

GOAL 2



ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

“By the year 2016, Botswana will have a system of quality education that is able to adapt to the changing needs of the country as the world around us changes. Improvements in the relevance, the quality, and the access to education lie at the core of the Vision for the future. The education system will empower citizens to become the best producers of goods and services. It will produce entrepreneurs who will create employment through the establishment of new enterprises. Public education will be used to raise awareness of life skills, such as self health care.”

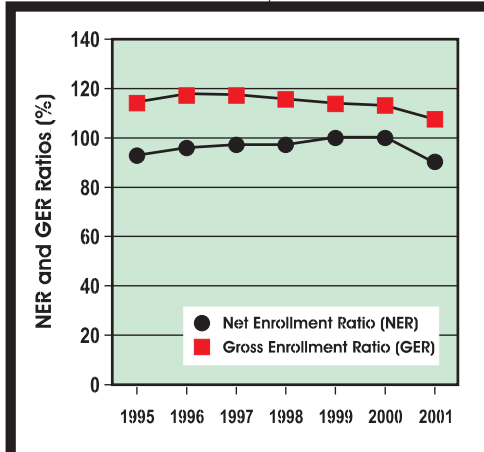
QUOTE FROM VISION 2016

Targets	Will target be reached?	Conducive Environment?
3. To achieve universal access to 10 years of basic education by 2016	Achieved	Strong
4. To improve the quality and relevance of basic education by 2016	Likely	Strong

Although this section will raise concerns about some aspects of Botswana's education, the policy environment and the priority accorded education in the fiscal budget provide an excellent environment for the sector to meet its goals and hence the overall assessment given above. The sector will face a significant but not insurmountable challenge in the form of HIV/AIDS induced capacity erosion. The impact of HIV/AIDS can be mitigated through improved management and innovation in service delivery. Botswana's education sector is well resourced and should raise its performance in the years leading to 2015/16.

1. WHAT IS THE SITUATION LIKE?

School Enrolment
(7-13 Years)



Education has been a key development priority for Botswana since independence. According to the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994, Botswana’s primary education goal is to produce a competent and productive workforce. The policy also gives priority to universal access to basic education, equity and quality.

ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION

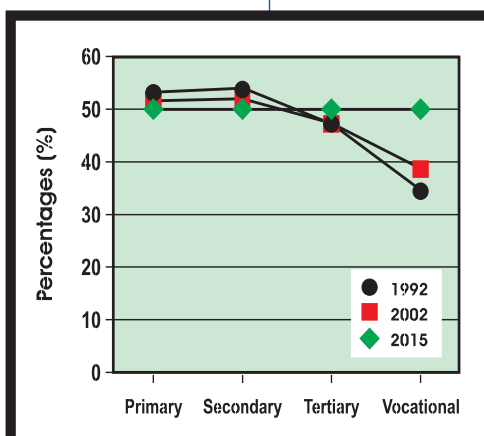
Botswana has achieved universal access to primary education (see figure 4), which provides a strong basis for the higher goal of 10 years of basic education. From 1995-2000, the estimated net enrolment rate (NER) for children aged 7-13 was consistently above 95%, peaking at 100% in 1999 and 2000. Over the same period, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was at least 11 percentage points higher than the NER, in part because some pupils start school late but also because some dropouts do return to school.

The Government has invested substantially in basic education - now defined as 10 years of schooling - rapidly expanding both infrastructure and services. Education is the single largest expenditure item in the fiscal budget, averaging more than a fifth of the budget. In 2003, it accounted for 24% of total fiscal spending, up from 22% in 1981, and 29% of recurrent expenditure.

In the process, Botswana has generated sufficient institutional capacity to guarantee every child of school going age 10 years of basic education. Increased expenditure on education has improved access to basic education in at least three ways, viz.,

- Education is offered free of charge in all public schools, thus eliminating direct costs as a constraint on access.
- Institutional capacity has expanded at both the primary and junior secondary school levels, thus reducing the supply capacity constraint on access.

