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The South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) Trust*

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THE FOUNDING OF SACHED

The South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) was founded in 1959 as an innovative response to the crisis in university education brought about by the National Party government's move to enforce apartheid at university level and thus complete their apartheid design for education.

The relevant legislation, The Extension of University Education Act was introduced in Parliament in 1958 and became law in 1959. It closed entry to 'white' universities, thus stopping all black learners from going to these institutions, and provided for the establishment of ethnic university colleges in areas traditionally known as Bantustans.

The effect of this and related legislation was twofold. First, it separated black (that is, African, coloured and Indian) students from white learners; it separated black and white education at university level and further isolated black learners from one another in separate ethnic and/or language groups. In addition, the siting of university colleges for African learners in rural areas isolated them from urban influences. Second this legislation ensured that black learners received only ideologically acceptable education so that they would be fitted for their role in apartheid society which was said to be as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (Verwoerd 1953); it also ensured rigid control Of admission/re-admission of all students and their activities at these institutions.

A group of academics, learners, church people and others committed themselves to struggle against the effects of these laws in a most practical way, through attempting to provide access to tertiary education for young black people which would be outside the apartheid framework but within the law to ensure survival. These people constituted themselves into a committee which was later known as Sached.

The reports of the first six years of Sached give some of the beliefs and hopes of the early Sached founder members concerning the nature of the first Sached programme.

*This case study was compiled from various Sached Trust Reports and from the author's personal recollection. The reports that the author used in the case study are listed in the reference section.

These beliefs and hopes show, as the quotations below demonstrate, that from its inception Sached has been striving for good quality education and high academic standards:

Black students studying through London University would gain a degree of high academic standard which would be internationally recognised. In this way their education would be free of the ideology of 'ethnic education' and also free of the stigma of inferiority (Sached: 1970-73)

THE FIRST DECADE OF SACHED: 1960-1970

The nature of the programme

In 1959 the newly established Sached set itself the task of providing tuition and other support services for learners in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. For several years learners in the Port Elizabeth/Grahamstown areas were also able to participate in a limited scale in the programme. In May 1960 the first Sached learners were enrolled. This was the start of Sached's first programme which was then called the Bursary Project.

The Bursary Project accepted for registration only those learners who had passed the South African Matriculation examination, either the National Senior Certificate or the joint Matriculation Board examinations. These learners then embarked on the required ordinary and Advanced Level General Certificate of Education (GCE) studies. On completion of these, students enrolled for the London degree courses. Most Sached students enrolled for the BA degree or the BSc (Economics) degree, while a few enrolled for law and one or two for divinity. London University offered an external examination but no distance tuition, for example in the form of correspondence materials. On registration learners received the syllabus of their courses. Full-time students could write examinations after a minimum of three years; part-time students after a minimum of five years. The BA degree consisted of three courses in each of three subject areas, nine courses in all, which were to be written in one sitting at the end of the period of study. The BSc (Economics) degree had thirteen courses: five in part 1 and eight in part 2. Courses in parts 1 and 2 had to be written and passed at the same sitting. Learners who did not pass all the courses written had to re-write the whole examination.

In 1960 Sached entered an agreement with Britzius Tutorial College (BTC), a Johannesburg-based private college that was already providing correspondence tuition in London University GCE O and A levels and degree courses, whereby the college would provide support services for Sached bursars. In addition the staff of BTC worked closely with the Sached committee and reported monthly on the progress of all their learners.

The scope and nature of programme development

The contribution to black education provided by Sached through the Bursary Project was on a very small scale. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the total black enrolment in all South African universities, including the University of South Africa (Unisa), in 1960 was just over 4 400: 1 901 African students; 1 602 'Asian' learners and 878 'Coloured' learners. Between 1960 and 1963, over 80 learners enrolled as Sached bursars. This was 2% of the 1960 total black university enrolment.

In addition, in its early years, Sached administered bursaries for some medical school learners (who were allowed to complete courses at 'white' universities), some learners at the University of Natal and also a few learners at the University of Roma, in Lesotho. Thus its impact was not inconsiderable.

The nature of Sached's learner support services

Sached offered its learners a bursary. This was not merely payment of fees and books, but a comprehensive support system to assist and sustain learners in their progress towards a university degree.

