

MISCELLANEA SPECIALIA 19



LEARNER
SUPPORT
SERVICES



Case studies of DEASA member institutions

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Preface

This publication is one example of resource mobilisation by members of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (Deasa) in producing and sharing knowledge and experience among professional colleagues in Africa and elsewhere in the world. It is a practical demonstration of a high degree of professionalism and commitment to distance education and open learning systems as viable and effective strategies for human resource development.

As the oldest distance education regional association, Deasa has provided exemplary leadership to several national and regional associations on the continent, and has continued to share knowledge and expertise over the years. This book of case studies is but one of the ways of creating and sharing knowledge and experience in an ever-growing field of open and flexible learning. It should be a valuable resource for all learners and practitioners in the field. It is also a 'good practice' model that could be replicated in other specialised aspects of open learning and distance education such as learner assessment, quality assurance and accountability, and Deasa should endeavour to tackle these hard topics with the same enthusiasm and diligence.

We look forward to witnessing in the near future an expanded stock of home-grown resource materials and publications from Deasa and other professional associations in Africa. It should be the aim of every professional association worth its name to produce at least one major publication each year as a contribution to new knowledge. The challenge lies with you, dear reader.

Peter E Kinyanjui
Vancouver, Canada
March 1998

Introduction

WHY THIS CASE STUDY BOOK?

This book of case studies of selected distance education organisations is a product of a workshop organised by the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (Deasa) for learner support staff of its member organisations. The workshop was organised in June 1995 as part of Deasa's staff development and training strategy. Deasa had noted the increasing use of distance education in the southern Africa region and the limited training available for distance education staff, particularly in the area of learner support which, though central to quality distance education, was often not the major focus of most organisations' staff development and training strategies. To address this problem Deasa decided that during the three-year period 1995–1997 its training strategy will focus on learner support staff. The plan adopted was three-pronged. It began with in-country assessment of learner support services provided by Deasa member institutions. This was followed by a five-day workshop for learner-support staff. From this workshop two products were developed: a handbook for trainers and this book of case studies.

There is a dire shortage of materials and examples of distance education provision in southern Africa. It is hoped that these case studies will contribute to the literature on learner support services in our region, at the same time providing Deasa member organisations, other providers and practitioners with examples of various types of tried and tested support services, lessons from our region and some of the pitfalls to avoid in the introduction of new ideas for improving learner support services.

SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

All members of Deasa were asked to participate in the training strategy mentioned above and in the development of case studies. Because of pressing institutional commitments not all members were able to participate. The case studies contained in this book are of organisations that were able to participate in the workshop and meet the deadlines for the submission of the final drafts. The processes for development of the case studies included an assessment of organisational and country learner support services by individuals identified by Deasa members as participants for a workshop on learner support and development of first drafts. The first drafts were discussed and

suggestions for improvement were made at the workshop. After the workshop participants reworked their drafts with the assistance of other members from their organisations. The final drafts were then submitted for comment by an editing team consisting of representatives from four of the Deasa member countries.

Every effort has been made to ensure that each of the five Deasa member countries is represented. Botswana case studies cover three of the four Deasa members in that country, that is the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), the Institute of Health Sciences and the University of Botswana Distance Education Unit. The Department of Adult Education indicated that their learner support services were conducted through the DNFE services. The Lesotho case studies represent all the major distance education providers in the country. The overview also gives an indication of distance education strategies adopted by other organisations that are not represented through case studies. South Africa is represented by one major provider, the University of South Africa (Unisa) and a non-governmental organisation, Sached, including one of its learner-support programmes, Dusspro. The second non-governmental programme from South Africa, the South African Institute for Distance Education, is not a provider, but as an active member of the workshop its contribution to the book is the country overview of distance education which appears as part of the South African section of the book. The Open Learning Systems Education Trust (Olset) took part in the workshop but did not develop an organisational case study. The other two South African Deasa members, the University of Fort Hare Adult Basic Education Programme and Technikon South Africa, were unable to participate in the workshop and the subsequent processes of developing the case studies. Namibia and Swaziland are represented by one organisation each, the Centre for External Studies of the University of Namibia and the Emlalatini Development Centre of Swaziland. Representatives from the second Namibian organisation, the Namibia College (Namcol) attended the workshop but did not meet the submission deadlines, while the other two Swaziland member institutions, the Department of Extra-Mural Services and the Institute for Distance Education, did not attend the workshop.

Though the total number of organisations per country is uneven, the case studies represent a wide spectrum and interesting examples of learner support services in the sub-region. The tertiary education sector is covered by the case studies from Unisa, Dusspro, the Sached learner support programme, the Centre for External Studies of the University of Namibia, the University of Botswana's Distance Education Unit, the Institutes of Extra Mural Studies and of Labour Studies of the University of Lesotho and the Institute for Health Sciences of Botswana. The secondary education sector is represented in the case studies from DNFE, LDTC and EDC. These case studies contain elements of both formal and non-formal education provision. While the great majority of organisations described in these case studies are part of government education provision, the non-governmental sector is represented by at least three case studies: two from South Africa (Sached and Saide) and one from Lesotho, Lanfe. The range in

organisational size is another interesting feature of these case studies. Unisa, a distance education mega-university, enrolls over 100 000 students per year and smaller organisations like EDC and Sached have student populations of 1 000 or fewer. The role of facilitation and advocacy of distance and non-formal education is represented by two organisations in this book, Saide and Lanfe, who are not providers. For this reason there is no specific Saide case study. Saide's mission is described as helping to increase democratic access to knowledge and skills through the adoption of open learning principles and distance education strategies (Saide 1997:1). As part of their work they have produced the overview of distance education in South Africa which is included in this book. Lanfe's work is covered in the brief description included in the Lesotho section. You will notice from Lanfe's stated objective the similarity to Saide's mission.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK AND CASE STUDIES

The case studies are grouped according to institutions and southern African countries which participate in Deasa. Where available, the country sections begin with an overview of distance education in the country under discussion. This provides the background against which readers of this book can assess the organisation's provision of learner support services in terms of its country's educational policy and stated objectives and priorities.

The case studies themselves include some background information on the organisation or programme, the nature of learner support services provided, problems, successes and future projection of how services will be or could be improved. Some of the case studies are quite detailed, while others tend to be rather brief in their description and analysis of problems and solutions. The reasons for this are related largely to organisational resources and views on the role and importance of learner support in their distance education system. But as an attempt at documenting provision in the regions from the learner-support practitioners' point of view, the case studies are an important first step which can be improved later as the need arises.

SOME OF THE ISSUES OF LEARNER SUPPORT

Distance education is widely regarded as a crucial mechanism for opening up learning opportunities and thus widening access to education and training. Learner support services play an important role in reducing the difficulties experienced by learners in this mode of education. These services do this, for example, by helping to reduce the isolation of learners, facilitating effective learning, reducing attrition rates and increasing success rates, and generally improving the quality of distance education. For learner support services to achieve the potential of greatly enhancing the quality of distance education, the issues facing their delivery should be seriously tackled.

Some of the central issues of learner support services in distance education include the underlying philosophy governing organisations' provision of these services, access, centralisation and/or decentralisation, role and responsibilities of learners, nature and role of technology, gender, collaboration and staff development. The case studies cover these issues in varying degrees of emphasis and detail.

With regard to the underlying philosophy governing institutional provision of learner support for example, some of the organisations have explicitly described their philosophy of learner support. The following excerpts from some of the case studies help to describe some ideas about the philosophy of some of the organisations regarding learner support.

- DNFE regards learner support as an integral part of a successful distance education programme. The institution is learner centred, hence the need for strengthening the support services.
- IHS states that distance education is a new mode of education and delivery for nurses in Botswana. Therefore the entrants into the programme need support to help them cope with the demands that this mode of delivery exposes them to.
- DEU believes it is important to establish learner support services to complement learning and teaching.
- Dusspro's view on learner support has always been that successful learning through the distance mode requires integrated and multifaceted learner support services that include face-to-face support.
- Unisa has to acknowledge that the time has come for it to move away from being a purely correspondence institution and gradually become a well-functioning distance education institution which ensures that all its students receive effective and efficient support.

Other organisations have provided no explicit description of their philosophies. But from the activities and services described in the case studies you can glean aspects of institutional philosophies. We trust that as you read through the case studies you will not only identify institutional philosophies but will also assess the extent to which each organisation addresses the other issues mentioned above.

Access to learner support services is a very thorny issue. In the past some distance education providers have rejected some forms of learner support, for example the provision of face-to-face support, because they claim they are not accessible to all their learners. What organisations need to realise is that some of the key strengths of distance education provision are that it offers learners the flexibility to take responsibility for their learning and for making decisions about the type of support they require and for determining when they wish to get such support. Usage of services should thus be

determined by learners' needs and in most instances learners' resources play an important role in accessing the services. As practitioners of learner support services one principle that we need to constantly aim at achieving is the development of a broad range of support services from which learners can choose according to their needs and the resources available.

While face-to-face support is always under scrutiny by organisations, the introduction of high-level technology is often not questioned and resources are quickly made available because organisations claim that they cannot afford to be left behind as the technology and information highway unfolds and virtual institutions become a reality. The issue of access to this technology by the majority of institutions learners is often not seriously considered. In the southern African context this is a serious issue because high technology still remains the preserve of the few who can afford it. Interestingly enough, the southern African experience as represented in the case studies shows very little usage of high technology in learner support; this is used more for efficient administration than for actual presentation. The Unisa case study is the only exception, which shows the introduction of some forms of new technology in its use of Students-on-line (SOL) system.

Related to the issue of access is that of centralisation and/or decentralisation. This covers the role of learning centres in making support services accessible to a greater number of learners, particularly those in rural areas who often have limited resources, and lack basics like electricity and equipment.

The relevance of support services is an issue that organisations need to take into serious consideration. Relevance includes aspects of context and the needs of the learner. The case studies in this book provide an indication of the organisations' assessment of their learners' needs and in most cases show how their support services address these needs. This is undoubtedly one way of tackling the issue of relevance of support services.

The notion of learner-centredness has implications not only for organisations but for learners as well. It means that while organisations have to consciously aim at addressing the needs of learners, the learners themselves have to play an important role, which includes responsibilities in the learning context. Responsibilities in teaching and learning activities are often very well addressed by learners and organisations. It is, however, in the areas of institutional governance and meaningful learner participation in the organisations' decision-making structures and process that distance education presents a major challenge. Some of the case studies have presented examples of how their organisations have grappled with this difficult but important issue.

These are but a few of the issues that we wished to highlight in this introduction. We hope that as you read through the case studies you will identify other issues and include for yourselves those that we have omitted.

As we conclude the compilation of this book of case studies, we are aware that some of the contributing organisations may have undergone quite a lot of changes which have

affected the philosophy and nature of learner support provision. As the historical barriers of geographical boundaries, political and socio-economic divisions are gradually breaking down, the region is growing into a global village, thus highlighting a greater need for cooperation and collaboration to tackle common problems. We envisage that the information contained in this book can be used as a stepping stone towards assisting the regions and other providers to widen learner support networks and strengthen the effort of finding solutions that will lead to more effective and efficient support for our learners.

Editors

Evelyn Pulane Nonyongo
Alice Thandiwe Ngengebule

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BOTSWANA

Overview of distance education development and programmes in Botswana

O Mphinyane & O S Selepeng-Tau

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA: EARLY EXPERIENCES

Historically, Botswana's involvement in distance education has been at two levels: first as a consumer of distance education programmes (correspondence courses), and as a provider. As consumers, Botswana have been studying for many years through correspondence courses provided mainly by private correspondence institutions in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Britain.

The following are examples of such experiences.

The Salisbury Experiment

In the early sixties, before Independence, some Botswana teachers received training through the Salisbury Correspondence College in Zimbabwe. Learners received study materials from the college and their assignments were marked there and returned to them by post. The practical part of the programme was done locally at the Lobatse Teacher Training College. The teachers were awarded the Elementary Teachers' Certificate by the Ministry of Education in Mafikeng in South Africa. The scheme operated between 1960 and 1965 (Jones 1981).

The Francistown Project

The Francistown project arose out of an identified need for trained teachers. A study carried out in 1965 revealed that about 48% of teachers were untrained at Independence (Jones 1981) and that the existing two teacher training colleges in Serowe and Lobatse could not cope with the demand. To alleviate the problem, the Francistown Project was launched in 1968. This marked Botswana's first involvement in the provision of distance education, a shift from being a mere consumer. The project ran from 1968 to 1973. It involved the upgrading of some 700 untrained teachers and achieved a success rate of

88%. Though this project was not replicated, it served as a good indicator that teachers could actually be upgraded *through unconventional means* inside Botswana.

Botswana Extension College

The success of the Francistown project led to the establishment of the Botswana Extension College (BEC) in 1973, bringing distance education home.

In 1978 the Department of Non-Formal Education was established in the Ministry of Education. BEC was absorbed into the new department only as a unit responsible for the work of the former college.

The University of Botswana

The University of Botswana was the second institution to offer distance education programmes in the country. The university's early experience with the distance education mode centred mainly on the use of radio as a medium for facilitating learning. Radio campaigns on national current issues were launched in 1971, 1973, 1976 and 1979. These were an alternative to face-to-face teaching and were intended as an alternative extension method which could reach very many people, about 50 000 at a time (Jones 1981).

One of the most popular radio campaigns was *Lesedi la Puso*, a radio learning campaign in 1979, which was concerned with civics education aimed at familiarising people with the operations of government and how they could participate in the decision-making process. The campaign was used as an alternative to face-to-face teaching because the population was scattered. There was no personnel available who had knowledge of the subject matter, and the campaign did not require all the participants to have literacy skills.

The university's offer of formal credited programmes by the distance education mode dates back to 1979 with the Diploma in Theology and to 1983 when the Certificate in Adult Education was offered.

Government policy on distance education

The First National Commission on Education of 1977 came about 10 years after the independence of Botswana. It made this important observation among others: 'Most emphasis at present is given to full-time education in schools, with too few opportunities for people to continue their learning outside the formal education system. There are large numbers of people who need such opportunities.'

This observation was taken to be very important. The White Paper which followed the Commission's Report stated that the government would give high priority to developing opportunities for people to learn out of school, and that there should not be a sharp dividing line between study in school and continuing learning out of school.

There should be many more opportunities for people to learn through formal and non-formal education.

However, since it was argued that this was not fully fledged policy, it was expected that a White Paper articulating a clear policy on non-formal education would be formulated. In the meantime, it was deemed necessary to set up a new unit in the Ministry of Education to take care of non-formal education. This became the Department of Non-Formal Education, established in 1978.

The Second National Commission on Education (1993) recommended the strengthening and upgrading of the Distance Education Division of the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) to the status of a semi-autonomous college established by legislation, namely the Botswana Distance Education College. The college will continue with the present programmes of the Division and have additional ones, mostly at pre-tertiary level.

The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) has observed that the expected White Paper was never produced. The commission therefore came out strongly in support of distance education. It recognised distance education as an integral part of the education system, with the ability to make part-time learning opportunities available to a wide range of children, young people and adults. The expansion and diversification of the distance mode of delivery is essential for future educational development. Thus the government is committed to providing education in order to create a learning society in which every individual should be provided with a learning opportunity outside the conventional system. The RNPE makes the following recommendations for the improvement of distance education in Botswana.

Recommendation 77 that the Ministry of Education enunciate a policy stating there should be shared use of all educational facilities in order to optimise their utilisation and promote out-of-school education.

Recommendation 79 With respect to junior secondary education for out-of school children, the Commission recommends the establishment of a nation-wide distance education study centre system of junior secondary level study.

Recommendation 83 With respect to junior secondary school for adults, the Commission recommends that the proposed Botswana Distance Education College offer the junior certificate programme with a support system to meet the needs of adults.

Recommendation 85 With respect to out-of-school education at senior secondary level, the Commission recommends that:

- a) the proposed Botswana Distance Education College offer a comprehensive and extensive O-level programme.

Recommendation 87 In order to extend the scope of distance education, the commission recommends;

- a) the establishment of the Botswana Distance Education College and
- b) the provision of appropriate resources to develop the Distance Education Unit of the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Botswana.

Recommendation 97 With respect to adult rehabilitation, the Commission recommends that:

- a) The proposed Botswana Distance Education College should modify its programmes, where relevant, for the disabled.

The 1993 National Education Commission identified a dire need for a distance education coordinating machinery. The major function of the machinery would be to bring together the various providers and undertake some strategic planning for the development of the system. This would probably help avoid duplications as well as repeating mistakes of the past. The machinery would also identify providers of various programmes at various levels, communities, private sector, parastatals and non-governmental organisations. It would further ensure some evenness in the programme scope and quality as well as some increase in allocation of resources. It would enable improvements in cost effectiveness and broaden the base of financing the system. It has been recommended that while the proposed college implements and coordinates programmes at pre-tertiary level, the Centre for Continuing Education should do the same at tertiary level.

The commission identified four major client categories whose educational and training needs could be serviced through distance education, under the umbrella of the above operational framework.

- **Category 1 Out-of-school secondary education for young people.**

This group is at present being serviced by the Department of Non-Formal Education. These people are mostly of school-going age and have not been able to complete the course. This category has two sub-groups:

- those who would like to get the Junior Certificate using distance education. The Commission recommended expanded support facilities for this group;
- secondary school O-level seekers who cannot get a place in a senior secondary school or vocational training. The commission recommended expanded programmes for this sub-group. These programmes would include commercial and technical subjects as well as academic ones.

- **Category 2**

The commission recommended that pre-tertiary vocational, professional and management in-service courses be offered through distance education. The courses would be aimed primarily at working adults, with a view to improving their work skills and career prospects. Such courses have never been offered before in Botswana. Like the first category, this category has two sub-groups:

- people who require academic and job-related upgrading for career advancement. These are people who in most cases need to upgrade their professional skills but lack the required academic entry qualifications;
- middle and junior management and secretarial cadres in government, the private sector and self-employed seeking skills training while combining learning with work.

- **Category 3 Post literacy and extension programmes**

These courses will play an important role in the development of a literate environment. Such courses could be useful to new literates who may wish to use their skills to satisfy an immediate need without necessarily seeking qualifications. These could include skills and information related to income-generating activities as well as public information.

- **Category 4 University level courses**

These will be for those people who require degrees and diplomas and are not able to go to university for various reasons. These would need to update their qualifications to meet modern challenges. DNFE (and later the Distance Education College) will provide distance education programmes for the first three categories as outlined above and DEU (Distance Education Unit) will cater for the fourth category.

INSTITUTIONS OFFERING DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA: THE CURRENT SITUATION

So far there are two major providers of distance education programmes in Botswana. DNFE is mandated to offer pre-tertiary programmes. The Distance Education Division of DNFE currently offers Junior Certificate and Senior Certificate courses at a distance.

The second institution is the University of Botswana (UB). Through its DEU, the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) is mandated to offer tertiary level programmes through the distance education mode. So far the DEU offers only one programme, the Certificate in Adult Education. The unit is in the process of developing a Diploma in Primary Education, which will be launched in August 1998. This programme is for upgrading primary school teachers and improving the quality of primary education. A Master of Education will follow thereafter.

The commission identified these two institutions (UB and DNFE) as major providers of distance education in the country. Their area of concentration, as indicated earlier, is pre-tertiary for DNFE and tertiary for DEU. They complement one another, as CCE takes over from where DNFE leaves off.

Although the DNFE and the CCE have been identified as the major providers of distance education, new extensive projects such as that of the Ministry of Health are pending. As a result of the Second National Commission on Education, Botswana is experiencing a paradigm shift in education and this includes the Ministry of Health.

However, the Ministry has to explore ways of solving problems encountered by learners who have a minimum education background, which limits their understanding of the new concepts of nursing education.

The Commission on Education also concluded that distance education in Botswana to-day is highly restricted and has thus not matched the vision laid out in the Report of the 1977 National Commission on Education. It has also remained a highly underdeveloped mode of teaching and learning in the country.

For this reason the Revised National Policy on Education (of 1994) aims at ensuring that the learning needs of the various client groups can be met through distance education. This will involve *resource re-arrangement* to meet the challenge and was the aim of Recommendation 77 of the RNPE.

Proposed institutional framework

Other efforts to provide distance education programmes have been made by various providers with various goals and objectives. However, these seem to have failed to achieve their intended objectives. Probably the programmes were launched without proper planning and may also have lacked a clearly articulated conceptual, theoretical policy framework to guide and provide a clear vision of distance education in Botswana. The government, through the RNPE, has seen the need for a coordinating machinery as well as the development of an institutional framework.

The CCE and the Distance Education Division of the DNFE have both been given the responsibility to establish such a framework. The CCE will provide and coordinate all programmes at tertiary level, while the Distance Education Division, which is to be upgraded to the status of a college, will provide pre-tertiary programmes and be responsible for their coordination.

Strengths and weakness of distance education

Strengths

First, in Botswana distance education has been recognised as having the potential to meet the educational and training needs of varied groups over the next twenty years. It has the advantages of bringing educational programmes closer to the people. Thus

Botswana, with a small population of about one million people scattered over a large geographical area, stands to benefit from distance education since it transcends geographical barriers. Second, a cursory survey of the provision of continuing education programme shows that the distance education potential has not been sufficiently exploited. The feasibility study for the establishment of the Botswana Distance Education College and the findings of the RNFE have also confirmed that there is a genuine need for opportunities for education and training through other means than the conventional system. So distance education has strong potential to fulfil this gap.

Problems and weakness

The greatest weakness, which led to several of the problems encountered here, stemmed from the lack of a clear policy on out-of-school education. Since distance education is one mode that can be used to address the needs of the out-of-school population, a clear policy statement would give direction to the development of distance education in the country. But the absence of the White Paper and consequently policy statement which was recommended by the 1977 Commission has led to lack of direction and coherence. These crucial ingredients are the key to the development of strong out-of-school education programmes.

Other problems stem from the severe lack of resources for DNFE's distance education programme.

Emerging future projections for Botswana

As already stated, distance education is ear-marked to satisfy the educational needs of the following clientele in Botswana in the next twenty years, to take us into the twenty-first century.

- Out of school secondary education for young people.
 - Junior Certificate seekers,
 - Senior Secondary O-level seekers.

These two categories are currently being provided for by the Department of Non-Formal Education.

- Pre-tertiary vocational professional and management in-service upgrading courses. So far no institution offers courses at this level through distance education in Botswana. When launched, such courses would target working adults, who wish to improve their work skills and career prospects. This target group falls into two categories:
 - people who require academic and job-related upgrading to advance in their careers or enrol for further training.

- junior management and secretarial cadres in government, the private sector and self-employed people seeking skill training.

Distance education would offer this category of people an opportunity to combine learning with working.

- Post-literacy and extension programmes. Some post-literacy participants who wish to expand their knowledge in certain areas could benefit from distance learning packages on topics such as bookkeeping, and income generating activities if these were available. National information campaigns on topics such as Aids could also benefit from distance education materials on prevention and/or management of this disease.
- University level courses. There are many people who wish to study for certificate, diploma or degree programmes but cannot enrol in conventional university programmes for one reason or other. The DEU of the CCE, University of Botswana, has embarked on developing certificate, diploma and degree programmes to address this gap.

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The Distance Education Division of the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE)

F Molefi & O Mphinyane

OVERVIEW OF THE DNFE'S DISTANCE EDUCATION MODEL

The Botswana Extension College (BEC) was established in 1973 with the help of the International Extension College. The college was set up as a teaching institution dealing with both formal and non-formal education. Its main purpose was to offer Junior Certificate (JC) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) courses and various upgrading, retraining and information non-examination courses.

The programme targeted people older than 19 years of age who are presumably mature enough to endure the isolation of studying by themselves. The BEC was incorporated into the DNFE in 1978 and continued to function as a separate unit. This unit has now been upgraded into a division. Since then, the department has continued to offer secondary education at junior and senior secondary level. Non-formal courses are also offered currently by the Literacy and Home Economics programme to enhance knowledge, attitudes and skills development. These non-formal education programmes are taught through conventional methods.

NATURE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVISION AT DNFE

The Distance Education Programme of the Department of Non-Formal Education is a nationwide programme. The average annual enrolment is about 2 000 learners, which could rise to about 5 000 when added to the previously enrolled students.

Table 1 Enrolment statistics for the Distance Education (DNFE) Programme from 1989 to 1994

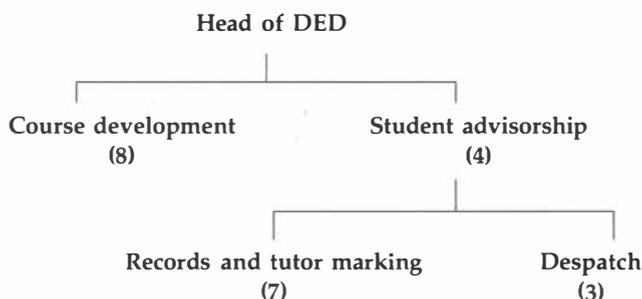
Year	JC	GCE	Total JC & GCE
1989	2 259	262	2 521
1990	2 535	1 529	4 064

Year	JC	GCE	Total JC & GCE
1991	6 317	3 159	9 476
1992	2 286	1 837	4 123
1993	3 220	2 980	6 200
1994	2 631	2 913	5 544

From the table, we notice a clear growth pattern from 1989, where the total number of learners was 2 521, to 1994, where the total enrolment was 5 544.

The following sub-systems and staff serve the entire learner population:

Table 2 The organisational structure and number of staff employed in 1994



Temporary staff may be employed at peak times or when the need arises.

Other service divisions are:

– Editorial and production staff	26	
– Field staff	185	
– Media, research and evaluation	<u>7</u>	
Total	<u>241</u>	(including staff of DED)

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Cooperation and collaborative relationships exist between the CCE, Department of Adult Education and Institute of Health Sciences. These include workshops and resource personnel exchange. There is also cooperation with other departments of the Ministry of Education, non-governmental organisations and parastatal organisations.

DNFE'S VIEW ON THE ROLE OF LEARNER SUPPORT

The DNFE regards learner support as an integral part of a successful distance education programme. The institution is learner centred, hence the need for strengthening the support services. This includes decentralising marking and distribution of print materials so that feedback is improved and the study lifespan becomes shorter and much more enjoyable.

NATURE OF LEARNER SUPPORT AT DNFE

Learner profile

In 1995 the age of learners ranged from 14 to 67 years. Learners can be categorised into two main groups:

- younger and unemployed learners, the majority (80%) of whom are female. This group is aged between 14 and 17 years and is of school-going age. They are Form 2 school leavers, less independent and less self-disciplined and thus need more guidance.
- older and mature learners, mostly employed, and 25 years and over. For these learners the programme serves as a catalyst in their immediate needs, for example working towards promotion at work or simply wanting to improve their standard of education for self-actualisation.

The following statistics reflect the 1992–1995 learner profile and give a detailed description in terms of age, majority age range, gender, educational background, geographical location, subjects enrolled for, marital and employment status and occupations:

Table 3 Learner Profile

	Age range	Majority age range	Gender	
			(M)	(F)
JC	14–54	17–32	700 (30 %)	1640 (70 %)
COSC	16–53	17–34	729 (33 %)	1496 (67 %)

Educational background

- JC PSLE or old Standard 6, which was the school-leaving point in the 1960s
 JC upgraders and failures
- COSC JC holders
 PL (Primary Lower Teachers Certificate)
 PH (Primary Higher Teachers Certificate)
 PTC (Primary Teacher's Certificate)
 Enrolled nurses
 COSC upgraders
 Military
 Police Force
 Prisons
 and others

Geographical spread

- 1 224 (27 %) of the total learner body are in Gaborone, the capital city. 367 (30 %) are Junior Certificate (JC) learners in Gaborone.
 294 (24 %) are Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) learners in Gaborone.
 The rest of the learner body are spread out over other towns and villages.