Ratio of Girls to Boys
in Education



- Reduction in the average distance to school to 5km for primary schools and 10 km for junior secondary has reduced the significance of distance as a constraint on access.

In addition to improved access to education, progression from one level of study to another has also improved. In 2002, 98.2% of all Standard 7 pupils progressed to junior secondary. Based on these trends, Botswana will make significant gains in literacy by 2016. The foundation for a fully literate society has been laid.

Botswana has also achieved gender equity in formal education. According to figure 5, girls accounted for just over half the gross enrolment in primary and secondary schools and slightly below half that in tertiary institutions in both 1992

and 2002. Vocational education is the only area where girls lag behind boys. Even then, their share of total enrolment increased by about five percentage points between 1992 and 2002. But equity transcends access and gender balance. The equity goal also requires that education should not only be universally accessible but should also be universally good. Thus, some questions of equity could be raised.



- *If, as is the case in Gaborone, private education is better resourced and produces better outcomes than public education, should the goal of equity imply that public education should aim for the same standards as private education?*
- *Should equity, given the limited role played by private education vis-à-vis public education, be looked at primarily in the context of public education itself?*
- *What role then should private education have? Should it be exclusively that of a benchmark on quality, or should it also be seen as a means of bringing more resources into the education system and expanding access?*

- *Are there groups in society - ethnic minorities, remote area dwellers, religious minorities etc. - that face peculiar access problems of the type that generate significant horizontal inequalities?*

The significance of the latter question can be traced to Botswana's commitment to a society in which "... there is equality of educational opportunity, and where no citizens are restricted to the circumstances of their birth." (Vision 2016, p 29).

QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF BASIC EDUCATION

As a result of growing unemployment amongst people with tertiary qualifications, concern has been raised about whether Botswana's education adequately prepares young people for life after school. The counter question to this is whether the school system should in fact seek to prepare pupils for the job market. Vision 2016 suggests so.

"Education has not been adequately geared to the needs of the country, and the job market. The challenge is to place greater emphasis on technical and practical subjects – the skills that are most needed."

Trends in unemployment do not, however, provide an adequate basis for assessing the quality of education. Unemployment is not necessarily a result of deficiencies in education and training. It is also fundamentally about the existence of employment opportunities. In the absence of more accurate measures of educational outcomes, proxies such as preschool enrolment, the teacher-pupil ratio, classroom accommodation, classroom equipment, and ICT resources may be used.

Preschool Education

All pre-school education in Botswana is provided by civil society organisations, including the private sector. However, the Government provides substantial sup-

port in the form of policy direction, teaching materials, teacher training and grants to NGOs and CBOs involved in preschool education.

Even so, preschool training is inaccessible to children from poor families and rural areas. About 90% of eligible children do not access preschool education, either because preschool facilities do not exist where they live, or because their parents cannot afford the fees, or choose not to enrol their children for preschool.

Preschool education is a key component of integrated early childhood development programmes. It is especially necessary for children from disadvantaged communities such as the Basarwa, who face even steeper hurdles in adjusting to school life. A fundamental quality issue then arises. With over 90% of eligible children starting primary education without preschool education, to what extent is the quality of learning compromised?



Significantly, NDP 9 shows keen awareness, on the part of the Government, of the value of pre-school education, and recognising its own capacity constraints, the Government puts emphasis on upstream roles for itself – policy, strategy, training and regulation/supervision – and partnership with civil society at the level of delivery.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

The significance of the pupil teacher ratio is that the lower it is the greater the amount of time the teacher spends with each pupil and the greater the quality of instruction. The average pupil-teacher ratio in Botswana's public schools was estimated at 27 in 2002, well below the NDP 9 target of 30 pupils per class. It still compares poorly with the 16 observed in private schools but represents real progress from 45 in 1994.

