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STRUCTURING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION RESOURCES PROJECT
(Project Number 931-1054)

FINAL REPORT

(17 March 1981 - 16 March 1982)

SHEILA L. ROSS

Editor

Maseru, Lesotho

P.O.Box 333
Maseru 100, Lesotho

March 16, 1982

Ken Tsekoa
Director
Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
P.O.Box 718
Maseru 100, Lesotho

Dear Ken:

As promised in my memorandum to you on 25 February 1982, here is my final report on the Structuring NFE Resources Project (USAID Project Number 931-1054) called for in my contract with TransCentury Corporation. It covers the period 17 March 1981 to 16 March 1982.

Sincerely,



Sheila L. Ross
Editor

cc: J. Carney
J. Hoxeng
C. Long

File
SMC.
REPORTS
(LESOTHO)

I. Work of the Editor

The work of the editor during the period from March 1981 to March 1982 may be divided into two parts: work that was done for the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) and work that was done for the In-Service Training Programme of the National Teachers Training College (NTTC).

For the LDTC, Workbook 11 of JC Biology was edited and sent to print; workbooks 8 through 11 of O-level geography were edited and sent to print; and the Network for Educational Innovations Development in Africa (NEIDA) Report was completely rewritten, edited, and sent to the print shop. (The NEIDA report was one of two reports the editor was asked to handle outside the formal course writers section.)

For the in-service programme, workbooks 1 through 4 of the health course were edited (they have not been printed but are ready for print); workbooks 1 and 2 of Social Studies I were edited and printed (with a great deal of rewriting); and workbooks 1 and 2 of Home Economics I were edited and printed. (The work for the NTTC was done from June to January--all the manuscripts had to be printed for the in-service programme at the beginning of January. All the work on course books for the LDTC and the NTTC included the lay-out and paste-up of the workbooks.)

During September 1981 it was decided that the training seminar for course writers had served its usefulness. It did accomplish what it was set up to do: all course writers were taken through the writing, in English, of one workbook, except the Sesotho writer, who, because she was a section head, was involved in many projects as well as a three-month training programme in England. (See Ross, S. Annual Report, 1980-1981, pp. 4-5 for an in-depth discussion of the training seminar.)

The newsletter, Letsoe la Molepe, ended after two issues because of the lack of interest of LDTC staff members.

II. Role of the Editor

This part of the final report discusses what the role of editor could have been under the Structuring NFE Resources Project (USAID Project Number 931-1054) and the actual role of the editor.

"The Service Agency will be staffed largely by technicians able to provide advice, training, and help with program implementation." (Grant Agreement Between the United States of America and the Government of Lesotho for Non-Formal Education, Annex I, Amplified Project Description, p. 2)

The physical placement of the editor was crucial. Although the editor was funded as part of the project to upgrade the capabilities of the Service Agency, the editor was placed in the course writers section. The editor should have been in the Service Agency. Having been placed in the formal course writers section, the editor was never able to function as part of the project. There was no input into the project and therefore the role of editor should not have been written into the project. Moreover, the amount of work generated in the course writers section was such that the editor could not have functioned other than as a correspondence course editor.

Counterpart training was not undertaken at all. It would have been ideal for the editor to have had a counterpart to train under the project. Because of the nature of the project, an editor/instructional materials developer is essential and it would have upgraded much-needed service agency skills. A counterpart should have been identified before the arrival of the editor. On the arrival of the editor, the counterpart could have been sent for training and the editor would have filled that slot for a year. This would have given the editor and the project, as well as the LDTC, time to get used to one another. On the return of the counterpart after training, the editor and counterpart could have worked together. On-the-job training is imperative for an editor, especially when English may not be the first language of the editor. The above time-table is not set up as the ideal; the ideal would have been a counterpart and an editor who could have worked together for

several years to give the LDTC a Mosotho trained in editing, who could in turn train other Mosotho, on the job. There are two people in the course writers section who could have received counterpart training; however, they have been too busy writing workbooks. There is a Mosotho editor in the Basic Rural Education Section but, because of the structure of the LDTC, there is little communication among sections.