Employed/unemployed

- 1 328 (29%) JC and COSC are employed.
 2 720 (60%) JC and COSC are unemployed.
 517 (11%) did not indicate any engagement.

Prison inmates

2% are inmates. Some of these students had enrolled previously, whereas others enrolled while in prison.

A very small percentage are physically challenged visually.

Table 4 Range of learner occupational patterns

Teachers	Typists
Nurses	Electricians
Secretaries	Technicians
Police	Shop assistants
Defence	Miners
Security	Administration officers
Prison	Factory workers etc.

Marital status

DNFE has learners who are single, single parents, married, divorced, separated or widowed.

The majority of the learner body are single.

International learners

A small fraction (0,1 %) of the learner body come from countries outside Botswana.

Learners enrol for any three subjects at a given time at a distance.

What are the learners' needs?

The DNFE was established by the government to cater for people who could not continue their post-primary education through the formal school system for various reasons. It was also established to increase educational opportunities for all age groups and to reduce inequalities in access to education. The learners who enrol with it, though they may have various needs, have a common and very important goal, which is to fulfil the academic need for secondary level education which was interrupted. In addition, they also feel a need to improve their academic qualifications.

Given this scenario, students find that the only institution available to them at an affordable price and without age restriction is the DNFE distance education programme.

In pursuance of this, the learners' need for support arise from the isolation inflicted upon them by the nature of the distance teaching mode. The learners need to conquer the separation between them and the institution, other learners and their educators. The learner need can then be categorised as follows:

- *Environmental:* Learners feel isolated physically and emotionally due to the nature of the programme. A facility such as a study centre is needed to mitigate the distance element which gives rise to abandonment of the courses being pursued.
- *Academic:* Learners demand a curriculum and teaching approaches that are a replica of the formal school system because it is what they are used to, and thus feel they can only learn when a teacher is teaching them.

However, what they need is reassurance that what they learn through distance education is as good as learning through the formal school system. They need help in choosing their courses and planning their study periods. They also need help in understanding what the institution expects of them, for instance how to do their assignments, being responsible for their own learning situations, preparing for examinations and performing better to achieve their ultimate goals.

- *Skills development:* Learners need to acquire skills that can turn them into independent learners. Obtaining appropriate study skills is therefore very important.

Table 5 Learner enrolment in 1995 according to districts, gender and JC subjects

District	English		Maths		Setswana		BKC		S Studies		P Agric		HSB	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Gaborone	149	85	144	67	87	32	44	19	33	27	37	16	40	20
Kanye	61	19	61	17	26	17	8	2	18	10	6	6	29	5
Kgaladi	14	7	5	61	1	26	8	2	18	10	6	6	29	5
Molepolole	55	7	41	6	33	4	8	0	25	3	18	2	20	0
Bobonong	5	2	43	14	4	1	1	1	10	4	2	0	3	2
Mochudi	46	19	5	0	36	9	8	2	3	0	6	1	7	2
Jwaneng	24	12	22	9	8	2	1	0	12	5	1	2	4	3
Masunga	9	4	9	4	4	0	9	2	3	1	2	1	2	0
Kasane	29	5	22	4	17	3	5	0	8	1	3	4	4	0
Serowe	29	5	28	6	22	1	2	3	6	1	2	1	8	1
Gantsi	18	10	15	11	10	2	1	0	3	4	3	3	3	1
Lobatse	63	35	58	30	25	16	8	2	28	13	14	8	18	11
Francistown	16	16	14	15	5	6	2	7	2	3	0	5	4	5
Selibe-Phikwe	13	12	13	10	4	4	2	3	5	3	1	2	6	5
Ramotswa	29	6	23	4	19	1	10	2	14	3	5	1	9	2
Mahalapye	34	5	27	4	17	1	7	0	9	2	0	1	5	2
Maun	27	12	24	9	10	7	8	3	2	2	2	5	4	6
Tutume	20	3	18	2	11	1	0	1	3	1	4	1	7	0
Letlhakane	25	9	25	6	10	3	9	3	1	4	2	2	11	2
Sub Total	666	273	597	279	349	136	132	52	203	97	114	67	213	72
Total	939		876		485		184		300		181		285	

Subject key:

BKC Book-keeping and commerce
 P Agric Private agriculture

S Studies Social studies
 HSB Human and social biology

Table 6 Learner enrolment in 1995 according to districts, gender and subject at GCE level

DISTRICT	English		Maths		Geography		P/Acc		Commerce		HSB	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Gaborone	163	88	119	67	33	27	41	21	60	48	59	28
Kanye	47	15	42	15	6	5	5	3	12	3	25	5
Kgaladi	4	5	1	5	0	0	1	2	1	3	0	0
Molepolole	38	7	26	6	15	3	5	3	1	5	29	2
Bobonong	14	3	12	5	17	17	0	6	2	0	7	3
Mochudi	78	38	73	30	0	3	6	1	27	7	47	1
Jwaneng	15	13	13	8	3	3	3	1	4	2	5	8
Masunga	8	6	6	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	6	4
Kasane	15	5	9	5	1	2	2	3	1	2	7	3
Serowe	44	14	34	12	6	3	9	1	7	2	24	6
Gantsi	7	7	5	5	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	2
Lobatse	27	12	32	7	9	3	7	1	12	4	17	6
Francistown	35	9	27	5	5	1	7	2	7	2	16	6
Selibe-Phikwe	43	11	38	11	11	5	37	4	16	4	10	1
Ramotswa	11	4	10	3	3	2	1	1	9	3	8	2
Mahalapye	33	18	36	15	6	5	5	1	16	9	36	9
Maun	51	19	38	13	1	2	2	3	1	2	7	3
Tutume	18	9	19	8	1	1	2	1	3	1	14	8
Lethakane	33	11	19	6	6	2	8	2	10	3	22	5
Sub Total	684	294	559	232	127	86	143	58	201	100	341	102
Total	978		791		213		201		301		443	

Subject key:

P/Acc Principles of accountancy

HSB Human and social biology

- *Administrative needs:* Learners need responsive recorders, markers, counsellors, tutors and administrators. They also need writers who are sensitive to their learning styles.
- *Career guidance needs:* Learners, particularly those of school-going age, critically need help in this area. They need to know what careers are available in the job market; the skills and abilities needed to perform these jobs; and the alternatives that are open to them.

How is the DNFE meeting these needs?

A student support service system is in place.

Up to April 1995 the advising and counselling service was operated centrally by a full-time learner advisor based at headquarters, Gaborone. However, four more staff members have joined to extend this service. The learner advisors are responsible for running the support services that are in operation. Support is provided for both the urban and rural learner population of DNFE. The new officers have been strategically placed to strengthen the Kgalagadi (Kang), North East (Francistown), North West (Maun) and Gaborone areas. The three former areas offer services that have been decentralised in an attempt to take services closer to the learners. The services include enrolment, materials distribution, payment of course fees, marking and learner advising and counselling.

These various elements of learner support are available:

- *Tutor-marking*

Tutors are required to provide subject content guidance when they mark the learners scripts. They are encouraged to engage in a dialogue when marking the scripts and impart study skills to the many learners whom they may never see so that they all get as much help as possible. In order to meet this requirement, tutors workshops, meetings and orientations on marking are conducted.

- *Tutorials at study centres*

Study centres are usually secondary school classrooms where learners come together to receive face-to-face help from part-time tutors. The tutors are trained secondary school teachers from the Ministry of Education who are employed temporarily by the department, except in rare cases where personnel from the private sector are engaged for subjects such as book-keeping and commerce, principles of accountancy and commerce. These subjects are not common in the formal school sector, hence the lack of trained teaching personnel.

Centres open from any time between 5:30 pm and 8:30 pm, three or four days a week. Tutoring is available in each subject for two hours a week.

The tutorial session entails tutors being approached by the students, requesting them to explain areas of difficulty in the workbook being studied. Tutors are

expected to conduct mini-teaching sessions if the area under discussion is perceived as a common problem area.

Each centre is run by a supervisor chosen from among the tutors. The supervisor ensures that the study centre is comfortable for every learner and that a conducive studying atmosphere prevails.

At the end of 1994 DNFE had 27 study centres and 122 tutors countrywide. In June 1996 24 study centres were in operation.

Table 7 The location, number and name of DNFE study centres in 1996

Place	No	Name of study centre
Gaborone	2	Gaborone and Maru-A-Pula Secondary Schools
Mochudi	2	Molefi Secondary School Isang Primary School
Mmathubudukwane	1	Madiwe CJSS
Lobatse	2	Letsopa and Ipelegeng CJSSs
Ramotswa	1	St. Conrads Primary School
Selibe-Phikwe	1	Education Centre
Tutume	1	Tutume MacConnel College
Molepolole	1	NFE office
Thamaga	1	Thamaga CJSS
Serowe	1	Central Primary School
Kang	1	Matsha Non-Formal Centre
Hukuntsi	1	Lehutshelo CJSS
Maun	1	NFE Office
Francistown	1	Selolwe CJSS
Kanye	1	Kanye Library
Jwaneng	1	Teemane Primary School
Kasane	1	Chobe CJSS
Gantsi	1	Itekeng CJSS
Mahalapye	1	Education Centre
Machaneng	1	Mosikare CJSS
Masung	1	Maruje CJSS
TOTAL	24	

Key: CJSS: Community Junior Secondary School

- *Teaching at weekend courses*

These are full teaching sessions as opposed to mini-tutorials. They are arranged on selected weekends by various officers of DNFE at their study centres. The sessions are additional non-residential weekend programmes. They are meant to augment the normal distance education programme. Ideally, each office should conduct four

weekend courses annually, but individual offices can arrange to have more, depending on their finances and tutor availability.

In addition to these tasks, tutors are duty-bound to provide additional support to the learners they tutor or mark for. This includes professional guidance, information about the institution and general academic performance. Tutors are often called upon to offer counselling services.

To prepare the tutors for these multiple roles, they are oriented through short but intensive workshops. The areas covered on such occasions include the concepts of distance education, the role of the DNFE and the basics of counselling services.

- *Learner advice*

This service is provided by the advisors at various levels. The service includes provision of pre-enrolment, on-course and after-course counselling. The topics include enrolment procedures, and when, how and where to register for examinations. They also deal with problems of study materials such as availability or unavailability, sequence, and marking of worksheets.

The advisors, three of whom are based in the decentralised areas, are also liaison officers between the tutors and the learners, course writers and the institution at large.

In addition, the learner advisors, based at Head Office, deal with incoming calls from students and the general public seeking assistance either about enrolment or more general concerns. They also attend to referral cases from the other advisors and re-route queries to appropriate officers or professionals to take action. The advisors also maintain accurate records of all contact with learners and the action taken. They are also liaison officers with outside departments and institutions.

- *Radio counselling*

The learner advisors are responsible for this area with the help of the radio producers, who provide technical help. Programmes cover study hints and skills development. Programmes on students and/or tutors' experiences are also made to share with peers and colleagues.

- *Counselling through letters*

Assisting students by counselling through letters on matters involving general study skills is also prevalent. Subject-specific problems are redirected to the relevant officers.

- *Telephone counselling*

This arrangement is based on individual needs. Those learners who are able to communicate by telephone take advantage of the facility. The office also contacts them when necessary. Issues discussed are of general concern and study hints. Specific issues are directed to the relevant officers.

- *Radio teaching*

Course development officers produce and present subject radio programmes in collaboration with the radio producers of the department. Each course development officer produces four teaching programmes and one on examination hints. The choice of radio lesson is based on the officer's knowledge of areas needing emphasis. The examination hints come at the end of the year when learners are preparing to sit their final examinations.

One programme lasts fifteen minutes and the four programmes are broadcast in blocks of one hour per week.

- *Audio tapes*

These are recorded tapes of the above programmes. Learners are encouraged to acquire any of the programmes they feel will enhance their studies. They buy their own cassette tapes and send them to the department for dubbing.

- *District visits*

These are occasional and undertaken by staff of the Head Office to the various districts and study centres to lend support to learners, tutors and district staff as well as assess the impact and progress of the programme. Face-to-face meetings are held with groups or individual tutors and learners.

At appropriate times during the visits the communities are also sensitised to the existence of the Distance Education Programme and the role of the department.

AN ANALYSIS OF DNFE'S LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

The problems affecting the Distance Education Programme of DNFE seem to emanate from the non-existence of a clear demarcation between providing a service with all its components and providing support. Furthermore, being able to achieve a balance between flexibility and a good structured programme seems to be hard but it is of crucial importance.

Gaps exist in the following areas:

Tutoring

- Tutor-marked worksheets are affected by the absence of tutors when they are on vacation.
- Diverse groups during tutoring sessions and weekend courses present problems during interactions.

Counselling

- Establishing boundaries in the student support services and providing a sustainable service also present problems in that, though this is an old programme, in terms of establishment, its development and progress lag behind.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

This is a very highly centralised area. The Department nominates trainees to feed the Ministry's training plan which in turn feeds the Government's Department of Public Service Management. The process is extremely slow and demotivating. Thus, the learner support area, like all other areas of the Department, does not have a clear staff development strategy that can be relied upon.

MAJOR PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

The problems and constraints encountered are sometimes seen as overwhelming due to the time it takes to resolve them. Constraints go on unresolved for rather too long. But the need for a sensitive programme cannot be overemphasised in distance teaching. However, the department has expanded since inception. This was in response to the increasing demand for education which cannot be met by the formal sector. Regional offices have so far expanded to five.

Some of the constraints and measures taken to improve them are the following:

- *Material availability*

This is going to be affected by the transition that is being effected as a result of the recommendations of the National Education Policy of 1994. The two-year Junior Certificate programme is being phased out in favour of the three-year JC programme. The current enrollees of DNFE are studying the latter but they have been started with the two-year JC programme materials. Preparations are under way to produce additional materials which would cover what the former materials would have left out.

Furthermore, materials production in terms of volumes typed, typeface and layout have improved with the acquisition of computers and other equipment. The technical staff have also been given in-service training in order to improve output.

- *Learner administration*

Since 1992 services such as enrolment, distribution of materials and marking have been decentralised to three areas. Management of support services, in particular learner advising and counselling, is also in the process of being decentralised. Assistant learner advisors have been placed in these decentralised areas.

These are to take care of problems of poor attendance at the study centres by both learners and tutors, learners' impatience to complete courses, delays in marking learners worksheets, losses and delays when materials are sent to and from the department by post.

Learners are discouraged by these problems, which consequently lead to irregular operation of the study centres and drop-out.

The tutors are at times affected by the load of work from their respective schools of employment and the diversity of the learners to be tutored.

- *Shortage of resources*

Shortage of personnel at all levels of the programme, such as in-course writing, due to vacancies that remain unfilled for too long, and inadequate staff for the counselling service, coupled with lack of relevant training, are all problems the service has to contend with.

Inadequate facilities, such as transport and office space in general and especially at the printing workshop, also affect the effectiveness of the programme.

To further improve the distance education programme, it has been proposed that subjects taught at both junior and senior secondary level should have separate course development officers.

In conclusion, though an improved organisational structure is in place to offer stronger and more efficient programmes, a lot still remains to be done in the area of training officers and providing policy guidelines which could influence operation in the various levels of the programme. Of utmost importance is the need to translate the experiences gained during training sessions into action so as to realise greater efficiency and effectiveness.

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Institute of Health Sciences (IHS)

A G Moesi & O G Mmolawa

BACKGROUND

The Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) in Serowe, which operates under the umbrella of the Ministry of Health, is involved in a distance education programme for nurses.

The government of Botswana adopted the programme Primary Health Care as the most appropriate strategy for achieving Health for All by the year 2000. Following this strategy, the Ministry concerned made significant progress in the development of health services. This rapid development has made giant strides towards addressing the need for a constant supply of skilled human resources. The Ministry of Health (MOH) and the University of Botswana (UB) submitted a joint request to the Kellogg Foundation to support the strengthening of the development of human resources in the field of health.

This led to the restructuring of nursing education in Botswana to meet the increasing demands of the population. Although various developments took place in various nursing institutions in Botswana, of major interest is the birth of the distance education programme in 1994 to upgrade enrolled nursing cadre into registered nursing.

The primary health care approach focuses on the community. It seeks to enable communities and individuals to take responsibility for improving their health by participating in the identification of health problems, setting priorities for action and planning, organising and managing health care programmes.

The effectiveness of primary health care services in Botswana depends to a large extent on the quality of the preparation of nurses who provide the bulk of health promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services in a variety of settings.

Because of this background, and after several consultations, the recommendation to phase out the training of enrolled nurses and upgrade current enrolled nurses to the general nursing cadre was accepted and active strategies were put into place towards the achievement of the latter.

The Serowe Institute of Health Sciences was designated as the campus responsible for

upgrading all enrolled nurses to general nursing level. Their entry point is year two of the general nursing programme.

The upgrading programme is offered in two approaches; a one-year residential (full-time) programme and a two-year part-time (distance education) programme.

The target population to be upgraded is approximately 1 600. These are actively practising nurses, employed either by government missions or the private sector.

These nurses are placed at various levels in the enrolled nursing cadre through promotion and some through post-basic training. The following breakdown shows the various ranks on levels of the nursing cadres.

- 40% enrolled nurses
- 25% senior enrolled nurses
- 20% principal enrolled nurses
- 10% midwives
- 5% ophthalmic nurses

THE MOH DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The programme started in August 1994, with 80 learners enrolled as part-time learners.

Learner profile

These are older and mature learners whose age ranges from 29 to 55 + .

Table 8 gives a detailed description in terms of age distribution, gender and educational background.

Table 8 Learner profile of MOH Distance Education Programme

Educational background	Age range	Majority age range	Gender
Primary level and JC (Unsuccessful)	45 – 55 +	50 – 55	100% (F)
JC	35 – 55	35 – 45	97% (F) 3% (M)
COSC Unsuccessful	29 – 45	30 – 45	98% (F) 2% (M)
COSC	29 – 35	29 – 35	98% (F) 2% (M)

Learners enrol for the following courses in first year.

First year

Semester I (August – December) 20 weeks	Theory	Practice
GN 111 Health assessment	40 hrs	40 hrs
GN 211 Primary health care	100 hrs	80 hrs
GN 216 Professional development	125 hrs	50 hrs
Semester (January – May) 16 weeks		
GN 311 (I) Primary health care (MCH)	48 hrs	32 hrs
GN 311 (II) Primary health care	40 hrs	80 hrs
Year II – 3rd Year Nursing Semesters I and II		
GN 312 Adult Health Nursing		
GN 215 Nursing Leadership and Management	48 hrs	

LEARNERS' NEEDS

During the planning for the programme several activities were undertaken in order to ascertain the needs of the potential learners. A countrywide visit was conducted by Ministry of Health personnel to sensitise enrolled nurses to the programme. This activity was followed by a general survey which was aimed at ascertaining the resourcefulness of the distance learner's environment. This included the workplace.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS

Following the general survey, some areas were identified as being suitable for learners to study at a distance. These areas are termed satellites. They are located more to the eastern part of the country where transport and communication means are readily available. Potential learners outside the identified areas are given first preference for the full-time programme.

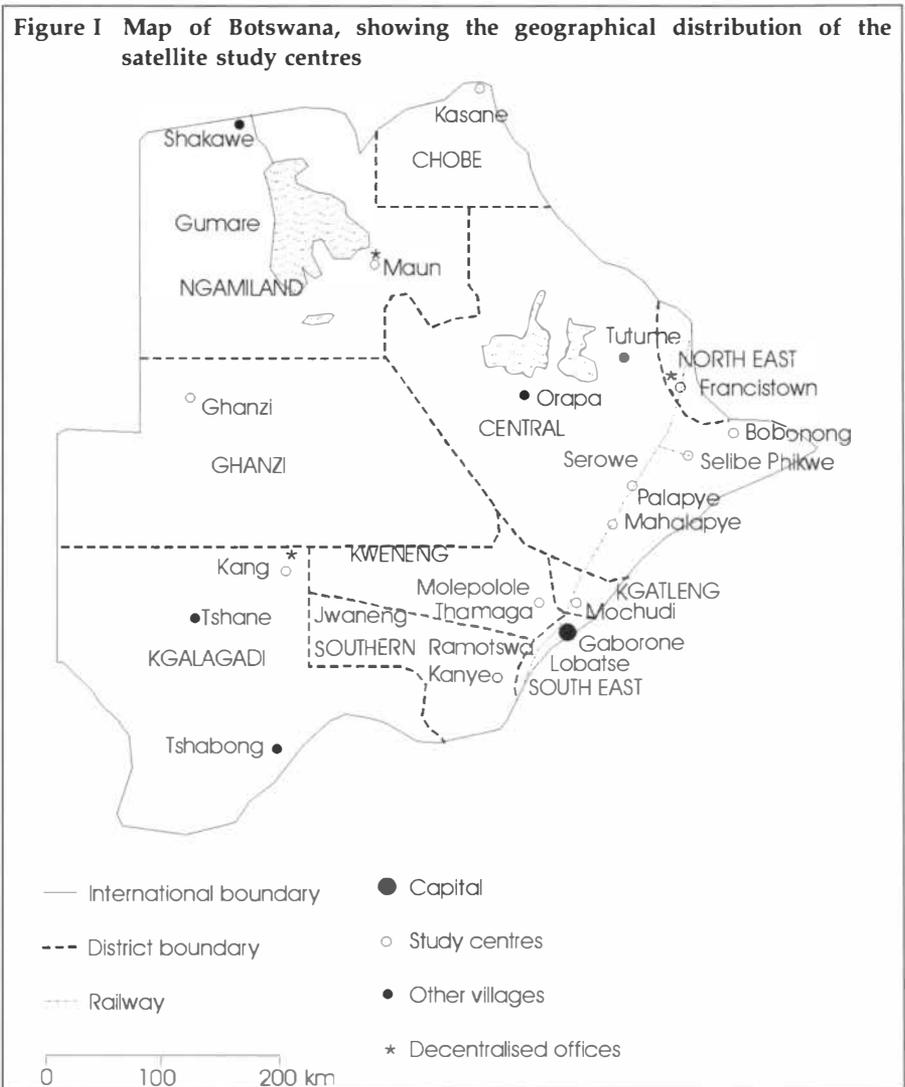
Satellites (study centres) are institutions attached to training hospitals which were identified in the catchment areas to service the distance education learners. These were identified because of existing teaching/learning resources such as libraries, classrooms, and qualified personnel to facilitate the learning process.

The satellites are in:

- Serowe
- Francistown
- Gaborone

- Lobatse
- Molepolole
- Selibe-Phikwe
- Ramotswa
- Kanye
- Mochudi

Figure I Map of Botswana, showing the geographical distribution of the satellite study centres



Personnel who offer support in satellites

- *Lecturers*

Ideally, each satellite should have a lecturer but because of the shortage of personnel some lecturers are responsible for more than one satellite.

- *Preceptors*

These are qualified nurses who work in the identified satellite. They should have two years' post-qualification experience and should have an additional post-basic certificate in Midwifery Community Health, Community Mental Health, Family Nurse Practice or a Bachelor of Education in Nursing.

Each preceptor is trained by the Institute of Health Sciences in Serowe for two weeks. The training is based on the modular approach, assessment and evaluation and on the learner and distance education concepts.

The preceptor/learner ratio is 1:3. But since all these people (learners and preceptor) are working in the same organisation, a 1:1 ratio would have been better in facilitating learning.

The role of the preceptor is to assist, guide, supervise and evaluate learners in the performance of clinical learning experiences.

- *Departmental support*

Assistance is also sought from other lecturers from the conventional general programmes.

ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS

The most common administrative need in distance education is transport.

The administrative structures in the learners' workplaces pledged to provide transport to the study centres and also to make their communication media available for use by the learners.

Administrative learner support

The user departments also assist in facilitating learning by giving learners an extra study day for their group projects. They also liaise with the Institute of Health Science for any matters pertaining to learners' needs.

IHS SEROWE: VIEW ON THE ROLE OF LEARNER SUPPORT

Distance education is a new mode of education delivery for nurses in Botswana.

Therefore entrants into the programme need support to help them to cope with the demands that this mode of delivery exposes them to.

The Institute regards all personnel in the learners' environment as support staff and can only do so if given adequate training and orientation into the programme.

NATURE OF LEARNER SUPPORT IN SATELLITES

- *Residential blocks*

Learners come to the satellite for their residential tutorials for a period of one week. There are four residential blocks in an academic year, eight weeks apart.

During the residential block, learners are given lectures on topics they could not cope with on their own. They also write tests. Individual counselling sessions are carried out.

- *Follow-up contracts*

Lecturers visit the learners on an individual basis at least twice before each residential block. Activities during the visitation include counselling on both academic and social matters, clarifying points in the study materials and answering learners' questions and concerns. This is done individually and in a group.

In addition, learners can contact the lecturer any time they need to by telephone or by calling in person to discuss issues of concern.

AT THE START OF THE PROGRAMME

All learners have a pre-registration course which entails reading and studying techniques, completion of profiles, orientation to the curriculum and modules. These learners come to the IHS Serowe for a three-week orientation course.

After three weeks learners leave for their areas of function, where they work with preceptors and hold residential tutorials every four weeks with a lecturer from the satellite.

DURING THE COURSE OF STUDY

- *Learning environment*

To provide a supportive learning environment temporary structures (Portacabins) were erected to increase the accommodation capacity to cater for distant learners during their residential sessions and examinations.

- *Learning materials*

Print is the main medium of instruction. The learning materials (modules) are self-directed study packages developed by the faculty involved in the upgrading programme.

Learners are also issued with prescribed textbooks/appendices to support information covered in the study materials.

- *Supportive learning resources*

There are two photocopiers, one with a collator, but they are too small for the type of production involved. As a result they break easily and take time to be repaired.

One officer is employed as a material production officer. Module production requires at least five members, therefore lecturers cooperate to ensure that the learning materials are produced.

The Department of Manpower in the MOH assists by photocopying some of the learning material but the Institute staff still compile and bind modules for learners.

There is a television monitor and a video cassette recorder for learners to use. Video information is related to the content in the modules. This equipment is available in the satellites. Learners and preceptors have access to it.

- *Libraries*

Each satellite centre has library facilities which have reference materials related to modules. Learners plan time to visit these libraries which are open on weekdays and at weekends. Plans are being made for learners to borrow reserved books on public holidays. Library hours are extended to 9 pm for learners.

- *Transport*

Three vehicles were provided by the MOH to assist in transporting lecturers to satellites from Serowe IHS during residential courses, and learner contacts for guidance and discussion of issues relevant to their learning. Other institutions provide transport for satellite staff.

- *Staff preparation*

Orientation workshops/seminars were held to orient lecturers to the curriculum, modules and planning teaching sessions.

Lecturers attended a workshop for writers and editors of distance learning materials. An orientation workshop for preceptors was held at Serowe IHS. Representatives from the user departments attended an orientation workshop. One lecturer was sent for training to specialise in distance education.

DURING EXAMINATIONS

- Prior to the examinations learners are helped with preparation.
- The examinations venue is organised.
- Learners receive details of examinations timeously.
- Counselling and giving examination tips is done.
- Learners are given a reading week.

POST-EXAMINATION

The respective lecturers are responsible for counselling learners who failed.

POST-QUALIFICATION

On completion of training learners are issued with diploma certificates as registered nurses. They are also oriented to their new roles by their respective user departments.

OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE

- *Human resources*

The Serowe Centre of the MOH has the following personnel:

Principal	1
Head of department	1
Programme coordinator	1
Lecturers	5
Academic register	1
Material production officer	1
Clerks	
Administrators	
Typists	

These personnel have different roles to play in providing support for the learners.

- *Learner counselling*

Learners are provided with counselling services during learner contacts. These services may be academic or social.

- *Self-help groups*

Learners have formed study groups which enable them to assist and support one another in matters of common interest.

