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1992  
**SACHED  
Trust**

incorporating  
**Turret  
Correspondence  
College**



# **TRANSFORMED DISTANCE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

## **1992 PROGRESS REPORT**

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# **TRANSFORMED DISTANCE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

## **1992 Progress Report**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

At the end of 1991 the Distance University Students' Support Project (DUSSPRO) and Turret Correspondence College (TCC) decided to merge into one distance education programme called Transformed DUSSPRO/TCC. The merger was an attempt to consolidate the strengths of the two projects into a programme that will effectively serve the educational needs of adults through distance education. This report will give an account of the achievements in 1992.

### **2. STRATEGIC LOCATION**

Transformed DUSSPRO's experience in the development and provision of support services for disadvantaged second language learners locates the programme strategically in the arena of distance education. Distance education in South Africa is currently mainly being classified as correspondence education because student support services are greatly neglected by the main players in this field. DUSSPRO's intervention, though small in scale, has provided a model on how distance education delivery can be improved. The challenge for the programme is, therefore, to find ways of utilising its experience to influence distance education policy in South Africa.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR**

#### **3.1 AIMS**

With the above strategic location in mind, DUSSPRO's 1992 aims were:

- To contribute towards the building of an adult education social movement by building the programme's capacity to create effective community-based organisations through which the education of adults can be facilitated.
- To build a national SACHED capacity to deliver distance education

programmes.

- To consolidate SACHED's practice in distance education by ensuring a smooth transition from our current practice of servicing individuals to laying the foundation for a new programme of work, namely that of training distance educators and administrators.

### 3.2 OBJECTIVES

The programme identified the following objectives in order to achieve its 1992 aims:

- To effectively merge the Distance University Students Support Project (DUSSPRO) and Turret Correspondence College (TCC) activities and staff into one distance education project called Transformed DUSSPRO/TCC.
- To phase out its current student commitments over a two-year period. This is in line with SACHED's changed focus.
- To begin the process of moving away from being the facilitator of individual student's educational activities to strengthening community-based initiatives by providing distance education training and, to relocate our students to existing community-based programmes.
- To seek to work with educators who will provide a more extensive outreach for SACHED's resources through their work.
- To lay the foundation for working closely with communities by negotiating with key national organisations and educational bodies around the training of educators and facilitators working in targeted community initiatives.
- To prepare for and run staff development programmes for the broadening of SACHED's staff capacity in distance education theory and practice.

In an effort to achieve these objectives, we planned to do the following:

1. To honour our commitments to students currently registered in the PWV and Port Elizabeth centres. This involved a continuation of our programme for 2 years (1992/93) to provide support to secondary and tertiary level students.

2. To introduce a training programme for distance educators and administrators located in community-based initiatives. The piloting of this work has in many senses already started with the work done in the DUSSPRO and TCC programmes over the years.
3. To engage and challenge the University of South Africa's (UNISA) educational practices and policies, initially through the organisation of a high profile conference.

There were thus three discreet and at the same time, interlinked sectors of the programme.

#### 4. PROGRESS MADE IN ACHIEVING THIS PLAN

##### 4.1 HONOURING COMMITMENTS TO STUDENTS

The programme continued to deliver all the components of the DUSSPRO/TCC work in the PWV and Eastern Cape centres to a total number of 2 170 students, of which 1 795 were tertiary students and 375 secondary level students.

The overall enrolment target for the tertiary programme was exceeded by 6% (133 students). With regard to the secondary level programme, the target figure for individual students was exceeded by 6,6% (160 instead of 150 students) but the expected enrolment of 100 ANC students did not materialise. Only 52 students from this group registered.

The programme ran orientation sessions for prospective DUSSPRO/TCC students which provided an introduction to the programme. These orientation sessions were also used as a consultation forum around the issue of phasing out the programme.

In consolidating the work begun during the first half of the year, the programme:

- continued to organise weekly tutorials in a variety of courses.
- completed the workshops planned for the year.
- identified suitable community learning centres and began negotiations for the relocation of students.

#### 4.1.1 Tutorials

The 194 tutorial groups started during the first half of the year continued until the end of October 1993. There were, however, monthly fluctuations in numbers due to holidays and tutors being away for some periods among other things.

In addition to tutorials, the Johannesburg Centre Law Faculty tutors organised an informative legal awareness programme covering the topic of The Law and Aids and using mock trials to concretise legal procedures. Participants included students as the jurists and both law and nursing tutors as experts.

In Pretoria the feedback staff received, from tutors about the tutorial visits was very positive. Tutors felt the feedback from staff enabled them to evaluate their tutoring skills and encouraged them to prepare and apply principles they had learnt in workshops.

#### 4.1.2 Workshops

##### a. Study Skills

All four centres continued to run workshops on study skills during the last half of 1992. The Johannesburg and Pretoria centres focussed on enskilling tutors to enable them to present these workshops. The approach and methodology of the workshops were determined by tutors at the June meeting which reviewed previous workshops and prepared for the next. Two areas were identified as essential for examination skills workshops; namely the organisational aspects and actual skills required when preparing for exams. Tutors produced guidelines and then met in subject specific groups to finalise the actual presentation to students during their tutorials. In Pretoria, 24 tutors attended the workshop on 20 June and 10 attended on 25 July.

In Grahamstown 15 students attended the exam techniques workshops held on 25 July 1992 and 26 attended the examination skills workshop on 29 August 1992. The Port Elizabeth centre organised a workshop on 22 August covering essay writing and another on 19 September covering exam skills. 37 and 32 students attended respectively. These two centres thus did not integrate study skills and tutorials.

b. Other Workshops

50 Johannesburg and Pretoria tutors attended a residential workshop from 27 to 29 November 1992.

The aim of the workshop was to discuss adult learning within the DUSSPRO context and to review the role of community learning centres within this context.

