

BOFESETE

BOTSWANA FEDERATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

P. O. BOX 404341

GABORONE

[Email: bofesete@botsnet.bw](mailto:bofesete@botsnet.bw)

TEL: 3937472/3

TEL / FAX: 570845



KNOW ALL ABOUT BOFESETE: FROM INCEPTION TO DATE

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Preamble

The Botswana Federation of Secondary School Teachers (BOFESETE) is an association duly registered with the Registrar of Societies in accordance with the laws of Botswana. BOFESETE is committed to championing the professional, social and economic interest of its members. The mission of BOFESETE is to promote the rights and interests of its members. This is done by mobilizing and organizing its constituents such that their numbers can be used to their advantage by influencing government policies and negotiating favourable terms in business transactions.

Membership of BOFESETE is open to all secondary school teachers who professionally qualifies as teachers.

1. Introduction

The BOFESETE office of Publicity and Information has compiled this booklet that contains the turbulent life of one of the most progressive and fast growing association of secondary school Teachers in Botswana. The booklet is invaluable to both subscribing and non-subscribing members and gives a broad picture of the organisations activities since inception to date. The information contained herein is not absolute. The booklet will be periodically updated.

It is our hope that after reading the whole booklet you will be in a position to assist and appreciate the growth of the organisation. The organisation is there because of you. It gets direction and strength from your input, not only through subscriptions but also through your active participation by recruiting new members and attending BOFESETE meetings, conferences and congresses. The success of the federation is therefore heavily dependent on your contribution as a Teacher in Botswana.

If you are not a member yet, please consider your position and take a positive step by signing up. Your membership makes the federation more formidable and stronger. Since its inception, the federation has seen it all. Going through this booklet will afford you an opportune moment to appreciate the strengths and challenges your organisation has gone through. New ideas of sustaining and/or improving what is already there are welcome. As much as the organisation needs you, you also badly need it on your side. You will also appreciate that quite a number of issues still need a united teaching workforce for them to be resolved. History will also tell you that a united workforce has always made great achievements.

BOFESETE membership is growing at an alarming rate as membership forms are flowing in daily. This really shows the confidence Teachers have in the organisation. It also means that school reps, regional coordinators and other committed Teachers are really working hard to get everyone on board. The Executive can only be successful with the full support of Teachers. One has to hasten to add that this support from Teachers is very crucial since the National Executive committee is made up of full time Teachers, who doubles up as classroom Teachers and Executive committee members.

Please enjoy the reading!

Thank you,

BOFESETE National Executive Committee
August 2003

2. Background history of BOFESETE.

Origins

BOFESETE stands for Botswana Federation of Secondary Teachers. It is a secondary school Teachers staff association. Its main aims are to improve the living and working conditions of secondary school Teachers as well as to improve the education system in Botswana. Concerned

secondary school Teachers who felt BTU was not doing enough in articulating secondary school Teachers' concerns formed BOFESETE in 1986 at Sedibelo motel in Mochudi.

The early years

Some of the early National Executive members include G. Phorano, L. Setei, S. Mfolwe, O. Gabasiane, T. Mbuya, W. Sentshebeng, C. Koveya, K. Pilane, T. Koodirile, S Walebowa, B.Z. Tlale, S. Sechele, Ms Lesetedi and R.Boitshwarelo. The BOFESETE constitution was approved in 1987 by the Registrar of Societies and since then BOFESETE has been operating as a duly registered organisation. During this early period, the organisation was very vocal in articulating Teachers concerns. On the other hand, the authorities saw the articulation as militancy and radicalism. Some Government officials, especially in Education, were not comfortable with the organisation and they started to frustrate the efforts of the members, particularly the leadership. Despite all these, Teachers rallied behind BOFESETE and it went on to advocate their problems like housing, non-payment of sportsmasters/mistress and claims of CJSS Teachers when attending workshops.

Early rapid years

The progressive stand of BOFESETE earned it instant support from the Teachers. The Federation grew in leaps and bounds. Actually, at the second National congress in 1988 the National Chairperson announced that the target membership of 500 had been reached.

Relationship with Ministry of Education

The radical stance and progressive nature of BOFESETE that was applauded by Teachers was received negatively by government and the top brass of the MOE in particular. They saw the arrival of BOFESETE as challenge to status quo. They regarded it as a threat to the existence of the "conservative" BTU. They regarded BOFESETE as divisive and sectarian. It was this attitude that was to prevail among Ministry officials throughout those turbulent years. As a result the ministry refused to grant BOFESETE official recognition. This, however did not dampen the spirits of the teaching fraternity. This intransigence by government represented by the MOE made the BOFESETE leadership more determined to represent the Teachers. The refusal by government to grant official recognition meant that BOFESETE could not be availed the stop order facility to allow members to subscribe directly from source. This rendered the federation weak as it did not have a constant source of income and hence could not operate efficiently. This was to become the federation's "Achilles heel" for many years to come.

The 1987 strike

This heavy handedness on the part of Government did not stop BOFESETE from articulating the problems of the Teachers. In December 1987, Teachers led by BOFESETE complained about low marking fees and conditions at marking venues. The MOE officials that was used to dealing with unorganised Teachers refused to listen to the Teachers' demands. The result was that Teachers went on strike and refused to mark JC scripts. The strike was a great success for BOFESETE as it showed its strength. (This is however a sad chapter in the history of education in this country. It could have been avoided had communication lines been opened).

Loss of leadership

During the period 1989-1990 BOFESETE lost a good number of its leaders who left teaching for better jobs. Among these were G. Phorano and L. Seitei. The MOE also embarked on some destabilising tactics that saw the vibrant organisation tumbling to the ground. The BOFESETE constitution then had a clause that forbid Deputy Heads and School Heads from being elected into the National Executive committee. This clause backfired as MOE officials promoted some members of the executive committee to deputy and headship posts. Others were transferred to rural areas where there was poor communication network in roads and telecommunication. Other leaders who left in the early 90's for greener pastures included O. Gabasiane (National Chairperson), T. Mbuya, W Sentshebeng, C. Koveya, K. Pilane and T. Koodirile. There was a leadership vacuum as some Teachers also went into hiding fearing victimisation.

