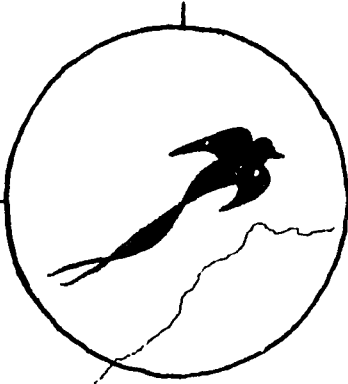


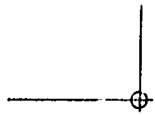
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**ACTIVITIES OF THE
LESOTHO
DISTANCE
TEACHING
CENTRE**

Lesotho

NEIDA Seminar September 1978





LESOTHO DISTANCE TEACHING CENTRE

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NATIONAL INNOVATIVE PROJECT

September 1978

Country: Lesotho

Title: Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre

Background

As far back as independence in 1966, the Ministry of Education was concerned about two problems in Lesotho -

- a) the large number of people who could not get secondary education or who dropped out before they had completed their studies.
- b) the growing numbers studying privately with little help other than that provided by commercial correspondence colleges in South Africa. This help consisted of poorly designed courses often written for a different syllabus. They were also very expensive and Lesotho could not afford cash drains. So, in 1967 the Ministry of Education, invited Bert Kaye, then Principal of Malawi Correspondence College, to write a report on the potential of correspondence education in Lesotho. Things moved slowly. The Lesotho Institute for Further Education (LIFE) which had a secondary school and a night school in Maseru began to plan a National Correspondence College as a third arm. In 1972 a consultant from a correspondence college in Swaziland was invited to help develop further plans to start a correspondence college in Lesotho. After a lot of consultation the Permanent Secretary for Education requested Michael Young, chairman of the International Extension College to draw up final plans to start a national extension college in Lesotho. These plans involved the Lesotho Government providing office space, equipment, free postage and financial contribution. The planned national extension college is now the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre.

Objectives

The objectives of LDTC are as follows:

- a) To provide basic rural education to the people of Lesotho. This is done through booklets on practical topics and workshops organized for groups.
- b) To provide relevant correspondence courses for out-of-school adults wishing to further their education.
- c) To act as a service agency for other organizations engaged in the provision of non-formal education. To this end the LDTC provides services in writing, editing and printing of educational materials, research services, consultancy, organization and running of educational workshops as well as evaluation of work done by the organizations.
- d) To provide educational materials for non-school going youth so that they may become literate and numerate.

Present work of LDTC

The overall objective of the LDTC is the provision of education to more people in rural Lesotho using distance teaching methods, such as printed materials, radio, cassettes, as well as some face-to-face teaching.

To arrive at these objectives the LDTC operates in four areas:

- basic rural education
- helping private candidates
- service agency work
- literacy and numeracy.

The following table is a summary of the nature of the clientele, age groups served as well as an estimate of numbers involved in each of the services offered.

Services offered	Clientele	Age group	number reached
<u>Helping private candidates</u>			
J.C.	Basotho adults at home and in R.S.A.	18 - 50yrs	656
C.O.S.C.	Basotho adults	18 - 50yrs	200
<u>Basic Rural Education</u>	Individual learners and groups of villagers.	Over 20yrs	20 000+
<u>Literacy and numeracy project</u>	1) Unschooled youth particularly herdboys and prisoners serving sentence	9yrs upwards	2 000+
<u>Service Agency</u>	All organizations interested in rural education.	Adult men and women	Whole nation

Five courses are offered at J.C. level. These are Agricultural Science, Bookkeeping & Commerce, English, Mathematics, Sesotho. A sixth course, Human & Social Biology, is being developed and will be offered from next year. With this course available to students, the LDTC will be boasting of being able to offer a full complement of the J.C. courses according to the requirements of the examinations council. At 'O' level, only one course has been offered. This is Mathematics. However, three more courses are being developed. These are Geography, Principles of Accounts, English Language. During next year students would be enrolled in these courses. The Mathematics course is being re-written as the one now offered is adapted from a course offered by the National Extension College in Cambridge. At least two more courses are planned. These are Human Biology and Economics.

We have to date 800 private candidates living in villages and towns of Lesotho. We help these students with correspondence courses, radio programmes, student newsletters and tutorial help which includes weekend courses. Among the many needs we have in this connection, is a central place where students may come together either to read, work assignments

or discuss together, and where tutors might meet the students. We have made negotiations with schools and mission places to make their buildings available to our students. Some secondary schools have allowed us to use their classrooms. The help we have received so far is not sufficient. We feel that our students would benefit a great deal from the services offered by the Centre if these services could be brought within villages.