This comprehensive support system was carefully constructed. A study of Sached's records in the early years of operation shows that the following components can be identified. They are listed in the table below according to the order in which the learner would encounter them in their learning cycle:

Table 16 Summary of the learner support system

counselling with regard to choice of degree and degree course option and the choice and number of O and A level courses required by the various degrees. Counselling would continue throughout the learner's studies and would include learner's study problems and progress;

study materials for courses, which included written assignments to be submitted for marking (provided by BTC);

a personal study timetable, drawn up by BTC for each student, detailing the study material to be covered, dates and times of weekly tutorials, internal tests and examinations and dates of external examinations;

regular tutorials on a one-to-one basis. These tutorials were intended to guide learners in new and unfamiliar areas of study, to develop their skills in a particular academic discipline, to encourage learners confidence to express their views and generally to sustain motivation (BTC provided tutors in Johannesburg)

a reading room cum rudimentary library where learners could study and also meet to discuss studies and other issues;

contact, maintained regularly by centre staff with each student to monitor academic progress, discuss any problems affecting study and sustain motivation;

an opportunity for Sached learners to become involved in *national student groups* and arrange their own local gatherings, etc.

financial support for needy learners. This support covered the cost of accommodation and a small subsistence allowance

The combination of all these elements was deemed to create a learning environment conducive to learners' academic progress, the development of 'independence of mind' and learners' involvement in their society. Interaction at all levels was considered very important, in contrast with the isolation of ethnic education of the apartheid system. Sached learners' cultural and/or language differences were not given any undue importance; Sached learners were encouraged and assisted to participate in student organisations like the National Union of South African Students (Nusas). The small number of learners and the personal and academic interest which full-time staff and tutors took in learners created a supportive environment for mutual exchange. Learners themselves were encouraged to have discussions and assist one another.

However, in accordance with government legislation, it was not possible for learners to attend tutorials as a group. According to the law then, this would constitute a 'school', for which registration was required. Sached was unlikely to receive endorsement from the government. Sached tutorials were therefore conducted on a one-to-one basis between learner and tutor. Sached was aware that the programme demanded that learners should be disciplined and self-motivated. Timetables, tutorials, assignments, internal exams and regular consultation with centre staff were all designed to assist learners to keep up with their work. However, considerable determination and stamina were required of learners to persevere through the long years of study leading to a degree: six to eight years at least for part-time learners. The emphasis on self-motivation and personal responsibility contrasted sharply with the authoritarian character of ethnic university education.

Student numbers

The Sached Bursary Project started with nine learners when it was launched in May 1960. By the beginning of 1961 the number had risen to 16 and by the beginning of 1962 to 45. In 1963 enrolments were just under 50, in 1964 about 55 and in 1965 about 65. By May 1970 81 learners were enrolled, 13 of whom were at different stages of study in different degrees (BA, BSc, and LLB) and were spread over the three Sached centres of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

Problems with the London University system

Given the political climate of these years, the very establishment and continued" existence of the Sached Bursary Project was, in many respects, very impressive indeed. The programme's support system formed the basis of a very effective alternative to apartheid education and became the cornerstone of the learner support systems of all subsequent Sached programmes. Many of the learners who completed their A-level through Sached went on to complete their degrees either in South Africa or abroad. This first phase laid the foundations for Sached's work in distance education.

However, the programme faced serious problems. The basic difficulty was that the London programme was very lengthy and very difficult for part-time learners and/or those who were second-language speakers. Learners could and did spend seven or eight years at these studies and eventually dropped out, with no university courses to their credit. The standards required by London University made it virtually impossible to complete for learners who had studied under the Bantu Education system. As a result the programme always had the vast majority of its learners in the beginning stages of their studies. Between 1960 and 1971 only four learners

obtained degrees. The London, system was unfamiliar to learners and most tutors and other staff who were assisting These learners. It is not surprising that in the next decade Sached began to consider the introduction of alternatives to the original programme.