- *Record of learners' progress*

Lecturers keep records of learners' progress throughout the course.

On completion of the course, learner grades are computed to come up with a final continuous assessment grade that is carried forward to the final examinations.

CONCLUSION

The learner support services offered in this programme are inadequate, hence the need for some improvement:

- *Libraries*

Some libraries have limited study rooms/reading space, and also an inadequate collection of up-to-date books on health and health-related information.

- *Preceptors*

Some preceptors are demotivated hence do not support learners effectively. Some even withdraw because of lack of incentives.

- *Faculty*

There is a shortage of staff. This hinders proper and adequate guidance and supervision of learners. Teachers are also limited in terms of distance education concepts.

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The University of Botswana

J W Kamau & O S Selepeng-Tau

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 Botswana. 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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LESOTHO

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 acquire 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-government. 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 unemployed, 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 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	Unem- ployed	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	Unem- ployed	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.

JC

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.

Institute of Extra-Mural Studies

A Maiaene & J Malefane

INTRODUCTION

IEMS is one of the departments of the National University of Lesotho. As a result of IEMS' reorganisation of its academic and administrative structures, the Department of Adult Education was born on 1 July 1993. Hitherto, its activities had been an integral part of the entire responsibilities of the former Part-time Studies Division which offered certificate and diploma courses in business studies and adult education respectively.

Under this new dispensation, the Department of Adult Education runs academic programmes leading to the award of the Certificate, Diploma or Degree in Adult Education, the latter using the distance education learning mode. The reason for adding the degree programme to its academic work was born out of the desire by diploma graduates for further higher education. But considering the socio-economic factors facing the clientele of this BEd degree programme who couldn't have resigned their jobs for the luxury of further education on a full-time basis, IEMS in collaboration with the Faculty of Education of NUL initiated the establishment of the BEd Degree in Adult Education, basically to be offered through the distance learning mode. The programme took off in July 1994 with 60 students enrolling.

TEACHING/LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The programme takes four years on a part-time basis through a combination of distance learning mode and direct contact. These modes are offered to students through:

- A residential programme (four weeks) at the beginning of the academic year followed by one weekend of lectures
- A four-week full residential course at the beginning of the second semester in January

- Written examinations at the end of each semester, that is December and May of every year

Tutoring/materials

Each course book is designed in such a way that it provides three assignments, plus a test given by the lecturer, to make a total of four assignments (40%) and the final examination (60%). This means that the face-to-face mode is supported and supplemented by print materials which students use during their own study time and on Saturdays and Sundays when they are on campus for tutorials. In future the department wishes to add electronic media materials to complement the present print materials used in the programme.

Counselling

In broad terms, general counselling and guidance services are provided by each of the lecturers in the part-time programme. But in specific terms, counselling services are provided for part-time students by the co-ordinator of the programme, who is a full-time academic staff member, in addition to the services of a professional counsellor who also happens to be a part-time lecturer in the programme.

Study centres

The IEMS has established three study centres for its part-time students. These are the Maseru, Mhales Hoek and Mahobong centres, where students come one weekend a month for professional assistance in management of their studies and counselling. This weekend is perceived to be strengthening individual students' capacities and capabilities in managing their distance education. In future, the study centres would be equipped with a library, co-ordinator and a secretary. Such services would enhance both the academic and administrative services needed by the students.

Resources

The IEMS, through the Adult Education Division, provides administrative and academic support services to students using the existing academic and administrative staff. Training skills are provided within the courses undertaken by students through their distance academic courses. In future, the Adult Education Division will facilitate visits to other distance education institutions in the region for the exchange of ideas, etc.

Financial

Unfortunately, the government of Lesotho does not provide scholarships for part-time programmes, only full-time. Our students therefore meet their own financial obligations of paying tuition – M1 500 from locals, M5 000 non-locals, plus M50 per course book.

However, the AED division is attempting to secure assistance from donors to support the distance education students. Any assistance for such purposes would be highly appreciated.

The Institute of Labour Studies

A Maiaene & J Malefane

LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

The Institute of Labour Studies offers training programmes mainly to workers through their respective organisations. It must be noted that the institute does this training on request, especially on topics which the trade unions cannot handle by themselves. It must be noted again that the institute tries by all means to train trade union officials, who in turn will train their rank-and-file members. In short, what the institute does is what is normally known as training of trainers.

It has been normal practice to conduct our courses in a tutoring manner, that is face-to-face contact wherein the facilitator leads the discussion on a particular subject which is discussed in a classroom situation by all the participants, followed by groupwork where the facilitator goes from group to group to clarify issues.

Lately, another method has been introduced in which the facilitator is given a training manual, prepared earlier by trade union officials with the help of ILO Regional Office. Each manual addresses a single subject such as economics for trade unionists; planning and administration of trade union training; and many others.

The first task of a facilitator is to synthesise the content of the manual in order to reproduce it in a language that any literate individual can understand. This is where the problem starts. How simple is simple language? At this stage, it becomes incumbent on facilitators to test their work in the process of writing their courses. What we usually do is find ways of having an audience (informal) with the ground workers in the campus. During spontaneous discussion the facilitator may raise an issue simply, say on economics, and check if he/she is understood.

If some curiosity is raised, give an explanation using any item as an example. At this stage one can gauge whether one is heading in the right direction.

After the manual has been synthesised, it is printed and distributed to the identified course participants prior to the start of the course for individual reading. By the time the course starts it is assumed that the participants at least know what they are expected to

discuss. The facilitator who synthesised the course, leads discussions for the duration of the course, which in most cases is residential.

In conducting the courses, we normally use print in the form of flip charts, chalkboards and handouts in different forms.

The organising body, which in this case is mainly the Trade Union Centre, is responsible for all financial implications of the courses. The institute may, if necessary, provide transport for its people to and from the course.

NAMIBIA

Overview of Distance Education in Namibia

H Beukes

INTRODUCTION

The high level of demand for distance education in Namibia has been amply demonstrated over the years. Namibians have a good deal of experience in distance education and there is a general awareness of its potential benefits.

Over the years many Namibian citizens have enrolled at the University of South Africa (Unisa). Vocational and school certificates were offered by commercial South African correspondence colleges.

Within the country, courses have been offered by the Academy's Department of Distance Education.

The Namibian Extension Unit (NEU) in exile (Lusaka) prepared and delivered junior secondary courses to exiled Namibians in Angola and Zambia. This unit has been assisted by the International Extension College of Cambridge and London.

After Independence the Ministry of Education and Culture inherited the Department of National Education. This Ministry had a Division of Distance Education in the Department of Adult and Non-formal Education. The country's profound educational deficits, sparse population and huge land area offer classic conditions for an expanded distance education programme.

In 1990 the International Extension College was asked by NEU to do a feasibility study on distance education in Namibia. The report of this study recommended that the following programmes be offered by distance education mode: teacher education, adult and continuing education, and English language teaching.

These programmes should be supported by a network of community learning centres. All these programmes would follow a multimedia approach, combining printed materials, face-to-face and audio, especially the radio.

In 1992 the Ministry of Education and Culture set up a consultancy team to review the various reports on the expansion of distance education in Namibia. In the report it

was clear that Namibia is faced with a huge demand for expanded educational provision at all levels. Much of this demand is from adults and young adults. These people are scattered throughout the country, and their educational needs cannot be met by conventional face-to-face methods. In 1995 Namcol (Namibian College of Open Learning) was established to cater for the need in school programmes. Namcol enrolled about one thousand learners for its distance education programme. In 1996 the enrolments have gone over four thousand. In 1996 IGCSE courses by distance education were introduced.

The Centre for External Studies (CES) at the University of Namibia

H Beukes

DISTANCE EDUCATION AT UNAM

This article was originally written in 1995 and revised early in 1996. Since then significant changes have taken place in the organisation and services of the Centre for External Studies of the University of Namibia. The article is printed here as revised in 1996, before those changes were implemented. A brief postscript was added in September 1997 by Tony Dodds, Director of CES since January 1996, in discussion with the author, to show what those changes are and how they are beginning to affect the students of CES.

In the mission of the University of Namibia (Unam) it is stated that learning throughout Namibia should be encouraged and promoted. In the light of this the Centre for External Studies (CES) caters for the needs of persons who for a variety of reasons cannot attend residential classes at Unam. CES helps Unam to fulfil its larger mission in terms of taking education to the people wherever they may be located. When the Academy was established in 1980 it was realised that the demand for education in Namibia was increasing very fast, and called for renewed efforts to expand educational efforts. It was also realised that education in Namibia should be delivered in its varied kinds to address the diversified needs of all the people. In 1984 the Distance Teaching section was established. It started with the Education Certificate Primary (51 students). In 1986 the Higher Primary Education Certificate was introduced (191 students). In 1989 the Distance Teaching section was extended and new courses were introduced: (National Diploma in Public Administration — 71 students, National Diploma in Police Science — 58 students, Educational Diploma Primary — 30 students). Courses in Library Science (22 students) and Community Development (52 students) started in 1990.

Student enrolment from 1989

Area of study	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Teacher education	1290	1200	1284	1823	1411	1222	1309
Public admin	71	73	97	206	270	300	358
Police science	58	66	91	106	106	118	165
Community Development		52	29	5	6	2	
Library science		22	10	22	7	2	2
TOTAL	1419	1413	1511	2162	1800	1644	1834

With the establishment of the University of Namibia (1993), the Academy as an institution ceased to operate. After the University of Namibia (Unam) came into operation distance education was reformed and restructured to offer education at tertiary level. In the restructuring process the Department of Distance Education, together with the newly established Department of Continuing Education, became the Centre for External Studies (CES) .

At present the CES is in the process of phasing out its previous education courses in order to make way for new programmes. The staff of CES consists of the following:

- *Academic staff*

Director

2 course organisers (one as head of the Department of Distance Education)

8 full-time lecturers

50 part-time lecturers

- *Administrative staff*

1 assistant registrar (CES)

1 administrative coordinator

4 distance education officers

1 secretary

1 typist

1 general assistant

GENERAL PROBLEMS AND WEAKNESSES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AT UNAM

Unam is phasing out 'old' courses and is in the process of developing new programmes. The university has developed new programmes suitable for face-to-face lecturing which

need to be adapted to the distance education mode. While the various faculties are dealing with their own problems regarding the new programmes, the CES is running out of courses. As in other countries, scepticism about the quality and status of distance education is a problem.

The lack of trained administrative staff causes problems in the daily activities of the CES.

Recruitment of qualified people to assist in the preparation of study material and the tutoring of distance students is one of the main problems facing CES.

PROFILE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS IN CES

A research by Keyter and Beukes in 1993 indicated that the average age of distance education students in CES is 29 years; this means that these students can be categorised as adults. Research by Mowes (CES) indicated that most of these students did not have, or did not take, opportunities earlier in their lives to improve their education. Female students (62%) form the greater part of the distance education student population.

Most of the distance education students (66%) live in the northern parts of Namibia. Nineteen per cent of all these students live in Windhoek, the capital city.

The majority (80%) of these students are in possession of a Grade 12 Certificate, because it is a requirement for entry into most of the courses offered by CES.

While the courses offered by CES are in-service training courses the majority (98%) of these students are employed as teachers, police officers and public servants.

THE NEEDS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS IN CES

The two main reasons for distance students to study education are promotion and a decision by the government that unqualified teachers should qualify themselves or face retrenchment. It is not only students in the teaching profession who need further studies, but also students in other professions, for example police officers.

Students study for a variety of reasons, but the main motive in most of the cases is promotion.

To succeed in their studies distance students need an effective student support system. These students expect such a support system to include the following services:

- the provision of counselling, which is widely and increasingly recognised
- the opportunity for face-to-face tutoring
- quality feedback on the assignments that they send in for marking
- quality tutors to mark students' assignments
- high quality printed study material (the only medium of teaching)

- the opportunity to contact their tutors when students experience difficulties in their courses
- not studying in isolation

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE CES

To meet the needs of distance education students in the CES the following support is provided:

- Face-to-face contact: two times a year (for one week) students attend classes in Windhoek and in the north where face-to-face instruction is offered.
- The university has established nine centres in the country. These centres are being run by centre heads. These centre heads are responsible for the following activities:
 - enrolment of students at the beginning of the year
 - distribution of study materials to students
 - organisation of weekend sessions when students have face-to-face tutoring by tutors recruited by the centre heads
 - organisation of group discussions for distance students
 - maintaining the small library in the centre which is available to distance students of CES
 - telephone contacts between students and their lecturers in Windhoek (arranged by the centre head)
 - dealing with student matters
 - assisting with the organisation of vacation schools, especially the ones in the north
 - sending out newsletters to students in their region
- Audio tapes are provided in language courses.
- Lecturers who are marking students' assignments receive training in this and in writing tutorial letters.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF STUDENT SUPPORT IN CES

Currently there are more weaknesses than strengths in the student support system of CES. One strong point is that almost all the lecturers are devoted to helping the distance student in the best way they can. It needs to be mentioned that the majority of lecturers

are employed on a contract (part-time) basis for only one year. These lecturers are from all walks of life, for example teachers, lawyers and police officers.

The weaknesses of the student support system in CES can be summarised as follows:

- too little face-to-face contact for students (centre heads try to organise more face-to-face sessions over weekends)
- too few permanent staff to offer qualitative support (CES recruits part-time lecturers to assist full-time staff)
- only a few centres to be utilised, which means that students have to travel long distances to visit the centres
- no student counsellors (lecturers are requested to assist in this regard)
- written study material as the only means of instruction (except in languages where students receive audio tapes)
- very little assistance provided by CES in design and editing of distance learning materials
- no utilisation of electronic media (television and radio)
- losses and delays in regard to students' assignments (CES sends assignments to the centres by courier; the centre heads distribute them to the students to avoid assignments getting lost in the post)

MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPROVE SOME PROBLEM AREAS

CES introduced a monitoring system to have quality control over the marking of student assignments. From time to time full-time lecturers receive assignments marked by part-time lecturers; they scan them and give advice to these lecturers in order to improve on the tutoring of the distance students.

An assistant registrar was appointed to administer the smooth running of the administrative section in CES.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Staff members attend workshops and seminars on distance education from time to time. Staff members also present seminars and workshops to members of CES, as well as to people from outside the university. Some staff members are currently enrolled for distance education courses at the Open University (UK). It is the policy of CES to expose members to training as much as possible.

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Until recently the one-writer approach was followed in the writing of study material for the distance students. In 1994 the CES tried to introduce the team approach in the preparation of study materials. The team consists of a writer, moderator, editor and a person to do the layout and design of the material. Study material is printed by the printing section of the university.

The CES has its own facility to copy audio tapes for language courses.

FUTURE PROJECTIONS

As mentioned above, the CES is in the process of phasing out existing education programmes. The Higher Primary Education Certificate and Education Diploma Primary will be offered for the last time in 1998. New courses to be offered by CES in the near future are Bachelor of Education (with initial specialisation in English and Mathematics), and the Degree in Nursing Science

From 1996 radio will play a more important role in student support.

From 1996 the university centres will be under the supervision of CES in order to have better control over the activities of these centres. In the past these centres were under the supervision of the examination office.

POSTSCRIPT (ADDED IN SEPTEMBER 1997)

In 1997 the Polytechnic of Namibia broke its links with CES and set up its own Distance Education Centre, though an agreement has been reached to continue to use the student support services offered by Unam's regional CES centres. Unam's external students have therefore decreased to approximately 800 in 1997. It is predicted that these numbers will increase to over 1 000 in 1998 and to 2 000 by the year 2000. The support services described below are being designed to cater for these increasing student numbers.

Several new programmes have been, or are being, introduced by Unam, through CES, which accounts for the expected increasing student numbers. These include an expansion of the Diploma in Education, African Languages (with a current enrolment of over 80), the Bachelor of Nursing Science (Advanced Practice), which enrolled nearly 200 when introduced in 1997, and the Bachelor of Education, which will be introduced in November 1997 with more than 200 students, with initial subject specialisation in mathematics and English. As new teaching subjects are introduced from 1999 onwards it is expected that these enrolment numbers will increase rapidly. It is also planned that one further bachelor's degree programme will be introduced in 1998/99, probably in management.

One of the major changes being introduced by CES which will, it is hoped, contribute significantly to improved student services and success rates is the creation of a professional instructional design unit which will assist part-time course writers to produce more effective, more student-friendly learning materials which will meet internationally recognised standards for distance and open learning materials. This unit has already taken responsibility for the creation of quality promotion and control structures.

The second major change is the creation of a student support services unit within CES whose professional responsibility is the diversification and intensification of tutorial, counselling and other support services for CES students scattered around Namibia. These include improved design and use of vacation schools, turning them from impersonal and overcrowded lectures into opportunities for students to interact intensively with their tutors to help them to study their materials more effectively. They also include improved postal tutoring through increased personalisation and a decrease in the number of students allocated to each marker tutor. Finally they include increased local tutorial services, including regular weekend tutorials where students can attend these; less regular but more intensive tutorials in more isolated study centres for those who can't; experiments with tele-tutoring via organised telephone conferences; and the use, as they become available, of e-mail, fax-tutoring and other forms of computer-based support services. The purpose of these diversified services is to experiment to find the most appropriate tutorial support forms for Namibia's differing population patterns, and to reduce the challenge of isolation in Namibia's population of external students.

The third form of improved services is the gradual expansion and upgrading of Unam's regional centres, by upgrading existing staff, improving library and information services, and by introducing a cadre of professional academic tutorial and outreach coordinators to stimulate, support and supervise such services.

Finally, CES is working to revise and improve its administrative structures, regulations and services to recognise and cater for the special needs of external students as compared to full-time on-campus students for whom its administrative systems have previously been designed. These will include more flexible enrolment and registration patterns, more open study schedules, and more responsive information and counselling services.

It is CES's hope and intention that the above changes will help more of its students to study effectively, and successfully and will serve to expand Unam's offerings to an ever-increasing body of students.

SOUTH AFRICA

Overview of distance education in the Republic of South Africa

The South African Institute for Distance Education (Saide)

INTRODUCTION

Although South Africa has a long history of distance education involvement, the first in-depth report on this involvement was compiled in 1994 by an international commission organised by Saide. The commission — comprising seven experienced and internationally respected distance educationists — published its findings in a report entitled *Open and distance learning in South Africa: Report of an international commission*.

Since then, the context of distance education in South Africa has changed considerably. The changing South African context has affected established distance education institutions and resulted in some new distance education initiatives.

In 1996, the overview of distance education provision in South Africa, as published in the report, was updated. In this chapter, we described current arrangements for open learning and distance education in South Africa and reflected briefly on some emerging initiatives. In the South African White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, the Ministry of Education has expressed its commitment to distance education:

The white paper has identified distance education as an essential mechanism for achieving its goals. However, it does not envisage distance education as an activity solely for dedicated distance education institutions. Rather, it sees distance education methods being adopted by a very wide range of institutions and organisations. It sees distance education having relevance in at least five areas central to Education for All.

Firstly, the provision of quality basic education for all children will require massive initial and in-service training of teachers. The white paper suggests that distance education should play a major role in this task, but notes that the current provision must be entirely transformed.

Secondly, the white paper envisages a key role for distance education in ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) programmes where appropriate.

Thirdly, the white paper notes that, at the Further Education level, a comprehensive interlocking sector needs to be planned which provides a purposeful education experience to learners at the post-compulsory phase, irrespective of age, place, and time of delivery. The role of well-functioning distance education in developing this level is envisaged as being considerable.

Fourthly, the white paper suggests in its discussion of financial considerations that it should invest in research and development on the appropriateness of distance education strategies for different learning goals. It is hoped that distance education strategies will be cost-effective in meeting the anticipated vast demands from youth, women, workers and self-employed persons, and students at institutions.

Finally, and most importantly, the white paper states that 'The dimensions of South Africa's learning deficit are so vast in relation to the needs of the people, the constitutional guarantee of the right to basic education, and the severe financial constraints on infrastructural development on a large scale, that a completely fresh approach is required to the provision of learning opportunities.'

The Ministry proposes that open learning is such an approach, which it believes has applicability to virtually all learning contexts. It sees open learning as an approach which combines the principles of 'learner centredness, lifelong learning, flexibility of learning provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition for credit of prior learning experience, the provision of learner support, the construction of learning programmes in the expectation that learners can succeed, and the maintenance of rigorous quality assurance over the design of learning materials and support systems.'

The National Education Department has also shown its commitment to improving the quality of distance education by launching a project aimed at developing quality standards for distance education. It is envisaged that these will provide guidelines for providers, learners, employers, and the National Department itself in setting up and evaluating distance education provision. Also included in the report will be a chapter on how these quality standards can be used in the general quality assurance system to be put into place, mainly through the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

In another development, the National Association of Distance Education Organisations in South Africa (Nadeosa) was launched on 2 August 1996 with the aim of improving the quality of distance education in South Africa.

The changing South African context has affected established distance education institutions and resulted in some new distance education initiatives. In the overview which follows we will describe current arrangements for open learning and distance education, taking into account the following issues: organisation, supervision, policy formulation, links with other organisations, and training, as well as describing briefly some emerging initiatives.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (Unisa)

The University of South Africa (Unisa) was established as a federation of colleges in 1916.

Unisa is an autonomous institution under its own statute, governed by its own council, and its academic head is a member of the Committee of University Principals (CUP). The CUP is a statutory committee which considers policy initiatives and other matters of common interest to the universities. In addition, Unisa is linked to the government in policy formulation through the Advisory Council for Universities and Technikons (AUT). This statutory body brings together representatives of the CUP and the Committee for Technikon Principals (CTP) and experts from commerce and industry, statutory institutions, and the public sector, and it advises the Minister of Education on a wide range of matters, including student subsidies, course development, and the allocation of programmes to universities and technikons.

With 124 212 registered learners in 1997, Unisa is currently the largest university in South Africa. Approximately 85,9% of these learners are enrolled in undergraduate degrees.

TECHNIKON SA

Technikon RSA was established as an autonomous tertiary education institution in 1980 under the House of Assembly, prior to which it had functioned as the external studies facility of the Technikon Witwatersrand. It came into existence as a result of the report of a committee appointed by the Minister of National Education to 'investigate the need for, and desirability of a Technikon for distance education'.¹ In 1993, the institution changed its name to Technikon SA (standing for 'Southern Africa') 'to reflect a commitment to playing a key role in the educational upliftment of the entire subcontinent'.²

From a total of 5 039 students in 1986, Technikon SA has grown in size to a total of 85 039 students in 1996. Table 14 below shows the enrolment categories in 1996.

Table 14 Enrolment categories in 1996

African	59,1%
White	30,3%
Coloured	6,8%
Asian	3,8%

Under 25 years	26%
25–29 years	32,2%
30–39 years	35,4%
Above 39 years	6,4%

	White	African	Coloured	Indian	TOTAL
Male	20,5%	40,5%	5,4%	2,9%	69,3%
Female	9,8%	18,6%	1,4%	0,9%	30,7%

Of the total students enrolled in 1996, 48,9% were enrolled in Law, 31,4% in Business, 11,6% in Social Sciences, 4,4% in Science and Technology, 2,4% in Language, and 1,3% in Education.

Technikon SA has 250 examination centres countrywide. In 1996 the Technikon awarded 3 453 diplomas/degrees. Of these, 2 657 were diplomas, 656 were undergraduate certificates, 139 were higher diplomas, and 1 was a master's degree.

TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF SOUTH AFRICA (TECHNISA)³

The Technical College of South Africa (Technisa) is a technical college for distance education, striving to provide for the changing distance education needs regarding technical and vocational education, in line with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Courses are offered in a variety of learning areas such as engineering, business, and social fields of learning. These courses range from Adult Basic Education and Training (Abet) to N6, and include studies for the National Intermediate Certificate (Grade 11) and the National Senior Certificate (Grade 12).

In the academic year 1995/6 8 650 learners were registered at Technisa.

Table 15 Subject enrolment of students

	Secondary level			Tertiary level		
	N1 + NIC	N2	N3 + NSC	N4	N5	N6
Number	6154	2646	4725	3186	1127	785
Percentage	33%	14,2%	25,4%	17,1%	6%	4,2%

In addition to this, Technisa runs bridging programmes, designed to upgrade people wishing to study but lacking the necessary qualifications. The college also runs a range of non-formal courses (for example evening computer literacy classes). Finally, Technisa has satellite centres located within specific industries, which are designed to service those industries through the provision of skills training.

VISTA UNIVERSITY

Vista University was enacted in 1981 under the Department of Education and Training as a result of the report of a commission of inquiry appointed 'to investigate the university needs and requirements of urban Africans in the Republic of South Africa'⁴. It began its first academic year in 1983 and described itself as 'an open, autonomous university [which] was established with the purpose of providing university facilities for people living in the major urban areas of the Republic of South Africa'⁵. Vista is an autonomous institution under its own statute and governed by its own council. Its academic head participates in the CUP in considering policy initiatives and other matters of common interest. Similarly, Vista is also linked to the government through the AUT.

The university operates through seven decentralised contact tuition campuses. Through these campuses the university offers a variety of degrees and diplomas. Between them, these campuses had 19 341 registered students in 1996, all of whom were registered for certificate and diploma programmes. In addition, however, Vista has a Distance Education Campus (Vudec) in Pretoria. This campus focuses solely on the upgrading of underqualified teachers through distance education, offering eight education diplomas and certificates. In 1996 the number of learners registered at Vudec was 12 481.

Vista has 86 examination centres and provides eight libraries for learners.

PRIVATE DISTANCE EDUCATION COLLEGES

Private distance education colleges are registered with the Correspondence College Council. There are 64 colleges registered with the Council, one of which (Intec) has been in existence since 1906. Some of the colleges (for example the Damelin Education Group, Omnitech Institute and the Institute of Personnel Management) are not involved solely in distance education, but offer face-to-face courses in addition to distance learning courses. A defining characteristic of all of these colleges, however, is that they are financed privately. In general, the courses offered by these colleges are purely correspondence courses, consisting of printed materials only. Some of the course materials, however, also include different media (for example audio cassettes, video cassettes, CD-Rom, the Internet, CBT, and multimedia). In addition, some of the colleges

(such as Rapid Results College and Intec) are developing student support centres where learners can gain access to college tutors and lecturers. This is increasingly supplemented by revision and other kinds of face-to-face classroom work in most of the colleges.

Three main types of courses are available through the private distance education colleges:

- *Secondary school courses:* These courses are, in general, aimed at adults who were unable to finish their secondary school careers through the formal education system, but are also available to people of school-going age unable or unwilling to attend a contact secondary school. Courses are available from Grade 6 level through to matric and lead to the acquisition of a senior certificate.
- *Vocational/professional courses:* These courses are designed specifically to enhance the employability of learners. A wide variety of technical and non-technical courses are available, on subjects ranging from motor mechanics and electronics to personnel management and banking. Many colleges have entered into a relationship with professional institutes in South Africa (for example the Institute of Administration and Commerce of Southern Africa and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants), whereby the colleges offer courses in the various professional fields and the institutes function as the examining bodies for these courses. The Institute of Personnel Management is an exception to this norm, because it is a professional institute which, in addition to functioning as an examining body, also provides a distance education course that leads to examinations for its diploma in personnel management.
- *Non-vocational/hobby courses:* Several colleges also offer courses which improve skills in particular subjects. Examples of these include courses on creative writing, languages, dressmaking, interior design, and calligraphy.

The colleges vary greatly in scope and size. There are five main colleges: Damelin Correspondence College; Intec and Rapid Results College (owned by International Colleges Group); Lyceum College and Sukses Correspondence College (owned by Nasionale Kolleges). These colleges offer many courses in all of the above fields. Over the past few years Allenby In-home Study, a division of the Midrand Campus Group, has also become one of the larger and faster growing private educational institutions in South Africa. It offers a wide range of courses with inter-faculty credit transfers. The courses are conducted under the auspices of their Centre for Degree Studies and Centre for Diploma Studies.

