

The Impact of Hostel Conditions on the Learning and Reading Ability of Khoe Children

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Abstract

This paper is an extract from the main study that explored the challenges Khoe children encounter in reading texts in English at Motshegaletau Primary School in Botswana. The paper focuses on the influence hostel conditions can have directly or indirectly on the Khoe learners' learning and reading ability. As the education system aspires to eradicate illiteracy and offer quality education for all starting at primary school level the reading skill should be central to this. Reading enhances learning and therefore the two cannot be separated. Indeed there are challenges in trying to achieve the educational goals set forth. Therefore, this study investigated the hostel conditions where Khoe children reside during the school term to see how the condition and status of the hostel affect their learning and reading ability. It is important to highlight the importance of the reading skill across the curricula and as such learners should acquire and master it for successful academic life and the world of work. Teacher questionnaires, teacher and student semi-structured interviews and hostel inspections were done for data collection. The findings indicated that there is violence, poor maintenance status of hostel and irregular monitoring of students by authorities. These unbecoming conditions indirectly cripple the acquisition of the reading skill as there is barely any practice of learning at the hostel. The study therefore, recommends a review of the hostel situation so that instead of being a brooding place for reckless behaviour, it can be conducive for reading and learning.

Introduction

Botswana like other countries of the world is committed to achieving education for all school going children following the Jomtien world conference of 1990, and the Dakar framework for action which set 2015 as a target year for this commitment to universal education for all. In this context, the United Nation's member states agreed in 2000 to achieve what has come to be known as Millennium Development Goals (MDG) one of which is achieving universal primary education. In this regard, Botswana has introduced ten-year basic education program, commencing at primary school level and ending at junior secondary. The Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) was introduced, which, apart from providing learning environment in the form of schools, and hence hostels, was targeted at reducing poverty among remote area dwellers, the majority of which are Khoe. These commitments are captured in Vision 2016 which is a document that presents what Botswana aspires to be like in the year 2016. To this end, two of Botswana's Vision 2016 principles are that the populace will be 'an educated and informed nation' while the other aspires for 'a compassionate, just and caring nation.' These two pillars, together with achieving quality education for all children of school going age, can only be achieved if the education system of Botswana takes into

consideration the environment under which the teaching and learning process occurs, the hostel situation notwithstanding.

Most of the Remote Area Dweller Settlements (RADS) primary schools are built in areas where children are forced to leave their parents to attend school. A hostel is built for these children so that they are looked after by caretakers, matrons and boarding masters. To this end, the government is faced with a big challenge of achieving universal primary education especially for Khoe who reside in the hostels built for them to be able to attend school. Studies conducted on hostel situations (Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2006; Polelo & Molefe, 2006) reveal that hostels for RADS schools are far from being conducive for learning and reading environments, instead hostels are brooding places for unacceptable behaviour.

A positive, conducive and friendly learning and living environment plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. This means that the hostels where students stay during the course of the school term and the classrooms where the teaching and learning process takes place should be equally friendly and conducive. If one wants to create a healthy reading, living and learning environment, one should start with a good supply of reading materials that are relevant to the needs of the learners and take into consideration their school and community experiences. Reading materials should be a natural part of the school but should not only reside within the four walls of the classroom. Children should be able to carry books home to study or read for pleasure especially if they have boarding facilities.

Background

Motshegaletau Primary School

Motshegaletau Primary is located between Moiyabana and Thabala villages in the Central District and it enrolls learners from neighbouring cattle posts, who are mostly of Khoe origin. These students stay in a hostel a kilometer away from the school premises. The hostel is looked after by a matron, cooks and caretakers. The matron stays in close proximity to the hostel so that she can attend to children's needs and emergencies at any time of the day. The cooks prepare meals, especially lunch and supper for students. The caretakers clean and perform general maintenance of the hostels. Parents and relatives are allowed to visit their children at the hostels any time they wish to do so during the school term. There are both boys' and girls' rooms in the same hostel although the students are not bound by any rules and regulations. On the contrary, in other parts of the country where there are schools with boarding facilities there are school regulations provided by the Ministry of Education to guide the functioning of such facilities. There is no boarding master to look after the boys. In regard to maintenance of the hostel facilities the RADS Programme under the Central District Council undertakes this. The idea behind the construction of hostels was to help children from minority groups who were unable to attend schools in big villages to access education and also to decentralize education for the benefit of all children.

