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*PURE Regional Visit Report (RVR1)*

*LESOTHO, SOUTHERN AFRICA*

*1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2009*

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**Individuals Consulted:** See Appendix 1

**Programme of Meetings:** See Appendix 2

## Executive Summary

The PURE visit to Lesotho took place in Maseru (at the Institute for Extra-Mural Studies) and Roma (main campus of the National University of Lesotho) over a four-day period, with two full days of substantial meetings topped and tailed by short meetings by way of introduction and latterly with a student group. Meetings involved a range of university staff (principally NUL senior management and from IEMS), external stakeholders from mainly the NGO sector and postgraduate students.

The visit was supported by excellent and responsive communication from the Link Person, Professor Preece, and very thorough documentation that provided the CDG with considerable background in advance. A clear benefit of the visit was that we were able to provide more clarity to a range of internal and external stakeholders as to the purposes and activities of PURE, and in particular to emphasise that it was a developmental, collaborative and long-term commitment on both sides.

The main focus of PURE in Lesotho will be social and civic engagement, in particular, poverty reduction, health, civil society and older adults. In the full report we signal how important it will be to involve the already highly supportive senior manager team and there will be a key role at meso-level for Deans. It will also be important for NUL and the wider region's involvement with PURE's other regions, many with common issues to explore, to ensure access to reasonably high-bandwidth electronic communication. Closer to home the involvement of Gaborone City provides the basis for some interaction and exchange.

A range of concrete action points have been proposed for the next phase of the project.

## Country Profile

The comprehensive Regional Briefing Paper produced by Professor Preece with considerable input from some Masters students in Adult Education, many of whom work for NGOs relevant to the PURE project, provides very good background on the characteristics of Lesotho as country and the higher education system. Some salient parts of this paper are summarized here. The Kingdom of Lesotho is a landlocked, mountainous country surrounded by South Africa, in the south east of the continent with a population of around 2m. Eighty six percent of the economy is subsistence agriculture and 14% industrial. Unemployment officially stands at 46%, with 35% identified as living on less than \$1 a day. Lesotho suffers from one of the highest HIV prevalence's in the world with official figures



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identifying the prevalence rate as 23.2% and a consequent life expectancy of only 34.5 years. Drought and unemployment have rendered more than half the population dependent on food assistance.

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) is the only publicly funded university in the country, with an institutional management structure of formal autonomy based on the UK system of university governance. Its Chancellor is His Majesty King Letsie III, King of Lesotho. NUL originates from Pius XII University College, which later became part of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. The universities became separate institutions during the 1970s and 80s, NUL being established in 1975.

Other institutions described by the Ministry of Education and Training as part of the Higher Education sub-sector are Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP). LCE is an autonomous institution responsible for training primary school teachers and junior secondary school teachers at both pre-service and in-service levels. The Lerotholi Polytechnic is best classified under Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and is also an autonomous institution. The Polytechnic, through its School of Technology, School of Built Environment and School of Commerce and Applied Studies, offers programmes at diploma and certificate levels. As reported in the Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2005-2015, LP has a vision of becoming 'a leading, self-sustaining and responsive university of science and technology university by 2015' (MOET 2005, p. 80).

Other publicly funded tertiary institutions are the National Health Teaching College and the Lesotho Agricultural College. The Malaysian owned Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (LUCT) is the nation's other university, opened by Honourable Prime Minister of Lesotho, Mr. Pakalitha Mosisili in October 2008. The encouragement of LUCT is in line with a critical challenge of the Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2005-2015 of 'Expanding the involvement of the private sector in the provision of higher education programmes' (MOET 2005, p. 82).

The Higher Education Sub-sector is governed by the Higher Education Act 2004, which provides for the regulation of higher education; for the establishment, composition and functions of a Council for Higher Education (established as recently as 2008); for the governance and funding of higher education public institutions; for registration of higher education private institutions; and for quality assurance.

Amongst the seven Strategic Goals of national policy, the following are perhaps most relevant to PURE.

- 1/ 'Enhanced opportunities for accessing quality higher education by Basotho people'.
- 3/ 'Improved relevance of higher education' (to make it responsive to the demands of the labour market).
- 7/ 'Proactive partnerships among stakeholders in place'.

