

February 2018

**Cross Collaboration of Ideas – Human Resource Development
Council of Botswana and Bournemouth University, UK**

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As the Manager for Student and Welfare Planning, it is important that the Human Resource Development Council of Botswana continuously strives to improve its processes, service delivery and knowledge of the latest developments particularly in the global context. One of the identified areas has been that of Student Affairs Services (SAS) within Higher Education institutions is a relatively new concept in Botswana. While research has shown that such services have greatly impacted student retention and success, and following the recently completed Student Affairs Services (SAS) Norms and Standards which have been cascaded to Tertiary Education Institutions in the country, the aim was to identify regional and national benchmarks. It was with this background that Bournemouth University was identified as a leading institution in the UK for Student Services and therefore deemed ideal to visit. The university was pleased to host Ms. Selelo and planned contact with key university staff where international Best Practice, benchmarking and experiences were shared.

The aim of the trip was to obtain insightful information that would help in the creation of an enabling environment that promotes student retention success and improve learner experiences through implementation of learner support programs. Therefore the

objectives were to gain insight into the UK system of student affairs and services, to establish networks and links to UK institutions and the related professional bodies.

Bournemouth University has an organizational structure consisting of various support centers and departments with the overall purpose of providing students with the best possible student experience. It is the responsibility of the Student Affairs directorate to provide cutting edge interventions, including psycho-social support initiatives, to help stabilize the personal environment of the student. Academic support initiatives to maximize the deployment of individual learning energies, initiatives to deepen and broaden individual use of academic technologies, and opportunities for academic staff development are also key objectives. With the overall goal of having graduates who are confident about their future career as well as exhibiting key BU graduate attributes, HRDC could not be better matched with a British institution to partner with.

During my time in Bournemouth I was able to meet with various professionals throughout the Directorate. I found it interesting that BU trains students for the market by teaching professionally focused subjects and has designated staff to monitor employability trends. An initiative called a 'sandwich placement year' is implemented as a compulsory part of certain academic programs where students participate in a 30 week experience similar to an internship. By offering all students an opportunity to partake in a sandwich placement experience, BU is assuring that their graduates are career ready.

Another key element is that student learners are identified should they need additional support. This could be for learning support should they have learning differences, or financial support if they are a first generation student from a lower socio economic background. For these students, they receive Widening Participation and Access to Higher Education funding.

It was interesting to see that at an institutional level, student support starts at induction where academic and social workshops addressing issues of adjustments including anxiety are addressed to help learners acclimatize. This is where students are also allocated a designated academic tutor for continuous support. The Students' Union also

plays a crucial role for students during the induction as they promote extracurricular opportunities such as clubs and societies, sports amongst other ways to get involved on campus. Furthermore, there is an emphasis placed on the professional development of the student support staff therefore membership to the related professional bodies is highly supported.

It was wonderful to see that an avenue for student affairs practitioners in Botswana and Africa is that overseas membership into these professional bodies is allowed. The benefits of membership include access to regular newsletters, professional journals and conferences. This will be vital for practitioners to design and strengthen SAS programs in Botswana.

Similarities and Differences

The history of Student Affairs in Botswana overall is not documented or widely studied. In Botswana, like many developing education systems, the area of student affairs is not standardized nor seen to playing an important part to the student experience on university campuses.

Botswana prides itself with forty-eight (48) public and private registered tertiary education institutions (TEIs) with a total enrolment of about 56,447 students (2016). Of these students, 62% and 38% are in public and private institutions respectively. Three of the public universities admit 46% of the total enrolment in public institutions whilst the remaining 54% are either in the Technical Colleges, Colleges of Education, Health Institutes, and other small institutions. The proliferation of tertiary education institutions has seen an increase in the participation rates, which, according to the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC), has soared from 11% in 2007 to more than 20% in 2015. The sophisticated tertiary education requires a deliberate and comprehensive student development program, particularly in view of a markedly increasing population of marginalized students.

Needless to say the massification of tertiary education and accompanying developments have direct influence on student services and welfare. For instance, the consistently increasing cost of living has created a precarious situation for students as

far as students' residences and wellbeing are concerned. At present, none of the private institutions offers on-campus residences and this means that students have to find accommodation in not so ideal housing arrangements while some of them have to travel about 140km on a daily basis for their studies. Conversely, the institutions that offer on-campus residence also face challenges such as catering and the quality and adequacy of residence accommodation as shown by sporadic demonstrations as students demand better services. If not adequately addressed, these challenges may eventually become serious for the Botswana government's human resources development efforts.

On the other hand, institutions in the UK and off-campus learners are accommodated in accredited accommodation facilities. For example, there are minimum standards set by Bournemouth Council and accommodation facilities have to adhere to these standards to be considered. This is not the case in Botswana. Students who can't be accommodated on campus have to fend for themselves. While first years are guaranteed accommodation in the majority of UK tertiary institutions, it's not a guarantee that all first-year students will be given accommodation. This could have adverse effects on students particularly as research has shown that dropouts are more prevalent during the first year of learning. The not-so-much ideal accommodation that learners find themselves in, the teenage stage for most of tertiary learners coupled with lack of parental guidance as majority of the TEIs are concentrated in Gaborone (Capital City), may have far-reaching implications for learning, or could actually work against the Botswana government's human resource development efforts.

The other major difference is that the majority of Bournemouth students are self-funded. In Botswana, most students are funded by the government therefore there is a need to strengthen support services where students can have all of the support that they need to ensure retention and progression. Therefore TEIs in Botswana can learn from institutions such as Bournemouth University.

Regarding career guidance for students, BU offers an extensive support network to prepare students through mentoring and coaching, workshops on CVs, job applications and other related areas, as well as a designated website listing jobs, placements, internships as well as a wealth of information on careers guidance. I think that TEIs in

Botswana can use this example to better support students as well as taking a more active in the evaluation and monitoring of employability trends. This is not only for the benefit of students but also for the future of higher education in Botswana.

From my time spent at Bournemouth University I have been able to make recommendations to the HRDC regarding the future. They include greater national and international collaboration between institutions and profession bodies, encourage the uptake of students for study abroad and international opportunities and that the professionalization of student affair professions need to be developed.



Photo of Vianna Renaud, Placement Development Advisor, Bournemouth University (left) and Marianyana Martha Selelo, Manager, Student & Welfare Planning, Human Resource Development Council of Botswana (right)