



# **NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION KINGDOM OF LESOTHO BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**



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## List of Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BTL	Breakthrough to Literacy
CEO	Chief Education Officer
COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
DTEP	Distance Teacher Education Programme
ECCD	Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development
ECOL	Examinations Council of Lesotho
EFA	Education for All
EHRD	Education for Human Rights and Democracy
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
FPE	Free Primary Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoL	Government of Lesotho
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEMS	Institute of Extra-Mural Studies
IDM	Institute for Development Management
LCE	Lesotho College of Education
LDTC	Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
LP	Lerotholi Polytechnic
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NTTC	National Teacher Training College
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
PIEP	Primary In-service Education Programme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSCU	Project Support and Coordination Unit

PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examination
SSRFU	School Self-Reliance and Feeding Unit
SSU	School Supply Unit
TSD	Teaching Service Department
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TTI	Thaba-Tseka Training Institute
TVD	Technical and Vocational Department
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVT	Technical and Vocational Training
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organisation

## **1. Introduction**

Since independence in 1966, Lesotho has always placed education and training at the top of her agenda as a tool for economic development and mechanism for empowerment of her citizenry. The biggest challenge has been opening access at all levels of education and providing opportunity for excellence. It became evident that opening access alone was not enough as quality, relevance and equity also had to be improved. Following stagnation in all these areas in the 1990s, Lesotho embarked on policy reviews towards the end of the millennium to address declines in enrolment, low efficiency and questionable relevance in all levels of education. This report by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of the Government of Lesotho (GOL) highlights key policy reforms and the resultant changes in key indicators on access and quality. The report also highlights the key changes in the provision of education in Lesotho in the new millennium.

## **2 Major Reforms in the Education and Training System of Lesotho**

### **2.1 The legal framework of education**

Whereas the Constitution of Lesotho<sup>1</sup> is the fundamental law that lays the foundation for provision of all levels of education and training in Lesotho, several laws have been promulgated to guide policy and practice at different levels of education. Different legislation exists for primary and secondary education; technical and vocational education training and higher education.

The Education Act No.10 of 1995, amended in 1996 was enacted to regulate provision of early learning education, primary and secondary education. This Act is currently under review to ensure that it addresses issues of Education for All, Convention on the Rights of a Child, the Millennium Development Goals, the Constitutional provision of free and compulsory education and the National Vision 2020 aimed at eradicating poverty through the provision of basic education for all. The envisaged review will also regulate and set standards for early learning

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<sup>1</sup> Order No.5 of 1993

education. It will also further entrench participation by civil society in the management of education at school and district level by devolving more powers to local level management structures.

In 2002, the MOET promulgated the Teaching Service regulations which guide teacher management and support, asserting the provisions of the Education Act and Teachers' Pensions Act.

The Lesotho Technical and Vocational Training Act of 1984 governs skills development programmes. Whereas under this Act, Technical And Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Training acting on the advice of the Technical and Vocational Training Advisory Board on all matters relating to TVET, the law is also under review to provide for greater participation of the private sector in skills development and in enhancing; enhance greater correlation between training programmes and the labour market and put in place governance and management structures that are appropriate to a demand-led system and above all, enable the system to respond quickly to the needs of the economy. The Department of Technical and Vocational Training of the MOET is the policy-implementing arm of the Board, and the nerve-centre of the TVET system.

The Higher Education Act enacted in 2004 regulates provision of higher education in a new context where there are public and private providers of higher education in Lesotho. The act, therefore, seeks to:

- regulate higher education through the establishment and registration of both public and private institutions;
- establish a council on higher education, whose main functions are accreditation and quality assurance of higher education institutions; and
- provide guidelines on governance and funding of public institutions in the sub sector.

