeking admission into tertiary institutions in Botswana. The students attended the career fair organised by the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Technology during the 2018/2019 pre-admission period⁶ in Gaborone. The use of the fair for data collection is appropriate because, as Datar and Ahmad (2019) have shown, information services such as career fairs can help students better comprehend their options. However, only students who came to the UB stand were persuaded to fill out the questionnaire.

The study sample of 101 is small. However, even smaller samples, as Arua and Alimi (2017) (n=10) and Rosen, Curran and Greenlee (1998) (n=18) have shown, have produced equally reliable, valid and insightful results. There is thus substantial evidence that small samples are acceptable, especially when quantitative and qualitative research designs are combined, as “the validity, meaningfulness and insights from such studies have more to do with information richness and the analytical qualities of the researchers rather than sample size” (Hardon, Hodgkin & Fresle, 2004, p. 64). In addition, the sample for this study is representative, as already noted, because it encompasses senior secondary schools across Botswana.

3.4 Data analysis

The response patterns for each section of the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics. Accordingly, percentile scores were computed for all the relevant themes. However, the computation of the demographic data is part of Section 3.3. The other results of the study are presented in Section 4.0 below.

4.0 Findings

As the main themes of Table 1 show, the first choice career interests of students in Botswana include a wide array of courses, from traditional fields such as agriculture, business, education, engineering, arts/humanities, medical and health science, science and social sciences, to the apparently newer and more innovative ones such as aviation, beauty, tourism and hospitality management, fashion designing, information science and security management. The more sought-after courses, however, are in the medical and health sciences (28 or 27.7%), business (21 or 20.9%), engineering (14 or 13.86%), science (9 or 8.9%) and arts/humanities (7 or 6.9%). Further specification of the choices for the respondents of this study, in order of preference, shows that nursing (10 or 9.9%), medicine (9 or 8.9%), accounting (7 or 6.9%), finance (7 or 6.9%), business management (4 or 3.96%), electrical and electronics engineering

Letlhakane Senior, Lobatse Senior, Lotsane Senior, Maruapula Senior, Matshekge Hill, Maun Senior, Matsha Community College, Mmadinare Senior, Moeding College, Mogoditshane Senior, Molefi Senior, Moshupa Senior, Naledi Senior, Seepapitso Senior, St. Joseph College, Swaneng Hill, Thamaga Senior, Tutume McConnell Senior.

⁶ It should be noted that academic activities virtually came to a halt immediately after the collection of the data because of the advent of the COVID pandemic in 2019. It should also be noted that educational matters – conditions, processes, policies and so on, have not changed substantially since the data was collected. In other words, the data is still valid and reliable.

(4 or 3.96%), media studies (4 or 3.96%), law (4 or 3.96%), pharmacy (3 or 2.97%), general education (3 or 2.97%) and general science (3 or 2.97%) are preferred. There are two additional points to make. First, the number and percentage of the respondents' second choices generally replicate or even surpass their first choices, as is the case with especially business (27 or 26.7%), engineering (15 or 14.85%) and arts/humanities (7 or 6.9%). Second, many courses in arts/humanities (English, French, Portuguese, Chinese, religious studies, history, African languages), education (educational foundations, adult education, etc.) and science (biology, physics) were not chosen by any of the respondents.

Table 1: Career choices of prospective senior secondary school students

Courses/Specialisations	1 st Choice		2 nd Choice	
	n	%	n	%
AGRICULTURE	2	1.98	1	1
Agricultural Engineering	1	1	0	0
Animal health/science	1	1	1	1
AVIATION	2	1.98	2	1.98
Aviation	1	1	1	1
Pilot course	1	1	1	1
BEAUTY	0	0	1	1
Beauty therapy	0	0	1	1
BUSINESS	21	20.9	27	26.7
Accounting	7	6.9	4	3.96
Business intelligence and data analysis	0	0	1	1
Business management	4	3.96	2	1.98
Computing with Finance	0	0	3	2.97
Economics	1	1	3	2.97
Entrepreneurship	0	0	1	1
Finance (with Banking)	7	6.9	11	10.89
Human Resources	0	0	1	1
Marketing	1	1	0	0
Maths and Finance	1	1	1	1
EDUCATION	6	5.9	3	2.97
Early childhood education	2	1.98	1	1
General	3	2.97	2	1.98
Physical Education	1	1	0	0
ENGINEERING	14	13.86	15	14.85
Aircraft Maintenance engineering	1	1	1	1
Architecture	2	1.98	5	4.95
Auto Engineering	1	1	0	0
Civil Engineering	1	1	3	2.97
Computer Engineering/Science	1	1	1	1
Electrical & Electronics Engineering	4	3.96	1	1
Estate Management/Real Estate	2	1.98	1	1

