



Teacher Education and Teacher Efficacy do they Match in Botswana Colleges of Education?

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Abstract

The training of teachers has been a priority to the government of Botswana since the country's independence in 1966. Education Policies have been revised to cater for quality education for citizens. This paper argues that although it is relevant to upgrade colleges, and offer quality education and assurance processes to monitor training institutions; teacher efficacy remains fundamental among pre-service teachers while they are still at training. The researchers present their arguments in relation to the mentioned above title. Research findings carried in the five colleges of Botswana that train primary and secondary school teachers showed a low teacher efficacy in relation to the three subscales of Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scales, Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies and Classroom management. The paper further states that, ecological research as it focuses on classroom management and student engagement is essential, as it highlights how teachers should manage classroom behaviors and provides some strategies to be implemented to engage students in learning.

Keywords: Quality Education, Teacher Efficacy, Ecological research, Classroom Management, Student Engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

The Botswana government as evidenced in several policy documents such as the Vision 2016, the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994 and many more acknowledges the fact that giving quality education remains an important practice all the time since education is a fundamental human right. It is a driver of “sustainable development, peace and stability within and between countries (Sota, 2013). It is an indispensable tool for active participation in the economy and society of the twenty-first century, which affects the rapid globalization (p. 437).

In Botswana, like in most of her African counterparts, compared to at Independence, education landscape has changed tremendously, across all sectors. It must however, be noted that for all achievements attained in the system it is the teacher who has always been very pivotal for all teaching and learning processes. Emphasizing the significance of the role that teachers play is underscored by the country’s Revised National Policy on Education (1994) which stipulates that “the success of any education system depends largely on teachers, they are the catalysts of the learning process and on them mainly rests the whole system” (p. 4). Sharing similar sentiments about the significance of teachers in the education system is the Botswana Education Statistics (2008) which stipulates that: Teachers are among the most important resources in the education system and the qualifications of teachers, methods of teaching, and resources provided have a significant influence on the overall quality of education children receive” (p. 31).

With teacher education accorded the most significant role expressed in the above it becomes even apparent why teacher education has taken great strides, globally. Further, with the above in mind, the paper argues that the training of teachers is not the only answer to educational challenges facing Botswana today. To put discussions here in context the subsequent section of this paper gives a brief background of teacher education processes in the Botswana colleges of education.

Programme Context in the Colleges of Education

From the above introductory remarks it is clear that education remains a priority area for the Botswana government both in terms of its goals and its budgetary allocation. It is therefore not amazing that over the years government channeled millions of Pula (local currency) into all efforts targeting teacher development. Other factors that prompted government commitment to educational development has been the persistently low performance in the academic achievement of learners forced government to undertake a number of unprecedented initiatives designed to improve the quality of schooling.

The Diploma in Primary Education

The Diploma in Primary Education (DPE) programme was piloted in Tlokweng College of Education in 1985. Specifically, by introducing the diploma; the government was keeping with the socio-economic and educational advancements of the country which made it imperative to upgrade teacher qualifications in the primary education to remain competitive in the global market (Tlokweng College of Education Prospectus, 2004/2005). Reiterating this move by government, a major education commissions undertaken in 1993 and 1994 noted that the Primary Teachers’ Certificate (PTC) was no longer relevant for the socio-economic and educational

system of the country. DPE was then extended to other colleges of education, (Lobatse 1996; Serowe 1997 and Francistown 1998).

The Diploma in Secondary Education

During the years 1985 and 1990 respectively, government established the Molepolole and Tonota Colleges of Education as fully-fledged colleges offering a Diploma in Secondary Education (DSE). Primarily, the DSE is a full time programme extending over three years and its aim is to train teachers for Community Junior Secondary Schools each college approximately producing about 400 graduates (Ministry of Education and Skills Development 2004). With regards to courses offered the programme offers both major and minor teaching subjects for instance, core areas of Communication and Study Skills, Foundations of Education Business studies, Social studies, Home Economics, Physical Education and Library Studies. In addition, the programme has service branches, namely, Educational Technology and Special Needs Education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES IN THE COLLEGES

With regard to all quality control processes in the colleges of education the University of Botswana (UB) has been overseeing this through its Office Affiliated Institutions (OAI). Primarily, the OAI is one of the five units that constitute the Centre for Academic Development (CAD). This unit is responsible for the ensuring the maintenance of quality of teaching and learning at the affiliated institutions. Other than the University, there is the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) formerly the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) whose primary mission is to ensure that institutions offer quality programmes that directly meet all market demands. As noted above as demanded by both the UB and the BQA for quality assurance purposes all colleges of education have been instructed to align their programmes to the national, regional and international best practices in tertiary education. It is in attempts to meet this need that since 2012 all colleges have slowly been introducing semesterization of their programmes as well as the use of credit system (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2013).