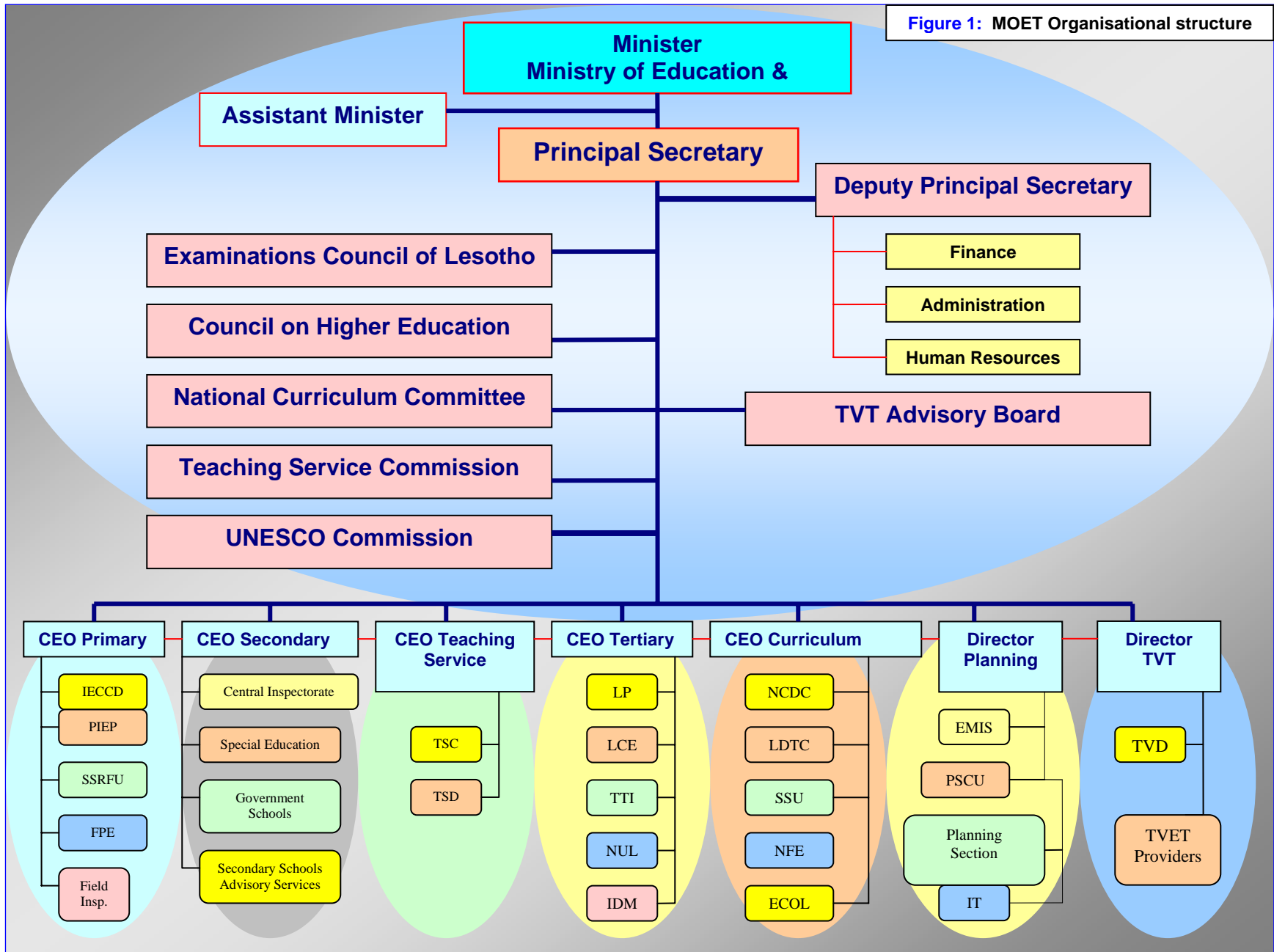
Two public institutions of higher learning – the Lerotholi Polytechnic and the Lesotho College of Education (formerly National Teacher Training College), to which provision of autonomy was legislated in 1997, were finally granted this status effective from 2002. This move was aimed at enhancing the professional effectiveness of these institutions with greater academic freedom and a degree of self-determination in human and financial resource management.

## **2.2 The organization, structure of the education and training system**

The Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for the management, provision and regulation of education and training in Lesotho and is headed by a Minister and an Assistant Minister of Education and Training. The incumbent Minister responsible for education is also the Deputy Prime Minister. The Principal Secretary, who is the administrative head and chief accounting officer of the ministry, is assisted at the executive level by the Deputy Principal Secretary; five Chief Education Officers responsible for Primary, Secondary, Teaching Service, Curriculum Services and Tertiary Education; two Directors, one of Technical and Vocational and Technical Education and the other for Training and of Planning; and the Secretary General of the National Commission for UNESCO. These Senior Managers head departments composed of programmes which form operational units of the education and training sector in Lesotho (see figure. 1).

The current structure of the MOET is under review to be more in line with the Public Sector Improvement and Reform Programme, whose main thrust is the professionalisation of the public service. Decentralisation of management and services in education and training remains a priority of the government of Lesotho and is addressed through gradual decentralisation of services to district level and ultimately to local levels pending election of local councils. The MOET has prioritised early-childhood care, primary education and teacher management for decentralisation by 2007.

Figure 1: MOET Organisational structure



### **2.3 Curriculum and Assessment Policy**

Whereas there has been a curriculum review process which started in the mid 1990s for primary and secondary education resulting in the current curricula organisation, fresh challenges in response to the imperatives of millennium development goals and the quest for more relevant national curricula as envisaged in the National Vision, results from the Impact Assessment of HIV and AIDS on the Education Sector and the Gender Audit in Education, have necessitated a need for a review of curriculum and assessment framework. The need to mainstream the response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the curriculum is one of the major imperatives for curriculum and assessment review process. The MOET, established a Task Force with broad stakeholder representation including, academics, teacher educators, policy-makers, curriculum developers, examinations officers, teacher representatives and school administrators and school proprietor representatives, to develop a new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework.

The Curriculum and Assessment policy framework development is oriented towards approaches placing primacy on survival skills for learners, not only in their schooling routine but in the local and global community that poses ever daunting challenges in the lives of young people. It is driven by the need to:

- determine the nature and direction of required reforms in national curriculum and assessment system;
- address the emerging issues pertaining to new demands, practices and challenges in particular mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS, environmental education for sustainable development and a gender responsive curriculum;
- monitor quality, relevance and cost effectiveness in the development of basic and secondary education curriculum;
- define different assessment levels and redirection of assessment processes towards standardized measurement of acquired and potential abilities of students, their skills and competency levels alongside measurement of knowledge achievement levels;

- determine timeframes and draw intervals for National Assessment Studies aimed at objective description of levels of mastery of various skills in the process of social and intellectual development of a child; and
- coordinate and maintain consistency between what is learned, taught and assessed.