General	1	1	0	0
Mechanical Engineering	0	0	2	1.98
Soil and Water Conservation Engineering	0	0	1	1
Water & Environmental Engineering	1	1	0	0
FASHION DESIGNING	1	1	2	1.98
Fashion/textile designing	1	1	2	1.98
TOURISM & HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT	3	2.97	4	3.96
Hospitality management	1	1	2	1.98
Tourism	2	1.98	2	1.98
ARTS/HUMANITIES	7	6.9	7	6.9
Archives & Records Management	1	1	0	0
Filming	0	0	1	1
Fine Arts	0	0	1	1
General	0	0	1	1
Live performance	1	1	0	0
Media Studies (Broadcast/Journalism, etc.	4	3.96	1	1
Pastoral Studies	0	0	1	1
Professional Communication	0	0	1	1
Creative multimedia	0	0	1	1
Pastoral studies (Social work)	1	1	0	0
INFORMATION SCIENCE	2	1.98	2	1.98
Health Information and Management	0	0	1	1
Information systems and data management	1	1	0	0
Information knowledge and management	0	0	1	1
Information technology	1	1	0	0
MEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES	28	27.7	18	17.8
Medicine	9	8.9	1	1
Medical laboratory science	1	1	2	1.98
Dental Therapy	2	1.98	1	1
Doctor's Assistance	0	0	1	1
Nursing	10	9.9	6	5.9
Occupational health & safety	2	1.98	3	2.97
Pharmacy	3	2.97	3	2.97
Public Health	0	0	1	1
Radiation & Health Physics	1	1	0	0
SOCIAL SCIENCES	5	4.95	4	3.96
Law	4	3.96	1	1
Political Science (and Economics)	0	0	1	1
Psychology	1	1	1	1
Social Work	0	0	1	1
SECURITY MANAGEMENT	1	1	0	0
Security Management	1	1	0	0
SCIENCE	9	8.9	7	6.9

Applied Geophysics	0	0	1	1
Chemistry	1	1	0	0
Ecology	0	0	1	1
Forensic Science	1	1	1	1
Geology	1	1	2	1.98
General	3	2.97	1	1
Mathematics	2	1.98	1	1
Statistics	1	1	0	0
NO RESPONSE	0	0	7	6.9
INCOMPREHENSIBLE RESPONSES	1	1	2	1.98
TOTAL	101	100	101	100

The results in Tables 2 and 3 relate to institutional preferences. Table 2 shows that 84 or 83.2% of the prospective students preferred public or government tertiary institutions while only 16.8% preferred private tertiary institutions. The most preferred institution is UB (51 or 50.5%). This is followed by the Botswana International University and Science and Technology (BIUST) (12 or 11.9%) and Botswana Accountancy College (BAC) (11 or 10.9%). The Table also shows that other government tertiary institutions ((Institute of Health Science (IHS), Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) and Gaborone Technical College (GTC)) and private tertiary institutions were all selected for diverse reasons. As Table 3 shows, availability of courses/programmes (38 or 41%), best university in the country and worldwide recognition (22 or 24%), good educational services and conducive learning environment (24 or 26%) and liking particular institutions (8 or 9%) are the reasons the prospective students gave for the choices they made.

