BOTSWANA CHAPTER
OSSREA BOTSWA CHAPTER ACADEMIC/POLICY DIALOGUE WORKSHOP REPORT

DATE of workshop:
23rd JUNE 2015

VENUE:
UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA (UB) MAIN CAMPUS
(BLOCK 247 ROOM 36), UB
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OSSERA 2015 workshop set-up
1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In response to the reality that unemployment (at large) and youth unemployment (in particular) remains a serious problem in Botswana despite the fact that a number of programs have been put in place, the Organisation for Social Sciences Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) University of Botswana (UB) Chapter organised and hosted a Policy Dialogue workshop to address youth unemployment. More importantly, the workshop was aimed at examining the role that research has played to inform government’s response to the problem. The workshop was held at University of Botswana Main Campus on the 23rd June 2015. Four members of the Chapter organized the workshop. A total of 47 people attended the workshop. Participants were made up of University of Botswana academics (23), representatives from private local tertiary institutions (8), representatives from government’s tertiary institutions (6), other government’s offices doing research related work (4), parastatal organizations (2), Civil Society (3), political parties (1). Unfortunately, the Director, Department of Youth and the Director, Department of Labour and Social Security who were assigned to deliver a Keynote address and Closing remarks respectively, did not turn up to the workshop because of other commitments. The workshop was graced by the presence of UN Deputy vice chancellor, academic Affairs (DVCAA), Prof. Totolo who welcomed participants to UB. Also attending were the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Chebanne; Acting Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Mogotsi; Acting Deputy Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ms. Mukamaambo; Head of Social Work Department, Prof. Nthomang; Head of Political and Administrative Studies, Prof. Sebudubudu; Head of Languages and Social Sciences Education, Dr. Molosiwa; Human Resources Development Council Chief Executive Oficer, Dr. Molutsi; Secretary General of Botswana Congress Party, Dr. Gobotswang. The report covers proceedings of the workshop from registration, through scientific session to closing. Report of the scientific session highlights key issues discussed and/or underscored under each theme and/or paper.
2.0 SESSIONS, SUB-THEMES, PRESENTATIONS AND DELIBERATIONS

This chapter focuses on research and policy proceeding of the OSSREA policy dialogue workshop, from the registration to the official closing.

2.1 OFFICIAL OPENING

The program of the workshop started with a registration session followed by an official opening of the session chaired by Prof. D. Sebudubudu. The official opening session started with a pray from one of the participants. Thereafter, the Charter Liaison Officer, Prof. Sabone gave introductory remarks. She emphasized, among other things, OSSREA’s emphasis on research and evidence-based planning. Following Prof. Sabone’s remarks, Dr. Monau proceeded with introduction of guests. UB Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Prof. Totolo gave the welcome remarks. He, among other things, recognized and encouraged working together for academics and the community at large because in that way, research that academics engage in can be relevant. Prof. Totolo noted that the University of Botswana valued internationalization and that it was striving for 30% of its staff being from the international community. He informed the audience that UB valued multidisciplinary and collaborative research for its enhancement of cross-fertilization of ideas and noted that, being a regional organization, he believed OSSREA shared that value. The Deputy Vice Chancellor appreciated the work of UB academic staff,
especially PhD holders, in OSSREA because academics have a duty to give back to the community which invests in their education.

Unfortunately, the Director of Department of Youth (DoY) in the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture (MYSC) who was scheduled to give a Keynote address did not make it to the workshop. Therefore, Following the DVC’s remarks, the scientific session followed.

2.1.1 OFFICIAL OPENING PICTURES

Prof Totolo & Prof. Sebudubudu

Prof. Sabone giving remarks
Dr. Gobotswang-BCP Secretary General in attendance

Dr. Monau introducing guests

Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, Prof. Totolo
2.2 SUB-THEME 1: UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION, PROBLEMS PROSPECTS,
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES AND SOLUTIONS.

This session had four (4) presentations/papers; it was chaired by Mr. Maripe. The first paper of the session titled ‘Disconnection of Economic Policy Reforms and Youth Employment Creation. A gender perspective,’ was authored and presented by, Ms. Elsie M Alexander and Ms. B. Kenewendo. The presenters/paper underscored that gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender into economic policies was an imperative for all Southern African countries. It acknowledged that most governments in Southern Africa had undertaken significant economic policy reforms which had, unfortunately, failed to achieve meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for young women and men. The presenters noted that impressive economic growth across the region had not been translated to effective youth economic empowerment (the case of Botswana cited as an example). They reported that research data had indicated that young women had a higher incidence of unemployment than young men; and that women were concentrated in the informal and small business sector as compared to men - a situation that had implications for women’s access and control over productive resources. They recommended that the economic diversification policy and the citizen economic empowerment policy should mainstream youth and gender related economic issues if they were to effectively address the increasing levels of youth unemployment.

