ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	RE-MAKING THE NAMIBIAN TEACHER: A STUDY OF TEACHER REFLECTION IN AN ERA OF SOCIAL TRANSITION AND POLICY REFORM
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After achieving independence from South Africa in 1990, the Namibian government began sweeping educational reforms. These reforms were built on a new philosophy of education that envisaged education as playing a transformative role in post-apartheid Namibia. New teacher education programs have been the cornerstone of these reforms and focus on learner-centered pedagogy, placing emphasis on critical reflection – a drastic change from the teacher-centered education previously found in Namibian classrooms.

Recent research in Namibian classrooms indicates that teachers communicate an understanding of pedagogical principles endorsed in official policy, but this often does not translate into observable differences in classroom practice. This study examines this situation from a new perspective, moving beyond teachers' understanding of the technical aspects of methodology to focus on the beliefs they hold about education and teaching.

Literature on teacher thinking, learning, and change tells us that teachers' beliefs are integral to teachers' practice and to changes in practice. These beliefs may be influenced by multiple, sometimes conflicting, messages that teachers receive through policy declarations, teacher training programs, and discussions with education officials, colleagues and parents. This study examines the meaning teachers in the Namibian context have made of such messages and the beliefs they have developed about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, as well as the connection of these with their practice.

Qualitative methods were used, including teacher and principal interviews and focus groups, classroom observations, interviews at the ministerial level, and document analysis. Deductive and inductive coding was used to generate and analyze themes in order develop a picture of the ways in which the purpose of education, the role(s) of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching are portrayed among teachers and at the policy level. Variations among teachers and comparisons between teachers and policy documents were examined.

The findings show that teachers' beliefs often concur with ideas espoused in policy documents, though with differences in some key areas. The study also explores the challenges that teachers face in trying to teach in accordance with their beliefs, and implications for professional development are discussed.

RE-MAKING THE NAMIBIAN TEACHER: A STUDY OF TEACHER
REFLECTION IN AN ERA OF SOCIAL TRANSITION AND POLICY REFORM

By

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DEDICATION

In memory of Meme Selma and in honor of her daughters, women who embody
the strength and perseverance of the Namibian people.

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I would like to thank the many teachers and principals in Namibia who graciously allowed me into their schools and classrooms and gave me their time, and the teacher educators and ministry officials who offered their insights and their help. I would particularly like to thank Demus Makuwa, who helped make this study possible and provided invaluable help in getting my fieldwork started. I also thank my Namibian friends, colleagues, and former learners, who inspired me in my work and my life. They are the reason I came to love their country.

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My family has offered support in more ways than I can count, and I am so deeply grateful to my parents and my sister for all they have done to make this dissertation possible. And to my husband and daughter, who have made sure that I didn't lose balance or lose my way.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BETD	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
HIGCSE	Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education
HOD	Head of Department
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
LCE	Learner-Centred Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SWA	South-West Africa
SWAPO	South-West African People's Organizations
TEFA	Toward Education For All
UNAM	University of Namibia

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

After achieving independence from South Africa in 1990, the Namibian government attempted to transform the education system by embracing a new philosophy of education, which envisaged education as playing a key role in moving towards an equitable and democratic post-apartheid society. As such, Namibia offers a unique context for examining teachers' beliefs about education and teaching and how these beliefs connect to their practice. Education is closely tied to the socio/cultural/political environment and teachers must make decisions and take positions in this environment that will affect their practice (Kincheloe, 1993). At the same time, how they view school and their own role as teachers may be influenced by multiple, sometimes conflicting, messages they may receive through policy declarations, teacher training programs, and discussions with education officials, colleagues and parents. This study examines the meaning teachers in the Namibian context have made of such messages and the beliefs they have developed about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, as well as the connection of these with their practice.

After gaining independence, the new Namibian government began sweeping educational reforms. One of the cornerstones of these reforms was the newly developed preservice teacher education program for primary school teachers, the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD). The BETD is based on the overarching philosophies of the Namibian reforms that embraced critical theory and placed education in an important, transformative role in post-apartheid Namibia. As such, it focuses on learner-centered pedagogy, active learning, and continuous assessment. This is a drastic change from the

formal, teacher-centered education previously found in Namibian classrooms and one

which is meant to contribute to the process of democratization. In order to enable and

support teachers in this new approach to teaching, the teacher education programs place

emphasis on critical reflection and action research.

Research that has been carried out in Namibia over the last fifteen years has

generally indicated that teachers' understanding of reform policies, and their

implementation in the classroom, is uneven (National Institute for Educational

Development, 2003). The findings presented by researchers have ranged from those

reporting little understanding of policy and almost no change in instruction (Mutwa &

Reines, 2002; Shaalukeni, 2002) to those reporting a wide variation (National Institute for

Educational Development, 2003; van Graan, Leu, Price-Rom, & Barrow, 2006), with a

mixture of traditional and more learner-centred approaches (Luecke, 2004; Storeng,

2001). This research extends the work that previous researchers have done by focusing

on teaching teams within three schools, with a variety of education backgrounds –

whereas much previous research has focused primarily on current, or recently graduated,

students in the new teacher education programs. I have also sought to move beyond

asking teachers to respond to policy statements, instead asking them to discuss their own

personal beliefs about education. Thus, the focus of my study is not on how teachers

understand policy, or how well their definitions of key terms match those in policy

documents, though I look at these issues as well.

Van Graan (1999) wrote in 1998, in a conference on Education Reform and

Innovation in Namibia:

> After Independence there was not really time to become acquainted with teachers'
> existing beliefs of what good practice constitutes, or to start the process of

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changing teachers' beliefs about what is good for their learners. This will be what ultimately realizes in the classroom, namely what teachers themselves believe about what will benefit their learners. (p. 60)

This statement parallels lessons learned from literature on teacher thinking, which tells us that teachers' beliefs are integral for teachers' practice, and to changes in practice. Thus, there continues to be a need for further examination of teachers' beliefs in Namibia, and not just among BETD students.

At the same conference, Pomuti (1999) stressed that the policies put into place after independence, particularly the choice to move toward learner-centred education, stemmed from the new philosophy of education that underlay the reforms. She wrote, "Learner-centred education is not seen as a goal in itself but as a means to implement the new philosophy of education in Namibia at all levels of the education system" (p. 14). This emphasis on the change in educational philosophy, and the acknowledged importance of teachers' beliefs, led to my research questions:

1) What beliefs do teachers espouse about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, and how do they view the connection between their beliefs and practice?
2) What messages about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching are communicated in policy and to what extent do teachers' beliefs reflect these "official" messages?

Purpose and Significance

As a researcher, my interest in undertaking this study in Namibia stems from my experience as a volunteer teacher in a rural school in northern Namibia from 1992 to 1995. I arrived in Namibia two years after independence and, together with my Namibian colleagues, attended workshops and learned about the changes that were taking

place in the education system. These changes were only at the beginning stages at the time, and it was some years later that I was able to read about the full extent of these changes and to better acquaint myself with the philosophies behind them and some of the policy processes involved. It has been both curiosity about my former colleagues and other Namibian teachers, as well as my own interest in the descriptions I have read about the reform policies[1] – how they placed the teacher at the center of reform, integrated reflective practice and critical inquiry into pre-service teacher education, and envisioned teachers as social change agents – that has driven me to return to Namibia as a researcher to better understand how teachers now think about education and teaching[2].

While my interest in this research has a personal motivation, it dovetails with the interests of scholars, researchers, and ministry officials in Namibia. As I have mentioned, research has demonstrated inconsistency in the use of teaching practices that the post-independence teacher education reforms were intended to foster. Further, the anticipated improvement in student achievement, expected to follow from "improved" teaching methods, has not happened. Thus, the Namibian education community is now at a point of review and reflection, and this study will contribute to this process. I will seek to undertake the type of exploration that van Graan (1999) recognized was necessary, but which had not been undertaken after independence.

Through this dissertation, I will share what the teachers who participated in this study discussed with me, the ideas they expressed about the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, and how these connect with

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[1] For example, one of the books that became easily available outside of Namibia and brought the Namibian experience in education policy reform and teacher education to non-Namibian audiences is *Democratic Teacher Education Reform in Africa: The Case of Namibia* (Zeichner & Dahlström, 1999).
[2] I had returned to Namibia in 1999 as well, but that was a visit to spend time with friends.

practice. I will describe the implications of what I have learned from the teachers as well as some ideas about potential further research. My hope is to raise questions and offer possible implications to contemplate and consider, but not necessarily to make policy recommendations or tell the Ministry of Education what they should do. As Swarts, Dahlström, and Zeichner (1999) have pointed out, there has sometimes been a tendency for outside experts to "provide answers instead of being 'critical friends', providing tools for reflection and the further development of practice" (p. 251). My aim, then, is to be a critical friend, and my hope is that this dissertation can be a tool for reflection and for thinking about the further development of practice.

While I hope that this study will be useful for Namibian practitioners and policy-makers, I believe that it will prove to be useful beyond Namibia as well. In Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in other developing countries, there has been a movement toward attempting to replace traditional modes of instruction with more learner-centered approaches, as well as efforts toward education for democratization (van Graan et al., 2006). There have been concerns, however, that classroom practice has not changed to align with these new emphases, and that achievement has not always accompanied these changes (Leu & Price-Rom, 2006; UNESCO, 2004; van Graan et al., 2006). This study emphasizes the importance of considering underlying philosophies and beliefs – of policies and change efforts, and of teachers. While not all of the specific findings I present will be transferable to other contexts, the framework which underlies the study – the utility of examining teachers' beliefs – is applicable in other contexts, and some of the ideas that the teachers in this study discuss, and some of the implications arising from these discussions, will likely resonate for other African countries as well.

Even beyond Africa, this study will contribute to the literature on teacher thinking. The Namibian case represents a particularly interesting context, as an attempt to take a critically-orientated teacher education program to a national level, and as a context where clearly defined philosophies underlay attempts to reform instruction. As I will discuss in my conclusion, this study highlights the importance of differences and idiosyncrasy among teachers. It also demonstrates the importance of considering sense-making and of bringing to bear an understanding of teacher learning and change when examining reform and implementation processes.

An Introduction to Namibia

In order to begin to situate this study, I will here briefly introduce the larger national context, and the local regional context, in which I undertook this research. I will further explore these contexts in Chapters 4 through 6.

The Country in Brief

Namibia was a Germany colony and then a mandated territory of South Africa until 1990. It is located on the southwest coast of Africa, just northwest of South Africa and bordering Botswana to the east and Angola to the north. Namibia also includes a narrow strip of land, called the Caprivi strip, which runs along the northern border of Botswana and part of Zambia's southern border (see Figure 1). The country covers an area of 825,418 square kilometers, a little over half the size of Alaska. According to the 2001 Namibian census (Namibia Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003), the population of

the country was just under 2 million, with an average population density of just 2.1

people per square kilometer. The population is distributed unevenly, however, with vast

areas of the country being sparsely populated, a few large towns – including Windhoek,

the capital, with a population of around 200,000 – and the northern portion of the

country, in which 60% of the population resides.

Figure 1: Map of Namibia[3]

The primary reason behind this population distribution is the country's

geographical features (Makuwa, 2005). Namibia is the driest country south of the

Sahara, containing the Namib desert, the Etosha Pan[4], and part of the Kalahari desert.

Much of the country is marked by dry river beds that are rock and dust during much of

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[3] Map downloaded from the CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html.

[4] The Etosha pan is a dry salt pan – the pan was originally a lake, which dried up thousands of years ago, and is part of the Kalahari basin. Because it does fill with water in some places during the rainy season, it attracts game and is now a national park and game reserve.

the year, but flow for a brief time during the rainy season. The northern section of the country receives somewhat more rainfall, though it suffers from deforestation, and the northeast part of the country, particularly the Caprivi Strip, boasts woodlands and a network of rivers. The central and southern regions are rich in mineral resources and thus support the country's mining sector, which represents the bulk of the country's GDP, as well as some cattle and goat farming – while there is heavy subsistence farming in the north.

Along with the differing geographic features of the country, there are also differences in culture, language, and history among different regions. There are more than eight different ethnic/language groups in Namibia[5], each with its historical "home" region, the boundaries of which were solidified under South Africa's apartheid policies[6]. While all of the indigenous groups suffered under the inequities of colonial and apartheid rule, their precise histories and experiences differ, and so their relationships with each other and with the post-independence government vary and sometimes have caused friction. One example of this confluence of culture and history is the predominance of Afrikaans in much of the country[7], and particularly in central and southern regions, which led to greater dissatisfaction with the post-independence language policy in these

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[5] Some sources emphasize "language" (rather than "ethnic") groups and generally identify seven main local language groups, though each consists of multiple dialects (Pütz, 1995b). Pendleton (1996) describes these groups in terms of "ethnicity" and uses the names that I heard people using when I lived there: Bushmen, Caprivi (Mafwe and Masubiya), Herero, Himba, Kavango, Nama-Damara (two groups speaking the same language), Owambo, Rehoboth "Basters", and whites (mainly German and Afrikaaner).

[6] While each ethnic group in Namibia had historically resided in a particular region, colonialism and apartheid solidified these boundaries, forcibly moving some groups and denying all groups the possibility of moving freely to other parts of the country. This "homeland" policy will be discussed further in chapter 4.

[7] According to Pütz (1995b), in the early 90's Afrikaans was still very much the *lingua franca* in Namibia. In 1991, Afrikaans was spoken as a home language (mother tongue) by 9.5% of the population, while English was the mother tongue of only 0.8%.

regions (Fourie, 1995; Pütz, 1995a, 1995b) – the policy which made English the official language and the medium of instruction from grade four onwards.

Along with such differences, and with the legacy of colonial occupation and apartheid, have come wide disparities in the distribution of wealth. While Namibia is considered a middle-income country, it has one of the highest income inequalities in the world[8]. These inequalities follow regional lines and also correspond to a rural-urban divide. Such indicators as literacy, access to potable water, and income show sharp differences between regions. For example, regional adult literacy rates range from as low as 57% in Kunene (a northwestern region) to 95% in Khomas (the region containing the capital) (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999). In Ohangwena (a central northern region), 60% of the population do not have access to health services and an adequate water supply. In relation to the rural-urban divide, these same indicators are similarly worse in rural areas, where 67% of the population resides, and 85% of "consumption-poor" households live in rural areas and make their living through subsistence farming – primarily in the northern regions[9].

The area in which I undertook my school-based research was in the central northern regions of the Namibia, the regions that were formerly referred to as Ovamboland, and which now include Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto. In this area subsistence farming predominates – in three of these regions, between 90 and 99% of the population lives in rural areas. At the same time, given that a large percentage of the country's population lives in these regions, there are some (relatively) sizable towns –

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[8] In 1998, the UNDP Human Development Report indicated a Gini-coefficient for Namibia of 0.67, which was the highest in the world.
[9] Figures are from the Namibia 2001Population and Housing Census and are available at http://www.npc.gov.na/census/index.htm.

including the country's fourth largest town (accounting for the comparatively high

percentage of urban dwellers, 69%, in Oshana). Similarly, there are more schools in

these regions than in most other regions, and the average class size is larger than in most

other regions (EMIS, 2005). At the same time, the remaining legacy of apartheid and

colonial equities shows through in the differences between resources among schools in

these northern regions as compared to the central and southern regions (EMIS, 2005;

Makuwa, 2005). For example, the classroom resources index used in the SACMEQ II

indicated that the regions of Ohangwena, Oshikoto, and Oshana were worst off in terms

of classroom resources (Makuwa, 2005).

Education in Namibia

The system of schooling in Namibia consists of four phases:

- Four years of lower primary (grades 1-4), taught with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction
- Three years of upper primary (grades 5-7), with English as the medium of instruction
- Three years of junior secondary (grades 8-10)
- Two years of senior secondary (grades 11-12)

Individuals schools are typically either primary (grades 1-7), secondary (grades 8-12), or

"combined schools" – the latter theoretically combines primary and secondary, but few

combined schools offer all grades, and it is quite common for them to stop at grade ten.

Learners[10] take national examinations after grade seven and grade ten, and after grade 12

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[10] In Namibia, youth who attend primary or secondary school are referred to as "learners", while those attending the college of education are often referred to as "students". I follow that terminology throughout this dissertation.

they take the "International General Certificate of Secondary Education" or the "Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education" (IGCSE/HIGCSE)[11].

Beyond the post-independence reforms I have mentioned, and which I will describe in more detail in Chapter 4, there have been other significant changes in the education system as well, particularly significant strides in redressing inequities remaining after independence. Enrollment in the northern regions of Ohangwena and Oshikoto increased by 50% from 1990 to 1998, and by over 50% in the Kavango region (Mutorwa, 2004). By 2000, 90% of school-age children were enrolled nationally, with much improved access in the previously underserved areas of the north. At the same time, the disparity in percentage of trained teachers narrowed. In 1992, only 63% of teachers in the central northern regions had some formal training, while in the capital region, 81% did[12]. By 1998, these figures were 81% and 90% - still a disparity, but not as large.

Despite these gains, however, there are still a number of problems in the education system, including remaining inequalities between regions and between rural and urban areas. In 2000, according to the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQII) report for Namibia, there were still large differences between regions in terms of classroom furniture and school resources (Makuwa, 2005). EMIS (EMIS, 2005) data confirm this as well – for example, in 2003, 13-17% of classrooms in some of the northern regions were constructed by parents using locally available materials, such as mud and thatch or corrugated iron. The percentage of

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[11] These are the international versions of the British GCSE and have been administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, though a process has begun whereby Namibia is taking over administration of the examinations.
[12] Calculated from EMIS (2005).

such "traditional" classrooms in the capital region, as well as most of the central and southern regions, was zero. While per learner expenditures are no longer differentiated by race, the fact that personnel costs make up a significant portion of expenditures (almost 90% in 2001/02) and that teachers in some regions (such as the northern regions) have average lower salaries than teachers in other regions (due to average lower qualifications) and teach larger classes, actual per learner spending ends up being skewed toward already advantaged schools (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999; Makuwa, 2005).

Overall, there are concerns about learner achievement, as well as continuing concern about teacher qualifications – both of which show similar differences among regions and between urban and rural areas. Namibia performed quite poorly in the 2000 SACMEQ study, with learners performing worst among participating nations in mathematics, and teachers performing second from last in that subject[13]. In most of the northern regions, over 80% of the grade six learners tested at levels that were considered in the study to be below "basic numeracy". Though they fared better in reading, still only 16.9% of learners in Namibia reached what was considered a "minimum level of mastery", and this figure is as low as 3 and 4% in some of the northern regions (Makuwa, 2005).

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[13] The countries which participated in the SACMEQII study included Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zanzibar. The SACMEQ study focused on grade 6 and included tests of mathematics and reading for teachers and learners, as well as a number of other indicators. It will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Limitations

Given the differences, sometimes quite stark, between regions within Namibia, selecting one region in which to focus my study creates obvious limits. Given the differences in demographics, both in terms of culture and language as well as in terms of school and class-size, and available resources, the teaching environment is quite different from region to region. In addition, given different political and historical contexts, it might even be hypothesized that teachers in different regions might have different reactions to the reform policies and may have developed different beliefs about education and teaching. My study was undertaken in the central northern section of the country, and it is probable that locating the study in this part of the country affected my findings.

In truth, I wouldn't want to claim that the teachers in my study represent all Namibian teachers, or even all teachers in the area in which I undertook my fieldwork. The process of making choices about particular regions and particular schools and teachers on which to focus inevitably created limits to my research[14]. In addition to selecting schools in central northern regions, I also chose to focus on grade six teachers. This meant that I drew on the ideas and experiences of teachers who teach specific subjects (as opposed to class teachers in the lower grades, who teach all subjects), who do not need to concentrate as much on large national examinations (as opposed to grade seven teachers, who will likely be concerned with the exam their learners will take at the end of the year), and whose learners may have weaker English compared to learners in higher grades.

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[14] I will discuss further how I made these choices in Chapter 3.

At the same time, as I will discuss in my conclusion, many of the things I learned from the Namibian teachers who participated in my study resonate with research that has been undertaken in other parts of the country. In addition, some of the implications will clearly reach beyond the schools in which I collected my data – for example, the clear need for continuous professional development, the idiosyncratic nature of teachers' beliefs and practice, and the numerous challenges faced by teachers in Namibia. At the same time, the ultimate aim of my study is not to make claims about all Namibian teachers, nor even to make extensive claims about the individual teachers in my study. Instead, it is to remain a "critical friend" and to provide both a picture of the beliefs held by some Namibian teachers, their relation with policy, and some implications that may arise from these.

Layout of dissertation

In the following chapters I will explore the questions that I have laid out in this introduction. Because these questions are based on notions of teacher thinking, and particularly the importance of beliefs about education and teaching in teacher thinking, practice, and change, I will begin in Chapter 2 by discussing the literature on these topics. In Chapter 3, I will present the methodology I used in my study. In Chapter 4, I will present the historical background of Namibia, which will further situate the present context of teaching and learning by demonstrating the ways in which the purposes of education were constructed before independence, as well as introducing the reforms that were meant to fundamentally change this.

In Chapter 5, I will further introduce the geographical area in which I located my study, as well as the specific schools and teacher participants, and will also include a discussion of lessons I observed. This will be followed, in Chapters 6 through 8, by a presentation of the ideas discussed by participants and in policy documents concerning the three core elements of my research questions: The purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching. In Chapter 9, I will explore the many factors that teachers feel can be challenges or supports in their attempts to practice in accordance with their beliefs. Finally, I will conclude by reviewing the findings I have explored throughout the study, contemplating possible implications, and identifying some of the many possibilities for further research.

CHAPTER 2: TEACHER THINKING, LEARNING, AND CHANGE – A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the last three decades, there has been an increase in interest in how teachers think and how their thinking connects to practice. Much of this interest and research has grown out of work done in the West, but has gained ground in developing countries as well. In the African context, as a result of both local and international influences, there has been an increasing realization of the importance of teachers overall, placing them in a key position affecting the quality and outcomes of education. There has also been a push to recognize that the work of teachers is something beyond the technician/worker role in which they have traditionally been seen in many places (Akyeampong, 2002; Craig, Kraft, & DuPlessis, 1998). Thus, teachers cannot be merely counted as inputs, like textbooks and classrooms. Instead, there is a growing recognition that what they choose to do in the classroom plays a pivotal role. At a basic level, research on teacher thinking, learning, and change, has sought to examine those choices, to understand better how teachers make the choices they do about practice, and how these choices change over time.

My research questions are based on a set of conclusions that arises out of the literature on teacher thinking and learning. I will introduce these conclusions briefly here and then explore the literature from which they come more fully throughout this chapter.

First, the questions I am asking are based on the realization that teacher thinking is important – that teachers hold beliefs about the purposes that education plays in society, the roles that teachers should and do play, and that teachers construct their own visions of quality teaching. Further, these beliefs are connected to teaching practice. The

second conclusion, which is closely tied to the first, is that teachers are surrounded by a rich and complex environment, both inside the classroom and out, and they are thus exposed to a number of different ideas about education and teaching. Teachers must make meaning of these various ideas as they construct their own beliefs, which may change over time. At the same time, this complex environment may impact the ways in which their beliefs connect to their practice. Finally, the third conclusion posits that teaching is a learning profession – that teachers' knowledge changes over time, like the beliefs they hold – that, in fact, it is this learning process that enables some teachers to become "expert".

Teacher Thinking

> Influenced by the advances in cognitive psychology, the popularity of ethnographic and qualitative methodology, and the conception of teaching as a thoughtful profession, teacher education researchers have, in the past decade or so, demonstrated an unprecedented interest in and enthusiasm about certain aspects of teacher cognition and their relationship to sound pedagogical practices in the classroom. (Fang, 1996, p. 47)

As Fang explains in the quote above, the last two decades have seen an increase in interest in the thinking of teachers as a significant factor in classroom practice, with a shift from focus solely on teacher behavior to attempts to examine teachers' "thinking, beliefs, planning and decision-making processes" (p. 47). The literature in this area has included both theory building and research-based evidence and has contributed to the construction of models for understanding how teachers think, including their beliefs about education and teaching, and how their thinking connects to practice. Before delving into this literature, however, I think it is necessary to consider the terms used

when discussing teacher thinking, since researchers and scholars who have examined

teacher thinking have not always agreed on such terms, or on their meanings.

Unpacking Terms – Beliefs Versus Knowledge

Throughout this chapter, I will be using multiple terms to talk about teacher

thinking, including primarily the terms *knowledge*, *beliefs*, and *theories*. Richardson

(1996), Kagan (1992), and Pajares (1992) list quite a number of additional terms that

scholars have used almost interchangeably, such as *attitudes*, *conceptions*,

understandings, and *values*. The use of these terms is, in fact, not entirely agreed upon

among researchers and theorists that use them. Some argue that the term *knowledge* can

be misleading and is sometimes used when the term *beliefs,* or *theories,* would be more

appropriate (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Others have created labels that qualify the

term *knowledge*, such as *practical knowledge*, *personal knowledge*, or even *personal*

practical knowledge (Carter, 1990).

I believe there is some value in considering the possible differences associated

with using the term *knowledge* versus the terms *beliefs* or *theories*, and would like to do

so briefly before going on. As Richardson (1996) explains, *knowledge* "implies

epistemic warrant" (p. 104), associating what is *known* with some objective truth. When

talking about a teacher's knowledge of mathematics, for example, we are led to think

about a seemingly objective assessment of a teacher's ability and understanding.

However, considering also such terms as *beliefs* and *theories*, we realize that, even with

mathematics, there can be more subjectivity and nuance. The topics a teacher would be

likely to emphasize, and the way in which he/she would approach them, comes from

his/her underlying philosophies about the purposes for learning mathematics and even the purposes for education, as well as about the subject itself. Based on these philosophies, a teacher may hold a belief about whether only a very few students should be exposed to abstract mathematics while the rest are taught consumer math. One teacher may view mathematics education as a tool bag of useful skills and knowledge for the future, while another may view it as a way of reasoning, which can contribute to a student's overall critical thinking skills.

I would posit that the use of the term *knowledge* is closely connected with a trend among educationists, to reframe teachers and teaching, moving from a view of teacher as worker to that of teacher as professional (Avalos, 1997; Hoyle, 1997). Ironically, in many places this has taken place at the same time as, and perhaps in part in reaction to, increased "surveillance [*of teachers*] by politicians and the community to be more accountable through standards regimes and rituals of verification" (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 5). In order to legitimize the idea of teacher as professional, scholars evoke attributes of a professional – including "a knowledge base for teaching" (Shulman, 1987).

While I believe that an unpacking of the terms used in describing teacher thinking is warranted, I do not claim to have the answer or to know what the best terminology is – and, further, I am sympathetic to efforts to raise the status of teachers. Thus, both out of respect to the authors I am citing, and in recognition of the fact that I am not myself able to resolve the debate, I have chosen to follow as much as possible the terminology used by the scholars to whom I refer.

Teacher Thinking – Knowledge and Beliefs

Scholars and researchers interested in teacher thinking have delineated a number of categories of teacher knowledge and beliefs, though ultimately such delineations can easily mask fluidity and connections between types. One commonly discussed area of interest is the knowledge teachers have about the subjects they teach (Fang, 1996; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987). Shulman (1987) breaks this knowledge into two categories: Content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. *Content knowledge* refers to the depth of knowledge that a teacher has about the subject itself – for example, their procedural knowledge and conceptual understanding of mathematics topics, as well as of the connections between topics. *Pedagogical content knowledge* is the knowledge teachers have about the ways children learn particular topics – for example, recognizing when manipulatives are likely to help students understand something better (Wilson et al., 1987).

In addition to pedagogical knowledge that is specific to a particular subject, some researchers also identify general pedagogical knowledge as a separate category (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). This can include, for example, techniques for classroom management and general theories of educational psychology. Knowledge of educational psychology, in fact, may overlap both pedagogical knowledge and the knowledge or beliefs that teachers hold about students. The latter category will also include the knowledge and beliefs a teacher has about particular students and student characteristics (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

Moving beyond the classroom, teachers have knowledge about the context of schooling, from knowledge of the school in which he/she works, to the district, to the

larger school system – for example, teachers may have varying degrees of understanding of school financing at various levels, or of how and where decisions are made about curriculum and resources. At an even larger level, teachers hold personal value orientations and will have particular theories or beliefs about the purposes of education and even the nature of knowledge. Similarly, they have theories/beliefs about what it means to be a teacher – about the roles that teachers should and do play, what the act of teaching entails, what makes for quality teaching (Kagan, 1992; Kincheloe, 1993; Pajares, 1992).

As I have mentioned, this categorization of areas of teacher "knowledge" masks fluidity and interconnectedness. Other models exist for framing teacher thinking. Kelchterman (2004), for example, describes teachers' *personal interpretive frameworks*, which he defines as "the set of cognitions, of mental representations that operates as a lens through which teachers look at their job, give meaning to it and act in it" (p. 220). He breaks this framework down into two domains: the teacher's *professional self*, which refers to the teacher's conceptions of her/himself as a teacher; and the teacher's *subjective theory*, which includes the teacher's "knowledge and beliefs about teaching" – which he associates with the question "how should I act and why should I act like that?" (p. 221). This framework, then, presents a somewhat more integrated picture of the various kinds of knowledge or beliefs of teachers.

Recognizing this integration, many scholars assert that, in fact, the contextual beliefs and value orientation that teachers hold are fundamentally important, as they can underlie the other forms of knowledge or beliefs that teachers hold. In this view, the ideas teachers hold that connect to the larger socio-cultural and political context,

including the purpose of education and the role of the teacher, are closely linked, if not

causative factors determining, their beliefs and theories about the subjects they teach,

how they should be taught, and about their learners. Even if teachers are not conscious of

their beliefs on a socio-cultural/political level, these beliefs impact their thinking

(Ginsburg, Kamat, Raghu, & Weaver, 1992; Tom, 1997).