The smaller correspondence colleges tend to specialise in particular fields of interest; the College of Public Administration of Southern Africa, for example, offers courses only in the field of public administration, while the School of Modern Photography offers a single course in photography. Some of the smaller colleges do, however, offer courses in

a range of fields: the Home Study Skills College of Southern Africa, for example, offers courses in subjects as diverse as horticulture, hotel and catering studies, and management and administration.

The private colleges are supervised by the Correspondence College Council, which was set up under the Correspondence College Act of 1965. That act governs private tuition, provides codes of conduct for private correspondence colleges, and regulates the Correspondence College Council.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Approximately 130 000 learners (nearly one third of South Africa's teachers) were enrolled in teacher education at a distance in 1995. Moreover, the sector is expanding rapidly, experiencing a 23% increase in new enrolments between 1994 and 1995. Most of this expansion has been concentrated in two providers: the College of Education of South Africa (with a 149% increase in new enrolments) and Success College (which registered 7 403 learners in its first year).

GAUTENG YOUTH COLLEGE

The Gauteng Youth College is a new education centre initiated in 1994 by the Gauteng Province Education Department for young people who want to complete Grade 12. It has four satellite schools in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Alberton, and Vanderbijlpark. Any learner, of any age, in Gauteng who attempted the former Standard 10 (now Grade 12) between 1991 and 1994 and failed is eligible to register with the College. Approximately 1 700 learners were registered in 1996.

RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITIES AND TECHNIKONS

The new trend in South Africa is that several of the universities and technikons traditionally regarded as 'residential' have started to offer, or are planning to offer, tuition through distance or mixed mode education. As a result, there are many initiatives at various institutions which are often very different in character. These include the following:⁶

The Public Health Programme at the University of the Western Cape

The Public Health Programme strives to be a centre of excellence for public health education, service development and research by providing leadership to address priority health needs, particularly for people in disadvantaged communities. A distance learning

programme on primary health care and public health issues is also currently being developed in order to reach a significantly larger pool of health professionals.

The Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (Esati)

Esati was initiated in late 1992 by the Universities of Durban-Westville, Natal, and Zululand. The universities have committed themselves to identifying areas of possible cooperation, and have also committed themselves to distance education as one of the five key strategic areas which they will work on.

University of Natal

The University of Natal has undertaken to phase in a mixed-mode approach from 1997 that will offer flexible entry and exit points for both undergraduate and postgraduate learners through the Open Learning Initiative. Courses offered will not be entirely materials-based, but will include short periods on campus, interaction with lecturers, as well as opportunities for structured tutorial interaction at learning centres. This mode of delivery is seen to be appropriate for students on and off campus.

Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa)

The Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa) offers two postgraduate courses through distance education. The first is a Master of Medicine in Family Medicine and the second is a postgraduate course in Veterinary Science. Both courses are designed for qualified doctors and last three years. The course is made up of printed materials and Medunsa also offers monthly face-to-face tutorials at the university. Attendance at tutorials depends on the situations and workload of the students. Twenty students are enrolled in the Master of Medicine in Family Medicine and 30 in the Veterinary Science course. The courses are administered by permanent Medunsa staff members.

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE)

PU for CHE is involved in various distance education programmes at both the main campus at Potchefstroom and the Vaal campus near Vereeniging.

At the main campus, an undergraduate programme in business administration (BBA) was launched in 1996 in collaboration with the Africa Growth Network (AGN) and Cal State University, Dominguez Hills, USA. Three hundred and five learners (215 male and 90 female) enrolled for this undergraduate course. A postgraduate MBA is to be launched along similar lines in 1997. Another form of distance education programme is the so-called two-year Bachelor of Education programme, which is better known as a 'vocational model'. The programme consists of four three-day sessions presented at the university during school vacations. These limited face-to-face contact sessions are

supplemented by detailed study guides, tuition material and, for some subjects, audio cassettes. Approximately 67 learners enrolled for this programme in 1996.

Currently 1 775 learners are registered for courses at the Vaal campus, with 813 in the Arts Faculty, 587 in Commerce, 196 in Education and 179 in Natural Sciences.

Approximately 70% of learners are part time and 30% are full time. There are 57 academic staff members at the Vaal campus.

Rand Afrikaans University (RAU)

Rand Afrikaans University (RAU)'s College of Education and its engineering faculty are working on the development of a distance education programme. The faculty describes this as 'education with limited contact' rather than distance education, as contact components are necessary which will incorporate practical laboratory sessions. The intention at present is to run these practical components in two-week periods during university vacations. This will allow learners to make use of RAU's residential facilities.

University of Cape Town (UCT)

The University of Cape Town (UCT)'s School of Education has made some tentative moves towards offering courses at a distance. Discussions are under way to mount a Further Diploma in Education or a postgraduate diploma for teacher educators through distance education. A number of new courses are being developed and tested through pilot studies run in conjunction with other institutions. The outcomes of such pilot programmes will be available for general institutional use.

University of the Free State

The University of the Free State is involved in various distance education programmes. These programmes are referred to by the university as 'semi-distance' teaching programmes or 'special residential education'. In this model, learners spend considerably less time attending lectures and are given self-study learning modules to compensate for decreased contact time. There are 122 learners enrolled at the Kimberley campus, and 41 lecturers are involved in the programmes. The following programmes are offered in this way: Bachelor of Education, Higher Education Diploma, Bachelor of Arts, and several occasional courses run by individual departments.

The University of the Free State has also started an Open Learning Distance Education Access Programme (OLDEAP), which commenced in totality in January 1997. This programme was developed to provide learners with an opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies without attending full-time classes at a residential institution. Initial subjects for the programme are mathematics, English, sociology, and a foundation course in lifelong learning.

University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria is involved in distance education provision through three initiatives:

- *Satellite campuses:* The idea behind the satellite campuses is to bring educational opportunities closer to communities by providing a combination of distance education and face-to-face tuition. Thus, learners attend a reduced number of lectures or arrange their studies through a block system of contact and non-contact teaching and learning opportunities. Two campuses are currently in operation, Hammanskraal campus and Witbank campus.
- *Teleteaching Project:* The original aim of the university's interactive teleteaching project was to find a cost-effective way of becoming educationally involved in its surrounding communities. Microwave technology is currently employed to transmit a television signal to viewers. Telephone lines are used to relay voice from viewers back to the presenter in the studio. In the schools project, 22 schools are linked to the system. In addition to daily broadcasts to these schools from 14:00 to 16:00, Mondays to Thursdays, various Summer, Winter, and Spring schools are presented particularly to help prepare matriculants for their final exams. Teachers benefit too through viewing and holding separate discussions of recorded lesson contents with the matriculants. Programme contents focus mainly on mathematics, physics, chemistry, accountancy, biology, and a number of life-skills courses. Depending on the daily programme schedule, approximately 500 to 700 learners view programmes daily and participate in discussions. After-hours transmission of lectures to learners at the university's Witbank campus is now common practice. The university has acquired its own satellite channel to expand its broadcasts to learners nationwide, as from 1997. Video-conferencing facilities for worldwide interactive communication with students will be operational in 1996.
- *National Colleges Project:* The University of Pretoria and National Colleges embarked on a joint agreement in 1993 with a view to offering prospective and other learners a wide range of university-accredited courses through National Colleges' constituent colleges, namely Lyceum, Success, and Mentor Business and Computer School. Certificates and diplomas studies range from career studies to academic diplomas consisting of university-accredited subjects. A variety of management diplomas consisting of career and university-accredited subjects are also offered.

University of the Witwatersrand

The University of the Witwatersrand is involved in initiatives which include forms of distance education:

- In 1994 the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Public Development Management and the Management for Schools Training Programme (MSTP) entered into a partnership to run a Further Diploma in Education Development, Management and Administration. This part-time, two-year programme is designed to meet the challenges facing practising educational leaders in their schools. Approximately 170 learners are currently registered in their first year, and 130 in their second year. Learners work on distance education course materials at their schools, and attend short residential sessions at Wits during the school vacations.
- In 1996 the Faculty of Education embarked on another programme of Further Diplomas in Education in Mathematics, Science, and English Language Teaching designed to address the needs of practising teachers of these subjects. The programme aims to improve learning and teaching in schools by extending teachers' educational, subject, and subject teaching knowledge and skills. The learners work on distance education course materials at their schools, and attend short residential sessions at Wits during the school vacations.
- Since 1993 the Faculty's Department of Adult Education has offered its Higher Diploma for Educators of Adults on a semi-distance education basis, involving part-time study and block-release, the provision of learning materials, off-campus study groups and field supervision. The department now offers its Master's degree in Adult Education on a similar format. Distance education as a special field of study is likely to be included in course options.
- The Centre for Continuing Education is involved in the development of distance education approaches in several of its research, development, and delivery projects, such as Rural Education Facilitators Project, the Kathorus Community Support Educators Project, the Teachers English Language Improvement Programme, and in the flexible delivery of its Adult Educator Programme. The centre has also carried out major action research work in the use of radio forums in non-formal community-based education.
- The Centre for Research and Development in Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education (Radmaste) is a research and development initiative in mathematics, science and technology education located in the University's Science Faculty. It aims to assist the development of teachers and teacher educators. One of its projects is the Maestro Programme. This aims to provide self-study learning materials in physical science from Grades eight to twelve to act as resources for teachers. The materials are contained in approximately 75 units, consisting of slides, audio-cassettes, and workbooks.

CORPORATE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Various companies and corporations are considering the use of distance education techniques as a means of providing in-service training to employees. The following are examples of corporate distance education provision already taking place:⁷

ABSA Bank Training Centre

ABSA started AGN (Africa Growth Network) using satellite and television technology. AGN is now a subsidiary of ABSA. This network is available not only to ABSA but to any company or individual. Although ABSA makes use of the network for ABSA specific programmes, it also enrolls learners on generic programmes.

ABSA had 9 400 learners enrolled in 1996. There were four training departments and eight training centres, 1 500 study centres (including viewing points), and eight examination centres.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) Trust⁸

The South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) Trust was started in 1959. The organisation is engaged in a wide range of educational activities. It has been involved in distance education through three main programmes: the Turret Correspondence College (TCC), the Dusspro Programme and ASECA, A Secondary Curriculum for Adults. (The Dusspro Programme, one of the key distance education programmes developed by Sached, is described later.)

Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC)

Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC) was started in 1976 and is based on an experiment started in the 1960s in Guatemala. Theological education by extension 'is not merely education by correspondence. The extension method places a great emphasis on tutorials'.⁹ Thus, courses consist of course handbooks and prescribed books which form part of a self-directed study programme, and regular tutorials organised in various regions around the country by the TEEC and run by volunteer tutors. The college offers a range of theological courses, ranging from short quarter-year award courses to a full diploma course which takes an average of four to six years to complete and is accredited by the Joint Board for the Diploma in Theology (Southern Africa). The TEEC also offers a range of short courses which are designed for use by parish groups and do not require formal registration or lead to any accreditation. There were 1 255 learners registered at the college in 1996. The work of the college is managed by 18 full-time staff and 38

part-time staff, all of whom are qualified in ministry teaching. They are assisted by volunteer tutors around the country.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TECHNIQUES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

There is very little professional development in the techniques of distance education currently being offered in South Africa. Most of what is offered consists of occasional internal training courses run by distance education institutions for their own staff members. Such training courses are run by Adec, Cesa, the Sached Trust, Technikon SA, Technisa, Unisa, and Vista University. In addition, Unisa offers an optional module entitled 'distance education' in its Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education.¹⁰ In addition, the South African Institute for Distance Education (Saide) runs occasional training workshops for people involved in or interested in becoming involved in distance education.

Notes

- 1 Technikon SA philosophy, organisation and functioning, unpublished paper, p 2.
- 2 Ibid, p 2.
- 3 General statistical information in the report on Technisa is all based on statistical information supplied by Technisa.
- 4 Vista University *Calendar 1994 Part 7: General information and rules for the Further Training Campus*, p 8.
- 5 Vista University *Introductory brochure*.
- 6 The fragmented nature of this field at present makes it very difficult to establish its exact scope and size. A range of present and planned examples are included; there is, however, a possibility that other initiatives exist which are not covered by this report.
- 7 As with residential universities above, it is very difficult to ascertain the scope and size of this field of distance education provision. Thus, included here are two examples of corporate distance education provision; it must be realised, however, that there may well be several other examples of such provision.
- 8 This information is from 1993, since more recent information was unavailable at the time of going to press.
- 9 *Handbook for TEE students*, p 1.
- 10 Unisa has since introduced a Postgraduate Diploma in Distance Education and a certificate course for Distance Education Practitioners.

The South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) Trust*

E P Nonyongo

THE FOUNDING OF SACHED

The South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) was founded in 1959 as an innovative response to the crisis in university education brought about by the National Party government's move to enforce apartheid at university level and thus complete their apartheid design for education.

The relevant legislation, The Extension of University Education Act was introduced in Parliament in 1958 and became law in 1959. It closed entry to 'white' universities, thus stopping all black learners from going to these institutions, and provided for the establishment of ethnic university colleges in areas traditionally known as Bantustans.

The effect of this and related legislation was twofold. First, it separated black (that is, African, coloured and Indian) students from white learners; it separated black and white education at university level and further isolated black learners from one another in separate ethnic and/or language groups. In addition, the siting of university colleges for African learners in rural areas isolated them from urban influences. Second, this legislation ensured that black learners received only ideologically acceptable education so that they would be fitted for their role in apartheid society which was said to be as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (Verwoerd 1953); it also ensured rigid control of admission/re-admission of all students and their activities at these institutions.

A group of academics, learners, church people and others committed themselves to struggle against the effects of these laws in a most practical way, through attempting to provide access to tertiary education for young black people which would be outside the apartheid framework but within the law to ensure survival. These people constituted themselves into a committee which was later known as Sached.

* This case study was compiled from various Sached Trust Reports and from the author's personal recollection. The reports that the author used in the case study are listed in the reference section.

The reports of the first six years of Sached give some of the beliefs and hopes of the early Sached founder members concerning the nature of the first Sached programme. These beliefs and hopes show, as the quotations below demonstrate, that from its inception Sached has been striving for good quality education and high academic standards:

Black students studying through London University would gain a degree of high academic standard which would be internationally recognised. In this way their education would be free of the ideology of 'ethnic education' and also free of the stigma of inferiority (Sached: 1970–73)

THE FIRST DECADE OF SACHED: 1960–1970

The nature of the programme

In 1959 the newly established Sached set itself the task of providing tuition and other support services for learners in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. For several years learners in the Port Elizabeth/Grahamstown areas were also able to participate in a limited scale in the programme. In May 1960 the first Sached learners were enrolled. This was the start of Sached's first programme which was then called the Bursary Project.

The Bursary Project accepted for registration only those learners who had passed the South African Matriculation examination, either the National Senior Certificate or the Joint Matriculation Board examinations. These learners then embarked on the required Ordinary and Advanced Level General Certificate of Education (GCE) studies. On completion of these, students enrolled for the London degree courses. Most Sached students enrolled for the BA degree or the BSc (Economics) degree, while a few enrolled for law and one or two for divinity.

London University offered an external examination but no distance tuition, for example in the form of correspondence materials. On registration learners received the syllabus of their courses. Full-time students could write examinations after a minimum of three years; part-time students after a minimum of five years. The BA degree consisted of three courses in each of three subject areas, nine courses in all, which were to be written in one sitting at the end of the period of study. The BSc (Economics) degree had thirteen courses: five in part 1 and eight in part 2. Courses in parts 1 and 2 had to be written and passed at the same sitting. Learners who did not pass *all* the courses written had to re-write the whole examination.

In 1960 Sached entered an agreement with Britzius Tutorial College (BTC), a Johannesburg-based private college that was already providing correspondence tuition in London University GCE O and A levels and degree courses, whereby the college would provide support services for Sached bursars. In addition the staff of BTC worked

closely with the Sached committee and reported monthly on the progress of all their learners.

The scope and nature of programme development

The contribution to black education provided by Sached through the Bursary Project was on a very small scale. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the total black enrolment in all South African universities, including the University of South Africa (Unisa), in 1960 was just over 4 400: 1 901 African students; 1 602 'Asian' learners and 878 'Coloured' learners. Between 1960 and 1963, over 80 learners enrolled as Sached bursars. This was 2% of the 1960 total black university enrolment.

In addition, in its early years, Sached administered bursaries for some medical school learners (who were allowed to complete courses at 'white' universities), some learners at the University of Natal and also a few learners at the University of Roma, in Lesotho. Thus its impact was not inconsiderable.

The nature of Sached's learner support services

Sached offered its learners a bursary. This was not merely payment of fees and books, but a comprehensive support system to assist and sustain learners in their progress towards a university degree.

This comprehensive support system was carefully constructed. A study of Sached's records in the early years of operation shows that the following components can be identified. They are listed in the table below according to the order in which the learner would encounter them in their learning cycle:

Table 16 Summary of the learner support system

counselling with regard to choice of degree and degree course option and the choice and number of O and A level courses required by the various degrees. Counselling would continue throughout the learner's studies and would include learner's study problems and progress;

study materials for courses, which included written assignments to be submitted for marking (provided by BTC);

a personal study timetable, drawn up by BTC for each student, detailing the study material to be covered, dates and times of weekly tutorials, internal tests and examinations and dates of external examinations;

regular tutorials on a one-to-one basis. These tutorials were intended to guide learners in new and unfamiliar areas of study, to develop their skills in a particular academic discipline, to encourage learners confidence to express their views and generally to sustain motivation (BTC provided tutors in Johannesburg);

a reading room cum rudimentary library where learners could *study* and also meet to *discuss* studies and other issues;

contact, maintained regularly by centre staff with each student to monitor academic progress, discuss any problems affecting study and sustain motivation;

an opportunity for Sached learners to become involved in *national student groups* and arrange their own local gatherings, etc.

financial support for needy learners. This support covered the cost of accommodation and a small subsistence allowance.

The combination of all these elements was deemed to create a learning environment conducive to learners' academic progress, the development of 'independence of mind' and learners' involvement in their society. Interaction at all levels was considered very important, in contrast with the isolation of ethnic education of the apartheid system. Sached learners' cultural and/or language differences were not given any undue importance; Sached learners were encouraged and assisted to participate in student organisations like the National Union of South African Students (Nusas). The small number of learners and the personal and academic interest which full-time staff and tutors took in learners created a supportive environment for mutual exchange. Learners themselves were encouraged to have discussions and assist one another.

However, in accordance with government legislation, it was not possible for learners to attend tutorials as a group. According to the law then, this would constitute a 'school', for which registration was required. Sached was unlikely to receive endorsement from the government. Sached tutorials were therefore conducted on a one-to-one basis between learner and tutor.

Sached was aware that the programme demanded that learners should be disciplined and self-motivated. Timetables, tutorials, assignments, internal exams and regular consultation with centre staff were all designed to assist learners to keep up with their work. However, considerable determination and stamina were required of learners to persevere through the long years of study leading to a degree: six to eight years at least for part-time learners. The emphasis on self-motivation and personal responsibility contrasted sharply with the authoritarian character of ethnic university education.

Student numbers

The Sached Bursary Project started with nine learners when it was launched in May 1960. By the beginning of 1961 the number had risen to 16 and by the beginning of 1962 to 45. In 1963 enrolments were just under 50, in 1964 about 55 and in 1965 about 65. By May 1970 81 learners were enrolled, 13 of whom were at different stages of

study in different degrees (BA, BSc, and LLB) and were spread over the three Sached centres of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

Problems with the London University system

Given the political climate of these years, the very establishment and continued existence of the Sached Bursary Project was, in many respects, very impressive indeed. The programme's support system formed the basis of a very effective alternative to apartheid education and became the cornerstone of the learner support systems of all subsequent Sached programmes. Many of the learners who completed their A-levels through Sached went on to complete their degrees either in South Africa or abroad. This first phase laid the foundations for Sached's work in distance education.

However, the programme faced serious problems. The basic difficulty was that the London programme was very lengthy and very difficult for part-time learners and/or those who were second-language speakers. Learners could and did spend seven or eight years at these studies and eventually dropped out, with no university course to their credit. The standards required by London University made it virtually impossible to complete for learners who had studied under the Bantu Education system. As a result the programme always had the vast majority of its learners in the beginning stages of their studies. Between 1960 and 1971 only four learners obtained degrees. The London system was unfamiliar to learners and most tutors and other staff who were assisting these learners. It is not surprising that in the next decade Sached began to consider the introduction of alternatives to the original programme.

THE SECOND DECADE, 1971 – 1980

Change from London to the Unisa system

A number of events and considerations led to Sached's decision in the early 1970s first to experiment with support for Unisa learners and then to phase out the former London programme in favour of support for learners registered with Unisa. The four most important factors were the following:

- The possibility of London University withdrawing external exams. Were this to be confirmed, Sached would have to find another correspondence university. This possibility did, in fact, become a reality in 1977 when London withdrew external degree examinations for learners outside the UK.
- Changed perception of Unisa. In the 1960s Unisa was perceived as one of the organs of apartheid education and for political and academic reasons Sached had looked beyond South Africa for a correspondence university for its learners. But in the 1970s the perception of Unisa in the black community was changing, partly because,

compared with the abysmally low standards of ethnic university colleges, Unisa seemed to offer an acceptable and attainable education, and partly because Unisa offered the same courses to black and white learners. Many learners began to see Unisa as an alternative to 'tribal colleges'. In addition, Unisa courses could be accumulated annually, thus making it easier and more motivating than the London arrangement.

- Pressure from ex-Sached learners who had changed to Unisa for Sached to provide them with a support system similar to what they had experienced as London GCE or degree learners. The extent of this pressure was a strong indicator of the large pool of potential bursars among Unisa learners.
- Sached's belief that the study surround or learning environment was the most important determinant in the part-time learner's career. It was felt that such an environment could compensate for any narrowness in Unisa courses and provide a challenge and develop critical awareness on the part of the Sached student. This view was articulated by one of the Sached directors as follows:

... the experience that the tutorial assistance and the supporting study surround in the centres was the overriding dominant influence in the study of these Learners. It mattered little which university was followed as this study surround, which fosters independent thinking and self-activity, would overcome any bias, tendency to inflexibility or narrow interpretation.

For these reasons then, Sached officially opened its Bursary Project to include Unisa degree learners on a trial basis. In 1971 a test group of 14 learners were enrolled. In 1972 the number increased and by 1973 there were 60 learners in the programme, 49 studying with Unisa and 11 with London. The Unisa option was firmly established. The progress and growth of the Bursary Project until its closure in 1994 are described in the case study on the Distance University Learners Support Programme which appears later in this book.

Diversification of Sached programmes

In its second decade, Sached's development was shaped by a number of shifts in the political context. The growing inability of the state to control and manage its political agenda was accompanied by the regrouping of forces among the oppressed and exploited. Three key developments can be identified here: the emergence of the black consciousness movement, the Soweto students' uprising of 1976, and the resurgence of worker organisations, which by 1979 had grown into a major force.

Sached responded by launching a number of initiatives aimed at offsetting the educational inadequacies of apartheid education, challenging its racist and Bantu education ideology and developing alternatives. Turret Correspondence College, the

Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Project, the Study Centres Project and the Newspaper Education Project were some of the projects set up during this period. The organisation's growth in outreach was accompanied by increases in staff, service departments and budgets.

It was also during this period that Sached was transformed from a committee to an educational trust. The 1970–73 Annual Report describes this shift as follows:

Sached has grown beyond its original function. In creating the Sached Trust, Sached is establishing a stable, but flexible, nucleus equipped to meet the growing and changing needs of a growing and changing South Africa ...

The programmes of the Sached Trust are concerned with upgrading and enriching the quality of life of those disadvantaged by the South African situation.

Our perspective is not that of assisting the under-privileged. We wish, rather, to provide resources which allow for independent self-help, but nevertheless do not at the same time lose educational efficiency (*Sached Trust Annual Report 1970–73: Annexure 14*).

This seems to be the first policy statement of the Trust. It highlights the move from focusing only on the learning environment providing resources for independent self-help. This move was made possible by the development of, inter alia, Turret Correspondence College (TCC), which introduced the development of interactive, self-instructional materials for second-language distance education learners. The TCC resources and experience made it possible for Sached to extend its outreach in other programmes that are mentioned later.

Turret Correspondence College (TCC)

Britzius Tutorial College sold the academic tuition section of its college (which provided tuition for Junior Certificate, National Senior Certificate, Joint Matriculation Board and London O- and A-Levels and degree courses) to Sached in 1969. Through this Sached launched Turret Correspondence College (TCC) to cater for the needs of second-language English speakers at secondary level by correspondence. TCC came into effective operation from August 1970.

Implicit in the creation of TCC, Sached directors believed, were two related directions which should shape the nature of distance education in South Africa. One was the focus on the development and supervision of the individual student as described above in the components of the Bursary Project. The other was the concept, also inherited from Sached's earlier programme, of distance education as 'correspondence plus' (that is the belief that correspondence study alone would not meet learners' needs and that a surround of support systems would be crucial for learner success and quality education. To implement these ideas Sached searched for models but had no success:

We began to search both in Africa and overseas for models. These were not available. Much had been done about 'systems' and 'structures' of correspondence education or distance learning, but with few exceptions, writers in the field had not dealt with the technicalities of course-writing and design. None had dealt with such within the context of a developing or disadvantaged society (*Sached Annual Report 1970–73:4*).

Through the Turret Correspondence College Programme, Sached then developed its own model of distance education which encompasses the development of both course materials and the learning environment that would meet the needs of disadvantaged communities.

TCC materials

The provision of appropriate learning materials for second-language speakers of English in the form of self-instructional workbooks was seen as the first priority of TCC. TCC designed and developed the workbook model of learning materials to meet the needs of their learners. These workbooks were designed to contain space which encouraged interactive learning through note-taking, guidance on effective learning methods, short and frequent activities to encourage active learning, and in-text feedback on these activities. All these design features were meant to encourage dialogue which correspondence education generally lacked. TCC's work in materials development in South Africa was pioneering in a number of ways. They were learner-centred, developed by course-teams, and also sought to draw on the learners' experience. They 'always aimed to develop the students ability to think critically' (Ngeengebule et al, 1992:9.4)

TCC learning environment

At first the 'correspondence plus' aspect of TCC was provided through individual tuition and the supervision of learners as in the Bursary Project above. Later a different model of support system was introduced. This was the Tutorial Centres model which attempted to 'marry' the positive aspects of correspondence education (in TCC's case good quality study materials in the form of workbooks) and the face-to-face components pioneered by the night schools. By the end of 1972 Sached was able to implement the idea of tutorial centres through a separate programme called the Study Centres Project.

Study Centres Project

The Study Centres Project's main aim was to provide TCC registered learners with some forms of contact, motivation and academic assistance at decentralised centres. Six study centres were set up, five at Soweto schools and one at a farm school in Bryanston to the north of Johannesburg. Local tutors were appointed and trained in 'elbow teaching'

which would avoid chalk and talk methods and would encourage group discussion, problem solving and learning skills development.

Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Programme (BTUP)

Sached's work in TCC and the study centres led to the development of a teacher upgrading project in the then 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana, where there was a dire shortage of qualified teachers and the majority of teachers had not completed the Junior Certificate level of education. The intention of the pilot programme was to upgrade, over five years, an intake of 1 000 learners, of whom about half were expected to succeed. This programme, which was called the Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Project, began in 1973 with a tutor training workshop in July and the first intake of 500 learners was planned to begin in January 1975.