Classroom Accommodation

Classroom accommodation is central to learning. It reduces the impact of the external environment - weather and events in the community - on learning, and facilitates the organisation and effective use of learning tools such as chalkboards, teaching aids and furniture. Through aggressive construction of new schools and additional classrooms in existing ones, Botswana has reduced its classroom shortage from 2021 in 1994 to only 187 classes in 2003. The shortage of classrooms has a regional dimension however. For instance, Ngamiland North and Ngamiland South respectively had classroom shortages of 37.8% and 29.5% in 2003.

Information Communication Technology

Information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially computers are essential for functional literacy. ICTs also improve the delivery of teaching services and make learning more interesting for pupils. Botswana's secondary schools have computer laboratories and are expected to offer basic computer awareness courses. On average, there is a computer for every 28 students in secondary schools. Many public primary schools on the other hand do not have sufficient ICT resources. Many do not even have access to electricity.

As a result of an ICT based Teacher Capacity Building (TCB) project, Botswana has taken significant steps towards enhancing the use of ICTs in both primary and secondary schools. Provision was made in 2003 for all primary and junior secondary schools to be equipped with a television set and a videocassette recorder as part of an interactive multimedia programme on HIV/AIDS. Primary schools without electricity would be supplied with power generators. Although the TCB infrastructure and equipment are primarily intended to facilitate HIV/AIDS related education, they offer possibilities for delivering mainstream education services as well as informing pupils broadly.



Learning Achievement

The Standard 4 attainment test assesses the effectiveness of learning in primary school. The results suggest that learning is not very effective at the early primary school level, which may reflect lack of preschool training. In 2001, only 39.6% of standard 4s were literate in Setswana, 21.9% had reached the desired competency level in English, whilst only 21.2% had done so in basic numeracy. Learning achievement in life-skills was, however, high at 77.7%, though only 51% of the pupils had attained the desired level of HIV/AIDS competence.

2. MAJOR CHALLENGES

Access to basic education has virtually been achieved even at the higher standard of ten years of basic education. The real challenges, it seems, are to sustain high school enrolment and retention rates; to address the special needs of vulnerable groups; to improve the quality of education in public schools; and to maintain the capacity of the education system in the face of an intense HIV/AIDS onslaught.

INCREASING ENROLMENT AND RETENTION RATES FOR CHILDREN FROM REMOTE AREAS AND NOMADIC COMMUNITIES

Educational statistics suggest that remote areas, where levels of education and household income are relatively low and vulnerability to poverty and other forms of deprivation is relatively high, have the highest school dropout rates. Notwithstanding the fact that the reasons for dropping out of school are many and varied, this suggests that deprivation, and related to it the pressure to work or earn a living, increase the likelihood of a child dropping out of school.

Creative ways have to be found to keep disadvantaged children in school. One option is to "... introduce universal, and compulsory education up to the secondary level." (Vision 2016, p 30). The other is to outlaw child labour except when it serves the child's own development needs. These measures respond comprehensively to a concern raised in Vision 2016, although the vision puts emphasis on a different solution. It argues thus:

"In many cases, parents are exercising rational choice over whether to send children to school. The introduction of universal schooling must go hand in hand

with improvement of socio-economic conditions to the point where children are no longer viewed as an essential source of labour or income for poor families, or girl children used to care for younger siblings when their mother works.”

The immediate effect of compulsory education is to reduce the supply of child labour and affirm the children’s right to education. The immediate effect of outlawing child labour is to reduce the demand for child labour and free children to attend school.

RAISING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The RNPE and the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (ECCEP) provide the platform for raising the quality of education in Botswana. The RNPE gives priority to quality enhancing educational inputs – school infrastructure and equipment, ICTs, trained teachers, lifelong learning, and a strong curriculum that puts emphasis on science and technology. ECCEP provides for expanded access to preschool education and an appropriate curriculum.



