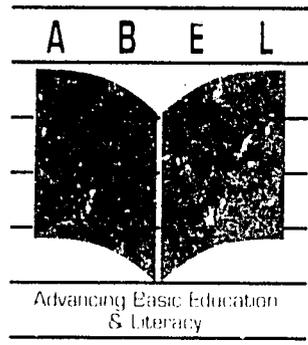


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## ELET EVALUATION REPORT



Prepared by:  
Julie Reddy

1992

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Dr. Julie Reddy  
Project ABEL

## 1) INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A short-term evaluation by ABEL was requested by the English Language Education Trust (ELET) for the purpose of assessing its general organizational structure and the administration of its functions. A long-term evaluation of the organization's work has been initiated that focuses primarily on the impact of its projects. The short-term evaluation was conducted from January 13 to January 26.

ELET was started as an independent trust in 1983 in response to an assessment of critical issues in Black Education conducted by the Urban Foundation. The study, which was requested by Anglovaal, revealed that a major problem confronting Black schools is the quality of English instruction. Pupils in Black schools are taught in their mother tongue for the first five years of school, while the medium of instruction is switched to English from standard three onwards. Proficiency in English, therefore, is a major focus in Black Education.

The primary purpose of the Trust is to provide in-service teacher training in English Second Language (ESL) for teachers in the KwaZulu, and the Department of Education and Training (DET) primary and secondary school systems. The Communicative Language Approach, designed to promote maximum interaction in English between teachers and students and among students through group work and the teaching of "life skills", is used in ESL training. In cooperation with the British Council, the Trust also offers certificate and diploma courses to English teachers that are supervised and moderated by the Cambridge University Examinations Syndicate. The two courses offered at the ELET Centre are The Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE) and the Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English (DOTE). An extensive resource library has been established by Anglovaal at the centre to provide teachers of English with resource materials.

ELET uses a comprehensive, needs based approach to upgrading English language instruction in Black schools by sponsoring projects that focus on twenty schools within a specific circuit. For 1992, ten projects throughout the Natal and Kwa Zulu areas are in progress. ELET's two-year formal involvement in a project is guided by the following stages:

Stage 1: A one-day **Principal's workshops** in which the project is explained.

Stage 2: A two-day **Teacher's orientation course** for selected English teachers within a circuit.

- Stage 3: **Follow-up school visits** to provide support and to monitor classroom progress.
- Stage 4: **School-based workshops** to address perceived needs of teachers and students.
- Stage 5: **Ongoing school visits** involving lesson observations and classroom demonstrations.
- Stage 6: **Post-project committees** formed by teachers within a circuit take over the continued running of the project. At this stage ELET disengages from any formal involvement with a project.

## 2) OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

Broad objectives of the evaluation that were identified by ELET, prior to the request for an evaluation were:

- a) To **appraise** the general organization, aims and operational principles of ELET.
- b) To **appraise** the administration of the field projects and of the teacher's courses.
- c) To **appraise** the fieldworker's training course.

## 3) LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

In the two weeks available to the evaluator for this short-term evaluation, it was not possible to fulfil all of the pre-determined objectives. The evaluator was unable to conduct any on-site assessment of the administration of field projects and teacher's courses because the teacher's workshops were only scheduled to begin in March. A limited appraisal of the fieldworkers training course was conducted because the course was already in progress when the evaluation began. Moreover, ESL is not one of the evaluator's areas of expertise and, therefore, she was unable to provide an "expert" appraisal of the quality of the course. An indepth assessment of the practical application of the fieldworker's training in the field was not viable because the projects were in the introductory stages and only two principal's workshops were held during the evaluation period.

## 4) REVISED OBJECTIVES

Revised, more realistic objectives that focused primarily on the internal functioning of the organization were negotiated with the ELET personnel during the early stages of the evaluation process.

The revised objectives were:

- a) to **assess** the management structure and internal functioning of the organization.

- b) to **identify** the perceptions of facilitators and trainee fieldworkers about the quality and direction of the fieldworker's training course.

## 5) **METHODOLOGY**

The evaluator was unable to visit the organization and negotiate the scope and objectives of the evaluation prior to the commencement of the evaluation process. Therefore, an inductive approach was used to gather the necessary data. The approach was exploratory and open-ended based on broad guidelines provided by the organization. A variety of methods were used to gather information for this assessment. Procedures used are described below:

- a) **Document review and analysis:** This involved a review and assessment of all relevant historical and recent documents available at ELET, as well as previous evaluation reports.
- b) **Interviews:** Semi-structured and unstructured individual, group and follow-up interviews were conducted with management (1), administrative (3) and project staff (4), and with the participants in the fieldworker's training program (10).
- c) **Observations:** Participant observations of staff interactions, fieldworker training sessions and two principal's workshops were conducted.