THE SECOND DECADE, 1971-1980

Change from London to the Unisa system

A number of events and considerations led to Sached's decision in the early 1970s first o experiment with support for Unisa learners and then to phase out the former London programme in favour of support for learners registered with Unisa. The four most important factors were the following:

- The possibility of London University withdrawing external exams. Were this to be confirmed, Sached would have to find another correspondence university. This possibility did, in fact, become a reality in 1977 when London withdrew external degree examinations for learners outside the UK.
- Changed perception of Unisa. In the 1960s Unisa was perceived as one of the organs of apartheid education and for political and academic reasons Sached had looked beyond South Africa for a correspondence university for its learners. But in the 1970S the perception of Unisa in the black community was changing, partly because, compared with the abysmally low standards of ethnic university colleges, Unisa,, seemed to offer an acceptable and attainable education, and partly because Unisa offered the same courses to black and white learners. Many learners began to see Unisa as an alternative to 'tribal colleges'. In addition, Unisa courses could b accumulated annually, thus making it easier and more motivating than the London arrangement.
- Pressure from ex-Sached learners who had changed to Unisa for Sached to provide them with a support system similar to what they had experienced as London GCE or degree learners. The extent of this pressure was a strong indicator of the large pool of potential bursars among Unisa learners.
- Sached's belief that the study surround or learning environment was the most important determinant in the part-time learner's career. It was felt that such an environment could compensate for any narrowness in Unisa courses and provide a challenge and develop critical awareness on the part of the Sached student. This view was articulated by one of the Sached directors as follows:

... the experience that the tutorial assistance and the supporting study surround in the centres was the overriding dominant influence in the study of these -Learners. It mattered little which university was followed as this study surround, which fosters independent thinking and self-activity, would overcome any bias, tendency to inflexibility or narrow interpretation.

For these reasons then, Sached officially opened its Bursary Project to include Unisa degree learners on a trial basis. In 1971 a test group of 14 learners were enrolled. in 1972 the number increased and by 1973 there were 60 learners in the programme, 49 studying with Unisa and 11

with London. The Unisa option was firmly established. The progress and growth of the Bursary Project until its closure in 1994 are described in the case study on the Distance University Learners Support Programme which appears later in this book.

Diversification of Sached programmes

In its second decade, Sached's development was shaped by a number of shifts in the political context. The growing inability of the state to control and manage its political agenda was accompanied by the regrouping of forces among the oppressed and exploited. Three key developments can be identified here: the emergence of the black consciousness movement, the Soweto students' uprising of 1976, and the resurgence of worker organisations, which by 1979 had grown into a major force.

Sached responded by launching a number of initiatives aimed at offsetting the educational inadequacies of apartheid education, challenging its racist and Bantu education ideology and developing alternatives. Turret Correspondence College, the Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Project, the Study Centres Project and the Newspaper Education Project were some of the projects set up during this period. The organisation's growth in outreach was accompanied by increases in staff, service departments and budgets.

It was also during this period that Sached was transformed from a committee to an educational trust. The 1970-73 Annual Report describes this shift as follows:

Sached has grown beyond its original function. In creating the Sached Trust, Sached is establishing a stable, but flexible, nucleus equipped to meet the growing and changing needs of a growing and changing South Africa ...

The programmes of the Sached Trust are, concerned with upgrading and enriching the quality of life of those disadvantaged by the South African situation.

Our perspective is not that of assisting the under-privileged. We wish, rather, to provide resources which allow for independent self-help, but nevertheless do not at the same time lose educational efficiency (Sached Trust Annual Report 1970-73: Annexure 14).

This seems to be the first policy statement of the Trust. It highlights the move from focusing only on the learning environment providing resources for independent self-help. This move was made possible by the development of, inter alia, Turret Correspondence College (TCC), which introduced the development of interactive, self-instructional materials for second-language distance education learners. The TCC resources and experience made it possible for Sached to extend its outreach in other programmes that are mentioned later.

Turret Correspondence College (TCC)

Britzius Tutorial College sold the academic tuition section of its college (which provided tuition for Junior Certificate, National Senior Certificate, Joint Matriculation Board and London O- and A-Levels and degree courses) to Sached in 1969. Through this Sached launched Turret Correspondence College (TCC) to cater for the needs of second-language English speakers at secondary level by correspondence. TCC came into effective operation from August 1970.

Implicit in the creation of TCC, Sached directors believed, were two related directions which should shape the nature of distance education in South Africa. One was the focus on the

development and supervision of the individual student as described above in the components of the Bursary Project. The other was the concept, also inherited from Sached's earlier programme, of distance education as 'correspondence plus' (that is the belief that correspondence study alone would not, meet learners' needs and that a surround of support systems would be crucial for learner success and quality education.