Teacher Thinking and Classroom Practice

Moving beyond the examination of teachers' thinking itself, many researchers

have considered the link between teacher thinking and classroom practice. There is a

degree of debate about this link, with some researchers finding inconsistency between

teacher beliefs and theories and their actions in the classroom (Fang, 1996). The problem

is that the environment in which teachers are making decisions and taking action is highly

complex and variable. It moves at a fast pace, and lacks the predictability that would

allow them (and us) to easily follow their thinking to a logical conclusion (Calderhead,

1987; Richardson, 2001). In addition, teachers may experience conflict with their beliefs

or theories, which further influences their actions. For example, a syllabus they are

instructed to use may conflict with their own beliefs about the nature of mathematics, or

the best way to teach. In the context of Namibia, like many African countries, a serious

lack of resources may similarly conflict with their beliefs about the best way to teach. As

Johnson, Monk, and Swain (Johnson, Monk, & Swain, 2001) write, for example,

"knowing that small group discussion helps students clarify their ideas is an unworkable

strategy for a room that has three children squashed onto every pair of seats intended for

just two" (p. 153).

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Biographical research on teachers has demonstrated, however, that "the basic ideas novice and experienced teachers have about teaching are remarkably coherent and serve a powerful organizing and explanatory function in their thinking and decision making" (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 134). And there is a preponderance of research that shows that teacher knowledge, beliefs, and theories do play an important role in practice (Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Munby et al., 2001; Pajares, 1992). Halkes and Deijkers (2003) explain this role well, positing that "teaching is intended action in a complex situation that to the teacher is as rational as possible, is meaningful, sensible, according to his/her personal intentions" (p. 4). As such, we should not expect a one to one correspondence, but rather a more dynamic relationship between teachers' knowledge and beliefs and everyday classroom practice.

Inconsistency may actually play a part in the process by which teachers learn through experience, a topic that will be discussed more fully in the next section. Shulman's (1987) *Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action* is illustrative. According to his cycle, teachers begin with *comprehension* - comprehending the subject matter and purposes of their instruction. They then undertake *transformation*, where they plan and prepare for instruction, based on their comprehension. *Instruction* follows, which is the action that takes place in the classroom – the teacher teaches the lesson. Afterwards, the teacher engages in *evaluation* and *reflection,* where she/he assesses students' understanding and his/her own performance and then undertakes a deeper reflective analysis of his/her own and the students' performance. And finally, the teacher reaches *new comprehension*, bringing the model full circle and enabling the teacher to change his/her practice. This model both allows for change in teacher thinking and demonstrates

that beliefs and practice do not have to be perfectly consistent in order for the former to influence the latter.

Research does indeed show that teacher thinking changes over time. Studies have indicated that experienced teachers demonstrate deeper, and more nuanced, knowledge in a number of the areas of teacher thinking described above (Berliner, 1987; Munby et al., 2001). At the same time, they have developed a larger repertoire of both planned and automatic responses that they can use in the complex classroom environment. Research has demonstrated, for example, that knowledge experienced teachers take for granted, such as decoding a complicated classroom environment, or identifying alternative decisions and their potential impact, is beyond the reach of most novice teachers, who rely more heavily on theoretical concepts (Berliner, 1987; Carter, 1990).

Teacher Learning and Change

While Shulman's model for teacher learning from practice presents one model for understanding the way in which teacher learning or change can happen over time, and evidence from novice-expert research studies have shown that it does, scholars have explored teacher learning in a variety of ways. This has included research related to developmental stages, pre-service teacher education, in-service and professional development, socialization, and sense-making.

From a broad view, a number of researchers have constructed developmental-stage theories for teachers, which present stages that teachers are purported to go through as they move from novice to expert to the final segment of their careers. Many of these

theories discuss the primary concerns of teachers at each stage, such as at which stage

they are more likely to be in survival mode (the first stage in most models) and when they

are more likely to seek innovation or experimentation, or to ask deeper questions

(Burden, 1996; Richardson, 2001). As Richardson points out, however, stage theories

generally have moved over time towards more "flexible accounts", which recognize that

they are not necessarily linear, that not all teachers will move through the stages in the

same ways, and that it is not clear what factors may move a teacher from one stage to

another. As Richardson concludes, "the use of a very flexible approach to stages or

phases may have taken us so far from the original concept of a stage theory that the

usefulness of the work must be rethought" (p. 913).

     While stage theorists have attempted to develop a broad and systematic view of

learning over the course of a teacher's career, the bulk of research on teacher learning and

change focuses on particular moments in time in a teacher's life – specifically, how

teachers may learn and change during pre-service teacher education, and how they may

change during in-service or professional development, particularly in the context of

reform. Each of these areas includes a large body of literature, and while I cannot hope

to present an exhaustive review of each, I will explore some of the conclusions that have

been drawn in these areas.

Pre-service Teacher Education

     Given that the research on teacher thinking has enumerated a broad range of areas

of knowledge that teachers call upon in their teaching, the question arises as to which

areas of knowledge should be emphasized in pre-service teacher education. In addition,

the research indicates that much of the knowledge base of expert teachers comes through experience (Munby et al., 2001; Pajares, 1992). So teacher educators need to consider not only what areas of knowledge are important in teaching, but also what areas of knowledge can be developed in student teachers during pre-service teacher education, whether student teachers' thinking can be changed, and how.

In regard to the first dilemma, a variety of teacher education programs have, not surprisingly, chosen different areas of knowledge on which to focus. Some may have a content-heavy academic focus, while others focus more on the teacher's personal development or general pedagogical knowledge (Al-Weher & Abu-jaber, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Noddings, 1999; Sosniak, 1999). The focus of any such program depends on the historical and cultural context, the philosophy of those running the institution, and the theories and beliefs of the teacher educators (who are, after all, teachers). Debates on the ideal focus of teacher education programs continue, but many researchers now advocate a balanced approach, attempting to offer pre-service teachers a foundation in multiple areas of knowledge, while also encouraging teachers to work towards gaining a better understanding of him/herself and his/her belief system (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Munby et al., 2001).

Then there is the second dilemma, the question of whether and how pre-service education can offer student teachers some of the knowledge that many expert teachers have gained through experience, and whether it can change pre-service teachers' thinking. Some of the conclusions from research appear to be mixed as to the impact of pre-service teacher education on teacher thinking. A number of studies have found that the beliefs and theories with which student teachers enter pre-service teacher education

programs changed little over the course of their time in the program (Akyeampong &

Lewin, 2002; Carter, 1990; Coultas & Lewin, 2002). As a result, some researchers have

concluded that the predispositions with which students enter their pre-service teacher

education programs are too ingrained to change over the course of what is a relatively

short period of time (Richardson, 2001; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Still, many other

studies have found that such changes can happen, though they are usually reported to be

small and inconsistent across students – some change more than others (Carter, 1990;

Davis & Moely, 2007; Ryan, 2007; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

As a result, some teacher education researchers have concluded that, in line with

some stage theories, pre-service teaching students generally have a greater need (or at

least a greater felt need) to learn "survival skills", and that changes in belief can happen

only in conjunction with practice and reflection on practice over time (Akyeampong &

Stephens, 2002; Munby et al., 2001; Richardson, 2001). This has even led some

researchers to propose that practical teaching experience be positioned at the beginning of

the pre-service education program (Tom, 1997). A larger majority instead propose that

teacher education should include a heavy dose of integrated teaching practice, so that the

process of reflection on practice can begin during pre-service education (Craig et al.,

1998; Hammerness et al., 2005).

Regardless of the specific strategy proposed, however, recent research on teacher

education has recognized that the efficacy of pre-service teacher education on changing

teachers' thinking before they begin teaching is limited. They recognize that teachers'

knowledge grows and their beliefs and theories evolve through practice. As such, many

teacher educators and teacher education researchers are moving to frame pre-service

teacher education as the beginning of a process, and hold one of the most important goals of pre-service teacher education to be preparing teachers to be lifelong learners (Craig et al., 1998; Hammerness et al., 2005; Tom, 1997).

In view of the dilemmas of pre-service teacher education and given the research that has been done on this stage of teacher learning, a number of scholars have attempted to enumerate those attributes of an effective pre-service teacher education program, which would provide student teachers with a strong foundation in a range of knowledge areas and prepare them for continued learning and development throughout their career (Craig et al., 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Hammerness et al., 2005). Some of the attributes that have been proposed include: a strong, clear and shared vision of education; a solid foundation in multiple areas of knowledge; opportunities to link learning and practice; and multiple opportunities for inquiry and reflection.

The Practicing Teacher – Learning and Changing Beliefs

Recognizing that learning and change continues throughout a teacher's career, many researchers have sought to investigate this ongoing learning process, but particularly in the context of in-service or professional development. In other words, the purpose of much of this research, even that which has explored natural learning processes of teachers (as with stage theory research), is to determine how in-service or professional development influences, or fosters, the learning/change process. A significant proportion of the research on teacher learning and change comes from studies of particular in-service or professional development programs, often in the context of reform at some level.

Again, there are mixed reviews concerning the feasibility of changing teacher's beliefs in pre-planned ways. Research has shown that a number of factors can either keep a teacher from changing her/his beliefs, or may influence her/him to change her/his beliefs in a way that is different from that intended (Richardson, 2001).

Research and theory indicate that prior knowledge and beliefs can contribute to resistance to change, but also that they are essential to learning. Numerous research studies have provided examples of resistance to change, often leading to the conclusion that teachers, like other adults, do not easily let go of previously held beliefs (Richardson, 2001). Thus, prior knowledge and beliefs can, and have been found to, create a kind of inertia, a seeming unwillingness to change. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) explains how teacher's personal values and emotions can become a blocking mechanism:

> Many reform ideas about teaching, learning, and schooling are very value-laden, for example, arguments about the purpose of schooling or what our society should value as mathematical or scientific literacy. Furthermore, the substance of the reforms – implementation of changes in teaching practice – affects the core behaviors that are central to one's self image (p. 401).

So, as just one example, teachers may have an emotional and negative reaction to receiving a message that what they have been doing is wrong, and then be resistant to changing their practice.

At the same time, learning new knowledge and shifting or developing new beliefs depends greatly on the way in which the adult learner connects this new knowledge to prior knowledge, or previously held beliefs. As Spillane et al (2002) write, summarizing from cognitive theory and research:

> The fundamental nature of cognition is that new information is always interpreted in light of what is already understood (Brewer & Nakamura, 1984; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996). An individual's prior knowledge and experience, including tacitly held expectations and beliefs about how the world works, serve

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as a lens influencing what the individual notices in the environment and how the stimuli that are noticed are processed, encoded, organized, and subsequently interpreted.(p. 394)

Adult learning theory provides a framework for how such learning can take place, with reflection playing a pivotal role. Dewey (1910) defines reflection as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6) and further explains that reflection comes into play when one is faced with a novel problem or an experience that challenges our beliefs, that creates "a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt" (p. 9). Building from these basic ideas, theories of adult learning provide models for how experience and reflection lead to learning and change (Merriam, Cafarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Vella, 1994). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, one well-known example, depicts learning as a process beginning with concrete experience, moving onto reflective observation of that experience, then to abstract conceptualization, which leads to active experimentation – which then becomes the new concrete experience as the cycle begins again. Kolb writes: "Learning, the creation of knowledge and meaning, occurs through the active extension and grounding of ideas and experiences in the external world and through internal reflection about the attributes of these experiences and ideas." (p. 52). And further, " . . . learning, and therefore knowing, requires both a grasp or figurative representation of experience and some transformation of that representation. Either the figurative grasp or operative transformation alone is not sufficient". (p. 42).

Mezirow (1991) builds on these ideas of reflection and experiential learning, emphasizing the importance of what he calls *premise reflection*, which he believes is

essential for the most transformative types of learning in adults. *Premise reflection* "involves our becoming aware of *why* we perceive, think, feel, or act as we do and of the reasons for and consequences of our possible habits of hasty judgement, conceptual inadequacy, or error in the process of judging" (p. 110). He goes on to explain that "premise reflection is the dynamic by which our belief systems – meaning perspectives – become transformed".

In teacher education research, there has been debate concerning the exact relationship between changing beliefs and practice. Some researchers have posited that changing beliefs must come first, while others have asserted that a change in beliefs can, in fact, follow a change in practice (Guskey, 2002; Richardson, 2001). Adult learning theory, however, implies that it's actually a cyclical process. And, in fact, there seems to be agreement that for a change in practice to be long-term and substantive it must be accompanied by a change in beliefs (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). Adult learning theory may also explain why researchers have reported varied findings concerning the "which comes first" question – the exact role of experience and reflection may differ by individual. Kolb (1984) presents a model to depict the ways in which some individuals may naturally tend toward introspective reflection, while others may be more oriented toward experimentation – orientations which may be culture-based. Regardless of personal learning orientations, however, ultimately both action/experience and reflection are necessary for learning or change to occur.

Reflective Practice

Out of a recognition of the importance of reflection, an emphasis on reflective practice, and the framing of the reflective practitioner, has arisen. Moving beyond a description of the role that reflection plays in how people learn, notions of the reflective practitioner involve a normative frame, through which scholars of teacher education have advocated for particular uses and forms of reflection. Like choices of terminology such as "teacher knowledge", discussions of teachers as reflective practitioners are also connected to recent efforts to empower teachers and to frame teachers as professionals rather than technicians, by emphasizing the learning aspect of the teaching profession (Christie, Harley, & Penny, 2004; Valli, 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Within discussions of reflective practice, scholars have pointed out the many different types of reflection possible, and often have advocated particular forms. Beginning with Schon's (1987) notions of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action", a number of scholars have attempted to create typologies of reflection, sometimes attributing to them a hierarchy. Handal and Lauvas (1987) for example, have developed a typology that includes reflection on action, reflection on the reasons for action, and reflection on the ethical justifications for action. Zeichner (1994) and Valli (1997) have developed typologies that describe the traditions of reflection they have found in teacher education programs in the US, which provide a useful way of thinking about the different possible foci of reflection. These typologies differentiate whether reflection is *academic*, focusing on subject matter; *technical*, focusing on scientific theories of teaching; *refection-in-action*, focusing on practice and experience; *developmental or personal*, focusing on the students; or *critical*, focusing on the socio-

cultural context. Zeichner (1994) eschews the notion of attributing levels to reflection, and instead advocates considering different domains of reflection, all of which are important. He writes:

> The idea of levels of reflection implies that technical reflection at the level of action must somehow be transcended so that teachers can enter the nirvana of critical reflection. This position devalues technical skill and the everyday world of teachers which is of necessity dominated by reflection at the level of action (p. 13)

Regardless of the type of reflection advocated, promoters of reflective practice encourage teachers to undertake reflection purposefully and intentionally, making conscious and then examining their own theories and beliefs in the process (Moore, 2007). As Marland (2001) writes:

> One main reason for teachers explicating their practical theories is so that they can then more readily subject their theories to review and revision in order to effect improvement in their teaching. Teachers attempt to change their teaching will be impeded and rendered less effective, however, if aspects of their practical theories remain tacit and if teachers are not fully aware of all the grounds on which their own approaches to teaching are based. (p. 172)

Much of this theorizing on reflective practice has come out of western contexts, as is common with many educational ideas that take on international currency. Some scholars have taken issue with this and question the applicability of "western" notions of reflective practice. Problems inherent in educational transfer have long been documented (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004), and some researchers have suggested that similar problems occur when western notions of reflective practice are transferred to developing countries. O'Donoghue (1994), for example, finds that teacher educators in Papua New Guinea appear to lack the capacity for critical reflection themselves, and therefore are not positioned to model or teach it to pre-service teachers. Similarly, Johnson, Monk and Hodges (2000) conclude that the teachers they worked with in the South African context

do not work at a "professional level", a level necessary for reflective practice. Both of these authors leave open, however, the possibility that forms of reflection can and do take place in these contexts – just at what they consider to be a lower order. This begs the question whether these scholars consider the individuals with whom they worked to be incapable of "higher-order" reflection, or just not practiced in it.

Akyeampong, Pryor, and Ampiah (2006) and O'Sullivan (2002) point to the latter, that teachers might just not be practiced in reflection, in their research studies in Ghana and Namibia, respectively. Both of these researchers found that teachers gained skill in reflection when they were provided with support and facilitation. On the flip side of this issue, some researchers have pointed out that teacher education institutions in industrialized countries, such as the US, often appear to lack the capacity for fostering critical reflection as well (Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Zeichner, 1996). Still, like Akyeampong et al. and O'Sullivan, many researchers have documented various localized approaches that have been effective, in which teachers were able to participate in multiple forms of reflection, and to make significant changes to their practice (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991; Valli, 1992).

Teacher Learning and the Social Context

This discussion of learning and change thus far has focused on the individual, and indeed numerous researchers have emphasized the importance of the unique experiences of individual teachers and the influence of their personal life histories on their teaching (Goodson, 1992; Raymond, Butt, & Townsend, 1992). However, regardless of how isolated they may feel at times, teachers work within a larger institution. Numerous

researchers have examined the many ways that this larger institution might influence the teacher and her/his learning and how the teacher is "socialized" – whether that larger institution is framed as the class of students, the school, or a national-level sense of teacher identity and role.

Literature on teacher socialization has examined the ways that teachers' thinking can be influenced by socializing forces at various levels and at various stages. Scholars in this tradition frame the belief and predispositions with which pre-service teachers enter their training as the product of socialization, largely during their experience as students (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Through their training, pre-service teachers may experience additional socialization influences – though as has been mentioned, studies have indicated that the predispositions with which pre-service teachers begin teacher education do not easily change, and may have lifelong influence on the way they think about teaching and about themselves as teachers (Goodson, 1992; Raymond et al., 1992).

A number of researchers (George, Worrell, & Rampersad, 2002; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) have found that the "ecological conditions" of the classroom – the various factors found in particular schools and classrooms that influence the dynamics in that setting – in which pre-service teachers will practice or teach can be the greatest indicators of whether they will use a skill learned in a pre-service course or micro-teaching exercise, as opposed to characteristics of the course itself. Some scholars (George et al., 2002; Ginsburg & Clift, 1990) have pointed out that this may be, at least in part, because the "hidden curriculum" of the teacher education program often contradicts the overt messages of the "explicit" curriculum. That is, such factors as the "pedagogical

techniques and texts and materials within the program" may be significant socializing influences, possibly even eclipsing the messages communicated through the formal curriculum (Ginsburg & Clift, 1990). Thus, as Zeichner & Gore (1990) summarize, some scholars claim that "the real impact of preservice preparation lies in these images of teacher, learner, knowledge, and curriculum, which are subtly communicated to prospective teachers through the covert processes of the hidden curriculum of teacher education programs" (p. 338).

Many scholars emphasize the importance of the workplace, the school in which the teacher eventually teaches, as perhaps the most important source for socializing influences. Here, teachers are strongly influenced by colleagues, evaluators and administrators, parents, and teachers, or more broadly by what has been described as the school "culture" or "climate" (Hamilton, 1993; Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson, & Pillay, 2002; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Numerous studies have been undertaken to try to tease out the roles that these various influences may play in teacher socialization, but findings appear to vary widely (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Hargreaves (1992) asserts that "teacher cultures, the relationships between teachers and their colleagues, are among the most educationally significant aspects of teachers' lives and work" (p. 218) On the other hand, Zeichner and Gore (1990) point out that some researchers contend that colleagues and other workplaces effects can be less important than "the attitudes of significant evaluators" (p. 339) such as administrators, inspectors, and so forth. Zeichner and Gore go on to argue against this stance, explaining that there is great variation in the amount of influence such evaluators might have. In some contexts, however, it appears that supervisors and evaluators may play a significant socializing role (George et al., 2002).

At a more macro-level, some researchers have also attempted to explore the role that broader social/cultural influences may play (Thaman, 2007; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). For example, Roberts-Holmes (2003) reports on the influences that Islam and the local political context have on Gambian teachers' professional identity, while Tabulawa (1997) similarly explores how Botswana teachers' thinking and practice has been influenced by British colonialism, traditional Tswana society, and recent policy orientations.

Based on research in teacher socialization, many scholars of teacher development have attempted to identify ways in which these influences can be taken into account, particularly when undertaking reform efforts that will demand teacher change. There is little agreement, however, concerning the exact role that teacher socialization plays in teacher learning and change. Reviews of teacher socialization reveal a broad spectrum, from those who view socialization as being almost completely determinate, to those who frame school or social influences as among many factors entering into the teacher's personal history (Richardson, 2001; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The relationship between socialization and individual personal history is inextricable in any case, and culturally dependent, so a search for a universal model is probably unwise (Carter & Doyle, 1996). Law (2001), for example, points out the collective orientation of teaching and teacher development in Asian countries as compared to the West, where it has been only recently that we have begun discussing the importance of collaborative learning among teachers.

A moderate view would perhaps recognize teacher socialization as an important, but not wholly determinate, influence. Certainly, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the school environment plays a role, but does not completely determine teaching practice or teacher learning. It is likely, once again, that both influences are important,

but that the exact relationship cannot be determined universally. As Zeichner and Gore (1990) write, "teachers influence and shape that into which they are being socialized at the same time that they are being shaped by a variety of forces at many levels" (p. 341).

Like prior knowledge and beliefs, the context – particularly the school context – can inhibit change or can support it, in both positive and negative ways (Richardson, 2001). Researchers have attempted to identify those environmental characteristics, particularly at the school level, which seem to support and enhance teacher learning in what is considered a positive direction (such as adopting teaching practices articulated in a particular reform). The bulk of this work has been done in Western countries, but a core conclusion appears to have some applicability in other contexts (Feiter, Vonk, & Akker, 1995; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Ying, 2007) – that learning is enhanced when teachers have an opportunity to work and learn together, ideally in an atmosphere that allows for "assumptions and beliefs to be communicated and examined" (Kelchterman, 2004, p. 222). Researchers have stressed that it is necessary to have some combination of collaboration and autonomy (Richardson, 2001), but even among the studies done in Western countries it is clear that there is no definitive formula for this combination (Hargreaves, 1992). As Kelchterman (2004) writes:

> Collaboration in itself is not the most promising path in terms of professional development . . . rather a positive balancing of collegial collaborative work on the one hand and individual, autonomous work on the other works far better. This balance, however, will have to take different forms in different schools and for different teachers. (p. 222)

And most certainly in different cultures. For example, in the Asian countries that Law (2001) discusses, the balance would clearly seem to be more on the side of collaboration than autonomy.

Reform and Teacher "Sense-Making"

Recent research on teacher sense-making (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002) brings the individual and social spheres together, highlighting the importance of the individual teacher's prior knowledge and beliefs as they encounter and make sense of reform, as well as the interplay between this individual sphere and the social sphere. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (Spillane, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002) point out that much of the research examining the impact of reform on teaching practice has implied that when teachers do not change their practice in line with reform it is most likely due to a lack of capacity, either on the part of the individual teacher or on institutional capacity, or that they have chosen to resist the reform. Spillane et al. (2002) emphasize the need to look more deeply at the sense-making that is involved:

> Viewing failure in implementation as demonstrating lack of capacity
> or a deliberate attempt to ignore policy overlooks the complexity of the
> sensemaking process. Sense-making is not a simple decoding of the policy
> message; in general, the process of comprehension is an active process of
> interpretation that draws on the individual's rich knowledge base of
> understandings, beliefs, and attitudes. (p. 391)

The sense-making framework posits, and research bears out (Jessop & Penny, 1998; Spillane, 1999), that the ways in which teachers understand reform and act in the context of reform is bound up with their personal and professional identities, which are in turn bound up with the cultural context. As a result, the ways in which they make sense of and react to reform are much more complex than much of the literature on reform have depicted. Schweisfurth's (2002) study of teachers in the context of reform in South Africa and Russia demonstrates, for example, the wide range of ways in which teachers respond to reforms, which go beyond assumptions of "resistance" or "conservatism" and

bring into relief the ways these teachers make sense of "incompatible forces" during the reform process, which "pull teachers in different directions" (p. 127).

In their "sense-making" model, Spillane, Resier, and Reimer (Spillane et al., 2002) bring together individual cognition and situated cognition. The former is described as "how individuals notice and interpret stimuli and how prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences influence construction of new understandings" (p. 388). Situated cognition means "that situation or context is not simply a backdrop for the implementing agent's sense-making but a constituting element in that process" (p. 389). Thus, the sense-making process of a teacher is dependent on that teacher's individual prior knowledge, beliefs, expectations, and values. At the same time:

> Social norms and organizational structures are important contexts for implementing agents' work and for their efforts to make sense of policy. Individuals draw on existing reservoirs of individual and collective knowledge to determine what particular policies mean, in order to decide on a response to policymakers' recommendations. (p. 404)

The local-level environment also offers the possibility for a community of reflection and dialogue, and thus may play an enhanced role in sense-making:

> Social interactions can aid sense-making not only because individuals learn from one another but also because group interactions bring insights and perspectives to the surface that otherwise might not be made visible to the group (Brown & Campione, 1990; Brown et al., 1989). For example, discussing ambiguous situations with coworkers may allow an individual to be exposed to alternative interpretations of shared stimuli. Interacting with each other, local actors can explicate tacit beliefs as individuals are prompted to summarize and articulate their interpretations in struggling to communicate their point of view. Once articulated, these frequently tacit opinions become visible to the individual and the group-open to discussion, debate, and negotiation, supporting group sense-making to find inconsistencies and flaws and to resolve them. (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 406)

In many ways, then, the sense-making model brings together a number of fundamental ideas about teacher learning, emphasizing both individual teacher's prior knowledge

beliefs, as well the social context, and highlighting the role of refection (without using that term specifically) in the learning and/or change process.

Conclusion

Returning to the conclusions that have informed my study, the substantial literature on teacher thinking, learning, and change provides convincing evidence that teacher thinking is important. Teachers hold many different kinds of knowledge and beliefs, which influence their practice. This influence does not always appear as a one to one correspondence, as the rich and complex environment by which teachers are surrounded also exerts an influence – an influence which can both impact a teacher's ability to practice in accordance with his beliefs and which can actually impact those beliefs. The relationship between beliefs and experience is, in fact, a dynamic one, as the teacher (like any adult learner) learns through experience and through reflecting on experience, both individually and as part of a community – a process that can lead to change in both knowledge/beliefs and practice.

In my study, in the context of Namibia, there are many areas of teacher thinking on which I could have focused. As I discussed in Chapter 1, a number of researchers have, in fact, addressed other areas of teacher thinking in the Namibian context – primarily focusing on teachers' understanding of or attitudes about particular reforms. I have chosen to focus on questions about teacher thinking that relate to a socio-cultural/political realm for two primary reasons. First, one of the characteristics of post-independence reforms in Namibia that has been emphasized and applauded is that they are based on a clear philosophy of education (Pomuti, 1999; Zeichner & Dahlström,

1999). While I will be examining this philosophy more closely in following chapters, the

bulk of literature on the Namibian reforms emphasizes the clear articulation of purpose,

where education was to be a key to moving from an unjust apartheid society to an

equitable, democratic one. Further, the reforms were reported to have come out of a

reflective process, just as reflective processes were to be imbued in the new teacher

education program.

The second reason that I have chosen to focus on the purpose of education, the

role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, is that I am among those scholars

who believe that such macro-level beliefs and theories are essential. This would seem

particularly to be the case in a context where the government was intentionally trying to

alter the fundamental philosophies of education that had governed the education system.

Based on the literature, it would also seem that a shared belief in these new fundamental

philosophies could contribute greatly to teachers' ability to change their practice –

whether that belief pre-existed reforms or came through as a result of the reform process.

As I will discuss further in the next chapter, this unique context, and the importance I see

in teacher beliefs, drove my interest in this Namibian case.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

I have undertaken a qualitative case study. While numerous scholars have written

about and proposed to undertake case studies, they do not always define "case study" in

the same way. As Merriam (1998) notes, researchers differ on whether they view case

study as a reference to the "unit of study" or the "product of investigation". She also

emphasizes, however, one common characteristic that she believes underlies all case

study research: the "notion of the case as a *bounded system*" (p. 27). Also fundamental to

any case study is the focus on the case "within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003).

Creswell (2007) provides a relatively succinct definition of qualitative case study

research, writing that:

> Case Study Research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a
> bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through
> detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and
> reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

In this chapter, I will explain how I identified my case and the iterative process

through which I determined its boundaries. I will describe the processes through which I

selected sites and participants, and then the methods I used for data collection and

analysis. Then I will discuss *process* concerns – that is, I will lay out those issues and

considerations that may impact, or contribute to, the quality of my study – concerns that

have been described as those of *trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility* and even

understanding[15]. Here I will discuss my positionality as researcher, the question of

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[15] Lincoln and Guba (1990) use the terms *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* to discuss possible rubrics to use
when discussing quality, and criteria for judging quality, of the inquiry *process* in qualitative research.
Wolcott (1990) uses the terms *credibility* and *understanding*.

language in my research, issues of validity and generalizability, and ethical considerations.

A Namibian Case Study

While a number of models exist for conceptualizing case study, I align my research most closely with Stake's concept of case study (Stake, 1988, 1995, 2000) which emphasizes the "unit of study" and includes the idea of the *bounded system*. Stake describes three general types of case study, the *intrinsic case study*, the *instrumental case study*, and the *collective case study*. My study falls under the first category, the intrinsic case study. With an intrinsic case study, the researcher is not selecting a case as an example of a larger phenomenon to be understood, but is instead undertaking the study because of an intrinsic interest in that case. As Stake (1995) writes:

> It is not unusual for the choice of case to be no "choice" at all . . . We are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case. (p. 3)

In regard to the present research, I was driven by an intrinsic interest in the Namibian case. I believe that this case provides valuable insight and understanding that will be useful both within and outside of Namibia, but my primary focus in undertaking this case study was the kind of intrinsic interest that Stake describes.