BOFESETE in the mid 90's

From 1995, Teachers in the Tswapong region under the leadership of colleagues like messrs Mbanga Mbanga, Justin Hunyepa, Marcos Maedza, Gideon Nkala, Ms Agnes Meisie Mogwasa and others worked hard to resuscitate their region (In fact prior to this, the Teachers were contemplating to form an organisation unaware of BOFESETE existence). The skeletal national leadership that was left of Mr RR Boitshwarelo, Mr BZ Tlale and Ms Lesetedi got inspired by their efforts and got in touch with them to compliment each other. Through the efforts of the remaining members of the National Executive, the Tswapong Committee and other individuals in the North East, a general meeting was called at Lotsane Senior in Palapye in 1997. An executive was elected with the following office bearers:

Chairman: Messrs BZ Tlale, Vice-chair: M Mbanga Secretary General: RR Boitshwarelo, Vice-Secretary General: L Dodzi-Botsie, Publicity Secretary: JC Hunyepa, Treasurer: Ms A Motswakgalagadi, Recording Secretary: Ms A Sebopelo, Additional Members: Messrs ECL Ditau, Mr G Nkala and Mr K Kautozu. This was the turning point in the history of BOFESETE as it marked the beginning of the rebirth of the Federation.

Re-launching

After the 1997 elections, there was more groundwork to be done. First and foremost was the need to get the stop-order facility from government. Members were paying their subscriptions over the table and then issued with a membership booklet (the size of our current passport). This type of subscription was not effective since it was not centralised and did not assist the organisation to make some savings. The only best and most effective way was to get subscriptions from the membership through an established government stop-order facility. This would enable the organisation to get the subscriptions direct from source through Accountant General. The government knew how powerful BOFESETE would be to have such a facility at its disposal. Repeated attempts by BOFESETE to get the facility fell on deaf eyes. BOFESETE had to make an all out campaign to get this facility. It was in 1998 that one insurance company, Libra Insurance Agency, of Mr Ivan Kleynhans joined the fray. The company was to create job opportunities for Batswana. It was ready to start off by selling its policies to BOFESETE members. For this to take-off, BOFESETE had to have a stop-order facility for deduction purposes. The pressure exerted by the alliance of BOFESETE and Libra Insurance Agency bore results as government finally acceded to our request. The Government then asked BOFESETE to bring a minimum of 200 members for the new stop-order facility to kick off. It was quite a challenge for BOFESETE to come up with such a number within a short period of time due to the nature of our work. Libra Insurance Agency came to our rescue as it had employees on the ground who then managed to recruit Teachers for the

new registration. The stop-order facility was launched in April 1999. The facility is working very well now and existing members who have not registered with the new system should do so as well as the new members.

3. Executive and Regional Committees

After the election of the 1997 Executive Committee, another Executive Committee was due after two years as per constitution. A congress was therefore organised in 1999 at Francistown Senior School. Though invitation letters were sent to schools, radio announcements made, advertisement in newspapers and posters put up in and around Francistown, there was a poor turn up for the congress, resulting in no elections that year.

The next biennial congress was held in August 2000 at the University of Botswana where the current executive was elected. The National Executive members were; Mr B. Tlale-President (Lincwe CJSS-Mochudi), Mr. E.C.L. Ditau-Vice president (Gaborone Snr), Mr R.R. Boitshwarelo-Secretary General (Lobatse Snr), Mr L.S. Dodzi-Botsie-Vice Secretary General (Masunga Snr), Ms T. Sebogodi-Treasurer (Tlhommo CJSS- Kanye)), Mr J.C. Hunyepa-Publicity Secretary (Mowana CJSS-Mahalapye), Mr G. Mokomane-National Organising Secretary (Makhubu CJSS-S/Phikwe), Ms G. Walebowa-Women's League President (Lotsane Snr-Palapye), Ms .B Nthobatsang-Recording Secretary (Mowana CJSS-Mahalapye) and 3 additional members being Mr KC Modukanele (Madiba Snr-Mahalapye), Mr E.T. Mapii (Pekenene CJSS-Mahalapye) and Ms B. Makula (Maoka CJSS-Gaborone).

The National Executive Committee is elected during the national congress every after three years. The current (August 2003) National Executive committee members are Mr B. Tlale-President (Lincwe CJSS-Mochudi), Mr. E.C.L. Ditau-Vice president (Gaborone Snr), Mr R.R. Boitshwarelo-Secretary General (Lobatse Snr), Mr K.C Modukanele-Vice Secretary General (Molefi Snr (UB student), Ms T. Sebogodi-Treasurer (Tlhommo CJSS- Kanye), Mr J.C. Hunyepa-Publicity Secretary (Tlokweng CJSS), Mr G. Mokomane-National Organising Secretary (Rakops CJSS-), Ms R. Kelefhile-Women's League President (Lobatse Snr), Ms N. Motsumi-Recording Secretary (St Josephs College-Kgale (UB Student)) and 3 additional members being Mr E.T. Mapii (Parwe CJSS-Mahalapye), Mr J.K.Joba Sedibelo CJSS—(Mochudi) Ms K. Tshukudu (Merementsi CJSS-Mmadinare) and Ms B. Phama (Mogoditshane CJSS).

For smooth coordination and running of the organisation, regional structures have been formed. Currently, there are twenty eight (28) regions nationwide. Each region is coordinated by a Regional Coordinator. Each school must have at least two (2) School Representatives and these form the regional committee.

