

The University of Botswana

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA (UB)

Over the years, the university has recognised the substantial demand for tertiary education by Batswana. The university also appreciates that this demand for educational opportunity from all those who aspire to and qualify for it cannot be met by increasing the number of places in the full-time programmes, because this task would require the construction of additional institutions to provide the required teaching, administrative and accommodation space. Second, some target groups cannot be reached through the traditional mode of delivery since it is difficult to withdraw them from their occupational and family commitments. Conventional institutions of higher learning are not an easy option for these target groups.

For these reasons distance education programmes are planned to complement the full-time programmes by making educational opportunities available to a wider population at certificate, diploma, undergraduate and graduate levels. In this way, the university will be responding to the national goals that uphold the provision of education in order to produce the skilled human resources which the nation so badly requires.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

The University of Botswana, which existed previously as a constituent college of the University of Botswana and Swaziland (UBS), became a separate national university in 1982. The separation came after the development of physical resources and academic programmes by each of the constituent colleges, (University of Botswana Calendar 1995-1996:3).

The university has six faculties which offer undergraduate courses leading to the award of certificates, diplomas, and degrees. The distribution of faculties and departments is as shown in table 9.

Table 9 University of Botswana: Faculties and Academic Departments

Faculty Departments	Departments
1 Faculty of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adult Education ● School of Graduate Studies ● Counsellor Education ● Educational Foundations ● Educational Technology ● Educational Foundations ● Higher Education Development Unit ● Home Economics Education ● Languages and Social Sciences ● Mathematics and Science Education ● Nursing Education ● Physical and Recreational education ● Primary Education ● Special Education
2 Faculty of Engineering & Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civil Engineering ● Electrical Engineering ● Mechanical Engineering ● Technology and Educational Studies
3 Faculty of Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● African Languages and Literature ● English ● French ● History (including Archaeology and Museum) ● Library and Information Studies ● Theology and Religious Studies
4 Faculty of Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biological Science ● Chemistry ● Computer Science ● Environmental Science ● Geology ● Mathematics ● Physics
5 Faculty of Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demography ● Economics ● Law

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political and Administrative Studies ● Population & Sustainable Development (PGD) ● Social Work ● Sociology ● Statistics
6 Faculty of Business Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accounting and Finance ● Marketing and Business Administration ● Business Administration

Other university sections or programmes include:

- The Centre for Continuing Education, which extends university education beyond full-time learners
- The Resource Programme for Disabled Learners, which integrates disabled learners into the university
- The University Library
- The National Institute of Development Research and Documentation, which coordinates research work for the entire University
- The legal clinic, which is run by the Law Department and provides free legal assistance to indigent groups in society
- The Okavango Research Centre, which concentrates on applied research on environmental management
- The Counselling Centre, which caters for the needs of learners and staff alike.

In addition, primary teacher training colleges; colleges of education which train secondary school teachers; and health training institutes which train nurses and other health workers are affiliated to the University of Botswana. The graduands from these colleges are awarded diplomas and certificates by the University of Botswana. The College of Agriculture (BCA), which offers diplomas and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture as well as other certificate courses, is also associated with the University of Botswana.

UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Historically, the university's involvement in distance education dates back to the early seventies when, as stated in the country overview, radio was used as the main medium to facilitate learning. The radio campaigns were supported with printed materials in the

form of study guides and report forms. These programmes were offered by the university via the Department of Extra Mural Service, which later became the Institute of Adult Education, and since 1991 has been divided into the Centre for Continuing Education (where the Distance Education Unit is based) and the Department of Adult Education, which is under the Faculty of Education.

The first credited course to be offered at a distance was the Diploma in Theology launched in 1979, using printed materials with some face-to-face components. This programme was later discontinued because of logistical problems.

The Certificate in Adult Education (CAE) was launched four years later in 1983. It came as a request from the Ministry of Education's Department of Non-formal Education for the professional preparation and training of a cadre of literacy assistants involved in the implementation of adult literacy at grassroot level. The programme uses self-instructional materials and face-to-face sessions. The face-to-face component consists of six weeks of residential periods and six study weekends per academic year. The CAE programme relied heavily on the input of course tutors, hence the heavy face-to-face component. This and other factors have necessitated a review of the whole programme, including a re-formulation of the programme objectives and the revision of the course content. The revised materials will set a tone for the subsequent development of course/instructional materials for other programmes.

THE CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

The major function of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) is extension and outreach work and to this effect the centre has been re-organised administratively into three programming units and one non-programming unit as shown in table 10.

Table 10 CCE programming and non-programming units

Programming units	Non-programming units
Public Education Unit (PEU)	Technical Support Unit
Extra-Mural Unit (EMU)	
Distance Education Unit (DEU)	

The Public Education Unit

The major function of this unit is to extend general education to the public, create awareness and sensitise the public to issues of national interest.

The Extra-Mural Unit (EMU)

This unit offers credit and non-credit programmes on a part-time basis through evening classes in diverse areas such as accounting and business studies.

The Technical Support Unit (TSU)

This unit is meant to service the programming units to enable them to deliver quality education to the public. This unit therefore concentrates on needs assessment to identify programmes of great demand, resourcing the study centres, providing guidance and counselling for CCE learners and monitoring and evaluating ongoing programmes for effectiveness.

The Distance Education Unit (DEU)

This unit has been mandated to develop distance education programmes at tertiary level.

The mission of the unit is to:

- initiate, plan, design, and offer university programmes to off-campus learners using the distance education delivery mode;
- convert, coordinate, and administer university faculty programmes to off-campus learners;
- ensure, in collaboration with other university departments, equivalence and parity of standards between on-campus and off-campus university programmes;
- establish regional teaching/learning centres; and
- in communication with the relevant departments, recommend to Senate the award of university level certificates, diploma and degrees.

Objectives of DEU

The specific objectives of the DEU are to:

- extend educational opportunity to all aspiring Batswana without withdrawing them from their families and duties in nation building;
- develop distance education study packages that are relevant to the needs of Botswana;
- produce qualified and skilled manpower in order to hasten the localisation process;
- develop an elaborate learner support system which will meet the diverse learning needs of distance learners.

Academic programmes

To cater for all learning needs the university intends to provide education programmes at non-credit, certificate, diploma, degree and graduate levels.

Non-credit programmes will consist of individual modular courses which can be studied for self-development purposes such as business English, basic first aid and small-scale entrepreneurship.

Based on a general appraisal of needs and possibilities, the following programmes are desirable:

- Certificate/Diploma in Adult Education (CAE/DAE)
- Certificate/Diploma in Trade Unionism
- Certificate /Diploma in Law
- Certificate/Diploma in Supervisory Management
- Certificate/Diploma in Accounting and Business Studies (CABS/DABS)
- Diploma in Primary Education (DPE)
- Bachelor of Education (BEd)
- Master of Education (MEd)

To allow for quality and flexibility and to ensure that the distance education programmes provided are manageable, the university intends to introduce academic programmes in phases starting with the Diploma in Primary Education and leading on to Master of Education (MEd).

Certificate in Adult Education (CAE)

This programme has been targeted at adult educators at the grassroots level. Learners come from all parts of the country. These are extension workers who work mainly with communities from different sectors, both public and private. Participants include extension educators who are involved in the National Literacy Programme; prison warders in the education section of the Department of Prisons who are involved in the education of inmates; extension workers in the Consumer Affairs Division of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; and others.

Table 11 Trend of enrolment and completion rates in the last five years

Year	Pass	Credit	Merit	Distinction	Total
1985	3	1	–	7	23
1987	12	21	–	2	35
1989	10	9	–	1	20
1991	19	8	3	–	30

Year	Pass	Credit	Merit	Distinction	Total
1993	9	16	8	–	33
1995	20	19	2	–	41
1997	1	12	2	–	15
TOTAL	74	98	15	10	197

The pass rate for CAE learners 1983–1995 (including all six cohorts that have completed the programme so far)

This programme is already being run at a distance but is currently being reviewed to allow wider access to Batswana in terms of entry requirements, additional content to reflect other areas of life apart from its existing literacy thrust, ensure greater cost sharing and cost recovery, and to reflect a greater distance education orientation. At present, only an average of 35 candidates are admitted into the programme. It is envisaged that this programme can now attract well over 50 candidates per intake per year.

Justification for the CAE programme expansion

The significant change in the number of learners to be enrolled in the CAE programme is due to the opening up of the programme to accommodate a wider group of clientele. At its inception the programme catered only for people dealing with literacy and other adult education programmes. Over time, other departments, such as the Prison Department, Department of Roads and the Brigades, have sent their staff for it. In addition, some other departments have recently shown an interest in the programme. This therefore reflects re-orientation that goes beyond literacy promotion. There are, of course, pre-service candidates who are also expected to benefit from the programme among the cadres of the COSC and GCE holders.