Stake follows the example of many case study researchers in subscribing to the notion of the *bounded system*. He portrays the bounded system as complex and dynamic, but with boundaries that are not necessarily obvious or fixed (Stake, 1988). In some ways, identifying the boundaries can be an iterative process, as:

> What is inside the boundaries of those systems depends on what you want to find out, but also on those unexpected things that turn out over time to be related to what you want to find out . . . To carry out most case studies you set the boundaries, and then you search out certain issues or themes. You have to set the boundaries again and maybe again as you come to know the case better. (p. 258)

These issues or themes, which become the research questions, depend on the case itself, but also on the purpose of the study and the researcher. By selecting issues, the researcher focuses and narrows the study, as "one cannot deal with the totality of anything" (p. 258). In an iterative process then, issues arise from the bounded system, which in turn help to define and redefine the system boundaries. Stake quotes Goode and Hatt:

> First the wholeness of any object, whether physical, biological, or social, is an intellectual construct. Concretely, there are no limits which define any process or object. Every variable ultimately links with any other. (Quoted in Stake, 1988, p. 258)

In my study the iterative process of identifying issues and defining and re-defining boundaries began well before I began collecting what became my primary data. I began with an interest in teachers in Namibia for three main reasons. First, the post-independence reforms had specific and declared philosophical underpinnings that stressed the role of education in social change and the vision of education as a key for moving towards a more democratic and equitable society. This philosophical stance is interesting because it recognizes that education is often a force of social reproduction, but it also posits that education can be used to the exact opposite effect. A second important element in this Namibian case is that the reforms brought the teacher to the center of the reforms, a choice which has been noted as being unique among most African countries (Dahlström, 2000; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1999). The Namibian post-independence reforms attempted to take a teacher education based on social justice-oriented ideas of

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education to a national level.   In addition to these factors, I also have a personal interest in this case, as I spent three years teaching in northern Namibia not long after independence, at a time when the reforms were just being introduced. While I had returned a few times for social visits, I was fascinated by the idea of better understanding what has happened with these reforms, and particularly with teachers, since that time.

I thus knew that the case I was interested in studying was of teachers in Namibia, in this particular reform context, and particularly primary-level teachers, since they have been the real focus of reform efforts. In 2004, I traveled to Namibia to undertake informal, exploratory research. This was the beginning of the process of identifying the issues that would become my focus. I had informal discussions with a number of ministry officials and teachers in the area where I had previously taught. Through these discussions, and through subsequent reading of primary and secondary documents, I identified the issues that were of most interest to me, and which I believe will be of interest to both educators in Namibia and educationists outside of Namibia. Through the continuing process of my research, these issues crystallized into the research questions that I introduced and described in Chapter 1:

1) What beliefs do teachers espouse about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, and how do they view the connection between their beliefs and practice?
2) What messages about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the definition of quality teaching are communicated in policy and to what extent do teachers' beliefs reflect these "official" messages?

Data Collection

Stake (1995) writes that "there is no particular moment when data gathering begins" (p. 49). He goes on to tell us that, "it begins before there is commitment to do the study: backgrounding, acquaintance with other cases, first impressions" (p. 49). This is certainly true in this study, since I had been learning about the case for years. However, there was a distinct moment in time when I began to prepare for, and then undertake, fieldwork, when I collected much of what would become my primary data. In this section, then, I will discuss the process through which I selected sites and participants and how I went about collecting data during my fieldwork.

Research Site(s)

Knowing that I was interested in learning about the thinking and beliefs of Namibian primary-level teachers in relation to education and teaching, I then had to make decisions about the "persons, places, and events" (Stake, 2000, p. 447) that I would include in my study. Certainly, I couldn't interview all primary-level teachers in Namibia and observe lessons in all their schools. When making these choices, Stake emphasizes "the opportunity to learn". Describing previous case study research, Stake describes a process whereby the researchers take note of "attributes of interest" and then make choices:

> assuring variety but not necessarily representative-ness, without strong argument for typicality, again weighted by considerations of access and even by hospitality . . . Here, too, the primary criterion is opportunity to learn. (p. 447)

<u>The Region</u>

Like the researchers Stake describes, I had limited time in which to collect my primary data (I had six weeks in which to undertake my fieldwork in Namibia) and knew that traveling to multiple regions of Namibia would not be feasible. Narrowing down the regions meant a lessening of variety, but it allowed me to focus on and better understand the context of the one region I would include. In essence, I chose to focus more in depth on one region rather than to undertake a comparison between regions, a choice in line with Stake's approach. I therefore chose to conduct my research in central northern Namibia.

My choice of regions in which to undertake the bulk of my fieldwork was based on access and opportunity to learn, as well as in the interesting context these regions provided. Because I had lived and taught in northern Namibia, former Ovamboland, for three years, I knew that both access and opportunity to learn would be increased. My familiarity with the geographical location as well as the local culture would increase my ability to gain rapport and communicate with participants, as well as to simply travel between schools, the local college of education, and nearby towns as necessary.

The region that was previously known as Ovamboland (now divided into Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena, and Oshikoto regions), was an area set off by the South African government for the Ovambo peoples. Under pre-independence apartheid policies, the people of this area, representing almost half of the Namibian population, could not travel freely. As a result, the schools in this region were among the most overcrowded and under-resourced in the country (Cohen, 1994). Since independence, schools in this region have received a great increase in resources, but still not a sufficient

amount for the large student population. At the same time, as I will describe further in

Chapter 1, the Ovambo peoples have generally been very supportive of SWAPO, the

party that fought much of the struggle for independence and that became the governing

party. Thus, while the schools in the region remain under-resourced, reform policies

generated by the new government may have been more readily accepted in this region.

The Schools

      Having identified the region in which I would collect my primary, school-level

data, I selected three schools for my fieldwork. I selected these three schools in

collaboration with the National Director of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium

for Monitoring and Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and officials from the Ministry of

Education's directorate of Planning and Development. SACMEQ I (in 1995) and II (in

2000) were large-scale, comparative studies of reading and mathematics education

undertaken in fifteen African countries. As a result of this study, a large dataset was

created that includes a number of variables related to student background and

achievement, teacher background and knowledge of reading and mathematics. Working

with the National Director of SACMEQ in Namibia offered a valuable collaborative

opportunity, as the Namibian SACMEQ researchers are interested in qualitative research

that follows-up on and extends the research they have done, and the cooperative

relationship was further useful for me as I identified schools to include in my study and

gained permission for school-based research.

      In selecting the three schools to include in my study, I was again mindful of the

attributes that would contribute to variety and opportunity to learn. I was thinking largely

about resources and location, considering that availability of learning materials and

facilities and proximity to urban areas could influence school dynamics and how teachers think about their teaching. I also considered the potential impact of a USAID-funded[16] lower primary-level teacher in-service training program that had been active in the northern regions since the mid-1990's, which could have additional influence on teachers' thinking.

Aware of these possible factors, I began the selection process by focusing on the pool of schools that had participated in the SACMEQ studies, and then determined that I would include two rural schools and one town school. I further looked for one rural school that had participated in the USAID-funded program and one school that was in an area that had had no involvement with the program[17]. This second rural school was farther from the major town centers in the northern region and was less equipped in terms of facilities (though all of the schools would be ill-equipped by American standards). When selecting the schools, I made sure that they were all of the same type – that is, they were all *Combined Schools*, serving both primary and junior secondary levels. The SACMEQ Director aided me in gaining permission from regional and circuit-level officials to undertake research in the schools, and I further sought the principals' permission by phone before going to each school.

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[16] Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by an American non-governmental organization (NGO) in collaboration with the Namibian National Institute for Educational Development (NIED).

[17] I thought I might observe differences between the rural school that had participated in the teacher-training program and the one that had not. As it happened, the principal of Rural School 1 (which had participated) knew very little about the program – he had sent his deputy principal to all the meetings – indicating it had perhaps had limited influence at that school. At Rural School 2 (which had not participated) the principal had actually been involved with the program at his previous school and had brought some of the ideas from the program to Rural School 2. This has interesting implications for tracing the impact of teacher training, but complicates the conclusions I could draw by comparing the two schools.

Research Participants

Within each school, I focused on grade six teachers, particularly teachers of English and mathematics. While my research could theoretically have been carried out at other grade levels, there are a number of reasons for focusing on grade six. Targeting the level examined in the SACMEQII study provides better linkages between this larger quantitative study and my much smaller qualitative study – this may be useful for the national SACMEQ researchers with whom I have cooperated. In addition, the language of instruction for grade six is English, which means classroom observations were much easier for me to follow, and teachers at this level generally have a greater command of the language than teachers of lower grades.

My choice of English and mathematics also corresponds well with the SACMEQII, since it focuses on these two subjects. In addition, my own teaching experience in these subjects, as well as coursework I had done in pedagogy and theory in these subjects, made me a more astute observer. English and mathematics are also considered particular areas of concern in Namibia, which means that this research connects to subject areas that are of concern to education officials in Namibia. That being said, I used focus groups and participant observation in order to bring teachers of other subjects into my study as well. I also interviewed the principals at each school, as the principals in these schools (as in many schools in Namibia) are also active teachers, and are important actors at the school level.

In addition to the teachers that would be at the center of the study, the issues that I had determined would be my focus demanded that I look at other levels of the education system as well. This would be necessary both to answer my second research question as

well as to gain a better understanding of the social/historical context, the policy context, and the development and current state of relevant reforms and teacher education programs. I identified teacher educators and ministry officials based on the offices they held, as well as their availability. Thus, I targeted teacher educators who taught courses the teachers were likely to have taken (math and English lecturers, Education Theory and Practice lecturers, and so forth) and ministry officials who would be most likely to have information or insights closely connected to primary-level teaching-related reforms (such as officials at the National Institute for Educational Development).

Forms of Data & Methods of Collection

I used qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) write, qualitative methods allow the researcher to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). Qualitative methods are thus most appropriate to my research focus, which is essentially the meaning-making of teachers.

Specifically, I used semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, participant observation, and analysis of secondary documents (See Appendix A for classroom observation and interview protocols)[18]. Interviews and focus groups were audio-taped, and observations were recorded using field-notes. I spent one week at each school, immersing myself in the life of the school, and particularly of the teachers, as

[18] Protocols utilized in the development of the protocols for this study include: Observation and Focus Group protocols from the High Quality Teaching Study at the University of Maryland, http://www.education.umd.edu/EDCI/hqtstudy/ (for Teacher Interview and Classroom Observation protocols); Teacher Interview Protocol from the EQUIP1 Namibia Pilot Study of Teacher Development, http://www.equip123.net/equip1/index_new.html (for Teacher Interviews); Teacher Interview Protocol from research undertaken by Carol Anne Spreen, University of Maryland.

much as possible. I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each of the grade six

mathematics and English teachers, which consisted of three teachers at each school (two

of the schools had two mathematics and one English teacher at grade six, while the other

school had two English and one mathematics teacher). I also observed each of these

teachers in their classrooms as much as possible.

While these classroom observations allowed me to collect data on instruction,

their primary purpose was to provide material on which to base a reflective conversation

with the teacher in the second, post-observation interview. In two of the schools I was

able to observe all of the teachers between two and four times each. In the third school, I

was not able to observe the mathematics teachers, because pre-service teachers from the

regional College of Education were doing their practice teaching while I was there. At

that school, I observed the pre-service teachers together with the regular mathematics

teachers and adjusted my interview questions to reflect on what we had observed

together. Also at that school, I was unable to complete a second observation and follow-

up interview with the English teacher, because she was absent[19].

I also conducted focus group interviews with the grade six teaching teams, which

consisted of the three teachers already interviewed and between one and three more

teachers in each school. In addition, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each

principal and undertook participant observation throughout the week at each school.

Because all of the interviews I did were semi-structured, I was able to adjust them as

necessary throughout the time I was doing my fieldwork and depending on the

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[19] While the teacher blamed a miscommunication about the class time and said she was sick during the scheduled interview time, I suspected that she may have decided that she didn't wish to continue her participation.

background of the interviewee[20]. I also had the opportunity to pilot the first teacher interview with a practicing teacher in the capital region, which enabled me to make minor revisions up front.

As mentioned previously, it was essential that I also include both the context of teacher education policy and programs and the messages concerning education and teaching that were conveyed at higher levels of the education system. As such, I conducted semi-structured interviews with six teacher educators (generally referred to as "lecturers") at the college of education (targeting lecturers in the subjects my teacher-participants could have taken) located in the region of my research, and officials of the Ministry of Basic Education (including one circuit inspector[21]). These interviews allowed me to develop a fuller picture of the policy context in which teachers make meaning of education, teaching, and learning, as well as to gain a more precise understanding of the development of the policies themselves.

Throughout the time I was in Namibia I also identified numerous documents to examine that would both provide a fuller picture of the policy context and become primary data when analyzing the ways in which education and teaching are constructed in official policy.

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[20] These adjustments allowed me to gain a deeper contextual understanding, as I would expand my questions to take into account experiences in exile, thoughts on the BETD, and considerations of issues and debates that were currently being discussed by educators and the general public.
[21] Because I knew it wouldn't be feasible to include multiple participants at the circuit level, I did not plan on this. However, I visited the circuit inspectors for each of the three schools as a courtesy, and one of the inspectors was particularly interested in my research and offered to participate.

Data Analysis

Given the methods for data collection described here, my data was in three forms: audio-tapes of interviews and focus groups, field-notes (including general notes, classroom observations, and post-observation reflections), and policy and other secondary documents. I used NVIVO computer software as a tool for data management and analysis. As such, I typed the field-notes and transcribed all audio-tapes and transferred them to NVIVO files (at which time all names were altered to maintain anonymity).

When coding the data, I used my primary sub-questions (purpose of education, role of the teacher, and definition of quality teaching) as a priori coding categories and began by coding school-level data (teachers and principals). I chose to begin by coding teacher data because my intent was to make teachers the center of the study. It is common to begin with the policy or literature, and then to compare teachers' responses to those. This, however, sets up the ideas that are expressed in policy or the literature as the norm, or as "correct". My primary question is how teachers are thinking, however, and not to judge whether they are "right" or "wrong" in comparison to a norm. I wanted to build a picture of how these three things (purpose of education, role of the teacher, quality teaching) are thought about and discussed by teachers, and in the education system more generally, without assuming that one perspective or version was somehow better than the other. Because the tendency is to value the policy perspective as "right", over the teacher perspective, I chose to begin with the teacher perspective in my analysis and presentation of results.

Once I completed coding teacher data, and had identified a number of themes that seemed to be important, I turned to the policy documents. Because I amassed a number of policy documents, I chose to do an in-depth analysis of those documents that had been identified as important during interviews. That is, I selected those documents to which interviewees spoke about or referred me. The aim of analyzing these documents was to help answer my second research question: *What messages about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the definition of quality teaching are communicated in policy and to what extent do teachers' beliefs reflect these "official" messages?* Thus, prioritizing documents that interviewees mentioned would help me to target those documents which carried messages that were most widely circulated[22]. There were some policy documents that were referred to a number of times by ministry officials, but which were very new documents and had little circulation as of yet.

By reviewing the interviews and notes, I identified two policy documents that clearly had substantial circulation and had not yet been superseded by new policy documents: *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992), also referred to as *TEFA*, and the *Pilot Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education* (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 1996), commonly referred to as the *Broad Curriculum*.

Toward Education for All was the foundational policy document released after independence that laid out the philosophy and goals of the post-independence reforms, as well as some specific changes that were going to take place. While this book was

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[22] It became clear that there were also a lot of documents that had limited circulation and, in fact, a separate analysis could be done of the ways in which the ministry made efforts to get messages out and the varying degrees of success they had – and of why some circulars or policy statements did not reach teachers in the field and others did. This analysis, however, was not part of my research questions.

published over 15 years ago, it remains a foundational document. I was told that even the most recent policy changes are still based on what was laid out in *Toward Education for All* and that any such changes are attempts to solve problems in the system while still relying on the same philosophies and moving toward the same goals. The document is also used in the colleges of education.

The *Broad Curriculum* was published in 1996. As I will discusse in Chapter 4, it was the result of a rather long process of developing the new curriculum for Namibian schools after independence. While the official title includes the word "pilot", this is the curriculum that was still in use in 2006.

I then coded these two policy documents using the same a priori categories. I was able to use some of the same codes that had been generated through the teacher interviews (for example, *personal economic advancement* under *Purpose of Education* had come up in the teacher interviews already), but I also had to create some new codes (for example, *social change agent* under *Role of the Teacher* was a new theme from the policy documents). Once I had completed coding the policy documents, I reviewed the coding scheme to see how codes might need to be condensed and/or expanded, which enabled me to revise my coding framework. I then coded the rest of the data (teacher educator and ministry official interviews) and followed that by a final review of the coding framework and a review of the teacher data to revise where necessary based on the final coding framework.

This coding process enabled me to draw an overall picture of themes connected to the purpose of education, role of the teacher, and quality teaching that are discussed at the school and policy levels in Namibia. In order to organize and present the data, I grouped

some of the themes into categories or levels (like the *Personal/Family* level for *Purpose of Education*, or *Beyond the Classroom* category for *Roles of the Teacher*).

I was then able to look across participants to identify the ways in which the teachers shared and/or held contrasting views when compared to each other, and when compared to policy documents and ministry officials. I did this by creating matrices to look at various themes by teacher, by school, and at the system level. This allowed me to see which themes predominated among teachers, or at a particular school, or in policy, and to compare.

Research Concerns

Qualitative researchers have struggled to identify terms which can portray their concerns about the quality of their research. Lincoln and Guba (1990) talk about *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* and develop rubrics that give these words a technical quality, while others prefer terms such as *accuracy*, *credibility* and *understanding* and do not get quite as technical about them (Creswell, 2007; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Wolcott, 1990). While the choice of terms may differ, and to some degree the lists of criteria that various scholars offer for judging the quality of qualitative research differ as well, they all agree that we as researchers must be concerned with the quality of our research – we must strive to make sure it supports *understanding*[23].

I have chosen to explicitly discuss the aspects of my study that I believe may impact and/or support this understanding, and those things I have done to try to enhance

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[23] *Understanding* is the term favored by Wolcott (1990), who stresses the difference between knowing and understanding. The strategies he uses to "not get it all wrong" strengthen understanding.

understanding. In this section, I will discuss my positionality, the choice of language, validity and generalizability, and ethical considerations.

Researcher Positionality

While, as I have mentioned, I believe my familiarity with the Ovambo culture, the geographical region, and the language allowed me to gain rapport more quickly than might be possible for another outsider, the fact remains that I am an outsider, and a white, American, female outsider at that. The various external identities I bring with me to the schools and ministry offices must inevitably have had implications for the ways in which participants responded to me. I cannot be entirely sure how these external identities affected the interviews and observations, except to guess that teachers tried to teach their best lessons while I was observing and may have attempted to speak about teacher education policy and the "new" approaches in ways that they thought I would like to hear. I tried to minimize this effect by emphasizing that I am not affiliated with a teacher education program and, in fact, had returned to Namibia because of my interest in what has happened there as a former school-teacher there. I also attempted to get past any relatively superficial "party-line" answers by probing further and asking teachers to share examples from their own experience or to discuss farther what they meant by particular terms that might have seemed "in vogue".

At the same time that my position as an outsider, albeit with some insider-ness (having lived and taught there before), might influence how teachers viewed me, so also might it influence how I viewed and heard them. The experience I had as a teacher in Namibia was just after independence, when many of the traditional approaches to

teaching were clearly still the norm. When I undertook classroom observations during my fieldwork, then, I couldn't help but remember what I had seen in classrooms in the early 90s and even to compare them at times. This is in contrast to many classroom-based studies that have compared the observed instruction with visions of what learner-centred education could, or should, look like. In short, I think I tended to focus more on the changes that had taken place, the "progress" made, than on the remaining distance between current and ideal practice. This impacted my interpretations and conclusions concerning instruction, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5 and in the conclusion.

In addition, I also have to acknowledge my own preferences and expectations. I was impressed with the philosophies and ideals expressed by policy reformers after independence and as presented in *Toward Education for All*. I also have a preference for critical orientations toward education and toward teacher education. This is perhaps evidenced by the very fact that I believe understanding philosophies concerning the purpose of education is important – further, that multiple purposes are possible and even desirable (as opposed to only economic purposes). At the same time, I imagined that it was very possible, even likely perhaps, that teachers' views were quite different from those critical orientations described and discussed by Namibian and international scholars. I realized that it was possible that my interviews would influence teachers' thinking and knew that my own interpretations could be affected by my own biases. I couldn't see the former as necessarily bad, per se, because engaging in such discussions gave teachers an opportunity to reflect on their teaching and to discuss it with each other. But my focus was intended to be the teachers' ideas, not my own. So, I tried my best to follow Wolcott's (1990) instructions to "talk a little, listen a lot" (p. 127), and to "record

accurately" (p. 128) to retain my focus on the teachers' ideas. And I found it useful,

when analyzing my data and when writing, to go back again and again to the data itself,

the words of the teachers.

Language

I believe that it is also important to address the impact of my choice to use

English as the medium of communication throughout my fieldwork. As I have

mentioned, I selected grade six teachers partly because they would be expected to be

proficient in English, while my basic knowledge of Oshiwambo would help me to follow

code-switching in the classroom. However, given that most of the teachers' mother

language is Oshiwambo, I did consider the question of whether to use an interpreter.

This would have allowed the teachers to speak in the language with which they were

likely to be most comfortable. However, introducing a translator into the study would

have also added a number of complications for data collection and analysis. With a

translator, there would have been added, unknown implications concerning the

relationship between the translator and teachers (Might they have seen this individual as a

ministry official even if they did not see me that way? How would this impact rapport?),

or my ability to get at teachers' own words in response to my questions (What would be

the impact of the translator's filter and interpretations?). I also considered the fact that I

had significant experience in working with limited English speakers and was very

familiar with Namibian English – that is, the particular forms of English, and slang, used

by Namibians who have learned English as a second language. Given these

considerations, I came to the conclusion that the use of an interpreter would complicate data collection, analysis, and interpretation to a prohibitive degree.

Ultimately, the majority of the participants in my study were highly proficient, or fluent, in English. There were, however, two areas in which I think the medium of English did have a negative impact. Two of the teachers I interviewed did have difficulty expressing themselves. While both of these teachers shared a lot of rich ideas and information with me, I am sure that they were not able to express all that they may have liked, or had to simplify some of the ideas they were sharing in order to get them across to me. In addition, two of the focus group interviews were also impacted negatively (though they were still highly useful). Though most of the participating teachers had little difficulty expressing their ideas to me in a one-on-one setting, the group setting appeared to make many of them more reticent. As one teacher expressed to me afterwards, she was shy to speak English in front of the other teachers – she was not used to it.

Validity & Generalizability

Concepts of generalizability and validity are historically rooted in positivist, scientifically-based research paradigms (Lather, 1986). As such, they have been debated among qualitative researchers. Validity speaks to an empirical truth and objectivity, and numerous qualitative researchers emphasize the deconstruction of researcher neutrality. As Maxwell (2002) puts it:

> As observers and interpreters of the world, we are inextricably part of it; we cannot step outside our own experience to obtain some observer-independent account of what we experience. (p. 41)

Generalizability is especially brought into question in relation to a single-case qualitative study, where any of the standard empirical norms for judging generalizability would not apply (or would find any single-case study utterly lacking), given the small samples and the infeasibility, or even impossibility, of replication (Donmoyer, 1990).

At the same time that qualitative researchers have questioned the applicability of *validity* and *generalizability* to qualitative research, most have a sense that something must take their place. For me, this speaks to the general question, "why should anyone listen to what I have to say about this case?" both in terms of the meaning or usefulness that someone other than myself can find in my research, and also in terms of the idea that there is something credible in what I am presenting. Wolcott (1990) writes about going "to considerable pains not to get it all wrong" (p. 127) and describes some of the ways that he tries not to get it all wrong. Lincoln and Guba (2000) are more specific in describing the importance of validity:

> Validity cannot be dismissed simply because it points to a question that has to be answered in one way or another: Are these findings sufficiently authentic (isomorphic to some reality, trustworthy, related to the way others construct their social worlds) that I may trust myself in acting on their implications? (p. 178)

These and other qualitative researchers take considerable pains to not get it wrong, to make their research trustworthy, while proposing a range of terms for talking about this process. Interestingly, as Wolcott (1990) points out, many of these terms speak to the less scientific notions of validity: "validity serves most often as a gloss for scientific accuracy among those who identify closely with science and for correctness or credibility among those who do not" (p. 126).

On the side of generalizability, many qualitative researchers have also discussed the ways that we might think about the concept while breaking through the constraints of

the term's positivist bounds.   While the idea of transferability has been a popular way to reframe generalizability in qualitative research, both Stake (1995) and Donmoyer (1990) point out that this is problematic, since it implies that the knowledge gained from a case study is only transferable to a similar context.   For both Stake and Donmoyer, there is much that can be learned from a good single-case study separate from, or in addition to, consideration of a comparable context. Stake writes about naturalistic generalization, while Donomoyer emphasizes the notion of vicarious experience and an adaptation of schema theory, claiming that vicarious experience can trigger processes of accommodation, integration, and differentiation. Both argue that a well-done and well-written single-case study can provide a kind of indirect experiential knowledge and that the degree to which a study allows for this knowledge is the measure of its "generalizability".

        While many scholars have thus advocated major revision, or complete rejection, of the terms *validity* and *generalization*, they still provide strategies and measures that qualitative researchers can use to achieve the concepts that these terms suggest for qualitative research. Creswell (2007) synthesizes many of these into a list of strategies[24] and recommends that researchers engage in at least two of these. I will discuss here the three strategies that I believe are most applicable to my research, and which I have used in my research study.

Thick Description

        There is general agreement that "thick description" (Ryle, cited in Geertz, 1973) is an important characteristic of qualitative research that contributes to both validity and

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[24] Creswell refers to them as "validation strategies", though some of them are also advocated for generalizability in the sense discussed by Stake and Donmoyer.

generalizability (by whatever terms we call them) (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2000; Wolcott, 1990). As Geertz (1973) writes, "A good interpretation of anything . . . takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation" (p. 18). Providing the reader with what Donmoyer (1990) calls "medium-rare data" through thick description will contribute to authenticity by revealing, at least to some degree, how I as the researcher made my interpretations. It can also aid in gauging transferability, if that is a reader's aim, or in learning through vicarious experience (Creswell, 2007; Donmoyer, 1990).

I have attempted to include rich, thick description in my research. While this effort surfaces the most in the written account – and the reader must be the judge of whether I have provided enough "medium-rare" data – it also enters into data collection and analysis. This meant taking field notes and writing reflections throughout the time I was in the field, during classroom observations certainly, but also while walking the grounds of the school or sitting in the staff room, and after informal conversations with teachers and school staff. During analysis, this meant making notes of the analysis process – the steps I was taking and how I made decisions regarding coding categories. In writing, this has meant literal thick description, providing, as Wolcott (1990) puts it, not just "an idea of what my data were like but to give access to the data themselves" (p. 129). I use narrative to describe the teaching context and include lengthy quotes from participants because I want the participants' voices heard, not just my own. I share, as Wolcott describes, "a bias in favor of trying to capture the expressed thoughts of others rather than relying too singularly on what I have observed and interpreted" (p. 130). When quoting participants, I have chosen to include all of their words. I use ellipses to indicate pauses and hesitations (such as when participants seem to be searching for the

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right word). My choice in including full quotes in this way, rather than paring them

down to be more succinct, is driven by my desire to share "medium-rare data" with the

reader – allowing the reader, to some degree, to determine whether my interpretations

and the conclusions I draw truly follow from the data.

Reflexivity

Recognizing that the notion of the neutral, objective observer is a fallacy, many

researchers have grappled with the question of how to deal with the fact that the

researcher impacts her research – both by the biases she brings in and by the potential she

has to influence that which she is observing. Geertz (1973) writes:

> I have never been impressed by the argument that, as complete objectivity is
> impossible in these matters (as, of course, it is), one might as well let one's
> sentiments run loose. As Robert Solow has remarked, that is like saying that as a
> perfectly aseptic environment is impossible, one might as well conduct surgery in
> a sewer. (p. 30)

The way that many qualitative researchers have found to avoid conducting "surgery in a

sewer" has two essential parts: To try to keep those sentiments from "running loose" and

to try to recognize and be open about what those sentiments are and how they might

affect how we do our research.

While Wolcott (1990) claims to reject validity, he still offers strategies he uses to

address the effect of his own biases in his research – many of which have become

common practice. He stresses recording accurately and going back to those records

repeatedly in order to minimize misremembering during interpretation. He discusses

reporting fully and being candid, including data that we failed to find an interpretation for

or that didn't fit our schema, and bringing ourselves in as researchers – implicating both

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the biases we bring to the research and the fact that we have an effect on the people who participate in the research.

I have tried to be reflexive throughout the research process as well as in the writing of this dissertation. I have already discussed my own interests and purposes in undertaking this research and have exposed some of my biases in relation to the research topic – such as my shared belief in many of the philosophies that underlined the post-independence reforms and the positive opinion I held of the theory and structure underlying the BETD program. In being reflexive, I have worked hard to follow the advice of Wolcott and other qualitative researchers by recording accurately – which was aided by recording interviews and then meticulously transcribing and reviewing each transcript – and repeatedly going back to the data. There were times, in fact, that I found that I had misremembered something a teacher had told me or that what seemed salient to me in a particular conversation had actually been a minor part of it. Thus, through both the process and the writing, I have tried to keep my biases from "running loose" while also being open about them.

Triangulation

Stake (1995) describes triangulation as "working to substantiate an interpretation or to clarify its different meanings"(p. 173) and delineates four common types of triangulation: data source, methodological, investigator and theory. I have used the first two types, data source triangulation and methodological triangulation, in my study. As such, I included multiple sources of data: teachers, principals, teacher educators, ministry officials, and primary and secondary documents; as well as multiple methods for

obtaining data: individual interviews, focus groups, observation, informal interviews and discussions.

In respect to gaining an understanding of historical context, the development and current state of policy and teacher education programs, as well as the sociocultural constructs therein, the use of triangulation provided "corroborating evidence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). As Erlandson et al. (1993) write, the "greater the convergence attained through triangulation . . . the greater the confidence in the observed findings" (p. 139). For example, many of the challenges and supports for quality teaching that teachers described were corroborated through interviews with other participants, through my own observations, and through secondary documents. Similarly, I used multiple sources in order to build a complete picture of the historical context of education in Namibia.

