Awakening to Reality

Instructional challenges faced by teachers in remote schools

Reginald Oats
Department of Educational Foundations University of Botswana.

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ABSTRACT

This study is a descriptive survey conducted on four primary schools based in the Kgalagadi North Sub-District in Botswana with purpose to cross-examine the instructional challenges faced by teachers based at schools in remote areas. After establishment of validity, interviews were conducted (individual and focus group). Results show that all the four remote schools sampled had homogeneous instructional challenges. Of the challenges, teachers identified discipline and academic challenges as a major factor in all the sampled schools. Even though parental support related challenges did not feature prominently in this study, the study identified that parents we not active in supporting their children in learning. The frequency of these challenges was found to be hampering positive academic output. These challenges were perceived to be capable of adversely affecting Botswana's national objectives of Vision 2016 pillar of, an educated and informed nation. The study found out that learner achievement at remote schools is low and that parents are not actively involved in their children's education. The final thought of the study was that teachers based at remote schools need capacity building to deal with instructional challenges to enhance their effectiveness. On this ground, the researcher agrees with literature on the need for family learning as an approach to assist parents to support their children.

Introduction

The 1948 United Nation Declaration on Human Rights pronounced education as a basic right for all. Consequently different countries had to put all efforts towards provision of education all sectors of the population. This is primarily by reason that education is deemed as the key to sustainable development in the 21st century (Coben and Llorente, 2003). Along the same, the 1990 World Education Forum reiterated the world's obligation to basic education. Further the 2000 Education For All (EFA) goals and in particular Goal 2 indicated that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality (UNESCO, 2002). This claim implies that all children regardless of their location must have the opportunity to fulfill their right to quality education in schools at all levels in Botswana. Simply put, Botswana as a nation state must make efforts to offer free and compulsory primary education in accordance with the UN convention on rights of the child.

It is observed that Botswana as signatory to the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) is bound to achieve EFA goals targeted for 2015, which emphasizes inclusive education and non-discriminatory education practices (UNESCO, 2009). As a matter of fact, Botswana's educational objectives is to provide quality and accessible education at all levels with an endeavour to contribute to socio-economic advancement of the country. In addition, a close look at the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 budget allocation show the Ministry of Education and Skills Development was allocated the largest share. This makes one to believe that the Government of Botswana recognizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for all learners

as expressed in various policy documents such as the Revised National Policy on Education (1994), vision 2016 (1996), and Inclusive Education Policy (2008). As such the Government's commitment to educational provision to all sections of the population is not doubtful.

Against the country's policy richness' and aspiration to transmit quality education to all as articulated above, it is clear that students based at remote settlements are not doing well to realise the country's vision and this is a cause for concern. In fact this study is conducted at a time the entire nation of Botswana is concerned about the decline of student's performance at both primary and secondary school level. This condition is worse in remote areas. This academic performance may imply that teachers based at remote areas of the Kgalagadi North Sub-Region are faced with a mammoth task to transmit quality education to students.

This paper argues that equal educational opportunities may only be achieved if government takes a further step of ensuring that all students receive quality education by giving teachers adequate support. Such an achievement is only conceivable if the government trains teachers to be responsive to the diversity that they find inside classrooms (Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa, & Moswela, 2009). Otherwise it is tantamount to exclusion if children from disadvantaged ethnic minorities go to school but fail miserably with grades that do not allow them to further studies at senior secondary school level. To overcome this concern there is need to investigate into challenges within the instructional environment at remote schools that could disturb the educlional goals that have been set. As such this study investigated into instructional challenges faced by teachers at remote areas relative to academic, discipline/behaviour and parental support.

Tele:
E-mail address: reginald.oats@mopipi.ub.bw

Theoretical framework

This study used the Bronfebrenner (1977),s bioecological systems model as a conceptual tool so as to demonstrate understanding on the impact of interaction between students at remote schools and teacher practices, parental support, and environmental conditions by viewing them as systems in themselves (Landsberg, Kruger & Swwart, 2011). According to this theory, child development takes place within four (4) nested systems of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. These systems all have points of contact. This papers position itself on the microsystem and macrosystem only. With regard to the microsystem, there is close interaction between the family as the first institution all children belong to, the school and peers. These relationship contributes to a great extend in the final product that comes out of a school. At the macro-level, there are factors such as economic, social structures alongside with values and believe systems of particular communities (Donald, et al, 2012). For instance if schools in remote areas are not equipped with necessary teaching material or parents fail to support their children because of poverty, the effect will be experienced by learners and later their academic performance will deteriorate. This is given the fact that the influence of the macro-level penetrates through all other layers (Tabane, 2014).