To implement these ideas Sached searched for models but had no success:

We began to search both in Africa and overseas for models. These were not available. Much had been done about 'systems' and 'structures' of correspondence education or distance learning, but with few exceptions, writers in the field had not dealt with the technicalities of course-writing and design. None had dealt with such within the context of a developing or disadvantaged society (Sached Annual Report 1970-73:4).

Through the Turret Correspondence College Programme, Sached then developed its own model of distance education which encompasses the development of both course materials and the learning environment that would meet the needs of disadvantaged communities.

TCC materials

The provision of appropriate learning materials for second-language speakers of English in the form of self-instructional workbooks was seen as the first priority of TCC. TCC designed and developed the workbook model of learning materials to meet the needs of their learners. These workbooks were designed to contain space which encouraged interactive learning through note-taking, guidance on effective learning methods, short and frequent activities to encourage active learning, and in-text feedback on these activities. All these design features were meant to encourage dialogue which correspondence education generally lacked. TCC's work in materials development in South Africa was pioneering in a number of ways. They were learner-centred, developed by course-teams, and also sought to draw on the learners' experience. They 'always aimed to develop the students ability to think critically' (Ngengebule et al, 1992:9.4)

TCC learning environment

At first the 'correspondence plus' aspect of TCC was provided through individual tuition and the supervision of learners as in the Bursary Project above. Later a different model of support system was introduced. This was the Tutorial Centres model which attempted to 'marry' the positive aspects of correspondence education (in TCC's case good quality study materials in the form of workbooks) and the face-to-face components pioneered by the night schools. By the end of 1972 Sached was able to implement the idea of tutorial centres through a separate programme called the Study Centres Project.

Study Centres Project

The Study Centres Project's main aim was to provide TCC registered learners with some forms of contact, motivation and academic assistance at decentralised centres. Six study centres were set up, five at Soweto schools and one at a farm school in Bryanston to the north of Johannesburg.

Local tutors were appointed and trained in 'elbow teaching' which would avoid chalk and talk methods and would encourage group discussion, problem solving and learning skills development.

Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Programme (BTUP)

Sached's work in TCC and the study centres led to the development of a teacher upgrading project in the then 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana, where there was a dire shortage of qualified teachers and the majority of teachers had not completed the junior Certificate level of education. The intention of the pilot programme was to upgrade, over five years, an intake of 1 000 learners, of whom about half were expected to succeed. This programme, which was called the Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Project, began in 1973 with a tutor training workshop in July and the first intake of 500 learners was planned to begin in January 1975.

After over a year's negotiation between Sached, the Bophuthatswana Cabinet and the Chairman's Fund of the Anglo American Corporation, the Bophuthatswana Teachers' Upgrading Programme (BTUP) began in 1975 as a collaborative venture among the three parties, each with a specific role. The Chairman's Fund financed the programme, Sached provided the educational input and services and the Bophuthatswana government ran the programme as an 'aided school' in its Education Department. The aims of the programme were:

- to help some 1 000 unqualified teachers to gain certificates from the Bantu Education Department and
- to develop a relatively cheap, efficient in-service training scheme which could not only achieve the first aim above, but also would provide a model for educational systems in other developing areas.

The programme ran for three (1975 to 1977) of its planned five years because it was suddenly terminated by the Bophuthatswana government. This decision was unilateral and contrary to the wishes and expectations of the other two collaborative partners. No reasons were given for the closure of the project. The only indication of friction had emerged when Sached staff were, after a six-month delay, refused entry into Bophuthatswana. The only disapproving sentiments were those made by the South African Minister of Police which Sached noted thus:

Some speculation by members of the public has resulted from statements by the Minister of Police when he discussed the banning of the World newspaper on television. The Minister in justifying the ban quoted a wrong source but implied that the newspaper was supporting 'pro communist views.' This implication was 'demonstrated' by the quoting of a statement which never appeared in the newspaper but came, in fact, from a tape/slide sequence shown in the Teacher Upgrading programme as an introduction to the section of 'Russia' in the history syllabus ... The Russian Revolution is a part of the syllabus of the Bantu Education Department (Sached Trust 1977 Annual Report: Annexure 2:3).

So, whether from pressure from the South African government, or fear of working with 'pro-communists', or other unknown reasons, the Bophuthatswana government terminated the programme and refused to discuss the matter, as this extract from their letter of 20 October 1978 demonstrates:

... the decision of the Cabinet is final, the project will be closed as from 1 January 1978. The file on this matter is closed and no further interviews will be arranged or any correspondence receive attention (Sached Trust 1977 Annual Report: Annexure 2:5).