Exploring the meaning-making of teachers involved triangulation in a different way. Erlandson et al. (1993) also state that "the convergence attained in this manner, however, never results in data reduction but in an expansion of meaning through overlapping, compatible constructions emanating from different vantage points" (p. 139). This is certainly the case in relation to the teachers' ideas about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching. In fact, the focus of my study is the various constructions that teachers make. What triangulation enabled me to do in this case was to get a sense for the ideas that are most salient across multiple participants, as well as to get a sense of the idiosyncrasy among them, both of which contribute to my interpretations. In other words, by involving multiple teachers from three different schools, as well as policy documents and ministry officials, I am able to see significant patterns, such as the fact that most everybody seems to think that learner

participation is a good, important thing – while, at the same time, there are a number of

ideas that only one or two teachers mention, or that is only mentioned in policy. Data

and methodological triangulation thus enabled me to substantiate information on the one

hand, and to increase the depth of my understanding on the other.

Ethical Considerations

The post-independence policies of Namibia value democracy and the free sharing

of ideas. Historically, however, this was not always the case, and I was cognizant of the

possibility that not all participants would feel that they could freely share their ideas

without risk – that there might be (or they might feel there would be) ramifications if they

were to sometimes sound critical of the education system (which they sometimes were).

As a result, I took care to explain to participants what I was doing there, what my

research was about, and what my affiliations were and were not (I am affiliated with an

American university; I had the Ministry's permission to undertake this research study, but

am not a Ministry official). At each school, I spent most of the first day getting

acquainted with the school and the teachers before undertaking any interviews or

classroom observations, and I took pains to make clear to the teachers that participation

was voluntary, as was tape-recording the interviews. Ultimately, no teachers refused to

participate, though, as mentioned above, one teacher was not available for a second

interview, and at two of the schools, I was not able to include all of the grade six teachers

in the focus groups because of their after-school duties[25]. Generally, participants at all

levels were quite open to taking part in the study. While I did not promise any

compensation to the schools or teachers, I did bring a small number of school supplies to

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[25] Presumably – it is also possible that they simply didn't want to participate in the focus group.

the schools (pencils, pens, and crayons) and gave each participant a University of Maryland pen (and, for teachers, school-related stickers).

I use pseudonyms for the schools and teacher participants throughout this dissertation. I do not use pseudonyms for individual teacher educators and ministry officials, simply using the tag "Teacher Educator" or "Ministry Official" instead. I do not give more specific titles or positions, because that would likely jeopardize their anonymity. Most of the teacher quotes are identified by school and teacher pseudonym. The exception is when I quote comments that might be considered particularly critical or controversial, in which cases I protected participants' anonymity further by not even including pseudonyms.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance that I place on disseminating findings from my study within Namibia. It is a clear expectation within the Namibian education and research communities that the findings from research undertaken in Namibia will be made available so that Namibians can learn from this research and, where possible, utilize it to inform policy. In fact, it became clear to me both before and while I was there that there has been an unfortunate history of researchers coming to Namibia for their research and then not sharing their work with Namibian scholars or policy-makers. I fully intend to share my work with the Ministry of Education and will offer to share it with each of the participating schools and offices. My greatest hope, in fact, would be that this dissertation could serve the purpose of being an opportunity and tool for reflection among ministry officials and others involved in education in Namibia, as well as informative and interesting to the international education community.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL VIEW

In the last two chapters, I laid out the conceptual framework and methodology for this study, explaining the importance of understanding teacher beliefs and the reasons behind my focus on teachers' beliefs about the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching. Before beginning to directly examine the beliefs that the Namibian teacher participants espouse, however, I will first take time to further situate the study by taking a larger national, historical view in this chapter and then, in the next chapter, by introducing the specific contexts of the school sites included in the study.

A Brief Namibian History

My research study focuses on a certain point in time, sixteen years after Namibia gained independence. However, in order to understand Namibia at this time, it is necessary to also have a historical view. Certainly, in order to understand the social context, and construct, of education and educational reforms, it is essential to have an understanding of the larger social-historical-political background.   Further, and perhaps even more importantly, this background provides a context in which to place, and better understand, the stories and opinions shared by participants in my study. In this chapter, therefore, I will offer a historical overview, first of Namibia more generally, secondly of education in Namibia, and ending with an overview of the post-independence reforms that are central to my research.

Namibia under South African Rule

South-West Africa (SWA), as Namibia was called before independence, was originally colonized by Germany. After World War I, South-West Africa was put under South African administration by mandate of the League of Nations. From that time, South Africa administered Namibia as though it was a fifth province. This meant that the same racist policies that were implemented in South Africa were applied to South-West Africa. Even before the infamous *apartheid* system was officially implemented in Namibia, the South African government's policies divided the Namibian population along ethnic lines. The South African government continued the colonial reserve system, whereby particular parcels of land were portioned off for each ethnic group – these would later be replaced by "homelands" under *apartheid*. Not surprisingly, much of the best farming land was stripped away from the indigenous peoples and taken over by whites, leaving largely untenable land for much of the population (Cliffe, 1994; O'Callaghan, 1977).

At the same time that indigenous groups were forced to live in designated areas, another centerpiece of the colonial regime, the contract labor system, tore families apart, forcing husbands and fathers to spend the majority of the year far away from their homes, working for extremely low wages. The majority could not earn enough to bring their families with them, even if the law had permitted it (Cliffe, 1994; SWAPO of Namibia Department of Information and Publicity, 1981). Travel from the reserves required permission from the government, as did most aspects of life under the South African government:

> Where to live, in what type of accommodation, what kind of job, promotion prospects, farm or reserve, the right to walk the streets, to live with one's family,

to marry the person of one's choice, even to die in decency – all depend on the say-so of colonial officials and police". (SWAPO of Namibia Department of Information and Publicity, 1981, p. 59)

Social services were on par with the substandard working conditions that black Namibians experienced. In 1973-75, for example, there was one doctor for every 30,000 black Namibians, compared with one doctor for every 900 whites (SWAPO of Namibia Department of Information and Publicity, 1981). Similarly, housing conditions for the majority of black Namibians were deplorable. Even in the most barren parts of the reserves, the government provided no materials for construction. There were no rules governing the provision of housing for laborers and, according to the SWAPO Department of Information and Publicity, many white farmers "neither provided any nor allowed their workers enough time to build an adequate structure for themselves . . .when they do build huts, the farmers provide no fuel or electricity, so that the workers have to burn scrap wood for cooking and lighting", while "contract workers are incarcerated in sordid compounds surrounded by walls or barbed wire" (p. 87).

The United Nations and South Africa

When the United Nations Charter was being drafted in 1945, South Africa argued for the incorporation of South-West Africa into South Africa. The United Nations instead declared that South-West Africa should be included under its International Trustee System. As such, South Africa would still have jurisdiction but would be obligated to follow the provisions of the Trusteeship Council, including among others, "to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political economic, social, and educational advancement, their just treatment and their protection

against abuses" and "to develop self-government . . . and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions" (Quoted in O'Callaghan, 1977, p. 30). This marked the beginning of a protracted dispute between the United Nations and the International Court of Justice on one side and South Africa on the other. The UN and International Court continually tried to pressure South Africa to follow its recommendations, while South Africa continued to resist, as it also continued to administer South-West Africa as if it was a fifth province (Carroll, 1967; O'Callaghan, 1977).

In 1953, the permanent United Nation's Committee on South West Africa was created and the majority at the UN continued to try to pressure the South African government to follows its recommendations. During the early 1960's, the United Nations adopted a number of resolutions concerning colonial countries in general, and South West Africa in particular, calling for:

> transfer of all powers to the peoples of those territories [which are still non-self-governing], without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire . . . in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom. (Quoted in O'Callaghan, 1977)

All of these declarations countered South Africa's apartheid policies and its continued annexation of South West Africa.   South Africa continued to resist. In 1971, the International Court ruled that the South African occupation of South West Africa was illegal, a decision followed by further resolutions by the United Nations condemning the continued illegal presence of South Africa in South West Africa (Cliffe, 1994; O'Callaghan, 1977).

The Struggle

While these high-level legal and political processes were taking place, Namibians were closely involved with the struggle for independence both within Namibia and in exile. There had always been resistance to colonialism in many forms, both during the period of German occupation and during South African rule. Namibians honor heroes from all of its ethnic groups who fought against German colonialism and later those who became strong forces in the fight against South African occupation[26]. From the mid-50's up until independence, worker and student strikes marked the continued attempts at resistance against the South African regime, resistance which repeatedly met with bloody retaliation by the government (Amukugo, 1993; Cliffe, 1994).

A number of liberation movements grew after the Second World War, and early on leaders of these movements recognized the importance of working with the UN to try to end South Africa's annexation of SWA. While there were multiple movements, the one that managed to gain the most strength and momentum was the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO). This movement grew out of the Owamboland People's Organisation, becoming SWAPO in 1960 to represent and strengthen its multi-ethnic membership and aims (Cliffe, 1994; SWAPO of Namibia Department of Information and Publicity, 1981). By 1976 SWAPO had come to gain enough recognition as the major resistance party as to be recognized by the United Nations as the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" (Quoted in Leys & Saul, 1995, p. 7).

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[26] In one famous example, in 1904-07, the Herero and Nama peoples staged a large-scale rebellion. This rebellion was ultimately quashed by the Germans, who went on to attempt to annihilate the Herero population – reducing their numbers from about 70,000 to 15,000 (Ellis, 1984; SWAPO of Namibia Department of Information and Publicity, 1981).

As early as 1946, a number of Namibian leaders were closely involved with the

United Nations work on South West Africa, lobbying and gaining substantial support for

Namibian independence. These individuals, later joined by SWAPO representatives,

played an important role in ensuring that the United Nations continued to pressure South

Africa and sought the 1971 decision from the International Court. At the same time, the

SWAPO-led resistance was involved in massive education and training campaigns on the

one hand, and the planning for possible guerilla warfare on the other. From the 60's

through the 80's, and particularly after the Angolan border was opened in 1974[27],

thousands of Namibians left the country for a variety of reasons: to work with SWAPO in

exile, to seek better education and training abroad, or simply to escape the ruthless

apartheid regime (Amukugo, 1993; Brown, 1995; Cohen, 1994; Saul & Leys, 1995).

In 1966, when the International Court refused to hear a petition brought before it

by Ethiopia and Liberia on Namibia's behalf, SWAPO officials decided that the

nonviolent strategies it was pursuing were not sufficient, and the first military action by

SWAPO took place on August 26 of that year. While this armed struggle impacted the

whole country, most of the actual fighting took place in northern Namibia, and the

SWAPO soldiers were primarily based in southern Angola and Zambia. Throughout the

70's and 80's, representatives of SWAPO and its supporters continued to work with the

UN to try to push South Africa to relinquish control of Namibia. At the same time,

SWAPO's military arm to continued to fight, and thousands of Namibians crossed the

border into Angola and Zambia to join the struggle (Brown, 1995; Saul & Leys, 1995).

For most of them, SWAPO represented their only form of support in exile, and it was

through SWAPO, and with the aid of SWAPO supporters, that they might finish their

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[27] Resulting from a coup in Portugal, which eventually led to Angolan independence (Leys & Saul, 1995)

education. Then they were usually channeled either into military training or further education or vocational training (Leys & Saul, 1995).

Finally, in 1988, South Africa agreed to negotiate, which ultimately resulted in a UN mediated plan for Namibia's transition to independence.[28] Elections were held in 1989 in preparation for independence, which took place on March 21, 1990. While SWAPO may have been the resistance party that was recognized externally by the UN as representing the Namibian people, within the country there were multiple political parties. According to Cliffe (1994), some observers estimated that there were more than fifty at the time of the elections. The only serious contender in opposition to SWAPO, however, was the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), which consisted of an alliance of several parties that had operated within the South African-backed interim government[29].

SWAPO won the majority in the elections, and the president of SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, became the president of Namibia. The margin of victory, however, was not large enough to give SWAPO a sweeping mandate for unilateral action. In reconciliation agreements included as constitutional requirements, existing appointments of many officials in ministry cabinets were protected. Thus, the new administration had to find a way to work with members of the "old guard" who retained their positions – although the SWAPO leaders publicly stressed not wishing to work by mandate anyway – a situation

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[28] The motivations behind South Africa's change in position, and in fact many events during the last 15 years of the struggle for independence, are very interesting and very complicated. Both Cuba and the US were closely involved, as SWAPO and Namibia's struggle became intertwined with Angolan politics. See Cliffe (1994) and Brown (1995) for detailed discussion of SWAPO's military struggle and the possible explanations for South Africa's decision to accept a negotiated settlement for Namibian independence.
[29] Beginning in the late 70's, South West Africa was run by a central administration that acted under supervision of an administrator-general appointed by South Africa.

that impacted education reform as it did all areas of government (Angula & Lewis, 1997; Jansen, 1995; Leys & Saul, 1995).

Education History

Having provided this rather brief overview of Namibian history generally, I will now go back and focus more on education. In presenting this education history, I highlight the purposes of schooling prior to independence and provide a profile of teaching and teacher training. This overview provides background for understanding the impetus for and context of the drastic and far-reaching reforms implemented after independence. Again, this historical view also enables us to better understand the stories of the educators who participated in my research, whether they themselves were educated in pre-independence Namibia, in exile in Africa or Europe, or in post-independence Namibia.

Pre-Colonial Education

Much of the literature on education in Namibia begins with the missionary or colonial periods, because this is largely recognized as the beginning of formal schooling. My study deals specifically with formal schooling, but I believe it is still important to recognize that education existed prior to the arrival of missionaries. Prior to colonialism, of course, there was no such thing as South-West Africa or Namibia. Instead, there were areas that were inhabited by different groups, including the Damara, the Herero, the Himba, the Kavango, the Nama, the Ovambo, and the San, each with its own social

structure and form of livelihood. Each of these groups had their own forms of education, though the common thread was a generally informal education where skills were acquired through a combination of observation and practice and children also learned through stories, song, dance, games, and so forth (Amukugo, 1993; Ellis, 1984). At least some groups did have formal education, in the form of initiation schools, which lasted anywhere from a few weeks to several months, where youth were taught the knowledge and skills necessary to become adults. Thus, when missionaries came they "introduced a new set of formal educational institutions which partly supplemented and partly replaced those which were there before" (Quoted inAmukugo, 1993, p. 33).

Missionary Education and German Colonization

Missionaries were active in Namibia from 1805, but the successful implantation of missionary education really began in 1842, when the German Rhenish Mission Society began working among the Nama, Herero, and Damara people, followed in 1870 by the Finnish Mission Society, which worked largely with the Ovambo people (Amukugo, 1993). Under missionary education, the purpose of education for coloured[30] and black children was to convert them to Christianity and to create a semi-skilled population which would serve the white community (Murangi, A. K., 1990). Separate schools were set up for coloured children, but their schooling was similar to that for black children. In both, children were taught largely by foreign white missionaries using a curriculum that

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[30] In this chapter, I use the terms generally used in the literature: "black", "white", and "coloured" - which reflect the racist apartheid policies being described. My use of these terms is not meant to imply that I approve of them, as I recognize their political and contested nature, but it is difficult to describe and understand apartheid policy without using such terms. In the Namibian context, "blacks" included the San, Damaras, Caprivians, Hereros, Kavangos, Ovambos, and Tswanas, "whites" included Europeans and European descendants who had settled in Namibia, and "coloureds" included "mixed" children as well as Namas and Rehobothers (Cohen, 1994).

included basic reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as singing and handicraft,

agriculture for boys, and domestic training for girls (Cohen, 1994). As one missionary

stated:

> For its development . . . the country does not need 'educated negroes', but competent, intelligent workers. The main emphasis will therefore be on education for obedience, order punctuality, sobriety, honesty, diligence and moderation rather than academic learning. (Quoted in Ellis, 1984, p. 14)

Under German colonization, which officially began in 1884, the missionary style of

education was beneficial to the colonial administration, as it provided labor for the

development of the colony. The colonial administration argued against literacy, however.

As one colonial administrator put it:

> White settlers require native servants, they can only ensure a continuous supply by seeing to it that the servants are kept in a state of educational inferiority. To educate them . . . (would) inculcate such mischievous and intolerable ideas as democracy, the brotherhood of man . . . human freedom and the like (Quoted inAmukugo, 1993, p. 45).

A separate system of schools served the white children of settlers in the colony

and was provided by both the colonial government and missions. While the goal of

schooling for blacks and coloureds was to provide semi-skilled labour and to Christianize

them, the schools for white children aimed to replicate the German system of education,

to ensure that white children received a quality of education that a student in Germany

would (Cohen, 1994). Thus, by the time South Africa gained control over South West

Africa, two separate education systems were already established: one for the whites and

one for blacks and coloureds, with the second being far inferior.

South African Rule and Bantu Education

When South Africa first gained control over South West Africa, the education system did not change significantly for black students, as the purposes of education under German colonization served the purposes of the South African government just as well (Ellis, 1984). The South African government did, however, work to ensure a quality education for white settlers in South-West Africa, and established three separate education systems, one for whites, one for "coloureds" or those of "mixed race", and one for "blacks". Education for black children retained much of the same characteristics it had previously, offering largely religious instruction, reading, writing, Dutch or English, and instruction in woodwork, metal work, and so forth for boys, and needlework, housework, and the like for girls (Amukugo, 1993; Cohen, 1994).

The rise of the Nationalist Party in South Africa in 1948 had a great impact on education in South-West Africa, as this party brought with it the ideology of *apartheid* – in many ways further entrenching the inequitable education system developed during German colonization. Beginning with the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the South African government began a process of using education in South Africa to further separate blacks, whites, and coloureds, and to enforce racist ideas of the apartheid ideology. Ironically, the ideas behind Bantu Education were drawn from the results of the Eiselen Commission, which was charged with devising a new system of education for blacks in South Africa, and which found that black children could potentially perform as well as white children. Thus, the commission concluded that education for blacks must be kept inferior so as to ensure their continued oppression. It recommended a 4-year education for blacks, with emphasis on literacy and knowledge of English and Afrikaans,

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as while as "tribal heritage, agriculture, religion and hygiene" (Ellis, 1984, p. 23). As Dr

H Verwoerd, the creator of Bantu Education, wrote in 1953,

> When I have control of Native Education I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them. People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for the Natives. Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live. (Quoted in Amukugo, 1993, p. 57)

Similarly, another Nationalist Party member stated, "education is the key to the creation

of the proper relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans in South Africa"

(Quoted in Harber, 1993, p. 417). Thus, with the Bantu Education Act and policies

which followed, the relegation of Africans to inferior quality education and to an

education which was meant to reinforce the superiority of the white race was well

established.

The implementation of Bantu Education in Namibia began in the late fifties,

beginning with policies stemming from the Van Zyl Commission of 1958, which was

charged with determining how/if Bantu Education could be applied in South West Africa.

These policies included moving most schooling from missionary supervision to

governmental supervision and formally establishing three separate systems: one for

blacks, one for coloureds, and one for whites. Bantu Education was fully entrenched

with policies following the Odendaal Commission of 1962-63. One of the most

significant changes following this commission was the establishment of six "homelands",

or Bantustans, in SWA where the population would be separated by ethnicity. In

addition, the administration of black and coloured education was put directly under the

Department of Bantu Education of South Africa, which meant that the South African

government would have even more control over education for these groups (Cohen,

1994; Murangi, A. K., 1990; O'Callaghan, 1977). The aims of this highly segregated

education remained the same, to prepare each group for its place in the social order.

The period of the mid-seventies through the 80's marked what Amukugo (1993)

has termed the "false decolonization period". During this period, two major

developments in education in SWA were the expansion of education for black Namibians

and the further segregration of the education system into eleven different administrations.

While expanding education opportunities for black Namibians may seem to be a positive

change, scholars have pointed out many ways in which this development was just a new

wrinkle in Bantu education (Amukugo, 1993; Cohen, 1994; Ellis, 1984). They suggest

that such a change would look more positive in the eyes of the international community,

about which South Africa had to be increasingly concerned. Internally, however, this

move created more skilled labour, which was sorely needed, and contributed to building a

black middle class, which the South African government may have hoped would help

work against SWAPO's efforts, because a black middle class might have an interest in

maintaining the neo-colonial structure. This expansion did not fundamentally alter the

inequitable education system, however, because it was still predominantly bottom-heavy

– the majority of black children still did not go beyond the primary level. In addition,

this expansion did not imply an accompanying increase in resources and materials, nor

more qualified teachers, for the black population, and a large disparity between

expenditures for different groups remained in place.

During this period also, the administration of education was shifted from the

three-tiered structure to one where each Bantustan had its own education administration.

Thus parallel systems were created for Bushmen, Caprivian, Coloured, Damara, Herero,

Kavango, Nama, Ovambo, Rehboth Baster, Tswana, and White. Of course, the same

inequities applied as before – in1987/88, R1,278 was spent on each white student, while

only R394 was spent on each Ovambo student (Cohen, 1994). Despite their separation,

however, these administrations did not have ultimate control over education within their

jurisdiction, as the National Education Act of 1980 ensured that the Administrator

General (who was accountable to the president of South Africa) had:

> an overwhelming power to control and direct the education of Africans in
> accordance with the interest of the state entirely on his goodwill. Likewise, he
> could establish and dissolve school committees and boards and shift their
> members left and right as he felt . . . the same applied to discharging teachers from
> their duties. In short, the Administrator General held the overall control over the
> establishment, provision, finance and policy of African education (Amukugo,
> 1993, p. 78).

The South African government therefore could ensure that education in SWA stayed true

to the purpose it was given, to maintain and reinforce the social order, which meant the

continued oppression of the black and coloured majority, while providing necessary labor

for white farmers and business-owners.

Teachers and Teaching Before Independence

Turning specifically to teachers and teaching, one predominate theme in the

literature describing teaching before independence is the great disparity between the level

of education and qualifications of black teachers in comparison to white teachers

(Amukugo, 1993; Callewaert & Kallos, 1989; Cohen, 1994; Swarts, 2003). In keeping

with the separation of ethnic groups in education more generally, separate teacher

training institutions existed for black, coloured, and white teachers. Also in keeping with

the great inequalities in the system, the teacher training institutions for black teachers had much lower standards than those for white teachers.

Teacher training for blacks in Namibia began with a teacher training institution, Augustineum, which was originally opened in the late 1800's, but then closed until 1923. The entry requirement was Standard II (grade 4) – secondary schools for blacks didn't even exist until the 1950's (Cohen, 1994; Ellis, 1984). By the seventies and eighties, a typical level of education for primary-level teachers in black schools was 6 years of education, and for upper-primary level, 8 years. Those who had teacher training would have received it from one of the segregated colleges of education. The emphasis in those colleges was more for teachers to upgrade their own education than for teacher education per se (Callewaert, 1999). A large percentage of practicing teachers before independence did not have any teacher training. In 1988, 88% of Ovambo teachers had Standard X or lower and no teaching qualification, whereas 99% of white teachers had Standard X and further qualifications (Cohen, 1994).

In addition to the low rate of qualified teachers for black schools, and the lower entry requirements for teacher training institutions open to black teachers, researchers surveying teacher education in 1989 reported that the teacher training programs were highly theoretical and academic, suffered from a shortage of materials, and offered minimal, if any, opportunity for practice (Callewaert & Kallos, 1989). The researchers also reviewed the materials used in teacher training and reported that they:

> . . . in general provide very few examples of different views. They are accordingly not appropriate for serious reflection and development of an understanding. We found no texts used that presented modern educational sociology or reflected upon the functions of schooling in society nor any texts or passages that introduced a critique of the existing school system in Namibia or discussed alternative strategies. . . the texts are thus reflecting the rote learning

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and the lack of opportunity to discuss and to develop understanding that we so often encountered in our classroom observations. (p. 38)

Not surprisingly, then, teaching practice before independence has generally been described as highly teacher-centered and authoritarian, emphasizing rote-learning and strict discipline (Callewaert & Kallos, 1989; Ellis, 1984; Harber, 1997). In one illustrative example, Shinyemba (1999) describes her experience in primary school in the late 60's:

> At school my teacher was newly graduated from the Agustineum Training College. He always had a cane in his hand. Whenever he entered the class we stood up very straight and greeted him . . . I shivered whenever I was asked a question because any mistake was reason for a caning. Corporal punishment was the order of the day. The class was asked to sit silently. We could not consult one another or share ideas. Sharing ideas was considered stealing knowledge (p. 2).

Chase (as quoted in Harber, 1997) describes teaching practice similarly:

> Children are expected to be well behaved sponges, absorbing the textbook knowledge relayed by the teachers and furthermore to reproduce these facts in examinations. It is not part of the educational philosophy to train these pupils to think by themselves nor to question the teachers (p. 118).

This authoritarian atmosphere was perhaps compounded for those black children who made it to secondary school, where white teachers predominated. Until the Academy for Tertiary Education was established in Windhoek in 1980 there were no institutions in Namibia for preparing teachers for the secondary level. Previous to that, students would have had to go to South Africa for higher-level teacher training, an unlikely prospect for most blacks. While white secondary school teachers may have had more schooling, their authoritarian role was often compounded with racist attitudes towards their learners. This situation was further exacerbated in the 1980's, when many whites left areas that were predominately black, and members of the South African

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Defence Force were placed as teachers in those areas, allegedly even carrying weapons to school (Cohen, 1994; Ellis, 1984).

Overall, therefore, the role of the teacher was one of discipline and authority. If education was to maintain the inequitable social order, teachers were needed to reinforce it. As the colonial administrator had put it so many years before, the classroom could not be a place which allowed ideas of "democracy, the brotherhood of man" or "human freedom" to be fostered (Amukugo, 1993, p. 45).

Resistance in Education

Perhaps not surprisingly, the very factors in education that were used as tools of oppression, including the curriculum and the authoritarianism of teachers, ended up fomenting a revolutionary spirit in many pupils. As I have mentioned, Namibians had long struggled against colonialism, and this was as true in education as in other areas. Students became quite active in the SWAPO movement by participating in student organizations, including a youth branch of SWAPO, staging protests and boycotts, and/or going into exile to join SWAPO outside of Namibia. Many teachers were also opposed to the status quo under Bantu Education. Ellis (1984) describes the conundrum that many teachers faced during this time:

> They have two masters. On the one hand they are entrusted with the hopes of parents; on the other, the South African government wants to use them as agents of the apartheid state . . . they know that they do not have the skills or equipment to cope with classes of 40 to 100 pupils. They do not like the syllabus. They must somehow make it clear to their communities that they do not approve of the racist government which provides them with their bread, knowing that if this 'open secret' catches the attention of the informers in their schools, they can be summarily dismissed, or detained by the army or security police. (p. 38)

Many teachers became actively involved with SWAPO despite these risks, working to try to provide alternatives and/or to resist the yoke of Bantu Education. A number of church organizations and mission schools also provided alternative spaces for education[31].

These alternatives, however, are notable in part because they were the exceptions. And even those exceptions fought an uphill battle. The structure of the education system was designed to maintain its inequities, with vast disparities in resources and materials, class size, and education/training made available to teachers. By all accounts, the predominate mode of teaching before independence was teacher-centered and authoritative and relied on rote memorization and heavy, often physical, discipline.

Education Reforms

It is against this backdrop that the new Namibian government undertook its education reform process, which actually began well before independence. As I have discussed, a significant part of the revolutionary movement were active students and young people, and education represented one of the key areas in which racist apartheid policies were exemplified. Early on, SWAPO recognized education as fundamental to its movement and to the future of an independent Namibia. In 1968, SWAPO established its Department of Education and Culture, which focused on providing education to Namibians in exile and eventually also on planning for a post-independence education system that would not only redress inequities in the previous education system but actually contribute to redressing inequities in society, and would help move the nation

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[31] See Cohen (1994) and SWAPO Department of Information and Policy (SWAPO of Namibia Department of Information and Publicity, 1981) for more information about these alternative spaces for resistance in education.

towards unity and democracy. This department, and SWAPO in general, saw education as a key to social change and viewed teachers as potential social change agents (Angula, 1999; Dahlström, Swarts, & Zeichner, 1999a; Swarts, 2003).

The Path To Education Reforms

During the two decades preceding independence, SWAPO worked on two fronts in relation to education: educating those Namibians that joined the movement in exile in a way that would be consistent with its view of what education could and should be; and also planning for education in an independent Namibia – which meant planning for reforms that would transform the education system. SWAPO was supported on both fronts by a number of institutions and organizations overseas, such as the United Nations (in the form of the United Nations Institute for Namibia, UNIN), the Swedish International Development Association (SIDA), the British Overseas Development Network, Umëa University in Sweden, and so forth. Through this support, SWAPO was able to send Nambians in exile to universities and teacher training institutions around the globe. At the same time, this support also enabled SWAPO to establish its own schools in exile in Zambia and Angola, and to develop teacher training programs which prepared Namibians to teach in those schools (Amukugo, 1993; Angula, 1999; Cohen, 1994).

Throughout the 1980's, SWAPO continued to receive substantial external support as it began to prepare for independence and to plan for educational reform after independence. The supporting institutions and organizations sponsored numerous international conferences aimed at discussing education policy options for an independent Namibia. They also funded individuals who worked with leaders in SWAPO's

Department of Education and Culture as they planned for the future. For example, during

the decade preceding independence, the Namibia Association of Norway sponsored

conferences on the possible adoption of the IGCSE and the secondary curriculum for the

Namibia Secondary Technical School in Congo, and the British Overseas Development

Administration sponsored a conference on English language policy in Namibia. Through

these conferences, Namibians in exile and outside "experts" came together to present and

discuss ideas concerning post-independence Namibia. In September 1989, the United

Nations Institute for Namibia sponsored the International Conference on Teacher

Education in Namibia, which was the first conference attended by individuals who still

resided in Namibia (Angula & Lewis, 1997; Dahlström, Swarts, & Zeichner, 1999b).