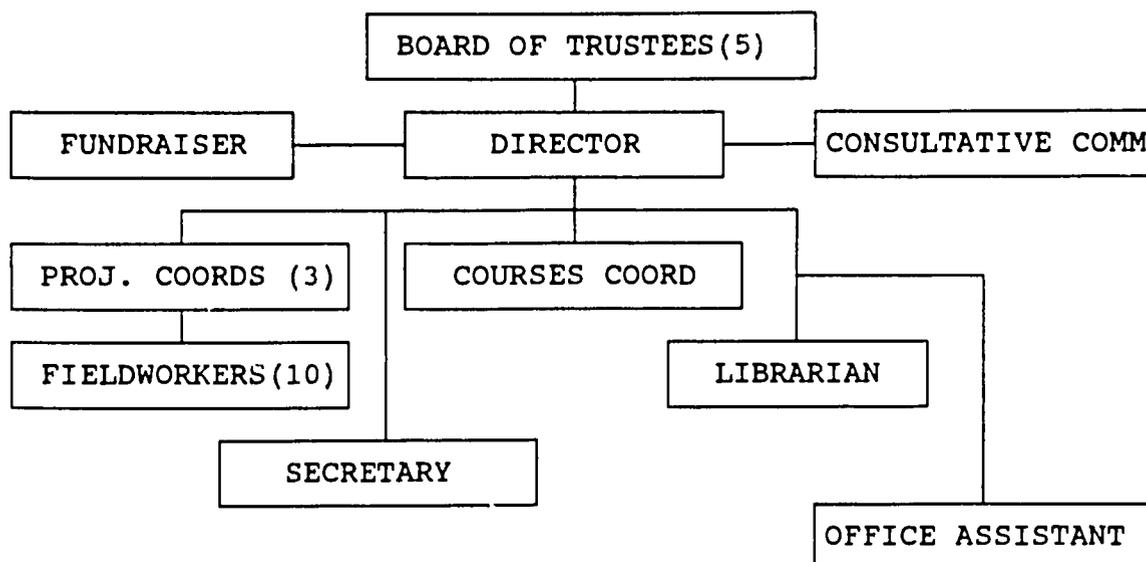
## 6) **REPORTING**

An oral presentation of findings and recommendations was conducted by the evaluator and draft copies of the evaluation report were distributed to all members of staff.

## 7) **DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND INTERNAL FUNCTIONING**

ELET has a full-time staff of 8 comprising a Director, 3 Project Coordinators, a Courses Coordinator, Librarian, Secretary and an Office Assistant. In addition, there are 10 Fieldworkers, (teachers from the DET and Kwazulu school systems that have been seconded to ELET for a period of two years), and 1 part-time fundraiser. The organization is run as a trust and currently has 5 members on its Board of Trustees. Among the full-time staff, only the Director and Secretary's positions are permanent. The remaining staff members are contracted for three year periods subject to renewal.

### THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ELET



The Board of Trustees together with the Director deliberate on overall policy and logistical planning, staff appointments and terminations, conditions of service, provision and allocation of funds and supervision of expenditures. There is also a Consultative Committee of representatives, drawn from the Centre and fieldstaff, teachers, principals, inspectors, education department and other education projects, that functions in a consultative, advisory and evaluative capacity regarding project implementation.

The Courses Coordinator organises and administers the Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE) and the Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English (DOTE) courses. Two of the Project Coordinators manage four projects each and are responsible for the training and supervision of fieldstaff. The third Project Coordinator manages only two projects because she is responsible for providing support for the post-project committees. The 10 fieldworkers representing individual ELET projects first attend a three week intensive training course provided by the Centre staff, and thereafter assume the day-to-day responsibility of overseeing a project.

ELET's formal involvement with a project is for two years, after which it is turned over to a post-project committee whose membership consists of teachers from the school district trained by ELET. Support for post-project committees is provided on an ongoing basis by one of the Project Coordinators.

#### 8) FINDINGS

The discussion of findings for **objective a: management structure and internal practices** will be based on five major issues that were consistently raised during data collection.

### 8.1) Organizational Hierarchy

A majority (7/8) of the office staff and two fieldstaff described the management structure as "top down." General concern was expressed about the power relationships within the organization. Apparently, decisions pertaining to recruitment/termination, conditions of service, management and internal structures are made by the Director in collaboration with the Board of Trustees with little staff input or consultation. However, there was unanimous agreement that within that linear structure there exists a pleasant and friendly relationship between the Director and other members of staff. The Director was supportive when approached by staff members about their problems and requests for time-off.

### 8.2) Internal Communication

There were four requests for clarity on the kinds of structural relationships that could be negotiated between staff members and management. It was also felt that people's skills were not adequately tapped and that a much greater level of participation in decision making and procedures than at present could work at ELET. Although there was recognition of the Director's initiatives in "asking for and listening to the opinions of the staff", it was explained that this:

is usually within the context of course planning, and discussions about work in the field itself. There is a sense that consultation/negotiations becomes trickier once the structural issues within the organization are brought up.