There is one fulltime editor in the course writers section. She is an expatriate who is the NTTC in-service coordinator. She works only with materials that pertain to the in-service programme. There was a part-time editor but she has been contracted to write the four workbooks for Social Studies II, part of the NTTC in-service materials. LDTC is recruiting an editor (to be funded by the Irish government). However, on the departure of the USAID-funded editor, there is no one to edit LDTC materials in the course writers section. There is a great deal of work to be done—for the in-service programme, for the course writers section, and for the Service Agency (as soon as work is generated under the project). In the course writers section there is an O-level commerce course that needs to be rewritten; the rewriting may also entail research. A part-time editor should be recruited to help the in-service coordinator and the LDTC. (There are 25 workbooks that must be edited by December 1982 in order for the LDTC to meet its contract obligations to the NTTC.)

There was no advisory role for the editor in the project. This has made the position of the editor awkward and ambiguous, which has led to frustrations and misunderstandings—on the part of the editor and the management of the LDTC. One example of this will suffice. It was recommended in late March of 1981 that the editor no longer function as head of typists. This request had been made several times by the editor and not acted on. However, in March 1981 it was made by Jim Hoxeng and acted on. Without the knowledge of the editor, who had been functioning as head of typists since August 1980, she was relieved of the position and someone else appointed. On learning of this, the editor went to the acting director and was told that there had been a meeting with the acting director, the office administrator, the head of the course writers section, and the head of production, at which a new

typing supervisor was chosen. But what better person to consult than the editor who had been in that position and had some insight into the problems as well as valuable suggestions to offer (see Ross, S. Annual Report, 1980-1981, pp. 8-11). Work flow and production charts had been set up; these have been discarded. Not even in the smallest ways were the advice and recommendations of the editor sought. This was particularly so after the departure of the project advisor. The editor was never able to gain the confidence of management, who were unable to separate criticism of job situations and loyalty to that same job.

On departure, the editor leaves nothing with the LDTC. Only the workload of the course writers section has been alleviated. It is doubtful that this was the only role envisioned for an editor under the NFE project. And it is not the proper role of an expatriate in development.

III. Observations on the NFE Project

This heading is being used as a catch-all phrase: under it will be discussed the project as written; selection of Lesotho as the country and LDTC as the organization for implementation; the timing of the implementation; personnel; placement of the technical assistants; the evolving of the LDTC as a service agency; the building design; and conclusions will be discussed.

The Project as Written

The project was designed "...to develop and test an innovative organizational approach to provision by central government agencies of technical and financial assistance to organizations and communities involved in non-formal education activities." (Grant Agreement Between the United States of America and the Government of Lesotho for Non-Formal Education, Article 2: The Project) "...to enable the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre to provide at an expanded and improved level, assistance in materials development, communications, staff training and finance to publicly supported institutions in Lesotho which need help to improve their NFE programs. As part of its assistance, LDTC will encourage expansion of NFE services to parts of the country which have least effective access to organized learning opportunities." (Amplified Program Description, Annex 1). One of the causes of the misunderstandings that existed between management and the first three technical assistants has been the project documents. Because of the elusiveness of the language, they are open to as many interpretations as there are people who read them. In the setting in which this project was implemented, more specific guidelines were needed.

A major flaw of the project as written for Lesotho and the LDTC, is the emphasis on upgrading only service agency capabilities. It is no good to develop those capabilities, which include the generation of instructional materials and reports, unless there is concurrent upgrading of other capabilities, for example, production. The production unit of the LDTC is



