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*Inauguration of the University of Botswana

On the 15th October, 1982, the University of Botswana was formally inaugurated though it had actually been constituted a University by Act of Parliament on the 1st July, 1982. At the same time the University of Swaziland which had previously been linked with it as the University of Botswana and Swaziland also achieved full university status. This development had been planned for several years.

The new universities will inherit a long tradition, dating back to 1946, when the Roman Catholic Pius XII College was opened at Roma Lesotho, with five students and four priest-lecturers. In 1950 it was taken over by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and by 1963 there were 180 men and women students from a variety of countries. The courses were taught and examined under a special relationship entered into in 1955 with the University of South Africa, a distance teaching university, which awarded students its degrees and diplomas in arts, science, commerce and education.

As the costs of running a growing university-level institution increased and difficulties arose over the relationship with the University of South Africa in the changing political climate, it became clear that a new solution to the provision of higher education would have to be found. Following a detailed study, an agreement was reached between the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the then High Commission Territories, a sum of money was made available by the British government and the Ford Foundation for the transfer of the assets of Pius XII College and the independent University of Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland came into existence on 1st January 1964. This in turn became the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland as the former High Commission Territories achieved their independence.

By 1970 the 188 students in 1964 had grown to 402 with an international multi-racial student body and an academic staff of 78 drawn from many countries. All the degree teaching was undertaken at Roma, but the Swaziland Agricultural College became associated with the University and was handed over to it in 1970 by the Swaziland government. In Botswana the first university building was a short-course centre opened in 1969.

After the initial period of consolidation it was seen to be desirable that the University, which was financed by all three governments, should undertake some of its teaching in Botswana and Swaziland as well as in Lesotho, and building began on sites in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, and Kwaluseni in Swaziland, and the teaching of Part I of the degree in those countries was started in 1971.

Unfortunately, the orderly devolution of the University was disrupted in 1975, when Lesotho withdrew from the partnership and constituted the Roma Campus as the National University of Lesotho. Students from Botswana and Swaziland were withdrawn, their teaching resumed on the Gaborone and Kwaluseni campuses and the University of Botswana and Swaziland was created by appropriate University Acts in the two countries.

Since then Botswana and Swaziland have worked together harmoniously in the development of higher education.

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No central administrative structure was created for the new University. Instead the administration of each of the Colleges provided the administrative services required by the University as a whole. The Chancellorship was held for periods of two years alternately by His Majesty the King of Swaziland and His Excellency the President of Botswana, while the rectors of the constituent Colleges chaired Senate on an annual basis. There was a Governing Committee for the University as a whole, but each College also had its Council, which had the responsibility for the financial affairs of its own College.

This provided a remarkably efficient yet economical form of organisation which allowed each country to develop its work in ways most beneficial to its own country, and yet to have many of the advantages of a single university structure. The same factors made it very easy to plan the separation of the Colleges into two independent universities when it was clear that the balance of advantage was in favour of such a step.

What of the future? Both universities intend to ensure that the close consultation which has marked their relationship for many years will continue and that whenever it is helpful there will be academic cooperation. It is inconceivable that the ties of work and friendship which have been forged over many years will now be severed. Both universities will in future be working within the wide framework of SADCC (Southern African Development Coordination Conference) and will take into the larger organisation patterns of cooperation which should make a valuable contribution to it. They are firmly committed to the concept of regional cooperation and intend to continue to develop new ventures together and to strengthen existing links. Each of them will also however have to develop its own programmes in accordance with the needs of its country. The first major development in Botswana will be the creation of the Faculty of Agriculture. In UBS Agriculture was taught at the Swaziland College and students from Botswana who wished to study at degree or diploma levels had to do so in Swaziland. The climatic conditions of the two countries, however, and therefore the types of agriculture which can properly be practised there, are so different that it is surprising that teaching in Agriculture had not been at least partially undertaken in Botswana earlier. The Faculty is to be started by the amalgamation with the University of the Botswana Agricultural College, which has a long tradition, at Sebele about twelve kilometres from the main University Campus. The University will continue the certificate course which has been taught there for many years, will strengthen the diploma programme and will inaugurate degree level teaching. The amalgamation will add about 350 students to the 1100 existing University population.