The newspaper project

The idea of education through the newspapers started from attempts to make Sached resources more widely available. Sached's other programmes, though relatively successful, were only reaching a limited number of people. Newspapers as mass media showed great potential for mass education.

In 1974 Sached started a small newspaper project called Study Mail, which for four months published three articles in the Rand Daily Mail. These materials were targeted at adults and were of two types:

- supplementary material for junior and Senior Certificate learners
- materials of a general nature covering, inter alia, communication and various discussion topics on African leaders and writers meant for adults.

In 1975 it was decided that a paper with a higher black readership would be more useful and in February 1975 the Weekend World School was started with the Weekend World newspaper as the carrier. Materials in this paper covered the same format as earlier ones but included a wider range of articles and subjects of a practical nature in the adult section.

By 1976 plans were afoot to expand the Weekend World School to a 12-page supplement. The June 1976 student uprisings and the subsequent disruption of schooling led to the establishment of Operation Catch Up, which was a daily educational supplement to the daily edition of World newspaper and provided assistance to those learners who wished to continue their studies. The supplement appeared for five weeks in July and August. The success of Operation Catch Up resulted in a proposal to expand the supplement from 12 to 24 pages and the new project would be called People's College.

As a supplement to Weekend World, People's College was first published in 1977 as a 24-page supplement but was later changed to 20 larger pages. It had three main sections:

- an informal section which covered material of broad interest to adults generally, for example post literacy, worker education, health education;
- a non-formal section, which covered courses that were examined by alternative education systems (that is not Bantu Education) and were aimed at developing more practical skills. Some of these courses were Pitman's Typing, Accountancy and Practical English and also Money Management and A Social History of Black South Africa. The last two courses were written by professors at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- a formal section, which covered materials on the core syllabus of the matriculation examinations and was directed at scholars.

People's College also developed a study environment called the receiving structure, which encouraged the setting up of learning groups and involved intensive regional Organisation. The receiving structure of People's College was felt to be unsatisfactory mainly because of the difficulty of maintaining staff in this section and the model was reconceptualised.

The evaluation of People's College which was commissioned by Misereor, the project's funders, indicated a generally favourable acceptance of the programme:

It can be stated that the political reactions to PC are predominantly positive. The World as carrier medium is partly accepted with pleasure, partly with hesitation, but only rejected by a small minority.

PC is basically accepted by most important educational-political trends of black South Africa. However, it is invited by the Black Consciousness Movement to hold regular consultations. PC is rejected by the South African Council of Churches for reasons which can hardly be separated from a heavy suspicion of selfish interest; but PC is clearly positively appreciated by leading white liberal personalities held in highest esteem by the black community (Hanf et al: 1977:59).

The broader political repressive context in South Africa intensified and impacted on the survival of the People's College Support Programme. After running for 31 weeks People's College's carrier newspaper, the Weekend World was banned in October 1977 along with a number of other organisations and individuals. This ended the publication of People's College, but not of Sached's involvement in newspaper education.

The experience gained by Sached helped in the introduction of two new programmes. One of these programmes, initiated in 1978, was the Reader, a postliteracy level, six-page tabloid which was produced every 32 days and distributed by subscription only. In 1979 a distribution network was set up for the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal area, which helped to increase the readership of the Reader.

The second programme was the Learning Post, a supplement which appeared in the Sunday Post from 20 August 1978. Learning Post began as a four-page supplement, but was expanded to eight pages after the eighth issue. For the first year, 1978, Sached and the Sunday Post agreed to keep a low profile and not attempt to form learning groups for Learning Post. In 1979, however, study groups were introduced, especially for the certificated courses published in Learning Post. Learning Post had two main sections: the certificated courses which covered materials for the Pitmans exams, and a themes section comprising articles on such topics as nutrition, African literature, electricity and social history. Within a full year, 37 issues of Learning Post were published between March and November. By 1980 Learning Post had also come to an end when the carrier newspaper, the Sunday Post, was closed down.