The workshop proved fruitful in that:

- i. it clarified DUSSPRO's new direction and concretised the implications of this for the tutors.
- ii. led tutors to a decision to investigate ways of developing a similar programme independent of SACHED.
- iii. tutors set up a Task Force that would conduct a feasibility study of community learning centres and of starting an independent DUSSPRO or similar programme in 1994.

Tutors envisaged that the Task Force would include full-time staff and students from the programme.

4.1.3 **Community Learning Centres (CLCs)**

Through personal contacts and participation in various forums, DUSSPRO had identified 12 centres around the PWV area as potential CLCs for the relocation of students in 1994. In 1990, DUSSPRO began to work closely with two of these centres viz. Alexandra Teachers Resource Centre and Tumahole.

A number of factors were responsible for the collapse of negotiations between DUSSPRO and these centres. The two most pressing being:

- a. the disruption of the centres educational activities by violence in these areas.; and
- b. lack of financial and material resources to carry out a DUSSPRO type of activity.

The second factor confirmed DUSSPRO's conviction that UNISA has to play a role in supporting its students and that resourcing such centres should be part of its responsibility. It is, therefore, important that during this period of transition DUSSPRO should seek ways of influencing policy on distance education.

#### 4.2 TRAINING OF DISTANCE EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS (TDEA)

The primary focus of the TDEA programme was on staff training. The training was done through workshops interspersed with practical on-the-job application. This type of training was aimed at increasing DUSSPRO/TCC and SACHED's capacity in distance education theory and programme implementation.

However; TDEA work during the second half of the year also covered nursing hospitals training and community learning centres training.

##### 4.2.1 SACHED Staff Training

During 1992 TDEA conducted the following internal staff training workshops:

- Educators: 17-19 February; 9-11 June; 25-27 August; and 8-10 December.
- Administrators: 19-20 March; 23-25 June; and 6-8 October.

These workshops covered the TDEA training Modules 1,2 and half of 5 in the case of Administrators and Modules 2 and 3 for educators.

In addition to this, the programme ran a Curriculum Planning Workshop. The main aim of this workshop was to give the 26 participants a broad introduction to the process of curriculum planning. Both programme staff as well as other SACHED staff attended this workshop.

Responses during evaluation sessions indicated that the participant's awareness levels had been raised significantly. However, the workshop was seen as a first step to improving internal staff knowledge and understanding in the area of curriculum development.

#### 4.2.2 Nursing Hospitals Training

TDEA has been negotiating a training programme with two hospital groups ie. Baragwanath and Bona Lesedi. The aim of this training programme is to equip a core of nursing tutors and counsellors in distance education methodology which they can use in helping their nursing trainees. The Baragwanath negotiations began in 1991 and an agreement on the training programme was reached. The actual training programme has not yet been completed. The difficulties experienced were those of scheduling and the tutors failure to adhere to this schedule. The tutors have undertaken to adhere to the 1993 schedule.

The difficulties experienced by these trainees were identified by the hospital tutors as being primarily related to inadequate learning and language skills. The tutors, therefore, decided to develop a distance education course to address these problems.

The Bona Lesedi tutors, on the other hand, began negotiations with TDEA in August 1992 and by the end of the year a schedule for the training in 1993 had been agreed upon.

#### 4.2.3 Community Learning Centres

Correspondence and dialogue with SEPROF (Sekhukhuniland Education Programmes Forum) continued throughout 1992 and plans are underway to pilot the TDEA audio cassettes at SEPROF in 1993. The audio materials will be developed with the assistance of the SACHED audio programme staff and a consultant from the International Extension College in the UK.

A workshop for SEPROF was held at Gamarishane from 31 July to 2 August 1992 with the purpose of advising, informing and training participants to run a study centre. The topics covered were counselling; record-keeping; meetings and agendas; and planning and organisation of study centres. Participants expressed satisfaction with the workshop, although an ongoing problem for TDEA trainers has been the lack of consistency of attendance. There are only three or four participants who attended all the workshops.

At a meeting held with SEPROF on 20 November 1992 the lack of a core group of attendees was raised as one of the programme's concerns, and this was accepted by SEPROF. Other issues discussed were the introduction of Basic level audio cassettes as part of the reworked multi-media training.

TDEA staff members also contributed to SEPROF's Planning and Evaluation workshop on 27 - 29 November 1992.

In the Eastern Cape, negotiations have been underway to form links with SADTU as part of sensitising teachers on the role of distance education in South Africa.

#### 4.2.4 DUSSPRO Tutors Training

TDEA completed its 1992 programme for DUSSPRO tutors by participating in the residential PWV tutors workshop held in November 1992, see section 4.1.2 above.

### 4.3 ENGAGING UNISA

The programme had planned to achieve this objective by organising a conference. The purpose of such a conference was to contribute to efforts to make tertiary distance education accessible to the broadest section of our community. By organising a conference we would bring together key national and service organisations to debate the democratisation of tertiary distance education.

However, during the first half of 1992, we decided to postpone the conference until after 1993 because the staff needed to focus on implementing an ambitious new programme of work. Also, many of the staff needed intensive staff training.

## 5. ASSESSMENT

The structure of the TDEA's original seven module course has been changed and adapted to fulfil the needs of the groups we have been working with. At present, there are three levels of the course all of which contain the same core. These are Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. This flexibility of the course is seen as a strength.

Issues around certification for the course have been put aside for now, but still needs to be addressed and this discussion should involve other SACHED. For the time being, we are considering the possibility of issuing certification for trainees attending our courses.