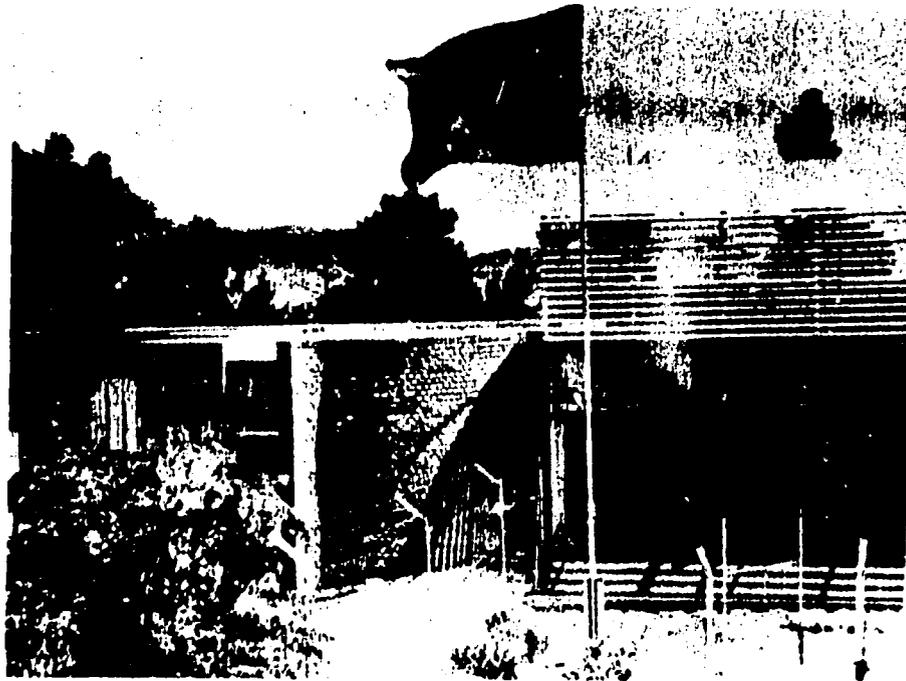
LESOTHO

Ministry of Education, Sports and Recreation

OFFICIAL OPENING

OF THE NEW OFFICE BUILDING

AT THE LESOTHO DISTANCE TEACHING CENTRE



PROGRAMME

6th November 1981

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weak: worksheets are put into the wrong workbooks; materials are lost; and equipment is often not in working condition. (Attached is a copy of the programme for the opening of the addition to the LDTC building. Not only is it printed upside down but the name of the ministry is incorrect. It must be pointed out that not all programmes were done in this fashion. Many of them were correct, but with no quality control, it would have been embarrassing for the Minister of Education to have received one of these. This example is mentioned at this time as an indication of just how important it is to upgrade other capabilities at the LDTC, and to call attention to the fact that the project for Lesotho and the LDTC was not well thought out or did not take into account the overall functioning of the centre.)

Since the design and implementation of the project the LDTC has moved into the Civil Service. Because of this, LDTC is hampered in its efforts to get rid of nonproductive personnel. Positions have also been frozen. A recommendation of the evaluators was that LDTC "pursue the termination and replacement of unproductive personnel." (A Mid-Term Project Evaluation of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre and the USAID Project 931-1054 Structuring Non-Formal Education Resources, November 1981, p.4.) This is often a long process and one the LDTC is hesitant to follow. The rigidity the move imposed, plus the lack of infrastructure, should have been fully looked into in the planning stage of the project.

Because of the innovational approach and the scope of the project, it was imperative that all parties to the project be of one mind. The staff of the LDTC did not fully understand the implications of the project -- what was expected of them or the benefits to be reaped. There should have been in-depth briefing for LDTC personnel before the arrival in March/April 1980 of three technical assistants. Alternatively, the three technical assistants could have undertaken that training. This, perhaps, would have been a way to avoid misunderstandings. To indicate just how wide the gulf that exists is, consider this incident. After the October/November 1981 evaluation -- an evaluation that was called for in the project document -- there was a staff meeting to discuss the findings of the evaluators. Before the meeting, an expurgated version of the evaluation was given to all staff participants.

Parts of the evaluation were blunt and many staff members were upset about what the evaluators revealed. A motion was made to send a letter to USAID requesting that the evaluation be rewritten because the staff of LDTC had lied when questioned by the evaluators and that the evaluators could know nothing about Lesotho or the Basotho because they had only spent three weeks in Lesotho. (The motion was not acted on.) With the full understanding of all parties to the project, this would not have happened. The LDTC would have understood just what it meant to accept donor aid from another country and what the host country's commitments were under that kind of aid.

Selection of Lesotho and the LDTC

Because of the political situation in Lesotho, is it possible to disburse loans and grants in a fair and equitable manner -- is there too much pressure, etc.? Because there was no one at the LDTC or, more specifically, in the Service Agency with the capability of handling the Assistance Fund, it would have made more sense to send a technical assistant to train members of the Service Agency in assistance fund management concurrent with bringing out other technical assistants. It was not realistic to have thought that the Service Agency and its small staff could handle the increased workload the project entailed. (During 1981-82, one of the members of the staff -- used by the Service Agency and Basic Rural Education -- was at the National University of Lesotho, thus depleting the staff further.)

Timing

Since the beginning of LDTC in 1974, the organization has grown at a phenomenal rate. There has been no infrastructure to grow with it. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that things are being handled in much the same way today as they were in 1974. There have been starts made, for example, trying to improve interoffice communication, but it is difficult for management to know which way to turn because there has been minimal management training of personnel. It would have been more beneficial to help LDTC improve the infrastructure of the centre first, before any thought was given to increasing the capabilities of the Service Agency. LDTC has to set

up a valid management system -- one that will work in the Sesotho culture. For that, a long-term consultant should be brought out, or should have been brought out at an earlier date. People are not fired because the LDTC still thinks it can take care of everyone, even nonproductive people (a nice approach and one that may work when there is a staff of eight, but not when there is an increased workload and a staff of seventy).