THE THIRD DECADE: 1981-1990

The third decade of Sached saw continued growth of the Organisation. This was partly related to the growing strength of mass-based organisations and the labour movement in South Africa, which generated specific educational and training needs. In its attempts to respond to the pressing needs of these emerging organisations, Sached expanded its regional base from four centres (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Grahamstown) to a national outreach that included centres in Port Elizabeth, East London, and Pietermaritzburg and three branches in

Pretoria, Newcastle and Bloemfontein. Centres operated more than one project, while project branches ran only one project for example, in a branch like Pretoria there was only the Bursary Project in operation.

In this period, Sached consolidated the work of the previous decade, which can be summarised as follows:

- continuation of its work in tertiary education through the Bursary Project (Dusspro). Sached also began a new focus by initiating an alternative tertiary level face-to-face residential education programme called Khanya College;
- continuation of secondary education work through TCC which was expanded during this period to try to reach as many learners as possible;
- continuation of its work in teacher upgrading through programmes like the Teacher Upgrading Programme and the Educational Resources Programme;
- development of a new focus :Ln trade union and community-based organisations through the work of a new programme called the Labour and Community Programme;
- continuation of its work in educational publishing through programmes like Upbeat, Publishing and Distribution.

THE CURRENT DECADE: 1991-1996

New direction

In 1989, the year of Sached's thirtieth anniversary, the Organisation reviewed its contribution to South Africa and established a Strategy Sub-Committee to investigate and make recommendations about Sached's future direction and priorities.

The unbanning of liberation movements in February 1990 made the reassessment Sached's role in the country even more urgent. Sached finally decided on a strategic direction that focused on adult education and specifically on working with the 'constituencies of the broad working class', organisations of these constituencies, and 'through educators as agents of transformation in those Organisation' (Sached 1990).

This statement of direction had major implications for programmes like Dusspro and TCC which worked with individual students and not with organisations or with educators specifically. All affected Sached programmes had either to change direction close down or be autonomous programmes. Some programmes chose the last two options.

Dusspro and TCC decided to tackle the problem facing their existence in two ways.

First, they combined their different strengths in distance education to develop a programme that would take their work forward in line with Sached's new direction. This was the development of a training programme for distance education practitioners, called the Distance Education Training Unit (DETU), which was built on the Dusspro strength of training tutors and TCC's materials development capacity. Today this is one of the few surviving programmes of Sached. In 1996

DETU entered into a collaborative arrangement with Unisa's Institute for Continuing Education to make their training course more widely available through Unisa's distance education system. Second, Dusspro and its learners and tutors decided to actively engage Unisa on taking responsibility for supporting its learners. The success of this effort is well documented in the Dusspro and Unisa case studies. This meant that in 1994 Dusspro *me* to an end as one of Sached's programmes. As far as TCC Matric learners were concerned, the period 1990-1993 was used to honour the programme's commitment to them and to close the programme at the end of 1993.

The remaining Sached distance education programmes are now only DETU and the programme called a Secondary Education Curriculum for Adults. This programme was developed towards the end of Sached's third decade with the aim of initiating a curriculum specifically developed to suit the needs of adults and not children as the TCC curriculum and all other South African curricula had done. Sached is currently attempting to have this new programme accepted as part of the mainstream further education sector South Africa.

CONCLUSION

Sached's work in distance education during the period 1959-1996 has been very innovative. Sached was the first programme in South Africa (and probably in most parts of the world) not only to recognise the limitations of correspondence education but also to implement a comprehensive learner support system to address these limitations. With good course materials and additional support services for learners the quality and effectiveness of distance education can be greatly enhanced. Programmes like Dusspro, TCC - and recently a Secondary Education Curriculum for adults, ASECA - have concretely demonstrated how quality distance education, albeit on a small scale, can be implemented. The work of these programmes has influenced new education systems and policy and also the direction of major providers like Unisa.

As an Organisation Sached has shown great resilience. It has survived the difficult and repressive years of apartheid, and has also managed to expand its programmes and outreach through constant critical assessment of its work and structures and the context in which it operated. This has enabled it to identify and take advantage of strategic niches that enhanced its work in distance education and other areas of education.

Sached is now facing new challenges from the new democratic context of South Africa. Like other nongovernmental organisations in South Africa, Sached is faced with financial problems as new relationships between overseas donors, the new government and NGOs are being forged. One can only hope that Sached would be able to survive this new crisis in its life as it has done many times over the past three decades. The new partnerships that Sached is forging with major providers like Unisa and provincial educational ministries, for example, are beginning to place Sached's distance education experience in programme development, management, materials design and development and learner support in the new South African paradigm.

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