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### **BOFESETE Position on Double Shift Sessions**

Botswana Federation of Secondary School Teachers (BOFESETE) is not in agreement with government position that the Double Shift sessions be introduced in our schools as soon as January 2006. Although this is a pilot project, the speed and circumstances of the introduction are not conducive for a successful implementation.

BOFESETE's reservations about the introduction of this programme emanate from a number of concerns.

#### **Why Double Shift**

Double Shift was introduced in a number of countries to increase access to both primary and secondary schools.

Double shift is common mainly in underdeveloped and developing countries where child labour is exploited with impunity. Children are in full time employment during the day and go to school in the evening. Double Shift sessions are also common in countries that have been ravaged by wars, where many children have been displaced or have missed opportunity to go to normal schools. To accelerate literacy skills, the countries had no option but to introduce double shifts. Examples include Mozambique, Sudan, Rwanda, Eritrea, Jordan, West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, etc. Some few successful countries like America and South Korea also had a go at double shift. The Americans however view it as harsh and draconian.

Double Shift is also used as a cost saving measure because it is said to utilize the existing resources.

In addition, it is used in countries as a medium term solution because the country concerned is undergoing economic hardship and cannot afford to build more classrooms. The Double shift therefore becomes a temporary measure.

#### **BOFESETE CONCERNS**

##### **Poor consultation**

The main reason for not accepting the sudden implementation is because of poor consultation on the part of the Ministry of Education (MOE) as well as the unfavourable conditions in which the policy is to be introduced. The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994 (recommendation 41) called for an 'extensive consultation'. A 19th September 2005 savingram from the Secondary Department reiterated the importance of consultation by stating that there is need for 'a lot of consultation in order for the pilot to be appreciated. This is a very important component to the success of the

programme'. The National Development Plan 9 quoting from the MOE strategic plan for 2001-2006 (Key Result Area 9) calls for 'effective partnership and stakeholder satisfaction'. Vision 2016 calls on us to embrace the Asian model of "smart partnership" and that consultation is very crucial. The mission statement in the MOE website reads: "we exist to provide responsible quality secondary education to the nation through partnership, highly trained personnel, teamwork and commitment to produce knowledgeable, responsive and enterprising citizens". Teachers as key stakeholders and partners are supposed to drive the reform. Their role has however been extremely undermined despite the above positions. Other important stakeholders like the parents should have been addressed through the Parents Teachers Association, but are in the dark. The students who are to face the new changes should be psychological ready. They have not been consulted as stakeholders. In the Gambia, students bound for afternoon sessions are said to have been not enthusiastic to go to school when it was their turn for the afternoon sessions. So there is need to seriously prepare the students through consultations.

BOFESETE is not against the reform per se. It also embraces the idea. The reform obviously increases access to senior secondary schools. It is likely to create employment for the unemployed graduates (that is, if two sets of teachers are to be used for the morning and afternoon). Another researcher also observed that it helps maximize utilization of the existing resources, especially the specialist equipment in science, computer studies, D&T, H.E, etc.

### **Time-tabling**

The MOE says the first morning group will run from 0630-1230 while the afternoon will be from 1230 to 1830. The concern here is that parents were not thoroughly consulted to make their input. Parents should be ready and aware what double shift means to their children. While some may appreciate that their children will now be admitted, others may be apprehensive to mass production that compromises quality. The Ministry should get parents views before the actual implementation. The winter times are scary dark. When does a child leave home for a 0630 lesson? Probably around 0430. When does a child arrive home after 1830? How do students with disabilities fit in the double shift, especially the blind and wheelchair bound? After 1230, where do the students go because a single shift session kept them safe in school? We have been concerned by student pregnancies in the past and now with so much time at their disposal, are we not providing fertile grounds for pregnancy and other anti-social vices like drug and alcohol abuse? Some researchers say that governments incur more costs out of criminal and other anti-social activities that occur after 1230, especially in countries where recreational facilities are poor. They say government will be forced to build such facilities, but then this may be costly and as good as building additional classrooms.

### **Resources**

Some see double shift as a cost-cutting measure because it maximizes the utilization of available resources. An example of the high cost of science, computers and other specialist equipment in Design and Technology and other subjects is given. These resources also include classrooms and furniture. Maximising utilization of existing

resources is however strongly condemned because it places increased burden on school facilities, leading to higher maintenance costs and reduced lifespan. Costing the reform against building new classes is highly recommended before double shift can be started.

Since students will be released early, Social workers and other observers are saying that recreational or social centres will be needed to arrest anti-social or illegal activities that will arise due to students being idle after 1230. Already students are into drugs, alcohol, sex and other unwanted activities. All these bring into focus the issue of costing the pilot project. The costing would reveal which one is cheaper between double shift and building more classrooms for a single shift. Malaysia is said to have calculated that there will be 25% of capital saving when Double shift is introduced. This was calculated on a model and the actual implementation turned out more expensive.

The staff, work and store rooms are already overcrowded. Obviously the double shift will worsen the situation.