Basic Rural Education programme aims at providing information to rural people through booklets on practical topics, such as Cookery, Crochet, Vegetable Growing, Child Care and First Aid. These booklets are all written in Sesotho. They may be used by individual learners, they are however, often used by groups of learners particularly women's associations and village clubs. This group learning takes place within the village itself.

Literacy and numeracy aims at helping large numbers of young people to become adequately literate and numerate. We have tested and produced a range of self-instructional materials and we are distributing these in villages. We have with the help of chiefs and churches recruited villagers to run evening classes, within villages, for illiterates. These group leaders accommodate students in their own homes, or in a nearby school. Learning is within the community itself.

Our Service Agency work has entailed working with organizations interested in producing educational materials. We have designed, tested and printed booklets, posters, pamphlets and leaflets. We have also helped to run courses for fieldworkers and for villagers. Through the support given to these organizations, LDTC hopes to fulfil its aim of making education available to as many Basotho as possible.

Staff and finance

The Centre now has a staff of 48 people. Of these, 7 are expatriates on contract. Support for the Centre has come from a variety of sources. The main ones are: the Irish Government, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Lesotho Government, Netherlands Organization for International Development & Co-operation (NOVIB), Training for Self Reliance (a World Bank Project), UNICEF, Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), World University Service (WUS),

The Danish Volunatry Service (DVS), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the British Government and the British Council.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES

The concept of distance education is a new one in this part of the world. I am sure it would not come as an over-generalization to say that the concept is new in Africa as a whole. It is difficult therefore to answer the question - where does an innovative approach begin? This is so because the very approach (distance education) to solving educational problems is an innovation. As distance education is so new it is more open to innovations, changes and new approaches than most educational fields. The development of the LDTC has shown a certain pattern in attempting to provide new approaches.

At the heart of this lies the identification and analysis of the needs of the local community. Many innovations come about as a result of the success that a particular approach has had somewhere in the world. There is no denying that an awareness of successful changes elsewhere in the world has a fertilising effect on the minds of men. Although we must continue to acquaint ourselves with what goes on elsewhere in the world, nothing should force us to dispense with the identification and analysis of the needs in a particular cultural setting. With this in mind, one's repertoire of possible approaches, wherever they have or have not been successful is a good resource for the formulation of a possible answer to a particular problem. An amusing example of the point I am trying to make is a proposal to construct educational tent camps all over Lesotho for unschooled herdboys. The idea is to have herdboys use these to learn how to read and write; and the camps would be provided with kitchen facilities! Herdboys would be using these literacy and numeracy tent camps in the evenings. The foreignness of the idea, although the attempt to provide literacy and numeracy for the unschooled herdboys is a genuine one, is more than obvious. This leads to the second point, which is, the proposed approach must fit in with the cultural setting of the country concerned. It is very laudable to try and change existing attitudes where they are bad for health, crop growing or child care, but where they are good or neither good nor bad it is not the business of an educator or a programme to change them. We must accept them as they are and incorporate their dictates and limitations into our programmes. That a programme has been

successful in Europe or South America is in itself no assurance that the same programme would at all be successful in Lesotho.

Areas of innovative approaches in the activities of the LDTC are as follows:

- a) Service Agency.
- b) Distance learning methods to improve formal and non-formal education.
- c) Provision of literacy and numeracy materials for out-of-school youth.
- d) Use of research in determining the needs of the people in both formal courses and basic rural education.
- e) Basic rural education.

Innovative feature in service agency

What LDTC has been developing over the past four years through giving assistance to a string of organisations is maturing into a very viable innovation. Our service agency work, as mentioned earlier is in five main areas, namely, educational materials production, research, consultancy, organizing and running training courses for other organizations as well as evaluation of the educational programmes/ activities in which we help the organizations. Some of the examples of the kind of work we have done for other organizations are:

For a long time Lesotho has been tackling the problem of gully erosion. In this direction the LDTC is working jointly with the Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC). The LAC already has a technical handbook on this, and we are presently simplifying this handbook and translating it into Sesotho. The simplified handbook will be distributed to chiefs throughout Lesotho.

