

Nonyongo, E.P., and Ngengebule, A.T. (1998). Selected case studies: University of Botswana (pp.33-51); Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (pp. 67-83); South Africa Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) Trust (pp. 116-129); and University of South Africa (UNISA) (pp. 154-176). In Learner support services: Case studies of DEASA member institutions. Pretoria, SA.: University of South Africa.

## **Overview of Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre's distance education model**

**A. Maiaene & J. Malefane**

Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) was established by the government of Lesotho with the assistance of the International Extension College (IEC). The centre started operating in February 1974.

LDTC was set up in order to complement formal school education; to provide a broader and more practical form of education; and to reach a much larger and more varied audience.

Specifically LDTC was set up to address the following felt needs:

- A correspondence college was needed to cater for the increasing number of primary school leavers who could not go to formal secondary schools as well as those who had left school before completing secondary school education.
- A correspondence college was needed to obviate the need for students in Lesotho to study at commercial colleges in the Republic of South Africa. Materials from these colleges were expensive and based on different syllabuses. The students also received no tutorials.

Prior to the setting up of the centre, a lot of preparatory work was undertaken. A number of consultations with local and international agencies were undertaken. The Institute for Further Education (IFE) and the South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) made useful inputs into this exercise.

Because it was different from a pure correspondence college, from the onset LDTC adopted a number of ways in which it offers support to its students.

The Project Memorandum between the Ministry of Education and IEC put the mission of LDTC as follows:

The centre will concentrate on three main activities:

- Help for private candidates. The centre will offer correspondence courses and radio programmes produced in Lesotho as well as tutorial support for students studying for Junior Certificate and 0 level courses. It will also explore ways of helping other private candidates.
- Basic Rural Education. The centre will do research into the kinds of help it should offer in this area but it will initially produce a range of booklets on practical topics for rural people

and may design educational materials and support system for young people out of primary school or who attend primary schools in Lesotho irregularly,

- Service Agency. The centre will offer educational services to a variety of organisations doing educational work in Lesotho. These will be government and private organisations. Later in the development of LDTC, a fourth dimension was added to its role.
- Help young people who could not have access to formal primary schools to become literate and numerate. The centre would have to experiment with a variety of methods such as the village group approach and teaching literacy and numeracy to prisoners.

Out of the four main activity or operation areas" the main objectives of the centre were developed:

- To provide correspondence courses for private candidates studying for the Junior Certificate and the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
- To provide learning materials on practical topics for rural people
- To act as a service agency for other organisations requesting the use of non-formal education techniques in their programmes
- To offer opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults to develop functional literacy and numeracy skills

## **STATUS AND NATURE OF GOVERNANCE**

LDTC is a department of the Ministry of Education. However, not all of its staff members are on the establishment list; about 14% of LDTC's staff salaries are paid from 'project' funding. LDTC is explicitly responsible to a senior staff member of the Ministry of Education - the chief education officer, under the Department of Curriculum Services.

LDTC, which is headed by a director, has two main units: one dealing with literacy and post-literacy programmes, credit schemes, and the alternative primary school courses called the Basic Education Unit; and a second Continuing Education Unit dealing with secondary education programmes. This led to the establishment of another position of deputy director for there was already a deputy director.

In addition to the units, there are support sections, namely Educational Broadcasting, Research and Evaluation and Accounts.

## **THE BASIC EDUCATION UNIT**

The Basic Education Unit comprises the Basic Rural Education, Service Agency, and Literacy and Numeracy sections.

The main objectives of the unit are:

- To offer opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults to develop literacy and numeracy skills to a level of real usefulness in life

- To produce educational materials for organisations that promote rural education in Lesotho
- To hold workshops and training courses for organisations involved with rural development
- To assist village groups financially in creating small income-generating activities
- To produce learning materials of a practical nature for rural people
- To complete and supplement work by other agencies in rural development.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT**

The Continuing Education Unit comprises the Student Advice, Writers and Printing sections. The main objectives of the unit are:

- to counsel students who have enrolled with the centre
- to produce self-instructional learning materials for JC and COSC learners
- to recruit part-time tutors who mark learners' assignments and run the Saturday courses
- to advise students who are interested in studying with the centre

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER STRUCTURES IN THE COUNTRY**

### **The Teaching Service Department (TSD)**

LDTC employs teachers who are fully employed by TSD on a part-time basis. They help with writing and editing workbooks, and can also be Saturday class tutors and/or markers. At the study centres, LDTC makes use of secondary school classrooms for Saturday courses.