The Khoe People

Khoe people originated from the Kalahari Desert and because of their nomadic life spread to different parts of Botswana including the Central District in the villages of Mogorosi, Thabala, Motshegaletau, Moiyabana and neighbouring cattle posts. They do not have permanent homes but stay where they are employed as cattle herders. Following today's lifestyle some have opted to look for permanent settlements which they visit periodically. The Khoe do not own property like other Batswana though some possess small items such as donkeys, radios and kitchen utensils. Further, most of them do not practice either arable or pastoral farming.

Khoe children stay in the hostels during the course of the school term and are transported back to their settlements during school vacation where their parents stay or are employed as cattle herders. Hostel blocks have been built close to each other inside the same fence. The rooms are big and accommodate as many bunk beds as sixteen.

Reasons for introduction of student's hostels

The Revised National Policy on Education (1993) clearly states that quality of education is measured in terms of attitudes and values and school morale because they contribute towards levels of performance. This sentiment should be true in terms of how these attitudes and morale are cultivated by, among other things, the living conditions of students. According to a circular from Urban Redevelopment Authority (2006), students' hostel is defined as premises used for lodging students for a particular period of time. These students may be unrelated by marriage, blood or legal guard premises. Emphasis is put on assisting students to reach their academic potential. They are helped to adapt to independent living conditions. A student's residential hostel is supposed to be an integral part of the school's academic programme and therefore should help in the development of character building. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (2007) points out that a hostel is supposed to effectively mould the students' personality. Therefore the students' body, mind and soul should receive due and full attention. Spiritual, cultural, physical, academic and social life should be nurtured by hostel life. Again, the surroundings should provide an opportunity for the students to develop various kinds of simulation and formulate programmes of a creative and constructive character.

Even after completion of education learners must remain committed to the values they inhibited while staying at the hostels. Very high standard of discipline should be maintained in the interest of students and there must not be any lapse on the part of the students. Besides, management at Hilltop School (2007) articulates that in hostel life television could be permitted on weekends only. In addition educational tours should be fostered during the school term. This is because hostel life should complement and supplement classroom instruction. Harmonious living and the spirit of cooperation are particularly encouraged. Hostels should have a garden, play area and a range of sporting equipment. Above all, parents of children who reside in hostels should be involved in decision making.

Objectives of the study

The environment under which a child learns must be healthy and conducive for learning, since the environment plays a vital role in grooming a child. The purpose of this study is therefore to find out the status, situation and condition of hostels where Khoe children stay at Sehunou and see how it impacts directly or indirectly on students' reading and learning.

Significance of the study

It is hoped that the study will be useful in sensitizing all stakeholders responsible for RADS to take into consideration the fact that hostels can be places of studying and learning and therefore structures should be put in place to recognize the RADS hostels in the same way as is done for government schools. Again it is hoped that the government and District Councils will look after the RADS children in hostels taking heed of the conditions under which the Khoe children live.

Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative approach which was considered suitable for the study because of its advantages. It uses a natural setting where researchers focus in understanding people, their social and cultural contexts within which they live (Bryman 2001). In this context, it was useful to visit the hostels where the students stay during the course of the school term and talk to those responsible for taking care of them and hear their views in regard to how they take care of the Khoe children, the challenges they experience and how they deal with these challenges. The hostels themselves were visited to find out, through observation, the extent of their conduciveness for living and studying. Data was also derived through informal interactions with the participants. The researchers tried as much as possible not to influence the respondents' answers such that they were captured as authentically as possible.