Curricula and content at post-secondary level of technical and vocational training are developed and determined by the Board through its committees and sub-committees. Both these processes are coordinated by TVD. The National Curriculum is in place for the following courses:- Automotive mechanics; Bricklaying and Plastering; Business Studies; Carpentry and Joinery; Electrical Installation; Home Science and Secretarial Studies. The awaited report on the recent National Skills Needs Survey will assist in determining which new courses have to be developed. All assessment and examinations in technical education subjects are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education through the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) in close collaboration with TVD.

#### ***2.4 Curriculum and Assessment in TVET***

TVET assessment at post-secondary level is the responsibility of the TVT Board. It carries out this responsibility through its committees and sub-committees, which develop examinations for courses. TVD coordinates this process and administers the examinations and awards certificates on behalf of the Board. The Director of TVT and the Chairperson of the TVT Board (Principal Secretary for Education and Training), attests to the qualifications acquired through the TVET system. These include skills acquired from the labour market through demonstrable competence. They also are the responsibility of the Board through its committees and sub-committees. TVD coordinates the process, administers the tests and awards certificates on behalf of the Board. The Director of TVT and the Chairperson of the TVT Board, sign the certificates thus issued. The need to involve more the private sector and employers in the curriculum design and

assessment modalities to ensure relevance of training is an imperative that is being addressed through policy and legislative review.

## ***2.5 The Content of Education***

Aware of the global economic realities and the pursuit of compliance with the Education for All goals, the content of education in Lesotho ought to be geared towards fostering participation in democratic processes so as to promote peace, stability and prosperity, and to prepare people to take control of their own destiny. It should further be skills-based in conserving and maintaining the environment and sustainable development. Similarly education should equip learners with skills with entrepreneurial skills necessary for participation in the national, regional and international economic arenas. Increasingly, technology, especially Information and Communication Technology (ICT), is becoming a driving force in all sectors. Education should therefore provide technological skills to learners in order to enable young Basotho to compete at all economic levels.

A sound education should integrate emerging issues such as HIV and AIDS, gender, population and family life education, human rights and democracy in a dynamic and evolving nature. The intention of the MOET is to aggressively address the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on the education sector in general, and in particular on school-going age children in a country which is one of the worst affected by HIV and AIDS in the world. These realities have been acknowledged in Lesotho and inform the current curriculum reform programme.

As a direct response to some of the critical challenges facing Lesotho, especially the need to provide basic education for all at an affordable cost, a comprehensive review of the curriculum organization at the primary level is being undertaken to reduce the number of subjects to a manageable number which provides opportunity for sufficient emphasis on literacy and numeracy acquisition, and offer an integrated package of Life Skills education.

The curriculum review is further meant to progressively mainstream such other emerging issues as human rights in the formal school curriculum so as to deepen the democratic values in our young people. Lesotho, in partnership with UNESCO, is piloting Education for Human Rights and Democracy (EHRD) in the first four grades of primary education from 2004. The current curriculum review process is expected to be completed in 2007.

## **2.6 Teaching and Learning Strategies**

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2000 necessitated a review the teaching strategies that are mainly teacher-centre and emphasize knowledge over skills. It is particularly true in an environment where teacher had little if any training and are handling ever larger classes. Our existing teaching force requires regular and continuing professional development to help them cope with these large classes.

The MOET in partnership with the Lesotho College of Education and other non-governmental organizations is engaged in the training of teachers in innovative ways of teaching language such as “Breakthrough to Literacy” (BTL). This approach that has been widely adopted in other African countries has been tried out very successfully in most schools and reports have verified that using these approach children do learn to read and write fluently within one year of schooling. The MOET is exploring other approaches to assist learners to achieve Numeracy in the first three years of schooling. Strategies such as double-shift system to cope with large classes and multi-grade teaching in smaller rural schools are also being explored for development to enhance children’s learning. The increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children has created a need to train teachers in psycho-social care and support techniques such as play therapy.

## **2.7 Supply of Quality Learning Materials**

While tremendous efforts were being made in ensuring access to education as the first priority, the MOET has not lost sight of the quintessential requirements of *quality, equity* and *relevance*. At primary school level a system of textbook rental scheme that has been in place since the early 1980s is under review to ensure cost effectiveness and quality assurance in book supply, by opening up the book market and minimizing monopolistic supply. As part of the Free Primary Education programme, the government provides stationery and other teaching and learning materials for pupils and teachers. Through the book rental scheme the pupil textbook ratio of 1:5 has been maintained at primary level.

From the 2004 school year the MOET has introduced a *Secondary Schools Textbooks Rental Scheme* at a highly subsidized rate. The aims of this scheme are (a) to reduce the high cost of education at this level through a subsidy in the purchase of quality textbooks which have hitherto constituted one of the highest costs to parents, (b) to improve the participation rates at this level since the majority of students dropout due the escalating poverty and (c) to improve the quality of teaching and learning materials in use through a stringent screening procedure before textbooks can be recommended for use in secondary schools. It is this last aim that serves as a quality control measure while at the same time ensuring that a majority of students has access to good quality learning materials at a reasonable cost. The scheme is introduced on an incremental basis starting with Form A in 2004.

