

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The starting point of this study was to trace the whereabouts of the 1997 graduates of the BEd programme of the University of Botswana. This survey was carried out to find out what happened to their career paths and workplace practices after completion of the degree and what informed and influenced their choices and preferences. This was done to establish whether the degree was instrumental in influencing their choices and preferences.

Interesting theoretical insights emerged from the study. From the responses of the graduates one gets the sense that the BEd has empowered them as individuals, given their overall description of how the BEd programme affected them. They claimed to be more informed, more focused, more perceptive and more receptive. Even though the degree was meant to enhance the teachers' professional practices in the workplace as recommended by the NCE (1977), the degree seemed to have gone beyond that. Data shows that instead of using their newly acquired skills to improve professional practice in the workplace, graduates left the primary sector and sought jobs elsewhere. This move is corroborated by evidence from the literature review, as provided by Blaug (1987) and Carnoy (1999); that degrees lead to increase in mobility of workers.

Teachers actually believed that the degree could be a solution to the problems they experience in primary schools. Accounts of why the graduates applied for the degree points to this factor. Many applied for the degree because they felt they needed to upgrade themselves so that they could be able to handle the challenges in the schools.

There is a serious mismatch of the programme and the current developmental needs of the teachers. The study reveals that a reasonably large number of the graduates left the primary sector to join the Ministry of Education as education officers, the Department of Teacher Training and Development as lecturers, as well as UB as lecturers. Blaug (1987) and Carnoy (1999) maintain that a degree qualification makes it easier for graduates to move between jobs, since they have the autonomy to make particular choices. This has serious implications for manpower shortage of highly qualified

people in the primary sector. Furthermore, this means a misdirection of resources for the primary sector in training them.

In their experiences, graduates believed that the degree had the potential of providing a base for upward mobility. In reality they felt that they had certain kinds of interests as they expressed that they wanted jobs with better remuneration, progression prospects and status. These represent the current trends on what graduates want, namely for their own interests to be incorporated. By this view they were attacking the validity of the claim that professionalising the degree leads to improvement of professional practice in the workplace. They felt that their interests were not addressed and took action by looking for fulfillment in other sectors. Success of any policy depends on the extent to which those for whom it is made can place their interests in it. If their interests are affected it follows then that it will impact on them. Realisation of the policy exists in constraints caused by what graduates expect of the degree.

Improvement of professional practice not only resides with a degree qualification. The importance of provision of incentives in the workplace is paramount. The decision to professionalise degree courses was not preceded by measures to motivate the teachers. After resolving to improve professional practice there was need to look at the context in which teachers were to operate, because the environment dictates what kind of teacher exists. Improvement of professional practice and provision of incentives are part of a package, to be addressed holistically, since they align well with one another. When incentives are not there workers become highly de-motivated, further rubbing of onto poorer students. Therefore it is highly critical to take into account emotional dimensions, e.g. fear, frustration and anxiety, since emotions and intellect can often be in conflict with one another.

The greatest misconception of the degree is that improvement of professional practice comes about with a degree qualification only. It is not true because the teachers have it and other things are standing in the way of this to happen. The second misconception of the degree is that since the BEd is a professional teaching degree it would enhance professional practice in the workplace. Neither is this true, because the teachers obtained it but then left the primary sector. Evidence provided in the data

reveals that the context in which teachers were to operate was problematic, as evident in their responses.

Briefly, the study argued that a BEd (Primary) programme was introduced at university level but it seems the degree failed to achieve its objective. This is because its implementation was largely severed as teachers chose to leave and its intentions were not realised. Evidence from the data showed that most of the graduates were dissatisfied with the lack of provision of incentives in the workplace and as a result settled for jobs they felt would be fulfilling and satisfying. This is due to the fact that degrees do different things. Supporting evidence from the literature review also points to the fact that degrees increasingly lead to autonomy, mobility and flexibility of labour (Blaug, 1987; Carnoy, 1999). When degrees are designed they do not take into account complexity of the things that teachers are faced with at the workplace, where some of the challenges have nothing to do with qualifications conferred by the degree. These include salaries, personnel interrelations, lack of promotion prospects and professional roles being devalued. These factors prompt teachers to leave, while some may be more competent they still need degrees in this information era. In addition to professionalising the degree, they may need an enabling context to do their work.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for this study:

A major recommendation of the study is that the University should review systematically the objectives, content, and strategies of delivery of degrees targeted at professional development. Currently the BEd degree is not doing that.

Government should look more deeply into the structures of the education system for solutions into the problems experienced there. It should interrogate all points and make reform where necessary. Government would not be wise if it does not realise that improvement of professional practice would not come about with de-motivated workers if their professional practices are to improve. Improvement of professional

practice lies with all structures in place that will ensure that teachers do their work with ease.