With the Lesotho Family Planning Association (LFPA) we produced educational materials for their volunteers and held a course to train the volunteers in the use of the educational materials, at the same time getting volunteers' opinions on the materials. In the light of this experience we re-edited the materials and produced final versions. To help the LFPA to become more effective in educating the public we designed and produced photostrips and radio spots. These have been distributed and broadcast respectively.

With the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) we produced a spinners' handbook for trainers. These spinners help villagers to use a spinner's wheel to spin mohair. The villagers will be helped to form marketing and producers' cooperatives.

The final example of our work as a service agency is that of a joint venture with the Interministerial Committee on Road Safety. We produced two posters and 10 radio spots aimed at pedestrians, especially children. We also wrote to all schools in Lesotho to ask teachers to practise good road crossing habits with children. For the three weeks prior to Easter, Radio Lesotho broadcast 5 spots each day and police circulated the posters very widely.

These examples are indicative of what we look upon as an innovative approach to educating the rural Basotho. Through other organizations we are able to reach many more people effectively.

Learning methods to support formal education

Inservice Teacher Training - Primary education is faced with a problem of many unqualified primary school teachers. There are at the moment some 1 500 unqualified primary school teachers without Junior Certificate. Between the National Teacher Training College (NTTC) and the LDTC, we have a joint programme to qualify these teachers. At the moment we are helping the first group of 366 teachers. We offer them academic content through correspondence courses in three subjects - English, Sesotho and Mathematics. The NTTC handles the pedagogy. The teachers study through their courses as they carry out their crucial job of educating the Basotho youth. They attend residential courses of two weeks duration twice a year.

At these courses they receive face-to-face teaching. Extra support services offered to these teachers (and our regular students) include radio programmes and Saturday schools held regularly throughout the year.

Non-formal education

Our provision of educational materials on practical topics for rural people is highlighted with research that we have undertaken prior to attempting writing on any topic. To be assured that our production is in line with the needs of the people we have insisted on finding out from the people which topics (in order of priority) they would like us to produce booklets on.

This has resulted in us being furnished with a long enough list to write for over a period of a year. Some of the materials we have produced include booklets on

- How to Crochet
- First Aid
- Vegetable Growing
- Expecting a baby

Through already established groups, these materials enjoy a very wide circulation.

Provision of literacy and numeracy materials

The LDTC provides simply written materials to teach people how to read, write and do simple sums. At the moment we are running a pilot on these materials.

The purpose of the pilot is twofold:

- 1) to test the educational effectiveness of the materials.
- 2) to devise a system whereby our materials could be successfully mediated.

One of the most innovative aspects of this pilot is use that is made of members of the community. Through various sources (women's clubs, extension workers, clinics, the church and teachers) we recruited group leaders. Having discussed organizational topics, such as fees and size of group per leader we trained these leaders on how to use the literacy and numeracy materials.

Using the materials are the out-of-school youth and prisoners in prisons all over Lesotho. Each individual, under a leader's guidance, adopts his own pace.

In-built Research

The LDTC has an in-built research and evaluation unit. Through this unit we are able to determine where to go, what we should emphasise more in our activities and indeed what is worthwhile doing.

Research is used in a variety of ways by the LDTC. Some of these ways are as follows:

Facts to guide policy. Guidelines for materials design, Knowledge, attitudes and practices of a particular community. Pretesting educational materials in both formal and non-formal activities of the LDTC, and evaluation of a particular programme or a range of activities.

In all of these, research has provided the LDTC with invaluable guidelines for our present and future activities as well as providing us with answers to certain basic questions.

Achievements - No evaluation of the project has been conducted so far. We have one planned for early 1979. However, the fact that we have an in-built research unit, has guided most our activities. Pretesting materials, assessing the educational effectiveness of booklets on practical topics, assessing the cost effectiveness of our correspondence courses etc. give us a fair enough indication of where we are going. We feel we have not been unsuccessful. The project, because of its being accessible to many Basotho all over the country can already be termed nation-wide. However, we hope to be able to reach more people. It is certainly looked upon as contributing to national development. Our set objectives, through a subjective eye, have been reached to a very large extent.

Failure - The LDTC is passing through its first stage of maturity - experiments have been carried out and useful results are available to us for guidance, the majority of our staff is now Basotho and we are becoming more and more of a local staff - as such it would be a little premature to pass any judgements.

We have negotiated to be given a semi-autonomous status with Government. Indications are that we will succeed to be offered this status. If we fail, perhaps this will be our first failure.