Two staff members pointed out that people can be very accountable if assigned greater responsibility in the workplace. One long-term staff member observed that:

ELET has grown on an ad hoc basis. No structural planning has gone into it and this growth causes the organization to lose touch with its internal functioning.

Three people added that existing practices are changed without them being informed or consulted. It was the perception of half the staff that conditions of service, "shift from time to time" without their knowledge. Three other newer members of staff concurred with this perception. According to one person:

there is a sense that nothing is written in granite (explicitly stated by the director) and that is worrying... I am not sure what it means, it might mean that he (the Director) is quite clear on how they were meant to happen ... I like to take it that things are negotiable... I would like to know what kinds of structural relationships one is negotiating because at the moment it does seem to be a top down situation and negotiations are somewhat limited.

In recent months resentment resulting from a perceived lack of consultation has, been directed in many instances, at the newly appointed secretary who in her defence pointed out that she was merely following the instructions of the Director. Two long-term staff people described specific office procedures that were changed and enforced through the new secretary without any consultation of staff. All staff members held the opinion that the monthly staff meetings dealt exclusively with project related issues and noted instances when they were explicitly discouraged from raising personal concerns. According to one long-term staff person:

M (the Director) found staff meetings too long winded and a waste of time and, therefore, he would make decrees and communicate it via memos.

Only one person concurred with the Director that staff meetings:

should be for work issues and that personal problems with individuals should be kept personal.

A majority (6) requested that staff meetings be held more regularly and should become more interactive and that people be given an opportunity at staff meetings to raise/discuss personal concerns/issues about management/administrative practices and conditions of service.

There were also requests for some sort of formal specification on the nature of the ELET organization.

Is ELET private sector or not? Because if it is private sector we should automatically get increases after three months anyway, plus the yearly increment, and if we are not it needs to be stated what kind of organization this is. We get private sector type leave and hours but don't get private sector salaries and it also seems that there are certain other perks in the private sector that we don't get.

A more consultative type of management structure was requested in every discussion of internal practices. Interview discussions and a review of policy documentation revealed that many of the management practices and structures at ELET seem to have evolved on an ad hoc basis through verbal directives. Apparently, very little is documented about the rules and procedures at ELET and, therefore, a majority of the staff members perceive changes in management practice and other internal structural changes as arbitrary actions of the Director.

### **8.3) Policies**

A majority of the respondents focused on four major policy issues: transport, hiring practices and procedures, position descriptions and salaries.

a) The transport policy of the organization was a major concern of management, and both project and field staff. Project staff criticized the vagueness of the transport policy which one person described as "a thorn in this organization," because it was explained that, "it seems to have been different at different stages for different people," and "more importantly, because the project depend's on people's mobility."

Coordinators and fieldworkers are expected to provide their own transport for their field visits. One long-term staff member:

Got the impression that I would get R4000 to purchase and maintain a car. But I don't know when they (benefits package) were changed or how, but they are just not there any more... A new package comes out every year.

Another person who comes from a situation with one family car said:

I can't buy one (a car) and that is a problem. I ought to be able to hire a car, but I have to work out a system of paying for the rental which means staying with people and getting a fieldworkers per diem for meals, etc. I don't like this system but I put my problem to M (the Director) and this is the kind of solution we came up with, which within the present parameters is quite a reasonable solution. But I do think the parameters are problematic...

One person explained that until last year people were being paid a transport allowance of 25 cents per km and that the staff in general, "were most unhappy about it and it became quite unpleasant this time (January )last year", because it was felt that "there was no logic to it at all." The Director approached the trustees on this matter and the amount was increased to 85 cents per km. However, it was pointed out by one staff member that this only applies to travel over a certain distance and to coordinators, because travel by administrative staff within the central business district of Durban is still compensated at 25 cents per km.

The fieldworkers, on the other hand, complained that the 500 rands a month travelling allowance paid to them by ELET was inadequate compensation for the "wear and tear" on their vehicles caused by rural roads. Moreover, the across the board rate was criticized as being unfair because some fieldstaff had to travel greater distances than others. It was suggested by one fieldworker that the transport allowance be pro-rated.

In general, project, field and office staff proposed that the ongoing tension between staff and management generated by the transport issue could only be effectively resolved if project cars were provided. One person in noting "that the funders were not eager to provide transportation because of abuse, etc;" added her perception that there were no "typical abusers on this staff", and furthermore, that "one can establish safeguards." Another cautioned that adequate consideration had to be given to

"the practicalities of the trust providing vehicles" and indicated concern for who would take responsibility for the vehicles. The Director, in voicing similar concerns, also indicated his reservations about the implications and responsibilities involved in making project cars available to staff.