By independence, SWAPO had thus participated in extensive international

dialogues concerning education reform in Namibia, and had had the opportunity to try out

new approaches to teaching and teacher training in their own exile schools. After

independence, however, SWAPO did not have a mandate to sweepingly implement its

reform ideas without consultation. And, in fact, a number of the reforms they advocated

were contested, particularly by officials and UNAM faculty who retained their positions

after independence (Callewaert, 1999; Dahlström, 1995). So, both to address such

opposition and to inform and gain buy-in from the general public, the new government

held a number of conferences and prepared review documents concerning the education

reforms it was proposing (Angula & Lewis, 1997). Still, it is questionable whether there

was any real intention of altering the reforms in a substantial way. It is telling, for

example, that at the first national conference in Namibia on the reform process, the

Etosha Conference, the opening address by Sam Nujoma was entitled "Towards Learner-

Centred Education" (Snyder, 1991), thus signaling that the adoption of learner-centred

education was to be explained and supported, not negotiated.   Namibian scholars have

recognized that, at base, the reforms were non-negotiable, sometimes arguing that this

was necessary for needed change to take place. As Swarts (2003), a supporter of the

reforms, writes:

> Although the Ministry has democratic participation as one of its major goals, the
> "root changes" which lie at the heart of the transformation were non-negotiable.
> At the macro level the change had a multiple, mandated character and, because of
> the wide sweep of its legislative authority, it was bound to exert immense
> influence. The mandated character of the transformation was necessitated by the
> legacy of apartheid and the policy of national reconciliation after independence.
> (p. 37)

Overview of Reforms

The content of education reforms and how they are represented in policy

documents will be discussed more in Chapters 6 through 8, but here I will introduce the

major reforms that are most pertinent to this study, including the adoption of learner-

centred education and continuous assessment, the reform of teacher education and of the

school curriculum, and the new language policy for education. The foundation for the

numerous education reforms was established at a fundamental level by the specific

inclusion of the Right to Education in the Namibian Constitution (*The Constitution of the

Republic of Namibia*, 1990). Article 20 reads:

1) All persons shall have the right to education.
2) Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable
   facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by
   establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be
   provided free of charge. (p. 14)

For the first time, education was to be guaranteed to all children regardless of race or

ethnicity.

Learner-Centered Education and Continuous Assessment

One of the most often cited, overarching reforms in post-independence Namibia was the adoption of learner-centered education (LCE) and continuous assessment. These were in sharp contrast to the authoritarian, teacher-centered practices used by a majority of teachers before independence, as I have discussed. The origins of the choice to adopt learner-centred education is somewhat contested, as some scholars argue that it represented an example of educational transfer and/or that it was adopted because it was a popular trend in international education (Luecke, 2004; Storeng, 2001). Certainly, there is some truth to this argument. At the same time, other scholars and educationists who were directly involved in the Namibian policy reforms argue that the choice of learner-centred education came out of the grassroots efforts of building a teaching approach for the education that was taking place in SWAPO schools in exile (Angula, 1999; Dahlström, 1999; J. Samoff, personal communication, March 2, 2007).

Internationally, there have been a number of different ways in which educationists have understood learner-centred education, and similar terms ("student-centered", "child-centered") and there has not been clear agreement on the signification of these terms, or their relationship with each other. In Namibia, the definition of learner-centred education was left rather nebulous after independence, and its practical application was only vaguely addressed in policy documents (Swarts et al., 1999). The guidance, or definition, that was offered in *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992) described learner-centered education in this way:

> Teaching begins with the interests of the learners, their level of maturity. Our emphasis must be on the quality and meaningfulness of learning. Hence, our teaching methods must strive to facilitate and encourage learning. Accordingly,

our approach to learning and teaching should be learner-centred, which means that:

- The starting point is the learners' existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school;
- The natural curiousity and eagerness of all young people to learn to investigate and to make sense of a widening world must be nourished and encouraged by challenging and meaningful tasks;
- The learners' perspective needs to be appreciated and considered in the work of the school;
- Learners should be empowered to think and take responsibility not only for their own, but also for one another's learning and total development; and
- Learners should be involved as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth (p. 60).

In keeping with this idea of learner-centredness, the policy-makers also sought to alter the assessment system, moving from relying on a single examination each year to continuous assessment. *Toward Education for All* explains the rational for this shift:

To maintain the focus on learning rather than on promotion and certification, evaluation in Basic Education will rely on continuous assessment throughout the year rather than on a single major examination (p. 61) . . . . The main purpose of assessment in basic Education will be to develop a reliable picture of each individual learner's progress and level of achievement in relation to minimum competencies specified in subject syllabuses. (p. 129)

Continuous assessment would be used not only to give marks to students, but perhaps even more importantly, for formative evaluation by the teacher and to give learners, parents, and teachers a better picture of each learner's progress.

Teacher Education

Pre-Service Teacher Education

Numerous scholars have recognized Namibia as being unique in its choice to place teachers and teacher education at the center of its reforms (Dahlström, 2000; J. Samoff, personal communication, March 2, 2007; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1999). As has been described, before independence SWAPO sent many Namibians to teacher training

institutions abroad and worked with organizations and institutions overseas to develop its own teacher training programs – in particular the Integrated Teacher Training Program (ITTP), which was originally implemented in 1986 in SWAPO schools in Kwanza Sul, Angola and, after independence, was brought to Ongwediva College of Education in northern Namibia. After independence, the Basic Education Teaching Diploma (BETD) program was developed and was implemented beginning in 1993. The BETD, which was to become the standard qualification for primary level teachers, shared the same fundamental principles of the ITTP and the reform movement more generally, emphasizing "learner-centered, reflective, analytical and productive methods and approaches in teacher education" (Swarts, 1999, p. 39).

Concomitant with changes in the structure and content of the teacher education program, the government also made substantial changes in the administration of teacher education. The National Institute for Education Development (NIED) was formed in 1991 and charged with overseeing the development of new curriculum and the development of the BETD program. NIED received substantial financial and technical support from a number of overseas institutions and organizations, including in particular UMEA University in Sweden, which had been closely involved with teacher training for SWAPO before independence and now offered significant assistance through the Teacher Education Reform Project. The BETD program would be offered at the four colleges of education throughout the country. The faculty of those colleges participated in staff development beginning in 1992, which brought them together and had them participate in practitioner research and which would pave the way for the implementation of the BETD (Alberts, 1997; Callewaert, 1999; Swarts, 2003).

The education of teachers for the primary level was thus permanently removed from the Academy for Tertiary Education. The Academy itself was transformed into the University of Namibia (UNAM), but now only teachers for the secondary level would receive their pre-service education there. The faculty at UNAM did not participate in staff development as the college faculty did and, in fact, many were not on board with the teacher education reforms, particularly the decision to remove all primary level teacher education from their purview. This meant that teachers at the secondary level would ultimately receive training that was not necessarily in line with the philosophies and theories underlying the reforms exemplified in the BETD (Callewaert, 1999).

Teachers for the primary level, on the other hand, would receive a pre-service education that was to be a drastic departure from the teacher training that had existed in Namibia before independence. The BETD is a three-year program, which school-leavers can enter after grade 12. The program is designed to provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to learn about the theory underlying learner-centred education, while ideally also experiencing it during their teacher education. School-based studies and critical inquiry are key components of the program, as are focused studies on a subject area of specialization (or Lower Primary specialization for teachers of grades 1-4) combined with a common core that includes Educational Theory and Practice and English Language. Students spend time in schools during each of the three years of the program, from undertaking observations during their first year to practice teaching during their final year. These school-based experiences are tied to critical inquiry and action research projects during each year (Swarts, 2003).

In-Service Teacher Education

In spite of the fact that many Namibians had been trained as teachers in exile and returned to Namibia after independence to teach, there was still a great shortage of qualified teachers. Once the BETD was developed and implemented, there was also the question of how to acquaint teachers who were already practicing with the new, learner-centered orientation. During the 90's there were a number of initiatives aimed at providing in-service training for practicing teachers. An in-service version of the BETD was developed (Swarts, 2003). Regional Teachers' Resource Centers were created, which were intended to provide venues for meetings and workshops as well as to provide facilities/resources for teachers' use (such as printed and audio-visual resources and computers)[32]. At the same time, other programs were sponsored by international organizations, and South African institutions offered a number of distance teacher training programs as well. It is somewhat difficult to create a clear and complete picture of all of the training options that were available during the period immediately after independence and, in fact, there was some confusion as to which programs could lead teachers to be officially qualified and which could not[33].

The Ministry of Education has recognized this lack of clarity, as well as the fact that not all of the programs in which teachers were enrolled necessarily shared the same philosophies of education or the same understanding of learner-centered education. A few years ago, the University of Namibia began to work in collaboration with NIED and the colleges in order to expand the distance version of the BETD to better meet the

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[32] Information concerning the Teacher Resource Centre network and functions can be found at http://www.nied.edu.na/resourcecentres/resource-centres.htm.

[33] This conclusion is based on a review of secondary documents and interviews. One official at NIED told me that she herself had difficulty getting a handle on the full range of programs and providers that were active in the 90's.

demand and, as much as possible, offer a way for practicing teachers to gain

qualifications that were equivalent to that offered through the regular BETD. The down

side to this change is that some teachers had already invested in training programs which

are no longer considered valid – leaving some teachers feeling confused and frustrated

that they have to start again with a new in-service training program in order to be

considered qualified[34].

The primary focus of in-service programs has been to enable practicing teachers

to upgrade their qualifications and adjust to the changes brought about by post-

independence reforms. Some limited, but now increasing, attention has also been paid to

developing a system of professional development by which teachers could continue to

develop and improve their teaching. *The Ten-Year Plan for Educator Development and*

Support in Namibia (Coombe, Bennell, Uugwnga, & Wrightson, 1999) identified

upgrading qualifications as the priority from 2000 to 2007, but stated that plans for

building a stronger framework for continuing professional development should start in

2004. At the time I undertook fieldwork, professional development, on a modest level,

was primarily made available through periodic circuit or regional level workshops and

through a sub-circuit level cluster system, which was initiated as a pilot beginning in the

mid-90's and has now expanded to other regions (Dittmar, Mendelsohn, & Ward, 2002).

Through this system, groups of schools comprise clusters, with a school designated as the

cluster center, and a subject facilitator who is expected to convene cluster meetings of

teachers, supported by the circuit advisory teacher. Clearly, the quality and frequency of

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[34] Based on interviews, including some teachers who themselves felt frustrated by these changes, as well as
ministry officials who acknowledged these frustrations.

such meetings will depend on the capacity of the cluster center and the teachers participating in the cluster.

Curriculum

Even before independence, Namibian education leaders recognized that transforming the curriculum was of utmost importance, as the old curriculum was a bastion of Bantu/apartheid education. As with teacher education, SWAPO had had the opportunity to develop curricula for its schools in exile, again with collaboration and support from overseas institutions, and used these as a foundation for building a new curriculum. The decision was made to begin the curriculum reform process quickly because, as Jansen writes, "there was a very important political imperative to demonstrate change from apartheid status quo as soon as possible after independence." (Jansen, 1995, p. 13) The curriculum reform process started at the Junior Secondary level, beginning with grade 8 because, it was argued, at this level fewer schools would be involved and it was supposed that learners at this level would more easily adapt to the new curriculum – thus change could take place at this level more rapidly. By the beginning of the 1991 school year, syllabi had already been created for grade eight (Alberts, 1997; Jansen, 1995). NIED was created while the curriculum process was already underway and had a Herculean task ahead, as it "was expected to institutionalize its operations and try to establish itself as the center for curriculum reform and development" (Alberts, 1997, p. 92). It received substantial financial and technical assistance from a number of organizations, institutions, and individuals from overseas.

The final version of the *Pilot Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education* (also referred to as the Broad Curriculum) was released in 1996, after a long process of review

and revision, and was based on the overall reform orientation. In other words, the curriculum was based on principles of learner-centered education and the goals of education that were outlined in *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 1996).

Language of Instruction

Another major post-independence reform was the installation of English as the official language and as the medium of instruction for upper primary and secondary education. Like many other aspects of reform in Namibia, the selection of English was made before independence, during the process of international dialogue and consultation. By 1991, however, only 0.8% of the population spoke English (Dlamini, 2000). Thus, when the new government established English as a medium of instruction, it had to contend with the fact that school-children did not speak English, and neither did most of their teachers. As a way to address this situation, the shift to English-medium was phased in from 1992 to 1996. Jansen (1995) summarizes the post-independence language policy as follows:

(a) In Grades 1-3 learners will be taught in the mother tongue as 'the best foundation for later learning in another language medium' (*Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education*, October 1992, Version 7: 23).
(b) All learners should acquire competence in English during the 7-year primary cycle. In grades 4-7 English will be phased in as the main medium of instruction for promotional subjects other than languages.
(c) In the secondary school, English will be phased in at Grade 8 from January 1991 so that by 1995 all secondary grades will be taught through the medium of English. (p. 10)

While the preferred language for the first three grades would thus be the mother language, schools with learners serving many different languages could apply to the Regional Director for permission to use English (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and

Culture, 1996). As a result, it is common for schools in urban areas to begin with English language instruction from grade one (Swarts, 2001). The central northern regions, however, are predominately Oshiwambo-speaking and, even in the larger towns, most of the schools use the local language as the medium of instruction for lower primary.

Though my research questions do not center on the Language Policy for Education, this policy has great significance for my study, and enters into the majority of my conversations with teachers. This is not surprising, since a learner-centered approach, which emphasizes classroom participation, would be greatly impacted by the ability of the learners to understand and communicate in the language that is being used in the classroom.

Post-Independence Developments

As this section has portrayed, most of the reforms were phased in over time. Generally, changes that have taken place since then can be seen more as adjustments and fine-tuning rather than as new reforms. The ministry officials and teacher educators I interviewed described such changes as efforts to overcome obstacles that had been met in implementing reforms, as attempts to continue moving toward the ideals laid out by the reformers. *Toward Education for All* has continued to be the foundational document guiding education in Namibia, and is required reading in the colleges of education. As I will discuss in the concluding chapter, very recent developments in education policy may signal a greater departure from the post-independence reforms, but in 2006 these policy discussions were still at a very preliminary and ministerial level. At the time this research was undertaken, the reforms initiated after independence, and the underlying

philosophies that I will be discussing, still guided current education policy and impacted

teachers' lives.

CHAPTER 5: OKULONGA – TEACHING IN THE NORTH

For much of the remainder of this dissertation, I will be sharing the words of the teachers and other participants in my study. Before presenting the ideas that the teachers shared with me, however, I would like to give a sense of the context in which they teach and to introduce the teachers themselves. In this chapter I will introduce the three schools in which I undertook my fieldwork and the teachers who graciously allowed me into their classrooms and spent their time talking with me in interviews and focus groups. I will also describe some aspects of their working life, giving a fuller picture of the teaching environment. Finally, I will turn to the teaching itself, sharing some impressions from the lessons I observed.

The Schools and the Teachers – An Introduction

I will begin this introduction to the schools and teachers by moving from the outside in – offering first a brief description of the region in which the schools are located. I will then introduce each school and, briefly, the participating teachers from each school.

The Regions

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the area in which I undertook the bulk of my fieldwork, where all three schools were located, was in the central northern section of Namibia – the area that is made up of the educational regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, and Oshikoto (see Figure 2 below).
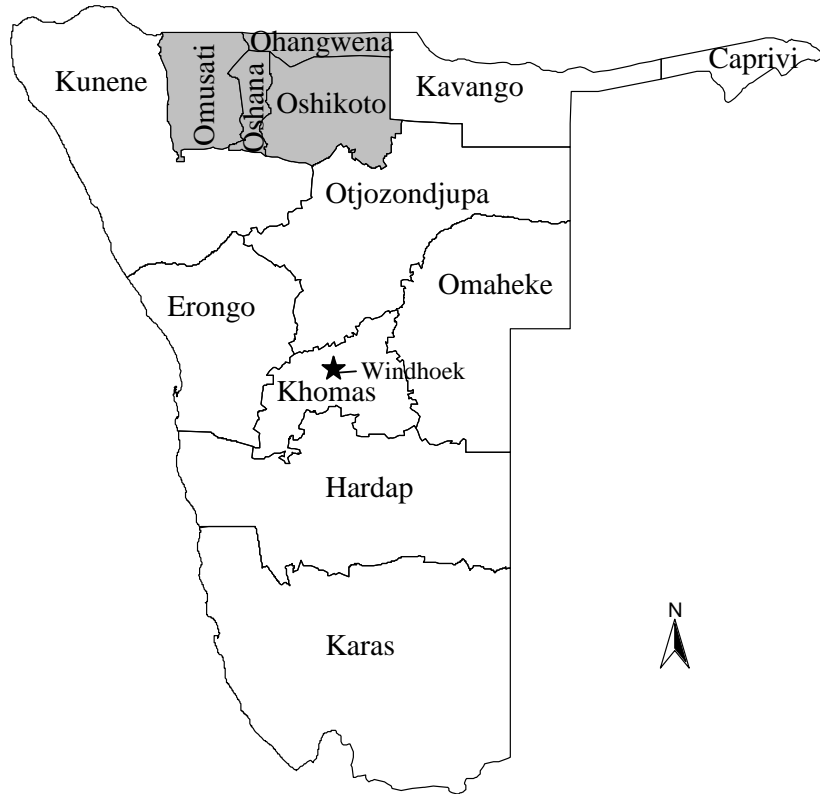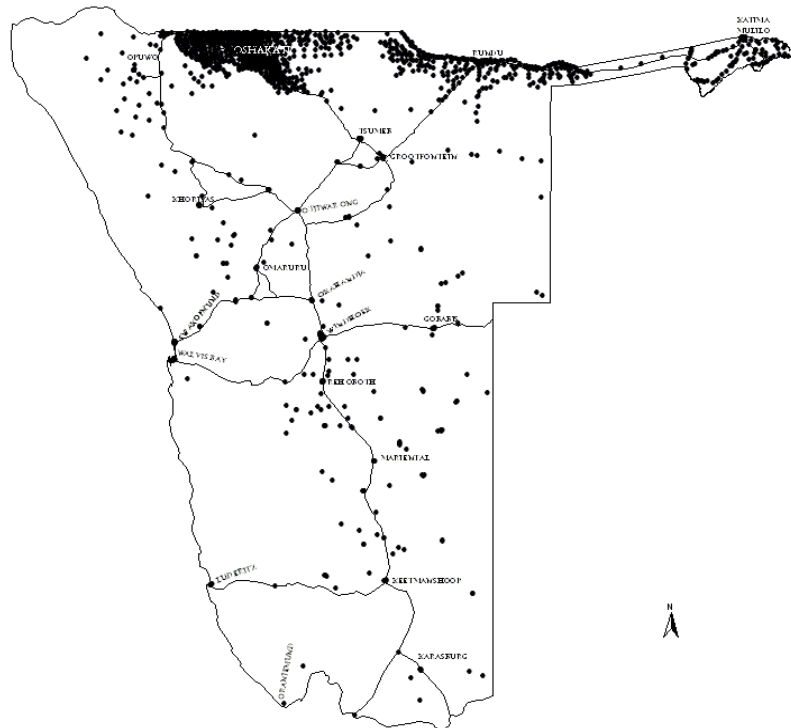
Figure 2: Namibia Educational Regions

Figure 3: Distribution of Primary Schools

While the country overall is sparsely populated, the majority of the population resides in the northern regions – this is evidenced in Figure 3, which shows the comparatively dense distribution of schools in the central northern regions.

Despite their high population density, the northern central regions are still largely rural, with a few large town centers. While these regions enjoy much higher rainfall than the rest of Namibia, the high population density has contributed to a serious deforestation and desertification problem. Travelling through much of this region, then, one sees open savannah plains with low-lying bush and periodic copses of trees, dotted with both traditional rondavals (round rooms or huts constructed with mud/clay and thatch roofs) and more "western" rectangular cement brick buildings – the two often combined in one homestead. Towards the eastern portion of these regions, the vegetation becomes thicker, as you near the Kavango region.

Outside of the large town centers, and except for a few roads that connect them, there are no tarred roads. There are extensive networks of sandy "bush roads" connecting villages and schools to each other and to the tarred roads. Teachers use these roads to commute to school – sometimes by foot, if they live nearby, or by vehicle if they're farther away. Most of the teachers at both Rural School 1 and Rural School 2 commute from town, or from rental houses that have been built in closer villages[35]. Many of the teachers at Rural School 1 commute from town by carpool in 4x4 pick-up trucks, while many of the teachers at Rural School 2 commute from town or rental housing by taxi or lifts they manage to find, which drop them on the side of the bush road leading to the school. Almost all of the learners walk, some quite long distances. These bush roads are

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[35] The rental teacher houses I saw were all found in areas where a number of small "cuca shops" (small shops selling beer, liquor, soft drinks, and often sundry household items) have been built in clusters and are patronized by residents in the surrounding area, becoming social centers of activity.

dependable during most of the year (for those with 4x4s who know where they are going). During the rainy season (from around January to April), however, these roads can often become impassible, and this can result in tardiness and absences of both teachers and children[36].

Town School

Located in one of the population centers of central northern Namibia, Town School has the characteristics of a typical primary school in Namibia, with sandy school grounds and rows of classroom blocks, enclosed by a gated fence (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Typical Schools of Northern Namibia[37]

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[36] In the rainy season, dry rivers suddenly flow, and oshanas (large depressions which are found throughout the region) fill with water. These inundated oshanas may suddenly separate students and teachers from their schools, and learners have to wade through them to get to school. Teachers who are not able to get a ride, or whose 4x4s get stuck in the water, may share a similar fate.

[37] The schools in these pictures are not any of the schools that participated in this study, but they give an idea of what a typical school looks like (learners normally wear uniforms – the picture on the bottom right was taken during a special event outside of school hours).

In the case of Town School, the fence is actually a high brick wall, which fully encloses the school, blocking the view of the surrounding neighborhood. Within the school grounds, the classroom blocks are rows of three to five painted cement-brick classrooms, with windows and doors (most of which can be locked), and with doors all opening on the same side, onto the sandy courtyards. There is an administration block that has a reception area, the principal's office, a staff room, and the offices of Heads of Department, as well as flush toilets for the teachers, a photocopier, and computers for staff members. Students use blocks of flush toilets that are separated from the other school blocks. Town School has a small library, which was created from and doubles as a store-room. There are also a couple other stand-alone cement-brick rooms, which are used as additional staff rooms, and a tuck shop, where students and teachers can buy drinks, school supplies, and snack food. Town school is a very large combined school, consisting of grades five through ten, with 31 teachers and about 900 learners. The grade six classes have around 37 learners, while some of the grade seven classes number around 45. During the week I was visiting the school, they also had 23 students teachers from the local teacher's college, and were visited by nurses from an area clinic, who were administering polio vaccines to all the teachers and students, because of a recent polio scare.

The Teachers

The three teachers who were the central participants in this study at Town School all have significant teaching experience. Teopo has been teaching for 17 years and was trained in exile, receiving part of her education in the UK. Aune has been teaching for 18 years. She received her teacher training in pre-independence Namibia, but has since

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completed the in-service BETD and has continued to take further education courses. Even when I was there, she was enrolled in a distance education course. Loide has been teaching for 35 years, 30 of those years at Town School. In 2000, she took education courses through distance education from the University of Namibia to upgrade her qualifications, since she had received her original teaching qualifications well before independence. The principal of Town School finished her education in exile, attending university in the UK. She began teaching in Namibia in 1992, was promoted to deputy principal at the school where she started teaching, and then came to Town School as principal in 2002.

Rural School 1

Rural School 1 shares many of the same characteristics of Town School – the familiar school blocks and sandy school grounds, the administration block with a staff room, offices, and flush toilets for the teachers. Pit latrines for the learners are set off a short distance from the classroom blocks – five latrines for boys and five for girls. The fence is constructed of wire and wood, and you can see and recognize this as a school from a distance, driving on the bush road over the flat, sandy landscape. In addition to the relatively new administration block, Rural School 1 also has a library/resource center, built from funds raised by a Peace Corps volunteer a few years ago, with three or four large book-cases full of books that classes can come in to use. There are also two classrooms which are designed to be science labs (though without lab materials) and an old office block that has been converted into small classrooms. Another building on the

grounds is used as a kindergarten during the school day, which is supported by the community, and as a community hall at other times.

While many of the classrooms are well-built and maintained, with lockable doors and windows, some are more rudimentary. One of the grade six classrooms does not have a cement floor. When the learners move around this classroom, dust from the sand floor rises and then is trapped within the cement walls. I was greatly relieved to move into the fresh air outside when the classes I observed in this room were over – I can only imagine what it feels like to be a learner in that room the whole day. While there are enough desks and chairs for the learners, many of these are broken. They continue using them as long as they are still functional, but there are many, many discarded chairs on the school grounds, which have been broken beyond repair. Rural School 1, which includes grades one through ten, has 25 teachers and about 800 learners. The grade six classes I observed had around 30 learners, while grades three and four have around 45 learners in a class.

The Teachers

The three teachers at Rural School 1 have varying degrees of experience. Titus was trained and began his teaching career in the exile schools in Zambia, and has been teaching at Rural School 1 since 1992. Both Hilde and Justina are graduates of the BETD program. Hilde has been teaching for seven years (five at Rural School 1) and Justina for five years (one at Rural School 1). The principal of Rural School 1 began teaching there in 1976 and has been the principal for 20 years. He received his teacher training in Namibia in the 70s. He hasn't attended additional teacher training since independence, but has received post-independence in-service training for principals.

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Rural School 2

Rural School 2 also shares many of the characteristics of the other two schools, with the familiar and recognizable school grounds made up of rows of classroom blocks. The wire and wood fencing encompassing this school grounds, however, is surrounded by bushes and trees, not the open, sandy plains of Rural School 1. Rural School 2 does not have an administration block, much to the chagrin of the principal. There are two narrow store-rooms, and one of these doubles as the principal's, secretary's, and Head of Depatrments's office, and the other doubles as a staff room. During lunch and breaks, some of the teachers place chairs under the trees on the grounds, since they cannot all fit in the storage /staff room at the same time. The pit latrines include both latrines for the learners – four for girls and four for boys – and specially designated latrines for the teachers. The school has water tanks which can be accessed for drinking and washing – and which can eventually be used for running water in an administration block.

The classroom blocks consist of both standard painted cement-brick rooms and temporary rooms that have been added on, constructed out of corrugated tin[38]. The school has expanded rapidly in recent years, adding grade eight in 2000, and grade nine in 2001. It now goes through grade ten. Because the ministry was not able to keep up with this rapid increase, the community contributed by providing materials and labor to construct these tin classrooms. The cement-brick classrooms are prioritized for the lower primary grades (one through four) and for grades seven and ten, since those are years when the learners will be taking national assessments. All of the grade six classes are in

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[38] These rooms are imilar to those pictured in Picture 1, but in Rural School 2 there is an open space of about three feet between the walls and the roof such that the learners can see out of the room if they are standing.

the corrugated tin rooms. The grade six classes have around 40 learners, making the rooms a tight squeeze. Overall, there are approximately 750 learners and 20 teachers.

<u>The Teachers</u>

The three participating teachers at Rural School 2 are all quite new to the profession. They are all recent graduates of the BETD program. This is the second year teaching for both Charles and Anna, and the first year for Peter. Peter and Anna both received their teaching diplomas from the local College of Education, while Charles comes from another region of Namibia, and received his diploma from the college of education in that region. The principal began teaching in 1987 as a grade 12 graduate. He stopped teaching in 1992 to attend the teachers college, where he received his National Higher Education Certificate (a precursor to the BETD). He began teaching again, while also pursuing a degree in education management through distance education from a university in South Africa. He became a principal in 1999 and then came to Rural School 2 in 2002.

The Working Life of Teachers – A Brief Glimpse

Having briefly introduced the schools and teachers, I will now spend a short time here describing some aspects of the working life of the teachers in my study. Many of the topics I touch upon here will be returned to, and discussed more deeply, in further chapters/sections, but I wish to provide an initial image of the teachers in my study and the situations in which they work. I begin with a question I asked all of the teachers, "why did you become a teacher?", the answers to which I believe provide some insight

into the lives of teachers in this context. I then move on to describe some of the everyday

facets of their working life: teaching load and time-tables; other responsibilities of

teachers; and teaching resources.

Why teaching?

I asked all the teachers why they had chosen teaching, and the various answers

they gave are not only interesting, but also offer further insight into the context of the

teaching profession in Namibia. A couple of the teachers talk about choosing teaching

because of a desire to help learners learn, or because of models of teachers they saw, both

positive and negative. One of the teachers at Rural School 1 told me:

> You know when I was in school I liked all the teachers. Once she or he stands in
> front of me, I was always happy. Then once I came to grade 12 I found out that
> our kids they are suffering, especially in the maths and science. Then I decided to
> take that one.

A teacher at Rural School 2 explained:

> Sometimes it's very good to do something according to the examples that people
> used to give, or that people used to be seen, the appearance of the people that have
> been in the profession before, some old teachers from here and there, because
> they are good, they are respected. They also . . .when I'm talking about respected,
> being respected, is being respected from the school community upwards, even in
> the village, in the whole society. Yeah, but one thing which very important, on
> top of that, we are talking about being mothers and fathers of education and
> giving the information that we were doing at school that we are best at. Yeah,
> things like in history, I was, you know, the best student there in history and in
> geography. So I wanted to share with those people there in my country also.
> Yeah, to give them also something which I know, not just to keep it for myself or
> anything.

The majority of the teachers, however, did not talk about choosing the teaching

profession because of a calling or because of a long desire to become a teacher. In fact,

many of them talked about not having a whole lot of choice. For those teachers who had

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come to the profession before independence, particularly women, there were not many

options available to them:

> Usually at that time . . .you know the war era . . . we don't have access to go to another route . . . we just stayed either to become a teacher, or to become a nurse. And the money . . . you won't get money to go to another courses, even in South Africa. My father died already in 85. Therefore my mother is a housekeeper, so we don't have enough money . . . I decided to become a teacher because there's no other alternative for me. But now I like it. . . . Yeah, I was interesting on become an engineering. Physical engineering. (Teacher from Town School)

Another female teacher described the interesting way in which she and her friends

chose their professions:

> Loide: To become a teacher. When I started [standard] six, we were two with my friends, no three with my friends, we can't decide to go to be a nurse or a teacher.
> *Wendi*: These are the two ones that girls are really looking at that time?
> Loide: Yeah . . . We were three at that time. We didn't . . . we were had in . . . two classes. One completed the forms to go to be a nurse, and the other one for teaching. Then we go in . . . we went in one class. We pray . . . we pray, we wrote three what? Three papers, and make a draw . . . then we pray. After praying, everyone should take one, okay. Then I go to be a teacher.
> *Wendi*: That's funny. Because you picked it? It said "teacher"?
> Loide: Yeah.