4. Offices: Equipment and Manpower

Through membership subscriptions, the organisation today is running its affairs in a more professional manner. It rents an office in Extension 12, plot no.3391. It pays a monthly rent of P3500,00. The office has the state of the art equipment. This includes a computer connected to internet (bofesete@botsnet.bw.), Website www.baobabbizclub.com/bofesete fax and telephone lines(570845, 3937472/3, 71437651), multi-media photo-copier, membership card processor and other pieces of furniture. A Security Services company protects the building as well as the property therein. Three ladies have been employed to provide secretarial and administrative services. Once more, one has to applaud subscribing Teachers who have made all these possible and without whom the organisation could still be operating as a briefcase one.

A four wheel Town Ace combi has been donated to the organisation by a Japanese company known as Wheels of Africa. The organisation paid P5000,00 for transportation and clearance costs. The combi has helped in touring regions like Kgalagadi, Gantsi, Okavango and Maun and is still running strong.

5. Benefits and Packages

BOFESETE has been concerned that there are no deliberate benefits and packages specifically tailored for Teachers so as to improve their working and living conditions. As a result of this, BOFESETE negotiated with a number of companies that could provide the membership with some social and economic benefits. The following are some of the benefits:

a. Legal Services

The federation's law firm is Moupo, Motswagole and Dingake. This is a local firm that has vast experience in dealing not only with civil cases but also with labour related issues. Members can use the firm for both private and professional cases and are not required to pay for file opening fees. Membership should however, write to the Secretary General about their intention to use the law firm.

b. Grievance Board

The legal service above is closely related to this board.

The Grievance Board comprises of BOFESETE President (chairperson), Secretary General, Treasurer, Women's League President, two experienced Teachers, an eminent administrator/retired or in service (non-voting and is co-opted by the National Executive, Chief Executive Officer (Secretary of the Board & non-voting), Chief Executive Officer and any person whose expertise may be desired to help the board in its work but will not have voting rights. The main duties of this board is to receive and consider complaints from the members regarding their professional treatment (unfair and unjust treatment), progression, transfers, promotions, terminations, sexual harassment, discipline and any other issue that impact on their professional work/life. If any member is aggrieved, s/he should write to the Grievance Board through the Secretary General stating his/her name, TSM no, subject, address, age, experience, etc. A summary of the complaint, stating what the real issue is, giving any relevant supporting background information, names and contact details of any witnesses is necessary.

The Federation requires the aggrieved Teachers to contribute financially to the legal expenses due to the fact that our monthly subscription of P15, 00 is insufficient to fight a sensible legal battle. As a result, complainants will contribute financially in this way:-

- i. 100% for private and non-professional matters. Members will only enjoy the free file opening facility.
- ii. 60% for professional but personal matter (where the matter benefits the aggrieved teacher alone).
- iii. 33% for test cases or precedent setting cases.

Aggrieved members will have to pay P500, 00 upfront for cases that are being taken up by the Federation lawyer. They will also sign a pledge for deductions from their salary. The case will then be handed over to the lawyer who will then advise on how the case will progress.

c. Funeral Scheme

This is one of the famous schemes that helped to launch the federation into being. Although it is unpleasant to talk about, one cannot run away from or wish death away. Each and every one of us is therefore expected to assist, especially financially, in the event of death in the family. The scheme comes out as a funeral group package. This means that all subscribing BOFESETE members should be subscribing to this scheme, as a policy requirement. The scheme covers immediate family members as well as parents and parents-in-law for a minimum premium of P27.80 per month. The member/spouse and children who are 16yrs and over get P5000, 00 each in the event of death. Children who are 6 yrs old but younger than 16 and those under 1yr including stillborn get P2000. 00 and P750. 00 respectively. Parents and parents-in-law and children 1yr and older but younger than 6yrs each get P1000.00. Dependents who are over 21 years and are neither in full time studies nor disabled are not covered. In the event of death, one has to call the office for the details about processing claims. The claims are processed within a record period of 48hrs. School reps and Heads should also advise members and/or relatives about making their claims as soon as they can within 6 months after death (after six (6) months the claim expires). Metropolitan Botswana has clarified two points of major concern. First was that they [Metropolitan] received a number of death claims whereby the deceased are not the legal parents to the member as should be according to section 6 of the contract with Metropolitan. Section 6 is said to clearly define parents to be covered. It further states that a legally recognised parent is the one whom there is a court order, or documentation clearly granting custody of the child to this person and not a letter usually written once the said parent is dead, nor a letter from the Chief confirming that the deceased was a guardian of the member. Step-parents should also have legally adopted the children in order for them to be covered, otherwise legally, marriage does not confer parenthood. The second point was that, according to the rules, children are covered up to the age of 21 [twenty one]. However, this cover can only be extended to children above this age up to the age of 25 when they are full time students and Metropolitan has been provided with such proof.

In addition, children who are incapacitated from maintaining themselves by mental or physical disability are covered up to no limit and when claims are made in this respect, they should be accompanied by a doctors' medical evidence to the effect that the said child was indeed incapacitated. The company regrets that it is not going to pay claims to any questionable covers. For further details contact BOFESETE office.

c. Computer Scheme

The Computer Scheme came about as a result of BOFESETE being seriously concerned that hundreds of Teachers are still computer illiterate and do not even have access to computers. Also of concern was that most schools do not have computers except one or two for administrative use. The main concern was that Teachers are on the forefront of imparting knowledge, skills and attitude and

therefore if there was anyone who needed a computer in this era it was a Teacher. From the Internet and other computer software, Teachers can download valuable information which can improve their teaching and hence make more meaningful contribution in improving education in our country. Besides, computers can help Teachers set tests and examinations and therefore reduce their reliance on the school Secretary to type for them. Even at home, children can improve their studies by using this piece of equipment. It is embarrassing to note that we still have Teachers who cannot switch on a computer or even make some basic computer operatives because they do not have access to such state of the art equipment. On the contrary, most government officers of comparable qualification and experience as Teachers do have computers in their offices. It was against such a background that BOFESETE had to clinch a deal with Apple Centre so that Teachers can purchase personal computers. The BOFESETE/Apple Centre computer scheme was officially launched by the Honourable Minister of Education Mr George Kgoroba in mid December 2000. The scheme enables Teachers to buy computers using the BOFESETE stop order facility. Members interested in buying computers can visit Apple Centre along Haile Selassie road in the Old Lobatse industrial site. One has a number of options of payment after choosing a computer. After paying a deposit at Apple Centre, one has to go to our offices [BOFESETE] to complete formalities of monthly deductions/instalments. The instalments depend on a number of factors like how much one has deposited, type of computer and so on. For any other details one can always enquire from Apple Centre management or BOFESETE offices.