Comments made during the interview discussions indicated that a majority of staff members perceive the Director as not understanding their concerns regarding the transport issue because he was provided with a car by the Trust and also enjoyed additional perks related to transportation. The Director pointed out that despite his efforts to resolve the transport concerns expressed to him by staff members, the decision to provide project cars was out of his hands because most funders are unwilling to fund project vehicles. He went on to add that he found the transportation prerequisite a major deterrent for many qualified people, particularly from the Black community, being considered for coordinator/field positions.

b) Hiring practices, the other major concern of a majority of respondents were described as inconsistent. In over half the staff interviews (5), respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with being hired for three year periods while other positions were permanent. The four Coordinators and the Librarian are hired on a three year contractual basis while the Director and Secretary hold permanent positions. In fact, one respondent, a recent hire was distressed to learn during the evaluation period that she was a contractual employee. During the interview she had assumed that she was employed on a permanent basis because the position had previously been permanent. Subsequent inquiry through management confirmed that the position had been restructured and changed to a contract appointment. Contract personnel argued that there was no rationale within the present operating structure of the organization for three year appointments:

What does this three year contract relate to in the present set-up. Projects last for two years and the follow-up with the (post-projects) committees is no longer the responsibility of the Project Coordinators. So what are we basing the three year set-up on. Actually, it leads to people leaving or being terminated while a project is half way through.

It was explained by Project Coordinators that prior to 1991 projects ran for three years but with the recent introduction of fieldworkers, (who are seconded from their teaching positions to ELET for two years), the lifespan of projects has been reduced to two. One person provided the following explanation:

Then at the beginning of 1991 the present structure was introduced. Now, when I look back at the previous structure of a project lasting three years I could see some rationale for employing someone for three years and then renewing it thereafter... Now things have changed and I am

just wondering whether the same policy in regard to contractual appointment should even still apply.

According to management, contractual hiring practices were designed because the employment of personnel was dependent on the availability of external funding. However, there was no explanation provided for, "why some positions were permanent and others not", and the continued practice of "three year" contracts. One person criticized what she perceived as "some sort of differential categorization of job" and pointed out that:

The Secretary's post is a permanent one. Now what I can't understand is what is the difference? You need a secretary to do all your typing but you need the Project Coordinators to run all the projects. So why is one a contract position and the other one not, it's peculiar ...

Contract staff described at length their feelings related to job insecurity. There was concern expressed that if one disagreed too vehemently with management on certain practices, one's contracts would not be renewed. It was added that the reliance on one person, the Director, who made recommendations to the Board of Trustees on contract renewals/terminations was problematic and as a result contract staff were "not comfortable with creating waves." As stated by one respondent, "I feel I could not go to bat over some issue that will contribute to the betterment of ELET because of the lack of security." Another added that there was fear among colleagues that, "it may be used against you at a later date when the contract becomes renewable." According to a couple of respondents, "this has happened before and could happen again."

Respondent's perceptions of job insecurity were intensified by the absence of any formal process within the organization for evaluating performance on the job. It was suggested by one respondent that this "gap in management practice", provided the Director with greater discretionary powers in relation to job tenure of contractual staff. Respondents described a situation in which, "one man on top was responsible for hiring and firing." It was added that "there have been cases when people's contracts have been terminated for personal reasons," because of personality clashes and power struggles within the organization. Moreover, it was argued that in the past people were notified of termination two months before their contracts were due for renewal and that this was unacceptable. The Director presented a different view by explaining that staff members had resigned from the organization of their volition and for better career prospects. He did concede that there were personality clashes but explained that this resulted primarily from ideological differences between himself and some of the staff members. He went on to emphasize that this did not contribute in any way to staff members leaving the organization.

All staff members strongly advocated the need for a definite structure for evaluating performances to alleviate some of their

concerns about personalities being used as a basis for termination. There was unanimous support for:

...rigorous assessments. They (assessments) help you and are motivating, and they don't have to be punitive in their design and form at all. We need to develop our understanding of evaluation, how to bring it about and how to use it for our benefit because it is part of process and ELET is becoming a process organization.

The procedures used to recruit new staff were also criticized. When ELET recruited two new project coordinators early in 1992 the long-term Courses Coordinator and Project Coordinator on the staff were not involved in the recruitment process. Apparently, the Director together with one of the trustees, who is an applied linguist, interviewed and selected the candidates. The dissatisfaction one respondent expressed with being excluded from the process of recruiting a counterpart was:

We know the job but an outside linguistic expert doesn't know the job.

The Director, in turn, described his perceptions of the staffing situation at the time as, "a sensitive area dependent on past experiences." Therefore, he added, based on his discretion he excluded the Coordinators from the process of recruiting their counterparts. However, he pointed out that project coordinators were very involved in the recruitment of project fieldworkers. He also acknowledged an experienced fieldworker's complaint that senior fieldworkers were excluded from the process of selecting trainee fieldworkers.