Another damaging occurrence concerning the timing of the project was the departure of the director for a year's study shortly after the three technical assistants arrived (they had all arrived by mid-April 1980 -- the director departed at the end of August 1980). The deputy director was left as acting director. The infrastructure of the LDTC was neither in place nor strong enough to allow for this. The director returned in late April 1981 and in September 1981 (as mentioned earlier) a member of Basic Rural Education went on a one-year study programme. This meant that there were only two persons in the Service Agency (with the arrival of the new project advisor in September 1981). How can the capabilities of the Service Agency be strengthened when there is no staff?

Personnel

A point that recurs is the lack of trained personnel and its effect on the implementation of the project. Perhaps the project could have been designed so that OPEXers could have filled existing roles while people at the LDTC were being trained. The LDTC needs trained staff and must go through the red tape of getting rid of nonproductive staff. There should be decentralization of power, but this can only come when the management does not feel threatened and after intensive management training. A recommendation at this time is for the project to take a completely different turn and develop a management programme -- an infrastructure in which the centre can operate to optimum capability. The implementation of an assistance fund should be put aside until there is an infrastructure to handle it and to manage the centre.

There is undoubtedly talent at the LDTC. However, during the two years this report covers, that talent, or the avenues for that talent to express itself, has not been evident. Pamphlets produced at the LDTC before the implementation of the project are evidence of the capabilities of the staff. Stories are told of a production unit that used to work until the early hours of the morning to meet deadlines. This implies a certain esprit among the staff -- an organization that was working together to produce its best. In January 1982 only the in-service coordinator and her children worked collating worksheets in order to meet an LDTC commitment to NTTC.

Placement of Technical Assistants

The placement of an editor under the service agency project has been discussed. The researcher/evaluator was needed as an OPEXer. Perhaps the physical placement of the research and evaluation technical assistant in the Service Agency would have added to the cohesiveness of the project and made more effective use of the technical assistants who had come to Lesotho to help make that project a success. Again, because of the lack of awareness about just what USAID represented and no commitment to that aid, the management and other members of the centre did not support the technical assistants. This might have been different had the director not left the centre for one year's study four months after the arrival of all three technical assistants. With the proper groundwork and understanding, this lack of support may not have occurred (see Ross, S. Annual Report, 1980-1981, pp. 4, 8-11, 16, 18-19).

LDTC Evolving as a Service Agency

Many of the staff of the LDTC are not aware that the current five-year plan of the government stipulates LDTC's role as the Ministry of Education's Service Agency for non-formal education on a national basis. If the LDTC is to evolve as a Service Agency, other areas of the centre may be deemphasized, for example, the formal course writers section and student advice. Because of the emphasis of the project on developing the

capabilities of the Service Agency, other sections of the centre have already suffered, originally because of the emphasis on the NFE survey (see Ross, S. Annual Report, 1980-1981, pp. 15-18).

Given the nature of the project and its emphasis on only one section of the LDTC, can there be any doubt of the stress on an already existing organization that was not structurally or intellectually ready for such a project. If it is the government's intention that the LDTC becomes the service agency arm of the Ministry of Education for non-formal education, then the staff of the LDTC should be made aware of not only that, but of the concurrent changes in the LDTC that will have to take place. To evolve successfully as a Service Agency, the LDTC needs to be restructured and key personnel trained in management. As it is now, the management governs city-states, not one dynamic organization working toward a common goal.

