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The University of Botswana

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

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

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

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

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

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

Table 9 University of Botswana: Faculties and Academic Departments

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Business Administration • Business Administration
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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
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 MI-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 I 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 centre
- 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 turnaround 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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