d. BOCCIM card

Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower [BOCCIM] promotes trade and manpower development in the country. BOFESETE is a subscribing affiliate to this organisation. BOCCIM organizes workshops for capacity building. It is also important for networking purposes. As one of the benefits for the subscribing members, BOCCIM has negotiated some discounts with more than fifty businesses throughout the country that sell goods and services. These include retail stores, hotels, chemists, consultancies and many others. The BOCCIM card is used to buy from these outlets and is only sold through affiliates. Currently it is sold at P12.50. BOFESETE is also exploring other ways of benefiting from BOCCIM besides discounts.

e. Loan Scheme

BOFESETE has gone into an agreement with GenFin for a loan scheme for teachers. Teachers should be able to secure such loans when they need them.

6. Update on Issues

Besides the above social benefits that BOFESETE has come up with for the membership, the Executive puts stronger emphasis on bread and butter issues that concerns the Teacher's living and working conditions. This is an area where Teachers should really show their full support to the federation not only through subscriptions but contributing constructively as to how the issues should be handled. Some issues have been tackled but still need further research and tactical handling.

a. Rent

Savingram dated 7 September 1999 from Department of Secondary Schools about Standardisation of Rentals for Government Aided Community Junior Secondary Schools got BOFESETE to arrange a meeting with Director of Secondary Department.

During the meeting, BOFESETE raised a number of reasons to support its case against the rent hike. Some of the reasons put forth were:

i. Lack of Teacher consultation and involvement.

BOFESETE argued that the Boards of Governors in CJSS were capable enough to work out the rentals in their respective schools. The Boards comprise of the School Head, a Teacher, Chief representative, 4 people elected at the kgotla and a Minister's nominee.

BOFESETE as an important stakeholder expressed concern that it should have been thoroughly involved, consulted and its views sought for in such processes of decision-making.

ii. Purchasability of institutional houses

Teachers do not have an option of buying the institutional houses unlike other government employees who occupy BHC pool houses through government assistance. Standardising the rent to such high rate is therefore unfair for Teachers who are already demoralised by other working and living conditions.

iii. Location of houses

BOFESETE also argued that the increment arbitrarily disregards the location or area within which a house is found – urban or rural. The common practice is that the value of a house in an urban area is obviously higher than that in a semi-urban and rural area.

iv. Lack of privacy and conducive peacefulness of mind

Teachers are housed in common semi-detached institutional houses. The semi-detached houses are nothing to write home about. They are not sound proof and therefore make occupants uncomfortable since neighbours are always aware of the on-goings next door. Another inconvenience is that the toilet and bathroom are not separated and as such allows one person in at a time. The house does not have servants-quarters and garage to warrant such exorbitant rates. The controversial housing units for Teachers are therefore of substandard quality. And Teachers are still sharing in these units.

v. No allowance, package or benefit for Teachers

Currently there is no allowance, package or benefit specifically for Teachers as compared to other government officers who enjoy free housing, electricity, water and gas. In addition, most government officers share amongst themselves overtime/commuted allowance, plain clothes allowance, special hazard allowance, professional allowance, special duty allowance, spouses allowance, children's allowance, uniform grant, clothing grant etc while Teachers do not have a single allowance (see govt white papers on salary adjustments).

vi. Teacher resolution

Teachers discussed and subsequently resolved in the last National Congress (UB 2000) that rent payment should be scrapped off completely or a housing allowance should be offered. This resolution was renewed at the 2001 National Conference at Palapye and is currently a standing resolution.

This resolution is supported by the Government White paper no.2 of 1994 of the Revised National Policy on Education whereby part v states that "Commission has cited evidence received from both the Teachers and the general public confirming that the teaching profession is characterised by low morale and declining professional status. Even though Teachers salaries compare favourably with other public officers of comparable qualifications, Teachers have not received many of the benefits available to public servants due either to administrative problems or communication lapses." BOFESETE has then called upon the government to consider their request as one of the benefits.

Government position-Response

The Director was adamant that rent had to be increased so that it also matches that of the market rates. He went on to explain that rent would in fact be adjusted, and adjusted upward any way. No amount of cajoling could get the department to change its position. The Executive took the issue further to the Permanent Secretary Mr Philimon Ramatsui and later to the then Minister of Education Mr Ponatshego Kedikilwe. In all the instances, the officials declined to have rent scrapped off. BOFESETE then wrote all Members of Parliament appealing to them to assist with scrapping of rent in government schools. The Member of Parliament for Boteti, Mr Slumber Tsogwane was the only MP who responded to the BOFESETE letter and has since promised that he will assist. The current Minister of Education, Hon. GK Kgoroba says Teachers still have to convince him that they need free rent. He has since taken the issue to Parliament for rubber stamping under the pretext of cost recovery measures. However, the issue is still active and the teaching fraternity needs free rent or a housing allowance.

b. Overtime

The issue of overtime in the teaching profession is an old item and has been discussed many times. During the August 2000 BOFESETE National Congress, Teachers once more discussed and resolved that as per recommendation no. 8.16 of the 1998 Report of the Presidential Commission on Public Service Salaries and Conditions of Service, they are entitled to overtime payment. Recommendation reads:

Payment of overtime should continue to be restricted to areas where it is a regular feature of a job and where days off cannot be given to compensate for overtime...The Directorate of Public Service Management should consider all departments and decide which departments should be paid for overtime and which departments should not.