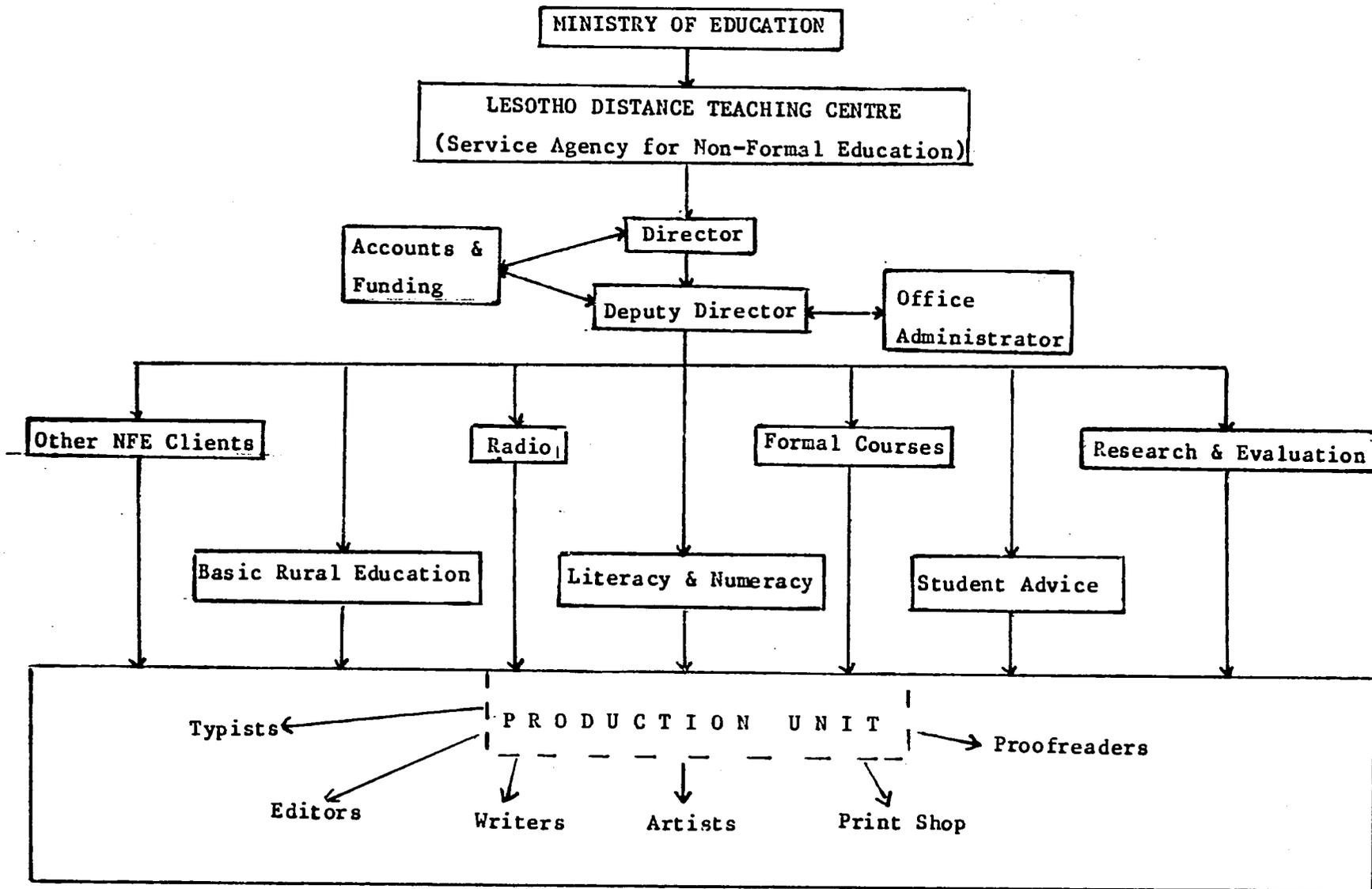
Building

The design of the building addition funded under the USAID project lends itself to keeping staff members in cubbyholes. For example, the course writers section has been split--the writers are in the new wing and the editors, artists and typists are in the old wing. The offices are hot and stuffy--there is no cross-ventilation. Design could have been improved on. A round library was designed--a nice touch, perhaps, but not functional. It is being used for other purposes. The windows in the writers section leak everytime there is a heavy rain.

IV. Conclusions

At this stage in the development of the LDTC, it is difficult to see how the project could have been implemented successfully as written. At the end of two years the overall impact of the project has been negative in many areas although the NFE survey is complete and the first organizations chosen for grants or loans.

The reasons for the negative aspects of the project have been enumerated in the final report. They are reiterated here for emphasis. In the planning stages of the project, the LDTC and its needs should have been more carefully observed. To write and implement a project that increases only service agency capabilities—when the Service Agency is understaffed—and ignores management and printing capabilities, is a disservice to the organization the project is trying to strengthen. Had the LDTC been more carefully scrutinized, it would have been obvious that there was not enough trained staff or infrastructure for such an innovative project. For the LDTC, a project designed to upgrade the organizational structure and management capabilities, making it more viable and dynamic and improving the production unit, would at this stage in LDTC's development, have been more useful.



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