Sampling

Most of the teachers, students and hostel caretakers at the school were interviewed. Two caretakers as well as the 19 teachers at the school including the school head and her deputy participated in the interviews. Questionnaires were administered on teachers and caretakers to solicit information about how hostel life contributed directly or indirectly to students' lack of reading ability, and how they dealt with this challenge.

Since hostel dwellers are a mixed bag at all levels, they all participated so that the study gives a good representation of what is going on at the hostels. One hundred and fifteen out of one hundred and seventy students who reside at the hostels were interviewed. These were students who attend at Motshegaletau Primary. Sixty five of them are females while fifty are males. The hostel is occupied not only by the learners who attend at Motshegaletau Primary but also by students who attend at another primary at Mabuo. Structured interviews especially with hostel dwellers were conducted to fill the gaps that were not catered for in the questionnaires and to

get as much information as possible. Discussions were held with individual teachers so that they could open up without intimidation and say their views.

Hostel inspections

Hostels were inspected so that the researchers could see their conditions and status and try to consolidate the respondents' answers and the hostel condition. Pictures of the hostel were taken, the rooms, ablutions and the bed bunks students use for sleeping. This would help to support evidence provided in the data.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework would be based on three theories highlighted by Seifert (1991) and Burke (1999) who justify their argument on learners' behaviour basing on two theories such as the social environment under which learners should survive and also the reasons why learners misbehave under a given environment. Again, Glasser (1985) discusses the control theory that empowers learners.

The environment

Seifert (1991) argues that the interdependence of people and their environment is closely intertwined with people and their social environment. In addition, personality develops from interaction between an individual and other people, a child and parent, a student and teacher, or students and other students. These interactions can improve on a child's self esteem or they can lower it with negative effects on academic performance. The encounters are supposed to help the students handle conflicts and also develop sound moral judgement and a feeling of responsibility for others. Burke (1999), purports that a learning environment should fulfill the needs of children. Children should be able to express themselves; they should hold memories of the environment they are living in. Again the environment should be able to nurture them.

Why students misbehave

Seifert (1991) points out a number of reasons observed by scholars on why students misbehave. One reason could be that students are bored; there is nothing to keep them busy. In some cases it could be that they are rebelling against authority and now seeking independence. The other reason could be that they need and seek attention which they cannot get from teachers, caretakers', parents or other students. Or it may be that they are confused about the expectations of the environment. Confusion happens if the authorities have not clearly laid down the rules of behaviour well enough. Short and long term consequences in responding to disruptions should be established.

Control theory

Glasser (1985) believes that successful education comes from giving students control or even influence over their living environment. Further, Glasser (1985) argues that students should have basic needs as human beings such as survival in a given environment, a sense of belongingness, to love and be loved by others, empowerment and also influence in the community, freedom and also they should be able to make choices to suit their own lifestyle. Having fun is one of the choices one

could have. He argues that schools can contribute to the failure and success of students and therefore positive and constructive contribution influence should be adhered to.

Findings of the study

Status of the hostels

As part of the data collection, an inspection of the hostels was carried out to verify information provided by students, teachers and care takers. Photos as evidence of the hostel conditions were taken. The following were observed:

Damaged property

The researchers had an opportunity to inspect the hostels at Motshegaletau Primary School and also talked to the two care takers. The following were common in almost all the hostel rooms: broken windows, doors, locks bulbs, dirty floors, plates, ablution and no mattresses in most beds. According to the care takers, the Central District council takes its time to repair the damaged property; they said it had been over a year since the last maintenance was done.

Mattresses

Researchers noted that in one hostel room there were about 10 – 12 bunk beds. Out of these, only about four bunk beds had torn mattresses, while the rest had only steel supporters with students' blankets. Learners are expected to sleep on these bunk beds without mattresses. They crowd in the few bunk beds with pieces of mattresses or with no mattresses at all. Alternatively, they sleep on the cold floor or steel bunk beds. Students reported a good number of uses for the mattress sponge which could be the reasons why there are no mattresses in most beds. The following were stated by students and care takers as uses for mattress: making pillows, balls, sanitary pads, shoe cleaners and for smoking.