Examples abound in the teaching profession that point that Teachers are entitled to payment for working long hours.

- i) All Teachers participate in co-curricula activities that have increased with the implementation of the Revised National Policy on Education. For instance, recommendation no.32e reads:
Each student should also take at least one co-curricular activity in the form of a sporting activity, a club or a hobby that promote contact with the world of work...

These clubs have since been formed and have long been in existence. These clubs include Science, History, Maths, Home Economics, English, Traditional Dance, Music [choral], Marimba, Debating, Football, Netball, Volleyball, Basketball, Athletics, Chess, JAB, PACT, etc. Teachers as coordinators and coaches are always engaged in these activities from 1600 hrs to 1800hrs (after co-curricular activities) and in boarding schools it stretches beyond this time.

- ii. Sporting activities are daily in our schools throughout the year and are run from 1630 hrs to 1800 hrs during the week while on Saturdays and Sundays Teachers are on duty throughout the day with no payment. First term Teachers are in athletics throughout [weekdays and weekends] while second and third terms are taken up by the ball sports.
- iii. Normal school routine starts at 0630 hrs up to 1630 hrs when other government officers start at 0730 hrs to 1630hrs.

- iv. Boarding schools go on study supervision from 1900 to 2100 hrs and Teachers are on standby throughout the night with no pay.
- v. Teachers mark students' work after work hours, attend to professional workshops, seminars etc and yet they are not paid for these long hours of work.

These are some of the arguments that BOFESETE got from Teachers and has been raising with the concerned authorities. Interestingly, other government departments have long been enjoying this benefit. For instance, Botswana Police, Prisons, Local Police, BDF and others get commuted allowance/overtime [see directives on review of salaries and conditions of service.]

BOFESETE went on to explain that issues of this nature contribute in demoralising Teachers as observed by the RNPE that reads: **Commission has cited evidence received from both the Teachers and the general public confirming that the teaching profession is characterised by low morale and declining professional status. Even though Teachers' salaries compare favourably with other public officers of comparable qualifications, Teachers have not received many of the benefits available to public servants due either to administrative problems or communication lapses.**

The above points were communicated to Director of Public Service Management [DPSM] in a letter dated 12-11-2000. DPSM has since referred BOFESETE to Teaching Service Management that this issue need to be handled by them (TSM), despite the 1998 Presidential Commission on Salaries and Conditions of Service. Before talks could commence with TSM on this issue, The Tsa Badiri Consultancy came up and BOFESETE had to make its input with colleagues from Botswana Teachers Union [BTU], Association of Botswana Tertiary Lecturers [ABOTEL], Botswana Civil Service Association [BCSA], National Amalgamated Local and Central Government, and Parastatal Manual Workers Union [NALCGPMWN] and Botswana Unified Local Government Service Association [BULGSA]. It was here that the labour movements proposed that due to the nature of Teachers work regarding sporting, curricular and guidance and counselling activities an allowance was necessary. The proposal read: **We propose a PROFESSIONAL ALLOWANCE of 15% for Teachers/Lecturers. This is to take into consideration the fact that Teachers work 24 hrs a day dealing with issues like guidance and counselling and sport activities.**

Subsequent to this proposal in the Tsa Badiri Consultancy, Public Service Management Directive no. 9 of 2001 was released and has made no mention of labour movements proposal.

The Minister of Education Hon. George Kgoroba has since explained to BOFESETE that he is not yet convinced that Teachers deserve overtime payment.

c. Scarce Skills

Another issue that almost divided the teaching fraternity is that of the Scarce Skills Policy. Public Service Management Directive no.36 of 1998: Direct Entry to Scarce Skills Cadres introduced this policy in the public service.

Before implementation, BOFESETE had meetings with various Ministry of Education [MOE] officials including Teaching Service Management [TSM], Permanent Secretary Mr Ramatsui and the then Minister of Education Mr Kedikilwe. BOFESETE explained that the policy was going to divide and demoralise Teachers. The beneficiaries in teaching were to be those holding Bachelor of Sciences, Mathematics, Agriculture, Design & Technology and Dietetics/Nutrition. BOFESETE had identified some anomalies. For instance, Diploma holders in the same subject area were excluded though they taught the same level of students. Surprisingly, Diploma holding Paramedics and those in Engineering were taken on board. BOFESETE went on to explain that the engagement of hundreds of temporary and foreign Teachers was enough evidence to show that there was a serious shortage of Teachers. As a result of this and other reasons, BOFESETE called on the government authorities to make scarce skills all-inclusive for all Teachers because of scarcity of

Teachers. As there was no progress with the MOE officials, BOFESETE was forced to petition the Office of the President [OP]. While BOFESETE was still awaiting a response from the OP for a possible redress, it got the shock news that the policy has been suspended [or is it stopped?]. BOFESETE position has been that Scarce Skills should embrace all Teachers. BOFESETE has never called on the stoppage of this policy (as some people claimed) and it still wants this policy to attract more Teachers into the profession. BOFESETE does not have the power to stop government policies and if it had such powers, it would have stopped a number of policies that are not favourable to Teachers. The power to stop government policies lies with government's branch of the Executive.

d. Parallel Progression

Parallel Progression was introduced in the Public service in April 1993 following the acceptance by Government of recommendation no. 4.76 of the Presidential Commission on the Review of Incomes policy. However, for the teaching profession it was effected on 1st April 1996 and negotiations to have it backdated to 1994 implementation date were not entertained. A number of irregularities featured so much since the implementation of parallel progression.

BOFESETE raised a number of anomalies about this policy. One was that the interpretation of parallel progression for Teachers was first given as meaning that a classroom Teacher progress parallel to the school head without him/her living the classroom. Later it was explained that progression was to be against that of other public officers, although our work is peculiar. Another concern raised was that the three-year stay at one level was too long and therefore discouraging. For instance, one had to take twelve years to reach Deputy Headship or HOD post, no matter how productive one could be. Accelerated progression was also shot down under the pretext that it would be abused and encourage corruption. BOFESETE had questioned TSM why accelerated progression as per the policy was not being done.