Table 2: Tertiary institutional preferences of senior secondary school students

Tertiary institutions			
Public	n	%	
Botswana Accountancy College	11	10.9	
Botswana International University of Science and Technology	12	11.9	
Botswana Univ. of Agriculture and Natural Resources	4	4	
Gaborone Technical College	1	1	
Institute of Health Science	5	5	
University of Botswana	51	50.5	
Total	84	83.2	
Private	n	%	
Baisago University	2	2	
Boitekanelo College	2	2	
Botho University	3	3	
Gaborone Universal College	2	2	
International Aviation School – Botswana	3	3	
Limkokwing University of Creative Technology	5	5	

Total	17	16.8
Overall Total	101	100

Table 3: Students’ reasons for institutional preferences (n=92)

Reasons	n	%
It offers the course I am interested in	38	41
It is the best university in the country and it well recognized world-wide	22	24
It offers good educational services and has a conducive environment for learning	24	26
I like the institution	8	9
Total	92	100

Table 4 shows that a vast majority of the prospective students who responded to the question on sponsorship (n=99) (96 or 97%) expected the Botswana government to fund their tertiary education. Only 3 or 3% of the students did not so indicate.

Table 4: Students expecting government sponsorship/funding (n=99)

Responses	n	%
Yes	96	97
No	3	3
Total	99	100

Table 5 presents the responses of prospective students regarding their course of action should the expected government funding not materialise. Some would return to school to improve their qualifications for another course (37 or 38%). Some would request admission into other courses, even those for which they have no interest but for which funding is immediately available (33 or 34%). Some would find jobs in the meantime in order to raise funds for their education (16 or 16%). And some would wait until government increases the funding available for the courses they are interested in (10 or 10%).

Table 5: Students’ prospective actions should government funding be unavailable (n=98)

Actions	n	%
Find another course for which funding is immediately available, even it is an area in which I have no interest	33	34
Wait until the Government increases funding for the course	10	10
Find a job in the meantime	16	16
Go back to school to improve my qualifications for another course	37	38
No response	2	2
Total	98	100

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Career interests

With very few exceptions and minor variations, the career interests of senior secondary school students in Botswana and their ranking are similar to those of other high school students in Africa and elsewhere. Predovic and Dennis (2020) assert that the interests and expectations are about 10 courses/majors or occupations. In Botswana, as already indicated, the fields are those of nursing, medicine, accountancy, finance, business management, engineering (electrical/electronic), media studies, law, pharmacy, general education, and general science. For the US and its territories, the National Society of High School Scholars (2022, pp. 15-16) lists the top ten as engineering, sciences, business, health(care), medicine and health services, psychology, technology/computers, art/drama/music, math, and finance and economics. In Qatar, they are medicine, engineering, sports, business, law, technical work, teaching, military service, science, nursing, and accountancy (Sellami, et al., 2023). In Ethiopia, according to Zewude and Habtegiorgis (2022), the medical and health sciences, business-related fields, law, engineering are the most preferred.

Predovic and Dennis (2020) have attributed the similarities in students' aspirations to the effect of globalisation. Cazes and Verick (2010) have also attributed the convergence in aspirations to the activities of policy makers or labour market engineers. In Botswana HRDC determines the programmes that the nation needs for its development. In this connection, the need for such policy makers and market engineers has been alluded to in the past. Head (1976), for example, observes that Lesotho had the highest literacy rate in Southern Africa with many BA graduates who had no employment. This suggests that the activities of policy makers are necessary to regulate academic programmes to ensure that prospective tertiary education hopefuls acquire qualifications that address the socio-political and developmental needs of Lesotho, Botswana and other African nations.

The content of Table 1 is remarkable for the lack of preference for some liberal arts programmes. For the Humanities in UB, in particular, the preference is for media studies. It is surprising that courses in the creative and performing arts are not mentioned by the respondents although they are in the HRDC list of top occupations in demand. Courses such as English, French, Portuguese, Chinese, religious studies, history, and African languages are not mentioned at all (see footnote 4). For Education, preference is for early childhood education and physical education. And for Science, biology and physics are not selected. Generally, then, the courses which are in demand are those that, according to the relevant government agencies, meet the demands of the Botswana employment market. It is feared that some courses would ultimately be phased out, especially in the Humanities, as a result of lack of patronage by prospective tertiary education candidates and as a result of the belief that the Botswana government is not supportive of candidates wishing to study them.