### **3 Major Achievements in Education and Training**

In spite of setbacks brought about by factors such as deepening poverty emanating from macro-economic factors and the impact of HIV and AIDS, there have been achievements at all levels of education from pre-school to higher education in areas of access, quality and efficiency.

### 3.1 Access to education and training:

#### 3.1.1 Pre-Primary (2 – 6 years)

Whereas access to early childhood care and development remains low with an estimated 30 percent of the age cohort accessing this service in 2003 from 22 percent in 1999, as shown in table 1 below, there are gradually more boys accessing this level of education than girls. Increased levels of household poverty and minimal support from the state have made this level of education inaccessible for most children. A draft policy that will guide provision of this level of education has been developed and is under consideration for adoption by the government. The MOET is piloting a home-based approach to early childhood care which seeks to empower parents with parenting skills providing care for children within their homes and in neighbourhood groups at minimal costs.

**Table 1: Projected Population and Enrolment 3-6 years by sex - 2000-2002**

Years	Males		Females		Totals	
	Pop. Est.	Enrolment	Pop. Est.	Enrolment	Pop. Est.	Enrolment
2000	74542	15215	73130	15324	147672	30540
2001	74158	17284	72865	17223	147023	34507
2002	74421	21520	73239	20099	147660	41792

#### 3.1.2 Access to Primary Education

As mentioned earlier on in this paper, Lesotho introduced Free Primary Education (FPE), phased-in one grade per year. It will only cover the full primary cycle from 2006. Besides the phenomenal increase of 72% in intake and an overall increase of 12.5% in enrolment in 2000, FPE has also brought about rapid narrowing of the gender ratio in favour of boys at almost 100% over four years

(see figure 2). In 2003 there were 214,746 boys to 214,974 girls in Lesotho primary schools, comprising a total Gross Enrolment Rate of 124.9 percent and a Net Enrolment Rate of 85%.

Efficiency in primary education has remained poor in spite of the gains in access in the past five years of Free Primary Education. In 2002 repetition rates for males and females were 23.5 percent and 18.6 percent respectively. Contrary to the repetition rates, drop out rates declined between 1999 and 2002 from 8.6 to 6.4 percent for boys and 5.5 to 3.2 percent for girls. Overall promotion rates increased over the period for both males and females.

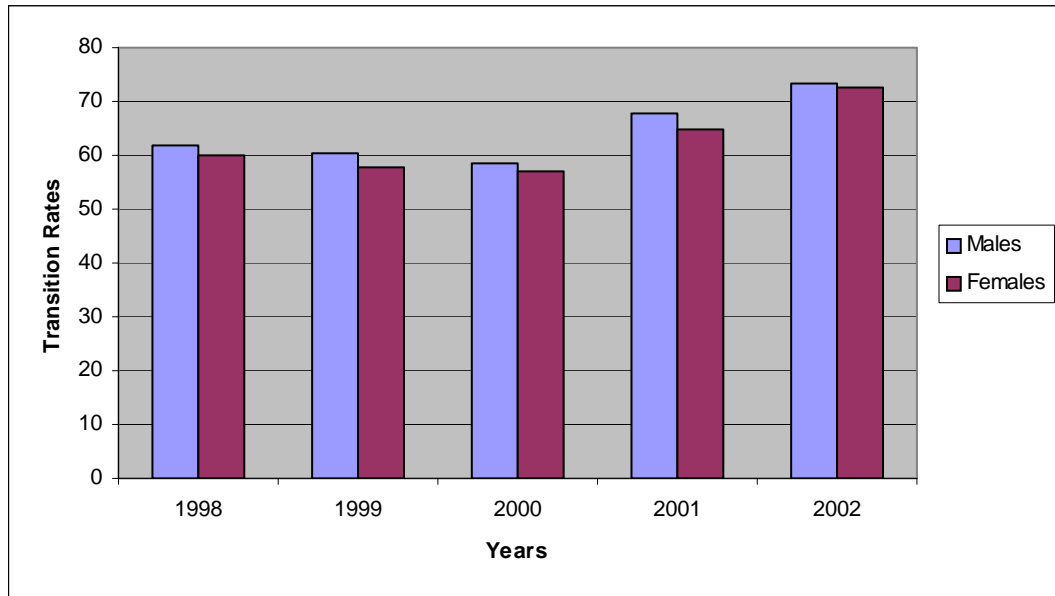
### **3.1.3 Access to Secondary Education**

The three years of junior secondary education are considered as part of basic education and form part of the EFA Goals. After a national Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) a relatively lower proportion of girls proceed to secondary education than their male counterparts. According to the 2003 Education Statistics, enrolment in standard 7 in 2002 was 36,628 and the enrolment in Form A<sup>2</sup> in 2003 was 25,678. This indicates 70% transition rate. Figure 4 shows that from 1998 to 2002, a marginally greater proportion of boys who passed the PSLE ended in secondary education than girls.