The second paper of the session titled ‘Prospects, Problems, and Solution of Youth Unemployment: Insights from Population Census and other Survey Data’ was authored and presented by Mr. M. Keetile. The presenter used data derived from the population and housing census to validate the ‘Youth Buldge’ phenomenon as a reality in Botswana, assess problems and prospects associated with youth unemployment and also to recommend possible options to address the problem. The presenter noted that Botswana’s youth unemployment was the second
highest in middle income countries after South Africa. In conclusion, he recommended that Botswana should address the system issues behind youth unemployment through transformative economic policies and social sector spending. He also recommended a more vigorous government and private sector partnership, more broad based preferential schemes for youth in business, attention to the issue of disparities in socio-economic development among youth in urban areas and rural areas, and conversion of the ‘youth buldge’ to a window of prosperity for the country's future economic growth and sustainable development.

Dr L. Sechele authored and presented the third paper of the session that was titled ‘Unemployed Youth and Self-employment in Botswana.’ Dr. Sechele’s research and presentation set out to highlight why many unemployed young people were not entering self-employment and to uncover the actual youth trajectories to self-employment. The paper was based on analysis of documentary sources, focus group discussions and individual interviews with unemployed and self-employed young people, and officials in Mogoditshane and Gaborone. The presenter reported that prior job experience along with the learning associated with that was often the pathway to self-employment, and that many unemployed young people did not consider it feasible to move directly from unemployment to self-employment. It was also revealed that most youth were not willing to stay in unskilled, risky, low-paid and insecure employment that does not provide decent work. The presenter therefore challenged policy makers to ponder strategies toward the creation of decent employment as well as to pay equal attention to training, wage employment, internship and
self-employment and their inter-linkages as a way of addressing youth unemployment in Botswana. He concluded by recommending a deliberate address to self-employment constraints in order to provide a more enabling environment for youth self-employment and prosperity. Among the recommendations, the presenter emphasized the need to come up with affirmative action strategies to ensure that youth received special dispensation in employment, allocation of resources and access to facilities that support self-employment such as land, government owned market stalls, other premises and finance.

The fourth and last paper of the session was titled, ‘Energetic but jobless: Analysing Socio-economic and Institutional Factors Influencing Youth Unemployment in the Okavango Delta, Botswana’ and it was co-authored by Prof. O. D. Kolawole who was the presenter and Mr. O. Kemiso. They assessed socio-economic and institutional factors contributing to rural youth unemployment in the Okavango Delta using a multi-stage sampling procedure with 105 youths in two communities within the delta. Their findings indicated that 57.1% of the youth were unemployed and that 65.6% of the job-less individuals were females. It was shown that level of education, training, access to information, entrepreneurial skills and youth perceptions towards government programmes had significant influencing on youth unemployment in the study area. To that effect, the authors recommended education, training, access to relevant information and removal of cultural barriers as crucial for alleviating rural youth unemployment in the study area.

Prof. Kolawole giving his presentation
2.3 SUB-THEME 2: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AS A REFLECTION OF CURRICULUM DEFICIT:

This session was chaired by Ms. Mukamaambo and it had two papers/presentations.