Diploma in Primary Education

To improve the quality of teacher education at primary level, it has been found necessary to upgrade the 9 000 Primary School Teacher Certificate holders. These teachers are spread out in all parts of the country and cannot be withdrawn from classrooms to attend training in conventional institutions. Thus offering the Diploma in Primary Education at a distance is an answer to government policy, which requires all primary school teachers to be upgraded to diploma level in order to improve the quality of primary education. The programme is projected to start in 1998 with an initial enrolment of 600 learners. Table 12 gives the enrolment projections up to the year 2003.

Table 12 DPE enrolment projections for 1996 – 2003

Year	Year I	Year II	Year III	Year IV	Sub total	Sub total
1996/97	Materials development					
1997/98	Materials development					
1998/99	600	–	–	–	–	600
1999/2000	660	660	–	–	–	1260
2000/2001	726	660	600	–	–	1986
2001/2002	799	726	660	600	–	2785
2002/2003	878	729	726	660	2785	3663

NB These figures have an annual growth rate of 10% per intake.

Learners on the Diploma in Primary Education course will take the courses listed below:

Subjects	Expected number of courses/modules
Agriculture	6
Communication study skills	6
Art and crafts	6
Education	26
Home economics	6
English	6
Mathematics	6
Music	6
Physical education	6
Religious education	6
Science	6
Setswana	6
Social studies	6
Teaching specialisations	6
Total	104

Master of Education (MEd)

The current University of Botswana MEd programme admits full-time and part-time learners, the latter almost exclusively those living in or around Gaborone as they have to attend classes in the evenings. Converting this programme into a distance education mode will benefit more teachers and other officers across the country and produce the badly needed administrative and managerial human resources.

The DEU model of distance education

The main mode of delivery in the current distance education programme has been through specially prepared self-instructional texts supported by face-to-face tutorials at residential sessions, reference textbook extracts and journals. Face-to-face contact sessions are held at the Ministry of Education centres. This trend will continue. Assessment of courses is done through continuous assessment and examinations. Teaching practice will be conducted where appropriate, as with the internal programmes offered by the University of Botswana. The use of other media such as audio cassette tapes to boost learner support is being explored. Course development, face-to-face tutorials, continuous assessment and examinations are done by subject-matter experts drawn from relevant faculties, departments and other institutions of higher learning.

To facilitate course development, the university has created course teams which comprise subject-matter experts responsible for selecting, organising and developing the content, and curriculum experts such as distance education specialists, instructional designers, editors, graphic designers, media producers, computer software programmers and others. Over 80 per cent of the course content is carried through print, with the rest of the content supplemented through face-to-face contact during residential sessions. The reason for this is to develop study materials that support individual learning at a distance.

Sub-systems required for the provision of distance education programmes at the Distance Education Unit and staff involvement

To service the distance education programmes effectively, the Distance Education Unit requires the following sections:

Sub-system	Staff requirements
Course Development	12 academic staff
Administration/management	4 plus 1 head of unit
Records section	5
Learner support	5
Despatch/Stores section	5
Editorial and production staff	13

Staff involvement in the provision of distance education programmes

Currently the DEU is responsible for the management, formulation of policy, organisation, coordination and overseeing of distance education operations in the University. During the study materials development process, for example, the DEU team work with subject experts in the interpretation of the syllabuses, course planning, design and development. They participate in the briefing/training courses unless in distance

education course development skills and in tutoring strategies, during face-to-face sessions.

Relationship with other institutions in the country

In its endeavour to provide viable distance education programmes the DEU collaborates with other institutions in the country. It relies on qualified people from other institutions to use as tutors/counsellors. Until it has its own, physical facilities, such as office and classroom space at regional and study centres, and laboratory facilities for distance education learners, the DEU will continue to use facilities from other institutions, such as:

- Colleges of Education
- The National Library and its regional outlets
- Primary Teacher Training Colleges
- Education centres
- Department of Non-Formal Education
- Secondary Department

These facilities will be used mainly as study centre venues, science laboratory facilities and for library services.

The unit's view of the role of learner support services

Compared to conventional learners, distance education learners are disadvantaged in that they are isolated from their teachers, the distance teaching institution and their colleagues. Given this scenario, DEU believes it is important to establish learner support services to complement learning and teaching. Students combine their studies with family, occupational and other commitments which distract them from their learning commitments.

Since they are separated from their teachers in time and space, they do not receive immediate feedback on problems they may experience in their studies. Learning resources such as library facilities for reference are not readily available to distance learners as they are for conventional learners.

The role of learner support study centres includes:

- organisation of effective tutorials
- provision of learning materials such as library books and other course materials
- provision of photocopying and playback/recording facilities for audio cassette tapes
- field counselling and information sharing
- coordination of teaching practice sessions where applicable
- general administration and distribution of assignments to and from learners to tutors

Who are the learners?

As indicated earlier, distance education programmes at the University of Botswana are targeted at adults who are already in gainful employment. As adults, these people have other family, occupational and community commitments.

In terms of gender these learners comprise male and female aspirants who are scattered all over the country. As such, they are separated from the institution that is offering the distance education programme, their tutors and their fellow learners. So far, learners who have expressed a wish for distance education programmes come from various occupations such as adult education and community development who are also teaching in both primary and secondary schools. Others are working with consumer organisations, accounting firms, and based on business administration and management.

Nature of learner characteristics

The general profile of learners for the Distance Education Unit is as follows:

Age: adults aged between 18 and 55 years;

Gender: male and female – the ratio depends on who is enrolled at any given time;

Location: learners come from all parts of the country. The concentration of learners depends on the population density and/or major population settlements in the country;

Occupation: the projected programmes are intended to draw learners from adult educators, teachers mainly, and others depending on individual courses/programmes requirements;

Subjects: the programmes and the subject areas preferred will depend on professional interests of the target groups.

Learners' needs

The identification of learning needs was based on a needs-assessment survey carried out by the Distance Education Unit in organisations which approached the Institution to mount distance education programmes for their employees. On accepting the requests, the university then made its own investigations in order to establish the specific nature of the needs and how they can be met. In some instances the university broadens the base for the programme as in the Certificate in Adult Education.

In addition, learners have cited the following problems as persistent in their distance education programmes (Mutava 1989:10):

- delayed feedback
- difficult working environment (remoteness) which is not conducive to learning
- loss of assignments records
- need for a course in study skills at a distance

- lack of reference materials

In most cases the expressed needs are in accordance with government concerns to uplift the quality of education at all levels and, as a spin-off effect, improve the socioeconomic way of life of all citizens.

In addition to satisfying their academic and skills development needs these learners require other forms of support from the distance education institution in order to cater for their varying geographical environments. These learners receive delayed feedback on their assignments because of their geographical isolation from the distance education institution.

Second, these learners left school a long time ago and the distance education mode of delivery is novel to them. As such, they need both communication and study skills so that they can study effectively, take notes as they read and do the assignments.

HOW THE DEU IS MEETING THESE NEEDS

The learners taking the Certificate in Adult Education course study the instructional texts and attend organised residential sessions and study weekends for tuition and counselling.

Face-to-face tuition

- *Residential sessions*

There are four one-week residential sessions which are spread over each academic year. There are two sessions per semester. The first residential session takes place at the beginning of each academic year when learners are introduced to the study materials in general by the course tutors. The second residential session takes place before the end of the first semester, and the learners discuss difficult concepts with their tutors and their responses to assignments. The third session takes place early in the second semester and is also designed for general academic counselling and introduction to the second module. The fourth session is given over to course revision for the end-of-year examinations.

- *Study weekends*

In addition to residential sessions learners attend study weekends once every two months when they again discuss study materials with their tutors at regional study centres.

- *Regional study centres*

The DEU encourages learners to seek assistance on their studies from staff members

at the CCE and the DAE. The other office where learners who live close by can seek assistance is based at Francistown. To cater for the majority of learners the DEU proposes to set up other study centres at Ghanzi, Maun, and Serowe. To ensure equitable geographical distribution of support services, and in line with learner populations, other study centres are proposed at Tsabong, Lobatse, Molepolole, Kasane, Mahalapye, Tutume and Selibe Phikwe.

The proposed study centres require the following equipment:

- photocopiers
- recorders and other types of playback equipment
- word processors
- textbooks, handouts
- telephone service
- video/recorder/monitor
- cassettes (audio and video)

The centres should also provide library facilities in the form of reference books, audio visual aids and other enrichment materials. At the study centres, learners will receive academic counselling from the tutor counsellors and the regional study centre coordinators. Newly identified tutor counsellors will be given orientation into the distance education mode of delivery. Regional centre coordinators will provide information to the public and potential learners on courses available at a distance, application procedures and admission criteria.