### **National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and Central Inspectorate**

All course writers belong to subject panels coordinated by NCDC together with members of the Central Inspectorate.

### **Deasa**

LDTC is a member of DEASA, together with the Institute of Education (IE), the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), the Institute of Labour Studies (ILS) and the Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education (LANFE). Each of these institutions has elected a member to form what is known as the DEASA Country Committee. This committee meets from time to time to discuss issues related to DEASA.

## **The institution's view on the role of learner support services**

Learner support services are an integral part of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre. Because of this the centre has a fully equipped educational broadcasting studio in which learner support programmes are prepared. The centre also engages part-time tutors for Saturdays and residential courses. The management of LDTC is quite supportive as far as learner needs are concerned, and deadlines to meet all learner needs are set by them.

## **NATURE OF LDTC LEARNERS**

The learners of LDTC are:

- People who completed primary education but failed to get admission into secondary schools
- Secondary school dropouts
- Candidates who want to improve their pass levels at COSC for admission to further education institutions
- Candidates who want to improve their pass levels at JC or COSC for better job prospects, and even to meet new set standards at their respective job areas
- Working candidates who cannot go to formal schools because of their work

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF LDTC LEARNERS**

LDTC learners can be described broadly in terms of gender, age, occupation, district, subjects taken and enrolments.

- *Gender*

Most students who study with LDTC are female. The prime reason for this may be that stock farming continues to be the major work of boys in the rural areas of Lesotho. Boys in these areas are expected to look after herds while girls go to school. As a result of this, more girls than boys go through primary schooling in Lesotho. According to the Education Sector survey report 'in 1980 primary schools had a total enrolment equivalent to about 85% of girls aged six to twelve'. The report goes on to state: 'In that year 20% of the primary school pupils were repeats, and about 17% of those enrolled dropped out during the year. If the dropout rates of 1979/80 were to continue only 291 boys out of 1 000 and 515 girls out of 1 000 entering Standard I would complete Standard 7.' The table below clarifies this fact.

### **LDTC JC Students**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
1989	50%	48%	2%
1990	56%	42%	2%
1991	69%	28%	3%

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
1992	59%	38%	3%
1993	63%	35%	2%
1994	73%	27%	0%
1995	67%	33%	0%

### **LDTC COSC Students**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
1989	64%	36%	0%
1990	63%	37%	0%
1991	56%	44%	0%
1992	62%	38%	0%
1993	72%	28%	0%
<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
1994	70,9%	29,1%	0%
1995	86,2%	31,8%	0%

- *Occupation*

The tables that follow show that most JC students are unemployed, while at the COSC level most learners are employed as teachers, policemen, clerks, nurses and factory workers. Other occupations are mining, bricklaying, photography, gardening and domestic work.

### **JC students**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Unem- ployment</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Defence</b>	<b>Clerks</b>	<b>Factory Workers</b>	<b>Others</b>
1989	60%	5%	4%	0,4%	2,4%	2,8%	25,4%
1990	55%	3%	4%	2%	10%	6%	20%
1991	65%	7,3%	2,9%	0,4%	2,4%	6,2%	15,8%
1992	55,6%	3,4%	4,6%	1,6%	7,4%	11,2%	16,2%
1993	57,5%	8,8%	4,9%	0,8%	8,7%	12,6%	6,7%
1994	44,7%	3,9%	3,3%	0%	3,7%	8,7%	35,7%
1995	66,5%	2,7%	1,2%	2,4%	5,1%	1,9%	20,7%

### **JC students**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Unem- ployment</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Defence</b>	<b>Factory</b>	<b>Nurses</b>	<b>Clerks</b>	<b>Others</b>
1989	47%	7%	6%	2,2%	3%	9%	14%	11,8%
1990	45%	12%	8%	3%	0,5%	9%	11,5%	11%
1991	35%	16%	5%	7%	1,2%	3%	16%	16,8%
1992	41%	14%	7%	3,4%	1,7%	5%	16,7%	11,2%
1993	37,4%	31%	6%	2,2%	2,4%	4%	10,2%	6,8%
1994	38,4%	21,5%	7%	3,5%	2,5%	3,3%	17,6%	6,2%
1995	35,8%	17,8%	6,2%	4,2%	4%	10%	17,1%	4,9%