Three senior staff members voiced their concern about the termination procedures adopted, particularly during the past year when three people "left" the organization within a period of three months. Incidents that contributed to the sudden turnover of office staff were related during interview discussions and was described as "quite alarming." One incident in particular involved the former secretary who was very popular among the personnel. The perceived circumstances that led to her departure from the organization were repeatedly mentioned. Apparently, she resigned because her requests for a higher salary and a computer were not granted. Staff members noted with disappointment that her replacement was offered both the higher salary and a computer. One respondent expressed the following description of management's treatment and attitude towards personnel:

They don't value staff at this place and they will not give you anything you ask for, but the moment you turn your back the new person gets it all. In fact, the new person sometimes does even better than the original person.

c) All position descriptions were written by the Director and described by project and office staff as being "too directive with little staff input." One person added that, "I don't have a sense that it was much other than handed to me, that I didn't

have a role in its conception." Coordinators described the tasks specified in their position descriptions as clearly functionary because "they operate in terms of policy laid down for us." One person added:

That's not to say that things don't filter up or down but there is no suggestion in the job descriptions of structures for consultative channels, and that bothers me very much. Engaging in research activities implies some kind of policy base from which you do that. Also, with all the other activities one is carrying out very important policy decisions so it is important that we work at that level.

A new staff member explained that she did not think that there were explicit position descriptions when she was employed. She was given a verbal description of the nature of the work on the ground but adds that she had to rely on her own initiative to discover:

what was going on to some extent even at that level (work on the ground), and the kinds of power one would have in the structure at large.

One respondent suggested that given the nature of the work ELET is involved in it was necessary for staff to negotiate some kind of consensus among the different counterparts about the nature of their jobs and that this could be an effective strategy for the sharing of skills and shared learning within the organization.

It was acknowledged by a recent hire that existing position descriptions were useful to the extent that they represented a pattern where jobs were clearly defined in certain respects, so that "one knows what is one's duties or one's direction." Apparently, it was the intention of the Director when he compiled the position descriptions that they be used as guidelines on requirements for particular positions and were definitely negotiable. The Director's attempts to consult with personnel about the position descriptions was confirmed by the Secretary. Staff members were given copies of all the position descriptions including a written description of the functions of the Board of Trustees and the Consultative Committee and were asked to respond individually. A more formalized group forum for negotiating the position descriptions was requested.

d) Salary increases at ELET are usually based on cost of living calculations, although there is a practice of additional compensation for increased academic qualifications achieved. There were a couple of complaints about salaries being too low, although the more consistent concern related to a lack of clarity of where personnel were located within the salary ranges used, and the inflexibility of when the annual increments are determined.

consultative and collaborative... Is this only with the outside community?

In general, responses revolved around requests for the Board of Trustees to be introduced to the staff, greater clarity and consultation on the role of the trustees and an opportunity for staff members to be more actively involved in strategic planning and decision making on the internal/external functioning of the organization.

It was also pointed out that early in 1991 the fieldworkers proposed, through the Director, that trustees accompany them on school visits using their own private vehicles. This request related primarily to their ongoing dissatisfaction with the organization's policy on transport. Fieldworkers believed that the school visits would provide trustees with a better sense of their transportation problems, and the arduousness of their jobs. It was also anticipated that through the field visits, trustees would realize that the allocated transport allowance was inadequate. Apparently at the time the request was made, the trustees verbally indicated that they would go on these school visits, however, it was noted by staff members that there has been no follow-through since.

One person commented that not all the members of the Board of Trustees were involved in decision making. His impression was that only two trustees together with the Director assumed responsibility for most of the decision making, and in fact wielded the most power. Another raised the point that the structure of the Board of Trustees was problematic because it was male dominated. Previously, there was a woman on the board but she resigned and there was lack of clarity amongst the staff about how membership is decided or terminated. It was suggested that "they choose each other."

In order to facilitate a negotiated relationship at ELET, it was proposed that structures be designed for staff, management and the Board of Trustees to work together through some of the policy and procedural issues that need to be clarified and addressed. This, according to staff, would provide a more acceptable forum for negotiating conditions of service and for the trustees to account for the dispensations they have decided upon for the staff and to have dialogue about the oftentimes opposing positions. One person pointed out that:

It is not for us to put cases which are judged but to have a sense that people are genuinely receptive, that we are not potential miscreants bound to somewhat arbitrary decisions by a Director and Board. Afterall, we are discovering the situation on the ground.

The need for a more consistent policy to deal with some of the ongoing issues facing the organization was consistently emphasized. It was proposed that the:

The Courses and Project Coordinators were informed that their salaries were equivalent to that earned by a training college lecturer, but given the racial inequity of salary ranges in academic institutions little is known about the specific range used and a person's location within the range. The Director responded that salaries are usually determined on the basis of qualifications and previous salary history, and added that senior coordinator's salaries fell into the upper end of the scale used.