### **Reduced contact/teaching time**

A number of countries that have piloted double shift have expressed concern over reduced teaching time in a double shift. The time is further reduced by assembly, tea and lunch breaks, national holidays, class disruptions, registration, etc. The impression officials usually make is that time will not be lost. What officials have is the intended time while the actual time is illusive. For instance, the Phillipines' intended time was 1,497 hrs and the actual time turned out to be 960 hrs which means they lost 53% of contact time. Malaysia's intended time was 1,230 hrs and actual became 999hrs. Indonesia and Argentina's intended time was 1,120 and 913 hrs and they lost 999 and 888hrs respectively. This reduction in contact time usually leads to reduction of subjects. Has the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) been consulted to make an input? They have not. Usually it is the core subject that survives the double shift axe while optional subjects are done away with. But it is the optional subjects that are also critical in helping to mould and socialize the child. Optional subjects were mainly introduced to close the gaps left by the core subjects especially in providing solutions to social ills like HIV and AIDS, violence, environmental problems, etc. So contact time will be reduced and in the past this was recovered from study time. Unfortunately there will be no study time due to afternoon sessions.

### **Quality Education**

The reform will also drastically impact negatively on the practical subjects which have been using afternoons to practice and complete projects. This is the death of afternoon studies and remedial teaching. Contact time used to be saved by administering tests in the afternoon. Teachers have been struggling to complete the syllabii and this will now aggravate the problem due to reduced contact time. With reduced contact time, the quality of education is also alleged to go down. Besides, Double shift schools are considered as poor performers just because students admitted there are of low achievement. It therefore concentrates more on mass production than quality. The MOE's 'quality secondary education' will not be easily recognized by this system. The MOE should have consulted extensively to be able to tell the nation how double shift schools perform compared to single shift ones.

Writing final examinations will also mean that lower classes close school since it will now be occupied by the completing morning and afternoon sessions. There will be no room for the lower forms.

MOE should expand existing classrooms in technical colleges and brigades and provide quality technical skills. This is what our country need most. Other successful countries consider student competency and then guide them into institutions like farming, business, accounts, technical colleges, etc. Only those who have the potential should go for senior secondary. Others with practical competence in practical subjects should be guided to upgraded vocational institutions.

### **Extra-curricular Activities**

As to how sporting activities fit into the school programme is still a puzzle. How will one school team be produced? Does this mean that the school now has two teams for morning and afternoon? This also applies to subject clubs where a school team has to train together in preparation for academic competitions or subject fairs. Teachers also volunteer their services as coaches and with the current impasse on overtime allowance, things look pretty bad.

### **Teacher Welfare**

A number of impending issues are going to be compounded by the Double Shift. Levels of Operation and Boarding Allowance have not been sorted out yet.

Already there is a looming problem of shortage of accommodation. We need sustainable solutions. Posting teachers to their homes as a solution is not sustainable. Does that mean that such teachers will now be untransferrable? What about when one has to apply for a higher post that is not available in his/her home school? The overtime allowance is an impending issue and obviously teachers will demand a shift allowance.

### *Administration*

It has to be made clear how the establishment register of the piloting schools will be like. Will the one School Head be expected to manage the two shifts? Even if the Deputy School Head or Heads of Departments (HoD) are used, the accountability will remain with the School Head. In Trinidad and Tobago, two Deputy Heads were employed, one for morning and the other for afternoon. How many HoD's and senior teachers will be needed? To what size will the classes be reduced? Will this really create employment for the unemployed graduates? How many will be employed if at all they will be? Current government thinking is that schools are overstaffed and the existing human resources have to be streamlined. Chances are that MOE will exploit teachers already overburdened by the student-teacher ratio. Another question that begs for an answer is whether MOE is going to use two sets of teachers, one set for morning and the other for afternoon? If the same set is to be used for both morning and afternoon, how will they be paid? Senegal and Gambia paid an extra 25 and 50 % respectively for teachers working second shift. In Zimbabwe, two sets of teachers had to be used and no savings accrued though it was thought it would be a cost saving measure.

## **Conclusion**

The success of double shift is said to be dependant on the greater involvement of communities and making teachers appreciate the economic conditions of the country.

The MOE must involve teachers in decision-making and planning for effective educational reforms, otherwise teachers will have a poor perception of relevance and value of the reforms. The MOE should stop taking teachers for granted, especially in areas where they must be consulted. And the consultation should be genuine.

Education is a fundamental human right and key element in the development of individuals, communities and nations that enables them to realize their full potential. The introduction of a reform of this nature can seriously impact on students negatively. It is on these bases that we feel that more consultation and ground work should be done before such reform can be introduced. There is no reason to be in such a hurry. It is on these grounds that BOFESETE feels compelled to negotiate with government for a proper look into the double shift so that the many questions that are begging for answers are satisfactorily answered. We strongly feel that conditions are not favourable to suddenly introduce the program in a month's time. It is on these grounds that we call upon the MOE to suspend the sudden implementation and properly consult all the stakeholders first. We may be forced to seek legal redress should the government go ahead to implement this reform in the current environment.

As custodians of education, we will do our best to protect students and the nation from half cooked reforms. What the education authorities are saying about double shift is completely different from what is likely to come out of this reform. It is more than meets the eye.

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