Teachers that were trained in exile also had a limited set of options available to

them. One of the principals discussed this:

> *Wendi*: So what, what . . . what made you to decide to become a teacher, in education?
> Principal: Eh, It's actually a long process. Because when we were in exile we don't choose, you'll only be given. So we were only selected. By then I was already teaching somewhere in Zambia . . . So then when I was teaching, then they say you and you and you have to go to Britain. So when we are selected is when we are told that you are going to do teaching.
> *Wendi*: But already by then you were teaching somehow?
> Principal: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was teaching, in grade 12 only.
> *Wendi*: Was that by choice, or was that somehow . . . told?
> Principal: No, it's not by choice.
> *Wendi*: Even then?
> Principal: Yeah, it's only that you . . .
> *Wendi*: You finish grade 12 or whatever and you can teach?

Principal: Yeah. Instead of going to the battlefield then you have to, because they choose. They only . . . you don't choose yourself, they do it for you. They say you and you and you, go to education. You and you and you, go to . . .
Wendi: They decide who is the best prepared for which thing?
Principal: Yeah, yeah.

Another teacher echoed this explanation of how such decisions were made when in exile:

Anyway, teaching, it wasn't really my idea (laughing). I didn't like it before, only because when we are in exile, we were just given, when a chance come, you have to take it.

Some of the teachers that attended the BETD program after independence also felt that it represented a chance, an opportunity, and that they had to take it. These sentiments echoed what I heard in many informal conversations, when individuals at various levels of the system explained that the college of education often offered opportunities to secondary school graduates who either didn't have high enough exam scores to enter university or did not have the financial means to attend. The college of education represents an opportunity to attend further education with funding provided. One of the BETD graduates explained that his exam scores were not as high as they could have been, because there was a period of unrest in his region during the last years of his schooling.

Teacher: The time now we came to write the examinations, so most of the subjects I did not perform well, then it's like I . . .
Wendi: Because some of the year you didn't have a teacher?
Teacher: Yeah, we did not have a teacher. So I stayed for, just the time I completed I stayed for one year at home. So the only option is . . .the only option I had was only to go to the nearest institution, which was the college. Then I'm just going to be a teacher, there's nothing else.

Another recent BETD graduate explained how her financial situation led to her enrollment at the college of education:

Teacher: Oh, in the first place, you know, I completed . . . [The next year] I was, I was just doing nothing, just doing some casual work. So then, from there, I decided to apply, I applied at the University of Namibia and at the college. So, I was qualified at both, but I choose college because I was not having a lot of money to go to university, and here at the college we get a . . . a . . .
Wendi: A bursary?
Teacher: Mmm (yes), a loan.

From informal conversations I learned that many graduates from the colleges of education pursue further studies in a different field through distance education once they have started teaching, and many leave the profession once they have completed those further studies. A couple of the teachers who participated in my study voiced an interest in pursuing a different career path through this route, but the majority said that they had come to enjoy teaching, or at least wanted to stay in teaching for a while longer before making a change. One of the younger BETD graduates expressed this:

Wendi: So now, what is your plan? Are you going to stay with teaching, or are you going to move on to something?
Teacher: (Laughing) No, I like teaching but . . . no, because of life also maybe I might change in future.
Wendi: . . . Many teachers, they are studying something else the same time they are teaching?
Teacher: Yeah, but, because right now I'm also through continuous education, I'm doing another certificate, but it's still education . . . but no, I might stay for even some 10 years to come.

Some of the more experienced teachers felt that, even if they were interested in changing, the time had passed for choosing another career.

Wendi: Okay. But so, somehow you came to like it over time?
Teacher: Yeah, I came to like it.
Wendi: Have you thought sometime about changing to something else?
Teacher: I wanted to change to be a lawyer.
Wendi: Okay.
Teacher: But now, I'm old now (laughing), there's no more time.
Wendi: So now you're going to just stay teaching until . ..
Teacher: Yeah (laughing).

Teaching Load

Once the choice has been made to become a teacher, then there is also the question of what subject one will teach. From grades one to four, the lower primary phase, teachers teach all of the subjects. Starting from grade five, teachers specialize in particular subjects. In the BETD program, pre-service teachers select a major and a minor based on their interests and on the marks they received in secondary school and, in particular, on their school-leaving exam. These majors and minors are actually sets of subjects, so for example a pre-service teacher might choose math and science (including Mathematics, Natural Science, and Health Education), or languages (including Mother Tongue and English). When they graduate and go to seek a teaching post, many BETD teachers find posts only for one of their minor subject or posts where they have to teach some classes in one of their major subjects and some in a minor subject. As one teacher explained:

> Teacher: . . . when you're coming from the college, you are maybe qualified for to teach the subjects which are you not teaching at that particular school, because you are just having an opportunity to have the post or becoming a teacher. Because we have many teachers who are not yet having post of teaching, so they are just . .
> *Wendi*: You take what you can get?
> Teacher: Whatever you can get.

It is also quite common for teachers to have to teach a number of different subjects to different grades, and for the principal as well to teach some classes. The subjects and grades they teach might also change from year to year. At Rural School 1, each of the central participating teachers was teaching three different subjects to at least two different grades. At Town School and Rural School 2, each of the teachers was teaching two different subjects. Interestingly, of the nine English and Mathematics

teachers in my study, only one mathematics teacher and one English teacher had that

subject as their primary, or major, subject – both of those teachers were at Town School.

Still, one of the older teachers emphasized that the situation now is better than it had been

previously:

> And like the old system of education, you just go to the college. When you come
> you just given any subject. And, once you give any subject, you sometimes you
> don't have base on that subject. Therefore, it is difficult for you to master that . . .
> It's only nowadays that now people have their specialty. That one's better for
> them to master the subject.

Teaching Time-Tables

The school day is six hours long, generally from 8am to 2pm, and consists of

eight 40 minute periods, with a break of 30 minutes (Rural School 2 divides this into two

breaks – one 20 minutes, and one 10 minutes). Grade six has a total of 39 periods across

the week, so Friday is often a shorter school day. There is no time allotted between

periods, so inevitably classes must either end a few minutes early or start a few minutes

late. In Rural School 1 and Rural School 2, the learners generally remain in the same

classroom throughout the day, while the teachers move to whatever class they are

teaching, carrying with them any materials they may need. At Town School, there is a

mix: some teachers have designated classrooms, and the learners come to them; while

other teachers move to the class they are teaching. The principal explained that this

allowed those teachers that tended to need more materials, such as science teachers, to be

able to organize and use these more effectively. There are not enough rooms for all

teachers to have this luxury, however, so some teachers have to do the shifting.

For grade six, English is given six periods a week, and mathematics is given eight

periods. All of the schools organize their time-tables in such a way so that at least some

of these are configured as double periods – that is, two 40-minute periods of maths or English in a row. As for the teachers' time-tables, these can vary. Some of the teachers at Rural School 1 have only one free period across the whole week, while four free periods across the week seemed to be more common. While school gets out by 2pm, this can still be a tiring, hectic schedule for teachers, as they are running from class to class until then. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that I heard general complaints of teachers "absenting themselves" from a period here and there – even more so, apparently, from "non-promotional" subjects, subjects which are not included in grade seven examinations (though only one principal referred to this directly as a problem he experienced in his school).

Because there is no time between periods, this also means that teachers would need to have all lesson plans and materials for the whole morning, until break, pre-prepared and ready to go. When they need to go back to the office to drop off or pick up materials, this takes away even more time from a given period. Because there are usually not enough English or mathematics books for a whole class, this also means that teachers may have to retrieve books that another teacher has been using – and plan carefully to make sure that the books are not already in use during the time they wanted to use them.

Each of the three principals in this study teaches one promotional subject and one or more non-promotional subjects, which is supposed to total less than ten periods per week. One principal explained to me that, because she teaches a few classes, she is able to give some of her teachers an extra free period or two. Teachers are expected to stay at school for at least an hour after the school day has ended, according to policy. From

informal interviews and observations, however, it appears that this policy isn't always followed.

Other Responsibilities

In addition to their subject teaching responsibilities, teachers may have various other responsibilities at the school. They may be members of various school committees, including the school management committee or the school board. They may facilitate extra-curricular activities, coaching one of the school's sports teams or helping with other after-school activities, like the "Window of Hope" after-school program targeting HIV/AIDS education. Teachers are also expected to attend periodic staff meetings at the school, during which the principal may pass on information he received from the inspector or at a cluster meeting, and they may discuss upcoming events or any problems or school-level issues[39]. They also take turns monitoring the afternoon study period, which non-boarding schools hold a few days a week for the learners in the upper grades.

At each school one or more teachers are designated the Heads of Department (HODs) for particular subjects. These teachers are considered the subject leaders for the designated subject(s), which usually involves additional training commitments and convening periodic meetings of teachers in that subject, as well as assisting the principal in monitoring and evaluation activities. The HODs are generally considered part of school management and often function as deputy principals. One of the teachers in the study was also a Head of Department: Loide, the mathematics teacher at Town School

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[39] One of the schools I visited happened to hold their monthly staff meeting that week, so I sat in. In addition to the principal sharing information from the inspector, one of the teachers shared information he had received from a recent workshop on School Counseling (since there are no teachers trained specifically in school counseling, a teacher is assigned this duty), and they discussed an upcoming retirement celebration for a teacher who had taught at the school for many decades.

was also the HOD for languages at that school (her primary subject being the local language).

Teaching Resources / Facilities

I have mentioned that there were not a sufficient number of textbooks for all the classes. This lack of textbooks represents just one aspect of the resource problem with which teachers contend. Other teaching aids, such as basic items like rulers and paper for photocopying, are also in short supply, which causes a lot of frustration among teachers. Classroom facilities can also be challenging. The chalkboards in some of the classes were less than ideal – some are cracked, some are apparently old or weathered such that the writing can no longer be seen clearly. The board in one of the corrugated tin classrooms in Rural School 2 is small and sits on top of a desk, leaning against one of the walls. While a few of the classrooms have bulletin boards, it was rare to see a classroom with posters or displays, save a class time-table and possibly class duties or rules. The teachers generally told me that such materials left in the classroom would be stolen or vandalized, and so they only brought such materials with them when they came in to teach.

Some of the teachers have found ways to contend with this resource problem by being creative and planning ahead. Charles takes advantage of a free educational newspaper that comes to the school – having students share it in his class as part of his lesson – while some of the other teachers in his school overlook its utility as a teaching tool. A few of the teachers prepare exercises or notes ahead of time on poster board or flip-chart paper and bring this into the class with them so that they do not have to spend

time in class writing these on the board. Of course, they must be selective in doing this, since the supply of poster-board and flip-chart paper is not limitless either. It does not appear that the teacher-made materials and displays are shared between teachers.

Instruction - Some Impressions

I was able to observe all but the two mathematics teachers at Town School during the course of the time I was at the three schools. I was able to observe each teacher between one and three times, resulting in observation notes from a total of six English lessons and six mathematics lessons. These observations provided material on which to base post-observation interviews with teachers, gave me a sense for the teaching context in which they taught, and provided some insight for better understanding connections between teachers' thinking and practice. I want to emphasize, however, that I do not use these observations to make evaluative statements about individual teachers, or to try to assign them a ranking or grade in regards to their use of learner-centred teaching. In my opinion, this type of analysis would demand many more observations over a much longer period of time, with thought to the day of the week, time of day, topic covered, and so forth.

Instead, what I will present here is a descriptive account of general impressions that I had regarding the lessons. Rather than try to describe a "typical" lesson, however, I will try to describe/explain various elements of the lessons – particularly the commonalities between teachers and the things that made them unique. This can help to

fill out the picture I have been trying to draw of the teaching context, and will also compliment the ideas shared by teachers in later chapters.

Mathematics Lessons

There were a number of ways in which the mathematics lessons I observed were similar to one another. Overall, the focus of the lessons I observed was generally procedural rather than conceptual, focusing on how to do the problems. In a lesson on adding and subtracting decimal numbers, for example, the teacher began by reviewing place value of whole numbers, but she did not draw a connection between whole number place value and decimal place value, and then to a conceptual understanding of why you need to line up the decimals when you are adding or subtracting. The teacher may discuss this in another lesson, but if not, lining up the decimals would become one of the steps that learners would simply have to remember when adding decimal numbers.

All of the mathematics lessons also shared a common structure, beginning with the teacher referring to the topic or lesson from the previous day – by asking a learner to recall what topic they had been working on, going over some of the homework problems, and/or by doing a brief problem or two from that previous lesson. The teacher would then present the topic for the day's lesson. In some of the lessons I observed, the teacher attempted to call on learners' knowledge of, or related to, the topic when presenting it. For example, one teacher asked the class, "What does the word 'comparing' mean?", while another asked if anyone knew what "perimeter" means. The teachers then modeled the type of problem on which they were focusing – spending more time on this than on lecturing or explaining the topic. Once the teacher had modeled a few example problems, he or she would give "class-work" – practice problems for the learners to work on –

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usually individually, but sometimes in pairs. Some of the teachers went over the class-

work problems with the whole class afterwards, while others marked the learners books

as they finished or collected them to mark later.

This class structure is a very familiar one, as it is commonly used in maths classes

in many different countries[40], and focusing on procedural rather than conceptual

understanding is also fairly common (and often criticized)[41]. After I had seen this

structure in a few classes, I asked one of the teachers about it – how I had noticed that all

of the maths[42] classes had this structure – and the teacher told me that that was how they

were supposed to do it, that was how they had been trained to teach maths classes. This

is also in line with the structure described in the Broad Curriculum (though the use of

groups was largely absent in the lessons I observed):

> In overlarge classes, teaching and learning can be made more effective through
> more extensive use of peer-group teaching, where learners are divided into
> permanent mixed-ability basis groups (home groups/family groups) of e.g. 6-8 per
> group. After teacher presentation of a new topic, learners follow up in their basis
> groups, with the teacher being free to support and facilitate, and to assist those
> learners who are in need of remedial or compensatory teaching.

While the structure and the procedural focus of the maths lessons were quite

similar, there were a number of individual differences between teachers, many of which

were discussed during the post-observation interviews. All the teachers included some

learner participation, though the quantity and form of this participation varied. All of the

teachers included portions of their lesson where they worked a problem on the board

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[40] See Jones and Bhalwankar (1990) for a discussion of this. They refer to this teaching model as
Expository, while it is also similar to the *Direct Instruction* model discussed by Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun
(2000).
[41] For example, the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1991) in the
US emphasizes a need to move from the typical procedural emphasis to a focus on conceptual
understanding.
[42] The shortened form for mathematics in Namibia is "maths" – these will be used interchangeably
throughout this dissertation.

while having learners tell them the next step, or the answer to the next step, particularly during the modeling portion of the lesson. One of the teachers also called learners up to the board to work some example problems and did the same when they were going over their classwork; she had these learners talk through their work for the class, explaining how they had worked through the problem. Another teacher also had her learners talk through their work, but she wrote on the board while they explained what they had done from their seats. A third teacher involved learners in an example when she was introducing the topic of comparing fractions; she brought two learners to the front of the class and asked who was taller and who was shorter and then drew an analogy with using "greater than" and "less than". When going over homework problems, however, that teacher worked the problems out with no learner input, mentioning that she wanted to do it quickly. She called on learners to give answers when she was working out problems on the board, but she didn't call on any learners to explain their work.

The ways in which teachers used teaching aids and/or connected the lesson to real-life varied as well. The majority of time the lessons focused on doing example or practice problems on the chalkboard or on paper, but some of the lessons did involve teaching aids or connections to real-life. As mentioned above, one of the teachers used the learners when discussing comparing. This teacher also used the learners as part of a word problem she presented when working on multiplication with fractions. Another teacher was giving a lesson on perimeter, and she brought rulers for the learners to use (though they had difficulty using them). She also had a group of learners find the measurements of the chalkboard as part of one of the example problems.

English Lessons

In contrast to the mathematics lessons, the English lessons did not share a clear

common structure. While all the teachers began by telling the learners what they were

going to be doing that day, and some lessons and/or portions of lessons followed this

modeling-practice structure, the overall structure of lessons was not as uniform. This

may be connected to the English syllabus where, as one teacher explained to me:

> . . . In English we are having five skills – like writing, speaking, listening,
> language usage. So, because each skill, they always say it should be used once in
> a week. So all of them, it's like you divide them, although you can . . . in one
> lesson, in a speaking lesson, you integrate all of them . . . so like, the one that I
> taught . . . yesterday, it was a speaking lesson. So, today, if I still want to
> continue with that topic I'll . . . maybe I'll put a reading lesson so that they can
> read more about the topic so that they can understand it[43].

Two of the lessons I observed, at Town School and Rural School 1, were what I

would consider straight grammar exercises. Their lessons followed a structure similar to

the mathematics lessons, where they introduced the grammar topic they were working on

that day, did some sample items, and then passed out photocopied exercises that followed

the same style as the examples. They asked the learners to work on these either

individually or in pairs. In one of these lessons the teacher asked the learners to write

their answers on the board when they had all finished, while the other teacher collected

and marked their papers but didn't go through the answers.

The other English lessons, particularly those I observed at Rural School 2, did not

follow as much of a regular structure – even across the two lessons I observed for each

teacher. One of the teachers focused on the past tense over the course of the two lessons

I observed through a series of teacher-led activities that involved speaking, reading, and

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[43] The syllabus does not specifically mention using each skill once a week. It does enumerate the five skills
and advocates integrating them, creating a "natural flow" from one to another (Ministry of Basic Education
and Culture, 2000).

listening. During his first lesson, he started by having the learners use the past tense to describe something they had done over the weekend. He then had them do a structured grammar exercise using the past tense. The following day, he read them a story that used many past tense verbs and then had them pick those verbs out of the story. The teacher tried to have the learners work in pairs and small groups a few times – asking them to talk about their weekends in pairs for example – but when they were reticent, he ended up doing the activities as a whole class (they did identify the verbs in the story in groups, however – they had to, since there were only eight books).

The other teacher at Rural School 2 also had a series of activities over the course of the two lessons I observed, but they did not have as clear of a connected focus. In the first lesson, he began by displaying a picture of animals on a savannah and asked students to describe what they saw – an activity done as a whole class. He would correct them and encourage them to correct each other, on structure and grammar as they answered. He listed some of the common mistakes he had heard on the board afterwards and discussed those. He then brought out a teaching aid he had made: two tins connected by a string, which he presented as a telephone. He instructed the learners as to the information that they should try to share with each other and then had pairs talk with each other on the "phone" while the others watched. In the next lesson, he introduced the idea of "scanning" and then brought out some student newspapers. He instructed the learners to work in small groups (there were two to three learners per paper) to scan an article in the paper in order to answer questions that he presented on the board. After they had finished, he called on students to give the correct answers and explain where they found them. He then went through the process again with a new article in the paper. The level

of English this teacher targeted was clearly a lower level than the other teacher at Rural School 2, and he seemed to have an easier time getting the learners to participate actively.

Overall Impressions

While there are obviously many differences between the English and mathematics lessons, and I have pointed out some differences within each of these subjects, there were still some overall impressions that were salient to me.

There seemed to be a common trend, seen in a number of the lessons, for the teacher to mark learner exercise books during the class. While the teachers would usually begin marking books while learners were working, they might continue marking even when all the learners were finished. As a result, I observed a number of lessons where learners spent time sitting and waiting for the teachers to finish marking their books. I asked one of the teachers about this informally, and she said that this was for continuous assessment. From other conversations, I got the sense that this meant both in terms of the teacher getting a sense of how the learners were doing, but also of making sure they had "continuous assessment" marks entered in their grade books. Some teachers also mentioned that learners' exercise books were looked at as part of monitoring by the HOD and/or principal to make sure learners were given work and that teachers marked it. The same teacher that had explained why she marked the books in class also mentioned that she had so many classes that it would have been unfeasible to try to collect them all and mark them after school[44], but she did not comment on the resultant off-task time of the learners (not to mention potential behavior problems that this could cause).

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[44] I have to say that I couldn't help but sympathize with this statement – figuring out how to review the work of all my learners was a great challenge for me when I was teaching in Namibia.

While there was some use, and variation, of grouping, the majority of time was spent in whole class instruction. This whole class instruction was not, however, a lecture format, with the learners sitting quietly and passively listening to the teacher. At minimum, learners were called on to give an answer that was procedural or memory-based, while the teacher modeled on the board. But, there were also examples where learners were called on to give more conceptual answers, and there were many examples where the learners were called on to explain their own work or show their work to the class. In many of the lessons, learners were encouraged to correct each other's work, though some teachers emphasized the importance of correcting in a supportive way, while others simply asked the class whether the learner was right or wrong.

There were also a number of examples of the use of teaching aids and other ways of connecting the lesson to real-life contexts: using a student newspaper, asking learners to talk about what they did over the weekend, asking them to measure the chalkboard, even physically using learners in examples. Such examples, though, certainly didn't appear in every lesson.

What is most striking, perhaps, is that, while very few lessons exhibited all of the strategies discussed – learner participation, drawing connections to real-life, using teacher aids – almost every lesson had an example of at least one. In other words, while I still saw many examples of "traditional" teaching, almost every lesson I observed included at least some approach or strategy that might seem innovative in comparison with the traditional model of lecture and rote memorization. This is a topic that will carry through some of the discussions in the following chapters, and to which I will return in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 6: PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

In the next three chapters, I will present data and findings from the three central foci of my research questions: the beliefs teachers and policy espouse concerning the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching. I explored each of these areas in my analysis by examining interviews and focus groups with teachers and principals, as well as examining the two primary policy documents I had identified: *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992) (*TEFA*) and the *Pilot Curriculum Guide for Basic Education* (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 1996) (*Broad Curriculum*). In the next three chapters, then, I will take each of the areas in turn, beginning here with the purpose of education.

In presenting the beliefs that were espoused concerning the purpose of education, I will present an overview of the various themes that arose in my examination of both teachers ideas and policy documents, thus creating a picture of the ways in which this topic is depicted in the Namibian context overall. As I introduce and discuss each theme, I will point to variations and the ways in which teachers differ from or are in sync with policy. This comparison, however, will be most directly discussed in the discussion section, where I will look across teachers and policy documents to highlight trends and make comparisons.

I identified five themes in relation to the purposes of education through my analysis of interviews and the two primary policy documents I reviewed. I then created categories in which to group these themes, simply as a way to better understand and present them. The themes fall in two main categories, or levels at which the purposes of

education are considered: The *personal/family level*, and the *community/national level*.

The personal/family level includes the three themes that relate to the purposes for or

benefits of education for individuals and their close family members: education for

personal economic advancement, education for

everyday utility, and education for *personal*

development. The community/national level

includes the two themes that relate to those

educational purposes and benefits at the

community or national level: *economic*

development and *social development*. These

themes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Purpose of Education
• *Personal/Family*
○ Economic Advancement
○ Everyday Utility
○ Personal Development
• *Community/National*
○ Economic Development
○ Social Development

In this chapter, I expand on each of these themes within each of these categories, to

portray the various ideas concerning the purposes of education that are expressed by

teachers and in policy. While I am using discrete categories, I will show how the

descriptions and discussions of teachers are actually quite fluid and overlapping.

Personal/Family

When discussing the purposes of education, three main themes emerged

concerning the outcomes or benefits of education at the personal/family level: *Personal*

economic advancement, *everyday utility*, and *personal development*. Neither the teachers

nor the policy documents separated these into three neat categories, but spoke about them

in a more fluid manner. Personal economic benefits and everyday utility in particular

seemed to be linked, often being mentioned by teachers together in the same sentence or

right after each other. Similary policy documents do not always present these as distinct

and separate, often discussing them together. As the *Broad Curriculum* states: "The

outcome of Basic Education as a whole should be that every learner becomes a competent

and productive member of society, performing well in all spheres of life: private life,

public life, work, and further learning" (p. 10).

Personal Economic Advancement
"If they cannot even manage to have a solid education, you cannot get a job".
(Teopo, Town School)

Both teachers and policy documents discussed the ways in which education

should help individuals and their families to advance economically, whether this means

to enable them to find a job or to prepare them to find alternative forms of employment,

including entrepreneurship. I will discuss these ideas about personal economic

advancement here, beginning with the teachers and then turning to policy.

Teachers

The majority of the teachers seemed to concur that a solid education is necessary

for getting a job. In her interview, Teopo described the economic benefits for individuals

and their families that come from education, particularly the job it would make possible:

> *Wendi: . . . if you can tell me, in your opinion, is it important for all children to*
> *go to school? And why? If so, why?*
> Teopo (Town School): Yes, it is very much important for all children to come to
> school for their future, not to be suffering, to be a good parent, to help their
> families . . . or if they cannot even manage to have a solid education, you cannot
> get a job.
> *Wendi: Now you said, you mentioned something about being a parent. Can you*
> *talk a little bit about how school can help with that?*

Teopo: How school can help what?
Wendi: You said something about being a good parent.
Teopo: Yeah.
Wendi: How does school help with that? How does school help to prepare some student for that?
Teopo: So, if you have something to . . . if you are . . . to be a parent is something you can give your children something to eat, to buy them dress, and to go to school safe, and it means having a better house to live in.

Hilde and the principal at Rural School 2 echo this perspective:

Hilde (Rural School 1): Yeah, those things are very, very important because children – the children cannot stay without knowing how to read and write because, she or he cannot get jobs. That is the main point.

Principal (Rural School 2): The more you read, the easy life you will have. And mainly in Namibia . . . if you don't have a diploma or a degree, you will not get a chance for employment as well. Yeah, you will not get it.

Justina further explains that education can help you find some form of income even if

you are not able to find a job in the formal sector, perhaps by following a more

entrepreneurial approach:

Justina (Rural School 1): Because if you look in our community, people who are not educated, who did not attend the school, they are suffering a lot. Cause some of them you can just find them in the cuca shops there, in the bars there, drinking our traditional liquor which we call otombo. Then, I think that one is not good for them. It's better if they attend the school, then they can, if they didn't get any job, maybe from the government, they can look for their new project and whatsoever.
Wendi: Because they have gone to school?
Justina: Mmm hmm (yes). They can come up with some ideas.

Aune further supports this idea that, even if one is not able to go for further studies, an

education can help in securing employment in the informal sector – that at least a basic

education may be necessary for even lower level jobs:

Aune (Town School): Because not all of us can have completed the school to go to the better education, but the best one, maybe you pass grade 10, you can get a job for the cleaning in the houses or what, something like that. But, by myself I won't accept somebody to work for me if he don't know how to prepare the milk for my baby at home, or maybe she don't know how to clean it properly the

house. Because, once you don't know how to read, you are far behind in many things. Yeah.

<u>Policy</u>

At the policy/ministerial level there is explicit discussion of the personal economic purpose of education, stressing both the formal sector and entrepreneurship. The goals of basic education listed in both *Toward Education for All* and the *Broad Curriculum* include goals directly pertaining to this purpose (see Appendix B for the full list of goals):

- provide knowledge, understanding and values, and develop creativity and practical skills, as a solid foundation for academic or vocational training, and for a creative, meaningful and productive adult life;
- encourage perseverance, reliability, accountability, and respect for the value and dignity of work; (*TEFA*, p. 55 and *Broad Curriculum*, p. 4)

Like teachers, policy frames education as building a solid foundation for work. *Toward Education for All* explains, under a section on vocational education and training:

Our education system has two sorts of responsibilities in preparing Namibians for the world of work. First, our Basic Education programmes must build a broad and solid foundation. Young and old people alike will be most successful in finding and creating jobs if they read, write, and handle numbers well. Their pre-vocational preparation will be even stronger if it enables learners to become skilled at identifying and solving problems, analyzing situations and drawing on their knowledge to synthesise solutions, and applying what they know to new settings. (p. 88)

Much of the text in *Toward Education for All* that is oriented towards this personal economic purpose stresses the fact that education is not a panacea for economic, or employment, problems. As did some teachers, the policy document emphasizes the importance of individuals being prepared to find alternatives to formal-sector employment, or to be prepared to become entrepreneurs – likely a reflection of the realities of the Namibian job market. Wherever the document discusses education as

preparation for employment, it mentions both "finding" and "creating" employment. It

also argues that a strong "pre-vocational" education program at the pre-secondary levels

would ultimately meet this purpose better than a vocationally oriented program.

> A pre-vocational curriculum does not seek to equip students with the sorts of
> skills that would enable them to enter skilled employment without further
> training. Rather, its goal is to enable all students to develop an appreciation of the
> skills and attitudes appropriate to the work settings they will encounter in their
> adult lives. In that regard, it seeks to develop responsible decision making and
> problem solving relevant to work situations. It seeks as well to enable all learners
> to be effective, enterprising, and capable whatever path they follow after they
> have completed school. Its approach is a combination of theory, project work,
> and practical activity. Although production is an important element in these
> activities, the principal emphasis is on the organization and operation of the world
> of work. In sum, in adopting and implementing this understanding of a pre-
> vocational curriculum, we are not attempting to prepare learners for a specific
> trade or occupation. Rather, we are working to prepare all learners for the next
> stage in their development whatever that is and wherever that takes place – further
> study, employment, or self-employment, urban or rural, agriculture, fishing, or
> manufacturing. (*TEFA*, p. 89)

Teachers and policy documents thus espouse the belief that one significant purpose of

education is to enable the economic advancement of the individual and his/her family,

specifically to prepare her for employment, or to enable her to become an entrepreneur, in

order to provide for herself and her family. A circuit inspector I spoke with echoed this

personal/family economic theme quite eloquently:

> Inspector: In my own opinion, education is supposed to take you to a level higher
> in life than your parents have been. . . . You see, if you look now, I mean, you
> should be going to a level higher where your parents were. Like, for example, in
> my case my parents was, uh, yes he finished his standard 10, he went into a
> college and he became a principal, and so on, and so on. But let's talk now about
> the non-professional people, let's talk about rural people. If my parents were
> peasants, I cannot, the purpose for me to go to school, even to become a peasant,
> but a more productive one. It's not to say to look down everybody wants to be
> white collar professions and whatever. But to be a better, not a person but a better
> . . . uh, provider for your own family. To make your family better off. And then
> your children, if they strive then they will make their family better off. And that
> is what we call development in life. That's how I see education, to be honest.
> Yes, it's a lot of skills and values and knowledge that you gain, but at the end of

the day, the purpose should be that you must be able then to come and take care of your family, your parents, if they are still alive, your smaller brothers and sisters, and to care also for your own family. And that's how, I mean, that's survival, basically.