The level of operation was another bone of contention. A Teacher with degree qualifications was disadvantaged if posted to a junior school as compared to a counterpart in a senior school. For instance, School Heads in senior schools are a scale ahead of their counterparts in junior schools even when they have the same experience and qualification. A host of other problems were identified. At the beginning of the year 2000, Parallel Progression was suspended in the Public service. When these news reached BOFESETE, the executive made an appointment to meet Director of TSM (Mr. Patrick Maphorisa then). This was to seek an explanation as to why the organisation as a stakeholder was not consulted prior to the suspension of the policy. BOFESETE was concerned that Teachers who were due for benefit would be disadvantaged financially and in other ways. The Director said that our visit was part of the consultation process and that any subsequent review of the policy would include us.

BOFESETE executive also had the opportunity to meet Education Minister, Hon. George Kgoroba and this issue was raised once more. The Minister assured the executive that for any subsequent policy review and formulation, he would ensure that BOFESETE is included. True to his words, when the recent call to review parallel progression was made (2001), BOFESETE has been invited to be part of the Review Task Force Committee. The President, Mr Baboloki Tlale was sitting in this committee and has since written all the schools to make an input. We hope the review will address the concerns Teachers raised.

Due to the October 2002 "strike", the teacher organizations met President Festus Mogae on the 7th of November 2002. In the meeting, teacher organizations raised the suspension of parallel progression as one of the reasons why teachers have decided to embark on a national strike. The President instructed that parallel progression be reinstated immediately. A court ruling around the 22nd of November 2002 also instructed government to backdate parallel progression for teachers to

1994. The government had then refused to implement Parallel progression for teachers in 1994 and had implemented it in 1996. If it was not the “strike” of October 2002, parallel progression would not have been reinstated. Around February-March 2003, the first batch of teachers started to receive letters of progression and the casualty return forms filled. August 2003, teachers have not received their back payment nor payment for the new positions. TSM said they had shortage of staff to handle the many casualty returns, a new blocking system had to be used, they had to handle over 24 thousand teachers’ files and so on. Teachers had to threaten demonstrations for them to get this information.

e. Separate Pay Structure and De Villiers Commission

The Tsa Badiri Consultancy and subsequent government White paper no. 9 of 2001 recommended that there be a separate pay structure for Teachers, nurses, police, BDF and prisons officers. The White paper further recommended that such structure should be in place by the 1st of April 2002. More than a year has passed since those recommendations were made and there is nothing forthcoming. What the Parallel Progression Task force produced has since been passed on to be the teachers separate pay structure. With the continued delay in releasing the separate pay structure, parallel progression review report as well as the unsatisfactory handling of other issues like leave encashment, scarce skills, allowances and benefits, Teachers resolved on Saturday 27th July 2002, at Linchwe CJSS in Mochudi to undertake a national peaceful public demonstration. The demonstration went on smoothly, peacefully and non-confrontational throughout the country on Wednesday 31st July 2002. This was in the afternoon and no disruption or inconvenience was caused to the running of the schools. Information from all the regions indicates that the demonstration was a huge success. Teachers really showed that united they can get their dues. It also showed that BOFESETE is a powerful force to reckon with. The demonstration was also strongly supported by the general public, Non governmental organisations (NGO's) and the private sector.

Peaceful demonstrations

Teachers’ impatience ran out when they realised that government was reluctant in releasing the separate pay structure. Teachers then resolved to embark on national peaceful demonstrations on the 31 July 2002 and on the 09 October 2002.

Industrial action—‘strike’

Teachers expectations and promises were not being fulfilled by the government. Teachers ultimately embarked on industrial action. Their main complaints are as old as history itself. Poor working and living conditions. Teachers refused to teach as from the 25-27 September 2002. These were serious BOFESETE members who could not take it no more. Other teachers’ organisations joined up with BOFESETE for another round of industrial action. This was from the 14-21 October 2003.

As a result of this action, the government instituted incomplete investigations and has since deducted some money from teachers’ salaries. Teachers have since taken this issue with their lawyers where they feel due process of the law has not been followed by government officials. The government has not provided the teachers with documentary that they were on strike. Teachers also argue that they were at the workplace and deductions should be done on someone who was not at work. Teachers expect a different charge other than the one the government has opted for and they are ready to fight to the bitter end.

De Villiers Commission

The President, Festus Mogae, announced on the 23 October 2002 that the separate pay structure that teachers and other government employees were waiting for has been cancelled. He then set up a commission on the 5 November 2002. The commission has since become popularly known as De Villiers Commission. Justice De Villiers, the commission's chair, is an Industrial court judge. The commission was to review the pay structures of the public service. Teachers and other government employees objected the involvement of the Industrial judge for possible conflict of interest. The report has since been handed over to President Festus Mogae on the 23 May 2003. Teacher organisations have read the document and dismisses it as a non-starter. The commissions' recommendations of 'smoothing out' the salaries has resulted in the deductions of teachers' salaries. Teachers fall in the C and D band where the deductions have been done. Those in superscales have received astronomically high increments.

The government has however come out clearly that the De Villiers report is not a white paper and that workers have to wait for it first. Teachers are however bracing for big fight.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BOYCOTT

Following the cancellation of the separate pay structure, teachers then resolved not to participate in extra curricular activities. The separate pay structure was viewed by teachers as something that was going to capture their unique working conditions. Teachers therefore boycotted extra-curricular activities from 14 January to 11 March 2003. This was as successful as the peaceful demonstrations and the industrial action.