- *Enrolments*

The figures below show an encouraging though not totally satisfactory upward rise of enrolments at LDTC. The objective of the centre is to absorb all formal school dropouts and help them to gain certificates. This has not been the case as yet. This state of affairs may be attributed to the following:

- There are many night schools in all the urban areas. These appeal more to students because of the frequency of face-to-face tutorials
- Most learners in Lesotho lack confidence in distance education.
- Many people, even in Maseru itself, do not know about LDTC and the services it renders.
- The services of LDTC were centralised for over twenty years. This resulted in only the people close to the centre being motivated to improve their education through it. It is hoped that as services are decentralised more people, especially in the mountain areas, will be inclined to enrol with LDTC and study through distance education mode.

### **COSC**

<b>Year</b>	<b>New students</b>	<b>Active old students</b>	<b>Total</b>
1989	176	589	765
1990	219	651	870
1991	240	491	731
1992	291	709	1000
1993	485	673	1158
1994	516	650	1166
1995	551	779	1330

### **JC**

<b>Year</b>	<b>New students</b>	<b>Active old students</b>	<b>Total</b>
1989	242	612	854
1990	215	745	960
1991	208	597	805
1992	239	811	1050
1993	365	835	1200
1994	380	915	1295
1995	415	893	1308

- *Age*

LDTC registers students of all age groups. As more and more learners drop out of formal schools because of failure or insufficient passes, most people who register with LDTC are teenagers and young adults who want to supplement a few subjects and so improve their chances of attaining their careers.

**JC**

Year	15 & under 15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	over 50
1989	2%	46%	23%	9%	9%	6%	2%	2%	1%
1990	2,9%	44,7%	29%	10%	9%	1%	2%	1%	0,4%
1991	7,3%	41%	25%	12%	6%	3,9%	1,4%	1,4%	2%
1992	1,2%	38,9%	31,9%	14,2%	7,1%	2,5%	1,7%	0,8%	1,7%
1993	0,5%	38,9%	27,9%	13%	8%	3,6%	5,3%	0,4%	2,4%
1994	0,8%	47,6%	24,5%	10%	5,3%	5,3%	3,9%	1,3%	1,3%
1995	0,7%	32,7%	36,9%	8%	6%	8,3%	3,1%	2,4%	2,2%

**COSC**

Year	20 & under 20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	over 55
1989	24%	43%	20%	7%	2%	1%	2,5%	0,5%	0,5%
1990	27%	38,4%	21%	8%	2%	1,3%	1,8%	0,5%	0%
1991	26,2%	34%	19%	11%	6%	3%	0,4%	0,4%	0%
1992	21%	36,9%	21%	11%	4%	3,4%	1%	0,7%	1%
1993	17%	35,8%	21%	14%	5%	4%	1,4%	1%	0,8%
1994	27,3%	24,8%	22,3%	13%	5%	5%	2,3%	2,3%	0%
1995	38,1%	17%	24,1%	11,6%	4,7%	2,9%	0,7%	0,4%	0,5%

- *Subjects*

Most students register for English at both JC and COSC levels. This is because:

- English is compulsory at both levels.
- English is a failing subject at both levels.
- A credit in English Language is a prerequisite for entry to the university, the Lesotho Agricultural College, the Commercial Training Centre, the National Health Training Centre and other institutions that offer tertiary education.

- A pass in English/English Language is a prerequisite for awarding the junior and COSC Certificates.

**JC**

Year	English	Sesotho	Maths	Human & social biology	Development studies	Book-keeping
1989	24%	41%	48%	26%	13%	19%
1990	64%	33%	38%	16%	13%	14%
1991	86%	25%	44%	16,8%	19,7%	16,8%
1992	67%	37,6%	54,8%	37,6%	23%	36,8%
1993	84%	40,5%	59,7%	30,6%	46,6%	44%
1994	66,8%	3,5%	52,6%	26,6%	22,1%	16,8%
1995	44%	44,8%	72,3%	46,7%	23,5%	46%

## COSC

Year	English	Sesotho	Maths	Human & social biology	Principles of accounts	Commerce	Geo-graphy
1989	44%	36%	48%	37%	16%	22%	2%
1990	66%	38%	35%	40%	24%	26%	6%
1991	73%	41%	37%	32%	22%	25%	11%
1992	76%	31%	46%	41%	24%	25%	13%
1993	87%	38%	48%	37%	20%	18%	8%
1994	9,5%	27,9%	48,4%	42%	28,3%	22,9%	10,3%
1995	84%	28,1%	50,8%	42,3%	7,3%	4,2%	8,2%

Please note that a student may register for more than one subject at any particular year.