Statement of the problem

The entire nation of Botswana is worried about the deterioration of student's performance at both primary and secondary school level. The situation is worse in remote areas. This could imply that teachers based at remote areas of the Kgalagadi North Sub-Region are faced with mammoth tasks to transmit quality education to students. This condition is capable of adversely affecting the national objectives of Vision 2016 pillar of an educated and informed nation. This paper contends that equal educational opportunities may only be achieved if government takes a further step of ensuring that all students receive quality education by giving teachers adequate support. Such an achievement is only conceivable if the government trains teachers to be responsive to the diversity that they find inside classrooms. Along the same parents and the private sector need to come in to give support to schools at remote areas of the country.

Objectives of study

The objectives of this study were to investigate the challenges faced by teachers based at settlement schools with relative to:
1. Academic
2. Discipline/behavioural
3. Parental support challenges

The nature of remote areas in Botswana

According to 2003 RADP Report (Republic of Botswana, 2003b) there are 65 RADs settlements with primary schools. In these settlements the medium of communication is through local community languages such as Sesarwa, Sekgalagadi, Seyeyi and Sembukushu, which are not recognised as official and are not allowed either in the school premises, or in the school curriculum. Effectively remote areas are distinguished by their traditional values, which also characterise their socio-economic and political cultures. The distinguishable ethnic minority groups in the RADPs settlement are Basarwa, Bakgalagadi, Baherero, Bayeyi, Bambukushu and other non-Setswana speaking ethnic groups who live largely in the Central, North West, Kgalagadi, Kweneng, Gantsi and Southern Districts.

These communities are detached from the mainstream of socio-lingual, socio-economic and socio-political activities, due to inadequate infrastructural development, low level of education of parents, minimal opportunities for economic advance, and lack of information and knowledge about various opportunities that exist in the country.

The Kgalagadi District is one of the widest districts and least developed in Botswana. The word Kgalagadi means "land of the thirst'' .The district is in the south western part of Botswana, lying along the country's border with Namibia and South Africa. The administrative center is Tsabong. The district covers a vast area of the Kalahari Desert. It has a total area of 105,200 km², and has a population of only 42,000 according to 2001 census. More than one-third of the district is covered by the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, which extends into South Africa. The district is divided into two (2) sub-district of Kgalagadi South and Kgalagadi North. This study was based at the Kgalagadi North Sub-District which has a total of nine (9) schools based at remote areas.

There is need to hasten to point out that the outlook of rural areas has changed dramatically and so have the needs of the rural people (Pelotshweu, 2013). For instance the Rural Area Development Programme (RADP), the programme has not only come to represent the aspirations of the poor but social inclusion as well. The objectives of this programme are to address spatial and social inequalities, attract business activities and help in economic growth of rural settlements by empowering beneficiaries to sustainably fend for themselves.

Further through a 2010 cabinet directive on RADP, government made a deliberate effort on Affirmative Action to assist people in remote areas improve their living conditions by availing opportunities and resources. The key issues of the programme are that of economic empowerment with an endevour to eradicate abject poverty and development of communities by helping them lead sustainable livelihoods. These initiatives are realized through an array of intervention measures such as backyard gardening and other poverty eradication initiatives. The programme has helped beneficiaries to significantly reduced reliance on government hand-outs. While this is the case, the status of education for the ethnic minority groups in the remote areas of the Kgalagadi District is a serious concern. This is a must do for Botswana Government because, the 'voice' of the children, parents and teachers in the hard-to-reach ethnic and often marginalised minorities in remote areas cannot be ignored if the goal of improving pedagogical practices and the teacher education programmes toward achieving 'education as a human right' and 'education for all' is to be realised (Pansiri, 2008)

Educational challenges in remote areas

The quotation below explains it all:

Quality of teaching in rural schools: Teaching is often of poor quality and is poorly supported. Isolated conditions in rural areas fail to attract high quality teachers. This situation is made worse by the fact that poor infrastructure obstructs support from advisory agencies. Not only are teachers served less by support services, they often have fewer print and other teaching resources (UNESCO, 2011).