In planning the programme the University is intending to establish a two stage degree. The first stage will be a three year diploma programme after which the students will normally enter work. After some years practical experience they will return to the University to take a further two years, as Part II of the degree programme. In this way it is hoped that the agriculture graduates will be people who have a thorough practical training and valuable experience in the field as well as achieving an appropriate academic level.

This system of a full degree programme consisting of a three year diploma followed by a two year Part II programme with the possibility of a practical experience between them is a very useful and practicable one which the University will hope to develop in a number of fields. In Education for

example it is hoped that a new three year diploma programme in Secondary Education to be taught at the new Molepolole Teacher Training College due to open in 1985 will be planned jointly with the University in such a way that it can serve as Part I of the five year B.Ed. degree. Discussions are also in train about the possibility of instituting similar programmes in other practically oriented subjects.

There are of course dangers in undertaking a new venture of this kind. Those who are concerned with the employment of professional teachers or agriculturists etc. naturally value their ability to undertake from the beginning of their employment the practical duties of their profession and are afraid that if such training is undertaken by Universities the practical element will be devalued and an excessively theoretical approach adopted. On the University side, on the other hand, many are fearful that such programmes will place an undue emphasis on practical ability and will underrate the importance of the theoretical, and thus fall short of the appropriate standard at degree level. It is only by being sensitive to this potential conflict that it will be possible to ensure that both emphases are given proper and not undue attention.

The development of university programmes of this kind is one example of attempts to meet problems which are not likely to arise in longer established institutions. Another relates to the development of a national lecturer cadre who can take over teaching in the University from expatriate staff. In larger or richer countries where there is a substantial number of universities this problem tends not to loom large. In a country like Botswana, however, which is fundamentally a poor country, which has a population of under a million and which has only one university, graduates are in demand by a large number of employers including industry and commerce which are also attempting to localise their senior administrative cadre. The second feature is that the output of secondary education is not sufficiently high to meet the needs of the university and of the many other institutions which require a school certificate as the basis for further training. The consequence is that the university is not able to develop as rapidly as it should while many of its most able products will be attracted away from university teaching into more lucrative fields.

In order to try to solve this problem the University of Botswana has adopted a vigorous Staff Development programme. It currently has forty Staff Development Fellows the majority of whom are studying in other universities either for their Masters or for their Doctoral degrees. Several of them have already joined the University staff and are giving valuable service to their departments. It is hoped that the size of the programme will grow during the next academic year.

Such a programme, although essential, is undoubtedly expensive. Fortunately a number of countries recognise the importance of this training and make scholarships available which enable SDFs to equip themselves for their work. Nor will the programme be quickly terminated, since, even when the University is staffed predominantly by Botswana, it will still be necessary to make provision for them to take Doctoral as well as Masters degrees. One can foresee therefore a need for a substantial Staff Development programme for many years to come.

Unfortunately no amount of training is able to convey experience. The provision of sound leadership will remain a continual problem. Every department benefits from having experienced scholars who can place the fruits of

their experience at the disposal of both staff and students. Yet such experience can only be gained over time. There is no doubt that career patterns within the University of Botswana, as in many similar universities, will remain uncertain for some time. In some departments the route to promotion may be blocked for a long period because of the appointment to senior posts of young men and women. This will cause frustration amongst their juniors who see little prospect of promotion with the University and no chance of moving to any other University in the same country. Fortunately we can anticipate that the University will continue to grow for some time which will at least in part ameliorate these difficulties. Senior scholars will, it is hoped, continue to be provided by short-term secondments from other Universities, with the help of Fulbright and other similar programmes of international assistance.

The future size of the University is difficult to prophesy at the present time. There is no doubt that as the population grows and as secondary education improves there will be an increasing demand for university places from the public. It is also reasonably certain that at least for a number of years the demand for university graduates will outstrip supply. Indeed a recently published manpower forecast anticipates that there will be a continuing shortfall of about 800 graduates in Botswana for at least the next ten years.

As far as subject areas are concerned the two most pressing needs which remain are probably Applied Science and Engineering and Medical Science. At the moment however the University is fully occupied in developing its newly acquired work in Agriculture.

The University is currently working on its Development Plan for the next five year period from 1986-90. It has however also been developing a Master Plan for the physical development of the University Campus to the year 2000 by which time it is anticipated there may be 4,500 to 5,000 students in the University.

To provide the main source of high level manpower for the whole nation is a challenging and intimidating task. It is also a fascinating one which staff of the University are eager to fulfil.

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