- *District*

Most learners of LDTC live in the Maseru district. People in Maseru have higher income-earning opportunities than people in the other districts, so they are often better able to meet the financial requirements of LDTC. Moreover, people who live in Maseru have easier physical access to LDTC, which is located in Maseru itself, than people who live in the other districts. Because of the socio-economic situation of migrant labour, a number of LDTC learners live in South Africa.

## COSC

Year	BB	LR	BR	MS	MF	MH	QU	QA	TH	MK	SA
1989	2%	8%	6%	56%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	10%
1990	2,7%	15%	5%	45%	6%	4%	3%	1,3%	5%	3%	10%
1991	3%	9,5%	5%	52,2%	7%	3%	9,5%	0,4%	1,6%	0,8%	8%
1992	4,9%	13%	7,5%	51%	8,2%	2,4%	1,3%	1,3%	3%	2,4%	5%
1993	5%	16%	9%	44%	8%	1%	4%	5%	4%	2%	2%
1994	3,5%	13,4%	6,6%	50,8%	8,5%	2,1%	0,8%	6,2%	2,3%	3,1%	2,7%
1995	3,8%	11,3%	8,5%	49,7%	10,2%	2,9%	1,2%	2,4%	4,9%	2,4%	2,7%

## JC

Year	BB	LR	BR	MS	MF	MH	QU	QA	TH	MK	SA
1989	31%	10%	5%	55%	2%	2,9%	3%	2%	2%	2%	13%
1990	4%	13%	5%	53%	5%	3%	2%	1,6%	3%	0,4%	10%
1991	3,4%	8,7%	5,9%	59,6%	2,4%	5,8%	4,9%	3,3%	1,4%	0,9%	3,7%
1992	3,7%	7,5%	9,6%	56%	3,3%	4%	2,9%	1,1%	2,5%	2,9%	6,5%
1993	5,7%	14,4%	11%	52,4%	4,8%	0,8%	0,8%	2%	2,1%	3,6%	2,4%
1994	1,3%	2,6%	1,3%	73,9%	5,8%	1,8%	0,8%	5,2%	3,1%	2,6%	1,3%
1995	3,4%	6%	6,5%	64,6%	6,5%	3,3%	1,9%	2,14%	1,2%	2,9%	1,6%

### Key:

MS = Maseru; LR = Leribe; BR = Berea; MF = Mafeteng; BB = Butha-butha;  
 MK = Mokhotiong; QN = Qacha's Nek; MH = Mohale's Hoek; QT = Quthing;  
 TT = Thaba-tseka



## **EVALUATION**

### **Continuous assessment**

This is based on the students' performance on the worksheets which normally accompany workbooks. On the basis of this performance the Student Advice Section can decide whether the student is ready to sit for examinations.

### **Examinations**

LDTC students sit for the same examinations as those in the formal education systems. The setting and the marking of JC examinations is the responsibility of the Examinations Council of Lesotho. At O Level, the responsibility still lies with the University of Cambridge in England.

## **LIBRARY SERVICES**

Students rely solely on public or school libraries where they are available

## **FUNCTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS**

Prospective LDTC students are sent application forms by post. These forms are also given to them when they come to the centre. They register throughout the year.

## **SOURCES OF FUNDING**

- Student fees
- External donors
- Subsidy from the Government of Lesotho

## **PROGRESS OF LDTC STUDENTS**

The following is a summary of the main trends in student progress:

- A large proportion of the students who enrol with LDTC never start work on their courses.
- Only a small minority of students - probably less than 20% of those who enrol will actually be sent the final part of the course. Only a few students will complete any given course.
- The rate of work is not satisfactory in all the courses. This could be attributed in some cases to the slow production of workbooks. In some subjects we find that there is a strongly marked termination point at the end of a part of a course. Students might not continue with the next part because they cannot pay fees for that part.

- If we use completion of two-thirds of the course as an index of 'preparedness for examination', we find out that, with the exception of Sesotho, most students are not sufficiently prepared to sit examinations and succeed.

## **NEEDS OF LDTC LEARNERS**

### **Environment**

For most LDTC learners, the home environment is not suitable for study. At times one hut is shared by all the members of the family for all the family needs.