Management of assignments and distribution of study materials form a major function of the regional study centres. The regional centre will therefore coordinate the submission, marking and return of assignments and maintain accurate records. Handling study materials and assignments through study centres will reduce possible losses which are often reported when the materials are forwarded through postal services.

● *Functions at regional study centres*

A number of functions are devolved to the regional centres:

Administrative responsibilities

The administrative responsibilities of the Regional Centre Co-ordinator essentially mean ensuring that the following take place:

- Part-time tutors are identified, recruited and trained.
- Part-time tutors do their work satisfactorily and their payment claims are vetted and forwarded to headquarters for payment without delay.
- The work of tutors is coordinated, and appropriate records are kept.
- Learning and other materials and facilities are properly managed and utilised in the interest of the programme.

- Teaching practice placements and supervision are coordinated.
- Accurate records of all statistics and other data are kept in an up-to-date form.
- The permanent supporting staff in the centres are supervised to ensure that they are executing their responsibilities effectively.
- The necessary communication is maintained with the DEU.
- Education resources are identified in the area.
- Learners are linked with the main campus.

Academic responsibilities

These will be performed by lecturers responsible for regional centre activities. The lecturers will be empowered to:

- provide tutorials in their own areas of specialisation;
- ensure that all tutorials start and finish as scheduled;
- ensure that tutorials are regularly attended by tutors and learners;
- ensure that tutorials are actually effective in fostering or achieving any of these responsibilities;
- seek solutions to identified difficulties which hinder the effectiveness of tutorials;
- encourage groups to form self-help learning groups and support such groups to ensure that they serve the purposes for which they are formed;
- process the payment of claims of part-time tutors after they have worked for the university.

Staff requirements at the centre

The Centres require the following staff in order to function efficiently:

- regional centre lecturer/coordinator
- administrative assistant
- records clerk
- secretary
- junior librarian/clerk
- driver
- messenger

Organisation of effective tutorials

Face-to-face tutorials form a major component of learner support services and complement the pre-prepared study materials for the distance learners. Tutorial sessions permit individuals to seek answers to learning problems and receive a psychological boost. At tutorial sessions learners are encouraged, and even assisted, to form self-help learning groups which enhance personal links and interaction between learners. Regional centre lecturers/coordinators are therefore encouraged to recruit and train tutors on methods of tutoring distance education learners.

Managing assignments and other forms of continuous assessment

Well-prepared course materials and learners' assignments are major support components of the teaching-learning process in distance education. Tutor-marked assignments and timed tests feature prominently in the learner assessment process. Submission of assignments at stipulated times is emphasised. The marking of these assignments should be prompt with the minimum turn-around time. Assignments must be carefully selected to sustain the interest of the learners in their courses and to inculcate a regular study habit. Delays in turn-around time affect distance learners' interest and motivation to continue with the course. In addition to the awarding of marks, the tutor will give communicative comments on the learner's performance and suggest improvements, that is, communicate with learners and help them to cope with the course units.

In the orientation/training of tutors the marking of scripts and comments made on them will be regarded as of paramount importance to the development and sustainability of the distant learner.

Through their comments on the learners' assignments tutors are encouraged to:

- initiate and sustain written dialogue;
- point out weaknesses and suggest ways of overcoming them;
- clarify performance standards;
- give learners an indication of how well they are achieving course objectives by marking and returning written work as quickly as possible;
- clarify the norms within a subject and the rationale for them;
- link written work with course material by appropriate references;
- link past work with current and future work;
- enable learners to improve their effectiveness as communicators of facts, ideas and arguments;
- suggest new ideas to learners;
- convey warmth, sympathy, support and build the learners' confidence;
- initiate personal relationships and concern for learners;
- reinforce learner strengths.

Mediated communication/media support

Audio cassettes are necessary to supplement the printed instructional material. These can be listened to when convenient to the learner. The learner can stop the cassette at any point and use it again and again for revision or recall. Some sections of the course/s can be explained or emphasised with the use of audio cassette. Media are used particularly in the teaching of language courses. Audio cassettes are a major communication medium but their effectiveness lies in the control learners have over their use, especially that they can go back and forth with ease as in the printed materials.

The telephone offers an opportunity for two-way communication between the learner and the tutor. Learners benefit from this two-way communication even though they are separated spatially. Some of the latest innovations of the use of the telephone in distance education involve tele-tutoring and teleconferencing. Tele-tutoring cannot be expected to be used on a large scale because of high telephone service charges in Botswana. But learners can be expected to call the regional centre/s or the DEU offices for counselling/tutoring on a one to-one basis.

In the not-so-distant future teleconferencing equipment at the main campus and later at regional centres will be introduced to be used for or with specific groups for specific activities. The introduction of innovations such as teleconferencing will be done in phases.

When introduced, video cassettes will probably be used for group sessions, especially for such activities as experiments for practical subjects. To facilitate their use video monitors will be provided at study centres or similar locations where laboratory facilities will be provided for distance learners.

LIBRARY FACILITIES AS A FORM OF SUPPORT

'By virtue of the independent learning concept of the Distance Education System, library facilities occupy a prominent place in the learners' learning process and form an essential part of support services' (Koul et al 1988:71).

The following system has been worked out for the provision of library services for distance (and other CCE) learners by the university library. The university library has a branch in Francistown, and has established a working relationship with the Botswana National Library Service (BNLS), under whose umbrella public libraries fall.

The Selibe Phikwe experience

This scenario has been established between the university branch library in Francistown and the public library in Selibe Phikwe. With the permission of the library in the town, bound copies of the computer print-out of University of Botswana library holdings (both in Gaborone and Francistown, otherwise known as 'card catalogue update') are deposited in Selibe Phikwe Library. Staff and learners of continuing education at the centre are encouraged to go to the library in Selibe Phikwe, select the materials needed from the card catalogue update and record their requests in the notebook provided. The university then regularly (a minimum of three times a week) links up with the library and notes the requests. Requests that can be met from the university collection in Francistown are promptly despatched to Selibe Phikwe library where they are collected. The postal system takes between two and four days.

The university library branch staff not only send these items to the library, but they also telephone to inform students of the status of requests. Items that have to be obtained from the main library in Gaborone take about two weeks or a little less (if readily available) to reach Selibe Phikwe. The rate at which the information is met is important to the library.

This experience can be extended to distance education learners in a number of ways. Because distance education learners are scattered geographically, the university library has collaborative efforts with public libraries in various towns, where library service centres are in operation.

Apart from sending requested materials to the public libraries where the borrowers can collect them, another option is to send them directly to borrowers by post. This method requires a clear indication of who will pay the postage bills, that is, the cost of sending the book to the borrower and the borrower posting it back to the library. This system works successfully elsewhere, and only hinges on the honesty of the borrowers. To facilitate borrowing the library should be well equipped with necessary audio-visual materials such as television, video recorders, radio, video/radio cassettes, facsimile, reprographic facilities, and computers.

GAPS

Currently the DEU is thin on staff particularly in the provision of support services. However, plans are under way to set up regional study centres and subsequently recruit the necessary staff so that learner support services can be devolved geographically to areas outside Gaborone and Francistown.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The starting point for the DEU is drawn from existing expertise. Course materials, for example, are developed by experts at the University of Botswana. These writers acquire skills in writing for distance education at writing workshops. Similarly tutors acquire tutoring skills for distance education at specifically organised tutors' workshops.

Most of the core staff at the DEU possess the necessary distance education skills. However, those who are recruited to coordinate course development, tutorials, and media and have no orientation in distance education will receive in-house training or be seconded to distance education institutions in the region or overseas. Those staff members who require further training at a master's level or doctoral degrees will be sent out for training in accordance with university requirements.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The DEU sees effective learner services as a major component of the provision of distance education programmes at the university. This component to some extent has the capacity to affect the success rate of distance learners. Through learner support services distance learners take shape and form, and cease to be names or numbers on the register. There is a possibility of post-high school unemployed youths enrolling for some distance education programmes. Their needs are unique and somewhat different from the usual adult clientele. For Botswana, learners support services cannot be forgone because of the environment of the learners, which is such that a learning culture — especially reading habits — should be inculcated to assist them in coping with their studies. Many potential students have been out of a formal learning setting for a long time, and need assistance in readjusting to student life.

Study centres are expected to be centres of activity where learners meet tutor/counsellors for academic counselling and learner-to-learner interaction, and coordinators for administrative activities. For learners they will be contact points with the university — where the idea of belonging to an institution is concretised.

Future projections

The clientele or learner base is expected to broaden. The existing course is currently under review in that its content and its clientele are being revised to cater for an expanding and changing environment. Botswana is a dynamic society and its institutions must adapt constantly if they are not to become obsolete and irrelevant.