One major challenge to education in remote areas of Botswana is observed as the use of unfamiliar language. Minority communities in remote areas are excluded because education programmes use unfamiliar languages and de-contextualized curricula, there is no national qualifications framework to sufficiently recognize the prior learning

experiences of minorities, and there is no state partnership with nongovernmental organizations in the delivery of education (Maruatona, 2011). Children whose main language is not the language of teaching in schools are likely to have added academic challenges and at times may even drop out of school or fail especially in early grades or standards. Research has shown that children's first language is the optimal language for literacy and learning throughout primary school (UNESCO, 2008a).

However, In spite of growing evidence and demand from general public Ministry of Education in Botswana insist on the one-size- fits-all approach of using Setswana and English as exclusive national and official languages and this condition leads to cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities (Maruatona, 2011). This means excluding other languages and with them the children who speak them (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2006). It is observed that Adults and children based at most remote areas in Botswana are not fluent in writing and reading any of the two languages of Setswana and English and this ailment renders such learners to be excluded because the 'foreign languages' hampers their learning. This contradicts the country‟ s aspirations to provide equal educational opportunity to all citizens by the year 2016 (Republic of Botswana, 1997). It is vital that Batswana children be educated through local languages [alongside English] to enable them to participate in national development and in the understanding of any issues of local and national importance (Adeyemi, 2008; Molosiwa, 2005).

The other challenge is that of poverty which has inevitable overlap with student learning and academic yield. While Botswana has been hailed as a beacon of economic controlling and a shining example of democracy in Africa, inequality is still a challenge. Botswana was considered one of the best performing economies, with an estimated per capita income of US$6,000 as at the end of 2009 (Bank of Botswana, 2009). In contrast to Botswana's impressive economic growth, good governance and prudent macroeconomic and fiscal management, the country faces high levels of poverty and inequality as well as low human development indicators (World Bank, 2015). The World Bank continues to report that while poverty rates declined from 50% at independence to just over 19% today, significant pockets of poverty remain, especially in rural areas. I therefore confidently argue that poverty crosses over to affect student learning and that one challenge to educational advance of children in remote areas of Botswana is poverty.

School readiness mirrors a child's ability to succeed academically and socially at school. It requires physical well-being and appropriate motor development, emotional health and a positive approach to new experiences, age-appropriate social knowledge and competence, age-appropriate language skills, and age-appropriate general knowledge and cognitive skills (Kagan, 1992). It is well documented that poverty decreases a child's readiness for school through aspects of health, home life, schooling and neighborhoods. Simply put, poverty affects a child's health and well-being and therefore their readiness for learning. For instance, substandard housing, inadequate medical care, and poor nutrition can affect the rate of childhood disease, premature births, and low birth weights, all of which affect a child's physical and cognitive development. Such factors inevitably influence students' ability to benefit at school from instruction. Living in daily economic hardship can also adversely affect students'

mental health (Winters & Cowie, 2009), self-efficacy (Conrath, 1988, 2001), self-image (Ciaccio, 2000a, 2000b), and motivation to do well in school (Beegle, 2006).

Viable strategies to improve academic performance in remote schools

In demand to attain worthy education in remote areas, teachers have to be trained and supported at all levels because teaching students in these areas in the 21st century is an intellectually challenging task and it is undeniable fact that in various teaching and learning environments they face challenges that are related to instruction (Rammolai, Seanego & Macheng, 2015).

Below I suggest strategies schools in remote places in Botswana could adopt and utilize for improved academic performance: These are the formation of clusters, altering the environment and empowerment of students and increase in incentives.

First is the issue of formation of clusters and generation of greater collaboration by schools in remote areas.The need for collaboration of school between the school and community and school and other schools needs no overemphasis. Clustering according to Jones (2009) refers to an initiative where schools are grouped or group themselves together to a particular purpose such as sharing resources they have, facilities and staff. Thus there is greater need for schools in close proximity to develop and nurture mutual relationships with a view to help each other. Clustering of schools in remotes areas of the Kgalagadi can help mainly by reason that some are doing better. Jones (2009) further denotes that Clustering of remote schools can bring out benefits such as making available a wide range of resources both material and human. Along the same vein, it can foster a broad sense of communality and unification and reduce the insular nature of being at a small remote school. As such clustering can when done well and mutually mediate a wide range of challenges schools in remote areas of Botswana face and in the process culminate to academic improvement.