Another important area is Life-skills, whose value lies in preparing children to make informed life choices and in preparing those who are unable to continue with formal education to pursue artisan training in vocational training institutions or to join the labour force. Increased emphasis on life skills is a curriculum development issue, itself an important dimension of quality, along with textbooks – appropriately chosen and provided on time – and ICTs

Other measures that should receive emphasis are measurement and monitoring of educational outcomes. The management of education will be more effective with better quality, more complete and timely statistics as well as reliable measures of educational outcomes. Further to these, there is an urgent need to expand access to preschool education and to consider a policy shift from ECCEP to Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD).

MAINTAINING THE CAPACITY OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR AND MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS

The challenge of maintaining the education system’s capacity requires, at one level, sustaining investment in education even as HIV/AIDS claims an increasing share of the budget. In NDP 9, the Government declares that “...the levels of investment in education that Government has made over the years can no longer be sustained unless alternative avenues for complementing Government efforts are established”.

It accordingly proposes cost sharing in education. The proposition implies an important argument on access, viz., that access is not exclusively an issue of cost to parents/pupils. It is also fundamentally an issue of supply capacity, one that judicious implementation of cost sharing could help resolve.

At another level, the challenge requires reengineering service delivery in education. For instance, closer collaboration with non-state actors may deliver additional resources and capacity. The deployment of ICTs in the delivery of services may extend the reach of otherwise limited capacity whilst flexibility with regard to the recruitment of expatriate teachers may help mitigate staff attrition due to death and illness.

The performance of the education sector will also be influenced by how well it prepares pupils to deal with the challenges of HIV/AIDS in the family. Will the system provide adequate support, knowledge and skills for pupils to deal with the personal challenges of HIV/AIDS? Does the education system have the capacity to meet the special challenges associated with the growing population of orphans?

In the final analysis though, Vision 2016 is right. The quality of the output of the education system will be better the more pervasive prosperity is. But this is a two way street. Just as education is essential for household prosperity, so is household prosperity essential for good education.

3. SUPPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Vision 2016 envisages “an educated, informed nation”. The RNPE is the single most important policy instrument for the fulfilment of this ideal. The table below summarises this policy’s objectives and those of the National Literacy Programme.

Policies, Strategies and programmes for universal access to education

Name	Year	Objectives
Policies		
Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE)	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To improve access, equity and quality in education; ◆ To effectively prepare students for life, citizenship and the world of work ◆ To increase transition from junior to senior secondary up to 50%, ◆ To reduce primary school class sizes from 45 in 1990 to 30 pupils per class ◆ To improve and maintain the quality of the education system and effectively manage the education system; ◆ To improve cost effectiveness and cost sharing in education finance education ◆ To enact legislation on compulsory education
Programmes		
National Literacy Programme (NLP)	1981	To eradicate illiteracy; enable national literacy programme participants to apply knowledge in developing their cultural, social and economic life; enable participants to effectively perform community duties on the one hand and to exercise their rights and obligations of citizenship on the other

4. TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TARGETS

Basic education statistics should be easy to collect at the level of schools so that Botswana could have complete and up to date education statistics. And yet, as the table below suggests, Botswana statistical capacity on education is not as strong as it could be given that the basic institutional infrastructure (the schools) for collecting educational statistics is in place.

The statistical challenge for the education sector is surmountable since the basic problems are organisational. They comprise, in the main, of measures to get the systems for collecting, summarising and analysing educational data to work and coordinate efficiently.

Capacity to Monitor Educational Outcomes

Elements of Monitoring Environment	Assessment		
Data gathering capacities	Strong	Fair	Weak
Quality of recent survey information	Strong	Fair	Weak
Statistical tracking capacities	Strong	Fair	Weak
Statistical analysis capacities	Strong	Fair	Weak
Capacity to incorporate statistical analysis into policy	Strong	Fair	Weak
Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	Strong	Fair	Weak