The first paper of the session titled ‘Graduate Employability in Botswana: Challenges and prospects’ was authored by Dr. L. Maunganidze, Dr G. Faimau who was presenting, and Mr. R. Tapera. The presenter noted that concerns from employers that tertiary institutions were failing to provide graduates with necessary skills had recently become a dominant issue particularly in developing economies. The presenter acknowledged and decried lack of literature on employability and market competitiveness of graduates in emerging African economies in general and in Botswana in particular. He examined the challenges and dynamics of graduate employability in Botswana using the Yorke and Knight (2003) USEM (understanding, skill, efficacy beliefs and meta-cognition) model. The presenter concluded that factors influencing employability of youth and university graduates in particular were mainly structural and institutional; and that lack of practical skills and mismatch between degree programme content and job requirements were leading the list. Among other recommendations, the author emphasized that in order to enhance work-preparedness and job competencies, curricula needed to incorporate work-based learning and entrepreneurial skills. Graduates’ employability could therefore be enhanced through a university-industry interface that reflects knowledge-intensive collaborations.
Dr. K. Boikhutso and Dr. A. Molosiwa co-authored the second and last paper of the session that was titled ‘Learning and Teaching – Need to Balance Theory and Practical Skills. Views of Parents’ and was presented by Dr. Molosiwa. The presenter acknowledged that for more than a decade, education policies in Sub-Saharan Africa had been driven by a commitment to expand access to basic education and to improve its quality. It was also noted that there was enough evidence to suggest that Sub-Saharan African economies were failing to cope with the increasing numbers of unemployed youth; largely as a result of increased access to basic and general education. Based on secondary data and literature, the presenter noted that Botswana was no exception. The case of Botswana was described as that of economic growth without economic development. Based on this background, the presenter explained the link between education and youth unemployment in Botswana. Dr. Molosiwa argued that poorly planned education system, mismatch between the education system and labour market needs and poor implementation of youth projects were some of the key factors in youth unemployment. It was emphasized that education is one of the critical components in addressing youth unemployment. The presenter therefore recommended examination of the quality of education at both lower and higher level in order to determine the extent to which it provides the skills needed in the labour market and in out-of-school life. She observed that it was yet to be seen if the Government of Botswana’s initiatives and strategies such as the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) and the National Internship Programme were adequately preparing and/or providing on-the-job skills that could enable graduates to penetrate the labour market.
2.3 SUB-THEME 3: YOUTH POLICIES/PROGRAMS AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT:

This marked the last session of the workshop, which had five (5) presentations/papers. The session was chaired by Ms. E. P. Mukamaambo.

The first paper of the session titled, ‘Rising Youth Unemployment: A Case of Policy Failure or Poor research?’ was authored and presented by Dr. G. N. Lesetedi. The presenter highlighted that Botswana had been recording high rates of unemployment amongst the youth which was higher than national unemployment. She acknowledged efforts of government and the private sector to address youth unemployment (in particular) and youth development (at large). However, the efforts were failing to address youth unemployment and to advance socio-economic development of the youth at large. The presenter then posed the question: Does the problem lie with the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes or it is a failure of the research which feeds into the actual policy making process? In responding to the question, she examined the socio-economic profile of the youth and the existing youth unemployment policies. She emphasized the importance of research in feeding policy formulation, implementation and monitoring; and the need for cooperation between the different stakeholders in advancing the aspiration of the revised National Youth Policy.
Prof. K. Nthomang and Mr. K. Diraditsile co-authored and co-presented the second paper of the session. The duo’s paper was titled ‘Need for Evidence Informed Policies and Programmes in Addressing Youth Unemployment.’ The presenters noted that youth unemployment deserved urgent attention because it had become a threat to the social, economic and political stability of the country; they cited poverty, alcohol abuse, crime and social unrests as examples. They noted that responses to youth unemployment policy and programmes were many and varied; but that they had almost always leaned more towards social welfare provision than promotion of practical education and skills training. They decried a suicidal habit of spending funds on short term under-employment, indecent jobs and unsustainable programmes that have little impact on job creation. The researchers raised concern about the absence of research to guide policy frameworks and noted that the omission might partly explain the poorly designed youth programmes. They called for a re-assessment of past and current approaches to youth unemployment with a view to developing more effective, relevant and sustainable solutions; as well as greater emphasis on research to generate up-to-date and reliable data to support initiatives for addressing youth unemployment in Botswana.

The third paper of the session titled ‘Implications and Possible Solutions to the Problem of Youth Employment in Botswana: Using the Internship Programme as a Case Study’ was co-authored by Dr. Bakwena who was the presenter and Prof. D. Sebudubudu. The presenter started by...
acknowledging Botswana’s phenomenal economic growth driven largely by the mineral sector. She noted that it was unfortunate that because of the enclave/structural nature of the country’s economy, the high economic growth rates had not created sufficient jobs. Consequently, the country had not been spared the problem of unemployment, the impact of which was heaviest on the youth. The presenter stated that the 2009/10 Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey (BCWIS) figures suggest that unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, was a major socio-economic barrier that posed a threat to the country’s development prospects. The presenter proceeded to examine the political implications of youth unemployment in Botswana. Thereafter, she focused on the National Internship Programme (NIP), drawing lessons from other countries in terms of how the internship programme could be made more effective in enhancing youth employment in the country. The presenter was of the view that the program was well intentioned and that it had the potential of addressing graduate youth unemployment if properly and diligently executed, with clearly defined targets.