Broken windows, doors, locks and beds

This was an observation made by the researchers during hostel inspection that all the rooms are characterized by the above. The caretakers complain that the Khoe children break the windows maybe during violent fights or due to carelessness. One of the caretakers confirmed that, "these students fight, and the fights can be very violent such that they break the window panes, locks, doors, bulbs and beds."

Unhygienic rooms and ablutions

Teachers and caretakers reported that although there are people who are employed to clean the hostels, they can go unclean up to lunch hour (1 pm). Pieces of paper were found lying all over the place; ablutions were left unclean with dirty water on the floor, used toilet papers or just waste. Even plates that students used for eating could be found in the ablutions and rooms.

Sexual abuse

Teachers reported that there are incidents where young female students are sexually abused at the hostels by older male students and this goes unreported. According to

the deputy head teacher, the Khoe are too shy and always want to shield one another and therefore such cases remain the secret of the Khoe hostel dwellers. Even if the cases are reported, it is normally too late to take action, because either evidence has been tempered with or the student is now pregnant.

Fights

Older girls and boys reported that bullying from the older students takes place since there is no proper supervision from caretakers. These fights will only be noticeable if those involved in the fights were hurt. Learners will go to school with blue, swollen eyes, bruises and scratches. According to the deputy school teacher fights are perpetuated by students who go out to drink and come late at night.

Abusive Language

Most boys and girls interviewed reported that other students use abusive language when there is conflict between them. It can go to the extent of insulting one another's parents, something that sparks violent fights. Some students reported that their counterparts use abusive language when they are drunk. Some students voiced out that this abusive language is sometimes used by the teachers and matron when they address them.

Violation of hostel rules

The school head, deputy and most teachers reported that most learners, especially male students leave the hostels in the afternoon to go out for drinking or entertainment. Sometimes there are scheduled afternoon remedial lessons which hardly ever materialize due to students' absenteeism. They go to drinking spots in the village to while away time.

Predators

Teachers and caretakers reported that under unsupervised conditions men have the freedom to walk into the hostels and pick their girlfriends or it could be vice versa, as such girls become vulnerable to herdsmen.

Discussion of findings

The discussion on findings shall be based on the key headings that were picked from the data collected.

Hostile conditions

Khoe learners are moved from their homes to stay at the hostels so that they can benefit from the education system, since it is hoped that the hostels will be conducive and be meaningful to their social and academic life. In addition Ruiz (1991) argues that children from minority groups come to school with few outside links and may not have sufficient exposure to apply in learning a foreign language to their socio economic environment. The situation at Sehunou hostels should provide the missing link. Ballantine (1997) points out that environments provide purpose, meaning and define educational systems. She argues that no individual can exist without being influenced and dependent upon the environment. Our families are key to our emotional, physical and financial well being. This means that if we were to

achieve some of the Millennium Development Goals (2004) such as universal education for all at primary level it means we have to start with the welfare of students at the hostels. As Ballantine states, the environment plays a crucial role if learning has to take place. This way, Khoe learners have to be placed under an environment that is habitable, an environment that will be meaningful to their lives and also conducive for their development of reading and studying. As the situation is, hostels appear to be brooding places for unacceptable behaviour and not character building as hostels are meant to do. The hostels have to nurture the needs of the students and be a habitable place for reading and learning to take place. As the status is, learners can neither read nor learn under the conditions presented at the hostels.