After over a year's negotiation between Sached, the Bophuthatswana Cabinet and the Chairman's Fund of the Anglo American Corporation, the Bophuthatswana Teachers' Upgrading Programme (BTUP) began in 1975 as a collaborative venture among the three parties, each with a specific role. The Chairman's Fund financed the programme, Sached provided the educational input and services and the Bophuthatswana government ran the programme as an 'aided school' in its Education Department. The aims of the programme were:

- to help some 1 000 unqualified teachers to gain certificates from the Bantu Education Department and
- to develop a relatively cheap, efficient in-service training scheme which could not only achieve the first aim above, but also would provide a model for educational systems in other developing areas.

The programme ran for three (1975 to 1977) of its planned five years because it was suddenly terminated by the Bophuthatswana government. This decision was unilateral and contrary to the wishes and expectations of the other two collaborative partners. No reasons were given for the closure of the project. The only indication of friction had emerged when Sached staff were, after a six-month delay, refused entry into Bophuthatswana. The only disapproving sentiments were those made by the South African Minister of Police which Sached noted thus:

Some speculation by members of the public has resulted from statements by the Minister of Police when he discussed the banning of the *World* newspaper on television. The Minister in justifying the ban quoted a wrong source but implied that the newspaper was supporting 'pro communist views.' This implication was 'demonstrated' by the quoting of a statement which never appeared in the newspaper but came, in fact, from a tape/slide sequence shown in the Teacher Upgrading programme as an introduction to the section of 'Russia' in the history

syllabus ... The Russian Revolution is a part of the syllabus of the Bantu Education Department (*Sached Trust 1977 Annual Report: Annexure 2:3*).

So, whether from pressure from the South African government, or fear of working with 'pro-communists', or other unknown reasons, the Bophuthatswana government terminated the programme and refused to discuss the matter, as this extract from their letter of 20 October 1978 demonstrates:

... the decision of the Cabinet is final, the project will be closed as from 1 January 1978. The file on this matter is closed and no further interviews will be arranged or any correspondence receive attention (*Sached Trust 1977 Annual Report: Annexure 2:5*).

The newspaper project

The idea of education through the newspapers started from attempts to make Sached resources more widely available. Sached's other programmes, though relatively successful, were only reaching a limited number of people. Newspapers as mass media showed great potential for mass education.

In 1974 Sached started a small newspaper project called Study Mail, which for four months published three articles in the *Rand Daily Mail*. These materials were targeted at adults and were of two types:

- supplementary material for Junior and Senior Certificate learners
- materials of a general nature covering, inter alia, communication and various discussion topics on African leaders and writers meant for adults.

In 1975 it was decided that a paper with a higher black readership would be more useful and in February 1975 the Weekend World School was started with the *Weekend World* newspaper as the carrier. Materials in this paper covered the same format as earlier ones but included a wider range of articles and subjects of a practical nature in the adult section.

By 1976 plans were afoot to expand the Weekend World School to a 12-page supplement. The June 1976 student uprisings and the subsequent disruption of schooling led to the establishment of Operation Catch Up, which was a daily educational supplement to the daily edition of *World* newspaper and provided assistance to those learners who wished to continue their studies. The supplement appeared for five weeks in July and August. The success of Operation Catch Up resulted in a proposal to expand the supplement from 12 to 24 pages and the new project would be called *People's College*.

As a supplement to *Weekend World*, *People's College* was first published in 1977 as a 24-page supplement but was later changed to 20 larger pages. It had three main sections:

- an informal section which covered material of broad interest to adults generally, for example post literacy, worker education, health education;
- a non-formal section, which covered courses that were examined by alternative education systems (that is not Bantu Education) and were aimed at developing more practical skills. Some of these courses were Pitman's Typing, Accountancy and Practical English and also Money Management and A Social History of Black South Africa. The last two courses were written by professors at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- a formal section, which covered materials on the core syllabus of the matriculation examinations and was directed at scholars.

People's College also developed a study environment called the receiving structure, which encouraged the setting up of learning groups and involved intensive regional organisation. The receiving structure of *People's College* was felt to be unsatisfactory mainly because of the difficulty of maintaining staff in this section and the model was reconceptualised.

The evaluation of *People's College* which was commissioned by Misereor, the project's funders, indicated a generally favourable acceptance of the programme:

It can be stated that the political reactions to *PC* are predominantly positive. The World as carrier medium is partly accepted with pleasure, partly with hesitation, but only rejected by a small minority.

PC is basically accepted by most important educational-political trends of black South Africa. However, it is invited by the Black Consciousness Movement to hold regular consultations. *PC* is rejected by the South African Council of Churches for reasons which can hardly be separated from a heavy suspicion of selfish interest; but *PC* is clearly positively appreciated by leading white liberal personalities held in highest esteem by the black community (Hanf et al: 1977:59).

The broader political repressive context in South Africa intensified and impacted on the survival of the *People's College* Support Programme. After running for 31 weeks *People's College's* carrier newspaper, the *Weekend World* was banned in October 1977 along with a number of other organisations and individuals. This ended the publication of *People's College*, but not of Sached's involvement in newspaper education.

The experience gained by Sached helped in the introduction of two new programmes. One of these programmes, initiated in 1978, was the *Reader*, a post-literacy level, six-page tabloid which was produced every 32 days and distributed by subscription only. In 1979 a distribution network was set up for the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal area, which helped to increase the readership of the *Reader*.

The second programme was the *Learning Post*, a supplement which appeared in the *Sunday Post* from 20 August 1978. *Learning Post* began as a four-page supplement, but was expanded to eight pages after the eighth issue. For the first year, 1978, Sached and the *Sunday Post* agreed to keep a low profile and not attempt to form learning groups for *Learning Post*. In 1979, however, study groups were introduced, especially for the certificated courses published in *Learning Post*.

Learning Post had two main sections: the certificated courses which covered materials for the Pitmans exams, and a themes section comprising articles on such topics as nutrition, African literature, electricity and social history. Within a full year, 37 issues of *Learning Post* were published between March and November. By 1980 *Learning Post* had also come to an end when the carrier newspaper, the *Sunday Post*, was closed down.

THE THIRD DECADE: 1981 – 1990

The third decade of Sached saw continued growth of the organisation. This was partly related to the growing strength of mass-based organisations and the labour movement in South Africa, which generated specific educational and training needs. In its attempts to respond to the pressing needs of these emerging organisations, Sached expanded its regional base from four centres (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Grahamstown) to a national outreach that included centres in Port Elizabeth, East London, and Pietermaritzburg and three branches in Pretoria, Newcastle and Bloemfontein. Centres operated more than one project, while project branches ran only one project for example, in a branch like Pretoria there was only the Bursary Project in operation.

In this period, Sached consolidated the work of the previous decade, which can be summarised as follows:

- continuation of its work in tertiary education through the Bursary Project (Dusspro). Sached also began a new focus by initiating an alternative tertiary level face-to-face residential education programme called Khanya College;
- continuation of secondary education work through TCC which was expanded during this period to try to reach as many learners as possible;
- continuation of its work in teacher upgrading through programmes like the Teacher Upgrading Programme and the Educational Resources Programme;
- development of a new focus in trade union and community-based organisations through the work of a new programme called the Labour and Community Programme;
- continuation of its work in educational publishing through programmes like Upbeat, Publishing and Distribution.

THE CURRENT DECADE: 1991 – 1996

New direction

In 1989, the year of Sached's thirtieth anniversary, the organisation reviewed its contribution to South Africa and established a Strategy Sub-Committee to investigate and make recommendations about Sached's future direction and priorities.

The unbanning of liberation movements in February 1990 made the reassessment of Sached's role in the country even more urgent. Sached finally decided on a strategic direction that focused on adult education and specifically on working with the 'constituencies of the broad working class', organisations of these constituencies, and 'through educators as agents of transformation in those organisation' (Sached 1990).

This statement of direction had major implications for programmes like Dusspro and TCC which worked with individual students and not with organisations or with educators specifically. All affected Sached programmes had either to change direction, close down or be autonomous programmes. Some programmes chose the last two options.

Dusspro and TCC decided to tackle the problem facing their existence in two ways.

First, they combined their different strengths in distance education to develop a programme that would take their work forward in line with Sached's new direction. This was the development of a training programme for distance education practitioners, called the Distance Education Training Unit (DETU), which was built on the Dusspro strength of training tutors and TCC's materials development capacity. Today this is one of the few surviving programmes of Sached. In 1996 DETU entered into a collaborative arrangement with Unisa's Institute for Continuing Education to make their training course more widely available through Unisa's distance education system.

Second, Dusspro and its learners and tutors decided to actively engage Unisa on taking responsibility for supporting its learners. The success of this effort is well documented in the Dusspro and Unisa case studies. This meant that in 1994 Dusspro came to an end as one of Sached's programmes. As far as TCC Matric learners were concerned, the period 1990–1993 was used to honour the programme's commitment to them and to close the programme at the end of 1993.

The remaining Sached distance education programmes are now only DETU and the programme called a Secondary Education Curriculum for Adults. This programme was developed towards the end of Sached's third decade with the aim of initiating a curriculum specifically developed to suit the needs of adults and not children as the TCC curriculum and all other South African curricula had done. Sached is currently attempting to have this new programme accepted as part of the mainstream further education sector of South Africa.

CONCLUSION

Sached's work in distance education during the period 1959–1996 has been very innovative. Sached was the first programme in South Africa (and probably in most parts of the world) not only to recognise the limitations of correspondence education but also to implement a comprehensive learner support system to address these limitations. With good course materials and additional support services for learners the quality and effectiveness of distance education can be greatly enhanced. Programmes like Dusspro, TCC — and recently a Secondary Education Curriculum for adults, ASECA — have concretely demonstrated how quality distance education, albeit on a small scale, can be implemented. The work of these programmes has influenced new education systems and policy and also the direction of major providers like Unisa.

As an organisation Sached has shown great resilience. It has survived the difficult and repressive years of apartheid, and has also managed to expand its programmes and outreach through constant critical assessment of its work and structures and the context in which it operated. This has enabled it to identify and take advantage of strategic niches that enhanced its work in distance education and other areas of education.

Sached is now facing new challenges from the new democratic context of South Africa. Like other non-governmental organisations in South Africa, Sached is faced with financial problems as new relationships between overseas donors, the new government and NGOs are being forged. One can only hope that Sached would be able to survive this new crisis in its life as it has done many times over the past three decades. The new partnerships that Sached is forging with major providers like Unisa and provincial educational ministries, for example, are beginning to place Sached's distance education experience in programme development, management, materials design and development and learner support in the new South African paradigm.

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The Distance University Student Support Project (Dusspro) – a Sached project

E P Nonyongo

INTRODUCTION

From its initiation in 1960 the Distance University Students Support Project (Dusspro) was known as the Bursary Project because it provided bursaries for study through London University. Each bursary covered financial assistance and provision of various other services for distance education students. The name of the programme was changed to Dusspro in 1988 because the name Bursary Project had become a misnomer, since financial assistance for registration at university and other costs was no longer provided. The assistance given was now mainly in the form of academic support services for distance study.

Dusspro was the first, and for a decade (1960–1970) Sached's only programme. Its earlier period of existence is well covered in the case study on Sached in the previous chapter of this book. The Sached case study also gives enough details on Dusspro's institutional context. This case study will therefore concentrate on the last 24 years of Dusspro's period of operation, which was the period of the phasing in and consolidation of support services for Unisa learners.

The year 1994 was the final one of Dusspro's operation as a Sached programme. This was not necessarily the end of Dusspro's contribution to distance education in South Africa. Dusspro's and Sached's aim of developing educational models that could contribute to the educational framework in post-apartheid South Africa was partly realised in 1995, when Unisa took over the two major Dusspro learning centres in Gauteng, the Johannesburg and Pretoria Learning Centres.

NATURE OF DUSSPRO'S LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Dusspro learner support services were not integral to the parent distance education institution through which learners were registered, assessed and accredited for degrees, that is Unisa. They were an add-on or adjunct that had no clear influence or official

relationship with Unisa. Dusspro has thus been described as a parallel subsystem to the Unisa system of distance education (Nonyongo 1993). This description also holds true for the support services provided by Dusspro during the London University phase of its operation, the period 1960–1970.

In comparison with other distance education programmes Dusspro occupied a unique position in that it was solely a learner support programme. It was thus not a fully fledged distance education programme. It did not encompass other subsystems such as course development and delivery, and assessment and accreditation. In the prevailing political and educational context of South Africa between the years 1960 and 1990 this position had advantages and disadvantages.

One advantage worth noting was Dusspro's freedom to experiment. Dusspro had an opportunity to experiment with the provision of comprehensive learner support services without the threat of interference from the provider, Unisa, whose focus at that time was mainly on correspondence education. It had the freedom to select its audience and hence decided to focus on the disadvantaged learners who most needed such support. Without such support many would have dropped out and would not have been exposed to the alternative learning opportunity that Dusspro provided.

Another advantage was that Dusspro provided opportunities for emergent black and white academics to develop and consolidate their tutoring and other academic skills in an environment that was supportive of democratic and participatory practice. It nurtured non-racial cooperation in spite of the oppressive and racialistic context which subjected such programmes to constant harassment and potential closure by the apartheid state of South Africa.

A major limitation was that as a parallel support programme without official linkages to the providing institution Dusspro had no impact on the educational systems of Unisa. Lessons from its experimentation could not inform Unisa's tuition model. Neither could Unisa's good practices inform Dusspro.

The second disadvantage was that Dusspro could not benefit from the resources of the state and Unisa and had to make do with the limited financial resources from external (mainly overseas) funders.

Despite its nature as a parallel support programme and these limitations, Dusspro provided the most essential services for its audience, as the details provided below will attest.

DUSSPRO'S VIEW OF THE ROLE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

As part of Sached, Dusspro's view on learner support has always been that successful learning through the distance mode requires integrated and multifaceted learner support services that include face-to-face support. In the absence of such a service from the providing institutions, in this instance London University and Unisa, Sached felt a

parallel system of support would help to reduce the problems of learners, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. In line with this organisational view, Dusspro's learner support services have revolved around attempts to provide, specifically for disadvantaged learners, a learning climate that would encourage interaction among peers and between learners, educators and other interested parties; and that would encourage independent and critical learning while ensuring active participation in the programme's operations and structures and within the broader community. In practical terms the elements of the Dusspro learning environment have been summarised as a framework of various support services, some of which are described in table 17 below.

Table 17 Dusspro Support Service Framework

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps to build/restore <i>confidence</i> in adults who have not studied for some time through putting them in touch with one another, and creating a sense of belonging • meets <i>students' needs</i> for support, both psychological and financial (tutorial bursaries, book loans, book bursaries) and for space to study at times convenient to them, after work and on weekends • provides regular <i>tutorials</i> in enough first and second level courses to support progress towards a degree and the necessary administrative support for the tutorial programme • provides <i>tutors</i> who on the whole combine competence and understanding of the problem of adult distance learners but who offer guidance rather than 'spoon-feeding' and are firm regarding the work that students must do for themselves and who work towards developing habits of independent study • provides study skills, particularly for new students and additional language help where necessary • encourages the formation of <i>study groups</i> that provide a strong source of motivation and spacing and provides a venue for them to meet; • provides <i>staff</i> who understand the importance of the learning culture and take responsibility for building this culture among students and tutors through study and contact and negotiation; also staff who are available when students are at the centre and who are supportive and challenging of students; who provide role models for students • provides <i>tutors</i> to develop and run study skills and contribute to the debates around Unisa courses and other educational or related issues • <i>challenges students who complete</i> their courses to return as tutors so that others can benefit from their example and their assistance • brings all these provisions together through the concept of <i>contracted learning</i> in which students and tutors and staff negotiate the learning/teaching contract (from 1986 Dusspro Evaluation Report)

For Dusspro the above support framework included the most essential elements of learner support which ranged from the physical environmental support in the form of

learning facilities (for example study and discussion groups space and library facilities), critical learning and other skills development programmes, academic support for various courses (for example subject-specific tutorials) administrative back-up to the human resources necessary for the effective functioning of the support system. The details and processes of the support framework were continuously reviewed and readjusted to accommodate the changing and emerging needs of the Dusspro participants and the broader socio-political context of the country.

WHO ARE THE DUSSPRO LEARNERS?

Learner numbers

The pressure for Dusspro to change from supporting London University learners to Unisa learners, as described in the Sached case study, led to a small pilot programme of Unisa learners enrolment in 1971 with 14 learners (Frenkel et al 1983:26). The success of this pilot programme resulted in the expansion of the Unisa learner support programme. By 1973 there 60 learners were registered in Dusspro, 49 studying with Unisa and 11 with London University. The table below shows the growth of learners' enrolment in the programme between 1974 and 1983.

Table 18 Enrolment figures 1974–1983

Centre	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Johannesburg	46	116	79	195	258	351	444	736	562	594
Cape Town	34	31	70	90	97	115	159	141	158	141
Durban	50	36	59	95	70	78	158	172	251	127
Pretoria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	346	306	320
Grahamstown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	24	18
Port Elizabeth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	53
Total	130	183	208	360	425	544	761	1417	1354	1253

(Adapted from Frenkel 1983:38)

The above figures show growth not only in learner enrolment over this ten-year period but also in the increase in learning centres from three to six. Dusspro extended its outreach to include two centres in the Eastern Cape and one in Pretoria.

The largest enrolment figures from 1975 to the end of this period were those of the Johannesburg centre. From its inception in 1981 the Pretoria centre's enrolment surpassed Durban and Cape Town, while the Grahamstown centre remained the smallest

of the six centres. The Dusspro learners demographics were closely related to the concentration of the general Unisa learner population.

Dusspro could carry the costs of such great expansion relatively easily because the costs of running the Unisa learner support system were cheaper than the London system, since most Unisa learners were in full-time employment and were thus able to carry most of the tuition costs (Nonyongo 1993:9). The Dusspro support thus began to concentrate on academic support and physical facilities for reading and study. At first some deserving learners were also given bursaries to buy prescribed books but later this service was discontinued.

Problems emanating from limited resources were the major reason for restricting enrolments in Johannesburg to not more than 600 between 1982 and 1983.

With increased funding and tutorial registration fees from students the decade 1984–1994 saw another growth in the Dusspro enrolment figures, as the table below demonstrates.

Table 19 Enrolment figures 1984–1994

Centre	Annual enrolments										
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Johannesburg	552	582	745	951	1100	1000	833	1088	1088	793	800
Pretoria	248	422	422	565	544	486	355	659	728	393	563
Cape Town	160	160	174	192	191	185	152	132	-	-	-
Durban	121	150	218	228	170	140	115	71	-	-	-
Port Elizabeth	68	56	70	81	80	90	33	127	198	-	-
Grahamstown	22	31	52	60	85	61	65	52	43	67	-
Total	1171	1401	1681	2077	2170	1962	1553	2129	2057	1253	1363

The centre enrolment patterns described in tables 18 and 19 show that the Johannesburg and Pretoria centres maintained their dominance as the largest centres while Grahamstown remained the smallest centre.

The enrolment figure of less than 1 500 was maintained till 1985. Between 1987 and 1988 enrolment increased by 23,5% and 29% respectively over the 1986 figures. It then decreased to 1 962 and 1 552 in 1988 and 1989 respectively before reverting to 2 000 learners in the next two years. The final two years of the programme, that is 1993 and 1994, saw a decrease in enrolments to 1 253 and 1 363 learners respectively. Reasons for the fluctuation in enrolments have been identified as rigid enrolment closing dates, difficulty of predicting the number of learners who would withdraw from the programme after orientation sessions and the strict enrolment requirements like the need

to produce a particular document as proof of registration with Unisa prior to enrolment with Dusspro (Nonyongo 1993:15).

The decrease in enrolment figures in the last three years was also due to the closure of the Cape Town, Durban and Grahamstown centres as Dusspro began to phase out as a Sached programme, as a result of financial constraints, Sached's new direction and the commitment to locating the programme within Unisa.

Learners' profile

A detailed analysis of the Dusspro learners was conducted in 1987 as part of the programme's evaluation process. This learner profile, Dusspro staff have maintained, is generally representative, percentage wise, of the ten-year period 1984–1994. The only noted exception is full-time students who represented 10% of the total national Dusspro population in 1984 but had increased to 13,5% by 1994. Details of the learners profiles are as outlined below.

1987 LEARNER PROFILE

Notes regarding tables

- 1 Figures are given for each of the six centres. The first set of figures in each column is the number of students followed by a percentage in brackets. Percentages under columns for the centres reflect a percentage of the centre enrolment.
- 2 In the tables below, an asterisk (*) denotes a percentage under 1%. Percentages are rounded up or down to arrive at a whole number. Thus some totals are under or over 100%. In some cases the sub-totals differ from the total because of this rounding up.

Notes regarding terminology

- 1 In this profile, the term black will be used in the inclusive sense, i.e. meaning African, Coloured and Indian.
- 2 The following abbreviations are used:

JHB	Johannesburg
PTA	Pretoria
DBN	Durban
CT	Cape Town
PE	Port Elizabeth
G'TOWN	Grahamstown

(a) Total number of learners

	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	G'TOWN	National total
Total no of students	951 (46%)	565 (27%)	228 (11%)	192 (9%)	81 (4%)	60 (3%)	2 077 (100%)

(b) Gender

	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	G'TOWN	National total
Women	621 (65%)	422 (74%)	159 (70%)	112 (89%)	72 (89%)	33 (55%)	1419 (68%)
Men	330 (35%)	143 (25%)	69 (30%)	80 (42%)	9 (11%)	27 (45%)	658 (32%)

Dusspro has always had a high percentage of women (as indicated, 68% in 1987). The reasons for this are varied and have not been studied, but it is clear that while all distance learners study under constraints of time and social commitments, women are confronted with the demands of their job, their studies and their family and home. As a group within the black community, which suffers from additional discrimination on the grounds of gender, it is important that Dusspro is making a contribution to the further education of women in this way.

In 1981 a survey of over 1 000 Johannesburg and Pretoria bursary learners indicated that 62% of all respondents were women and 38% were men. However, for learners other than nurses the percentage was 50% men and 50% women. In 1981 25% of learners were nurses. However, in 1987 the percentage of Johannesburg students who were nurses declined to 13% while in Pretoria in 1987 nurses constituted 20% of the total. Thus while the proportion of nurses declined, the percentage of women has continued to increase.

(c) Age

	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	C'TOWN	National total
16-24	128 (13%)	104 (18%)	N/l	26 (14%)	6 (14%)	6 (10%)	270 (15%)
25-34	515 (54%)	265 (47%)	N/l	100 (57%)	32 (40%)	22 (37%)	943 (51%)
35-44	212 (22%)	150 (25%)	N/l	39 (20%)	28 (35%)	19 (32%)	448 (24%)
45+	96 (10%)	46 (8%)	N/l	18 (9%)	15 (19%)	5 (8%)	180 (10%)
N/l	0	0		0	0	8 (13%)	8 *
	951	565		192	81	60	1849 (100%)

(d) Status

(i) New or returning

	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	G'TOWN	National total
New Students	665 (70%)	406 (72%)	N/l	137 (72%)	50 (62%)	23 (38%)	1 281 (69%)
Returning Students	286 (30%)	159 (28%)	N/l	55 (28%)	31 (38%)	37 (62%)	568 (31%)

The percentages of returning learners vary between 28% and 38% in four of the five centres where information was available. The reasons for the high overall proportion of learners who do not return each year have not been researched with the learners themselves. However, there are two main considerations which the project coordinator emphasises: first, once most Dusspro learners have spent one year in the programme, they feel that they are better able to carry on studying (often together with friends) and no longer need the weekly tutorial support; second, the programme's policy was to provide tutorials mainly for first-year level courses. Tutorials were provided only in a few strategic second- and third-year courses and thus these students are fewer in number.

(ii) Full or part-time

	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	G'TOWN	National total
New Students	95 (10%)	107 (19%)	16 (8%)	44 (23%)	1 (1%)	3 (6%)	266 (13%)
Returning Students	856 (90%)	458 (81%)	181 (92%)	148 (77%)	80 (99%)	51 (94%)	1774 (87%)
N/I							

(e) Degrees enrolled for

Faculties	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	G'TOWN	National total
Arts	646 (68%)	465 (83%)	150 (66%)	131 (68%)	67 (83%)	53 (88%)	1512 (73%)
Commerce	231 (24%)	57 (10%)	68 (30%)	38 (20%)	7 (9%)	4 (7%)	405 (19%)
Law	26 (3%)	31 (5%)	2 *	15 (8%)	4 (5%)	1 (2%)	79 (4%)
Science	15 (2%)	8 (1%)	2 *	8 (4%)	0	0	33 (2%)
Diplomas	20 (2%)	2 *	6 (3%)	0	1 (1%)	2 (3%)	31 (1%)
Non-Degree Purposes (NDP)	13 (2%)	2 *	0	0	2 (2%)	0	17 *

The majority of learners (73%) were registered for Arts degrees. Science degree students comprised only 2% of the learner population. Science enrolments are generally very low in the country. Dusspro's policy was to encourage enrolment in science through active recruitment and by providing tutorials in science courses even where registrations were

below the required minimum of fifteen. In most cases there were between three and ten students in the various science tutorials.

(f) Occupation

	JHB	PTA	DBN	CT	PE	G'TOWN	National total
Teaching	429 (45%)	381 (50%)	N/l	61 (32%)	3 (4%)	48 (80%)	822 (44%)
Nursing	124 (13%)	112 (20%)	N/l	14 (7%)	62 (62%)	5 (8%)	317 (17%)
Other Quasi Prof eg Social, Legal Services	36 (4%)	0.00	N/l	15 (8%)	6 (7%)	0.00	57 (3%)
Admin. Clerical	215 (23%)	50 (9%)	N/l	44 (23%)	2 (4%)	4 (7%)	315 (17%)
Full-Time Student/ Unemployed	95 (10%)	107 (19%)	N/l	44 (23%)	2 (2%)	3 (5%)	251 (14%)
Other	52 (5%)	15 (3%)	0.00	14 (7%)	6 (7%)	0.00	87 (5%)

(g) Geographical distribution

(i) Johannesburg

Johannesburg suburbs	77
Soweto: radius up to 35 km	513
East Rand: radius up to 50 km	273
West Rand: radius up to 35 km	44
Vaal Triangle: radius up to 75 km	41
Areas outside PWV: radius of 100 km	3

(ii) Pretoria

Black residential areas: radius 13–15 km	216
African areas outside Pretoria: radius 38–46 km	227
Rural areas: radius of 70 km	62
Rural distant: over 110 km	11

(iii) Other areas

including Klerksdorp 200 km	15
Witbank 135 km and Bronkhorstpruit 51 km	

(iv) Port Elizabeth

Black residential areas: radius of 5–15 km	75
Outside PE: radius of 35–50 km	6

(v) *Grahamstown*

African residential area: radius of 5 km	54
Port Alfred: radius of 50+ km	4
Kommadagga 1	
Fort Beaufort: radius of 100 km	1

(vi) *Cape Town*

Most students live within 15–20 km radius	83
but serious problems with public transport make this distance difficult for many of them.	
Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha: radius 25–30 km	9

LEARNER NEEDS

The original need for Dusspro emanated from the implications of a politically motivated event within the South African education situation; the exclusion of black students from white universities (see Sached case study). After the programme was established learner needs were identified through a variety of methods which included formal evaluations and informal feedback from learners on various aspects of the programme. The needs identified centred on Dusspro learners' mode of education, that is distance education, which tends to isolate them from the providing institution, educators and other learners. This threefold isolation has been aggravated, in this instance, by the legacies of apartheid education and the limited support from the providing institution, Unisa. Dusspro's two decades' experience of supporting Unisa learners showed that the most essential needs of these learners cover the following:

- *Physical facilities and learning material*

A centre with facilities, space, electricity, etc, for learners to read quietly, meet in peer groups and have access to prescribed alternative books and other learning materials, whether print, audio or video, and where necessary, availability of equipment like computers. The centre should be accessible to students at times that suit them as working adults.