The support services which are provided for learners will need to be flexible and responsive to their needs as dictated by a changing and dynamic environment. It is envisaged that by the end of Botswana's National Development Plan Period No 8, 1997–2002, a study centre system will be in place comprising five regional centres and seven others making twelve centres in all, each serving a catchment area and strategically located. Each centre will be coordinated by an academically sound staff recruited at the lecturer scale with a backing of adequate human and material resources.

A distinguishing factor of distance education is the separation of learner and teacher. To facilitate the process of learning and teaching, communication between the learner and teacher is mediated through technology in the main. The use of postal services, telephone and audio/visual cassettes plays an important role. But more and more the use of more advance features such as teleconferencing may be introduced in regional centres.

The provision of library services will assume an important role. As a way of ensuring parity of provision and standards distance learners need to have access to services which give them the opportunity to perform at a very high level, comparable with full-time learners. Its specially designed study materials alone may not be adequate without

additional reference materials in the form of setbooks, journals and others for certain levels, for example master's.

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Overview of Distance Education in Lesotho

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PREFACE

This report is a preliminary study of distance education in Lesotho. It is a preliminary study because it is only a first step in the process of research. It is a preliminary study because it is only a first step in the process of research.

LESOTHO

1. It is estimated that there are about 2 million people in Lesotho, and that the population is growing at a rate of about 2% per year. The population is growing at a rate of about 2% per year. The population is growing at a rate of about 2% per year.

2. The number of people in Lesotho who are enrolled in primary schools is about 1 million. The number of people in Lesotho who are enrolled in primary schools is about 1 million. The number of people in Lesotho who are enrolled in primary schools is about 1 million.

3. It is estimated that there are about 1 million people in Lesotho who are enrolled in primary schools. It is estimated that there are about 1 million people in Lesotho who are enrolled in primary schools. It is estimated that there are about 1 million people in Lesotho who are enrolled in primary schools.

Overview of Distance Education in Lesotho

A Maiaene & J Malefane

POLICY

There is no policy on distance education in Lesotho. There are, however, statements and recommendations that are going to be used to formulate policy on distance education. Preparations are at a very advanced stage for the formulation of policy.

Some of the statements are as follows:

- It is estimated that 38% of adult Basotho are completely illiterate, and 54% are functionally illiterate. The total number of people over the age of 15 who lack the reading and writing skills adequate for use in unproductive remunerative labour is thus estimated at around 500 000. Herdboys, out-of-school youth and returned miners constitute the largest groups of functional illiterates.
- The number of people in need of basic education thus exceeds the present primary school population, and would be even higher if the larger numbers of primary school dropouts under the age of 15 were also included. What is more, the number of illiterates will increase if the expansion of the primary school systems does not keep pace with population growth, or if wastage rates increase even further. As indicated in previous chapters, 79% of the school age group are enrolled in primary school, but many leave before the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), or even before attaining basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- At present, the literacy agencies operating in Lesotho are reaching only about 4% (20 000) of this pool of half a million people. There is clearly a great unmet need for alternative basic education programmes, not only for adult illiterates but also for those children who for various reasons are unable to attend primary school, or drop out before attaining functional literacy. It is therefore most important that an appropriate flexible system catering for people bypassed by the regular system, and capable of satisfying a variety of different needs, should be established. While a number of programmes are currently offered through the Ministry of Education

(MOE), these require considerable strengthening and reorganisation (Ministry of Education: *five year plan 1991/92 to 1995/96*).

- In discussing the development of education in Lesotho, it is necessary to ensure that education is not equated only with schooling. Education is the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and values regardless of where, when or how that learning takes place. Non-formal education today is recognised as being a potentially important partner to formal education in developing those skills and attitudes required for the development of Lesotho. Since independence, Lesotho has recognised the importance of non-formal education by establishing a number of training institutions outside the formal education system. (Education Sector Survey, *Task Force Report*, November 1982)
- MOE will give non-formal education (NFE) organisations access to formal education (FE) institutions to promote integration of NFE and FE programmes and ensure cost-effective use of learning materials and facilities.

MOE will hold workshops/seminars to give a clear statement on the role of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) in the development of NFE and show the relationship which other NFE organisations and institutions have with the LDTC.

MOE will ensure that relevant NFE organisations produce standard learning materials in Sesotho that will be used in skills-training programmes so that NFE participants may have access to relevant occupational learning materials.

MOE will ensure that all NFE organisations provide programmes that help their participants with self-improvement and the acquisition of self-employment skills in order to promote self-sufficiency.

The Government of Lesotho (GOL) will facilitate the provision of repayable loans to NFE graduates in order to assist them to become self-employed.

MOE will establish an NFE research unit which will develop a database to assist in assessing non-formal educational needs.

MOE will ensure that all local personnel involved in non-formal education receive appropriate training and that expatriates have such training prior to recruitment. (*Clarification of Lesotho's education policies and priorities*, Part II 1989/90).

WEAKNESSES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

The main weakness of distance education in Lesotho is the lack of a clear policy on distance and non-formal education. The extent of this omission was captured very well by the then Minister of Education, Dr L B B J Machobane, when he stated:

- The Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre, however, has so far not been accorded the degree of seriousness that it needs. If it is to acquit itself efficiently and effectively in its crucial role in our educational system. For too long it has, so to speak been

treated like an orphan, whose needs have rather depended on the special interest and sympathy of those who have specialised in its techniques, instead of as it should be, as one of the country's major instruments in our campaign against illiteracy. And yet, this is an instrument that internationally has been proved to produce immense results with a minimum of staff, when it is being operated with commitment. We need seriously to make this institution an integral part of our educational system whose basic requirements have to be satisfied (Machobane 1988).

Despite this optimistic statement, not much has been done and distance education through the LDTC continues to struggle whenever it needs to pursue its objectives. Other non-formal education institutions survive on foreign aid and initiatives taken by their staff members.

INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Many institutions and organisations are involved in distance, non-formal and adult education in Lesotho. Some of these are governmental while others are non-governmental. A few of them are Deasa members, while others are not. We provide a brief description of some of these institutions/organisations and their roles and functions.

Non-Deasa members

The Blue Cross of Lesotho

The Thaba-Bosiu Centre of the Blue Cross of Lesotho was founded jointly by the Blue Cross of Norway and the Blue Cross of Lesotho in 1989. The objective of the centre is to contribute towards a reduction of alcohol and drug-related problems in Lesotho. The centre operates through two programmes namely Prevention and Treatment.

The objective of the Prevention Programme is to educate the community on alcohol and drug-related problems. This entails providing education and information to specified target groups through the use of media, mediating techniques, seminars, workshops, campaigns and other relevant resources. The programme also looks into the possibilities of creating alternative opportunities for employment and recreation for various high-risk groups in the society.

The objectives of the Treatment Programme are to treat individuals and families with alcohol and drug problems and pay attention to individual needs through a family- and community-based approach. The centre offers a minimum of five weeks residential treatment programme which comprises detoxification, group therapy, family therapy,

individual counselling, social training, stress management, health education, sports and other recreational activities.

- *Prevention strategies*

Prevention strategy constitutes several specific objectives and activities which are carried out according to the principles of the Blue Cross and the prevailing situations in Lesotho at a specified period of time. The formulation of the strategy is based on the SMART approach which is adopted in consideration of the following factors:

- S for specific activities
- M for measurable results
- A for achievable actions
- R for realistic actions
- T for time limit for activities

- *Activities*

To inform the public about the causes and effects of alcohol and drug use and abuse, the centre provides regular articles to newspapers such as *Lentsoe la Basotho*, *Moeletsi oa Basotho* and *Leselinyana*. The centre also provides articles to magazines such as *Shoe-shoe* and *Litsoakotleng*.

The centre has also been allocated time in four radio programmes. In addition, the centre develops education materials for learning via the distance education mode.

Transformation Resource Centre

Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) is a non-governmental ecumenical resource centre striving for a peaceful and democratic society based on Christian values by empowering Basotho individuals and organisations with resources which focus on human rights, democratic principles and justice in their endeavours to transform society. TRC was formed in 1978 by a South African couple, Jimmy and Joan Sewart. TRC sees itself achieving this vision through the following:

- *Maintaining a library of written and audio-visual materials*

The library continues to be a central place of TRC's life. The main idea behind the formation of this library is to help groups and individuals in the field of non-formal and adult education with written and audio-visual materials. It had become obvious that most local libraries did not have books to help people be better equipped for their work. The TRC books are also used by individuals from the formal education sector.

- *Production of Work for Justice*

Work for Justice (WFJ) is a TRC quarterly newsletter which covers a range of topics. It is an analytical paper that is meant to facilitate dialogue on all social, political and

economic issues. It is another way in which TRC engages in non-formal education, realising that education is a source of empowerment and transformation. Other than *WFJ*, TRC also publishes on occasion other educational materials especially on democracy and human rights issues for use by individuals and groups.