Lack of trust and empathy

It appears that Khoe children have no mentors and guardians at the hostels. Human beings survive and learn best in an environment of trust and empathy, (Kohn, 1991). As stipulated elsewhere in this paper, the Revised National Policy on Education (1993) clearly states that quality of education is measured in terms of attitudes and values and school morale because they contribute towards levels of performance. Besides, being read to and reading on one's own are a great help in the development of language and reading. The above seem to be talking loudly of a conducive environment that students should trust and find comfort in. It indicates that a hostel is not only a residential place it should serve as an integral part of academic programs as already indicated. However, the hostel conditions at Sehunou where Khoe learners stay seem to prove the opposite. The environment is not conducive for living and learning for children between the ages of 7 – 12. There is no trust and empathy because violence takes place, during the day and at night and these go unreported. The matron and caretakers could be providing a vital role in developing that trust and also exercise empathy whenever students are in need of it. The fact that they are not staying with their parents means that there is a gap between school and home, a missing link which has to be provided by supervisors concerned. Students can read and study if they know they are protected. Whatever problems arise that disturbs their reading and academic work they can always report. But in this case there is no trust and empathy to nurture their reading and learning environment.

Lack of supervision and guidance

For an institution to impart value-oriented education to its students, concerted effort is needed to shoulder the responsibility of developing creative and constructive character, and all authorities must remain committed to the values that would benefit the students through close monitoring and supervision (Sri Sathya Sai University, 2007). Khoe children could become insecure because most of the time the caretakers and authorities are not available as they appear to be either busy with administrative duties or personal issues. To support this argument, Seifert (1991) argues that interaction can improve a child's self esteem or lower it with negative effects. The encounters are supposed to help students handle conflict and develop moral judgement and a feeling of responsibility. Looking at the conditions of rape and beatings that go on at the hostels; it is obvious that they lower the Khoe children's self esteem and impacts on their reading skill negatively. The personal encounters

they have with other students and authorities do not help them to handle the conflicts that occur at the hostels. It looks like they are reacting to the environment because they are desperate and bored. Very little is happening at the hostels to develop their moral judgement and yet they are children, they need constant guidance to acclimatize themselves with the conditions of the hostel. They are still young and vulnerable and therefore need constant reminders to read for academic purposes. They need to be reminded that if they do not read they will not succeed academically. If they could be empowered with that sense of responsibility they could look after the government property and themselves. In addition, Khoe young girls fall prey to herdsmen who have a habit of "fishing" from the hostels. This could not happen if students were supervised and guided all the time. Therefore they need guidance to perform better academically and to control their own lives.

Non-reflection of Khoe culture

The environment is not conducive for young children who are desperate to find their identity and at the same time learn new ideologies, values and customs that are not related to their own culture. Besides, Burke (1999) argues that an environment should fulfill many of the students' needs. Hostels should be a place of self expression, vessel of many memories, a refuge from the outside world, and a cocoon where students should feel nurtured. But the question still remains whether a hostel such as the one at Sehunou could substitute the Khoe children's home, a place where children spend most of their time. The Revised National Policy on Education (1993) recommends that the environment under which students learn should be made flexible to take into account cultural and environmental differences. If this could be practiced perhaps Khoe children would be able to fit well in the strange environment they live in at the hostels to enable them to improve their reading and learning. Pattanayak (1981) argues that most formal education has left the majority of people illiterate by ignoring the students' culture. In addition, UNESCO emphasizes that the culture of learners should be used as a means for achieving a satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. The question remains as to whether the life of the hostel at Sehunou reflect students' culture. It is questionable whether the Khoe children's school and community experiences are taken into consideration when they are taught literacy skills. Trueba (1987) asserts that many minority children are uprooted and transplanted to a new setting where they stand out as strange and incompetent. Minority children sometimes have to leave their home of origin, culture and language; these changes affect not only the personal life but all aspects. This might explain why they rebel in a strange environment. This is also confirmed by an Annual Report of the Department of Community Services of June 1988 that it is still an issue of concern that it is difficult for students to adjust from rural to either semi urban or urban life especially if the culture is strange to them. Therefore the type of life style impacts on their reading ability indirectly. If the learner's cultural artifacts were used to teach them the reading skill they would feel a sense of motivation as they would feel that they contribute towards what they study.

Violent situations

Violence that takes place at the hostels tear the students apart. It reaps them off the social responsibility they are supposed to display. Social responsibility is more than a set of learned skills or acquired habits. In addition, it is anchored in the development of deeply personal commitment to issues such as justice, tolerance and concern for others (May, 1994).

