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Description of Fort Hare University, B.Prim.Ed. Program

This describes a qualification-upgrading program that emphasizes school-based improvement. Strong local support is provided through a partnership between the University and the Eastern Cape Education Department. This document includes:

Part A – A description of the program

Part B – A detailed model of the curriculum organization of the program

Parts A and B of **Document 9** can be used by program managers to generate questions about course structure. This document will also be particularly helpful for those developing programs that incorporate a curriculum of school-based activities.

A Part A: A Description of the Program

The program was developed and is offered by the Distance Education Project (DEP), which is based at the All Saints Campus of the University of Fort Hare in Bisho, South Africa. The B.Prim.Ed. Program comprises eight semesters. Each semester comprises two courses, presented through eight *imithamo* (each *umthamo* is a printed booklet of approximately 40 pages) in “bite-size” chunks of approximately 40 hours of learning time.

- Core Education Studies:
 - Learning About Learning (LAL)
 - Helping Learners Learn (HLL)
 - Schools as Learning Communities (SLC)
 - Learning in the World (LIW)
- Learning areas:
 - Literacy
 - Numeracy and Mathematics
 - Natural Sciences
 - Technology

As noted above, each umthamo is a separate booklet, which represents 40 hours of learning time. Of this 40 hours, nine are spent in three, 3-hour Saturday sessions, and the remainder are spent in individual study and classroom application built around a key activity (requiring at least 10 hours to complete).

A typical Saturday morning contact session (of which there are 20 during the two-semester year) involves discussion of three imithamo:

- One being concluded (for example, Umthamo 11, Natural Sciences - What's Happening Here?)
- One being monitored (for example, Umthamo 12, HLL - Creating a Learner-Centered Environment)
- One being introduced (for example, Umthamo 13, MLMMS - Problem-solving and Investigating)

These Saturday morning contact sessions are supported by Abakhwezeli.

Abakhwezeli

A document titled, "Draft Specifications for Part-time Tutors for Core Course Modules" (1997–98) specifies that *Abakhwezeli* need "to explain requirements clearly (not to teach but to *support* learners)." This role is further elaborated in Umthamo I (pp. 2–3) where the story of umthamo and *umkwezeli* is set out.

The terms *tutor* and *mentor* are inadequate and hence the term *umkwezeli* was chosen for its sense of someone whose "job was to keep the fire burning just right so that the food in the pot would cook well." The Abakhwezeli are not supposed to use contact sessions to teach. Rather, their role is to facilitate discussion and explore issues in the printed material. The Abakhwezeli play a key role in motivating teacher-learners in their studies—that is, in "keeping the fire burning."

The majority of Abakhwezeli are teachers or principals from the local area. Some are, or were, college lecturers; and some of these were designated as Educator and School Support Officers (ESSO) (see below) in a secondment arrangement with the Department of Education in 2000.

All Abakhwezeli receive a stipend of only R400 per contact session of three hours.

In practice, Abakhwezeli work considerably more on the B.Prim.Ed. Program than they are paid for as they are not recompensed for time spent in preparation, in additional support, in feedback on assessment of assignments, and on practice portfolio sessions. There are clearly other motivating factors at play. Approximately 11 of these Abakhwezeli are also able to offer school-based support outside of contact sessions in their roles as ESSOs.

Educator and School Support Officers (ESSO)

ESSOs have been approved by the Department of Education from traditional colleges of education. ESSOs are expected to spend 60 percent of their time on Department of Education work (10 percent of that in the office) and 40 percent of their time on Fort Hare's DEP work. In practice, the divisions are blurred because support to individual teacher-learners usually overlaps whole school-development work.

This in turn presents opportunities for further recruitment into the Fort Hare DEP. It seems likely that in 2001 the Department of Education will require Fort Hare to manage the salaries of those seconded ESSOs who are also playing management roles (for example, as center or regional coordinators).

Visits to schools by ESSOs are initiated by Fort Hare DEP teacher-learners and by other teachers who request a visit via the Education Development Officers (EDOs) of their local circuit or district office. Typical areas in which ESSOs provide support are in encouraging parental and community involvement (the topic of an umthamo), implementing Outcome-Based Education (OBE), and teaching technology. The initial workshop tends to involve information-sharing, and subsequent ones offer more activities and sometimes classroom-teaching demonstrations at Fort Hare's All Saints campus.

While curriculum-development and curriculum-support materials remain largely centralized, the learner-support work of Abakhwezeli and ESSOs is increasingly coordinated in a decentralized way through regional coordinators.

Regional Coordinators

The need for regional coordinators became apparent in March 2000. Three positions were created in May 2000: Eastern and Igcuwa; EG Kei; and

Northern. The regional coordinator's role fulfills three broad functions:

- Academic support to Abakhwezeli and teacher-learners
- Administrative support in record keeping and convening a monthly central progress meeting, recruiting, developing plans of action, and negotiating catch-up sessions for lagging groups
- Logistical support to ensure materials are efficiently delivered and that centers have the Abakhwezeli they need to support the teacher-learners enrolled¹

The Regional Coordinator is the first line of communication for Center Coordinators (see below) and plays a monitoring role in this regard. It is envisaged that this aspect of the program will need to become increasingly autonomous as the program expands.