This proved that teachers have the potential to fight their own battles. Many pessimists had thought that teachers would not rise to fight. After the strike and demonstrations, teachers were faced with intimidation and victimisation from some few school heads and education officers. Those in acting positions were kicked out for mediocre ones, some bound for further training were frustrated, strained relationship ensured where the school managers were not confident and so on.

f. Transfer Policy Task Force

Teachers and TSM have expressed serious concern regarding transfers. Teachers do not want to be posted or transferred to certain areas whereas TSM has a duty to send Teachers anywhere in the country where their services are most needed. This dilemma resulted in TSM initiating a Transfer Policy Task Force. The task force comprised of both Teacher organisations and MOE representative departments directly responsible for Teachers' welfare both professionally and administratively. The Vice President, Mr Eric Ditau represented BOFESETE in the task force. After extensive consultation, BOFESETE presented thus:

- i. A minimum of three years stay per school for Teachers and six years stay per school for school administrators or management staff.
- ii. A fair rotational transfer of Teachers based on classification of stations into urban, peri-urban, least remote and remotest areas.
- iii. Improvement of allowances through inclusion of curtain fees, connection of utility services, etc and use of professional movers.
- iv. Extension of RASA to all remote areas regardless of their proximity to the railway line.
- v. Non-separation of spouses or their placement in schools that are within commutable distance.
- vi. Consideration of transfers on medical grounds.
- vii. Encouragement of inter-regional transfers.
- viii. Consideration of transfers on swapping basis.
- ix. Teachers reaching retirement age to be allowed to retire near their home villages or towns.

- x. Consideration of appeals against transfers within twenty-one days and whilst the Teacher is in his/her duty station.

The final document has been released January 2002 as a **Policy on Transfer of Teachers and Lecturers**.

The policy itself was based on the Revised National Policy on Education recommendation no. 109 (i), which reads:

Teachers like other public officers should be afforded an equal opportunity, taking into account the needs of the service, to serve in all parts of the country on a fair rotational basis.

The Task Force that comprised TSM, Supervisory Departments and Teacher organisations came up with this policy:

1. That all Teachers should be transferable to address serious shortages of competences and skills as well as fill up vacant posts through promotions.
2. That movement of Teachers and Lecturers shall comply with TSM Code of Regulations, Directives and Circulars issued from time to time.
3. A rotational transfer system where Teachers/Lecturers stay a minimum of 3 years per school/college and 6 years for school Heads/Principals. Length of stay will be dictated by the exigencies of the service.
4. Schools will be classified into 4 areas namely urban, least remote, remote and remotest. Some of these areas will attract allowances as per Public Service Management directives and circulars issued from time to time.
5. As far as practicable, Teachers/Lecturers will be given 3 months notice of transfer to allow them to prepare for movement to the new duty station.
6. Teachers shall be transferred to a comparable post in any government school/college where his/her services are required.
7. Attempts will be made to transfer Teachers/Lecturers at the beginning of the year and only in exceptional cases will they be allowed any other time.
8. A Teacher/Lecturer may be transferred on medical grounds based on a recognised medical practitioner's report, and whose report the transferring authority can verify for credibility by recommending a further check-up on the Teacher/Lecturer.
9. The Transferring Authority can also consider transfers on social grounds provided the request is accompanied by relevant supportive documents like those from social workers.
10. Consideration should be exercised to avoid separation of spouses, where not feasible, they should be within commutable distances.
11. Teachers who wish to swap duty stations will be considered on the strength of their reasons and only if they have similar subject specialisations, grades and where possible the same qualifications.
12. There shall be a Transfer Board to consider transfers on behalf of the Transferring Authority.
13. The allowances available to Teachers/Lecturers on transfer shall be in accordance with prevailing government conditions of service and government directives issued from time to time.
14. All appeals on transfers shall be addressed to the Transferring Authority through official channels.

The effective date of implementation is 1st January 2002.

g. Leave Encashment for Teachers/Lecturers.

A committee was appointed by TSM to advise and make recommendations on the implementation of Leave Encashment for Teachers/Lecturers following issuance of Directorate of Public Service

Management (DPSM) directive no. 12 of 2001 on Public Officers Leave Encashment. Some of the key areas of the Leave Encashment are:

1. Leave Entitlement of Teachers/Lecturers shall be a minimum of forty calendar days as stipulated in the in the Code of Regulations 701 and that such leave should be taken during school vacations in accordance with the COR 701.
2. Contract Teachers/Lecturers on their last year of contract shall earn leave up to the end of the month preceding the end of the term.
3. Non-contract Teachers/Lecturers shall, during their last year of service, be paid their leave entitlement earned during that year.
4. Compassionate leave may be taken during school term and shall be deducted from leave balance.
5. Forms TSM 8 (Application for Leave) and TSM 8B (Leave Register) will be used in the management of the leave.
6. School Heads and Principals in schools and colleges respectively will maintain the leave registers.
7. Teachers/Lecturers shall be entitled to encash a maximum of 50% of their leave balance per year.
8. Teachers/Lecturers must have taken leave of a minimum of 15 calendar days before they can be allowed to encash leave in any given year.

Unfortunately not a single leave encashment form for Teachers has been accepted nor processed. Some officials are reportedly refusing to process the leave encashment forms because they are saying practically Teachers do not have leave to encash anyway. They are further alleged to be putting up this explanation under the pretext that Teachers have many days when schools are closed and therefore cannot accumulate days for encashment. There is also talk that they argue that leave encashment is meant for officers who do not have a chance to go for leave and as such Teachers fall outside this bracket. BOFESETE has not received any official correspondence so far. Otherwise how does one explain the expenses BOFESETE and Government incurred when working out the modalities of leave encashment for Teachers? Its another case where Teachers are going to lose out while other Government employees continue benefiting. Remember Scarce Skills Policy, Overtime, free rent and a string of other benefits lined up for other Government employees except Teachers.