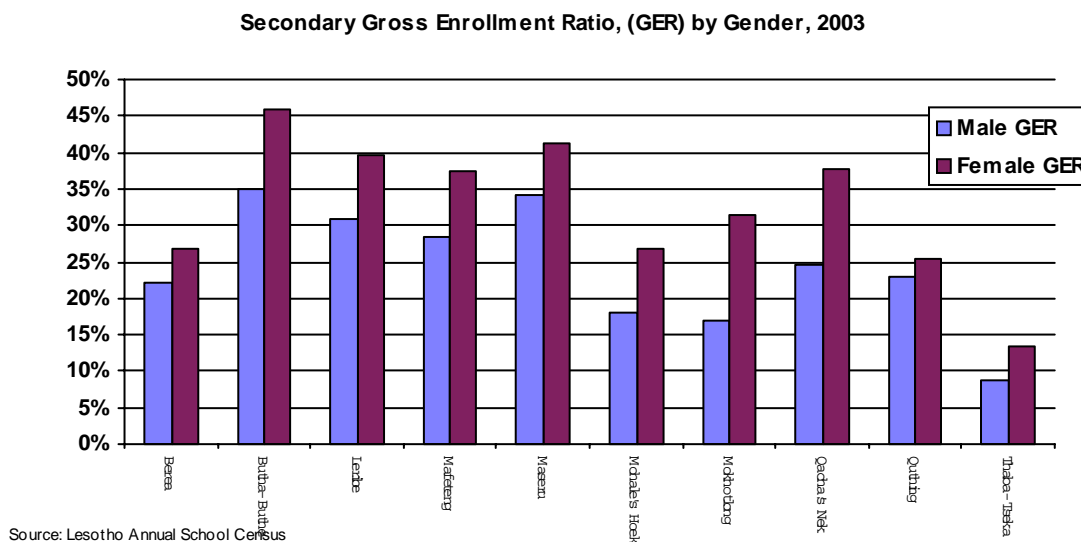
Given the much higher cost to parents for secondary education, this suggests that if they have to choose, most parents opt to provide secondary education for boys than girls. Since so far many more girls sit and pass the PSLE, in spite of this apparent bias against girls, enrolments in secondary remain higher for girls (see Figure 3). If the current trend continues, there is a danger that by 2007 when the first FPE cohort reaches Form A, unless there is deliberate intervention, we could begin to see more boys access secondary education than girls.

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<sup>2</sup> Form A is the first grade of secondary education.



**Figure 2: Transition Rates from Primary to Secondary Education (1998 – 2002)**



**Figure 3: Enrolments in Secondary Education by district (2003)**

The total enrolment for secondary education from form A to Form E increased from 72,437 in 1999 to 83,104 in 2003. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for secondary education increased from 24.9 % and 36.0% in 1999 to 30.1% and 39.1% in 2003 for males and females respectively.

The High wastage rate from both dropout and repetition rates in secondary education is illustrated by this cohort analysis which shows that only 66 percent of the 1999 form A cohort reached form C and a further 37 percent reached form E (Table 2). Further analysis indicates that the wastage is proportionally higher for girls than for boys.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>% Cohort</b>
1999	9,535	12,749	22,284	100
2001	6,456	8,211	14,667	66
2003	3,821	4,414	8,235	37

**Table 2: Cohort Analysis for Secondary Education: 1999 – 2003**

### **3.1.4 Technical and Vocational Education**

Amidst concerns in public discourse about the vocational relevance of formal education and the employability of school leavers, there has been marginal growth in enrolment in vocational courses in local institutions. Whereas some learners have opted for TVET courses offered outside Lesotho, very few school leavers have the requisite entrance requirements into these courses. There is still a strong gender bias in enrolment in technical courses with the old tendencies born from gender roles persisting. These trends have necessitated a review of policy in TVET to address issues of access, quality and relevance. The need for a demand driven provision of TVET, dictates that the private sector play a leading role in the development of TVET programmes.

Table 3 below shows levels of participation in the TVET courses from 1999 to 2003. Participation in Home Science has declined significantly from 655 in 2001 to 424 in 2003. This course, unlike others, was meant to prepare girls for the adult life in the home and not in the industry. It is losing popularity because it does not provide graduates with vocational skills which they can sell in the job market.

**Table 3: Enrolments in Technical/Vocational Institutions by Course and by Gender 1999 - 2003**

<i>Type of Course</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>
Architecture	33	34	51	51	51
Auto Electrics	0	0	10	10	10
Basic Electronics	8	10	0	0	0
Bricklaying	183	262	237	229	230
Business Studies	59	59	60	120	121
Carpentry	116	107	162	161	155
Civil Engineering	36	38	54	54	54
Commercial Studies	97	57	0	0	0
Dressmaking	15	15	15	37	37
Electrical Engineering	49	52	55	92	58
Electrical Installation	121	135	132	96	131
Fitting and Turning	41	38	45	45	45
Home Science	595	681	655	423	424
Marketing	20	20	24	44	44
Mechanical Engineering	46	51	53	47	47
Motor Mechanics	142	154	174	163	148
Panel Beating	31	32	32	31	31
Plumbing	97	74	84	88	84
Secretarial Studies	0	0	60	120	121
Tailoring	15	15	15	25	25
Welding	8	8	9	9	9
Leather Works	10	17	12	14	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>1722</b>	<b>1859</b>	<b>1939</b>	<b>1857</b>	<b>1837</b>

According to enrolment statistics in TVET, the highest recorded enrolment figure of 1,939 was reached in 2001 but has since dropped to 1837 in 2003. It also shows that males have been enrolling in larger numbers than females in this sector. We have observed also that males are grouped in the courses that prepare them for the so-called masculine jobs, or traditional vocations, while girls are grouped in those which prepare them for the so-called feminine jobs or soft careers. Table 3 shows total enrolment by sex and by level from 1999 to 2003.