5.2 Institutional preferences of Botswana students

As already noted, there is an overwhelming preference for public tertiary institutions in Botswana. The literature on the subject reports a similar trend. Zewude and Habtegiorgis (2022), for example, show that based, presumably, on the criterion of government ownership,

public universities in Ethiopia are the most preferred ones. Ogwo (2022) reveals that the five most preferred universities in Nigeria⁷ in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years, University of Ilorin, Ahmadu Bello University, University of Benin, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Lagos, are all public (federally-owned) institutions. The reasons respondents adduce in support of their preferences are also similar to those in the literature. One of them is that high-status programmes are domiciled in public schools. For example, UB has engineering, medical and health sciences, and law, which are not available in private universities; BUIST has engineering; and BAC has accounting, and business. Another reason for the preference for public schools is reputation. Respondents believe that public universities in Botswana are the best locally and internationally. For example, UB is reputed to be a centre of excellence, hence the moniker *Mmadikolo* (mother of all schools). The other public schools in Botswana have also acquired some reputation as centres of excellence that depict Botswana as a country whose quality of education is of international standard. Perhaps, the most important factor for the selection of public institutions is the perception that they are more affordable (have low cost of attendance) than private schools (Zuker, 2006). Thus, from a broad perspective, the majority of students prefer public schools in Botswana because they house much sought-after programmes, are reputable, well-resourced and, apparently, more affordable.

5.3 Funding for students

The finding that almost all the students in the study sample require government sponsorship to pursue their degree programmes is predictable. Financial aid and scholarship are clearly indicated in the literature as important factors constraining students' career choices and institutional preferences. This is especially so in countries with developing economies, a class into which many African countries are grouped. Public schools in Nigeria, whether federal or state, are much less expensive as the tuition fees are subsidised. Because of this, students prefer them to private institutions. For this reason, admission into such schools is competitive and many prospective students wait interminably to be admitted into them. The students in the study sample also believe that their tertiary education studies should be paid for by the Government of Botswana. In order to ensure that they pursue their chosen courses in their preferred tertiary institutions, they are, among other alternatives, willing to wait until they secure funding. The other alternatives also imply a delay in accessing the type of education they wish to acquire. They may delay their university education by working to raise funds for it, go back to high school to improve their qualifications or select other courses for which funding is available even when they are not interested in them.

Damane and Molutsi (2013) describe Botswana as a rich state which has problems financing its tertiary education. It is interesting to note that previously, the Government of Botswana sponsored all students admitted into public primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions. However, sponsorship at the tertiary level has become restricted somewhat. The Government of Botswana through the DTEF allocates more funding, in terms of the number of students sponsored, to the courses/programmes that the Ministry of Tertiary Education,

⁷ Based on the number of candidates who applied for admission to them.

Science and Technology and HRDC consider to be germane to the economic wellbeing of Botswana. The effects of this sponsorship regime, which is different from that of a previous era in which funding was equally available to all qualified Batswana, have been the downgrading of certain programmes and the restriction of the tertiary education opportunities available to some Batswana. As enunciated by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations, higher education “shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education” (United Nations, 1966, Article 13, 2c). In restricting the opportunities available to Batswana, the Botswana government is violating the principle of non-retrogression for higher education clearly enunciated in UNESCO’s *Right to education handbook* (UNESCO, 2019). The principle is that nations “should not take deliberate backward steps by adopting measures that will repeal or restrict existing guarantees of the right to education” (p. 108). The current funding model will need to be re-examined to ensure that higher education in Botswana is not unduly restricted for some Batswana because of their career interests.

6.0 Conclusion

The article investigated career interests and institutional preferences of senior secondary school students seeking admission into tertiary institutions in Botswana. The article also surveyed students’ views about how to fund their education. The findings of the study are in alignment with those in the literature on the subject. Botswana senior secondary school students like their counterparts elsewhere generally compete for courses in business, the medical sciences and law, among other high-status courses. Public schools, which usually have a high reputation and international recognition, are preferred by an overwhelming majority of the students. On the issue of funding, students rely on the Government of Botswana for sponsorship and other financial aids. Unfortunately, lack of funds has led the government to increase sponsorships for programmes that it believes will grow the wealth of the country and decrease them for those it believes will not. The danger inherent in this behaviour is that Botswana may be repealing existing guarantees of the right to progressive free higher education for some of its citizens.

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