● *Designing and facilitating workshops for various groups*

Workshops have been used by TRC to target various groups of people in society to discuss different social problems and decide on the appropriate course of action. For example, TRC has been in the forefront in awareness creation of the harsh realities of destabilisation of Lesotho and the rest of southern Africa. Long before the general elections of 1993, TRC had started organising and inculcating a spirit of democratic principles and behaviour in the general public through bringing groups of people together in workshops.

The Lesotho Opportunities Industrialisation Centre

The Lesotho Opportunities Industrialisation Centre (LOIC) is a community-based, non-formal, non-profit-making vocational and business skills training institution. It is a replica of Opportunities Industrialisation Centres of America, a movement founded by Revd Dr Leon Howard Sullivan in 1964.

The LOIC training programme started its operations in late January 1979 when 34 trainees enrolled in what was called the Department of Industrial Arts at Lerotholi Technical Institute (LTI) transferred to the LOIC training programme. Thirty new trainees were enrolled and the total enrolment came to 64.

In July 1980 the Management/Business Development and Foreman Training Division was established to provide part-time business management and supervisory skills training for youth and adults who owned or wished to start their own businesses or held supervisory responsibilities in business or industry.

● *LOIC training objectives*

- To train the unskilled and the unemployed
- To upgrade the skills of the under-employed
- To provide vocational training which complies with the needs of Lesotho
- To provide on-the-job training (OJT) experience for all trainees
- To provide the employer with highly dependable and motivated trainees
- To work jointly and cooperatively with all Lesotho institutions
- To keep job training at LOIC relevant to Lesotho manpower needs
- To refine the managerial knowledge and skills of supervisors foremen, civil servants and small business owners

- *Clientele*

The clients of the training courses offered at LOIC are Lesotho's vocational illiterates, school dropouts or push-outs, the unemployed, the under-employed, the unemployable, the retrenched, the retired, the poor and the hungry.

- *Admission criteria and enrolment requirements*

- Standard 7 or JC drop out
- Age: 16–64
- 95% must be Lesotho nationals
- 5% foreign quota, that is non-Basotho
- 80% must be between the ages of 16 and 24
- 50% must be male and 50% female applicants

To ensure that the services offered by LOIC are open and accessible without any discrimination and prejudice, the trainees are enrolled in the programme on a first-come, first-served principle.

- *Methodology*

Instruction at LOIC is competency-based and individualised, based on the open entry/open exit approach. Everyone sets his/her own duration of stay in the programme through his/her own learning pace.

The Lesotho Prison Service Juvenile Training Centre (JTC)

The Lesotho Prison Service is a department in the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. It is also part and parcel of the criminal justice system and falls under the disciplined forces of Lesotho. It was established in the colonial era with the aim of accomplishing two major objectives, namely security, and rehabilitation of law offenders institutionalised by courts of law.

- *Security*

As defined by Lesotho Prison Service, security is the safe custody of prison inmates until the expiry of their terms.

- *Rehabilitation*

As defined by scholars, this is an activity or series of activities aimed at changing one's habits from negative to positive, that is from socially unacceptable to better.

The major device in doing this is to expose the inmates to a learning situation by providing them with technical and vocational skills and offering them the literacy and numeracy programmes which lead to the Std 7 examination. JTC also collaborates with the LDTC to prepare learners for the JC and COSC examinations.

In addition to the above, JTC also offers skills training as a means of keeping ex-prisoners occupied after their term. Training is offered in the following fields:

vegetable production, piggery, poultry keeping, cobbling and leather work, stone dressing, sheet and metal work, block and brick-making, tailoring, knitting, crocheting, brick-laying, carpentry, cabinet-making and joinery. At the end of training, learners who wish to sit for trade testing register with the department of the Ministry of Education called the Technical and Vocational Division.

Primary Health Care

Primary Health Care (PHC) is a department of the Ministry of Health. The international conference on PHC held at Alma-Ata in 1978 issued a declaration which stated that PHC is the key to attaining health for all. It defined PHC as follows: 'PHC is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country could afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self reliance and self determination.' PHC forms an integral part of the country's health system, which is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family and the community with the national health system, bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work, and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.

Ministries of Health have an important role in stimulating and coordinating action for health with other social and economic sectors concerned with state and community development, in particular, education, agriculture, industry, social development, water and sanitation, communication and non-governmental agencies.

Since 1979, when Lesotho adopted PHC as the basis of health care system, several gains have been made. There has been a marked expansion of public health work as a result of deliberate policies emphasising prevention rather than curative work, culminating in the establishment of the PHC department with divisions and units catering for the listed elements and reaching as far as the village level.

One of the main units of PHC is the Health Education Unit (HEU) which has some of the following objectives:

- To provide specialised and well-targeted information education and communication (IEC) services, advice and follow-up support for the general public and specific groups
- To plan, design and develop required IEC materials, messages, media and other professional services to health-related sectors and the general public
- To distribute and ensure effective and efficient use of IEC materials
- To review and improve the effectiveness of health education materials
- To provide photographic, radio/video-broadcast, and graphic reproduction services for the various programmes of the Ministry of Health

- To provide technical service and support for the Ministry of Health and other health related institutions
- To upgrade the level of health education and health promotion services through selection, training and proper deployment of qualified staff at headquarters and at local/regional level

DEASA MEMBER INSTITUTIONS IN LESOTHO

Five institutions are members of Deasa in Lesotho. These are the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC), the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), the Institute of Education (IE), the Institute of Labour Studies (ILS) and the Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education (LANFE). Since this handbook contains case studies on LDTC, IEMS, ILS and IE, this section will concentrate on LANFE. Four institutional case studies are discussed in this section, that is, LANFE and LDTC, IEMS and ILS.

STRENGTHS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

The major strength of distance education in Lesotho is its potential to provide education to all sectors of the population.

Although for many years Lesotho was widely assumed to have a high literacy rate, a survey that was conducted by LDTC in December 1985 showed that only about 62% of the population are functionally literate and only about 46% are functionally numerate. Since many of the illiterate and innumerate people are adults and young adults, they cannot go back to school and can only be reached through distance education.

The other strength is that distance education continues to cater for rural school drop-outs. For years to come therefore, it will to play a large role in the education of the entire Basotho people.

EMERGING FUTURE PROJECTS

The workshop that the Ministry of Education held for senior education officers in June 1996 showed that more and more people in the country are becoming aware of the potential and benefits of distance education. This was indicated by recommendations and observations made. Some of these recommendations/suggestions/observations follow:

- The Ministry of Education should formulate a policy on distance education.
- The Ministry of Education should be seen to represent both formal and non-formal education by:

- recognising certificates, diplomas and degrees gained through non-formal education
 - sharing budget with non-formal education institutions
 - expanding the non-formal education department so that it has more than one inspector.
- Children who cannot be taken into formal primary education because they are over-age should be taught through the distance education mode.
 - The Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre should be expanded to cater for all educational needs that cannot be met through formal education.

Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education (LANFE)

A Maiaene & J Malefane

LANFE is a non-denominational, non-partisan, non-profit-making voluntary organisation.

BACKGROUND

LANFE was founded in 1979 as a result of several consultative meetings by adult educators and non-formal education practitioners from the National University of Lesotho, the Ministry of Education, Lesotho Council of Credit Union League as well as the extension workers and individuals from the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Interior.

As a voluntary organisation, LANFE depended entirely on the goodwill and sacrifice of its members. Meetings were hosted by members on a rotational basis. Other administrative facilities such as stationery and transport were voluntarily offered by member institutions.

With the amount of members' efforts and sacrifice, as well as support from others, LANFE has grown to be an umbrella organisation for non-formal education activities in Lesotho.

ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

LANFE has the following organisational structure:

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) should be attended by all individual members and a representative from each institutional member. The Annual General Meeting is the supreme policy-making body of the association.

The Executive Committee elected by the Annual General Meeting is responsible for policy implementation. It is a body of thirteen members elected for a term of two years.

A Secretariat headed by the Executive Secretary is based at the headquarters in Maseru. It provides a central point of contact and interaction for the members across the country.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote non-formal education (NFE) in all its forms
- To promote efforts to eradicate illiteracy
- To publish and encourage publication and production of materials contributing to the advancement of LANFE
- To cooperate with any association in matters conducive to NFE
- To promote NFE research and training on issues related to NFE
- To organise educational excursions within the country and internationally

FUNDS

LANFE is supported by funds from the following sources:

- Individual annual membership fees
- Institutional annual membership fees
- Loans from sources approved by LANFE Annual General Meeting
- Any other source not in conflict with LANFE objectives
- Proceeds from project investments
- Renting services and facilities to other groups

MEMBERSHIPS

LANFE members are individual persons interested in non-formal education and institutions affiliated to LANFE.

TRAINING

LANFE offers its members (individual and institutional) training and skills in the following areas: management, income generation, leadership, public relations, consumer education, environmental education, literacy education, family life education, peace and human rights education.