As indicated above, the link among Regional Coordinators, Abakhwezeli, and Teacher-Learners are the eight Center Coordinators. They are based at Nyathi, Butterworth, Umtata, East London, Bisho, Alice, Bizana, Lusikisiki, Flagstaff, Mt. Frere, Kokstad, Umzimkulu, Maluti, Queenstown, and Sterkspruit. Some Center Coordinators oversee more than one center or double as Regional Coordinators.

Center Coordinators

Center Coordinators play a similar role to Regional Coordinators but on a smaller scale. Key aspects of the role include the following:

- Ensuring that the right imithamo and Abakhwezeli are instated in a timely fashion
- Compiling a monthly report of activities for the Regional Coordinator
- Checking that Abakhwezeli mark key hand-in activities on time, fairly, and accurately
- Ad hoc checking of key non-hand-in activities as well as Abakhwezeli journals

Monitoring performance of Abakhwezeli is intensive for new recruits but becomes intermittent as they gain experience.

The centers themselves comprise classrooms and government offices, which are borrowed for the duration of the contact session.

By using existing facilities, mobilizing community support, and entering into a partnership agreement with the Department of Education, the University of Fort Hare can offer a considerable and varied degree of contact-based support to its teacher-learners without charging prohibitive fees. Currently, the B.Prim.Ed. fee is R3000 per year.

Source:

1. Paired interview with Zoliswa Mafanye (Center Coordinator for East London; Umkhwezeli, ESSO, Materials Developer for Stirling, East London) and Celiwe Ngethu (Regional Coordinator for Gcuwa-Inyathi Region; Center Coordinator, Umkhwezeli, ESSO, Materials Developer for Bisho and Alice) en route to ESSO Presentation in Ncqamakwe, September 19, 2000.
2. Mays, T. 2001. "Innovative Ways to Support Teacher Learners." *Open Learning through Distance Education* 7(1):16-17.

Part B. Detailed Model of Curriculum Organization of Program

University of Fort Hare, Distance Education Project, Core Education Studies Course, B.Teach Degree

Organizing themes	Learners and Learning	Helping Learners Learn	School as Learning community	Learning in the World
Year 1 Focus	What is learning	Learner-centered classrooms	School as learning community	Role of education
Semester 1	Thinking about learning, including learning at home, constructivism	Using group work to aid learning. Group work, activity centers, project work	Concept of school as learning community, characteristics of single grade, multigrade schools, large classes	Role and aim of education: advantages and disadvantages of schooling as one path to education
Semester 2	Exploring teachers' theories about learning including various theorists	The teacher as facilitator and mediator <i>Profiling the learner</i>	The self-managing school and community, empowering schools to become self-managing	Understanding education and change in South Africa: pre-colonial, apartheid education and resistance, to date
Year 2 Focus	Role of language and thinking	Outcomes-based education	Educational policies	Curriculum 2005
Semester 1	Language and thinking includes metacognition	Understanding change: OBE, teacher as change agent, continuous assessment. <i>Evaluating learners' achievements</i>	Educational policies at school level, classroom curriculum	Curriculum 2005: local imperatives and world trends, purposes of education (work, globalization)

(continued)

Organizing themes	Learners and Learning	Helping Learners Learn	School as Learning community	Learning in the World
Semester 2	Exploring language and thought, different types of speech of learners indicates different ways of thinking	OBE approaches and learning materials. Identifying available learning and teaching resources	Educational Policies at national level. Evaluating teaching programs	Curriculum 2005. Curriculum development, policy and programs.
Year 3 Focus	Human development	Understanding and responding to learners' development	Effective management in schools	Hidden curriculum
Semester 1	Physical and cognitive aspects	The teacher as researcher and evaluator. Evaluating the effectiveness of teaching	Effective management: Physical arrangement of classes, classroom preparation, democratizing the classroom, stress, isolation	Hidden curriculum and rules and regulations of teachers and schools.
Semester 2	Social, moral and emotional aspects	Holistic teaching (whole language, theme teaching), all aspects of learners' development Action research to improve classroom practice	Effective management: Scheming, lesson planning, and scheduling	Hidden Curriculum and anti-bias education: race, gender, disability
Year 4 Focus	Learners and diversity	Responding to diversity	The school and the community	Relevance of education
Semester 1	How to promote learning, different ways of learning. Catering for individual needs, Independent and peer learning	The teacher as motivator: encouraging positive behaviour of pupils, conflict management	Educational Policies: Community input. Educational resources within the community. Identifying available learning and teaching resources	Cultural context of education, relevance, language and critical literacies
Semester 2	Exploring learning problems and the challenges these present	Using the social context as a resource, using, making, and adapting other resources for learning aids	Contribution of the school to the community. Community and teacher aides Parents-Teachers Association. reporting to parents	Major research project