Salary increases are awarded without exception on an annual basis in January. This meant that an employee who started work mid-year had to wait almost 18 months before his/her salary was upgraded. It was repeatedly pointed out that this was a very unfair practice and that a more acceptable system would be for annual increments to be given on the anniversary of one's starting date. Apparently, the Director and Trustee's response to staff complaints and recommendations was a non-negotiable reference to ELET's policy.

There were unanimous requests from respondents for clarity and written policies that specify not only the organization's transport policy but other conditions of service as well. All staff members expressed their dissatisfaction with verbal promises, while one person pointed out that benefits, "should not be given as a kindness from above."

#### **8.4) External Communication**

When asked to comment about the relationship between ELET personnel and the Board of Trustees, a consistent complaint was that the trustees have never actually met with the staff to discuss issues because all concerns are relayed through the Director. One person pointed out that:

There are times when they (the trustees) pop in but quite frankly, if I saw most of them on the street I wouldn't recognize them.

According to the position description document, the Board of Trustees is "responsible for overall policy and logistical planning," which was described by one respondent as, "pretty over the top." Other responses to the role played by Board members in the organization's functioning included:

It is pretty ludicrous, actually, that I have nothing to do with conditions of service or logistical planning or even the provision and allocation of funds... this is all part of my job as it is. I feel I should be at the conceptual level of deliberation and planning just as much as the level of implementation.

The trustees are doing some of the things we should be doing. We don't have all that much say on policy and I feel that we as professional people should have some say in policy... I mean we are the people on the ground. It is a screaming irony because ELET professes to be more

Staff need to negotiate a future dispensation with the trustees. So far things have been handed down arbitrarily. All those areas seem to be based on the assumption that people are going to be unsatisfactory, not positive.

### 8.5) Deputizing and Line Functions

a) All project and office staff pointed to a, "structural gap in the organizational hierarchy", particularly between the position of the Director and the rest of the staff. In the present structure it was observed that:

If something happens (to the Director), there is nobody (within the organization) to take over.

Individual staff members were credited with having genuine skills in the area of management and administration, and in a crisis management situation those individuals were considered capable of stepping in. However, it was also recognized that "in terms of what the present structure had to offer, these individuals would be inadequately prepared for the job." As one person pointed out:

I have been aware of my own gaps in skills in various areas, particularly administrative and I've thought how am I going to learn these skills? It just seems that I have certain functions and not other functions..."

There is a general feeling that the deputizing function during the Director's absence was very arbitrarily determined and that there was a gender bias underlying that determination. It was pointed out that previously the "deputizing function was written into two people's job descriptions," which led to confusion and a measure of resentment among the staff members concerned. Furthermore, at one point there were major conflicts between certain staff members. As a result, nobody was asked to deputize in the director's absence.

Presently, however, the Courses Coordinator has been chosen by the Director to deputize during his absence. Apparently, the rationale for this choice has not been communicated to the rest of the staff. Except for the Director, the Courses Coordinator is the only other male on the staff. Therefore, it was suggested that gender and the coordinator's relationship to the Director rather than qualifications was the basis for this choice. It was pointed out that the Courses Coordinator and one of the Project Coordinators were hired at the same time, yet the Project Coordinator, even with her higher academic qualifications, was passed over:

There are gender tensions at ELET, C (the Courses Coordinator) deputizes for (the Director) and just knowing some of the women that have passed through these doors I find that very surprising... I know he is very recently qualified and he is not involved in the project work but in the present top down structure he represents number two...

The Director reacted to this statement by describing the existing organizational structure where no provision was made for a position of Deputy Director. In explaining that his choice of a deputy was based on the individual's previous administrative experience and not gender as was suggested, he conceded that it was an oversight on his part not to have communicated this to his staff.

In response to a request during the interview for strategies to deal with this issue, one person suggested that an alternative management practice would be to allow the staff to elect a person to deputize. Another suggested that the deputizing function be rotated within the organization. Coordinators, in particular saw little opportunity to "grow" within the organization, given the present structures. The lack of opportunity for staff development into second tier management was illustrated in the following comment, "If I wasn't a Coordinator, I would have to be the Director."

b) The absence of explicit line functions in the present management structure was another issue that was raised. Project Coordinators in particular, who are responsible for coordinating the work of fieldworkers, pointed out that there was very little clarity on who should be consulted about personal requests. Situations were described in which they were approached by their fieldworkers to mediate on their behalf with the Director regarding personal requests, while at the same time expecting their project coordinators to handle work related matters. The ambivalence that exists about line functions and decision making responsibilities was described as "unacceptable."