The current practice is that members provide their own transport to and from the workshop(s) while LANFE takes care of the rest of the training such as accommodation, meals, stationery and resource persons.

Emphasis in training is on technical skills, business skills and group dynamics.

Follow-up to the training and material assistance are offered to ensure that the projects are running as best as they can, as well as a support structure for the groups being established where possible.

BENEFITS

Most of the LANFE beneficiaries are operating independently and generating a profit. With this history in mind it is proposed that by using LANFE's skills, further self-sustaining and empowered projects can be established to support the economic growth of Lesotho. Successful groups become role models from which others learn. This is how LANFE grows.

ROLE OF ORGANISATIONS

Affiliates are invited to approach LANFE regarding training for their members. It is preferable that members or groups identify potential trainees themselves as this helps to facilitate the independence process.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

LANFE is a member of:

- African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE, Kenya)
- International Council of Adult Education (ICAE, Canada)
- African Association for Training and Development (AATF)
- Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA)
- Cooperation with the German Adult Association (DVV, Bonn)

Overview of Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre's distance education model

A Maiaene & J Malefane

Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) was established by the government of Lesotho with the assistance of the International Extension College (IEC). The centre started operating in February 1974.

LDTC was set up in order to complement formal school education; to provide a broader and more practical form of education; and to reach a much larger and more varied audience.

Specifically LDTC was set up to address the following felt needs:

- A correspondence college was needed to cater for the increasing number of primary school leavers who could not go to formal secondary schools as well as those who had left school before completing secondary school education.
- A correspondence college was needed to obviate the need for students in Lesotho to study at commercial colleges in the Republic of South Africa. Materials from these colleges were expensive and based on different syllabuses. The students also received no tutorials.

Prior to the setting up of the centre, a lot of preparatory work was undertaken. A number of consultations with local and international agencies were undertaken. The Institute for Further Education (IFE) and the South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) made useful inputs into this exercise.

Because it was different from a pure correspondence college, from the onset LDTC adopted a number of ways in which it offers support to its students.

The Project Memorandum between the Ministry of Education and IEC put the mission of LDTC as follows:

The centre will concentrate on three main activities:

- Help for private candidates. The centre will offer correspondence courses and radio programmes produced in Lesotho as well as tutorial support for students studying for

Junior Certificate and O level courses. It will also explore ways of helping other private candidates.

- Basic Rural Education. The centre will do research into the kinds of help it should offer in this area but it will initially produce a range of booklets on practical topics for rural people and may design educational materials and support system for young people out of primary school or who attend primary schools in Lesotho irregularly.
- Service Agency. The centre will offer educational services to a variety of organisations doing educational work in Lesotho. These will be government and private organisations. Later in the development of LDTC, a fourth dimension was added to its role.
- Help young people who could not have access to formal primary schools to become literate and numerate. The centre would have to experiment with a variety of methods such as the village group approach and teaching literacy and numeracy to prisoners.

Out of the four main activity or operation areas, the main objectives of the centre were developed:

- To provide correspondence courses for private candidates studying for the Junior Certificate and the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
- To provide learning materials on practical topics for rural people
- To act as a service agency for other organisations requesting the use of non-formal education techniques in their programmes
- To offer opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults to develop functional literacy and numeracy skills

STATUS AND NATURE OF GOVERNANCE

LDTC is a department of the Ministry of Education. However, not all of its staff members are on the establishment list; about 14% of LDTC's staff salaries are paid from 'project' funding. LDTC is explicitly responsible to a senior staff member of the Ministry of Education — the chief education officer, under the Department of Curriculum Services.

LDTC, which is headed by a director, has two main units: one dealing with literacy and post-literacy programmes, credit schemes, and the alternative primary school courses called the Basic Education Unit; and a second Continuing Education Unit dealing

with secondary education programmes. This led to the establishment of another position of deputy director for there was already a deputy director.

In addition to the units, there are support sections, namely Educational Broadcasting, Research and Evaluation and Accounts.

THE BASIC EDUCATION UNIT

The Basic Education Unit comprises the Basic Rural Education, Service Agency, and Literacy and Numeracy sections.

The main objectives of the unit are:

- To offer opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults to develop literacy and numeracy skills to a level of real usefulness in life
- To produce educational materials for organisations that promote rural education in Lesotho
- To hold workshops and training courses for organisations involved with rural development
- To assist village groups financially in creating small income-generating activities
- To produce learning materials of a practical nature for rural people
- To complete and supplement work by other agencies in rural development.

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT

The Continuing Education Unit comprises the Student Advice, Writers and Printing sections. The main objectives of the unit are:

- to counsel students who have enrolled with the centre
- to produce self-instructional learning materials for JC and COSC learners
- to recruit part-time tutors who mark learners' assignments and run the Saturday courses
- to advise students who are interested in studying with the centre

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER STRUCTURES IN THE COUNTRY

The Teaching Service Department (TSD)

LDTC employs teachers who are fully employed by TSD on a part-time basis. They help with writing and editing workbooks, and can also be Saturday class tutors and/or

markers. At the study centres, LDTC makes use of secondary school classrooms for Saturday courses.

National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and Central Inspectorate

All course writers belong to subject panels coordinated by NCDC together with members of the Central Inspectorate.

Deasa

LDTC is a member of DEASA, together with the Institute of Education (IE), the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), the Institute of Labour Studies (ILS) and the Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education (LANFE). Each of these institutions has elected a member to form what is known as the DEASA Country Committee. This committee meets from time to time to discuss issues related to DEASA.

The institution's view on the role of learner support services

Learner support services are an integral part of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre. Because of this the centre has a fully equipped educational broadcasting studio in which learner support programmes are prepared. The centre also engages part-time tutors for Saturdays and residential courses. The management of LDTC is quite supportive as far as learner needs are concerned, and deadlines to meet all learner needs are set by them.

NATURE OF LDTC LEARNERS

The learners of LDTC are:

- People who completed primary education but failed to get admission into secondary schools
- Secondary school dropouts
- Candidates who want to improve their pass levels at COSC for admission to further education institutions
- Candidates who want to improve their pass levels at JC or COSC for better job prospects, and even to meet new set standards at their respective job areas
- Working candidates who cannot go to formal schools because of their work

CHARACTERISTICS OF LDTC LEARNERS

LDTC learners can be described broadly in terms of gender, age, occupation, district, subjects taken and enrolments.

● Gender

Most students who study with LDTC are female. The prime reason for this may be that stock farming continues to be the major work of boys in the rural areas of Lesotho. Boys in these areas are expected to look after herds while girls go to school. As a result of this, more girls than boys go through primary schooling in Lesotho. According to the Education Sector survey report 'in 1980 primary schools had a total enrolment equivalent to about 85% of girls aged six to twelve'. The report goes on to state: 'In that year 20% of the primary school pupils were repeats, and about 17% of those enrolled dropped out during the year. If the dropout rates of 1979/80 were to continue only 291 boys out of 1 000 and 515 girls out of 1 000 entering Standard 1 would complete Standard 7.' The table below clarifies this fact.

LDTC JC Students

Year	Female	Male	Unknown
1989	50%	48%	2%
1990	56%	42%	2%
1991	69%	28%	3%
1992	59%	38%	3%
1993	63%	35%	2%
1994	73%	27%	0%
1995	67%	33%	0%

LDTC COSC Students

Year	Female	Male	Unknown
1989	64%	36%	0%
1990	63%	37%	0%
1991	56%	44%	0%
1992	62%	38%	0%
1993	72%	28%	0%
1994	70.9%	29.1%	0%
1995	68.2%	31.8%	0%

- *Occupation*

The tables that follow show that most JC students are unemployed, while at the COSC level most learners are employed as teachers, policemen, clerks, nurses and factory workers. Other occupations are mining, bricklaying, photography, gardening and domestic work.

JC students

Year	Unemployed	Teachers	Students	Defence	Clerks	Factory Workers	Others
1989	60%	5%	4%	0,4%	2,4%	2,8%	25,4%
1990	55%	3%	4%	2%	10%	6%	20%
1991	65%	7,3%	2,9%	0,4%	2,4%	6,2%	15,8%
1992	55,6%	3,4%	4,6%	1,6%	7,4%	11,2%	16,2%
1993	57,5%	8,8%	4,9%	0,8%	8,7%	12,6%	6,7%
1994	44,7%	3,9%	3,3%	0%	3,7%	8,7%	35,7%
1995	66,5%	2,7%	1,2%	2,4%	5,1%	1,9%	20,2%

JC students

Year	Unemployed	Teachers	Students	Defence	Factory	Nurses	Clerks	Others
1989	47%	7%	6%	2,2%	3%	9%	14%	11,8%
1990	45%	12%	8%	3%	0,5%	9%	11,5%	11%
1991	35%	16%	5%	7%	1,2%	3%	16%	16,8%
1992	41%	14%	7%	3,4%	1,7%	5%	16,7%	11,2%
1993	37,4%	31%	6%	2,2%	2,4%	4%	10,2%	6,8%
1994	38,4%	21,5%	7%	3,5%	2,5%	3,3%	17,6%	6,2%
1995	35,8%	17,8%	6,2%	4,2%	4%	10%	17,1%	4,9%

- *Enrolments*

The figures below show an encouraging though not totally satisfactory upward rise of enrolments at LDTC. The objective of the centre is to absorb all formal school dropouts and help them to gain certificates. This has not been the case as yet. This state of affairs may be attributed to the following:

- There are many night schools in all the urban areas. These appeal more to students because of the frequency of face-to-face tutorials.