Another approach is to alter the environment and empower students: Remote areas on their own do not motivate any teacher or student towards learning. Hence, the need for schools to work towards the creation of a favorable environment amid an unfavorable environment in remote areas. To realize this, schools could work towards changing the school environment to mitigate stress and resolve potential compliance issues with students who do not want to change. Among others, a plausible technics to use is to reduce homework stress by incorporating time for home work in class or right after class. This is given the fact that students in remote areas do not take home work seriously and that they do not have supportive parents near them at home, hence doing homework at school would be better. Furthermore, teachers could incorporate strategies such as role plays and physical activities such as walks, relays or games and creative activities such as drawing or playing instruments, hands–on activities such as building or fixing into class activities to transit certain knowledge (Sameroff, 1998). Alongside with this strategies should be student empowerment to increase their perception of control over their environment by showing them how to better manage their own challenges. For instance, instead of telling students to act differently, take time to teach them how to act differently (Sameroff, 1998)

I also propose the use of incentives & and compulsory service for remote areas:

I am fully aware that currently there are incentives for government employees based at remote schools such as an allowance and transportation to major towns for shopping at month ends but I argue that this are not adequate. I argue for the need for Government of Botswana to consider an approach of compulsory service, preferential access to training and financial incentives for working in remote areas. Teachers working in remote areas could earn double the salary of teachers working in urban areas with a view to attract best teachers to remote schools. Alongside government could increase their chances for being recruited into the prestigious civil service with state-subsidised specialist training. Botswana could adopt such an approach if educational needs of children in remote areas are the concern of the government.

As a long term vision there is also need to transform teacher training to equip teachers to teach effectively in rural remote areas. To realise this, student-teachers need practicum placements in remote schools so as to have a positive impact on their attitudes towards living among remote communities. I believe strategies that encourage student-teachers to train in rural areas may improve recruitment and retention of quality teachers in these areas. My trust is full to capacity that encouraging and retaining the right teachers in remote schools would clearly benefit students in such areas.

Research methods

This is a qualitative interpretive study undertaken through a case study design. A qualitative research design was employed to accommodate ethnographic techniques. This study used a case study approach as a strategy for data gathering. A case study is described as an approach that investigates a few cases, often just one, in considerable depth (Mouton, 2001; Gorman, Hammersley & Foster, 2000). For this study multiple case study approach was used wherein a number of cases are studied to investigate some general phenomenon. It is for this reason that in this study multiple case study approach was chosen to fit the phenomenon being studied and to gain the information-rich and thick descriptions of data portrayed by Patton (2002) and Rubin and Rubin (2005). In this study the use of multiple case studies helped to select sites and participants with varied backgrounds and experiences on teaching at remote schools. Key research methods consisted of focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews. These methods allowed the researcher to investigate phenomena in detail. This study targeted all primary schools based at remote areas in the Kgalagadi North Sub-Region in Botswana. The area has nine (9) schools at remote areas and four (4) primary were selected through the probability sampling approach. Probability sampling was preferred because it allowed each unit in the sample identified to have an equal chance of being selected. Then random sampling was employed to select teachers. Three (3) teachers were selected from each school for both the individual and focus group interview.

Ethical considerations

Relevant ethical protocol was observed throughout – permission to conduct the study was sought from the Permanent Secretary as standard procedure and from the regional office and schools, consent was sought from the participants after they were assured confidentiality, anonymity and liberty to pull out from the study at any point.

Data collection

Unstructured open-ended questions were used for focus group interviews with, and semi-structured questions for individual interviews. The choice for unstructured interviews was informed by the fact that interactive discussions we envisaged with the participants. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews were considered because they would allow probing beyond the answers given by participants to prepared questions (Opdenakker, 2006). Data was gathered at the beginning of 2015 after appointments were made with the participants. The participants were interviewed during their free time in school campuses in order not to disrupt their time and class attendance. Data analysis followed stages of transcription, intensive reading to familiarise with data before coding for patterns and themes, category formation and triangulating between schools and types of interviews.

Findings and discussion

As open ended questions were used for data collection, the researchers analysed the collected data by searching for the statements that reflect various commonalities or aspects of particular relevance to the study. The data from each school was first exposed to within case analysis, where data from each school was analysed separately. Then cross-case analysis was done by compiling the findings to come up with the final data that was coded into themes. Merriam (2009) stated that in multiple-case study, within case analysis of each study is first done as a comprehensive case, and then analysed. After that, cross-case analysis was done after within-case is completed it arose from findings that teachers based at schools in remote areas of Botswana face Multiple and diverse challenges. These range from academic to discipline related and parental support. Data is therefore presented under three themes of academic challenges, discipline related challenges and parental support.