In her speech inaugurating the new Council for Higher Education, the Minister of Education and Training, Dr. Mamphono Khaketla alluded to some of these issues. Although there are plans to increase access, affordability is a major issue for many Basotho children. She contextualised the issue of relevance of the curriculum, alluding to the high levels of unemployment of graduates from Lesotho's HEIs. ([http://www.education.gov.ls/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=279](http://www.education.gov.ls/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=279)).

In the case of the 7<sup>th</sup> goal, the Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2005-2015 states that the activities in support of this objective are to:



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- Establish strong partnerships and consultative mechanisms between institutions of higher learning and the private sector, NGOs and the community.
- Establish strong modalities for dialogue between the Government and cooperating partners/donors that support higher education.

Lesotho also has a well-defined set of policies for lifelong learning and non-formal education (NFE) within which is viewed as a plank within the key goal of reducing the levels of illiteracy and poverty in the country. The targets for NFE are a number of disadvantaged groups including herd boys, out of school youths, adults who missed on formal education, and retrenched miners. As context it is estimated that in 1999, full-time participation in formal education was only 45.8% of the school-age population (i.e. 6-24 years) and that one third of Basotho youth and adults are illiterate. Within Higher Education, the main contributor to lifelong learning provision is the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), part of the National University of Lesotho, and the hosts of the PURE review visit.

IEMS offers open and distance learning Diploma and Degree programmes in Adult Education (Diploma, Bachelors and Masters level), Business Entrepreneurship (Bachelor level) and Mass Communication (Diploma level). It also has a number of regional learning centres in the remote areas of Lesotho, and runs tailor made short courses and workshops on community development issues as requested by communities. IEMS's overall aim is to widen participation in higher education and make learning accessible to those who would not otherwise be able to study at the main campus.

An important context for the role of NUL in regional engagement is its Strategic Plan, which encompasses the Vision, Mission and Values of the University for the period 2007- 2012. The priorities of NUL are:

1. Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning.
2. Improving the University's Research and Innovation Profile.
3. Diversifying the University's Income Streams and Managing Its Finances Prudently.
4. Establishing Good Governance and Administrative Reforms.
5. Developing the University's Human Resource Capacity and Addressing Staff and Student Welfare.
6. Improving and Strengthening the University's Physical and Technological Infrastructure.
7. Addressing Critical National Needs including HIV and AIDS.
8. Developing Partnerships Arrangements with Public, Private and International Bodies.

From these priorities eight goals have been agreed:

1. Goal 1: Improved access to NUL programmes.
2. Goal 2: Improved relevance and quality of teaching and learning.
3. Goal 3: Improved research and innovation profile.
4. Goal 4: Diversified Income Streams.
5. Goal 5: Improved Financial Management.
6. Goal 6: Improved governance and management.
7. Goal 7: Improved Strengthened Physical and Technological Infrastructure.
8. Goal 8: Strengthened, Local, Regional and International Partnerships.

A number of the above priorities and goals align with the purposes of PURE, especially priority 7 and goal 8. Priority 7 is encompassed with the area of health that the region wishes to focus upon as part of social and civic engagement, and Goal 1 is a common international aspiration.

The Strategic Plan 'envisages a doubling of student numbers by the academic year 2011-2012', and implies not simply quantitative change, but a focus on the widening of participation through the



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development of new programmes offered by open and distance learning through the Institute of Extra Mural Studies and bringing back bridging programmes in Arts and Science linked to all degrees programmes.

The five objectives within the eighth priority and strategic goal are all found within other regions of the PURE project. At NUL they are expressed as:

- To develop partnerships with private, public and international bodies.
- To expand number of productive partnerships.
- To address critical national issues including the UN Millennium goals.
- To provide community services.
- To provide innovative business solutions.

It would therefore seem that in pursuing these objectives NUL is reflecting the seventh of the Strategic Goals of national policy. It is reported however in the Strategic Plan that partnership is an area of weakness within NUL and that the university needs 'to strengthen its policy and legal instruments in the area'.

([http://www.education.gov.ls/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=279](http://www.education.gov.ls/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=279))

## Areas of priority in Regional Engagement

The priority areas are as follows:

Social and civic engagement – in particular, poverty reduction, health, civil society and older adults.