Again the Revised National Policy on Education (1993) says that children should be provided with a set of convictions and loyalties that will make them good members of society and responsible citizens. This means that social responsibility goes along with personal commitment, tolerance and concern shown on others. However, students at Sehunou hostel are faced with a situation where there is no justice, tolerance and concern shown and exercised in their misdemeanours. For such unbecoming behaviour to be displayed by students on other students, it means there is no tolerance and concern from both the other students and authorities because if there was such there could be reporting rape cases or taking action against the students who are violent. At least the victims of circumstances would feel that justice has been done. These children are left with scars for the rest of their lives with the type of lifestyle they experience at the hostels. Khoe children cannot be expected to develop commitment, dedication and seriousness to their reading and academic work under this vacuum. They must be able to see and experience these values in action in their daily lives including their lives at school. The school environment including the hostels where students stay should become caring communities in which all children become contributory and valued customers.

Besides, Botswana's Vision 2016 also echoes that by 2016 Botswana should be a compassionate, just and caring nation. This is to say that for Khoe children to develop their reading ability the conditions under which they stay should be compassionate and caring such that they will be able to develop their reading ability. Not only should the school be caring and nurturing even the hostels where learners spend most of the time, that is the afternoons and weekends should be seen to be a compassionate, caring and a nurturing environment. In addition, the Sri Sathya Sai hostel document highlights that hostel life should complement classroom instruction by moulding the students' personality whereby students receive due and careful attention. Their spiritual, cultural, physical, academic and social life should be nurtured for them to fulfill the primary objective of education.

Sexual abuse

There is an indication that girls are sexually abused by their male counterparts. This unbecoming behaviour goes unreported until some girls are reported to have absconded due to pregnancy. The sexual abuse can be done even at school in the storerooms. To avoid physical abuse, young female students have to give in to avoid perpetuating violent situations. However, a situation such as this one robs learners off a meaningful academic life. The students may experience difficulty in developing their reading ability and might score low when assessed in reading. Sexual abuse on its own affects students physically, emotionally and otherwise and in this way it indirectly affects the reading and academic life of students. At the hostels they are emotionally unstable most of the time and this does not create room

for reading and studying with a stable mind. Although the Millennium Development Goals and Education for all are the goals that Botswana education system intends to achieve like other countries, the sexual abuse may drive girl child away from school and it will be difficult to achieve such.

Fostering misbehaviour of students

Since there is an indication that Sehunou hostels are a brooding place for undesirable behaviour, Seifert (1991) justifies why students do so. She argues that students misbehave because they are bored and have nothing to keep them busy. Further it could be that they are rebelling against authority and now seeking independence. In addition they could be confused with the expectations of the environment. This could be true because there is no entertainment for the students for relaxation. Besides, the culture of the Khoe is distinct from that of Bangwato who are the dominating group at Motshegaletau Primary, as well as the hostels. The students are not sure of what is expected of them. Chall (1983) believes the readers attitudes toward reading are related to those of his or her family, culture and school. Somewhere we could be missing the point. Further they are confronted with the challenge of acquiring an entirely different culture which they often view as being in conflict with their own. The undesirable behaviour does not help the students to reach their academic potential because there is neither reading nor learning taking place.

Poverty

Looking at the various purposes Khoe children use mattress sponge for, it tells an unpleasant story about their poverty. Botswana's Vision 2016 argues that by the year 2016 Botswana should be able to offer support and opportunity to those who are poor; this includes all people in the benefits of growth. However, from the look of things, Khoe children cannot afford toiletry for personal usage hence they find mattresses to rescue themselves when they want to clean or polish their shoes. Also they use it as sanitary pads for their absorbency, let alone using them in the toilet if toilet paper is not available. No way can mattresses stand the test of time if students are needy. Even if shops were available to buy such toiletry they would have nothing to buy it with. So the parents and children's poverty send an alarming message that the sponge is used like the bottle of Coca cola drink in the film 'The Gods Must Be Crazy.' Again vision 2016 articulates a healthy nation as well. But who knows how this mattress sponge is affecting the students' health when they use it as sanitary pads? How clean is the sponge being used? Poverty affects the Khoe children's reading and ability indirectly. It impacts on their emotions as well as psychologically.