### 3.1.5 Access to Higher Education

Over the years access to higher education by many qualifying Basotho has significantly increased. However, there has always been limited space in the three institutions that are under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Training. Table 4 indicates undergraduate enrolments at the National University of Lesotho. It should be noted that many undergraduate and post-graduates students enrol in universities outside Lesotho, especially in South Africa, and most of them are on state-funded soft loan bursaries.

**Table 4: National University of Lesotho Enrolments 2003 - 2005 by Programme**

#### **Academic Year 2003/2004**

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Total</b>
Education & Humanities	446	453	496	229	1624
Law & Social Sciences	925	748	367	218	2248
Sciences, Applied Sciences	251	328	183	123	885
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	1622	1529	1046	560	4857
IEMS	835	604	310	27	1776

#### **Academic year 2004/2005**

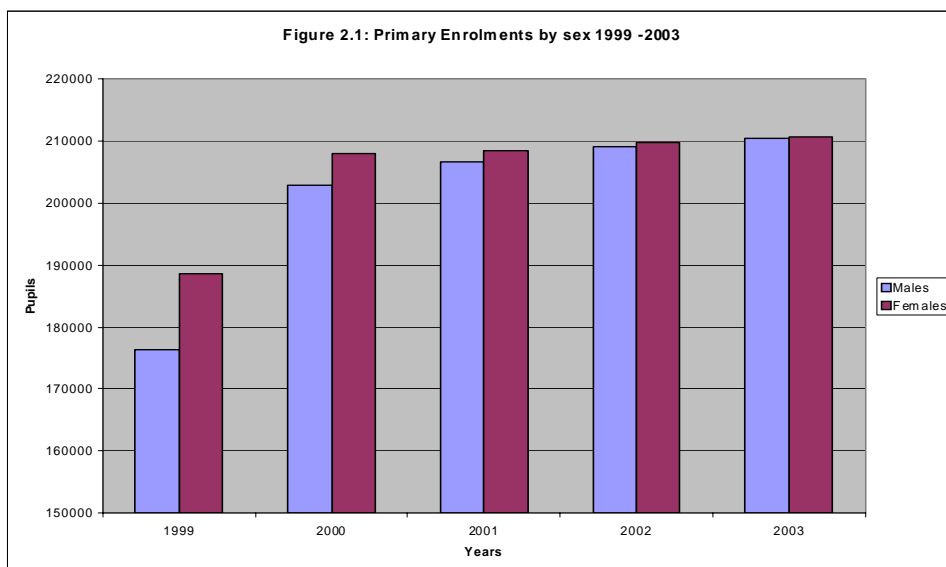
Agriculture	28	36	24	41	129
Education	351	350	275	233	1209
Health Science	66	74	45	2	177
Humanities	73	101	61	80	315
Law	190	327	163	91	771
Natural and Applied Sciences	224	147	96	70	537
Social Science	514	392	413	229	1548
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	1446	1427	1077	746	4686
Institute of Extra-Mural Studies	555	372	341	42	1310

## **4 Equity in Education**

Following a Gender Audit of the Education Sector in 2002, the MOET has acknowledged that gender issues do exist in the Lesotho education and training system and is in the process of developing a gender policy for the sector based on the National Gender Policy framework. Since issues of equity are not only on gender, they express themselves differently at different levels of education.

#### 4.1 Equity in Primary Education

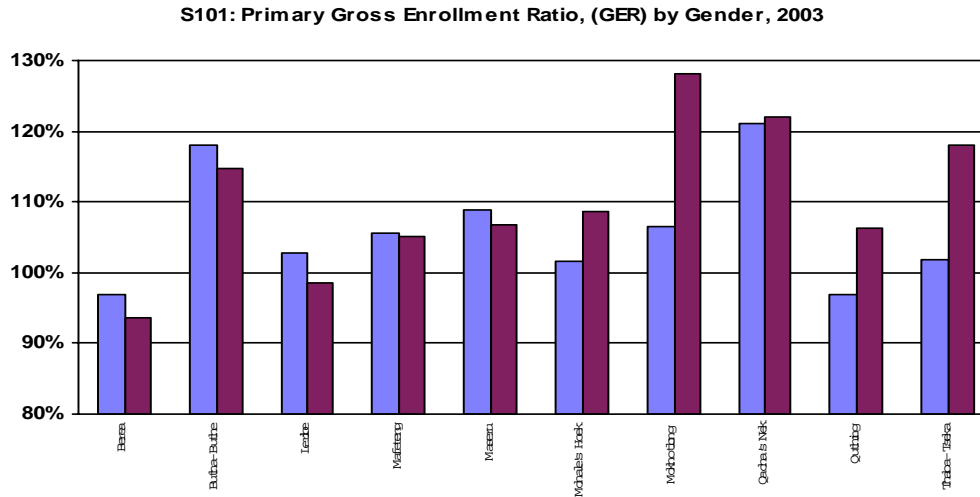
In Lesotho, there have been more girls enrolled than boys at all levels of schooling since official statistics records were kept. Socio-economic patterns, such as the migrant labour system and livestock herding by boys, have been attributed to this unorthodox pattern. The disparities on the basis of social status and geographic location have also been characteristic of the education system across the board. Nevertheless, these aggregated statistics camouflage considerable regional and gender disparities in primary enrolments. Whereas the aggregated figures show a marked reduction in the gender gap over the five years from 1999 to 2003 (figure 4), further analysis show the differences.