## Interim findings and advice

The programme of meetings at the NUL began with a meeting with Heads of Department within IEMs during which the purposes of PURE were summarized, followed by a broader workshop and a general discussion involving external as well as internal stakeholders. Issues raised were broad and included reflections on the current overall goals of education generally and higher education specifically in Lesotho. There was a general feeling expressed that education from primary level onwards is still designed with and benchmarked against an overseas former colonial model, and that the curriculum had led those who experienced it to think that their own ways were 'wrong', excluding indigenous knowledge systems from Africa. One statement appeared to capture a common feeling: higher education needs to engage in a healing process in relation to a disservice that it has done to communities. Other views from the workshop discussion suggested a view that the HE offer is supply-led with little attempt to determine what individuals and stakeholders need or want. Meanwhile one academic suggested that politicians believe that academics are 'a useless bunch'. More positively, informal feedback from the workshop of some 30 individuals indicated a good understanding of PURE's goals, and a general agreement as to its usefulness to Lesotho.

Presentations from the Acting Vice-Chancellor of NUL, representatives of LCE, LUCT, Lerothi Polytechnic and the Development for Peace Education (an NGO) offered a range of perspectives linked to PURE, some more relevant than others. NUL reported a range of activities that related to the training of officials in government and of those working in NGOs, including research training. The university had contributed to the development and evaluation of policy initiatives in areas that included poverty reduction, social inclusion, health and working with the elderly. A number of obstacles and challenges to engagement were reported. These are summarized as follows:

- Inadequate resources and a dependency on government funding.
- Inadequate physical infrastructure.
- A high teacher/student ratio.

- An inadequate workforce with low levels of motivation amongst academics and administrators.
- Inadequate administration processes.
- Poor levels of research.
- Low relevance of many programmes to national needs.
- High attrition rates of staff.

Amongst the solutions proposed included raising more funds from non-governmental sources in line with goal 3 of NUL's strategic plan, innovative business solutions and the further use of IEMS's regional campuses to extend its reach.

Amongst the initiatives of LCE that were reported was the targeting of non-qualified teachers (with 'O' level or less as their highest qualification), and providing access to minority groups by offering courses in the language of IsiXhosa. LUCT focused its presentation on its intention to offer of a range of programmes that meet industry needs and to develop graduate entrepreneurs. Its representative emphasized a desire to integrate business leaders within its programmes to mentor students.

The DPE offered quite a different perspective, and provided some interesting examples of current engagement with NUL and expressed a variety of needs. For example, working with community groups it incorporates law students to sessions that seek to interpret key laws. The DPE reported that many NGOs cannot retain skilled workers, and are therefore not viewed favourably by government. They need the university to assist in providing the 'language' and arguments needed when lobbying government and its agencies. They all lack the capacity to follow relevant trends in the world; here again the university could help by providing briefings and they would then translate these into words that are understandable by citizens. DPE suggested that adult education provision at IEMS played a critical role in helping NGOs by offering programmes at weekend that meet the needs of civil society organizations. Further it appeared that academics in this unit were perceived as recognizing that students themselves were co-creators of knowledge. Specific issues raised for further discussion included:

- The lengthy period (11years) required to complete part time studies up to Masters degree level.
- The fragmentation between degrees at NUL and other organizations including IEMS. In short articulation and credit transfer was poor.
- The narrow range of flexible p/t programmes offered at IEMs. The key issue was why it was only Adult Education, Mass Communication and Business Management, and not other degrees of NUL.
- Ensuring that the curriculum is relevant by allowing NGOs scrutiny of programmes and involvement in programme planning.
- Offering short course provision to SMEs as had been past practice.
- Offering summer school provision focused on NGOs and government policy.
- Establishing a Centre for Civil Society Support as a way of formally linking NGOs to the university. It was argued that a strong link with the university in this way in turn would create better links with Community Councils around the nation.

In further open discussion within the workshop, the proposals from DPE in particular resonated strongly. There were a number of suggestions concerning how these proposals could be built upon to develop a new type of citizenship involving NUL and NGOs, linking these to national goals. Discussion developed around the notion of citizenship in terms of identity, subjectivity, participation, and the session suggested that it is much deeper than about being a 'good citizen' and is more complex in Africa in view of its history. It must be learned and nurtured and DPE alone may not be enough. It was suggest that there should be a national policy to develop citizenship as legal status, public engagement and understanding deeper issues.



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Discussion also focused on the nature of knowledge and the link between knowledge, democracy and inclusion. The meaning of citizenship in context of democracy changes when all sectors of society are included and the same issue pertains for knowledge. The term 'cognitive justice' was used – learning that does not disenfranchise your own culture. It was argued by one speaker that it was necessary to recognise communities as sources of relevant and valuable knowledge and that this will begin the process of enfranchisement of African people.

