



Youth Engagement in Medical Policy: An Analysis of Botswana's Strategic Framework for the Future Healthcare Workforce

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Published: 23 August 2007 | **Received:** 07 May 2007 | **Accepted:** 29 July 2007

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18538998](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18538998)

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Abstract

The sustainability of Africa's healthcare systems relies on cultivating a new generation of medical professionals. Botswana's strategic policy documents acknowledge the need to engage youth in medicine, but a critical analysis of how these policies conceptualise and operationalise such engagement is absent. This policy analysis critically examines Botswana's strategic framework for its future healthcare workforce, focusing specifically on how it defines, incorporates, and promotes the role of youth within the medical field. A qualitative document analysis was conducted on key national policy documents, strategic plans, and programme reports related to health workforce development. The analysis employed a thematic framework to assess both explicit and implicit conceptualisations of youth engagement. The analysis revealed a predominant conceptualisation of youth as passive 'future beneficiaries' of training pipelines, rather than as active stakeholders in policy design. A key theme was an over-reliance on scholarship schemes as the primary youth-focused initiative, with minimal structured mechanisms for youth consultation or leadership development within the health sector. Botswana's strategic framework demonstrates a clear intent to increase the number of young medical professionals. However, it falls short of embracing a transformative model of youth engagement that values their agency and input in shaping the health systems they will inherit. Policymakers should integrate formal youth advisory structures into health workforce planning bodies. Programmes must move beyond financial support to include mentorship, leadership training, and platforms for meaningful participation in policy dialogue. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should incorporate specific indicators for the quality of youth engagement. health policy, health workforce, youth engagement, medical education, Botswana, policy analysis This analysis provides a critique of the underlying

assumptions about youth within Botswana's health workforce strategy, offering a framework for re-evaluating youth engagement in medical policy across similar contexts.

Keywords: *health workforce planning, youth engagement, Sub-Saharan Africa, policy analysis, medical education, strategic framework, human resources for health*



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