Everyday Utility
"Not only for job, but also in his or her whole life."
(Hilde, Rural School 1)

There seems to be a general level of agreement among the participating teachers, as well as in policy, that education has economic benefits to the individual and her/his family, that education is necessary for securing an income in the future. However, neither teachers nor policy emphasize this as the only, or even necessarily the most important, purpose for education. Right alongside economic benefits, there is an emphasis on the everyday utility afforded by a solid education – some teachers emphasizing this type of utility even more so than the path education creates toward future employment. I will begin here by presenting the ideas shared by the teachers about the everyday utility purpose of education, and then present the ideas portrayed in the policy documents.

Teachers

In the teacher interviews, the participants fluidly move from discussing purely economic benefits to more general personal benefits for everyday life. Looking more broadly at Hilde's discussion of the purposes of education, for example, displays this clearly:

> Hilde (Rural School 1):   It is important for the children to go to school because if the children cannot attend school, they cannot know how to write and how to read.
> *Wendi: And why is this important?*
> Hilde: Why?

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Wendi: Why are those things important for them to learn?
Hilde: Yeah, those things are very, very important because children – the children cannot stay without knowing how to read and write because, she or he cannot get jobs. That is the main point, or maybe . . . there is a certain, maybe people are voting or what, she cannot know how to do like that. Yeah, those are the main, the main points. It is not only for jobs, but anyway, even when you go to some offices, you need to say good morning, or – if she or he needs something signed? She or he will know how to do – that is the main.
Wendi: So, not just in the job, but outside of the job?
Hilde: Yeah, outside. Maybe, let me give you an example, like the election. Maybe people are going to vote – if a certain – if that person doesn't know how to write or to, yeah, she cannot do anything.
Wendi: Just going in the thing to push her, to vote, she won't know . . .
Hilde: Yeah, not only for job, but also in his or her whole life. Or maybe he or she is at a certain meeting, people can sign something, but she or he cannot do anything. Yeah, that's why she needs to go to school to know some skills, yeah.

Justina and Aune, both quoted earlier discussing the economic/employment purpose of

education, similarly speak of this purpose together with a more everyday utility purpose:

Justina (Rural School 1): . . . If somebody did not attend the school, he's just like somebody's who's three years old – because he needs to get something from the school, from the books. Like, for instance I can give you an example of the social studies subject. That is something which is teaching a learner about all the new things which are coming up in the country or in the nation.
Wendi: And why is that important?
Justina: . . . Okay, it's important because, for instance, you want some assistance from the government, or from a certain company, he knows how to put something in the paper, but if he didn't attend the school, only maybe the letters which he cannot even read.

Wendi: . . . Do you think it is important for all students to go to school . . . for all children to go to school?
Aune (Town School): Yeah, it is important. Because whether you don't want to become a teacher or a doctor, you know how to read the information. You get all the information you need on something you want to do. You're able to read, like now we have the . . . Polio – you know the thing, or you can read from the newspaper how to find the symptoms of the Polio. You can read, once you get it you can, oh maybe I have Polio because my neck is stiffness, or I have a . . . or I have a pain in my head. Therefore, everybody needs to go to school. So that they can know how to read, and also they can get the basic skills. Because not all of us can have completed the school to go to the better education, but the best one, maybe you pass grade 10, you can get a job for the cleaning in the houses or what, something like that. But, by myself I won't accept somebody to work for me if he don't know how to prepare the milk for my baby at home, or maybe she don't

know how to clean it properly the house. Because, once you don't know how to read, you are far behind in many things.

This notion of being able to find information on your own, and an important purpose of school being to prepare you to be able to do that, appeared to resonate with a number of the teachers, as did a notion that you don't know what the future holds, so education can help you to prepare for any possibility. The following are additional examples from two of the teachers and one of the principals:

Wendi: . . . why, in your opinion, why is it important, or is it important for all children to go to school?
Aune (Town School): Yes, I think it's important so that they will be able to learn how to read and write.
Wendi: And why do they need that?
Aune: Why do they need to read and write?
Wendi: Yeah.
Aune: So that they will be able to discover some information on their own, like reading newspapers, . . . Also able to learn the official language, which is used almost worldwide.

Charles (Rural School 2): . . . It's very important for children to go to school, because they cannot just learn from themselves, or from their parents, because they need to know how to read, how to write, how to speak, because they don't know where they are going to find themselves, few years to come . .. because life changes every day, so if a person does not know how to write, how is he going to communicate with the other people. Or if a person does not know how to speak even, especially the official language is English. How can a person survive here, even here in Namibia, it's very difficult for a person just to be using one language, so he has to learn. So like, even me – if I could only know our language there, how was I going to be here?
W: Right, right.
Charles: It was going to be a very difficult thing.
W: Even if you didn't know that you are going to be somebody teaching at this school called Rural School 2.
Charles: Yeah, because even also, the children some years to come also, the time they are learning, they are going to be . . . how can I put it? Now, it's like something that is, they are going to find themselves at a place where there's only, not it's like their area. In geography, we use them as push factors. Where they stay, they are going to find that there's something now that is not, it's unattractive so to say. So they want to go somewhere . . . so, it's going to be very difficult for them, so that is why they need to learn, at least they should learn even how to

speak the language, or how to write, so that they can communicate with others in future . . .in some years to come.

Principal (Rural School 2): . . . what is schooling, or education is very important, is now because, if you are not well educated, I hope you can facing a problem . . .your future will be in problem. Simply because many things now are going to become computerized, and mostly information going to be put in computer, or in reading material. If you don't know how to read, you don't know how to find information somewhere, then you're going to suffer in the future. And, I hope . . . .to be educated is very much important so that, once you are study, you also, the life become easy.

<u>Policy</u>

Just as many of the teachers do not completely separate the personal economic purpose of education and the everyday utility purpose, neither do the policy documents. Among the goals of education listed in *Toward Education for All* and the *Broad Curriculum* are:

- support and stimulate learners through childhood and youth and prepare them for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life and citizenship;
- (as cited previously) develop knowledge, understanding and values, creativity and practical skills, as a solid foundation for academic or vocational training, and for a creative, meaningful and productive adult life; (*TEFA*, p. 55 and *Broad Curriculum*, p. 4)

When discussing more specific aims of education, both documents reiterate the benefits that education has for daily life. They state that "Functional Literacy and Language Development" will "develop competence in English as the official language for the purposes of education and public life" and "Functional Numeracy and Mathematical Thinking" will "help learners apply mathematics in everyday life" (*TEFA*, p. 56 and *Broad Curriculum*, p. 5). The *Broad Curriculum* further develops these areas and also describes how particular competency areas prepare individuals for public and private life. Under "Physical" education, the curriculum states:

There are three main types of learning experience in this area. The first type, which is concerned with the development of psychomotor skills, is fundamental for daily life. (p. 15)

Under "Natural Scientific":

Critical thinking, investigating phenomena, interpreting data, and applying knowledge to experimental skills are essential to understanding the value and limitations of natural scientific knowledge and methods, *and their application to daily life* [italics added]. The application of scientific knowledge and attitudes to health is of special relevance for the individual, the family, and society as a whole. (p. 16)

In sum, both teachers and policy documents clearly see everyday utility as an important purpose of education, coupled with, but beyond, the purely economic benefits for individuals that they expect education to provide.

Personal Development
"It's also part of the development of the person also, because once they are here at school they are going to develop psychologically"
(Teacher, Rural School 2)

Under personal development, I have included ideas about education developing positive attitudes and values, such as socialization, tolerance, a love for learning, and so forth. This theme of personal development as a purpose of education did not come up nearly as often as the previous two themes among the teachers, but was discussed throughout both policy documents. I will begin by presenting the ways in which teachers did discuss personal development as a purpose of education and will then turn to the policy documents.

<u>Teachers</u>

While teachers did not often mention personal development as a purpose of

education, the focus group discussion about the purposes of education that took place at

Rural School 2 did offer a few different ways education can foster personal development:

> Male Teacher (Rural School 2): . . . I wanted to say to share knowledge, skills, and even I think it's also part of the development of the person also, because once they are here at school they are going to develop psychologically. The mind is growing, and they will know how to read, write.
> *Wendi: . . . Okay, other comments on that one?*
> Female Teacher: Maybe we can also say it's to learn of different cultures also. It's also a purpose of education. You learn different cultures.
> *Wendi Learning about different cultures?*
> Female Teacher: Mmm hmm (Yes).
> Male Teacher: And you can also add, because even in history I think there's something that, like appreciation of, culture, knowledge, so they can appreciate what they have, like their own culture.
> *Wendi Okay, so you learn to appreciate your own culture at the same time you're learning about different cultures?*
> Multiple: Mmm hmm.
> *Wendi Okay. . . . other? . . . okay, they had given some, some suggestion that one of the, maybe some of the purpose of school was to learn about different cultures, and even to appreciate your own culture. So I was asking, why is, why are those important, those two things, why are they important?*
> Female Teacher: To understand one another better, because the way people are doing is not the same, so that you know how they are doing, maybe you will understand, maybe you . . .
> Male Teacher: One of the purposes of school is also to develop association, socialization among the learners and teachers. This is when a certain group of people are going to do something which they say, unity is always important when a common task is to be done. When learners are even in group, they are developing, you know, sharing of knowledge, respecting someone's ideas, mistakes, errors which have been made, correcting themselves. From there, they are getting knowledge. From this association, group discussion, something like that. Teachers are also doing the same thing.
> *Wendi: Somehow learning to work together?*
> Male Teacher: Teamwork.
> *Wendi: Teamwork. Okay . . . Any more comments on that?*
> Female Teacher: Maybe addition to that is that of you learn more things about other cultures. Like in my case also, I learn that also, kids can greet older people, what we don't usually do in our culture, so you learn to appreciate also what other people do.

One clear theme in this discussion is the role of education in socialization, specifically of

helping students to learn how to work and to be with other people, including people of

different cultures – and how to work and be with them with respect and even cooperation,

developing a recognition that you can learn from people that are different from you.

Teopo also echoed these same values in our discussion of the purposes of education

during her interview:

> *Wendi: Okay. What do you think are some of the most important things that*
> *students gain from school? The most important thing school can give them?*
> Teopo (Town School): They can give them the opportunity to know how to stay
> with others.
> *Wendi: Can you talk a little bit more about that?*
> Teopo (Town School): Yeah, how to assist the others, or how to be with
> somebody who is not coming from your own house, how can you play with them.
> *Wendi: How does school do that? Teach them that?*
> Teopo (Town School): The school teaches them that, because when they there
> they are sitting in the classroom, they are together. So, they know each other, to
> help them how to, who is the weaker and who is not the, can do something, or
> they can know how to play.

Policy

    While only some of the teachers touched on personal development as a purpose of

education, the two policy documents expounded on it. A number of the enumerated goals

speak directly to education instilling values and attitudes in learners:

- promote human rights, respect for oneself and respect for others, their cultures
  and religious beliefs;
- foster the highest moral, ethical and spiritual values such as integrity,
  responsibility, equality, and reverence for life;
- encourage perseverance, reliability, accountability, and respect for the value
  and dignity of work;
- develop literacy, numeracy, understanding of the natural and social
  environment, civic life, artistic appreciation and expression, social skills, and
  promote physical and mental health;
- foster and promote the spiritual and religious wellbeing of the learner, with
  due regard to the diversity and freedom of beliefs. (*TEFA*, p. 55 and *Broad*
  Curriculum, p. 4)

Both *Toward Education for All* and the *Broad Curriculum* iterate a number of important

values and attitudes that education should support in the development of individuals.

When providing a detailed discussion of the aims of education, the documents also

include two areas that are directly related to personal development:

> **3.4 Personal Development and Self-fulfilment**
> 3.4.1 help learners develop self-confidence, self-knowledge, self- reliance and understanding of the world in which they live, through meaningful activities;
> 3.4.2 provide for individual needs and aptitudes, within the framework of a common curriculum, including compensatory teaching at classroom level;
> 3.4.3 enable learners to obtain the knowledge and understanding, skills and competencies, and attitudes and values needed for their personal development, related to the changes in Namibian society; and
> 3.4.4 provide all learners with an equitable start to schooling through school readiness education. (TEFA, p. 56; Broad Curriculum, p. 6)
>
> **3.6 Spiritual and Ethical Development**
> 3.6.1 provide religious and moral education which will promote the spiritual, religious and moral development of the learner;
> 3.6.2 promote and foster the highest moral and ethical values; and
> 3.6.3 develop and enhance respect for, understanding, and tolerance of, other peoples, religions, beliefs, cultures and ways of life. (*TEFA*, p. 57; *Broad Curriculum*, p. 7)

In addition, even when the discussion of aims and competencies focuses on subject

content areas directly, the *Broad Curriculum* still includes more affective and value-

oriented benefits:

> **3.2 The Development of Functional Numeracy and Mathematical Thinking**
> 3.2.1 develop positive attitudes towards mathematics; (p. 5)
>
> **3.5 Health and Physical Development**
> 3.5.1 develop attitudes and practices, and further knowledge and activities which promote physical and mental health; and
> 3.5.2 promote co-operation, positive competition, sportsmanship and fair play through participation in games and sports. (p. 6)
>
> **5.2.3 Linguistic and Literary**

Linguistic and literary learning involves the acquisition and development of language communication skills. . . . It is vital to the intellectual, emotional and social development of the learner. (p. 15)

While *Toward Education for All* does not provide a detailed discussion of specific competencies, one area that it does stress is that school should develop in individuals a positive orientation toward life-long learning:

. . . the commitment to education for all recognises the value and importance of education in its own terms. Learning can and should be an intrinsically satisfying activity. It neither begins when children enter the school door nor ends when they complete their years of formal classroom instruction. Schooling itself must not destroy the excitement and satisfaction learning generates. (p. 14)

It is important to stress again that we must all understand that learning continues throughout our lives. Our educators must design and refine strategies that make that both possible and satisfying. Learning is more than accumulating little bits of information in formally designated settings during intense but relatively brief periods. For learning to be liberating, it must involve developing both a critical consciousness and a solid sense of self-confidence. For learning to be developmental - both individually and collectively - it must be encompassing and unceasing. (p. 15)

This is an orientation that couples closely with the everyday utility theme of being able to find information independently. Here though, education is seen as developing the affective component, beyond the necessary skills: developing self-confidence and even a love for learning.

Thus a positive attitude towards learning is one among a number of attitudes and values that education is seen as potentially developing and supporting in learners. When asked about the purpose of education, teachers did not spend much time, if any, discussing personal development. As I will discuss in the next chapter, however, a similar theme did arise when they discussed the role of the teacher. Policy documents more directly discuss personal development as a purpose of education, and *Toward*

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Education for All in particular highlights the importance of developing positive attitudes toward learning and an orientation toward life-long learning.

Community/National

Two main themes emerged concerning the outcomes or benefits of education at the community/national level: *Economic Development* and *Social Development*. Economic development corresponds to the contributions that education is seen as making to the economic growth and development of the country, while social development refers to the contributions education can make to non-economic forms of development, particularly as it contributes to the characteristics envisioned for a post-apartheid society – embodying the values of tolerance, unity, and democracy. As I will discuss, both of these themes, economic and social development, are mentioned by some teachers, but are discussed much more thoroughly in the two primary policy documents.

Nation-Community Economic Development

"To me you can have a bunch of educated individuals who are very much . . . um, informed of their needs, but if they don't respond to the needs of the communities where they live, to develop those communities, then education has not succeeded."
(Ministry Official)

The idea that education contributes to a country's economic growth, and thus that economic development is a fundamental purpose of education, is well known in the literature of comparative and international education (Arnove, 2005; Carnoy, 2000; Jones, P. W., 2000). This idea was stressed by both primary policy documents as well as ministry officials, but was rarely mentioned by the teachers. Still, some teachers did

touch on this theme, and I will begin by discussing their ideas, followed by a presentation

of the way the theme was represented in the policy documents.

Teachers

While some of the teachers do mention a purpose of education to be contributing

to the development of the community and/or country, they usually discuss ideas of

development that are non-economic, or more social (and are discussed in the next

section). One teacher, Titus, and the principal in the same school (Rural School 1) come

closest to describing an economic growth oriented purpose of education:

> Titus: . . . If all come to school they get knowledge, and they get more skills and
> develop our country.
> *Wendi Okay, how does school help in . . . I guess I want to understand better*
> *how is coming school to get knowledge going to help to develop the country.*
> Titus: Yes.
> *Wendi: Can you talk more – how, how is it?*
> Titus: Yeah. Some of them – they'll become as teachers, they will become as a
> farmer, they'll become as a . . . yeah, and they'll become as a policeman or
> woman, and they'll become a soldier, they become as . .. working also in the
> company, because they have a knowledge. For example in the bank, in the . . .
> many . ..
> *Wendi And they must go to school for?*
> Titus: For all of this. Mmm hmm.
> *Wendi What does the school – what are the most important things that they are*
> *getting from the school? To help in the future?*
> Titus: Uh, to . .. as well as to become as the teacher, they're building up our
> houses, our schools, etc. etc.
>
> *Wendi: . . . what do you think is the purpose of school?*
> Principal (Rural School 1): The purpose of school is to educate the learners, to
> create them so that they can become a useful citizen in the community, so that our
> country can have educated people.
> *Wendi So how, what does it mean to be a useful citizen in the community?*
> Principal: useful means that we can get a doctor, we can get a . . . a president
> from them, pilots, and so on . . . they can work in the community in our country,
> the whole of them . . can be given to the one who is educated. Policeman and so
> on, because those who are not useful, they are only sitting in their home, they are
> only maybe doing nothing and so on. They are waiting only to stay in bed, and so
> on.

Both of these participants describe one of the purposes of education as being to ensure that the various workforce needs of the community or country are met, that there are qualified individuals available for the range of jobs necessary for the society to function.

Policy

Perhaps not surprisingly, the policy documents speak more explicitly about an economic development purpose of education. Once again, the iterated goals of education include this purpose:

- lay a foundation for the development of human resources and economic growth of the nation. (*TEFA*, p. 55 and *Broad Curriculum*, p. 4)

In its Preamble, *Toward Education for All* states:

Expanding access to education increases productivity and economic growth. Education has come to be understood as an investment in human capital. Extending and improving education promotes development. (p. 3)

And further on, in the Introduction:

Spending on education can have a major development payoff. Sometimes the benefit is direct and rapid. Agricultural productivity may increase, for example, when better educated farmers learn new techniques more easily or adopt methods that they have read have been used successfully by other farmers. Sometimes the benefit is less direct and may not be visible for some time. Better educated mothers, for example, are more likely to attend ante-natal clinics and thereby reduce infant and maternal mortality. Whether the payoffs are direct or indirect, both the individuals who have furthered their education and the society at large benefit. (p. 18)

And, when discussing the aims of education, both *Toward Education for All* and the *Broad Curriculum* further develop the goal mentioned above, describing the "vocational orientation and economic development aim":

- vocational orientation and economic development
  - to foster the learner's awareness of the local, regional and national needs of Namibia, and to contribute towards development

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- to equip learners to play an effective and productive role in the economic life of the nation, and
- to promote positive attitudes toward the challenges of cooperation, work, entrepreneurship and self-employment (p. 57)

At the same time that *Toward Education for All* emphasizes that an important purpose of education is to contribute to economic development, it also stresses that, as mentioned before, education is not a universal cure for economic problems:

> Education promotes development and thereby contributes to creating jobs and expanding employment opportunities. But for the most part, it does so indirectly by building a foundation of understanding, analytic skills, and general expertise. It is not school-based vocational training but high quality general education and the development of life skills and exposure to practical subjects – pre-vocational preparation – that help people find and create employment. (p. 63)

> Schools and other education programmes do have a role to play in reducing unemployment and its frustrations, but they cannot themselves solve the basic problems of the economy. To expect them to do so is to frustrate ourselves, and our young people, even further. (p. 63)

Such cautionary passages give the sense that, while the policy documents identify economic development as a purpose of education, they recognize the possible limitations, and they certainly don't hold it as the single most important purpose.

Nation/Community Social Development
"The school is also helping the learner by providing some of the material that they can use, especially for the learner to know, to read. And, other things so that they can help in their, in the community."
(Focus Group, Rural School 1)

Some teachers and both policy documents discuss the ways in which education can contribute to community, or national, social development in terms of building the kind of society viewed as desirable. Again, as with economic development, the policy documents discuss this theme much more than the teachers do.   Here again, I will begin

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by presenting the theme as expressed by teachers, and then discuss how the policy documents discuss social development as an important purpose of education.

<u>Teachers</u>

Moving beyond a purely economic view of development, some teachers point to a purpose of education that contributes to development on a more general level, or different forms of development. This includes a notion of education contributing towards building the kind of nation that Namibia would like to be (in the view of the teachers speaking). Charles and Peter, both at Rural School 2, speak of the role education plays in the desire for Namibia to be competitive, to be at a level comparable with other countries, but not just in terms of the economy:

> Charles (Rural School 2): Yeah, because even also, the children some years to come also, the time they are learning, they are going to be . . . how can I put it? Now, it's like something that is, they are going to find themselves at a place where there's only, not it's like their area. In geography, we use them as push factors. Where they stay, they are going to find that there's something now that is not, it's unattractive so to say. So they want to go somewhere . . . so, it's going to be very difficult for them, so that is why they need to learn, at least they should learn even how to speak the language, or how to write, so that they can communicate with others in future . . .in some years to come . . . So that, even also, even our nation also can become . .. so some people can say, no, this is an educated nation.

> Peter (Rural School 2): Mmm, uh . .. in the first place, we have to think about balance in development of any kind. First point should be balance in the development of any kind for a human being. A learner is also a human being. School came to be known when people are being educated, which is, you know, which is very important for people to be upgraded, by the time the government sets school, it's formal schools, whereby people have to taught to be equal, to be at the standard with other people in the world . . . So schools have to be installed, they have to be built to, you know, to equip people *so that they will be at the same standards in the world* [italics added] . . . Yeah, for example, the education should be equal, which is in Africa, to the other continents of the world.

Peter goes on to give further details, explaining how education can and should work against discrimination, and should give opportunities to all individuals to reach their potential:

> Peter (Rural School 2): Yeah. I think that point is too general. Coming back to, you know, digest the point, some particulars . . . Is when we are talking about, uh, you know, destroying, or abolish, you know, discrimination between the learners who are from the well-being families and also learners who are from, you know, not well-being family, or poor family . . . So, if the school is there. All the learners who are going there are going to be taught in the same way without being discriminated them according to the economical status, or to the social status, or political status, based on the political party, according to their mothers or fathers. So, education can balance also our learners in the same, you know, standard, when it comes to those things I have mentioned. Yeah. There also is very simple learners who come at school to be told how to read and write.

This theme of the social development purpose also links back to the themes of personal development and every-day utility, as education can help to develop the kind of country Namibians seek to live in by developing the kind of citizens that such a country would need – citizens who are tolerant and respectful of differences, citizens who are able and desire to continue learning, citizens who wish and are able to participate actively in a democracy. Most of the teachers, however, don't frame it in this way, instead focusing on the benefits of education for the individual and their families.

Policy

While only a few teachers mention education for social, or other non-economic forms, of development, this theme is heavily stressed in the two policy documents. Within the goals iterated in *Toward education for all* and the *Broad Curriculum*, the purpose of education as contributing to social development, building a society of shared values, is clear:

– promote national unity, liberty, justice and democracy

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> – extend national unity to promote regional, African and international understanding, cooperation and peace; (*TEFA*, p. 55 and *Broad Curriculum*, p. 4)

Looking at the more detailed "aims" discussed in both documents further highlights this

theme:

> ### 3.7 Social and Cultural Development
> 3.7.1 promote democratic principles and practices at school level in the educational system, and in civic life;
> 3.7.2 develop the learner's social responsibility towards other individuals, family life, the community and the nation as a whole;
> 3.7.3 promote equality of opportunity for males and females, enabling both sexes to participate equally and fully in all spheres of society and all fields of employment;
> 3.7.4 enable the learners to contribute to the development of culture in Namibia; and
> 3.7.5 promote wider inter-cultural understanding.
>
> ### 3.8 National Unity, International Understanding and Political Development
> 3.8.1 foster unity, national identity and loyalty to Namibia and its Constitution;
> 3.8.2 promote awareness of the place and role Namibia has within the region, and its relationship to neighbouring countries; and
> 3.8.3 further understanding and appreciation of the interdependence of peoples and nations for peace in the world. (*TEFA*, p. 57 and *Broad Curriculum*, p. 7-8)

Toward Education for All emphasizes social forms of development, including specifically

stressing that the development to which education contributes goes well beyond

economic measures:

> 56. Indeed, beyond its contribution to economic growth, education is also an investment in improving the quality of our lives. Improved health for mothers and young children is one example. Another is enhanced communication. Great distances separate one part of our population from another. That we speak different languages and had different experiences prior to our independence tends to separate us even more. Literacy facilitates communication. Education, especially in the national language, enables that communication to flourish. The distances between us become less important. We can share in the joys of our fellow citizens far away, or learn of their problems and take action to help them out. We can find out about the problems we all face, like drought or AIDS, and learn what to do about them. (p. 18)

57. Education also improves the quality of our lives by helping us develop our abilities. As we learn more about our environment and the threats to it, we become better able to protect and preserve it. As we become better at identifying and solving problems, we also become better at creating jobs and increasing our income. As we develop our own new ideas and technologies, we become less dependent on imported innovations and the conditions that often accompany them. As it helps us become more successful in setting and pursuing our own goals, education is liberating, both individually and socially. (p. 19)

As these passages indicate, the policy documents hold education as a key to creating the kind of nation the Namibians (or at least the policy-makers) envision. The documents give a number of quite specific national characteristics that education is intended to foster at the national level. As mentioned previously, these policies also indicate that part of the way education helps to develop these national characteristics is by developing them, through values in particular, in individuals.

Some of the values that are sought on a national level, and thus assigned to education to foster, include tolerance and respect for others:

> Learning about moral and ethical problems helps to develop moral convictions and attitudes. The school should foster respect for the feelings and views of others, and show that problems can and should be solved in a rational and empathetic manner. The school system should foster a culture of tolerance, where the rights of others are respected and promoted. (*Broad Curriculum*, p. 15)

As well as democracy – the building of a democratic nation and, at the individual level, a valuing of and preparedness for participating in democracy:

> Learner-centred education belongs in a democratic society. There must be consistency between the approaches to teaching and learning and the social life of the school through the promotion of democratic participation at all levels. Learners must be encouraged to be active in the SRC and other formal structures, and must be supported in taking increasing responsibility for running their own affairs. It is important for learners to understand that democracy involves responsible attitudes and behaviour, and accountability to those who are in charge of the school. (*Broad Curriculum*, p. 31)

> Our commitment to education for all supports, and in turn is supported by, our commitment to building a democratic society. Literate citizens are better able to understand the issues that confront us and the alternatives that we must consider.

We can consider different points of view and make educated decisions. Education for all will make it possible for all citizens to be active participants, not just voters, in governing our country. (*TEFA*, p. 15)

Our learners must study how democratic societies operate and the obligations and rights of their citizens. Our learners must understand that democracy means more than voting. Malnutrition, economic inequality, and illiteracy can be obstacles to democracy that are far more powerful than barriers to participating in elections. Our learners must also understand that they cannot simply receive democracy from those who rule their society. Instead, they must build, nurture, and protect it. And they must learn they can never take it for granted. (*TEFA*, p. 41)

Just as education is a foundation for development, so is it a foundation for democracy. Building those foundations must be a conscious process in which all learners are engaged. (*TEFA*, p. 42)

Sustainable development and environmental awareness:

- development of environmental awareness
    - to develop a holistic understanding of the dynamic interdependence of all living things and their environment
    - to develop a sense of responsibility toward restoring and maintaining ecological balances through the sustainable management of natural resources, and
    - to promote involvement in practical activities to preserve and sustain the natural environment (*TEFA*, p. 58)

And equity and fairness – one of the goals of basic education is to "promote maximal development of the individual learner's potential, including those with special learning needs" (*TEFA*, p. 55; *Broad Curriculum*, 4). Toward Education for All also includes a section specifically on gender equity, which includes the following:

Ensuring access, equal opportunity, and equity for girls in our education is not simply a utilitarian issue. Achieving those objectives is fundamental to the sort of society we are building. (*TEFA*, p. 134)

Discussion

In this chapter I have presented the various themes that I identified when looking at how teachers spoke about the purposes of education and when examining policy documents: Personal economic advancement; Personal Everyday utility; Personal development; Community/national economic development; and Community/national social development. This gives an overall picture of the ways in which the purposes of education are discussed in the Namibian context. Once I had explored and developed this overall picture, I looked across the teachers and the policy documents, to develop a better sense for which themes were more significant for teachers versus the policy/ministry level, and vice versa[45]. In this concluding section, I will discuss two observations I was able to make by doing this: the emphasis by teachers on the personal/family level and by policy on the national level, and the fact that teachers collectively, but idiosyncratically, represented almost all of the ideas espoused in the policy documents.

Looking across the participating teachers, it is clear that they mentioned personal/family level themes for the purpose of education more often than community/national level themes. Personal Economic and Everyday Utility purposes were the most popular – all of the teachers mentioned at least one of these, and five of the nine teachers discussed both of them. This gives the sense that the teachers I spoke to, when discussing the purpose of education, were more focused on the benefits for the individual and his/her family, than for the larger community or nation.

The policy documents, perhaps not surprisingly, give a slightly different picture. Looking at how the themes fell out across the two policy documents, the emphases on the

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[45] Using a simple matrix, as discussed in the Chapter 3.