Academic challenges

With perspective to academic challenges, teachers indicated that their plight of teaching at remote schools is that of academic performance which is very low in most cases. When asked what the challenges they face at remote areas regarding instructional delivery, one teacher said,

Inability to read and write and this discourage them as they are reluctant to even attempt to do school work'. In some instance some learners go to the extent of even failing to hold a pen properly; hence their writing is not legible.
Closer to above statement, another teacher opined thus,

what I experience as a major challenge here is the fact that learners generally lack interests in learning and as such often loss textbooks and exercise books, hence even if you give them homework its waste of time. Along with these is constant absenteeism'

Responses on challenges faced also covered issues of material resources and support from relevant authorities. Teachers pointed out that remote schools do not receive support equal to non-remote schools. One teacher who was becoming emotional indicated that there is often acute shortage of teaching and learning material at schools in remote areas. Another said: " we have a serious   lack/ shortage of resources such as photocopiers, printers' cartridges, photocopying papers and we think the lack of these resources contribute a lot to poor academic performance''.

When asked to explain the root cause of this acute shortage of resources the teacher said:

Our council is not doing enough when it comes to the supply of consumable material such as the above. Pupils have to hustle for them and as for the settlement where there is no employment or source of money at home, it becomes a

serious challenge. The little that Council supply is always reserved for PSLE and STD 4 examinations.

For another teacher agricultural material/equipment was a challenge. The teacher indicated that Garden tools, Poultry equipment, Animal was not supplied by the council yet learners are taught about these tools in agriculture. He further pointed out that learners are therefore not exposed to these yet exams are always full of questions related to the above material/equipment. ''We suspect that contribute to our low performance as we know that pupils learn and understand through visual and exploring'. He reiterated

Other academic challenges mentioned during various focus group discussions worth mentioning include the following:

➢ Low esteem in academic ability of learners in remote areas.
➢ There is often delay in replacing relocated teachers
➢ Language barrier in some subjects like Setswana, English

Discipline / Behavioural Challenges

On the question of challenges relative to learners discipline or behaviour, teachers gave different observations. One respondent stated, "No. in my class most learners are well behaved because I lay proper ground rules from onset"

Another indicated, "well learner behaviour is linked to or determined by the teachers classroom management style so as for me I hardly have learners who misbehave because I do not joke with them but seriously beat them''.

Majority of teachers however indicated that there was no discipline among leaners in remote areas and that this condition contributes largely to their failure.

One respondent opined: "Unwelcoming behaviour like making noise in class, rude behaviour and use of vulgar language were rampant at this school''

Closer to this response another teacher said,'' sir learners here do not concentration when one is teaching as they can rather sleep in class during active instructional delivery, in some cases they frequently ask for permission to go to the toilet'.

Further discipline related challenges raised during focus group interviews include:

➢ Peer influence or pressure which misleads promising leaners.
➢ Alcohol and drug abuse
➢ Disruptive learners who are never settled in class
➢ Fast learners disturb after finishing the work
➢ Truancy or absenteeism
➢ Failure to take instructions: as shown by students not taking instructions
➢ Vandalism and theft
➢ Some students bully others at school
➢ Illicit relationships with students

Challenges relative to Parental support:

It is anticipated that parents should play a role not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and the democratisation of school governance (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). It is based on the same that teachers were asked to indicate challenges they face with regard to parental support. A number of responses were recorded majority of with show that parental support is a great challenge in remote areas of the Kgalagadi district.

One teacher said:'' parents here are mostly illiterate so their involvement in education matters is very limited. Even when they attend school meeting they never contribute in ways that could benefit us'

Another teacher closely opined that Pupils stay with grandparents who are not educated so they hardly get encouragement to do assignment'. With further probing the teachers expanded that since these are remote areas with little amenities and employment opportunities younger or educated people stay away from remote areas and as such children are left with the elder who at time have no value for education.