h. Unity Talks

BOFESETE has been on the forefront of seeing an umbrella body for Teachers' organisations in place. This is so because the benefits of such a body are well known to all and sundry. The RNPE recommendation no.113 also called on Teachers' organisations that "while maintaining their separate existence, should affiliate to an umbrella forum for strength, to create an effective consultative machinery with the Ministry of Education and Government, in order to foster professional contact and interaction among the Teachers for discussion of educational policy issues and related matters." This recommendation simply echoes Teachers' sentiments. All the four Teachers' organisations have been working tirelessly in a bid to implement this recommendation. When all seemed to wind up well, BTU said that its membership has not given it a mandate to participate in umbrella talks yet. BTU has since come up with a proposal that calls on all other organisations to dissolve and join the existing BTU structures. The other organisations, BOFESETE, ABOTEL and BOPRITA had proposed a federal structure that would have an executive that is representative of all organisations. This was in line and spirit of a government policy that recommended "maintaining their separate existence." The other three organisations have since produced a draft constitution for a body to be known as Botswana Confederation of Teachers Association (BOCOTA).

However, the structure and composition of BOCOTA is flexible to accommodate BTU should it decide otherwise. Meanwhile, all teacher organizations still consult and meet to discuss common issues.

An umbrella structure would help organisations to swiftly handle all issues of common interest like parallel progression, scarce skills, rent, further studies and many other bread and butter issues that keep on cropping up.

i. Networking: BOCONGO, BOCCIM, BERA, MISA, EI, etc.

BOFESETE has embarked on a networking strategy with other professional organs. This is intended to enhance and promote the image, delivery, productivity and so on of the organisation. Some networking is being done with the following:

BOCONGO

BOFESETE subscribes to Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations [BOCONGO]. This organisation has affiliates from both the private sector and non-profit making organisations. Though BOFESETE has only recently subscribed to this organisation, it has already benefited greatly. BOCONGO has mounted a couple professional workshops on capacity building where BOFESETE has benefited so much. It has also saved BOFESETE from a government eviction order. This was when the government ordered the business community to vacate residential areas around the city's main mall. BOFESETE's offices are in extension 12 and falls within the designated eviction areas. BOCONGO intervened that BOFESETE be exempted since it is a non-profit making organisation. BOFESETE has since been exempted.

BOCCIM

Besides the material benefits in terms of discounts BOFESETE membership is getting from Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM), it hopes to benefit more than this from this organisation. BOCCIM offers training, seminars, workshops and so on for subscribing members.

BERA

The Botswana Educational Research Association (BERA) supports and encourages research activities. BOFESETE has subscribed to this association so that it can get the support when it conducts educational researches on various issues, especially educational policies and programmes. It also hopes to benefit from the BERA literature and workshops. BERA also gives research awards. Individual teachers are also encouraged to subscribe for personal professional development.

MISA Botswana

BOFESETE is also a subscribing member of Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). Some of the objectives of MISA are to: " promote and defend freedom of expression and of the media; to take appropriate steps where such freedoms are violated and to seek and to remove obstacles and impediments to the flow of information in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers." Another objective is to conduct such other activities as may be deemed necessary. BOFESETE also hopes to benefit from MISA's literature and workshops.

E.I

BOFESETE is also working on a networking strategy with Education International [E.I], which is an international body that deals with education. Some of its officers have visited the country a

number of times and have conducted and attended some workshops, seminars, conferences and so on around the country.

A powerful networking with other professional organisations and associations is also being worked out to enhance and improve the organisation's image and delivery.

7. Recognition and Consultation.

BOFESETE today enjoys so much recognition from the once hostile government officials. BOFESETE is recognised as a serious stakeholder and has of recent been consulted on a number of issues. Such issues where BOFESETE has been consulted and participated includes review of Parallel Progression [Mr BZ Tlale], formulation of Transfer Policy [Mr ECL Ditau], orientation of new teachers by TSM [Mr Boitshwarelo], Leave Encashment for Teachers [Mr JC Hunyepa] and so on. BOFESETE represents Teachers in Teachers Day committees. It therefore means that BOFESETE should have a representative at local, regional and national committees throughout the country. In addition, BOFESETE has had a couple of meetings with Ministry of Education officials ranging from Director of Secondary Education up to the Minister of Education. These meetings were initiated by BOFESETE and the officials have never turned down requests to meet them.

Teachers living and working conditions like those of progression, promotion, scarce skills, consultation, rent, computers and other general issues on education like curriculum and professionalism have been discussed with the MOE officials.

However, BOFESETE strongly feels that such consultations are not enough and that some more effective measures have to be put in place than the current status quo.

Consultation does not mean that ones contribution would be considered. Ones input could be subjected to the dustbin and may therefore be of no effect. There is really nothing binding for government officials to consider whatever we may propose about issues pertaining to Teachers living and working conditions.

What BOFESETE is really clamouring for is the amendment of our labour laws that currently forbids government workers from unionising. In fact government ratified 14 ILO conventions in 1997 and therefore harmonising them into our legislation would be the best way forward for government employees. Some of the ratified conventions include Convention no. 87 concerning **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise**, Convention no.98 concerning the **Application of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively**, Convention no. 151 concerning **Protection of the Right to Organise and Procedures for Determining Conditions of Employment in the Public Service**. If our legislation is amended to accommodate such conventions, employees and employers would discuss issues under a more conducive environment where collective bargaining is the order of the day. Workers also have strikes as a bargaining tool.

8. Professionalism

BOFESETE is a professional Teachers organisation that seeks to improve the living and working conditions of secondary school Teachers, as outlined in our mission statement. It also strives and hopes to see the standard of education improving in the country.

The organisation therefore expects its membership and other Teachers to conduct themselves in a way that will bring praise, trust, respect and pride to the profession.

There have been reports of Teachers accused of unprofessional behaviour like failing to report for duty for no reason, reporting on duty drunk, sexual relationship with their clients and many other vices. BOFESETE strongly discourages Teachers from such habits and will not support them in any way.

BOFESETE National Executive Committee