The interest in the elderly, who as a proportion of GDP receive one of the highest pensions in the world, received a lot of attention in workshop discussion. They tend to ensure that these funds go to where it is best needed within their household, and are key members of households who might benefit considerably from education and training. Further the elderly as described by one participant are the 'working libraries' of Africa, and there was discussion of how pensioner knowledge/wisdom be incorporated into NUL programmes without exploitation.

The main outcomes of the workshop could be summarized as the need for collaboration between the HE sector and a range of external stakeholders in order to more closely meet the development needs of Lesotho, and a desire to 'Africanise' the curriculum.

We should also acknowledge the role of IEMS Masters in Education students, who contributed to the RBP. A final session within the visit provided an opportunity for discussion with the CDG. Students included individuals from a range of government ministries, NGOs, the Independent Electoral Commission and the Chief of the Staff Defence Force. In discussion this students re-iterated some activities of NUL including its role in outreach via regional centres and the work of agriculture students in improving crop yields in farming communities. One student suggested that the Faculty of Health Sciences could do more by connecting theory to practice in communities. It was agreed that students would be a sounding board for the benchmarking tools of PURE and would provide comments to 'Africanise' them.

These summaries provide a taste of discussion and probably do not do justice to their richness. It would appear that there is considerable enthusiasm for the PURE project and a basis for a successful project based on the responses during our discussions with predominantly IEMs staff within NUL, individual representatives from other parts of the Higher Education landscape and external stakeholders mainly from NGOs. Any conclusions from these initial discussions carry strong caveats because there are many other stakeholders that could be consulted. However the CDG did meet with the Acting Vice-Chancellor and other members of the senior management team and were received with considerable enthusiasm. The Registrar reminded the group of a World Bank report that speaks of the vital role of universities in African development, but of the 'deeply entrenched aloofness' of the sector. She saw the objectives of the PURE project as a means of bringing universities and regions together as a 'family'. The Dean of Students remarked that it would be vital to involve other Faculties and departments, notably in their absence from meetings during the CDG's visit.

These comments lead us to some suggestions to take the project forward within NUL. Firstly it is vitally important that senior managers fully support the project so that it is legitimised in the university. Our impression from discussion is that this is the case, but our experience suggests that this needs continual re-enforcement. There will be a key role at meso-level for Deans and within faculties champions will have to be identified. The project is being led by IEMS, but in order to achieve all its potential needs to involve all faculties who can make a contribution to engagement to civil society, and this is likely to mean the entirety of the university. It is therefore important that the Regional Co-ordinating Group (RCG) is widened, and those priorities of the wider university as well as IEMS are incorporated in PURE work. There will be an important role for the Director of IEMS as well as Professor Preece in putting the objectives of the project in Lesotho into action, each being able to build on different strengths and networks. It will be important for NUL and the wider region's



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involvement to ensure access to reasonably high-bandwidth electronic communication. One of the major benefits to Lesotho and other regions is the international interaction that PURE brings, and understandably resources in this area are limited. However, it would be helpful if the interactions required could be the focus of particular attention. Relatively closer to home the involvement of Gaborone City and the presence of a professor from the University of Botswana in the CDG provides the basis for some interaction and exchange. The involvement of an IEMS member of staff in the Gaborone City reviews provides further linkage that can be capitalised on, and the 2010 PASCAL conference and final PURE workshop in Gaborone will provide a good opportunity for the involvement of NUL staff and the wider region in international discussions. Finally it was evident that Masters students in IEMS (who we saw for too short a period) are an excellent resource for engagement with key players in the community given the range of organizations they work for.

## Possible specialist sub-group cluster subjects (and possible partner regions)

The area of social and civic engagement with a focus in particular on poverty reduction, health, civil society and older adults creates the possibility for links with other regions that wish to focus on these aspects of civic engagement. Although these aren't a focus for the nearby Gaborone City, these are issues that may benefit from strong contact with that region.

## Possible examples of good practice that may be written up later

In the course of the visit, a small number of possible examples were reported, most notably the work involving DPE and law students in the re-interpreting of laws for community groups.

