



# THE YEAR THAT WAS ----- BOSETU PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION

## THE NATIONAL RESULTS FOR COMPLETING STUDENTS REMAIN AT CRISIS LEVEL

2019 still witnessed some devastatingly low national results for students at all levels, that is, for the BGCSE, JCE and the PSLE. The dwindling results can be traced back to 2010, when the results started dropping sharply to their lowest levels in 2016 up to date. BOSETU has for years cautioned about this situation, pointing out that the unresolved hours of work following the use of the Public Service Act No 30 of 2008 to regulate teachers in 2010 will always haunt the teaching profession. Government remained unresponsive, unwilling and in our view approached this issue in lackluster manner. The results are now with us, bearing the brunt of the indecisiveness of government in resolving the matter.

## SCHOOL STILL EXPERIENCED FAULT STARTS IN 2019

2019 still experienced some fault starts by schools as the 1<sup>st</sup> term of 2019 began. This has become a common occurrence where at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> term of the year, students experience critical shortages of not only next books, but also exercise books, desks and even teachers themselves. The Ministry of Basic education has always been caught napping in this respect, resulting in untold delays in the commencement of the teaching and learning process. This has had dire consequences to the coverage of the syllabi, hence affecting the results.

## Students Violence Against Teachers

The year 2019 saw a worrying increase in incidences of student violence against teachers, and as such, have subjected teachers to hazardous working environment. We have seen students physically attacking teachers and injuring them. This, no doubt, is a phenomenon that greatly worries the BOSETU as union, and it's a matter which a national discourse needs to be opened around it. BOSETU has on numerous occasions called for the intensification of security in schools and the strengthening of the guidance and counselling units to address matters of behavior modification and the use of habit – forming substances by

students.

## School Heads Reigning Some Terror on Teachers

We have as a union seen quite disturbing instances in 2019, in schools such as Maoka Junior Secondary School, Dukwi Junior Secondary School, Artesia Junior Secondary School, Baitlotli Junior Secondary School, etc, where School Heads have reigned a terror of fear and abuse on teachers. In all these instances, appeals to Ministry of Basic Education officials to intervene have been made, but to no avail, or only to receive a lackadaisical response. As BOSETU we find these dictatorial tendencies by some school administrators to be not only uncalled for, but also cancerous in that they destroy team work in schools and the moral of teachers, and as such resulting in schools performing badly. What worries the union more is that such school administrators go scotch free without any action by Ministry of Basic Education officials and continue to destroy the labour relations within the institutions.

## Unpaid Overtimes for teachers

Overtime like in previous years has remained a dominant source of conflict between school administrators and the teachers. We have seen in 2019 like in the previous years, overtime disagreements turning into fears disputes between employees and school administrators, and or the Ministry of Basic Education. We have seen such disputes this year, reaching mediation and even the Industrial Court. This issue originates from the hours of work of teachers following the use of the Public Service Act No. 30 of 2008. As explained elsewhere in this paper, government to face this issue head on and resolve it. We have seen teachers who worked during the BISA Sports competitions and the those who were engaged during boot camps being denied their overtime pay.

## The class sizes remain basting at their sims

This challenge has remained entrenched and characterizing our education system even in this year 2019. While the international trend set out by the international community

through education international is a ratio of 1 teacher to 25 students in a class, we still see a disturbing ratio in Botswana of 1 teacher to even 60 students in class. This has done a devastating blow to effective teaching and learning in our classroom environment. Government remains unresponsive in terms of action with respect to the policy on class size. During election campaigns however, as a result of pressure from BOSETU, we have seen political parties in their manifestos committing to reducing class sizes. This pledge or promise was in the manifestoes of all political parties including the ruling party. It remains now to be seen as to how the ruling party would move to put it into practice.