Though the above-mentioned plans for upgrading programs and producing qualified personnel will help serve the nation at large, it is not known whether the trainee teachers believe that they can impact student learning through their classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. The educational vision advocates for all Botswana's citizens to be offered "equitable lifelong education and training that is relevant and responsive to the rapid technological development and the changing socio-economic environment, and that produces knowledgeable, skilled, enterprising, and independent individuals" (National Development Plan, 2009, p. 268). Teacher efficacy is therefore essential in Botswana education system and practice. Teachers or trainees ought to believe in themselves to have a positive impact on students' learning. The terms teacher efficacy, teachers sense of efficacy and self-efficacy will be used interchangeable in this paper.

TEACHER EFFICACY AN IMPORTANT DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

The concept of teacher efficacy is important; Poulou (2007) suggested that psychology and education researchers have based their ideas about teacher efficacy on Bandura's theory of self-

efficacy. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1997), involves “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required producing given attainments” (p. 2). The definition is relevant to teachers, because they have to believe that they can influence the learner positively, and organize their instruction effectively so that good results are produced, showing that their students know how to learn.

Teacher efficacy is also defined as the teacher’s “judgment of his/her capabilities to bring about the desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Tschannen- Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 783). This definition implies that individual teachers are able to evaluate their performance to find out whether it has an impact on students learning or not, if not the teacher is expected to improve their performance in order to assist students. Teacher efficacy research can assist pre- service teachers who have insufficient beliefs about their teaching abilities. Personal teaching efficacy has been thought of as having an impact on the growth of beliefs about being a good teacher according to Ng et al. (2010). Efficacy is the ability to bring into being the desired results (Tschannen- Moran and Hoy, 2007). Therefore, teacher self-efficacy can influence pre-service and in-service teachers to be effective and manage difficult students in their work. Rizvi and Elliot argued that teacher efficacy is "an important dimension of teacher professionalism and, together with other dimensions such as teacher practice, leadership and collaboration" (as cited in Cheung, 2008, p.103). Research on pre-service teachers’ beliefs is important because they can be assisted while training to become effective teachers with a high teacher efficacy.

Mulholland and Wallace (2001) reported greater students’ teacher efficacy beliefs that were related to high pupil achievement and desire for positive teacher characteristics. Poulou, (2007) investigated the students teachers efficacy beliefs and factors influencing their beliefs and reported that students teachers stressed the importance of personal motivation particularly their interest in working with pupils as well as (they) students teachers to perform better in teaching.

The findings of Gowie, (2010) with pre-service teachers reported that "instructional practices are examined as potential influence on development of efficacy beliefs" (p. 1). Thus, while pre-service are training to become teachers, teacher educators should use more of instructional strategies that will have an impact on the development of their high efficacious beliefs that can benefit learners at schools.

Teacher efficacy research can reduce some problems in education, especially if researchers investigate teacher efficacy with other factors. For example, experience in teaching has been associated with positive teacher efficacy. A teacher with positive beliefs about being a teacher is useful because it can bring convictions to teachers with regard to students learning.

Teacher efficacy construct is vital among in- service and pre-service teachers in Botswana. The training of teachers may be a priority of Botswana government and teacher education programs upgraded to improve education in general. But what is a concern to the nation at large is declining performance of students from primary, junior and senior secondary schools.

The discussion of this paper borrows from the research studies of Moalosi, and Forcheh (2015). The study was carried on the two colleges that train secondary school teachers and the other three colleges of education in Botswana.

Moalosi (2015) researched Molepolole and Tonota Colleges of Education pre-service teachers on teacher efficacy. Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy (TSES) instrument comprising 25 items were used to measure the trainee’s teacher efficacy. Pre-service teachers in Molepolole college of Education had a high teacher efficacy in Instructional Strategies, Student Engagement

and Classroom management. While their counterparts reported a low teacher efficacy beliefs. What is a challenge to Botswana education is, these mentioned above teachers trainees are assumed to be given quality education as discussed earlier, and also teachers in Botswana are perceived to be the key leaders in teaching and learning process. Teachers or teacher trainees who have a low teacher efficacy, who do not believe in themselves that they can positively influence to students to learn are a concern to the community at large. Education does seem to be an important human right because teachers cannot deliver effective instruction to students. The study findings of Moalosi and Forchheh (2015) used TSES subscales with the five colleges of Botswana that train teachers reported Serowe College of Education having a higher teacher efficacy in all the three subscales of teacher efficacy, Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies and Classroom management. Interestingly, the mentioned above college has mature in-service teachers than other colleges. Could the teaching experience they obtained prior training influenced their teacher efficacy? Younger males had higher efficacy beliefs in classroom management than females in all the five colleges.

The mentioned above results shows the teaching profession shifting from being a female job to male (see Moalosi and Forchheh, 2015). Research of teacher efficacy is not new in Botswana, Dibapile, (2012) conducted a study on teacher efficacy with Botswana Junior Secondary school teachers in the city of Gaborone and surrounding areas. There were 1, 000 participant's and only teachers with Post-graduate Diploma in Education rated themselves higher in one subscale of Student Engagement. Most teachers did not have high efficacious beliefs in instructional strategies and classroom management. While success in any education system is perceived as depending greatly on the training of teacher Botswana government need to change ways of training teachers.