In situations such as this, the family is often never quiet enough for the learners to concentrate on their studies. Learners also often lack proper chairs and tables to use as they study.

In most families, lighting is also often inadequate as there is no electricity in the rural areas and families use small paraffin lamps for lighting. Contact with fellow learners is often difficult because at times learners may not be aware of each other, even if they are in the same locality.

This creates the isolation problem which is so prevalent in distance education. This is aggravated because villages in the rural areas of Lesotho are few and far apart and getting from one village to another is difficult as there are neither taxis nor buses and no fast mode of transport or communication.

### **Medium of instruction**

English is a second language for Basotho learners and is used as the main medium of instruction in all courses except Sesotho. The incompetence of learners in English is therefore a restraining factor to their progress in the subjects they enrol for.

### **Skills development - study skills**

Learning, for most LDTC students, is a subsidiary activity. Unfortunately, learners do not always maximise the little time they have for studies.

Too much time may be spent on some subjects and not enough on others, a dangerous habit because examination boards often stipulate the number of subjects a candidate requires to obtain a certificate.

Like most distance learners, LDTC students lack the skills that are needed for independent study. In most cases they expect to be taught and when this need is not met, learners get demotivated and discontinue their studies.

### **Administrative**

To be served efficiently, learners need a strong administrative framework that links different functions such as learner support services and record keeping, course writing and production as well as dispatch of study materials and assignments.

Delay in the production of course materials demotivates learners and, as has been pointed out earlier, this leads to huge drop-out rates. To overcome this it is essential that learner progress be monitored well throughout the term of study. This has, however, often imposed problems because of distances between LDTC and its learners. Another issue that keeps learners

demotivated is delayed feedback. The reasons for this shortcoming are postal services which are unreliable, shortage of staff to process and dispatch students' materials on time, as well as tutors who often concentrate more on their full-time jobs than the LDTC learners. This problem can be overcome by engaging full-time instead of part-time tutors, as is now the case,

### **Social needs**

The high drop-out rate of LDTC learners can also be attributed to the lack of support from society. At times the relatives, spouses and co-workers discourage learners from continuing with their studies and they usually succeed in this since all learners are members of many institutions, for example work, which take precedence over study.

## **LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES AT LDTC**

At the LDTC, learner support services are offered through print as the main medium of instruction and this is supported by radio broadcasts and face-to-face tuition.

### **Course development**

Course developers offer support to the learners by writing workbooks in a friendly conversational tone that helps to alleviate the learners' isolation problem. Course developers also use short sentences and paragraphs and divide their lessons up into small units. This subdues the learners' apprehension at the great task that faces them as work is given in manageable amounts. A further source of support is that all workbooks contain self-check exercises that motivate learners to go further, as they see and correct the mistakes that they have made.

Illustrations in workbooks break the monotony of individual study and enhance the learners' comprehension of the matter. Workbooks also contain objectives which tell the learner where he is going and what he is expected to achieve. All workbooks are written by full-time and part-time course writers. Editing, as well as typing and printing, is done internally.

### **Tutoring**

LDTC supports its learners through tutorials that are held on Saturdays. During these, tutorials individual and general learners' problems are solved. These tutorials also serve the function of allowing students to meet one another to discuss common problems. Tutors offer further support to LDTC learners by marking their worksheets. These worksheets, which are contained in all workbooks, test the learners' understanding of the content they have gone through. Tutors teach as they mark. They also counsel students on all the problems that they encounter in their course of study. All tutors are high school teachers employed on a part-time basis by LDTC. LDTC does not have its own classrooms. All tutorials in Maseru are held at the National Teacher Training College (NTTC). At study centres LDTC makes use of high school classrooms.

## **Counselling**

Counselling services are done through all the media that LDTC utilises, namely correspondence, radio, personal visits and the telephone.

LDTC offers pre-course counselling through booklets entitled *How to enrol with LDTC*. In these booklets learners are guided on how many subjects to select, how to pay course fees and what is expected from them as learners.

The second stage of counselling, the on-course stage, is offered through the student handbook, which counsels students on how to study, how to prepare for examinations and what to do to seek and receive help.

The final stage of counselling, the post-course stage, is given verbally to successful students who need information on career choice and how to attain further education.

## **Study centres**

Learner support services at present are highly centralised at LDTC. All services are done at the main centre in Maseru, the capital. LDTC hopes to decentralise its services through study centres which will be established throughout the country. At present four of the intended nine study centres are operating.