- Most learners in Lesotho lack confidence in distance education.
- Many people, even in Maseru itself, do not know about LDTC and the services it renders.
- The services of LDTC were centralised for over twenty years. This resulted in only the people close to the centre being motivated to improve their education through it. It is hoped that as services are decentralised more people, especially in the mountain areas, will be inclined to enrol with LDTC and study through distance education mode.

COSC

Year	New students	Active old students	Total
1989	176	589	765
1990	219	651	870
1991	240	491	731
1992	291	709	1000
1993	485	673	1158
1994	516	650	1166
1995	551	779	1330

JC

Year	New students	Active old students	Total
1989	242	612	854
1990	215	745	960
1991	208	597	805
1992	239	811	1050
1993	365	835	1200
1994	380	915	1295
1995	415	893	1308

● Age

LDTC registers students of all age groups. As more and more learners drop out of formal schools because of failure or insufficient passes, most people who register with LDTC are teenagers and young adults who want to supplement a few subjects and so improve their chances of attaining their careers.

JC

Year	15 & Under 15	16–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–45	46–50	Over 50
1989	2%	46%	23%	9%	9%	6%	2%	2%	1%
1990	2,9%	44,7%	29%	10%	9%	1%	2%	1%	0,4%
1991	7,3%	41%	25%	12%	6%	3,9%	1,4%	1,4%	2%
1992	1,2%	38,9%	31,9%	14,2%	7,1%	2,5%	1,7%	0,8%	1,7%
1993	0,5%	38,9%	27,9%	13%	8%	3,6%	5,3%	0,4%	2,4%
1994	0,8%	47,6%	24,5%	10%	5,3%	5,3%	3,9%	1,3%	1,3%
1995	0,7%	32,7%	36,9%	8%	6%	8,3%	3,1%	2,4%	2,2%

COSC

Year	20 & Under 20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–45	46–50	51–55	Over 55
1989	24%	43%	20%	7%	2%	1%	2,5%	0,5%	0,5%
1990	27%	38,4%	21%	8%	2%	1,3%	1,8%	0,5%	0%
1991	26,2%	34%	19%	11%	6%	3%	0,4%	0,4%	0%
1992	21%	36,9%	21%	11%	4%	3,4%	1%	0,7%	1%
1993	17%	35,8%	21%	14%	5%	4%	1,4%	1%	0,8%
1994	27,3%	24,8%	22,3%	13%	5%	5%	2,3%	2,3%	0%
1995	38,1%	17%	24,1%	11,6%	4,7%	2,9%	0,7%	0,4%	0,5%

● Subjects

Most students register for English at both JC and COSC levels. This is because:

- English is compulsory at both levels.
- English is a failing subject at both levels.
- A credit in English Language is a prerequisite for entry to the university, the Lesotho Agricultural College, the Commercial Training Centre, the National Health Training Centre and other institutions that offer tertiary education.
- A pass in English/English Language is a prerequisite for awarding the Junior and COSC Certificates.

Year	English	Sesotho	Maths	Human & social biology	Development studies	Book-keeping
1989	24%	41%	48%	26%	13%	19%
1990	64%	33%	38%	16%	13%	14%
1991	86%	25%	44%	16,8%	19,7%	16,8%
1992	67%	37,6%	54,8%	37,6%	23%	36,8%
1993	84%	40,5%	59,7%	30,6%	46,6%	44%
1994	66,8%	3,5%	52,6%	26,6%	22,1%	16,8%
1995	44%	44,8%	72,3%	46,7%	23,5%	46%

COSC

Year	English	Sesotho	Maths	Human & social biology	Principles of accounts	Commerce	Geography
1989	44%	36%	48%	37%	16%	22%	2%
1990	66%	38%	35%	40%	24%	26%	6%
1991	73%	41%	37%	32%	22%	25%	11%
1992	76%	31%	46%	41%	24%	25%	13%
1993	87%	38%	48%	37%	20%	18%	8%
1994	90,5%	27,9%	48,4%	42%	28,3%	22,9%	10,3%
1995	84%	28,1%	50,8%	42,3%	7,3%	4,2%	8,2%

Please note that a student may register for more than one subject at any particular year.

- *District*

Most learners of LDTc live in the Maseru district. People in Maseru have higher income-earning opportunities than people in the other districts, so they are often better able to meet the financial requirements of LDTc. Moreover, people who live in Maseru have easier physical access to LDTc, which is located in Maseru itself, than people who live in the other districts. Because of the socio-economic situation of migrant labour, a number of LDTc learners live in South Africa.

COSC

Year	BB	LR	BR	MS	MF	MH	QU	QA	TH	MK	SA
1989	2%	8%	6%	56%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	10%
1990	2,7%	15%	5%	45%	6%	4%	3%	1,3%	5%	3%	10%
1991	3%	9,5%	5%	52,2%	7%	3%	9,5%	0,4%	1,6%	0,8%	8%
1992	4,9%	13%	7,5%	51%	8,2%	2,4%	1,3%	1,3%	3%	2,4%	5%
1993	5%	16%	9%	44%	8%	1%	4%	5%	4%	2%	2%
1994	3,5%	13,4%	6,6%	50,8%	8,5%	2,1%	0,8%	6,2%	2,3%	3,1%	2,7%
1995	3,8%	11,3%	8,5%	49,7%	10,2%	2,9%	1,2%	2,4%	4,9%	2,4%	2,7%

JC

Year	BB	LR	BR	MS	MF	MH	QU	QA	TH	MK	SA
1989	31%	10%	5%	55%	2%	2,9%	3%	2%	2%	2%	13%
1990	4%	13%	5%	53%	5%	3%	2%	1,6%	3%	0,4%	10%
1991	3,4%	8,7%	5,9%	59,6%	2,4%	5,8%	4,9%	3,3%	1,4%	0,9%	3,7%
1992	3,7%	7,5%	9,6%	56%	3,3%	4%	2,9%	1,1%	2,5%	2,9%	6,5%
1993	5,7%	14,4%	11%	52,4%	4,8%	0,8%	0,8%	2%	2,1%	3,6%	2,4%
1994	1,3%	2,6%	1,3%	73,9%	5,8%	1,8%	0,8%	5,2%	3,1%	2,6%	1,3%
1995	3,4%	6%	6,5%	64,56%	6,5%	3,3%	1,9%	2,14%	1,2%	2,9%	1,6%

Key:

MS = Maseru; LR = Leribe; BR = Berea; MF = Mafeteng; BB = Butha-buthe;
MK = Mokhotlong; QN = Qacha's Nek; MH = Mohale's Hoek; QT = Quthing;
TT = Thaba-tseka

EVALUATION

Continuous assessment

This is based on the students' performance on the worksheets which normally accompany workbooks. On the basis of this performance the Student Advice Section can decide whether the student is ready to sit for examinations.

Examinations

LDTCC students sit for the same examinations as those in the formal education systems. The setting and the marking of JC examinations is the responsibility of the Examinations

Council of Lesotho. At O Level, the responsibility still lies with the University of Cambridge in England.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Students rely solely on public or school libraries where they are available.

FUNCTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Prospective LDTC students are sent application forms by post. These forms are also given to them when they come to the centre. They register throughout the year.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

- Student fees
- External donors
- Subsidy from the Government of Lesotho

PROGRESS OF LDTC STUDENTS

The following is a summary of the main trends in student progress:

- A large proportion of the students who enrol with LDTC never start work on their courses.
- Only a small minority of students — probably less than 20% of those who enrol — will actually be sent the final part of the course. Only a few students will complete any given course.
- The rate of work is not satisfactory in all the courses. This could be attributed in some cases to the slow production of workbooks. In some subjects we find that there is a strongly marked termination point at the end of a part of a course. Students might not continue with the next part because they cannot pay fees for that part.
- If we use completion of two-thirds of the course as an index of 'preparedness for examination', we find out that, with the exception of Sesotho, most students are not sufficiently prepared to sit examinations and succeed.