**Figure 4: Primary Enrolments by Sex 1999 – 2003**

There are gender ratio variations between the populous lowland districts and the mountainous districts of the country as shown in Figure 5. The first five districts, which are mainly lowlands<sup>3</sup>, have had a relatively lower GER for girls since 1999, which has since been surpassed by that of boys. While there has been overall increase in enrolments for both boys and girls, and the narrowing of the gap brings the country closer to the targeted gender parity, it not comforting that girls have not gained as much advantage from FPE as their male counterparts.

<sup>3</sup> The lowlands districts are Botha-Bothe, Leribe, Berea, Maseru and Mafeteng.

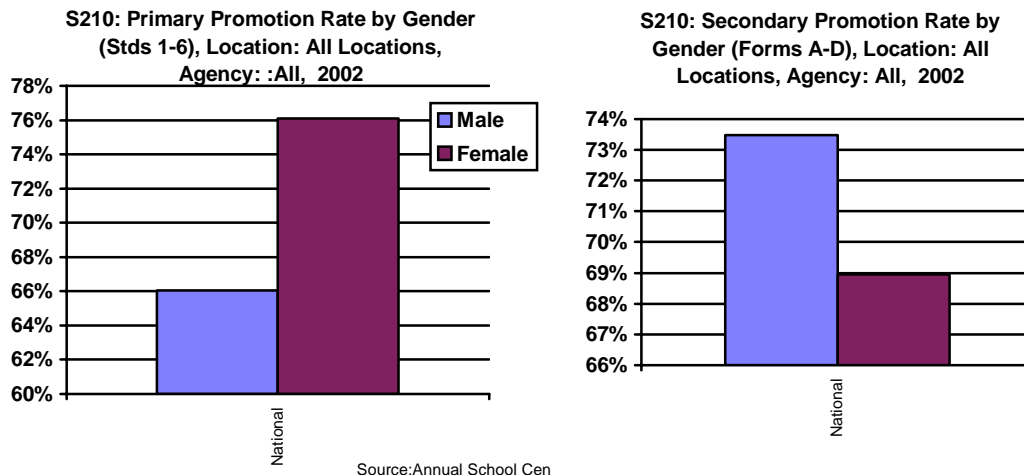


**Figure 5: GER by District and by Gender, 2003.**

Since enrolment in primary education before 2000 were generally low and declining, attention was focused on efforts to increase overall enrolment for three to sixteen year old children in Lesotho. These efforts have succeeded to varying degrees at different levels of education. While the narrowing of the gender gap between boys and girls was a welcomed development, concerns are beginning to rise as the enrolment of boys overtakes girls with no clear natural explanation. This trend needs to be further investigated and, if needs be, remedied. In an effort to address the issue of girls in education at school level, a Girls Education Movement (GEM) has been introduced in line with United Nations Girls Education Initiative.

### 3.1 Equity in Secondary Education

At secondary level 4.5% of boys are promoted more than girls (see figure 6). Coupled with the lower transition levels for girls from primary to secondary education, girls lose out on their advantage in primary education very rapidly at secondary level. Factors such as teenage pregnancy, early marriage, morbidity of parents and other relatives due to HIV and AIDS, all take their toll on girls in secondary education. A number of quality issues also militate against girls at secondary level which further diminishes the advantage they have had in primary education. These notwithstanding, the total enrolment indicate that at every level from Form A to E the number of girls is higher than that of boys.



**Figure 6: Comparable Promotion rates for boys and Girls at Primary and Secondary level: 2002**

The government introduced a bursary scheme into secondary education targeting particularly orphaned and vulnerable children whose participation in secondary education is low. Despite the difficulties of attracting out-of-school youth to return to school to complete secondary education, the bursary scheme provides a realistic opportunity for the poorest of the poor and AIDS orphans to complete ten years of basic education.

## ***4.2 Equity in Higher Education***

Like all levels of education in Lesotho there have always been more females than males in schools with the exception of technical higher education where there are more males. For instance in 2004-2005 academic year there are 203 males against only 99 females admitted at the Lerotholi Polytechnic. Similar gender biases are also observed in the choice of programmes and subjects in higher education. The major equity concern in higher education is the low level of access to this level of education by children from lower income groups and learners from remote rural areas.

