INTRODUCTION

Globally, a rapid increase of mobile tertiary education seekers has been observed. In 2005, more than 2.7 million tertiary education students were studying in a country other than their own, representing an increase of about 61% since 1999. Trade in education services is increasingly becoming important worldwide. Saner and Fasel (2003)* observe that the value of annual trade in higher education services was estimated at US$30 billion, which was 50% of trade in financial services.

The common destination for consumption of tertiary education is the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries).**

While the provision of primary and secondary education generally remains the responsibility of governments in many countries, provision of tertiary education continues to gradually move away from being in the purview of governments. The pressures of globalisation have a role to play in redefining the market forces that govern the provision of higher education. Education is increasingly becoming a private good that is paid for, as opposed to a public good to be provided for solely by governments. Further, there is an observation that the demand for publicly provided education is growing against the limited resources of governments due to budget limitations, the changing role of governments and the increased emphasis of the market economy and privatisation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Botswana is a net importer of tertiary education services. A significant proportion of public funds are spent on educating citizens in foreign institutions. The deliberate policy of government to educate the citizens is clearly articulated in different public policy documents. Developing the skills of the population through education and training has been translated into tangibles through the government budgetary spending in education.

This research reviewed the current state of trade in education services in Botswana, with particular emphasis on tertiary education, with the view to assess the country’s standing on the prospects of establishing an educational hub.

The research was based on information available from official statistics, accreditation bodies and tertiary institutions and used structured questionnaires and interviews.

This brief discusses the flows (imports and exports) of trade in tertiary education


** OECD member States are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States
The Southern African Development Research Network (SADRN) was launched in 2007 as a broad-based policy and research network. It aims to increase the supply of policy-relevant research in the SADC region and strengthen evidence-based policy-making. The project is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

SADRN focuses on three themes: industrial policy, services sector development at the regional level and trade policy and its linkages to pro-poor growth. The Botswana Institute for Development and Policy Analysis is the host of the trade and pro-poor growth theme working group, Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies hosts the industrial policy theme and the University of Mauritius hosts the services sector theme.

and the modes of supply involved (see table above), and analyses the policies, institutional and regulatory framework on tertiary education in view of their enhancement of the conditions for the establishment of an educational hub.

Two aspects are important in developing the tertiary education sector in Botswana.

**Government policy**

Increased accessibility to tertiary education is the main objective of government and the programmes offered should be in line with national policies. Government’s responsibility is also to ensure the programmes are internationally competitive.

**Institutional and regulatory setup for tertiary education**

Setting up the Tertiary Education Council to develop tertiary education and maintain standards is commendable. That its services include registering institutions and programme accreditation ensures that quality is upheld.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having realised that importing education costs the economy large sums in terms of revenue Botswana has started making inroads in developing the tertiary education sector. Between 2006 and 2008 the Tertiary Education Council registered seven new tertiary institutions.

Existing institutions are being expanded to include new programmes such as a medical school. A new institution, the Botswana International University of Science and Technology has been established.

Considering these developments, it is suggested that Botswana become an education hub. It should seek input, financial or abstract, from the smaller countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland so as to have a buy-in and subsequent ownership.

In the longer term, Botswana can serve as an alternative to South African institutions, as was the case with Zimbabwe before the political challenges.

January 2011