Mr. G. Taziba authored and presented the fourth paper of the session titled ‘Youth Policies and their Link to Research - Is There Evidence?’ The presenter highlighted that like many developing countries, Botswana was wrestling myriad (traditional and contemporary) socioeconomic and socio-political challenges; and that central among these challenges was unemployment - youth unemployment to be precise. He noted that the reality of youth unemployment had persisted despite continued noble public and private sector interventions such as Youth Development Fund (YDF), Young Framers Fund (YFF), National Internship program (NIP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Economic Diversification Drive
(EDD), Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) and the KBL Kick Start Program. The presenter also illustrated that the reality also persisted despite continued establishment and heavy funding of over 50 youth organizations across Botswana, including the mother-body, Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC). The revised National Youth Policy (2010), the National Action Plan for Youth (2010-2016) and respective public financial breakdowns provided evidence that Government, private sector and development partners were channelling millions of funds into youth organization to directly and indirectly combat youth unemployment. Using the BNYC as an example, he noted the lack of research in youth policy interventions and programming. In conclusion, the presenter called for more public awareness on the significance of research in policy formulation and implementation, as well as strategic partnerships between the youth structures and research institutes such as OSSERA, UB, BIDPA and BITRI.

The last paper of the session and workshop was authored and presented by Mr. K. Jongman and was titled ‘Youth Participation in Youth Empowerment Programs.’ The presenter started by emphasizing the need for stable identity for youth and outlined relevant dimensions of the concept of identity - being school identity, work identity and relational identity. He noted that if young people stay long without finding a job, they risk losing their identity. Long term unemployment lowers self-esteem, is demotivating and is associated with poor health. While acknowledging the unfortunate low level of youth socio-economic development, he also emphasized that youth were the most abundant asset Sub Saharan Africa (Botswana inclusive) had. He expressed concern about the lack of opportunities for the youth that posed a serious challenge to the nation as it increased unemployment and dependence on government’s assistance programs. Using the Youth Development Fund as an example, the presenter argued that entrepreneurial skills were not being given due attention in Botswana’s Youth socioeconomic development. In conclusion the presenter called for better skill training and strengthening of the public service, better monitoring and evaluation and mentoring.
At the conclusion of paper presentations, there was an open session for policy actors’ remarks and general discussion from the floor. The discussions were quiet insightful with most commentators reiterating what the researchers had already underscored in respective papers and themes. The need for research on youth policy interventions and programming and the significance of collaborative research dominated the discussions. The session was concluded with a wrap-up of the themes; and this was done by the rapporteurs of respective sub-themes. Recommendations from respective sub-themes were also highlighted during this phase of the workshop.

2.4 OFFICIAL CLOSING

In the absence of the Director Department of Labour and Social Security, a Chapter member Ms. E. Mukamaambo delivered the workshop closing remarks. She thanked all the participants for dedicating the day to advancing the objective of the workshop and the mission of OSSREA family at large. She appreciated the level and calibre of research and topics deliberated on throughout the day. She also thanked the organisers of the event for making 2015 workshop a
reality. While acknowledging the technical constraints encountered during the day, she assured participants that the next workshop would be much better. She assured participants that this was not the first OSSREA Botswana Chapter workshop and that it was certainly not the last! Participants were advised to look out for more activities from OSSREA Botswana Chapter. She pleaded for the same response and turn-up in future endeavours. With these words, Ms. Mukamaambo declared the 2015 Policy Dialogue Workshop closed.

3.0 CONCLUSION

In the conclusion, we present a summary of the results of the participants’ workshop evaluation. Twenty two (22) participants returned evaluation forms and many indicated that what they liked most about the workshop was the topic. The workshop was said to have been quite engaging with the choice of the subject matter very topical. Participants pointed out that they liked the readiness of the presenters, their confidence and their well researched paper that enhanced knowledge. The papers were described to be academic and scholarly with a multidisciplinary diversity and well articulated issues. Presentations were an eye opener to the actual youth unemployment problem and how policies could be improved. There had been free flow and cross fertilization of ideas. Appreciation of views from different opinions allowed for interaction between different stakeholders during the discussion. It had been clear from the discussion that there was consensus on the reality of youth unemployment as a disturbing problem and that a gap between skill and market need could be a possible contributory cause of the problem. Participants lamented the poor visibility of representatives from public office stakeholder departments in the workshop; and it was advised that in future the situation be improved.

Acknowledgments:

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