## Teachers remain bottled at Salary Scale C1

As BOSETU has always warned, the year 2019 has seen the PEMANDU consultancy confirming the worst of the fears that the union has had and has warned about in the past years. As a result of the large number of the teaching cadre in the country, about 26 000, and the narrowness of the progression structure of the teaching profession, as one goes up the ladder, the PEMANDU consultancy report indicates that about 85.2 % of the teachers are trapped and bottled at salary scale C1, having reached the ceiling of the last notch of the scale as they would not progress to next scale of D4 which is a promotional scale. One could only get promoted if a vacancy exists and such vacancies are few. This has resulted in teachers remaining in the same notch of C1 scale for many years without getting any change in their salaries even when they are performing well. This has damped the teachers' moral and has affected their delivery.

## Crisis of the Brigades

The year 2019 has seen the situation at the brigade institutions reaching a crisis proportion. BOSETU has always maintained that placing the skills development aspect of education at the Ministry of Employment is a misguided practice as training and skills development are not part of issues employment and labour. We have this year experienced shear confusion with respect to what is supposed to happen at the brigades.

Brigades institutions admitted large numbers of students beyond their institutional capacity, the institutions could not be accredited by BOTA, new unaccredited courses without instructors were introduced, instructors were taken for unrelated physical training by the soldiers and former soldiers were taken in campus to physically train students. This, no doubt, was a shear state of confusion that needs to be expeditiously addressed as we move into 2020.

## Clustering of Senior Teachers with responsibilities with those without at Primary Schools

This challenge has yet again reared its ugly head during this year 2019 and ultimately finding its way into the 2019 negotiations on PEMANDU report and its recommendations and the conditions of service. This is an anomaly that was created by the implantation of the unravelling of the levels of operation that were introduced by the 2004 scheme of service for teachers. This is a matter that in view amounts to a discriminatory practice and we are hopeful that it will be addressed by the on – going mediation process.

## The Passing of the Teaching Council Bill by Parliament

This 2019 saw the passing of the Botswana Teaching Council Bill which when the President ascends, it will be a law. The Bill is meant to establish a regulatory body for teachers in Botswana. The council would have powers to license teachers and admit teachers to practice in the country. It will set ethical standards for teachers and monitor compliance. While this is a progressive step to professionalize teachers, BOSETU remains vigilant and on guard that is not used as a punitive instrument against teachers.

## Government defies court order to implement judgment on paying Accounts & Business Studies teachers scarce skill

Even this year, government has remained defiant and has refused to obey the order of Justice Nthomiwa to pay all teachers offering Business Studies and Accounts scarce skills. The union ended up approaching the courts seeking for an order of contempt of court which was actually given,

but government still remained defiant. The union is of the view that government as the custodian of the laws of the country is setting a wrong precedence that orders of the courts orders could be violated with impunity.

## 2019 Political Matters

### BOSETU PARTNERS WITH DUMA FM TO ENHANCE DEMOCRACY

2019 was a special year for the country in many respects, and in particular that it was a year that the country's general election was to be held. As the year began, the hype associated with electioneering had already started. BOSETU, as a progressive trade union and a socio – political player within the country's democratic space partnered with Duma FM to sponsor parliamentary candidates debates across all the 57 constituencies. As an enhancer of democracy, and part of the civic society, whose responsibility is among others to protect the country's democratic credentials did so to give the electorates an opportunity not only to assess the ability and credibility of those wishing to represent them, but also to give them an opportunity to assess the manifestos of different political formations. This in our view became yet another milestone achievement of the year 2019 by the union.

### The Feud between past immediate President and the current President

2019 has experienced an intense fight between former President Ian Khama Seretse Khama and the current President Mokgweetsi Masisi. Botswana has historically enjoyed a relatively stable political environment with a multi-party democratic tradition that is envied continentally which has been seriously undermined by ongoing tussle between the Former President Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama and his hand - picked successor Mokgweetsi Masisi. The net result of this deeply personal feud has been the paralysis of normal day to day activities making a proper and informed assessment of Masisi's short tenure in office a difficult exercise.

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