#### 9) Discussion

It was noted that all respondents were cooperative and open during the interview discussions. This can be partially credited to the Director who in his evaluation briefing for staff asked that they not only make themselves readily available to the evaluator but "speak their minds." Furthermore, it was encouraging to find that respondents reacted critically to certain internal practices and policies without fear of intimidation. Generally it was ascertained that all staff members, and in particular the Director, show tremendous commitment to the organization and its goals. It was observed throughout the discussions with both staff and management that there was a climate for change and a commitment by all persons involved with the organization to strengthen its internal functioning.

Clearly many of the managerial and administrative issues raised are outcomes of organizational growth and change. As illustrated by one respondent, the organization has grown over the years on an ad hoc basis. The Trust started with an initial staff complement of 2 in 1983, and presently employs 8 full-time centre staff, and coordinates the activities of 10 fieldworkers that are seconded to the organization from the DET/KwaZulu school districts. While it was obvious that a great deal of foresight

and planning has gone into the external functioning of the organization in terms of the services it provides, few formal structures have been developed to cope with the increasing demands on internal administration and management practices resulting from growth and change. Based on the information gathered, it was obvious that a form of crisis management has constituted the primary managerial response in dealing with organizational problems at ELET.

There were two prevailing themes underlying the discussion of the major issues emerging from the evaluation:

**a) Dysfunctional Communication Channels:** There is an obvious lack of effective communication between management/trustees and the rest of the staff. This has resulted in unilateral decision making by the Director and members of a Board of Trustees that is perceived by staff members as non-consultative and "top down."

**b) Underdeveloped Structures for Internal Functioning:** Written procedures and policies on a number of issues relating to human resource and internal management practices are inadequate.

## 10) RECOMMENDATIONS

It was not the intention of this evaluation undertaking to be prescriptive to ELET. Rather, through a presentation of respondent's perceptions of the management structure and internal functioning, it was anticipated that underlying core issues would be exposed so that strategies for dealing with internal organizational problems might be recommended. To deal with the two core issues described above it is recommended that:

**10.1) Effective communication channels** be set up to encourage dialogue and negotiation between the Director/Executive Board and staff members. One recommendation for improving internal communication and fostering a team spirit within the organisation is to formalize regular specific staff meetings to discuss office management and policy concerns, since the current practice restricts monthly staff meetings to implementation/project issues. Reciprocal accountability among all the persons employed in the organization can only be facilitated if management makes an effort to be accountable for its decision making to the individual members of staff. It is also recommended that a staff representative sit on the Executive management committee to ensure that the concerns of staff are adequately represented and promote a consultative type of management structure.

**10.2) Written procedures and policies** have to be systematically developed to clarify issues and provide consistent structures on internal functioning and management practices, particularly as it relates to recruitment, termination and conditions of service. Written documents will not only provide staff members with a point of reference for dealing with organizational concerns, but also eliminate the need for management to justify certain actions, as was revealed during this evaluation.

The following provides a list of additional specific recommendations for improving and strengthening the internal functioning and management structures of the organization:

- \* Examine and redefine the operational capacity and scope of functions of the Board of Trustees. This can be done by assessing the composition, practices and operations of other NGO Trusts.
- \* Establish structures for performance evaluation and a set of criteria by which staff performances can be evaluated in a non-threatening and positive manner.
- \* Prepare a Code of Employment Conduct which includes a comprehensive grievance procedure.
- \* Establish a second tier leadership within the organization to promote staff training and development and to provide a forum for the Director to delegate some of the management and administrative responsibilities.

11) The discussion of the findings for Objective b: To identify the perceptions of facilitators and trainee fieldworkers about the quality and direction of the fieldworker's training course will be divided into two sections.

#### 11.1) Perceptions of Facilitators

The three-week fieldworkers training course was designed and facilitated primarily by two Project Coordinators. However, the Director was also involved in leading some sessions. There were 10 fieldworkers participating in the training. Three were senior fieldworkers who had attended a previous training course, while the rest were new trainees. This was the second year that training was offered to fieldworkers, and according to the facilitators the materials used in 1991 had to be revised and recast based on the assessed level of competence of the participants. Additionally, based on the outcomes of the 1991 course evaluations, the duration of the course was extended from two weeks to three weeks. The intention was to provide participants with additional time to reflect on certain key issues and to concentrate on their reading materials.

It was the perception of the facilitators that the content and implementation of the fieldworker's training program was collaborative at the level of broad planning, but that an increased level of collaboration between centre staff and field staff at the level of developing materials was required. Apparently, time and personnel constraints had limited not only a critical examination of the reading materials and course content, but also the efforts of the course planners from working systematically through the course materials at the level of detail desired. There was a sense that fieldworkers had not been fully integrated into the process of developing the training

materials and that the training was packaged by the facilitators without being mediated on the ground. It was proposed that a greater level of interaction be encouraged between the fieldworkers and the designers of the course so that the training can be more collaborative rather than directive.