Administrative matters, enrolments and the dispatch of materials are all done at the study centres in the education offices in the respective districts. Tutorials are held in nearby secondary school classrooms. It is hoped that in future study centres will serve the following purposes:

- Provide storage and access to reading materials, audio/visual materials and laboratory equipment.
- Provide a place for study as most students do not have suitable places at home.
- Provide point of contacts for learners and tutors and for learners with their peers.

Monitoring by tutor organisers takes place monthly at the operating study centres.

## **Residential courses**

Residential courses are held in winter and on Independence holidays for JC and 'O' Level examination candidates. The aims of the courses are:

- to encourage student progress
- to provide examination writing practice
- to advise students on how to approach examinations
- to provide much-needed confidence for students.

Residential courses, which are called examination preparedness workshops, always take the form of intensive face-to-face tutoring in appropriate subjects; and testing and working on past examination papers.

## **Radio**

The functions of radio lessons are twofold: to give additional explanations of course materials; and to provide motivational support for students. There are 15-minute programmes for JC English Literature and Sesotho Literature, and a programme on LDTC programmes as a whole.

All these programmes are broadcast weekly with repeats. The recording is done at LDTC's studio, and broadcast over Radio Lesotho.

## **Administration**

The administration structure of LDTC is highly integrated but built up in such a way that each officer has a specific task to perform to support the learner.

More often than not, delays, bottlenecks and problems at any point in the system affect the quality of a particular learner support service deliverance, and also influence future work at all steps of the process.

However, all involved have been trying their level best to overcome any problems.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE LDTC'S LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Weaknesses**

- LDTC communicates with its students through the post. At times the postal service is irregular and slow.
- Print materials take a long time to produce. This highly demotivates students as they may spend some time without materials.
- Print materials require large storage spaces which LDTC does not have. The stores we have are highly crammed.
- LDTC's radio programmes have been put at hours which are not so convenient for most of our students. They are broadcast between 3:00pm and 5:45pm on weekdays. During these times, LDTC's students cannot listen to the programmes as most are still at work or are on their way back home from work.
- Radio reception is poor or intermittent in some areas in the country.
- The counsellor at times 'just picks up clues' about learners' problems from the correspondence. This is not always beneficial as the problem may not be attended to in depth.

### **Gaps identified**

- Enrolments of students throughout the year makes it difficult for tutors at Saturday courses to monitor the progress of students and to prepare for lessons. Throughout the year, the storerooms must contain materials on all subjects. This is problematic as LDTC does not have big enough storerooms.

- Numbers of students at tutorials are very large and students are at different levels. Tutors are not able to prepare any work in advance for the tutorials. Almost every time there is a tutorial, new students have to be attended to first to get them started as they are waiting to be 'taught'.
- There is no orientation to distance education for new students.
- Part-time markers are used who often keep worksheets too long.
- Materials shortages are caused by delays in revising and reprinting workbooks.
- Record forms do not provide all the essential information about learners. Perhaps the learners could provide three addresses; the postal address where he/she is residing when he/she registers; the home address in cases of people not residing at their home; the address of their next-of-kin. Students' materials are often returned from the post office because students are no longer available at the addresses they provided on the record forms.

### *Solutions*

- A proposal has been made by Continuing Education Unit staff that enrolments of students should not take place throughout the year, but that new enrollees should be taken in between October and March. This is yet to be considered and discussed with LDTC management and other staff members.
- In some courses there is more than one tutor for Saturday courses. One tutor attends to new enrollees and the other to students ready to sit for examinations. This has reduced the number of students in a group and tutors can do some preparation for the tutorials.
- Since at times part-time markers keep worksheets too long, it was decided that the turnaround time for worksheets should be two weeks, that is from the time the worksheets arrive at the centre till they are sent back to students after marking. The tutors have cooperated and the system seems to be working.

### **Staff development strategies**

- Staff involved in learner support provision include writers, editors, graphic artists, printers, student advisors, tutor organisers, dispatch officers and clerical assistants. The majority of them have not received any training in the field of their jobs. They have received on-the-job training, together with short courses here and there.
- Relevant adequate training is needed. There should be refresher courses now and again. The ratio of clients should balance those of staff and materials.
- Voluntary work should be encouraged.

### **Other points of interest**

The cost of the learner support, for example tutoring, requires the LDTC to consider charging students a token fee to meet part of the tutorial expenses. This would probably increase their attachment to the institution.