- *Academic and learning skills development*

Contact with and access to competent tutors who can assist learners with difficult sections of their studies and who can help them to develop the critical learning skills necessary for autonomy in learning.

- *Administrative support and human resources*

Institutional administrative and managerial support through staff who are both supportive of and challenging to learners and provide role models for learners and encourage open communication between the institution and participants.

- *Learner participation*

Provision for participation in decision-making processes and structures of the institution as part of developing learner autonomy and responsibility in the programme (summarised from Sached 1986 and cited in Nonyongo 1993:6).

The above needs were identified through annual pre-registration orientation and counselling sessions held with learners, feedback from tutors, ongoing counselling sessions, annual programme review meetings with tutors and learners and from various formal evaluations carried out at different stages of Dusspro's development.

DUSSPRO'S RESPONSE TO LEARNER NEEDS

Various Dusspro evaluation documents have summarised Dusspro's response to the above learner needs in terms of three broad categories: the institutional, tutorial/learning and learners responsibility aspects (Sached Trust 1986, Frenkel et al 1983, Nonyongo 1993, Sached Trust 1989 and 1990). In summary these three categories show how Dusspro addressed learners needs in terms of its instructional system as articulated in Dusspro's aims, objectives and plan; and operationalised in the daily application and interpretation of the plan within the programme's learning milieu.

DUSSPRO'S AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PLANS

Dusspro's main aims are stated thus:

- to develop critical independent learners
- to break the isolation generally experienced by correspondence students
- to enable correspondence university students to pass examinations (Dusspro Tutors' Brochure undated:1)

In addition to the above aims the 1989 Critical Review document of the programme lists the following as sub-aims:

- to encourage greater student and tutor participation in decision making
- to maintain contact with and train our audience by means of seminars and workshops
- to develop suitable materials for use by our audience and all interested parties (Dusspro National Critical Review Report 1989:7)

This Review Report goes on to state that the aims:

- reflect Dusspro's understanding of the response it should make to the 'educational crisis', since in essence they encourage numerical growth of successful tertiary students, involvement of the project's constituency in decision making, development of materials that provide an alternative focus and which supplement tutorials and study skills workshops. (Dusspro National Critical Review Report 1989:7)

and through all these activities provide:

- critical input into the content and forms of Unisa courses, primarily through participatory discussion methods and critical worksheets. In this way it is hoped that the oppressive aspects of Unisa's programme ... can be countered (Dusspro National Critical Review Report 1989:7)

In line with the above aims, Dusspro set its objectives for 1990, for example as follows:

- to continue to provide a supportive learning environment in six centres, reaching 2 160 students (Johannesburg 1 000, Pretoria 600, Durban 200, Cape Town 200, Grahamstown 80, Port Elizabeth 80). This will cover tutorials, academic counselling, library facilities and premises for tutorials, peer group learning and informal meetings;
- to continue to consolidate the development of study skills courses through workshops for students and tutors and the production of audio visual and written materials. This consolidation will pay attention to the development of critical and independent learning students;
- to continue to strengthen the project's national structure and national cohesiveness;
- to continue to consolidate the project's administrative services in those centres where the student audit has recently been introduced and where there have been recent staff changes; and
- to intensify the discussions on the challenges presented by the current and changing political economy of education and what future policy directions and long term aims the project should adopt. These discussions have begun at the staff level of the project but would be extended to all the participants of the project and the broader South African community (Sached 1990:111).

The above aims and objectives show that Dusspro was seeking to address the learners problems of isolation by providing a supportive learning environment that would address the needs identified above. This is described in the aims and objectives cited above as an environment that encourages at all three levels of operation (namely the institutional, tutoring/learning and learners responsibility levels) greater learner and

tutor participation in decision making, and that maintains contact with and trains the Dusspro audience through various face-to-face support services.

DUSSPRO'S LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEM

Dusspro's learner support system consisted of a variety of elements. These elements are:

- learning centres
- administrative support
- orientation
- counselling and student advice
- additional learning materials
- face-to-face tutorials
- peer-group learning sessions
- study, language and academic skills development
- structured participation in the programme's governance by learners and tutors

The details of each of these elements are described below. These descriptions include some analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each gleaned from various programme documents, including some of the major evaluation reports of the programme.

- *Learning centres*

The Dusspro learning centres were strategically located at six major South African cities: Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. These centres provided the essential infrastructure and physical learning environment that, in most instances, was not available in the immediate neighbourhood of the disadvantaged communities served by this programme. While the Dusspro centres were located far from the learners' homes and in the central business areas of the cities concerned, these centres have been well utilised by learners and tutors because they provided essential space for quiet reading, peer group learning and tutorials and other forms of face-to-face support. For most Dusspro students a quiet electrified place for study was a luxury which was unavailable at their homes, particularly during the earlier period of Dusspro.

The learning centres also had small library facilities stocked with reference books recommended by Unisa and other learning materials meant to provide alternative and critical perspectives.

These centres were kept open and available at times that suited learners. The official hours of operation were 08:00 to 22:00 on weekdays, 07:30 to 21:00 on Saturdays and 08:30 to 18:00 on Sundays. These hours suited both full-time and part-time students of the programme. During peak learner usage periods, for example

prior to and during final examination times, sections of the centres were kept open until midnight.

The major weaknesses of the Dusspro learning centres revolved around limited resources, inter-Sached programmes relationships and learners' responsibility problems (Nonyongo 1993). With limited financial resources, Dusspro and all other Sached programmes were unable to rent adequate space for their increasing learner population and to furnish the premises accordingly. Sached programmes therefore pooled their resources together to acquire and furnish facilities which were then used on a rota basis according to programmes' schedules of activities. The often unpredictable and unexpected changes to these schedules in order to meet emerging learner needs strained relations among programmes and led to great inconvenience. The intensive utilisation of facilities, particularly over weekends, created cleanliness problems which were caused by learners not leaving the rooms as clean as they found them and it was difficult to apportion blame for untidiness in facilities that were used by learners from different programmes; each programme always pleaded innocence of littering. These are problems that the envisaged multi-purpose learning centres now being considered in South Africa will have to grapple with.

Extensive utilisation of facilities by learners for quiet reading, discussion groups and tutorials indicated that the programme was addressing a crucial need.

- *Administrative support*

Administrative support is a central infrastructural backbone of learner support. Within this generic term fall services like record keeping, reception and general enquiries, mechanisms for sharing feedback and other information on the programme with all participants and potential clients, programme management, monitoring, coordination and planning of all sectors of the programme. For systematic, qualitative and effective delivery of programme, administrative support at all levels are as important as the educational and academic aspects of the programme (Kuhn 1993:31).

These services were provided within Dusspro by a small core group of staff at all six learning centres. Kuhn's 1993 evaluation report of Dusspro noted that the staff/student ratios in this programme 'seem unrealistically low' in some centres while in others they were 'too high'. The reasons for this are that despite the number of learners in such a programme the basic administrative infrastructure required to run a programme of this nature cannot be provided by one person only. This is due mainly to the very late and awkward hours of work required by the programme, the need to provide a relatively wide variety of services and the location of Dusspro within a large organisation like Sached which made other demands on programme staff which often took staff away from programme-specific tasks to broader organisational duties. This meant that even the smallest centre needed to have support to ensure that staff were available for learners and tutors at all times of the programme's activities. Grahamstown with 31 students in 1985, required one full-time and one quarter-time

staff members, while Johannesburg with 582 students had four. One of these Johannesburg staff members also had national programme coordination responsibilities.

- *Orientation*

The 1983 evaluation of Dusspro highlighted that most participants of the programme were not aware of the aims and conditions of the programme and of their roles in it. To address this weakness in 1984 Dusspro introduced compulsory orientation sessions for all new participants to the programme and review sessions for returning participants. These sessions gave tutors and learners an opportunity to learn about the programme and conditions for participation prior to registering in the programme. For most learners orientation was the first contact point with programme staff and other learners and tutors. After orientation learners could then decide whether to join the programme or not.

For new learners, the content of orientation sessions covered the following

- the history, aims and objectives of Sached and Dusspro;
- study problems
- students' and Dusspro's expectations
- Dusspro's educational methodology
- introduction to study skills
- conditions for participation in programme and general centre-specific registration procedures, important dates and timetables.

For learners returning to Dusspro for another year, the orientation sessions covered a review of the activities of the previous year and learners' expectations for the current year.

Dusspro participants have found the orientation sessions very helpful in giving them a better understanding of the programme and of Sached and the facilities and services offered, in clarifying their roles ('it is very clear what is expected of a Sached learner' as some of the learners noted), in clarifying the difference between study groups, tutorials and skills development programmes, and in providing the first contact with other learners, tutors and programme staff. Returning learners, particularly, have voiced their appreciation of orientation sessions as fora for voicing grievances, new expectations and making suggestion on how the programme should be changed to meet their needs adequately (Dusspro: 1989).

In their review of orientation sessions Dusspro staff have noted that these sessions have achieved their objectives in terms of implementation, learners' attendance and participation in small group and plenary discussions. As a selection procedure, programme staff felt that orientation was not effective. Although learners who join the programme promise to abide by the conditions and educational methods outlined

during orientation, most still do not attend tutorials regularly; neither are their expectations of tutors' roles in tutorials changed by the orientation sessions. In most instances the programme's expectation of autonomous learning for first-year level learners was over-ambitious. Such learners needed much more didactic support and development of effective learning methods from tutors during the first year of distance learning (Dusspro: 1989).

- *Counselling and student advice*

Dusspro provided learner advice and other forms of academic counselling to learners during the various stages of their study cycle. This support was provided by full-time staff and part-time tutors. Support covered basic information on the programme and the types of services offered, registration procedures, times of operation, staff members and their responsibilities, etc. There was also support that was more academic in nature, for example study language and other learning skills development sessions with full-time staff and tutors. Staff were available for assisting learners with their study problems from 08:30 to 18:00 on weekdays and from 08:00 to 16:30 on Saturdays.

Where learners required more specialised assistance, staff referred them to relevant bodies, for example psychological counselling and more subject-specific assistance.

- *Additional learning materials*

In addition to the materials provided by Unisa, Dusspro made other materials available to give learners alternative perspectives. Full-time staff and tutors identified relevant materials on various topics and subjects and made these available to learners during tutorials or as reference materials in libraries. The Dusspro and Sached libraries became well known for such materials, especially in the area of distance education. In order to make such materials concretely relevant to the subjects that the Dusspro learners were enrolled for, in 1989 the programme attempted to introduce what were called critical worksheets, which attempted to provide an alternative focus to the Unisa syllabi in terms of content and methodology. However, because of the changing direction of the programme and the need to put resources into other sections of the programme, this activity was discontinued before the first batch of worksheets were completed.

- *Face-to-face tutorials*

Face-to-face tutorials continued to be one of the central components of Dusspro. For some of the participants they were the only important part. Tutorials were organised on a weekly basis for each of the courses that Dusspro selected yearly for such support. Most of the tutorials were of one-hour duration. Only a few subjects like English, Maths and Accounting were allocated two hours per week, because of the

difficulties that learners experienced, which were due mainly to learners' limited background knowledge of the subjects concerned.

The bulk of the tutorials were in first-year courses, because Dusspro believed that at this level support was needed most by distance learners and that given support with the initial problems of studying their various subjects, learners would be better able to tackle the demands of second- and third-year studies with minimal support.

Tutorials were meant to provide opportunities for learners to interact with one another and with tutors, to supplement the course materials that learners received from Unisa with alternative materials and different perspectives, to help to solve problems that learners encountered in their studies, and to help develop and integrate learning and study skills that would encourage learning autonomy.

In line with these aims, Dusspro tutors were seen as central to the success of tutorials. Their role has been described as covering four main aspects of support, namely assistance with drawing up yearly tutorial plans; attending to learners' study problems; assisting learners to become independent and critical learners' and assisting learners to develop effective study skills (Nonyongo 1993:43).

Between 1989 and 1990 Dusspro organised over 190 weekly tutorial sessions at its six learning centres. The centre breakdown of the number of tutorials was as follows:

Number of tutorials per week

Centre	1989	1990
Johannesburg	76	75
Pretoria	64	56
Durban	18	17
Cape Town	30	25
Port Elizabeth	17	9
Grahamstown	16	15
Total	221	197

(Dusspro 1989:15)

The bigger Dusspro centres had more tutorial groups because of the size of their learner population and the wide variety of courses the learners were enrolled for. Some of the smaller centres had difficulty in finding suitable tutors. In some instances tutorials could not be provided because the number of learners registered was below the required minimum of fifteen per group. Where learners' weekly attendance was poor, tutorials were cancelled during the course of the year.

Tutorials and tutor assistance were identified by learners as the most important elements of the programme in an evaluation that was carried out by Kuhn in 1993. Their importance for learners were also shown by the fact that every respondent commented on tutorials and tutors. These comments covered aspects of satisfaction and of dissatisfaction with tutorials and tutors.

Another study of Dusspro (Nonyongo 1993) showed that there were differing interpretations of the role and nature of tutorials and the role that tutors should play in such face-to-face support sessions. These differences were said to emanate partly from the inexperience of tutors, misunderstanding of what the development of critical and independent learning meant, and the difficulties of developing good relations and rapport with learners in large tutorial groups. These difficulties in turn led to poor tutorial attendance or even drop-out from the programme. In the many instances where tutors had been able to transcend these difficulties, learners found their participation in the programme an enriching experience which motivated them to continue and complete their studies and in some cases return to the programme as tutors in order to 'plough back what they had gained from the programme'. In such instances learners' non-attendance of some tutorials was not by choice but because of circumstances beyond their control.

Because in the Dusspro experience the negative aspects of the tutorials have been fewer than the positive and enriching experience, more learners have continued to support the programme by continuing to enrol and by telling their friends and relatives about its benefits. Throughout Dusspro's over 30 years' experience, the programme has never undertaken an active media advertising campaign. Learners and tutors have come to know about its service mainly through word-of-mouth advertisement by its participants.

- *Peer-group learning sessions*

Peer-group learning or discussion sessions were organised by the learners themselves. The programme's learning centres accommodated peer-group learning sessions by allocating rooms specially for this activity. Where the demand for peer-group learning was great, centres introduced a booking system to ensure that each group could have access to these facilities. Besides providing the facilities and introducing learners to groupwork methodology as part of the study skills sessions, Dusspro played no active role in what, when and how the groups were organised and maintained.

Dusspro learners on the whole used peer-group learning sessions extensively and Kuhn (1993) noted that these sessions were used:

In cases where learners feel that they are dissatisfied with their tutor. Most respondents indicated that learners generally do not take this issue up with staff, they decide rather to stop attending the tutorial. This need not mean that they drop out of the programme as a whole, especially if they are attending an

adequate tutorial in another course. In the absence of tutorials they consider worth attending, they might set up a study group, if they do not already have one, or use an existing study group in a more extensive way (Kuhn: 1993:16–17).

The study groups described by Dusspro learners varied. Some were small with 7–10 participants, while others were much larger with between 25 and 30 participants. With time these large groups were divided into smaller units. Some groups met regularly, at least once a week, while others met late in the year for pre-exam revision and preparation or particular purposes like discussing an assignment. Some groups, especially those that met regularly, were related to tutorials and often developed into tightly knit groups that continued to operate for many years and for different subjects yearly.

But whatever the nature of these peer groups, those learners who have participated in them emphasise the groups' contribution to their confidence, skills development, ability to take control of their learning and general success in their studies. This positive outlook to peer group learning caused Dusspro to provide — whatever limited facilities were present in the learning centres — for such activities even at times that have proved most awkward for staff. The benefits of the combination of tutorials and peer group learning sessions has been described as a 'synergy' that is 'essential to learners' success in completing their studies' (Kuhn 1993:19).

- *Study, language and academic skills development*

In a context where learners have been educationally disadvantaged in various ways, Dusspro recognised that providing learning centres, tutorials, library facilities and space for reading and discussions were on their own not sufficient for developing critical and autonomous learning. Skills developments also had a crucial role to play in tackling some of the learners' learning and skills-related problems. Dusspro provided a number of skills development programmes particularly in the areas of study and language skills.

At first the more general skills development programmes were optional and organised separately from tutorials by people who had some expertise in this area. These programmes were aimed at first-year learners. In the beginning they were provided free of charge, but later a nominal commitment fee was charged to encourage regular attendance and learner ownership of this aspect of Dusspro's support services. There was a marked improvement in attendance once this nominal charge was introduced.

The skills development programme was presented through half-day, full-day and/or residential weekend sessions.

Initially the focus of the programme was on developing reading and writing skills from the perspective of developing greater understanding and a more critical outlook. Later on the programme was expanded to include Buzan's organic study techniques and the use of creative patterns, which in turn were modified to include approaches that assisted learners, through group discussions and sharing of learning experiences, to 'pay attention to and value their own experiences' and build on their current useful methods of study (Gibbs). Experience in the programme had shown that very few learners, if any, radically changed their way of learning after such short skills development programmes. What became crucial then was to assist them to use their current learning styles effectively. The Dusspro skills development programmes have thus been more eclectic in nature, being adapted to encompass the lessons emerging from the context and experience.

The initial strategy of organising separate skills development programmes was changed when experience showed that such separate programmes were not effective and that learners preferred to see linkages between the skills development and their particular subject content. Integration of skills with subject content meant that part-tutors needed to be trained in the Dusspro skills development methodology. The programme at this stage changed its focus from providing skill workshops directly to learners, with one or two staff at each centre who had the requisite skills, to concentrating on developing tutors to take on the role of skills development within the context of teaching these skills in general skill development workshops as described above and consolidating skills at the regular tutorial sessions.

Besides the general skills development programme, Dusspro also provided language skills development programmes, which were organised according to specific requests of learners or at the request of tutors who had identified specific problems in their tutorial group members. The language skills programme was organised either on weekday evenings or during the weekends and it ran concurrently with tutorials and covered mainly grammar and essay writing skills. Learners or tutors made arrangements with the presenters to take their groups at specified time and decided on areas to be covered in each of the sessions. The programme was thus more problem-based and attempted to accommodate the needs of learners as they cropped up during the various stages of their studies. It was possible to do this because the learners who attended these programmes were fewer in number and it was possible to develop a month or two-month programme that addressed the identified needs. Also different groups could be on different programmes according to the different schedules prepared for a particular period.

Implementation of the skills programme was uneven in the six Dusspro centres. This was partly due to staff interests, experience and skills and partly to learner interests, introduction to and understanding of the value of the programme. But until the closure of Dusspro the skills development programme was one of the popular and well-documented elements of support. Each year between 350 and 700 learners went

through some aspects of the programme, while over 60 tutors were trained either to be group leaders during general skills workshops or as presenters who had a general knowledge of the total skills development programme but were responsible for presenting certain aspects during general workshops. Table 20 gives a breakdown by centre of actual numbers of learners and tutors who went through the skills development programme in 1989.

Table 20 Participants of the Study Skills Development Programme

Centre	Learner numbers	Tutor numbers	
		Group leaders	Presenters
Johannesburg	342	15	10
Pretoria	183	17	2
Durban	35	6	2
Cape Town	89	8	1
Grahamstown	1	–	1
Port Elizabeth	33	2	1
Total	683	48	17

(Adapted from Dusspro 1989:12)

The numbers of learners and tutors in these skills development programmes are closely related to the size of Dusspro centres and the number of new and returning learners in each centre. Small centres had fewer participants, while large centres had more learners and a large number of tutors who were able to act as presenters in the training programmes.

In its assessment of the study skills programme Dusspro noted that time continued to be a major problem because it was never possible to cover the content to the satisfaction of the presenters during the workshops. While recognising that integration of skills in tutorials was the best option for consolidation of skills development, Dusspro staff mentioned that another major problem was tutor turnover and that: 'It is mainly in courses whose tutors have a Dusspro tutoring experience of about three years where study skills consolidation in tutorials is consciously attempted' (Dusspro 1989:13).

- *Structured participation in programme governance by learners and tutors*

Dusspro was committed to involving all its participants in the running and governance of the programme. This commitment was actualised through structures like general staff, learners' and tutors' meetings and through tutor representative councils (TRCs) and student representative councils (SRCs).

The general meetings were organised as forums for sharing ideas, planning, reviewing and monitoring the programme's activities. These general meetings were held at least thrice per year at each centre. The first meeting of the year served as an orientation to the year's activities, the mid-year one reviewed progress, while the year-end one finalised plans for the next year.

The TRCs and SRCs represented their respective audience on matters relating to their participation in the programme. These two structures helped to involve tutors and learners in the project's decision-making structures. They were particularly active in the Pretoria and Johannesburg centres. When, for example, Sached decided to phase out Dusspro as one of its programmes, it was the TRC and SRC in these two centres that demonstrated against such a decision and were active in assisting the staff to find alternative ways of ensuring that Dusspro, which learners described as 'an oasis in the desert' of no support for distance learners (Nonyongo 1993) should continue. In 1993 the TRC and SRC, together with Dusspro staff, decided to increase learners' fees to ensure that the programme continued while at the same time working with other mass-based organisations to engage Unisa in taking responsibility for supporting its learners.

Through this active collaboration of Dusspro, the TRC and SRC the Joint Project that started between Unisa and Dusspro (Pretoria) was ratified by the Sached decision makers. This (1994) Joint Project was a pilot project whereby Unisa assessed the potential for the delivery of the Dusspro type of support to a wider Unisa audience. These combined efforts and the supportive new management at Unisa ensured Dusspro's support services did not die, but were incorporated in the Unisa system in 1995. You will read more about this in the Unisa case study later in this book.

Dusspro's impact

The 1993 evaluation of Dusspro (Kuhn 1993) defined impact as the 'effect of the project on the participant and the participants' consequent impact on their milieu' and identified two categories of impact: the educational and personal/social levels.

In terms of educational impact, the evaluation noted that Dusspro has been able to assist those learners who made extensive use of its service to achieve their educational goal, that is pass their degrees and not drop out. It notes particularly that:

Most respondents were adamant that they would not have achieved their degree without Sached's (ie Dusspro's) assistance. Even those few who did not have to repeat even one course insist that they could not have achieved this without Dusspro's support.

The type of support that the respondents found most useful was identified as a combination of attending tutorials and being part of a peer study group. These study groups served a range of purposes, for example motivation, feedback, catch-up,

collective learning and responsibility and democratic style of participation and accountability.

As far as personal and social impact are concerned, ongoing friendship with peers and the non-racial, non-sexist characteristics of the programme were viewed as central. Dusspro participants noted that acquiring higher qualifications not only benefited the individuals concerned but also helped to 'redress the educational and power imbalances caused by apartheid' (Kuhn 1993:23). In addition the respondents noted that most of Dusspro's learners worked within the so-called helping professions, that is as nurses, teachers, social workers. Participation in Dusspro had helped them to 'develop the openness to and tolerance of a wide range of views and approaches which is essential to successful community work' (Kuhn 1993:23).

On a more general level the fact that each year individual learners residing within close range of the Dusspro centres showed interest in joining the programme is another indication of the programme's impact. Taking into consideration that the programme did not actively advertise its services, but that the demand for the programme had been increasing to such an extent that in the larger centres learners had to be turned away each year once the maximum number had been reached, then it is clear that the programme was meeting real needs for support.

Also if, as Gooler (1979) noted, the crucial criterion for consideration of impact is 'to what extent and in what ways do distance education programs influence the goals, policies and directions of other programs, institutions, agencies or individuals', then Dusspro's impact can be seen in the new focus of Unisa learner support services (and Unisa's collaboration with Dusspro) and in the new South African policy documents that have emphasised the need for learner support for distance education especially through learning centres. The Unisa learner support programme in particular is resourced by ex-Sached and Dusspro staff and this pool of expertise has ensured successful implementation of support services at Unisa within a limited timespan.

When Sached phased out Dusspro as one of its programmes it had amassed valuable experience in distance education support services. This experience indicated, inter alia, that staff development and training of distance education practitioners was important but that no comprehensive training programmes were available. The Dusspro experience was thus channelled into developing a course for distance education practitioners, particularly tutors and administrative staff who are often excluded from institutions' training programmes. Sached has entered into partnership with Unisa in the delivery of this course and the first cohort of learners were enrolled in 1997.

CONCLUSION

As Sached's oldest programme, Dusspro has shown great resilience. It survived the earlier repressive years when its support could only be given on a one-to-one basis and

grew into a vibrant programme which encouraged group interaction and learner participation in the programme's decision-making structures.

From a national perspective Dusspro's learner support experiment has contributed greatly to the transformation of distance education in South Africa through the efforts of past Sached staff and ex-students who are now involved in other organisations, through the use of their experience and expertise and participation in learner support debates and initiatives. While Dusspro has ceased to operate as a Sached programme, its vision, experience and influence have not died but have become part of the new and vibrant social movement which is actively advocating systemic integration of learner support services as part of any good quality distance education. This is done with a view to ensure the 'efficacy' of distance education as a mode of learning and also to improve on the successful completion rates of the learners.

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University of South Africa (Unisa)

Alice Thandiwe Ngengebule

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW AND FOCUS

The history of University of South Africa (Unisa) dates back to 1873, with the inception of the University of the Cape of Good Hope. For many years this university was only an examining body for other institutions. In 1916 this examining body became the University of South Africa, which was a federal university consisting of a number of constituent university colleges which gradually developed into fully fledged universities. In 1946, in terms of South African legislation, Unisa restructured its focus and developed, delivered and awarded its own degrees and diploma programmes via the correspondence mode. Over the past 50 years, Unisa has evolved into one of the ten largest distance education institutions in the world.

LEVEL AND SIZE OF THE UNISA EDUCATIONAL OPERATION

Number of faculties, bureaux and institutes

As a distance education university Unisa provides tertiary educational opportunities to thousands of people in South Africa and beyond its borders. Because of its distance education component over the years Unisa has developed the capacity to deliver educational programmes in six faculties, that is, Arts, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Law, Science and Theology. Currently, Unisa has 59 academic departments, 25 bureaux, centres and institutes, and 26 administrative departments.

The evolution of Unisa has been characterised by a steady increase in the enrolment figures of learners from the various population groups, and socio-political and cultural backgrounds, as shown in table 20.

Table 20 Learner numbers and composition: 1955–1997

Years	White	%	Coloured	%	Black	%	Asian	%	Total
1955	3 948	71	195	3	1 014	18	429	8	5 586
1965	12 934	82	466	3	1 552	10	893	6	15 845
1975	31 024	77	1 512	4	4 943	12	2 728	7	40 207
1985	46 281	61	3 872	5	17 556	23	8 210	11	75 919
1995	50 925	40	4 877	4	61 156	47	11 240	9	128 198
1996	48 810	38	4 988	4	63 113	49	11 543	9	128 454
1997	46 891	38	4 816	4	60 702	49	11 803	9	124 212

UNISA DISTANCE EDUCATION SUB-SYSTEMS AND STAFFING

Over the years Unisa has developed very efficient administrative systems to cater for the complex network of subsystems which are crucial to effective distance education programme development and delivery. Until 1994 Unisa concentrated largely on the development of the following subsystems.

Course creation, materials development and administration

Before 1994 Unisa’s method of developing courses was through the single person, individualistic approach. To this end Unisa procured staff for the purpose of the origination of learning materials in the various faculties, bureaux, centres and institutions. For this, the university employed staff in the following categories:

Teaching staff	Material production and distribution	Student administration
Lecturers	Editors	Administrators
Academic authors	Translators	Clerks
Departmental heads	Secretaries	Cashiers
Faculty deans	Printers	Data capturers
Secretaries	Book collators	
	Book finishers	
	Despatch clerks	

Learner advisors and counselling service

Most of Unisa learners register centrally in the Pretoria main campus or through the regional facilities. The latter are located in three of the South Africa's largest cities, Durban, (KwaZulu-Natal), Cape Town (Western Cape) and Pietersburg (Northern Province).