Materials for the course were developed by the facilitators. It was stated that course materials were developed on an ad hoc basis based on the expressed needs and interests of the participants. It was the impression of both facilitators that, given the circumstance and constraints under which they have had to operate, the outcomes were satisfactory. However, it was added that a preferred option would be to produce a training manual to add more structure to the training course. Both facilitators realized that a considerable amount of time and effort would have to be allocated to produce a product that would meet the expectations and standards of both facilitators and participants.

Although both facilitators shared the opinion that the course content was adequate, they proposed that a learner's capacity to digest and absorb the materials demanded greater attention during the development of the course plan and implementation timetable. It was noted during some training sessions that participants became overwhelmed with the amount/complexity of the materials being presented.

Facilitators noticed that when participants researched particular areas on their own they sought new readings and shared them with other participants. In some instances facilitators needed to work individually with participants to develop a particular theoretical framework that proved difficult for the individual to interpret. It was observed that participants brought to the sessions many practical ideas and in some instances merely needed assistance in locating those ideas into a theoretical framework.

There was a suggestion that the materials and methodology used in the training be more rigorously assessed. It was proposed that this can be achieved by incorporating a formative process of evaluation in the design of the training course. So far, the courses offered have been summatively evaluated at the end of the training course. The facilitators would also like to include a formal mechanism for the fieldworkers to formatively assess their personal and intellectual development in the training course.

### **11.2) Perceptions of Participants**

In general the participants in the training course found the sessions interesting and the facilitators capable and sensitive to the needs and expectations of the participants. There were requests that future course planning include a time slot for more extensive use of the library. It was felt that the librarian should be given an opportunity to present a session to participants on the services and information available through the library. Specific time should be allocated in the training sessions for library research to enable participants to explore

and examine additional materials to support and supplement course handouts.

The three weeks allocated for the training course was considered inadequate by some participants, given the courseload. The allocation of a whole day for orientation and discussion of methodology/course plan was considered unnecessary. It was felt that this component of the training could be accommodated in half the time. A majority of respondents pointed out that the theoretical component of the course was dealt with in excessive detail and needed to be reassessed and shortened. Also, facilitators were spending too much time on lesson planning and that too much material was being covered in the time allocated for the sessions. In many instances this led to "overload" among certain participants and affected their concentration. Many of the new fieldworkers felt that more time was required to absorb and grasp the materials and theoretical concepts, and also for working through the more demanding areas.

It was suggested that part of the afternoons be made available on a daily basis for participants and facilitators to work together in assessing the situation on the ground. This would provide an opportunity for participants to reflect upon the approaches discussed in the sessions and their learning in terms of their own situations and experiences. Another proposal was that sessions be videotaped to provide participants and facilitators an opportunity to review and assess the course "after hours."

## 12) DISCUSSION

All the facilitators interacted very well with the participants and it was noted that facilitators were actively engaged in creating a conducive learning climate for the participants. The fieldworkers displayed confidence during the sessions and participated actively.

It was noted that participants were very capable of summarizing and describing the readings/handouts, but experienced difficulty in critically assessing the readings and other course materials. In a discussion with one of the facilitators it was pointed out that the whole concept of the critical autonomous consciousness of an individual is central to the learning process of the training course. It is important, therefore, that participants be encouraged to critically assess the various components of the training, particularly since one of the primary purposes of a communicative language approach is to facilitate autonomous learning in the learner/acquirer in order to improve communication skills. To the participants' credit, it was observed that the majority were able to take the ideas and approaches discussed in the sessions to their own situations and realities in the field. Participants were starting to explore how the materials and approaches learned in the sessions can work in their particular situations. Many were strategizing, without compromising the spirit of teaching, for their own situations.

The course followed a slightly academic approach to the training of fieldworkers. Although video tapes were used extensively in the course it is recommended that alternative teaching techniques, particularly roleplaying and simulation exercises, can be used effectively in training and promoting active participation.

**ADDENDUM**

A workshop on the evaluation findings and recommendations was conducted for all ELET personnel on March 27, 1992. The general reaction was positive and most of the discussion focused on follow-up technical assistance by ABEL to strengthen the organizational functioning of ELET.

Specifically, areas in which ELET feels that ABEL can provide assistance include:

- 1) improving communication channels through team-building exercises
- 2) developing written procedures and structures on management practices, internal functioning and conditions of service

In response to the report, the Director pointed out an inaccuracy in the ELET document describing the function of the Trustees. The document states that Trustees are responsible for logistical planning, in fact, the Director intended that the Trustees be responsible for long-term planning. The Director commented that he felt this inadvertent error had caused misunderstanding among staff regarding the role of the Trustees.

In addition, the Director explained that prior to 1991 projects ran for 1 year and not for 3 years, as was stated by some staff members.