Discussion of findings

The two major issues that emerged from findings under the themes of academic, discipline/behavioural and parental support challenges were found to be ubiquitous in all four schools sampled. It is worth mentioning from onset that the frequent challenges in all the sampled schools are the discipline related and that these challenges permeate to affect the academic performance. Research findings by Garegae (2008) also show that in Botswana, teachers have to deal with a multiplicity of challenges like violence, vandalism, theft, truancy and reluctance to do homework.

Some of the more frequent challenges faced by teachers are that learners at remote schools do not concentration when teachers are teaching. This implies that their regard for schooling is very low. Teachers reported that at times they literally sleep in class during active instructional delivery and in others cases frequently ask for permission to go to the toilets. This attitude to schooling is deemed by teachers as one of the major contributory factors to poor performance of schools in remote areas of the kgalagadi district. The disturbing element is that inspite of students understating of particular concepts teachers proceed with the syllabus to the detriment of such students because they do not want to lag behind with the syllabus coverage. This findings are in agreement with findings by Rammolai, Mareledi & Macheng (2015)who indicated that The students' negative behaviour is a problem despite school rules and regulations that are in place. Their study though was based at one of the cities in Botswana revealed that students exhibit rude behaviours, use vulgar language against the teachers and their peers as a consequence of negative peer influence and that teachers have a huge challenge in dealing with students.

Findings indicated that learners have inability to read and write and that this condition affects their whole learning effectiveness. Literature has indicated that minority communities in remote areas are excluded because education programs use unfamiliar languages and de-contextualized curricula, there is no national qualifications framework to sufficiently recognize the prior learning experiences (Maruatona, 2011). Along the same Fairclough (1989) indicates that language is a great social tool that helps people to develop, grow, link up and understand their being. Development of one's indigenous language is, therefore, essential for society's wellbeing. It can thus be argued that the poor academic situation in remote settlements can be attributed to the language of instruction. In Botswana, the languages used in education serve as the ruling elite mechanism to distribute unequal cultural capital and power relations (Maruatona, 2011).

Lack of parent support was mentioned by all participants of this study. Teachers are adamant that with responsive parental support they could improve performance in remote areas. This is in line with Duckworth, (2008) argument that most children have two main educators in their lives – their parents and their teachers. However, parents are the prime educators until the child attends an early years setting or starts school and they remain a major influence on their

children's learning throughout school and beyond (Duckworth, 2008). Clearly it means school and parents both have crucial roles to play. However, in remote areas mainly by reason that most parents are illiterate support is not beneficial. Findings disclosed that in most cases children stay with their grandparents who are no educated themselves and as such do not give school children needed support and requisite motivation. It thus becomes very difficult for such parents to inspire theirs children and show them how to take charge of their own educational journey. Lack of motivation to work hard in school; lack of resources like stationary, textbooks, furniture and lack of parental involvement have also been shown to make classroom instruction difficult in sampled remote areas.

Conclusion

Results show that all the four remote schools sampled had homogeneous instructional challenges. Of the challenges, teachers identified discipline and academic challenges as a major factor in all the sampled schools. Therefore a conclude is made that teachers based at remote school have serious challenges in handling effective teaching and learning due to students unwanted behaviours which inevitably affect their academic output. Even though parental support related challenges did not feature prominently in this study, the study identified that parents we not active in supporting their children in learning. A local pastor in his speech at one of the remote areas confirmed the finding by indicating that those teachers were working hard to produce the best results, while parents had become spectators (Seloka, 2015). On this note, researchers maintain that parental involvement is the key to educational success and that all means should be explored to bring parents on board. On this ground, the researcher agree with literature on the need for family learning as an approach to assist parents to support their children. Family learning broadly refers to approaches which engage parents and children jointly in learning. This can include family literacy and numeracy programmes to improve the basic skills of parents and the early literacy of children and may include joint parent/child sessions to support early reading skills.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study that teachers based at remote schools face challenges in the execution of their mandate, the researchers recommend capacity building for them to enable them deal with these problems effectively to enhance their teaching and learning initiatives. Teachers are key in transmitting quality learning to student as such their continuous capacity building to deal with challenges that emerge from time to time is of importance. Along the same, parents have to be encouraged to be involved in educational issues to assist teachers deal more effectively with their children to enhance performance and curb acts of deviance within the schools. It is also necessary that both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes are improved in order to train and prepare teachers for these not-easy-to-reach remote areas. As this study cannot be generalised, further research is necessary in other regions of Botswana with remote schools to reveal a true picture of prevailing challenges in remote based schools.

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