Advice and counselling services are given during the registration period to learners who are able to go to registration venues.

Whilst Unisa caters for registration to be done by correspondence, very little counselling or effective advice is offered by correspondence to assist this type of distance learner to effectively select courses or make adequately informed decisions on an effective career path.

For this service Unisa employed counselling staff, who up to 1994 were located centrally at the Unisa headquarters in Pretoria. From 1995 a counsellor was employed in Cape Town and one was employed in the Durban office in 1996. In 1997 two more counsellors were located in Pietersburg and in Johannesburg.

Instructional support services

Unisa's tuition model is based primarily on print materials, in the form of a study package comprising study guides and tutorial letters. These are further supported by the following:

- assignments and exams;
- limited face-to-face encounters with the academic staff at the main campus, for those student who can travel to Pretoria, or who can phone the university. And also through 'discussion classes. These are an additional somewhat ad hoc didactic aid' (Unisa 1994:9), delivered through regular visits by the lecturing staff to the various regional facilities;
- audio-cassettes;
- library services;
- graduations and certification.

Overall size of staff

The size of operation in Unisa is supported by 3 399 academic and administration staff members (*Unisa pocket statistics leaflet* 1997). The proportion of time spent by the academic staff on the various activities portrays the following pattern: 'In 1994, 55,6% time was spent on formal instruction, 25,13% on research, 10,66% on academic administration' (Unisa 1995:16). The bulk of this staff are centrally located at the Unisa campus in Pretoria.

The institution's view on role of learner support services

Unisa's view on the role of learner support should be seen in the context of the country's view on distance education during the apartheid education period. In this period the major constraint identified in South Africa's distance education model was the 'lack of student-centred tutoring provision by the provider institutions' (SAIDE 1994:64). Whilst Unisa perfected the system to ensure effective registration and administration, the area of learner support was identified as a weakness.

The changing political context leading up to the emergence of the Government of National Unity (GNU) highlighted new educational priorities and imperatives. Unisa, as one of the largest providers of tertiary education, had to re-examine its role and service to its learners and thus explore ways of changing and expanding the character and nature of its tuition model. It must also be noted that whereas Unisa, as one of the mega-universities had pioneered the expansion of access to university education both in South Africa and internationally, it was necessary for it to 'improve the quality of its course materials and student support' (Daniels 1995).

The post-1994 period heralds a change in outlook on the needs of learners in distance education. Greater emphasis is now being placed on the role which distance education must play in meeting new needs of learners and eliminating the backlog in education. 'Unisa has to acknowledge that the time has come for it to move away from being a "purely" correspondence institution and gradually become a well-functioning distance education institution which ensures that all its students receive effective and efficient support. It is the quality of the learning experience, underpinned by the University's administrative, academic and environment support systems, which provide the students who register with Unisa with a highly positive educational experience and thus increase their chances of successfully completing their studies' (Maimela 1995).

Nature of learner support at Unisa

To understand the nature of the support provided by the University we need some background of who the Unisa learners are, and what their needs are.

Who are the Unisa learners ?

Racial distribution

The political context which grew out of the apartheid era in South Africa was designed to create a socio-economically and educationally divided communities. In this context the white community was provided with educational opportunities and resources designed to encourage and develop economic and political dominance. The majority of learners who entered distance education in South Africa, who came largely from black communities, have thus not only been historically and politically disadvantaged, but also

economically and educationally deprived. However, as shown by Table 20, there has been a drastic increase in enrolment of learners from such communities. By 1997 Unisa enrolled 124 212 learners, approximately 60% of these came from disadvantaged community, ie black, coloured and Asian. Table 21 shows the racial distribution of Unisa learners in 1997.

Table 21 Racial distribution (1997)

Year	White	%	Coloured	%	Black	%	Asian	%	Total
1997	46 891	38	4 816	4	60 702	49	11 803	9	124 212

Gender distribution

Gender distribution is as follows:

Table 22 Gender distribution (1997)

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1997	54 999	44	69 213	56	124 212

Geographical distribution

As one of the largest providers of distance education internationally, Unisa enrolls and delivers educational opportunities to learners from diverse backgrounds. The overall geographical distribution as shown in table 23 gives a picture of this distribution, as captured in 1997.

Table 23 Geographical distribution (1997)

South Africa	117 337
Rest of Africa	4 617
America (North)	285
America (South)	24
Asia	1 044
Europe	772
Australia	83
New Zealand	50
Total	124 212

Within South Africa Unisa occupies a significant niche as one of the largest providers of tertiary education. As shown in table 24, in 1997 Unisa enrolled 117 377 South African

learners. These represented about 40% of the overall number of learners enrolled in tertiary institutions in South Africa.

The geographical distribution within South Africa is as follows:

Table 24 Learner distribution in South Africa in 1997

All RSA provinces	Numbers	%
Western Cape	10 278	8,8%
Northern Cape	976	0,8%
Eastern Cape	7 973	6,8%
KwaZulu/Natal	23 307	19,9%
Mpumalanga	6 712	5,7%
Northern Province	14 173	12,1%
Gauteng	45 421	38,7%
North West	5 396	4,6%
Free State	3 101	2,6%
Total	117 337	100%

Age distribution

Distance education affords educational opportunities to learners of different age groups. The average age of Unisa learners is 30 years. The majority of these learners are people who entered tertiary education in search of further education or for a second chance to acquire a tertiary qualification.

Occupational distribution

Because of its distance education model, Unisa learners over the years have been largely part-time students who were employed or had other social commitments in their communities. Unisa statistics in 1997 show that students who are employed come from a diverse spread of economic activity. However, nearly 30% of these are teachers in primary and secondary schools.

Although Unisa learners are more mature in age, the shift in political context after the 1976 Soweto Schools boycotts highlighted new realities for South Africa. As the political crisis grew, the pressure and demand for more economic and educational opportunities and resources intensified. The quality and standards of education declined drastically, resulting in greater numbers of youth who either dropped out or completed the secondary school with very poor preparation for entry into the tertiary level. This reality has had a major impact on the nature and character of Unisa learners, particularly in the last decade. Younger and unemployed learners with less academic preparation needed access to higher and further education. These learners, generally referred to as

'full-time' distance learners, began to turn to Unisa as the only viable route to tertiary education. This viability is in terms of relative affordability and flexibility of entrance qualifications. Between 1987 and 1994 the number of learners of the calibre described above grew from 3,3% of the overall Unisa enrolment figure in 1987 to 11,4% in 1994.

The implication of this trend was the need for changes in various ways. 'Foremost amongst these changes is the movement of the University away from a correspondence University to a distance teaching institution. More contact with students and community has called for the need for a structure to deal with this situation enhanced by an increasing number of full-time students who visit the campuses on a daily basis, to study' (Döckel: 1994).

The needs of the learners (a brief identification)

An analysis of the profile of Unisa learners in South Africa highlights that the majority of learners have needs which can be briefly described as follows:

Environmental needs

- About 60% of the learners come from historically disadvantaged communities. They lack educational opportunities and learning resources. Their needs include library, study space, venues for group and peer-group learning and tutorials.
- The increase in participation by younger unemployed learners has brought about a need for venues where study and social discourse can occur regularly.
- One of the legacies of the apartheid system is that the majority of the disadvantaged communities are economically disenfranchised. The learners in this category therefore need financial support so that they can sustain the cost of higher education.

Instructional or academic needs

Apartheid educational strategies in the schools failed to give learners the academic and general skills necessary to cope with the demands of tertiary learning. Learners therefore enter tertiary education with limited capacity for reading, writing, conceptual and general cognitive skills.

This scenario is further complicated because the majority are second-language users of English and Afrikaans, which are the main media of instruction and administrative communication at Unisa. In 1997 82% of the total learner population opted for study in English, and 18% opted for Afrikaans. None of the indigenous languages are used for formal communication.

Skills development – needs

Another characteristic of apartheid education is that the students are taught mainly through the 'rote learning' mode, where the student is passive, dependent on memorising and regurgitating information with no space for creativity, analysis or synthesis. On reaching the tertiary level the learners need to develop skills to organise, sort out, interpret and apply information.

For them to cope with the pressure of distance education they need also to develop skills in time management, goal-setting and prioritisation.

Need for information on career choices

As the majority of learners have been historically excluded from meaningful socio-economic participation, their perceptions and perspectives for career-path development are limited. They then opt for the curriculum selection and combination of courses of study which are largely geared to prepare them for the traditionally 'easier' careers, which are also known to be less strategically located for modern economic development.

Addressing the learner's needs

In acknowledgement of the learner needs which have been highlighted above, and also because of the changing external and internal context, Unisa decided to embark on a number of strategies to address the identified needs.

Instructional learner support

Correspondence tuition

As mentioned above, the nature of the Unisa tuition model revolves largely around the development of printed study guides as the primary teaching medium. These study packages have been largely designed and developed by the academic staff who are located centrally at the Unisa headquarters. It is generally accepted that distance education study material should promote dialogue and discourse between the learner and the teacher. However, the major criticism against the bulk of the Unisa study material has been that they lacked the critical element of support for the learner. 'The materials are traditionally developed, from an individualistic perspective. The text often convey an authoritarian tone. Little if any scope is provided for students to interact with the ideas they are meeting or with the views of the lecturer who has prepared the study guide. Students are considered as subservient and the text ensures that they will be. Rather than being encouraged to learn actively, students are drilled through exercises as if these were the ends of learning' (Saide 1994:62).

Re-designing study materials — including learner-support mechanisms

By 1994, Unisa had embarked on a project for Planning, Designing, Development, Production and Delivery (PDDPD). This project started as an experimental programme for redesigning some of the Unisa courseware in an effort to address the identified weakness. 'The first newly designed course to hit the shelves was the Faculty of Economic and Management Science, Introduction to Economic and Management Science, a foundation course that is compulsory for all the students in the Faculty' (Van Zyl 1996:22).

Commendable in the newly designed study materials is the level of learner support which is built into the overall presentation, that is the course and graphic design. The interactive style is an effort to facilitate and enhance learning. Van Zyl (1996) stresses that 'on-going evaluation of these new materials tends to confirm that students are learning more effectively and are achieving better results. Probable reasons for this may be sought in the fact that the new guides are more accessible and student friendly, and in the scientific instructional design principle underpinning the structure of these guides.'

It is also to be noted that the re-design of the Unisa study guides is tied up to the shift in the course development approach, away from the highly teacher-centred approach, whereby individual teaching staff members developed their study guide in complete isolation, towards the 'possible implementation of the project team approach to design the tutorial matter at Unisa' (Döckel 1996:7). The latter approach is a central principle which underpins the re-design projects. When the project is completed, it is envisaged that 70% or more of Unisa students will come into contact with the newly designed, more interactive, learner-centred and supportive study materials.

Through this approach, the print material can offer the flexible, in-built support mechanisms which can enhance and enrich the learning experiences of the majority of the Unisa learners.

The outcomes of this project have been included in the report which has been to Senate with recommendations on how the various support services offered by Unisa should be integrated into the core study and tuition model of the university.

Other forms of correspondence-based learner-support mechanisms

- Tutorial letters. In addition to study guides an academic department may issue a tutorial letter which may give information on departmental regulations and procedures, and updates and announcements concerning the course. Tutorial letters are also used to provide an overview on the course, its structure, objectives and general aims and schedule of assignments.
- Prescribed books. These are additional textbooks which may be prescribed to accompany and complement some aspects of the Unisa print material. Since they are

not part of the core study packages obtained by learners on enrolment, learners have to purchase these separately.

- Recommended works. The recommended texts also aim at assisting and motivating the learners to obtain a broader and more critical perspective on the subject or course of study.
- Casebooks. The Faculty of Law, for example, makes use of additional texts which may contain relevant examples of reported court decisions. These anthologies of cases are compiled by Unisa academic departments and accompany the regular study package.
- Assignments. Traditionally, assignment and project writing is a very important component of distance education assessment and feedback mechanism. Well-designed and well-marked assignments are an effective teaching-learning tool. Unisa is also exploring creative ways of re-designing the role and function of assignments in the overall study milieu/process. For example, in giving an overview of one of the newly designed courses Van Zyl (1996) also notes: 'A unique assignment system designed in collaboration with the Bureau offers students three routes: a fast route for those who are able to work through the course material at an accelerated rate: a normal route for those who prefer to submit assignments at regular prescribed intervals; and a back-up/enrichment route for those who find it difficult to adhere to fixed submission dates.'

The flexibility implied by this system of assignments would offer the ideal perspective of an open learning process. However, for many courses Unisa still adheres largely to the system of the fixed submission dates.

Provision of other resources

Library

One of the key resources provided by Unisa is a well-equipped library. Unisa library is one of the largest and best-equipped research libraries in the southern Africa region.

The library is at the disposal of students and staff and also provides an essential support for lecturers, tutors and facilitators in the quest for better study materials for their learners (Unisa 1995:17). The library is part of Unisa's learner support strategies, which include lending services for learners, postage of books to learners, reference materials and skills training by some library staff.

In addition to the study collection up to 1994 the library also offered study facilities for students. For example, up to 1994 the library (at both the main and regional facilities) could offer study space with 1 968 seats. It is further noted that: 'The Johannesburg study centre could seat 466 students and often accommodates more during peak periods' (Unisa 1994:11).

Examination and graduations

The university organises and coordinates the writing of over 2 200 examination papers at about 475 exam centres in South Africa and internationally.

The organisation and management of examinations and script marking is handled with precision. Traditionally the writing of the undergraduate courses is done between mid-October to mid-November. The results for these annual examinations are issued by mid-December of that academic year. Provision is made for aegrotat and supplementary exams in January of the following year. The academic cycle of any given year is complete by March of that new year.

The university can be commended for having one of the most efficient administrative systems for the management and distribution of the examinations and graduation sub-systems.

Learner support at the Unisa learning centres

Development of the Department of Student Support

The changing socio-political context in South Africa since 1994 has caused Unisa to consider a new understanding of the role of student/learner support in distance education. The university has to explore ways in which learner support should begin to encompass the wide range of activities, structures and infrastructure which are set up by the institution, with a view to supporting its learners, during the course of their study and assisting them to meet their academic goals. According to Sweet, student support services should reflect the operating principles and practices of an institution. Unisa, like other institutions of distance education, 'is moving away from the traditional industrial model that is characterised by the course design team and the production of instructional packages towards a more distributed model based on study (learning centres) or communication networks' (Sweet R 1994).

Acknowledging the need for this paradigm shift in approach to learner support Unisa used 1995 to embark on the first concrete steps towards the foundation of various structures to address other learners needs which had not traditionally been given by the university prior to 1994.

Against this background, the university established the Department of Student Support (DSS) which would concentrate on the following objectives :

- To facilitate the establishment of a receiving structure from which various student support processes could be generated. This structure would be in the form of provincial Unisa learning centres, which could be organically linked to a network of community-based study centres.
- To facilitate the establishment of an integrated student support system which would include a face-to-face tutorial system.

- To facilitate the formation of a well-functioning student representative council which could enhance student participation and involvement in all the key decision-making bodies of Unisa.
- To facilitate the development of a Financial Aid Bureau which would open access and ensure sustenance for the financially disadvantaged, but academically deserving students of Unisa (Unisa/Council September 1994:36).

Learner support generated through these new departments

Establishment of Unisa provincial learning centres

The year 1995 was an important foundation for the development of Unisa learning centres. By October 1996 Unisa had established learning centres in the following places :

- Cape Town – Western Province
- Durban – KwaZulu-Natal Province
- Pietersburg – Northern Province
- Thutong/Pretoria – Gauteng Province
- Johannesburg – Gauteng Province

The first three learning centres are extensions of existing Unisa provincial centres, which have been largely administrative centres.

The development of the latter two centres in Gauteng came out of a joint pilot project between Unisa and an NGO, the South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) in 1994. All these learning centres are developed with a view to broaden the support services given to the learners in the province and create a supportive and conducive learning environment for Unisa distance learners. Each learning centre is a receiving structure where the following facilities and infrastructure has been developed.

Facilities and infrastructure provided by the centres

One of the major legacies of apartheid, which has led to poor performance by the majority of the disadvantaged learners, particularly those from black communities, studying through distance education, has been the lack of learning facilities and amenities. Against this background, and for furthering the objectives of reconstruction and development, it is crucial to provide centres with the following amenities :

- adequate space for tutorials, group discussion and quiet reading
- a library with basic reference materials
- office/administrative space for staff
- office/administrative space for student representatives
- assignment boxes for delivery and receipt of assignments
- sufficient lighting and running water

- recreation space for students.

Nature of services provided by the learning centres

The Unisa learning centres are seen as places where the following flexible learning processes, resources and learner support services are planned and delivered.

- face-to-face tutorial support
- self-help group discussion
- individual/quiet reading
- library facilities
- assignment boxes
- student representation in Unisa structures
- academic and psychological counselling services.

The model that is emerging is that of locating Unisa's presence in each province through a centre which is not only 'an administrative centre' (Saide 1994), but which can also concretely give academic and environmental support to the learners as clients of the university. From this core centre Unisa is beginning to explore and research ways of building partnerships with other educational initiatives in the province to construct a network of community-based learning centres.

The following satellite centres existed in 1997: Makhado, Mahwelereng, Bopedi-Bapedi, Tibumbeni, Soshanguve, Phokeng, Kwa-Mhlanga and Pietermaritzburg.

Development of a network of community-based learning centres

One of the issues brought up by the new policy documents on National Education and Training is the new South African government's vision of educational provision for adult learners.

According to the Ministry of Education (1995), one institutional innovation which the Ministry wishes to see investigated is the idea of community learning centres. These can be envisaged as a network of facilities, usually pre-existing, which offer regular services to students of all varieties in pursuing their learning goals. It is further envisaged that such centres would form an essential part of the infrastructure required for the realisation of open learning approaches throughout the education and training system.

Between 1995 and 1997, Unisa Learning Centre staff have been able to negotiate with a number of communities in the various provinces and assist them in initiating community-based learning centres. The communities were assisted with guidance, planning and training of local staff on educational programme development, delivery and monitoring. The long-term view is that such centres could be multi-purpose and address a wide variety of adult learner needs from literacy, post-literacy, right up to

tertiary education and training needs. During the 1995 to 1997 pilot phase, these community-based learning centres were used to extend Unisa support services to the communities. In this way it was possible to begin to deliver the tutorial programme in some of the remote rural areas.

The tutorial support programme

As mentioned, one of the objectives of the Department of Student Support is the development and expansion of a well-functioning student/learner support programme which includes face-to-face tutorials.

The emergence of the face-to-face tutorial support programme is based on the development of sub-systems to cater for:

- student-recruitment
- orientation and skills development of students on the tutorial programme
- tutor-recruitment
- tutor-support and development
- planning, scheduling and evaluation of the programme

Student recruitment

The face-to-face tutorial support programme started in 1995 on an experimental basis. Learners enrol on the programme voluntarily by paying an additional but very nominal fee. In order to ensure effective planning and evaluation, and for quality assurance, the tutorial programme recognises the importance of accurate, administrative records of student statistics (Calder 1994). For the purpose of the experiment and pilot phase it was important that the enrolment figures should be limited and manageable.

However, during the 1995, 1996 and 1997 pilot phases, the tutorial programme reveals the following growth trends, shown in table 25:

Table 25 Head count of learners on the tutorial programme

Unisa Learning Centre	1995	1996	1997
Cape Town	500	1 052	1 149
Durban	740	1 800	2 228
Johannesburg	1 155	1 745	1 772
Thutong (Pretoria)	1 318	2 200	1 904
Pietersburg	600	2 274	2 453
TOTAL	4 313	9 071	9 506

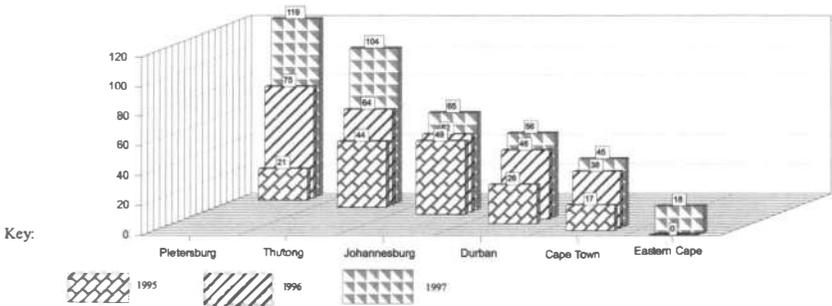
Each year the programme has catered for an additional 1 000 organised peer study groups which were planned, administered and monitored by the centres.

Tutors employed in each learning centre

Part of the dichotomy which was facing Unisa in 1995, when the tutorial programme experiment was debated, was whether it would be possible for the University to find qualified, part-time personnel who could facilitate learning for Unisa learners as tutors in the learning centres.

The 1995 to 1997 experiment proved to be very vital in ascertaining this position. By the end of 1997, the Department of Student Support (DSS) in collaboration with the academic departments was able to employ local tutors as shown in figure A.

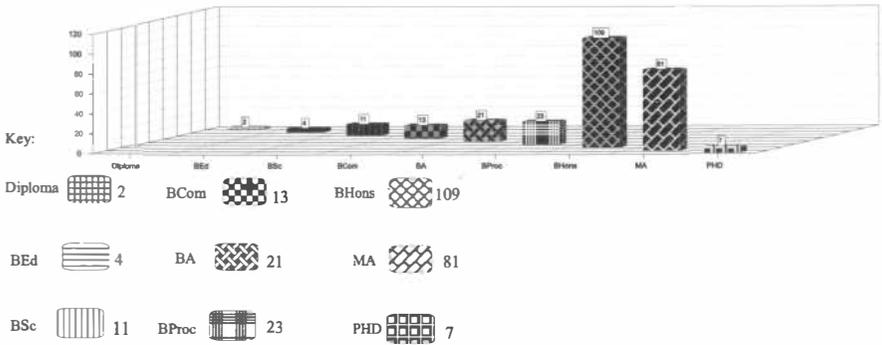
Figure A Tutors at learning centres (1995 to 1997)



(Department of Student Support)

The tutors were recruited to support the students in the various courses of the various faculties. For this reason it was important that the tutors should be well qualified in the relevant subject areas. Figure B below shows the distribution of qualifications held by the tutors in 1996 and 1997.

Figure B Distribution of tutor qualifications for 1997



Unisa learning centre tutor qualifications as at 1 July 1997

Capacity building in learning centres

● *Tutor training and development*

The success of a tutorial support programme depends on well-trained tutors and facilitators. In addressing this need, the Department of Student Support, in collaboration with the academic departments and the Bureau for Student Counselling, planned and coordinated the tutor training and development programme.

The first workshop to be run under this programme was in May 1995. In the opening remarks the Vice-Principal (Tuition) at this workshop notes that ‘as the first Tutor Workshop where the tutors are meeting the Unisa academic staff and Learning Centre support educators, this weekend is epoch making. Let us use this workshop to get to know one another, build bridges to initiate the formation of teams and to chart a collaborative future for this vital experiment in the transformation of our institution’ (Maimela 1995).

The aims of this workshop were as follows:

- To highlight the needs of distance learners and the providers of support, in order to inform and take forward the Unisa institutional response
- To provide an opportunity to begin the development of a dialogue and to build a shared understanding which will help to inform the experiments in support provision that are currently in operation

- To generate ideas leading to an action strategy that will guide the provision of relevant support services (Unisa 1995)

This weekend workshop was attended by members of the following Unisa communities:

Departments	Number of participants
Rectorate	4
Faculties/Academic staff	50
Local tutors	50
Learning centre staff	8
Department of Student Support staff	3
Bureau for Student Counselling	2
Institute for Continuing Education	1
External (Sached)	3
TOTAL	121

The workshop was facilitated by a joint team from Unisa, Sached (NGO), and the International Extension College (London).

The lessons learnt in this workshop were actively used to plan the 1996/1997 tutorial programme and also for the development of the subsequent staff development and training programmes.

In 1996 the training programme was extended to include tutors from the Cape Town, Durban and Pietersburg centres. There were two sets of workshops, the Introductory Workshop run at the beginning of the year and the Consolidatory Workshop run towards the middle of the year.

The numbers of tutors who participated in these workshops were as follows. See table 27.

Table 27 Tutor training in 1996

First workshop		Second workshop	
Learning Centre	Tutors attended	Tutors attended	Total trained
Cape Town	34	No workshop	34
Durban	31	No workshop	31
Pietersburg	46	50	96
Johannesburg & Pretoria	31	73	104

The aim of the 1996 training programme

The introductory workshops covered the following broad areas:

- the role of tutors
- study skills and counselling in tutorial support
- administration and programme organisation
- use of technology in the learner support programme

The workshop was also used to orient the tutors on various aspects of distance education and specifically on the role of learner support.

The consolidatory workshops aimed at building on the tutors' experiences and skills in facilitating effective tutoring for adult learners.

The aspects of training which were established during these staff development workshops for tutors have been further developed through their exposure to the actual process of tutoring at the various learning centres. Close cooperation and collaboration has been developed between the local tutors and the academic staff of the various faculties. Through this collaboration, Unisa has established a number of communication, feedback and monitoring systems which have proved to be vital for consolidating the capacity of the tutors.

Monitoring the face-to-face tutorial programme

The smooth running of any educational and support programme depends on efficient co-ordination, scheduling and monitoring. The monitoring of the tutorials programmes is done by learning centre staff. The tutorial co-ordinators and their assistants have to ensure that the planned tutorials are delivered. This monitoring is facilitated through the filling in of appropriate attendance schedules by both the tutors and the students. The tutors' attendance schedules are then reconciled by the learning staff to generate the appropriate tutor payment claim forms.

For quality assurance and monitoring the synergy between the subject tutors at the learning centres and the academic departments, each Unisa academic department has selected a dedicated staff member to act as tutorial coordinator. Some of the functions of this coordinator are to support and guide all the tutors responsible for that respective subject by supplying them with year plans and guidelines and also to provide any other support which may be found relevant for the course.

The positive outcomes of the close collaboration that has developed between the tutors and some of the academic course teams are encapsulated in the words of one head of department who states that 'our tutors are regarded not only as purveyors of our courses they are also seen as a means of remaining in touch with students' needs, difficulties and aspirations. Indeed we envisage tutors playing a role of increasing

importance in the maintenance of academic standards and in the campaign against failure' (Unisa 1997).

Evaluation of the face-to-face tutorial support programme

Ongoing formative evaluation of this experiment has been planned with special emphasis on the following:

- Programme administration
- Learner attendance
- Learner dropout rate
- Tutor attendance
- Quality of tutorials
- Learner performance in assignments and in the examination.

To form a broad picture, and to inform the way forward, summative evaluation was also planned. It included a comparison between students participating in the tutorial programme and a control group comprising students who did not receive any tutorial support in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

This latter study was done in two ways. First, a quantitative evaluation was done by Unisa's Bureau for Management Information (BMI). The nature of this evaluation was to measure the impact of the tutorial programme on the performance of the students who attended the tutorial programme in 1995 and 1996. The examination results of the students who attended the tutorial programme were compared with control groups of students who did not receive tutorials. The analysis of the outcomes came to the conclusion that 'although in the experimental stage, tutorial support services at the Learning Centres seem to be well under way to achieve a more student-centred distance education approach' (Unisa BMI 1996).

Second, the Department of Student Support, in collaboration with the academic departments, embarked on qualitative evaluation on all aspects of the tutorial support. This process involved the Department of Student Support, Academic departments, learning centre administrators and tutors in the process of developing the evaluation processes, and the questionnaires. The overall aim also included the process of having all tutors in all the learning centres and community-based learning centres were evaluated by peers, students and the learning centre staff. The participation of the students who are registered on the programme is vital because Unisa concurs with Calder (1994) about the importance of evaluation in enabling organisations to find out just what being a student in an organisation means. Participation by students has given strong indications of the strengths and limitations of the support services.