However a number of other initiatives were reported in the RBP, and some are replicated here:

1. The Winter / Summer Institute for Theatre for Development (TfD) collaborative work between the NUL Theatre Unit and Mediciens sans Frontières (Lesotho), taking forward TfD techniques.
2. ODL for health professionals in Lesotho Partnership between Faculty of health sciences and University of Dundee.
3. The use of Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) initiatives to open up access to education in the context of high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates Institute of Education NUL, Chancellor College University of Malawi and IoE London. ESRC funded research project.
4. Non-formal Education and Poverty Reduction - partnership between Lesotho Association of Non Formal Education, the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre and IEMS at NUL – Kellogg funded research project investigating the impact of vocational skills component of literacy classes for herd boys and farmers in remote rural areas.
5. Potato seed production - follow up on production in different parts of country – partnership between NUL Dept of Science and Technology (Ministry of Communications) and Dept of Agriculture (NUL).
6. Rural sustainable development - collaboration with Institute of Development Management (IDM), UNISA and IEMS – series of training workshops funded from Kellogg via Department of non Formal Education (NFCE) at IEMS- Kellogg funded.

## Initial use of and reactions to the Benchmarking Tools

Generally the reaction to the tools was positive although the HEI tool appeared daunting. It would be used selectively with different sections being used with different parts of the university. It was felt to be a useful starting point for discussion and analysis. Feedback would be given on the Regions tool and Masters students would offer suggestions on Africanising both tools.



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## First indicative notes about a Region Action Plan

1. The LP, Professor Preece would seek to broaden the local RCG by including representatives from other faculties and departments.
2. She would also re-present the PURE project to other interested parties within and beyond NUL.
3. The HEI Benchmarking tool would be used selectively as one way to engage a broader range of departments and an overall synthesis of engagements would be produced. It would be split into component parts, these being distributed to relevant departments. Masters students would be a sounding board and provide comments on ways in which the tools might be 'Africanised'.
4. The Regions benchmarking tool would be scrutinized and comments fed back to the PURE team before the Vancouver conference.
5. The senior management group would consider sending a representative to the Vancouver conference.
6. a number of online meetings between the RCG and the CDG would be held over the next 10 months to review progress.
7. The region would be clustered with other regions with common interests to share and begin exchanging progress.
8. The next CDG visit would probably be in February 2010.



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## APPENDIX 1

Individuals consulted and CDG  
At PURE Workshop and in smaller groups

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Mr. P. Lebotsa	Assistant Registrar, Communications and Marketing Unit	



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## APPENDIX 2

	Programme	Invitees
April 1 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Arrival, protocol – introduction and welcome at IEMS</li> <li>▪ briefing with PVC present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PVC</li> <li>▪ IEMS</li> <li>▪ staff</li> </ul>
April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<p>IEMS workshop</p> <p>09.00 Introductions CDG Explains PURE &amp; benchmarking</p> <p>10.00 Open Q &amp; A session</p> <p>01.00 Lunch</p> <p>02.00 Presentations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LCE</li> <li>▪ Limkokwing</li> <li>▪ NUL – PVC</li> <li>▪ Lerotholi Polytechnic</li> <li>▪ Mr Shale - DPE</li> </ul> <p>03.45 Plenary to discuss particular issues in relation to overall theme: How can HE contribute to development aspirations of the nation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NGOs</li> <li>▪ IDM</li> <li>▪ Lerotholi</li> <li>▪ LDTC</li> <li>▪ LCE</li> <li>▪ Limkokwing</li> <li>▪ UNESCOM</li> <li>▪ Masters students and their organisations</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Education – CEO (Curriculum) &amp; (Tertiary)</li> <li>▪ NUL Lesotho Snr Citizens Grp</li> <li>▪ Agricultural College</li> <li>▪ NHTC</li> <li>▪ Letter &amp; benchmarking tools to:</li> <li>▪ LCE</li> <li>▪ Lerotholi NUL</li> <li>▪ PVC</li> <li>▪ Limkokwing</li> <li>▪ Dpt Peace Education</li> </ul>
April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<p>09.00 Discussion with NUL Senior Management</p> <p>01.00 CDG private meeting</p> <p>03.00 Debriefing with steering group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NUL Senior Management</li> <li>▪ Then NUL steering group (JP, SMS, PO, Shale, Mofokeng, LANFE)</li> </ul>
April 4 <sup>th</sup>	<p>08.30 Meet with Masters students</p> <p>10.00 Depart</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEMS Masters students</li> </ul>