SUGGESTED APPROACHES TO THE SOLUTION

The discussion in this paper, though argumentative offers some useful solutions that could reduce poor performance in Botswana Education system. Ecological research could offer shed light on what teachers ought to do to engage students in learning as well as reflecting to their practice. Ecological research of Kounin and Gump (as cited in Brophy, 2006) described how teachers can manage classroom behaviors as well as how environmental factors that can affect learning. They focused on different activities; both supported (affordances) and prohibited (constraints). During their classroom investigations classrooms were perceived as ecologies that can be investigated in terms of innovations created to fulfill a specific goal (Brophy, 2006). Kounin and Gump focused on different aspects of classroom environments (e.g., whole class, small groups, individual) and the activities that took place in them (e.g.,) more teacher-student discourse occurred in lesson settings than in seatwork settings' (p. 759).

The above mentioned concepts could be allowed in Botswana education system for a change since the performance of students from primary to senior secondary schools decline each year. These researchers reported the following from ecological research conducted in classrooms:

- *Withitness*, “remaining with it” teachers concentrated much on what was happening in the classroom most of the time; they examined the classroom settings while engaged with individual students or small groups.

- *Overlapping*: Teachers performed more than one task at a time. For example, they remained close to students to capture students' attention and to conduct the lesson without interrupting.
- *Signal continuity and momentum during the lesson*: The teacher is expected to teach well planned lesson, efficient classes centered on capturing students' attention. The teacher should also present the content continually ("the signal") that is more compelling than the noise of competing distractions, and sustaining the momentum of the signal throughout the lesson.
- *Conveying purposefulness*: The teachers who were efficient classroom managers took advantage of the time allocated for teaching and evaluated whether the students were participating and learning. They encouraged students to be responsible for finishing their work on time. Daily revision of work was arranged, and students were give effective evaluations. (Brophy, 2006).
- *Teaching appropriate conduct*. Effective classroom managers are defined as having an understanding about expectations of students as well as what they cannot accept. Teachers focused on students 'work, which was important, and also on teaching them how to do their work effectively (Brophy, 2006)
- *Maintaining attention*. Effective managers pinpointed students who were confused or not paying attention in class. They organized seating arrangements so that students faced the direction in which they could be best concentrate. In addition, effective managers changed the tone of their voices when they spoke with students, they moved around the class or "paced[d] to sustain attention" (Brophy, 2006).

The discussed findings of ecological researchers conducted on observations in the classroom settings sheds light to our understanding of what happened in classes that could bring improvement in engaging students in learning and managing classroom behaviors. The writers have not discussed all the research findings of ecological research, but highlighted some that they think could be more useful to teachers and teacher educators. It should be borne in mind that the writers do not imply that teachers in Botswana are not applying in their practice what is discussed in this paper and do not generalize that all teachers in Botswana have a lower teacher efficacy. It is the research findings of teacher efficacy in Botswana that guides this argument. The researchers are aware that there are some factors affecting students' performance in Botswana. For example, parental involvement is another challenge in Botswana schools particularly at primary, and secondary schools. Some parents do not attend Parents and Teachers Associations meetings where they can work together with teachers to help their students learn. Shortages of classrooms, where students are taught in open spaces affect learning in one way or the other and insufficient teaching materials still hampers Botswana schools.

The other thing that is a major problem is the teacher student- ration. Teachers teach many students that it is not easy for them to manage unruly behaviors. In her research reports, Pheko, (2010) with school visits, primary and junior secondary school asserted " But the reality in most schools the researcher visited that the teacher- student ratio at junior secondary schools is higher as it was 1: 51" (p.218). Contrary to the Botswana Education Statistics that reported that, the teacher ratio at primary and secondary schools is 1: 28 and 1: 40. Such crowding in classes will results in poor performance because the teacher won't be able to attend individual learners effectively as desired. Student engagement is vital in learning, learners need to be task focused

if they have to improve their performance and this not only achieved by offering quality education, but by producing teacher with a high teacher efficacy who will have an impact on students' learning. Daugherty (2005) reported that, efficacy for student engagement was "a significant predictor to three of the five (engaging the struggling learner, motivating students, instruction and assessment." (p.59). The continuation of declining performance of students in Botswana makes an individual to ponder and ask him/herself, are the students engaged in learning effectively?

CONCLUSION

To conclude, much is appreciated about how the government of Botswana has done in previous years to improve the training of teachers. Colleges of Education have been upgraded to make sure teachers obtain higher qualifications to enhance students' learning. However, the construct, teacher efficacy is still essential because the students cannot perform well in their studies unless they interact with teachers who have high efficacious beliefs.

Research studies about teacher efficacy reported in this paper shows most teachers as well as pre-service have a low teacher efficacy; particularly in the three subscales, Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management. The results causes concern because it shows that, it is not how good the training programme can be, but teachers has to believe in themselves, be confident, and committed to their work so that they can impact students' learning. Ecological research findings reveal that teachers engage students in learning. It is beyond doubt that if some teachers in Botswana schools can use ecological research in their classrooms, they can maintain effective instruction, and manage classroom behaviors well as depicted in ecological research. Thus, poor performance in Botswana schools which has been a challenge for some years could reduce. What happens in the learning environment is vital particularly inside the classroom students should be given the opportunity to know how to learn and be given activities that will motivate them to learn.

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