Likewise, the involvement of the actual practitioners, that is the academic, administrative staff and the tutors, also highlighted important insights and

recommendations which will inform future planning of the programme, and thus will 'serve the interests of the learners and practitioners primarily' (Thorpe 1988).

Preparation of learners for participation in tutorials

The success of a student/learner support programme also depends on the manner in which students in distance education institutions participate in the programme. It must be accepted that in South Africa, however, especially in Unisa, the whole concept of student/learner support is still not evenly understood. This affects the expectations of both the learners and the teachers. Concrete efforts have to be made to develop students' capacity to participate and benefit from a support programme.

Against this background, during the recruitment of the students, the learning centre staff and the bureau for student counselling staff run development workshops for learners in:

- orientation to the programme
- learning skills needed for tutorial programme
- setting expectations from the face-to-face tutorials
- participation in peer-group programmes

The experience gained in the face-to-face orientation workshops in 1995 and 1996 has been utilised for the development of student orientation handbooks and other student development and capacity building materials.

Other forms of learner support

Computer-based support

In 1996 the provision of computer-based support started on a limited scale for learners who had access to their own computers.

This programme is known as Students-on-line (SOL) and it started on an experimental basis. It handles a subset of the activities of a server of a full-fledged 'visual university'. It is envisaged that in the near future SOL should be able to dispense all the services required by the distance learner. At present the academic content of SOL is rather limited but will be enriched and extended by putting a variety of Unisa courseware on the Internet.

In 1997 Unisa negotiated a contract with Cyber Connections which is expected to improve student access to the Internet and also to the SOL server in Unisa. The first Internet Centres are now being set up as a pilot project. Through this pilot about 10 000 computers will be at the disposal of students. Students will be able to access SOL and the Internet free of charge, although they will have to pay a reasonable fee per page if they wish to print some materials.

Support by the Faculty of Science

The Science Faculty has a modern personal computer laboratory on the Unisa Main Campus and is in the process of setting up another on the premises of the Durban Regional Facility.

The laboratory is extremely popular with students and staff and, apart from countless informal and individual sessions of students, is used for conducting formal practical courses in statistics, etc. The faculty puts a vast array of relevant licensed software at the disposal of students, such as word processors, mathematical and statistical programmes.

The facility, however, is not used to its full capacity, but use is growing daily. It is envisaged that the facility will be fully occupied as soon as remedial courses in science and English come onstream.

Compulsory practical sessions for students who study the natural sciences

Unisa students who enrol for the natural sciences are compelled to attend a two- to three-week residential practical session. In this period they are exposed to laboratory facilities for the practical experiments at the Main Campus in Pretoria or an arranged venue at other universities.

● *Financial support*

As already stated, the majority of learners who come from the disadvantaged communities find it difficult to access higher or tertiary education because of financial constraints. To address this, the Government of National Unity (GNU) has set up a government financial aid scheme.

In terms of this financial scheme, the concerned learners can be assisted through:

- full funding of all activities
- budget funding
- formula funding

A recent commission of inquiry into the overall higher education needs and provision concluded that: 'The policies and approaches developed by the commission in its interim report on a National Student Financial Aid Scheme for universities and technikons for 1996, should form a basis for the elaboration of a more comprehensive and longer term set of policies' (NCHE 1996:123).

In the changing South African context this financial aid system is a crucial support function which is given to the learner for tertiary education. One of the primary issues which face an institution such as Unisa as a distance teaching institution was that distance learners were discriminated against, and excluded from funds because the funding formula and selection criteria utilised favoured learners who attended conventional face-to-face institutions. The inception of this new financial aid scheme has come a long way towards assisting distance learners with funds to study through Unisa.

CONCLUSION

This case study on learner support services at Unisa must be seen against the need for an overall framework for the transformation of higher education in South Africa. In concluding the investigation on Open Learning and Distance Education, the authors say: 'The impetus towards transformation is very great and education and training must be at the heart of all reconstruction and development... conventional approaches have no chance of providing access to education and training opportunities on the scale or with the range of flexibility and speed that are needed' (SAIDE 1994).

Only well-functioning distance education policies which ensure responsive and supportive mechanisms for the learners will be able to deliver high quality education, particularly to the large mass of learners.

The innovations which have been embarked upon from 1995 with the establishment of the learning centres and the expansion of other forms of support is an important foundation which could assist Unisa to address one of the key proposals of the National Commission on Higher Education (1996) which calls for 'the Minister of Education to take urgent steps, in conjunction with the provincial ministries of Education to maximise the use of the large number of educational facilities in the country by establishing a national network of learning centres that would be a focal point for learner support activities associated with distance education programmes' (NCHE 1996:124).

The University of South Africa is on a new path towards addressing the needs of its learners in a responsive and interactive way. This represents a major paradigm shift from the time when Unisa was founded in 1946, which can be summarised in the words of the Vice Chancellor and Principal of Unisa, who said: 'Our teaching must not be confined to our magnificent campus. Let us speak, walk around our campus — South Africa and other countries — and teach our students directly and not at a distance, by means of well-designed, self-instructing course materials, and with the aid of modern technologies' (Wiechers: *Progressio* 1996:2).

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SWAZILAND

Overview of distance education in Swaziland

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The history of distance education in Swaziland dates back to 1970. Distance education was pioneered by Ephesus House, which was established through the help of the Danish government. This institution helped South African refugees living in Swaziland to continue with their high school education. These refugees were given study materials which were supported by long residential sessions. So, there was a lot of face-to-face support service.

In 1972 Ephesus House changed its name to Swaziland International Education Centre (SIEC). During this time some Swazis were enrolled in SIEC. The government of Swaziland was beginning to appreciate the distance education mode as provided by SIEC.

An increased demand of continuing high school education by the Swazis became evident in the SIEC era. This pressurised the government to provide the means of meeting the demand. Pressure on the government together with government's own appreciation of the role of SIEC led to the present-day Emlaladini Development Centre (EDC) in 1981. This was a change not only of name but also of administration and funding. EDC was then a wholly Swaziland government institution.

Ephesus House, SIEC and EDC provided distance education only at secondary level. This was mainly for adults (30 – 40 age group) who wanted to continue with their high school education as their age prevented them from continuing their secondary education in the conventional/formal system.

Distance education has also been developed at adult education level (certificate and diploma levels). This has been done through the University of Swaziland at the Department of Extra-mural studies (DEMS). The DEMS programmes have been attracting mainly employed adults.

A more recent development in distance education has been the establishment of the Institute for Distance Education (IDE) at the University of Swaziland (Uniswa). This will offer courses at diploma and degree level. The first enrolment at the IDE was in 1996/1997.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON DISTANCE EDUCATION

It should be noted that up to EDC period, the government did not have a clear-cut policy committing itself to distance education. The 'birth' of EDC came about through a documented policy/commitment to distance education. The policy under which EDC was established is found in the 1977/1983 national five-year plan. Distance Education in Swaziland is classified under the Ministry of Education.

Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC)

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PREAMBLE

Non-formal education is an essential sector in the overall provision made by a country for its people to have access to some form of education in the course of their lifetime. The assumption that education and training are completed early in life is clearly not related to today's conditions. The changing nature of occupations, together with rising levels of aspiration for occupational and cultural development, is creating needs which can only be met by some form of continuing education. It is a fallacy to equate non-formal education with an inferior type of education or training. The Ministry of Education is involved in non-formal and adult education through three important avenues of action. These are the Sebenta National Institute, Emlalatini Development Centre and the Rural Education Centre. At present, only the latter two are directly controlled by the Ministry, while the other enjoys a large measure of autonomy. The need for the three to work in close collaboration and cooperation is widely recognised.

This case study concerns the Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC).

AIMS OF EDC

The aims of the programme as stipulated in the five-year plan were:

- (i) to administer and develop the national correspondence programme;
- (ii) to decentralise and establish programme learning centres at the rural education centres;
- (iii) to establish additional education facilities to promote the expansion of the correspondence programme;
- (iv) to continue to provide, on behalf of the William Pitcher Teacher Training College, the University of Swaziland Certificate of Agriculture in Education through the in-service training course of primary school teachers;

- (v) to upgrade the physical facilities and equipment used to service the national correspondence programme;
- (vi) to provide the training programmes in practical skills related to income- generating activities; and
- (vii) to strengthen and re-organise the supervisory support and administrative structure.

WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVISION IN SWAZILAND

Weaknesses

Policy and commitments are not strictly adhered to by government, hence distance education practitioners find it very difficult to cover it at its full potential. The most notable unfulfilled commitments are in staff development (long-term training).

Also the attitude of the policy makers towards the value/status of distance education is hindering progress in distance education development. This prevents them from responding timeously to distance education needs.

Nature of distance education provisions

EDC is an institution that was specifically established to provide distance education programmes. Two programmes are offered:

- Junior Certificate (junior secondary level)
- O-level Cambridge (senior secondary level)

These programmes are offered in exactly the same methods/model.

Each programme runs for two years, offering one to three of the following subjects:

JC	O-LEVEL
English language	English language
English literature	Siswati
Siswati	Geography
Geography	Mathematics
Mathematics	Principles of accounts
Human & social biology	Human & social biology
Bookkeeping & accounts	Commerce
Additional mathematics	

During the SIEC and early EDC period the programmes were mainly correspondence. In the later EDC period the programme is experiencing a quick transformation to a modern Distance Education mode. The programmes are provided through a set of self-contained workbooks which provide the syllabus content. These workbooks are supplemented by various support media (see support services below).

Table 29 The number of learners in each programme and per subject

1995	JC	O-level	Total
English Language	314	533	847
Siswati	157	117	274
Mathematics	183	218	401
Human & social biology	77	104	181
Principles of accounts	–	182	182
Commerce	–	97	97
Additional mathematics	9	–	9
Geography	96	121	217
English literature	166	–	166
Bookkeeping & accounts	55	–	55

1994	JC	O-level	Total
Additional mathematics	40	–	40
English language	234	709	943
Siswati	207	166	373
Mathematics	299	462	761
Human & social biology	111	292	403
Principles of accounts	–	166	166
Commerce	–	123	123
Geography	123	198	321
Bookkeeping & accounts	137	–	137

1985	JC	O-level	Total
English language	312	368	680
Siswati	186	04	190
Mathematics	185	172	357

Human & social biology	156	212	368
Principles of accounts	–	99	99
Commerce	–	59	59
Additional mathematics	04	–	04
Geography	149	06	153
Bookkeeping & accounts	–	92	92

NB: In 1985 at JC, English language and English literature were treated as one subject. It was not until 1993 that the two were separated.

It is also important to note that Siswati and Geography have extremely low enrolments. The reason for this is that both subjects had just been introduced at O-level. They had always been offered at JC Level.

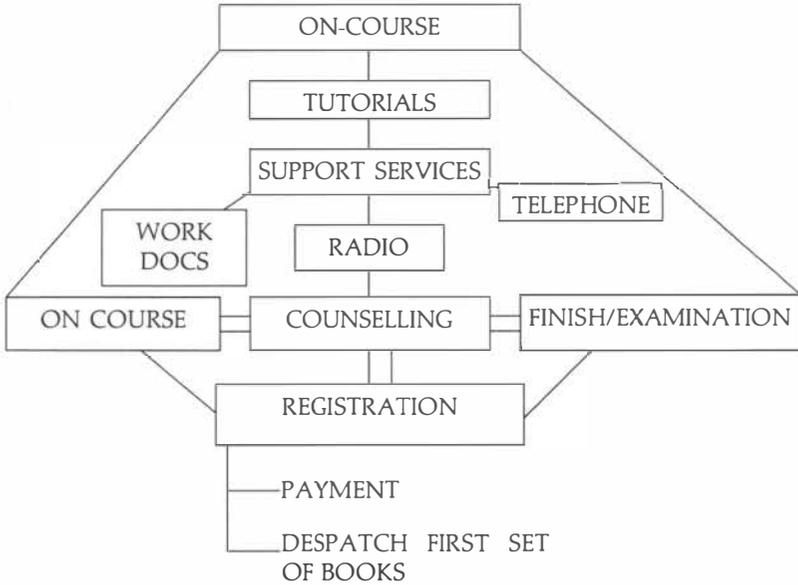
1987	JC	O-level	Total
English language	247	382	629
Siswati	118	97	215
Mathematics	143	122	265
Human & social biology	88	177	265
Principles of accounts	–	106	106
Commerce	–	77	77
Additional mathematics	14	–	14
Geography	87	89	176
Bookkeeping & accounts	50	–	50

Nature of learner support

EDC has always considered the importance of learner support and has always supported its learners by providing residential courses. However, with the change in the nature of the learners, EDC has even put more importance/emphasis on learner support. The changes that have compelled EDC to emphasise learner support are the drop out rate, change in age and reasons for opting for DE.

Table 30 below shows the model in a schematic form.

Table 30



Staffing

- 1 x head of institution – principal
- 1 x student adviser – who is the vice-principal
- 8 x tutors – course developers representing the subjects offered
- 1 x editor – course production
- 1 x graphic artist – course production
- 5 x printers – course production
- 8 x tutors – course delivery
- 15 x part-time markers – course delivery
- 4 officers – despatch
- 1 x storeman
- 4 x accounts officers

Learner profile

- i) Who are the students of EDC?
 - 88% (691) are school leavers and those who failed the Junior Certificate and O-level examinations

- 3% (19) are primary school teachers
- 10% (73) are working people, from the civil service and industry/private sector
- 65% (511) of learners had been to conventional systems prior to their enrolment with EDC.

AGE GROUP	O-LEVEL
15–20	262
21–25	206
26–30	42
31–35	9
36–40	4
41–45	2
46–50	1
TOTAL	526

49% (309) females/40% (215) males

AGE GROUP	JC
15–20	178
21–25	54
26–30	20
31–35	6
36–40	1
TOTAL	259

51% (130) females

49% (129) males

Educational background

(JC Group)

- 70% have gone through JC
- 25 % dropped out in Form 1–2
- 5 % only completed primary level

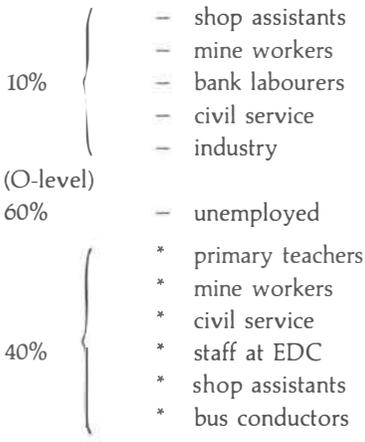
(O-Level Group)

- 35% dropped out in Form 4–5
- 60% failed Form 5
- 5% on the job professional training

Occupation: employed/non-employed

(JC Group)

90% – unemployed living with parents



What are learners' needs?

The nature of the learners analysed above clearly indicates that the learners will have different needs. These needs are not only different but multiple. The learner needs identified were derived through the following ways:

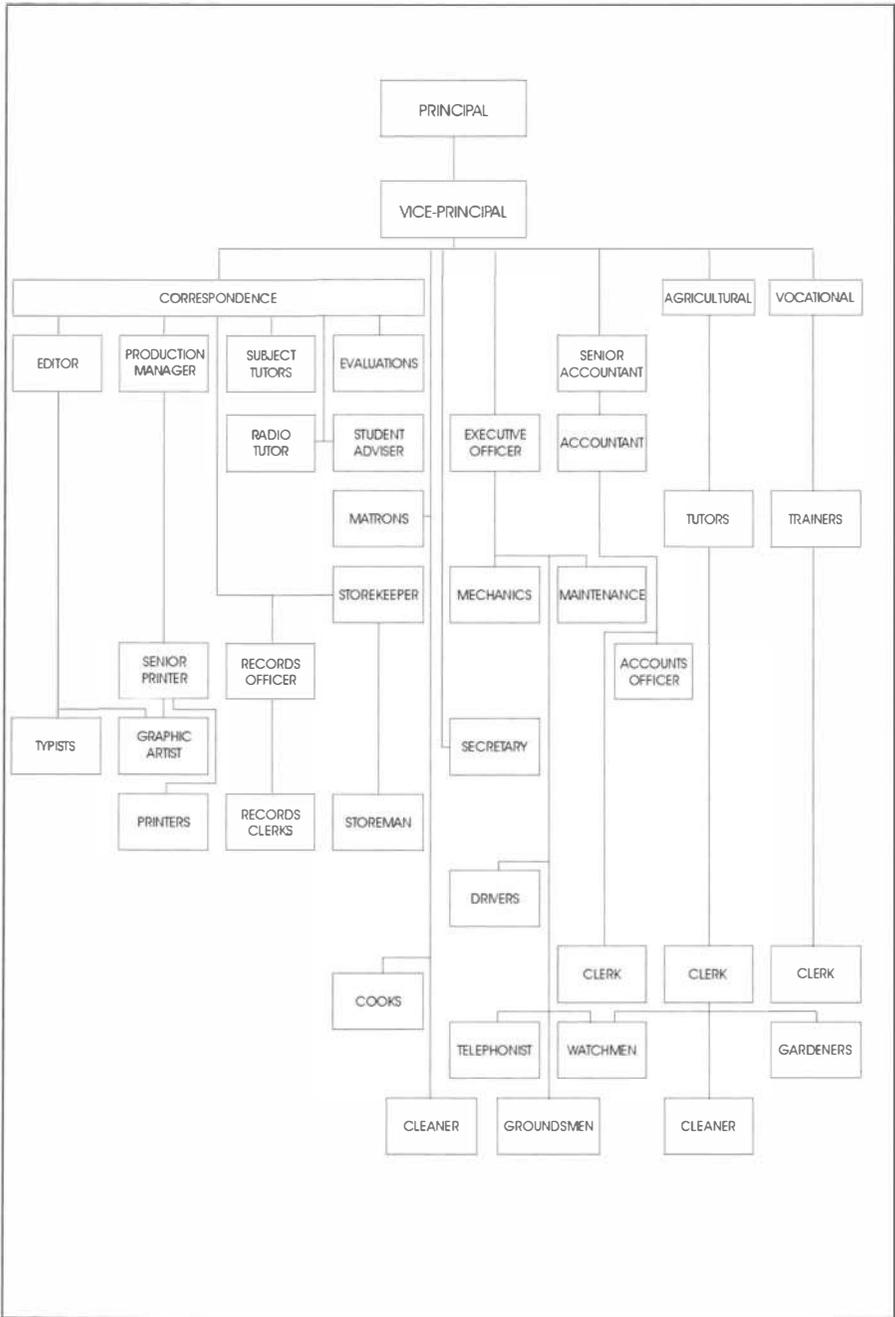
- registration forms
- pre-course/on-course/post-course counselling
- learners' worksheets (tests) sent for marking
- difficulty sheets

EDC Organisational Chart

The organisational chart appears on page 188.

EDC learners' needs

- To upgrade themselves, to qualify for university or colleges.
These are the learners who fail a few subjects at senior secondary level (0-levels).
- To upgrade themselves, to qualify for senior secondary. (0-levels).
- Learners with these two needs have immediate extra needs, that is study skills relevant to distance education (breaking the isolation).
- Counselling, including choice of career (subject combination)
 - helped to re-join conventional system (senior secondary)
 - assistance in acquiring certificates from previous results (from school) and those they will obtain by studying through EDC.



- To attain a high academic level to qualify for promotion at work, salary increments, personal upliftment.
- A conducive studying environment.
- Provision of an examination centre.
- Cost effectiveness. In most instances the tuition fees charged by EDC are lower than the fees charged in a conventional school, so some learners take advantage of this.
- Availability of space in schools. The conventional schools cannot absorb all the learners in the country and thus those that were unable to get space come to EDC.

Learner support available/provided

In its effort to provide quality distance education, EDC provides the following support service to meet the learner needs identified above.

- *Print material (workbooks/other)*

This constitutes more than 80% of the overall support to the learner. In the distant past EDC adapted some workbooks from LDTC and TCC. These were acquired through EDC's membership of the former Distance Learning Association (DLA). These adapted workbooks have been continually reviewed (by EDC tutorial staff) to suit EDC learners. In the course of time new workbooks have been produced at EDC (through expertise from DLA – Deasa).

There is a prepared set of workbooks for each subject. These contain the subject - syllabus content. Most of the workbooks are self-contained and are learner-based. Students are given these workbooks at certain (student-determined) intervals. These form the major service the centre offers to meet the student's needs. The average number of workbooks per subject is six. The last two workbooks have past exam papers in order to acquaint the learners with examination-type questions.

- *Tutorials (face-to-face sessions)*

These are provided in various forms and held at different times of the year and include the following:

- Residential courses. EDC has continued to run the April/May residential course, to help guide students who are preparing to sit for the end of year examination. Tutors provide a one-week intensive face-to-face session.
- One day sessions. As from May, every Tuesday and Thursday, one-day tutorials are held. These sessions are only provided at EDC.
- Students visits. Learners are free to come for help from tutors whenever they need it.

- *Radio programmes*

Up to now it is only the English department which uses radio. The English Department's radio specialist writes and produces radio programmes, with some assistance from the other tutors. These programmes are divided into two groups. Some are for Junior English language covering both junior secondary and senior secondary). The others are for Junior English literature.

Production of these programmes is done at the national radio station. EDC has three 15-minutes slot per week. Towards the end of the year EDC produces programmes on examination hints. Radio is also used for announcements pertaining to examination, registration and timetable and other relevant information to the learners.

- *Telephone/postal*

Those students who have access to the telephone use it mostly for enquiries on administrative issues. At certain times (less frequently) they use it for enquiring about subject (content) problems.

EDC also uses the telephone (provided learners have personal phones) to contact learners. These are mostly issues on learner progress, that is if a learner is identified a lagging behind with his or her studies.

- *Study centres*

Distance Education means a physical separation of learner and tutor. To bridge this distance, EDC has established study centres. EDC has six operational study centres and these are at the rural education centres (REC) at:

- Ntfontjeni
- Vuvulane
- Dvokolwako
- Big Bend
- Matsapha Correctional Services
- Simunye
- Zombodze (to be opened in the near future)

EDC chose the REC because they have the infrastructure (room) and the personnel to be used. These REC are attached to practising high schools. EDC took advantage of government-employed teachers in the schools to serve as study centres' part-time tutors. Another advantage was that the REC officers are part of the Adult Education Department in the Ministry of Education.

Co-ordinators in the REC have continued to man our study centres as distribution centres. They liaise with students and EDC through enrolment and the issuing of the first workbooks for students.

Part-time tutors

EDC recruits part-time tutors to mark learners' tests, provide counselling per learner needs and provide tutorials for the learner.

ANALYSIS OF LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Weaknesses

- Poor reception of radio programme from the channel used
- Postal delays in sending/receiving tests leading to delay in feedback, workbooks and other correspondence
- One-day tutorials only benefit Manzini-Mbabane learners
- Transfer of study centres part-time tutors

Attempts at solving weaknesses

- Negotiate for radio programmes to be on a channel with no reception problems.
- Acquire transport to enable frequent visits to study centres.
- Audio cassettes for radio programmes to allow learners convenient listening time.
- Learners to collect study material whenever visiting EDC.
- Part-time tutors to conduct tutorials at the study centres.
- Sending reminders to learners who are not up to date with their work.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Emlatini depends on the government (through the Ministry of Education) for staff training and development. In the 1983/1987 National Development Plan, the government committed itself to yearly external staff (tutor) training. However, since then only two tutors have been trained. Emlatini has, however, been taking advantage of the informal short-term workshops provided by the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa.

FUTURE PROJECTIONS

- Increasing the number of subjects offered to create a wider choice for EDC learners.
- Using Television as a form of support.
- Employing a full time radio tutor.

- Increasing the number of subjects taught on radio – currently it is only English language and JC Literature.
- Connecting EDC to Internet.
- Buying computers to facilitate work in the various departments.

Acronyms

Botswana

BCA	–	Botswana College of Agriculture
BEC	–	Botswana Extension College
JC	–	Junior Certificate
GCE	–	General Certificate of Education
DNFE	–	Department of Non-formal Education
DED	–	Distance Education Division
COSC	–	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
PSLE	–	Primary School Leaving Education
PL	–	Primary Lower Teachers Certificate
PH	–	Primary Higher Teacher Certificate
PTC	–	Primary Teachers' Course
CJSS	–	Community Junior Secondary School
MOH	–	Ministry of Health
UB	–	University of Botswana
IHS	–	Institute of Health Science
UBS	–	University of Botswana and Swaziland
CAE	–	Certificate in Adult Education
CCE	–	Centre for Continuing Education
PEU	–	Public Education Unit
EMU	–	Extra-Mural Unit
DEU	–	Distance Education Unit
TSU	–	Technical Support Unit
CABS	–	Certificate in Accounting and Business Studies
DABS	–	Diploma in Accounting and Business Studies
DAE	–	Diploma in Adult Education
DPE	–	Diploma in Primary Education

B.Ed	–	Bachelor of Education
M.Ed	–	Masters of Education
BNLS	–	Botswana National Library Services

Lesotho

LDTC	–	Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
IEMS	–	Institute for Extra Mural Studies
NUL	–	National University of Lesotho
ILS	–	Institute of Labour Studies
UNICEF	–	United Nations International Children Education Function
PSLE	–	Primary School Leaving Examination
MOE	–	Ministry of Education
NFE	–	Non-formal Education
FE	–	Formal Education
LTI	–	Lerotholi Technical Institute
JC	–	Junior Certificate
JTC	–	Juveline Training Course
COSC	–	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
LANFE	–	Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education
AGM	–	Annual General Meeting
AALAE	–	African Association of Literacy and Adult Education
ICAE	–	International Council of Adult Education
AATF	–	African Association for Training and Development
DVV	–	Cooperation with the German Adult Association
TSD	–	Teaching Service Department
NCDC	–	National Curriculum Development Centre
IE	–	Institute of Education
NTTC	–	National Teacher Training College
AED	–	Adult Education Division
OJT	–	On the job training
PHC	–	Primary Health Care
HEU	–	Health Education Unit

Namibia

NEU	–	Namibian Extension Unit
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IEC	–	International Extension College (UK)
NAMCOL	–	Namibian College of Open Learning
UNAM	–	University of Namibia
CES	–	Centre for External Studies

South Africa

SAIDE	–	South African Institute for Distance Education
NADEOSA	–	The National Association of Distance Education Organisations in South Africa
CUP	–	Committee of University Principals
UNISA	–	University of South Africa
AUT	–	Advisory Council for Universities and Technikons
CTP	–	Committee for Technikon Principals
TSA	–	Technikon of Southern Africa
VUDEC	–	Vista Unit of Distance Education
ESATI	–	Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions
MEDUNSA	–	Medical University of South Africa
PU	–	Potchefstroom University
PU for CHE	–	Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
AGN	–	African Growth Network
RAU	–	Rand Afrikaans University
UCT	–	University of Cape Town
OLDEAP	–	Open Learning Distance Education Access Programme
MSTP	–	Management for Schools Training Programme
WITS	–	University of the Witwatersrand
RADMASTE	–	Research and Development in Mathematics, Science and Technology
NGO	–	Non Government Organisation
SACHED	–	South African Committee for Higher Education
TCC	–	Turret Correspondence College
DUSSPRO	–	Distance University Student Support Programme
TEEC	–	Theological Education by Extension College
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TEEC	–	Theological Education by Extension College
EDC	–	Emlaladini Education Centre
REC	–	Rural Education Centre
NUSAS	–	National Union of South African Students
BTUP	–	Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrades Programme
PC	–	People's College – a newspaper supplement published in the Weekend World Newspaper 1977
ASECA	–	A Secondary Education Curriculum for Adults

Swaziland

EDC	–	Emlaladini Education Centre
REC	–	Rural Education Centre
AGN	–	African Growth Network
BCC	–	Britzius Correspondence College
GCE/O	–	General Certificate Education O-levels