## **5 Quality education and the key role of teachers**

The number of teachers has been increasing considerably in attempt meet the increasing need as enrolments rose and in an attempt to reduce teacher pupil ratios. Given the low level of output from our teacher preparation programmes and high teacher attrition rates of qualified and experienced teachers, the system has had to resort to unqualified teachers and expatriates to meet teacher shortages. The need for regular and continuing professional development for teachers and improving their working conditions has to compete with the urgent need increase numbers of qualified teachers. To address this need, a comprehensive Teacher Education and Training policy for Lesotho is in the last stages of being developed provide guidance for a balance between quality and quantity in teacher supply and demand.

## **5.1 Primary Teachers**

The number of teachers in primary education increased from 8,225 in 1999 to 9,294 in 2003. In this period the ratio of unqualified teachers increased from 22% to 32%. The majority of primary school teachers are female comprising almost 80 percent. The challenge to increase intake levels and to improve the quality of output is taken seriously at the Lesotho College of Education. The primary teacher qualification has now been raised to diploma from certificate level and a Distance Teacher Education Programme for serving under- and unqualified teachers, has been instituted. The first cohort of graduands from this programme is expected in 2005. Whereas this will easily produce double the number of teacher usually coming out of the pre-service, it will still fall short of the required numbers to reverse the current level of unqualified teachers.

Albeit, irregular and not well coordinated, in-service training programmes are offered to teachers including induction of unqualified teachers, dissemination of curriculum initiatives, pedagogical approaches in language teaching, school management and instructional supervision. The need for a well coordinated continuing professional development of teachers has been recognised and is incorporated the teacher education and training policy document.

## **5.2 Secondary Teachers**

In secondary education, the main concerns are in connection with teachers of specialized subjects. According to Education Statistics 2003, there were 3,421 teachers in secondary and high schools, and out of those 1,543 were male and 1,878 were female, constituting 45.10% and 54.90% respectively. To cite a few examples, in Basic Handicrafts, out of 307 teachers, there were 263 male and 44 female. In Woodwork, out of 341 teachers, there were 306 male and 35 female; yet in Food and Nutrition, out of 205 teachers, there were 2 male and 203 female teachers. This imbalances influence the students' choice of subjects. There is still a net shortage of qualified teachers in subjects such as science, mathematics, business studies and technical subjects.

## **6 Major Challenges and Facing the Education Sector**

Among the key challenges facing education and training in Lesotho, the following are the most fundamental related to access, quality, relevance, and efficiency.

### **6.1 Access**

The goal of affording universal basic education for all remains the main challenge in the development of education, especially at secondary level where NERs was till as low as 24% in 2003. If the target of reaching 100% NER from the current 85% is to be reached by 2015, primary education may need to be made free and compulsory. Great expansion is needed in the provision of a relevant Technical and Vocational education for as many school leavers struggling to make it in the job market.

### **6.2 Efficiency**

The low enrolment at all levels is compounded by low efficiency epitomised by high repetition and dropout rates. At primary level only an average of 71% of boys and 78 % of girls are promoted while almost 20% repeat grades and 6% dropout. As shown earlier, the pattern is similar in secondary education. The need to provide stricter policy guidelines on promotion and repetition and to improve the assessment skills of teachers will address this problem.

### **6.3 Quality**

A good quality of provision and high achievement of learning outcomes do not only provide appropriate dividends to the investment in education but also have a positively influence on the demand for education. Curriculum review at all levels especially the incorporation of life skills, technology and functional numeracy and literacy remains a key priority. Investment in the training of teachers and provision of appropriate teaching learning materials will also contribute to the improvement of quality.

### **6.4 Teacher Development**

The challenge to meet the ever increasing demand for qualified teachers, especially in specialised subjects such as science, mathematics and technology

is one that can only be won through a well coordinated teacher education and improvement programme.

### **6.5 HIV and AIDS**

Preliminary results from the Impact Assessment of HIV and AIDS on the education sector indicate that the loss of trained and experienced teachers to AIDS and the need to save those children in the 'window of hope' who are not yet engaged in risky behaviour is a challenge that we cannot afford to lose. For those with rare skills who are already infected Lesotho has resolved to use its resources to keep them alive as long as possible. In a system where there is already an acute shortage of qualified teachers, the need to encourage voluntary counselling and testing for HIV, and to provide antiretroviral treatment for those infected has been realised. Having trained all serving primary school teachers on the facts of HIV and AIDS the shift is now to keep those who are infected alive and keep those who test negative away from risky behaviour.

## **7 Conclusion**

The dawning of the new millennium has brought hope to many Lesotho citizens as more young people access education than any other time before. The millennium development goals expressed in the national vision 2020 and the Education Sector Strategic Plan provide a real opportunity for the achievement of education for all and sustainable development. The HIV and AIDS scourge, partnered by endemic climatic mishaps have left many people poor and unable to access basic education. The resolve of the Government of Lesotho to make quality education available to all remains steadfast. Reform programmes in the legal and policy framework, curricula, human resource development and delivery mechanisms will give Lesotho a realistic chance of eliminating poverty through education by 2015.

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