NEEDS OF LDTC LEARNERS

Environment

For most LDTC learners, the home environment is not suitable for study. At times one hut is shared by all the members of the family for all the family needs.

In situations such as this, the family is often never quiet enough for the learners to concentrate on their studies. Learners also often lack proper chairs and tables to use as they study.

In most families, lighting is also often inadequate as there is no electricity in the rural areas and families use small paraffin lamps for lighting. Contact with fellow learners is often difficult because at times learners may not be aware of each other, even if they are in the same locality.

This creates the isolation problem which is so prevalent in distance education. This is aggravated because villages in the rural areas of Lesotho are few and far apart and getting from one village to another is difficult as there are neither taxis nor buses and no fast mode of transport or communication.

Medium of instruction

English is a second language for Basotho learners and is used as the main medium of instruction in all courses except Sesotho. The incompetence of learners in English is therefore a restraining factor to their progress in the subjects they enrol for.

Skills development – study skills

Learning, for most LDTC students, is a subsidiary activity. Unfortunately, learners do not always maximise the little time they have for studies.

Too much time may be spent on some subjects and not enough on others, a dangerous habit because examination boards often stipulate the number of subjects a candidate requires to obtain a certificate.

Like most distance learners, LDTC students lack the skills that are needed for independent study. In most cases they expect to be taught and when this need is not met, learners get demotivated and discontinue their studies.

Administrative

To be served efficiently, learners need a strong administrative framework that links different functions such as learner support services and record keeping, course writing and production as well as dispatch of study materials and assignments.

Delay in the production of course materials demotivates learners and, as has been pointed out earlier, this leads to huge drop-out rates. To overcome this it is essential that

learner progress be monitored well throughout the term of study. This has, however, often imposed problems because of distances between LDTC and its learners. Another issue that keeps learners demotivated is delayed feedback. The reasons for this shortcoming are postal services which are unreliable, shortage of staff to process and dispatch students' materials on time, as well as tutors who often concentrate more on their full-time jobs than the LDTC learners. This problem can be overcome by engaging full-time instead of part-time tutors, as is now the case.

Social needs

The high drop-out rate of LDTC learners can also be attributed to the lack of support from society. At times the relatives, spouses and co-workers discourage learners from continuing with their studies and they usually succeed in this since all learners are members of many institutions, for example work, which take precedence over study.

LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES AT LDTC

At the LDTC, learner support services are offered through print as the main medium of instruction and this is supported by radio broadcasts and face-to-face tuition.

Course development

Course developers offer support to the learners by writing workbooks in a friendly conversational tone that helps to alleviate the learners' isolation problem. Course developers also use short sentences and paragraphs and divide their lessons up into small units. This subdues the learners' apprehension at the great task that faces them as work is given in manageable amounts. A further source of support is that all workbooks contain self-check exercises that motivate learners to go further, as they see and correct the mistakes that they have made.

Illustrations in workbooks break the monotony of individual study and enhance the learners' comprehension of the matter. Workbooks also contain objectives which tell the learner where he is going and what he is expected to achieve. All workbooks are written by full-time and part-time course writers. Editing, as well as typing and printing, is done internally.

Tutoring

LDTC supports its learners through tutorials that are held on Saturdays. During these tutorials individual and general learners' problems are solved. These tutorials also serve the function of allowing students to meet one another to discuss common problems. Tutors offer further support to LDTC learners by marking their worksheets. These

worksheets, which are contained in all workbooks, test the learners' understanding of the content they have gone through. Tutors teach as they mark. They also counsel students on all the problems that they encounter in their course of study. All tutors are high school teachers employed on a part-time basis by LDTC. LDTC does not have its own classrooms. All tutorials in Maseru are held at the National Teacher Training College (NTTC). At study centres LDTC makes use of high school classrooms.

Counselling

Counselling services are done through all the media that LDTC utilises, namely correspondence, radio, personal visits and the telephone.

LDTC offers pre-course counselling through booklets entitled *How to enrol with LDTC*. In these booklets learners are guided on how many subjects to select, how to pay course fees and what is expected from them as learners.

The second stage of counselling, the on-course stage, is offered through the student handbook, which counsels students on how to study, how to prepare for examinations and what to do to seek and receive help.

The final stage of counselling, the post-course stage, is given verbally to successful students who need information on career choice and how to attain further education.

Study centres

Learner support services at present are highly centralised at LDTC. All services are done at the main centre in Maseru, the capital. LDTC hopes to decentralise its services through study centres which will be established throughout the country. At present four of the intended nine study centres are operating.

Administrative matters, enrolments and the dispatch of materials are all done at the study centres in the education offices in the respective districts. Tutorials are held in nearby secondary school classrooms. It is hoped that in future study centres will serve the following purposes:

- Provide storage and access to reading materials, audio/visual materials and laboratory equipment.
- Provide a place for study as most students do not have suitable places at home.
- Provide point of contacts for learners and tutors and for learners with their peers.

Monitoring by tutor organisers takes place monthly at the operating study centres.

Residential courses

Residential courses are held in winter and on Independence holidays for JC and 'O' Level examination candidates. The aims of the courses are:

- to encourage student progress
- to provide examination writing practice
- to advise students on how to approach examinations
- to provide much-needed confidence for students.

Residential courses, which are called examination preparedness workshops, always take the form of intensive face-to-face tutoring in appropriate subjects; and testing and working on past examination papers.

Radio

The functions of radio lessons are twofold: to give additional explanations of course materials; and to provide motivational support for students. There are 15-minute programmes for JC English Literature and Sesotho Literature, and a programme on LDTC programmes as a whole.

All these programmes are broadcast weekly with repeats. The recording is done at LDTC's studio, and broadcast over Radio Lesotho.

Administration

The administration structure of LDTC is highly integrated but built up in such a way that each officer has a specific task to perform to support the learner.

More often than not, delays, bottlenecks and problems at any point in the system affect the quality of a particular learner support service deliverance, and also influence future work at all steps of the process.

However, all involved have been trying their level best to overcome any problems.

ANALYSIS OF THE LDTC'S LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Weaknesses

- LDTC communicates with its students through the post. At times the postal service is irregular and slow.
- Print materials take a long time to produce. This highly demotivates students as they may spend some time without materials.

- Print materials require large storage spaces which LDTC does not have. The stores we have are highly crammed.
- LDTC's radio programmes have been put at hours which are not so convenient for most of our students. They are broadcast between 3:00pm and 5:45pm on weekdays. During these times, LDTC's students cannot listen to the programmes as most are still at work or are on their way back home from work.
- Radio reception is poor or intermittent in some areas in the country.
- The counsellor at times 'just picks up clues' about learners' problems from the correspondence. This is not always beneficial as the problem may not be attended to in depth.

Gaps identified

- Enrolments of students throughout the year makes it difficult for tutors at Saturday courses to monitor the progress of students and to prepare for lessons. Throughout the year, the storerooms must contain materials on all subjects. This is problematic as LDTC does not have big enough storerooms.
- Numbers of students at tutorials are very large and students are at different levels. Tutors are not able to prepare any work in advance for the tutorials. Almost every time there is a tutorial, new students have to be attended to first to get them started as they are waiting to be 'taught'.
- There is no orientation to distance education for new students.
- Part-time markers are used who often keep worksheets too long.
- Materials shortages are caused by delays in revising and reprinting workbooks.
- Record forms do not provide all the essential information about learners. Perhaps the learners could provide three addresses; the postal address where he/she is residing when he/she registers; the home address in cases of people not residing at their home; the address of their next-of-kin. Students' materials are often returned from the post office because students are no longer available at the addresses they provided on the record forms.

Solutions

- A proposal has been made by Continuing Education Unit staff that enrolments of students should not take place throughout the year, but that new enrollees should be taken in between October and March. This is yet to be considered and discussed with LDTC management and other staff members.

- In some courses there is more than one tutor for Saturday courses. One tutor attends to new enrollees and the other to students ready to sit for examinations. This has reduced the number of students in a group and tutors can do some preparation for the tutorials.
- Since at times part-time markers keep worksheets too long, it was decided that the turn-around time for worksheets should be two weeks, that is from the time the worksheets arrive at the centre till they are sent back to students after marking. The tutors have cooperated and the system seems to be working.

Staff development strategies

- Staff involved in learner support provision include writers, editors, graphic artists, printers, student advisors, tutor organisers, dispatch officers and clerical assistants. The majority of them have not received any training in the field of their jobs. They have received on-the-job training, together with short courses here and there.
- Relevant adequate training is needed. There should be refresher courses now and again. The ratio of clients should balance those of staff and materials.
- Voluntary work should be encouraged.

Other points of interest

The cost of the learner support, for example tutoring, requires the LDTC to consider charging students a token fee to meet part of the tutorial expenses. This would probably increase their attachment to the institution.