Conclusion

Perhaps there was a wrong reason for building residential hostels at Sehunou without necessarily taking into account good objectives of having a hostel. From the above points discussed the residential hostel for the Khoe at Sehunou is far from being classified as a hostel, it cannot be an integral part of the academic programme since it is not conducive for reading or studying, instead it is a brooding place for violence. A lot of unpleasant stories go on behind the scenes. The violence and rape

cases that go unreported are a cause for concern. It is an indication that there is no social responsibility, no compassion and no care for the welfare of the Khoe learners. Learners show no love for one another at the hostels which is something that should be instilled and embedded in their everyday lives. This has a negative influence in their future lives if they are to live like this. Life at the hostels affects them academically, physically, emotionally and psychologically. The environment at the hostels should teach learners morals, character development, interaction with other students and also demonstrate to the nation that they are well rounded citizens.

Instead of being a habitable place, the harsh conditions drive students away from both the hostel and school environment. Previous studies indicate a number of dropouts for a number of reasons, the non conducive environment being one of them. Again, there is an indication that students at lower levels drop out or abscond from school in large numbers, this could be a sign that the condition at the hostels are not habitable for reading and learning. Therefore it is essential to maintain and look after the hostels in concerted effort. As parents' poverty contributes to undesirable behaviour, strategies should be implemented to assist students. RADS policies articulate well the support it has to offer to disadvantaged groups, if this is done, it is inadequate because poverty seems to be looming in the Khoe children's lives.

In addition the Millennium Development Goals and Education for all are far fetched under the conditions at Sehunou hostel. Children only learn within the four walls of the classroom and therefore do not associate the hostels with a place where they can do studying and reading to improve their academic performance. The environment under which learning takes place contributes a lot to learners performance and quality education.

Recommendations

The Sehunou hostel should be restructured such that there are boys and girls dormitories closely monitored by a boarding master and matron respectively. Close monitoring might reduce the violence and vandalism that takes place at night and during the day.

Security personnel, night watchmen should be availed to support the boarding master and matron's effort in close monitoring the movements of hostel dwellers.

Prefects and monitors should be assigned and empowered in each room to report on the status of the rooms and behaviour of students that is unbecoming. This might curb indiscipline inside the hostel rooms knowing that they are being watched.

Students should be empowered to look after their hostels and the government property they are using. This should be the starting point, if students are empowered they will take responsibility of their actions and in addition try as much as possible to obey the hostel rules.

Regular maintenance of the hostels should be done. The Central District Council responsible for Schunou hostels should make sure that whatever damage has been done should be repaired promptly. Leaving damaged property unattended for a long time makes the hostels look deserted. It also affects students' health in winter since the doors and windows are broken and not working.

Entertainment should be provided. The fact that students cut mattress sponge to make balls is an indication that they need something to play with. Again leaving the hostels to go and drink or indulge in unbecoming ways is a sign of boredom. Time should be set aside for relaxation within hostel premises. Afternoon activities such as school trips should be organized to keep learners busy.

Poverty should be alleviated, students should be provided with enough toiletries regularly. Whatever students are provided with is not enough to take them through. If they could cut mattress sponge to use for menstrual periods, brushing their shoes and after using toilet then something must be done to help them use the appropriate toiletry rather than tearing mattresses.

The issue of HIV/AIDS is a concern across society and globally. This should be instilled in Khoe learners such that they are aware of the consequences of indulging in unprotected sex and unplanned pregnancies.

If the hostel is not serving any purpose in moulding students characters to better citizens then why have it? Authorities need to look into this issue and review why hostels were built for children as young as seven years to stay alone.

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