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personal/family level and community/national level were more even. Interestingly, Economic Development on the national level was discussed least often, while there was a clear emphasis on Social Development at the national level and Personal Development at the individual level. This gives the sense that the policy-makers and policy document authors were interested in emphasizing the purpose of education as one of supporting and developing the values and characteristics among its learners that would contribute to national-level characteristics they wished to achieve. In other words, by using education to foster a democratic orientation, a respect and tolerance for differences, self-confidence and empowerment for all, they could achieve their vision for a new Namibia. While developing content mastery, technical skills, and facility in critical thinking would contribute to human resource development, this was thus just one piece of the array of goals to be achieved in education.

The second observation that stood out when I looked at the themes across teachers was that, taken together as a group, the teachers did discuss most of the various purposes of education laid out in the policy documents. When taken individually, each teacher would discuss one or two purposes of education, but taken together, their ideas ultimately represented all of the themes that were identified. There were no obvious patterns by school or by age, which gives the sense that the way in which teachers view the purpose of education is more idiosyncratic, perhaps attributable to unique constellations of experience, training, and perhaps even personality of each teacher – a finding that resonates with literature on the importance of biography in teacher learning (Goodson, 1992; Kelchterman, 2004; Raymond et al., 1992). What this also means is that all of the purposes of education that are represented in the policy documents are "out there" in the

field. While many teachers may first think of personal/family level purposes of education, there are teachers who also consider other possible purposes. An implication of this is that, when/if the teachers come together and consider such questions as the purpose of education, being exposed to each others' ideas means also being exposed to most of the purposes that policy makers envisioned, since they are represented in teachers' ideas.

CHAPTER 7: ROLES OF THE TEACHER

In the previous chapter, I presented the themes regarding the purpose of education that arose from teacher interviews and analysis of the two primary policy documents (*Toward Education for All* and the *Broad Curriculum*). In this chapter, I will turn to the role of the teacher.   I focus here on explicit discussion of roles, leaving comments about best classroom practices, more detailed discussion of what the teacher should do in the classroom, under Quality Teaching (discussed in the next chapter). As in the previous chapter, I will present an overview of the themes, a picture of the ways in which the role of the teacher is depicted in the Namibian context. In the discussion section, I will highlight the variations and the comparisons between teachers and policy.

I identified three overarching categories under which I organized the themes (see Table 2 for a summary of the themes). These categories arose from interviews and policy analysis and include: *Developing the Child Mentally*, *Developing the Child Socially/Personally*, and *Beyond the Classroom*. The first two categories pertain to the roles that the teacher plays in the classroom. *Developing the Child Mentally* includes two themes: *the teacher as guide/facilitator* and *the teacher as a holder/giver of knowledge*. The category of *Developing the Child Socially/Personally* includes three themes: *the teacher as an instructor or guide for personal development*, *the teacher as a role model*, and

Table 2: Role of the Teacher
• *Develop the Child Mentally*
o Guide/Facilitator
o Holder/Giver of Knowledge
• *Develop the Child Socially/Personally*
o Instructor/Guide
o Role Model
o SubstituteParent
• *Beyond the Classroom*
o Community Teacher/Leader
o Social Change Agent
o Teacher as Learner

the teacher as a parent. While the categories arose from the data, the teachers and policy did not always separate them, often mentioning these two categories together. As the principal of Rural School 2 said, "the role of the teacher, firstly to develop the child on, in all aspects, like physically, mentally, socially, all aspects of life."

The third category, *Beyond the Classroom*, includes the roles that teachers may play outside of the classroom, as discussed by the teachers and, particularly, the policy documents. As Peter, a teacher at Rural School 2, told me "I don't think the work of the teacher is to be stopped inside of the school premises where he used to teach during the day." The teachers and policy documents discussed the roles beyond the classroom under the themes of *the teacher as a community leader*, *the teacher as a social change agent*, and *the teacher as learner*.

Develop the Child Mentally

"The role of the teacher is to teach, and teaching is to give knowledge to the learners, and to guide the learners."
(Loide, Town School)

Both the teacher and the policy documents discuss an important role of the teacher as one of developing the child mentally, guiding or supporting their academic learning. Within this theme, there are two somewhat different roles that came up during interviews and in analysis of the policy documents: the role of *guide/facilitator* and the role of the *holder/giver of knowledge*. In this section I will first present the ways in which the teachers discussed each of these roles and then turn to the policy documents.

Teachers

The teachers discussed both of the themes under *developing the child mentally*, indicating that they felt the teacher should both act as a facilitator and as a giver of knowledge. As I will illustrate, however, they tended to stress the role of the teacher as guide/facilitator over that of holder/giver of knowledge, and were not always clear on how these balance or come together.

Guide/Facilitator

 " . . . *just to be as a facilitator in the class. To make learners to learn and do, and make them discover things on their own.*"
(Anna, Rural School 2)

A majority of the teachers participating in the study talked about the teacher as a "guide" or "facilitator". When discussing further what this means, many of the teachers talked about the role of the teacher as one of giving, overseeing, and supporting learning tasks for the learners. Hilde and Teopo mention this role:

> Hilde (Rural School 1): The job of the teacher is to assist the learners and to guide them.
> *Wendi: In what?*
> Hilde: In teaching and learning.
> *Wendi: How do you do that? What do you think, if that is what you see as the main role of the teacher, what do you do to, in keeping with that? How does this philosophy about teaching guide your practice?*
> Hilde: . . . Okay, by guiding?
> *Wendi: Yeah, in what way – maybe you can give me some examples of things that you do in your class.*
> Hilde: For guiding. Okay, like giving the learner a task to do, and the teacher have to guide them, when they are doing. Yeah, a task I give to them, whether there are some learners not writing, or don't have pencils, things like that – we have to guide them. Yeah.
>
> Teopo (Town School): The teacher, when you are teaching, you are . . . you can be a facilitator . . . or you can be the assistant, to assist them. You can . . . be a motivator when they're doing something. You can be the supervisor also to learners they are doing something. And, uh, also to teach them something.

Wendi: Maybe you can talk, a little more about . . . when you say facilitator or teacher, can you explain them somehow?
Teopo: So, when you are giving something to do, or you are trying to show them how to do something, it's not really for you to give them really something to do, but you have to just to introduce something, and then you can assist them how to do this.

Some of the teachers also stressed this facilitator's role as one where the teacher provides

information and support to learners, but expects the learners to play an active role

"constructing meaning" or "discovering information":

> (Rural School 2 – Focus Group, Female): . . . as a teacher you can act as a facilitator in the class. So, that's one of the roles, so let the learners do things on their own, discover things on their own, and just help and instruct how they must do those things.

> Peter (Rural School 2): A teacher is also a facilitator. Someone who is facilitating learning which is taking place at the school. This is when the teacher is giving whatever is needed. For example, the information is number one. The teacher has to give the information to the learners and learners has to use the information at their hands. It means, learners have to create and construct meaning out of that information given by the teacher. Again, learners have to make information meaningful.

Charles, another teacher in Rural School 2, echoed many of these ideas:

> Charles: . . . the roles of the teacher, they are many. So I'll just recall most . the five, five – not five but, in English, let me talk about English first. They say, an English teacher is a facilitator, an English teacher is a director, a manager, communicator, a coordinator. Just a lot of things. So, most, those are the things. So, teachers . . . when I talk about the director and facilitator, the person must be there guiding learners, what they should be doing. They should also be there to contribute, talk with the learners, share ideas with the learners, even direct them, oh no, take this pot, use this . .

Later during the focus group in Rural School 2, he contributed a similar idea:

> Charles: The first one, role of the teacher, is to teach. The teacher teachers and, um . . . okay, so like, I, in English when you talk about English, they always say the teacher is there as somebody who should direct, because what happens is that the activities that we are supposed to do in class, they are not aiming just at our own teaching, but the activities they are involving the learners. Making the learners realizing something or putting some ideas in their head. So that is one of the roles of the teachers.

While Charles' description of the teacher as facilitator echoed many of the ideas shared by other teachers as well, I was struck by his use of the words "they say", and the fact that, during the interview, it sounded as if he was going to recite a list of the five roles of the teacher he may have learned previously. The other teachers had said many of the same things, but had not used such third person terms in their discussions. I asked Charles about his use of the word "they":

> Charles: It was just, because I just got it from one of the, I think it was one of the books that I read at college. We just used to use that book, where they . . . it was not a book, I think it was a hand-out we were just given.
> *W: Okay, maybe in ETP or something like that?*
> C: Mmm.
> *W: Okay, and then you read it, and are you somehow agreeing with those things?*
> C: Yeah, I just . . . because I knew already . . . because like when you are teaching a class of learners where they can contribute, it's going to be a very nice lesson, because you are just going to be guiding them there, because that is most, especially in English, a teacher has just to give activities, tell them no, you are right, you are wrong, do it this way.

Charles, then, expresses the same ideas as the other teachers, also making clear that his ideas, or at least the expression of them, seem to have been heavily influenced by his pre-service training. Many of the teachers use the same term, "facilitator", and the degree to which they can explicitly describe exactly what they mean by this term, or give strong concrete examples, varies. It may be that, like Charles, many of the teachers have learned about this idea during training or workshops, and many have embraced it, though the degree to which they have clarified its meaning for themselves may vary.

<u>Holder/Giver of Knowledge</u>
"Making the learners realizing something or putting some ideas in their head."
(Focus Group, Rural School 2)

There were a number of teachers, as well as ministry officials, who shied away

from talking about the teacher as a giver of knowledge. I was repeatedly told that

education reforms were based on the realization that learners were not "empty vessels"

into whom knowledge should be pored by the teacher. At the same time, some

participants did mention a role of giving knowledge, sometimes mentioning it alongside

the guide/facilitator role. There were no teachers who described teachers only as givers

of knowledge, without also mentioning guiding and facilitating, but there were a number

who mentioned both. Loide, for example, mentions them immediately together, as well

as a couple more roles that teachers play:

> Loide (Town School): The role of the teacher is to teach, and teaching is to give knowledge to the learners, and to guide the learners, and to control the . . . the what, the behaviors, and to discipline them . . . and to show them what is good and what is wrong.

If we look back at some of the same comments in which teachers spoke of the teacher as

facilitator or guide, we can see that some of them coupled this with a role of giving

information:

> Charles (Rural School 2): The first one, role of the teacher, is to teach. The teacher teachers and, um . . . okay, so like, I, in English when you talk about English, they always say the teacher is there as somebody who should direct, because what happens is that the activities that we are supposed to do in class, they are not aiming just at our own teaching, but the activities they are involving the learners. Making the learners realizing something or *putting some ideas in their head* [emphasis added]. So that is one of the roles of the teachers.

> Peter (Rural School 2): A teacher is also a facilitator. Someone who is facilitating learning which is taking place at the school. This is when the teacher is giving whatever is needed. *For example, the information is number one. The teacher has to give the information to the learners* [emphasis added] and learners

has to use the information at their hands. It means, learners have to create and construct meaning out of that *information given by the teacher* [emphasis added].

These teachers present a view of the teacher as one who both gives information and who stands back and guides or facilitates, supporting the students in discovering or building meaning from what they are doing. Teopo pointed to another idea of the teacher as giving knowledge, indicating that sometimes the teacher becomes more of a giver of knowledge when frustrated, when the facilitator role seems to have failed. Just after Teopo had described how the teacher is a facilitator, our discussion continued:

> *Wendi: So, maybe I don't know if you can maybe you can give me an example. You have this idea now of, um, especially the teacher as a facilitator instead of the one giving all of the knowledge. And I was wondering if you, maybe it's hard, but if you can think about, how that makes you, how that affects your practice – how that affects what you are doing in the classroom?*
> Teopo (Town School): Only because . . . not all of them [learners], they can think.
> *Wendi: Yeah?*
> Teopo: So, some, if you know that this . . . maybe you can just find a few, but the most . . .the most of them they cannot even think about it. You have to tell them again and again and give them.

This comment gave me the impression that she was not fully convinced about the notion of the teacher as facilitator, not to mention some of the other assumptions underlying the reforms, though she had just spoken about it. Taken together with discussions with other teachers, some of whom were quite enthusiastic about the idea of the teacher as facilitator throughout our conversations, I conjectured that there is a mixture of ideas here: some teachers may grapple with this somewhat new idea, but still basically prefer to think of the teacher as a giver of knowledge; other teachers whole-heartedly believe in the teacher as facilitator, while also recognizing that there is a role of giver of knowledge at the same time – that each is appropriate at certain times; while others might not be entirely certain how and when they fit together. I was left with the

sense, though, that the teachers felt that the "correct" (according to the higher-ups in the

ministry) response lay most heavily on the side of guide/facilitator.

Policy

The policy documents I examined do not contain extensive explicit references to

the role(s) of the teacher, particularly in comparison to the explicit discussion of the

purposes of education. I did, however, find some discussion of the role of the teacher in

contributing to the mental development of the learner. These discussions emphasize the

role of teacher as a guide/facilitator, particularly in contrast with the more authoritarian

role teachers played previously: " In democratic education for a democratic society

teachers must be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its

masters or caretakers" (*TEFA*, p. 42). When *Toward Education for All* gives a list of

attributes that teacher education should develop in pre-service teachers (the full list can be

found in Appendix C) it includes:

> . . . the ability to create learning opportunities which will enable learners to
> explore different ways of knowing, and develop the whole range of their thinking
> abilities. (p. 82)

This idea of creating learning opportunities is very similar to some of the ways in which

the teachers described the guide/facilitator role.

At the same time, the *Broad Curriculum* has some passages that indicate that the

role of "giver of knowledge" can also be appropriate. It references teachers as both

presenters of information and as facilitators when discussing how they may cope with

overlarge classes:

> In overlarge classes, teaching and learning can be made more effective through
> more extensive use of peer-group teaching, where learners are divided into
> permanent mixed-ability basis groups (home groups/family groups) of e.g. 6-8 per

group. After teacher presentation of a new topic, learners follow up in their basis groups, with the teacher being free to support and facilitate, and to assist those learners who are in need of remedial or compensatory teaching. (*Broad Curriculum*, p. 30).

The document later emphasizes even more directly that teacher-directed methods are sometimes appropriate:

There should be variation between teacher directed, teacher facilitated, and learner directed work, depending on which is the most effective in relation to the learning objectives and content of the lesson. (Broad Curriculum, p. 26)

Like some of the teachers, then, the policy documents seem to indicate both the teacher as guide/facilitator and as a giver of knowledge are valid at certain times, though what the exact balance should be isn't really resolved.

Develop the Child Socially/Personally

"Teaching you about all these values in order to become somebody"
(Circuit Inspector)

While not many teachers specifically identified personal development as a purpose of education, a number of them emphasized teacher roles that pertained to the personal development of the child. This could be as an *instructor or guide*, explicitly instructing learners, as a *role model*, or as a *substitute parent*. Policy, conversely, discussed personal development as a purpose of education, but did not mention it as much when alluding to the roles of the teacher. In this section, then, I will first present the ways in which the teachers discussed each of these roles. I will then turn to the policy documents, in which the three roles are not separated, but which do include some discussion of the teacher's role in developing the child socially and personally.

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Teachers

Teachers clearly felt that one of the important roles of the teacher was to contribute to the personal development of the child. Through their discussions, it became clear that they had multiple, nuanced ways to describe how they did this, as my presentation here of the three themes within *developing the child socially/personally* (instructor/guide; role model; substitute parent) will illustrate.

Instructor/Guide – Personal Development
"To show them what is good and what is wrong."
(Loide, Town School)

In her interview, Justina described a few different areas of personal development in which she felt teacher's were responsible for guiding or instructing the learners:

> Justina (Rural School 1): Okay, some jobs are there, is to teach the learners the health and cleanliness.
> *Wendi: Okay, and do you think that is, that is the case no matter which subject they are teaching?*
> Justina: Mmm hmm. Yes, you can just get in and "why you didn't wash your head today?" Because, those lower grades, the teachers were trying, but since the kids are so small, they could not do it. They only expect the mother or father to say, go and wash yourselves. But here they are coming to the fact that they are grown up enough, they have to do the thing by themselves, even they are not adults.
> *Wendi: So it sounds like somehow you're trying to teach them to be responsible for themselves in that way?*
> Justina: Mmm hmm (Yes)
> *Wendi: Okay, so how maybe you would do that? You would tell them, correct them somehow?*
> Justina: Yeah, you can just even hold somebody, call a certain learner in front of the class, then you make that learner as an example of everybody, then you are not only talking straight to that pupil which you call in front, but that is just the example to show. Then you tell them, you are all included in what I'm talking about.

Further on:

> Justina: . . . respecting of parents as well.
> *Wendi: Respecting of parents?*

Justina: Mmm hmm (Yes).
Wendi: So how may you do that in the class?
Justina: Sometimes parents have not yet come to school, nay? Just came to look to my child's work for instance. Then some of the children, they might just be sitting down as their parents get in the class, and you have to tell that one because as we are all parents, we are all their parents, they have to stand up each and every time the parent is coming in – not only when the teacher is coming in, as when an older person is coming in. They have to stand up.

So, Justina felt that health and cleanliness and respect for elders were two areas of development that she felt responsible for as a teacher – she saw it as her role to guide or instruct the learners in those areas.

One of the teachers in the Town School focus group also discussed the ways in which the teacher should guide learners in their social and more general behavior:

Teacher (Town School Focus Group, Female Teacher): Sometimes a learner maybe have a social problem. You have to counsel her so that she can socialize with the others. And when you are talking about the guidance, also you guide somebody to be somebody. Maybe the learner behavior is so bad you have to talk to her, you have to show that this is the right way to go, and what . . .
Wendi: And by talking with them, or ?
Teacher: Yeah, by talking with them, individually.

Loide and Aune both described this role in more general terms, mentioning that one of the teacher's role is to develop the learner "in all aspects", "to teach what is good and what is wrong":

Loide: The role of the teacher is to teach, and teaching is to give knowledge to the learners, and to guide the learners, and to control the . . . the what, the behaviors, and to discipline them . . . and to show them what is good and what is wrong.

Wendi: Okay, can you talk a little about each of those – a little bit more about how you see the teacher as a guide or . . .?
Aune (Town School): yeah, you guide them on what they are doing. Even whether maybe somebody is doing something wrong, you won't have to speak so with a hard words. You must speak to her or him politely, then say, why you do this? . . . maybe . . . Do you think it's the right way? You don't have another alternative to do that? Do you think this can hurt somebody when you do this? You help somebody to guide in the right way of life.

Wendi: So not just, not just in the content itself?
Aune: Yeah, not only the content only, but also their life.

These teachers felt that one of their roles was to directly and explicitly guide the learners'

personal development.

Role Model
"A role of the teacher is to be a role model"
(Focus Group, Rural School 2)

While teachers may explicitly teach or guide learners in areas of personal

development like cooperating with peers and hygiene, they may also support personal

development by acting as role models. In the Rural School 2 focus group, the teachers

discussed this role:

> Female Teacher (Rural School 2, Focus Group): . . . Maybe it is, a role of the
> teacher is to be a role model. Because, um, when you are teacher, whatever you
> are doing is what the learner will, they will do what you are doing, so you have to
> be a role model to the kids. You have to do good things that the learner can . .
> .follow you.
> *Wendi: Can you give me an example of what, what you might be a model of, or
> what you might be trying to show them?*
> Female Teacher: Mmm. Say for instance the, um . . . . If you are . . .say for
> instance I used to come late to school every day, and then my learners used to see
> me, so they will also be coming late because I'm their role model. If I'm doing
> this, they will follow this. If I'm always punctual, they will also be punctual.
> Male Teacher: What she's talking about the role model. That's not only actually
> just within the school premises. So it's even outside. If the teacher maybe always
> is the one who is the boxer outside or something like that, then learners also are
> going to say, ah, teachers always do like this, they start copying bad behaviors
> from the teacher. So, he has to be a role model, whether it's outside, inside . . .
> they always.
> *Wendi: They're always going to be seen . . .*
> Male Teacher: Because I remember, even some of the things that we do in class,
> or even work that we do . . . you go away today, and then some of the learners,
> it's not going to go out of the minds of the learners, some of them are going to
> repeat accordingly. Whenever, even we know that they are even giving names to
> the teachers, that "oh look at Mr. Transgression". And always they are calling –
> the name is already in the behavior – you are now the role model by that.

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These teachers seem to acknowledge that a teacher is a role model whether he or she

wishes to be so or not – that they can model good behavior, or bad behavior just as easily.

The principal of Rural School 2 emphasized this point, stressing that teachers should

make sure to set positive examples:

> Principal (Rural School 2): Yeah, socially now, the learner, the children, or the child, they like to imitate their teachers. So, that's why the teacher needs to be a good example . . . when social we mean, the way he welcomes the learner, say in one class, or when he approaches the learner, he needs to do it friendship, and show that he is much interested in that learner. By doing this, he learned the child how social . . . how met . . . how stay with somebody.

Hilde also told me that she saw one role of the teachers as being a role model, though she

was a little more vague in describing what she thought they should model:

> Hilde (Rural School 1): Can I add to, what, the role of the teacher? Also, the model.
> *Wendi: The mother?*
> Hilde: A model.
> *Wendi: A model. Okay. Can you talk a little bit more about that?*
> Hilde: A model, like maybe you do something and then the learners can imitate you. The model, something like . . . even it's good or . . .yeah, to imitate you.
> *Wendi: What are some of the things that you want to model for the students?*
> Hilde: Yeah, maybe for model, maybe like for what you were saying, the boys and girls, something like that, or maybe some other thing also, they're going to imitate you, and when they are going to grown up.

In recognizing they are inevitably role models, the teachers see this as one way they are

effectively teaching learners about values and behaviors – that this is one of their roles as

teachers.

<u>Parent</u>
"A teacher is a substitute parent."
(Peter, Rural School 2)

Another way some of the teachers see themselves as guiding students in their

personal development is in the role of a kind of "substitute parent" – playing the role that

the parent would play in his/her absence. Peter discussed this role in some detail:

> *Wendi: Then, the next question is, what do you see as the role, or the roles*
> *maybe, of the teacher?*
> Peter (Rural School 2): Mmm . . .the teacher has a lot of, the teacher acts as a,
> you know, a mother, let me say as a parent. Substitute parent.

He continues:

> Peter: It's when a teacher is in the classroom, and something happen to his
> learners there, he should do exactly as parents of that particular learner used to do
> at home. He can't organize without discriminating that, this is not my child. He
> can give even sometimes money, he can, report immediately to the principal, he
> can even tell the learner in particular, he can organize a meeting, to meet that
> particular learner and tell her about her behavior, without even consulting the
> parents at home. So, if teachers could not be, you know, like substitute parents,
> then we could not even give any information to the learners according to their
> own personal point of view, the way they're behaving, or attitudinal behavior. So
> we can even just send it home they'll come and say, oh, that's what you did in the
> class, okay go back. Go to your parents. What happen if the parents does not of,
> is not of the same opinion? Never know what happens in the classroom, so the
> teacher sometimes here is a parent.

In the focus group at his school, Peter went on to explain even more ways in which he

might act as a substitute parent:

> Peter: Yeah, it's like when one of my learners happens to, you know, be sick
> during the lesson, I won't call her own terms, his terms. I should try to finish all
> the work that was supposed to done by his parents at school. Especially when we
> report that learner directly to the principal, and also if the principal's not around, I
> can do whatever, I can do my level best, giving him some money from my pocket
> and give the learner. The cleaning or something like that. Maybe someone . . . I
> have to be, you know, give . . . the same assistance, like what is being given by
> parents to help. If the parents would have there when the problem happens, he
> would have done the same as me I'm doing in school. . . . So I say it's an . . . .
> substitute parent.

So, Peter indicates that he provides support as parents would, or sometimes provides

support the parents cannot. Aune discusses this in her interview as well:

> Aune: . . . the teacher is a guide, is a helper. To guide them, and also the teacher
> are psychological to them. And the teacher, they look like their mothers, their
> fathers. They're trusting you, they're trusting on . . . you have to trust also on
> them, so that they count on you.
> [After discussing the role of teacher as guide]
> *Wendi: . . . .And about the, you were saying like a mother and a father?*
> Aune: Yeah, you know when you are in the kids, they just like . . . you can . . .
> you can also maybe see on the day of the holiday and then the way they express
> their feeling on the cards they give to you, oh you are just like . . . you are just like
> a mother to me, you are like a father to me. You . . . even you, the idea you've
> given me, the advice you've given me, my mother doesn't give to me. You are
> just like a father or a mother to us.

Later she explains, similarly to Peter, that she sometimes has to provide money or food

for certain students:

> Aune: Therefore, sometimes you can get the parent that, oh can you give her five
> dollars to go back, by your own, if you are, if you are helping that one. [giving
> extra academic help after school]
> *Wendi: But if you have many learners coming then you cannot pay for the whole
> class.*
> Aune: Exactly. Like now we have some learner who don't have anything to eat.
> Sometimes you have, you come up with the two glasses and Oros [an orange
> flavored drink] to give to her so she can participate in the classroom.

While not all of the teachers discussed giving money or food to students, many of them

did emphasize their role in providing a nurturing and support that goes beyond academic

learning. Overall, most of the teachers described guiding their learners in their personal

development, whether it be directly and explicitly as an instructor, as a role model, or as a

substitute parent.

Policy

There is a fairly minimal discussion of the role of the teacher as an instructor or guide for personal development in the policy documents, but when listing the teacher attributes that pre-service education should inculcate, *Toward Education for All* includes the following:

- develop a teacher who will respect and foster the values of our Constitution, contribute to nation building, and respond positively to the changing needs of Namibian society;
- Promote gender awareness and equity to enable all Namibians to participate fully in all spheres of society;
- Enable the teacher to promote environmental awareness and sustainable management of natural resources in the school and community; (p. 81-82)

The policy thus implies that one of the roles of the teacher is to promote and foster particular values, though it doesn't specify exactly in what way this should be done. A circuit inspector described in more detail the way he views the teacher as one who guides and supports the development of values:

> Inspector: When God created you, physically, just the bone and the skeleton and flesh and whatever. And he breathed some breath into you. He made you. Now you have to survive. That is where the teacher comes in. Teaching you about all these values in order to become somebody. Not necessarily somebody in an economic world, or whatever. But to have belief, to have dignity, to respect others, tolerance, peace, you know, these type of things. Basically, a teacher should be a co-creator. And . . . to take that child, I don't know how to put it, but to make the child . . . a living something. Yes, it's a living human being, but in order to survive out there, in the society, a very demanding society, the teacher should be able to prepare the child for each and every challenge, it doesn't matter what it, what it might come across. Even something like unemployment, even something like war, even something like divorce, like death of your spouse, or whatever. All these things, that emotions, how you should, you cannot know that your spouse has died, now you sit in the ash and you, and you, I mean, for the rest of your life. So that is the role of the teacher. To make sure that you will be able to become full human being, to put it that way.

While the policy documents do not specify the ways in which a teacher might promote or foster the values mentioned, such as by talking about them directly or by being a role model, it seems reasonable to imagine that one way a teacher would promote and foster values could be by exemplifying those values him/herself. This is not often specifically mentioned in the policy documents, though *Toward Education for All* includes some statements that discuss the ways in which democracy should be fostered through education, stating that instruction must aim towards "introducing and encouraging classroom practices that reflect and reinforce both the values and practices of democracy" (p. 120). It also states:

> In the past, we were not fooled by an authoritarian government that preached to us about democracy. Nor will learners today be deceived by an education system that talks about democracy and says it is for someone else at some other time. To teach about democracy, our teachers – and our education system as a whole – must practice democracy. (*TEFA*, p. 41)

One of the ministry officials with whom I spoke specifically mentioned the role of the teacher as role model:

> Ministry Official: Ah, the teacher is that person who actually holds the dream for every learner.
> *Wendi: Holds the dream?*
> Ministry Official: Yes, make it possible for every learner to achieve their own individual dream. I say this in the sense that the teacher must be a caring person, must be a person who actually role models for the learner. He is a person who is well-informed, or at least he's aware of the diverse needs of the learners. And, and, to fulfill those needs in ways that are meaningful for every learner.

The policy documents do not explicitly mention the role of the teacher in guiding personal development, but they do mention personal development as a purpose of education. The policy documents thus seem to imply this role, though the nuance of the ways of doing this that is evident in the teachers' discussions is not paralleled in the policy documents.

Beyond the Classroom

" . . . we came for the, not only for the kids, also for the community, for the . . .
"The whole nation, because we are the root of the nation."
(Focus Group, Rural School 1)

Both the teachers and the policy documents indicate that the teachers' work does not end at the classroom door – that their role(s) go beyond just teaching their learners. Their roles can include acting as a *community leader*, as a *social change agent*, and as a *life-long learner*. While the policy documents (particularly *Toward Education for All*) emphasize these roles far more, they are also mentioned by some of the teachers. I will again begin with a presentation of each of the roles discussed by teachers, and will then present them as portrayed in policy.

Teachers

While some of the teachers discuss roles that go beyond the classroom, they do so much less frequently than the roles inside the classroom, which I've discussed in the previous sections. As I will illustrate, just a few teachers mention any of the themes in this category, and none of the teachers discusses the role of the teacher as a social change agent. In this section, then, I present the two *beyond the classroom* themes that are discussed by teachers: *community teacher/leader* and *teacher as learner*.

<u>Community Teacher/Leader</u>
"The role of the teacher . . . is to teach the learners as well as the community"
 (Titus, Rural School 1)

A few of the teachers, particularly the teachers at Rural School 1, emphasized that

one of the roles of the teacher is to be a teacher and leader for the entire community:

> Titus (Rural School 1, Focus Group): Yeah, um, teachers also help the community
> to give some information. This is important.
> Male Teacher2: . . . I think the role of the teacher is the only, the main thing is
> only the responsibility, because you have to have responsibility for what you are
> doing. Because you know that when we came here, we came for the, not only for
> the kids, also for the community for the . . .
> Female Teacher: The whole nation, because we are the root of the nation. To
> give what is needed in the nation. The . . . (unclear) . . . and understanding, and
> so on.

Titus described this role more fully in his interview:

> *Wendi: . . . the role of the teacher, or the job of the teacher, is what?*
> Titus: The role of the teacher?
> *Wendi: Yeah.*
> Titus: Yeah, is to teach the learners as well as the community, the environment,
> and they give information to the parents, . . . if one thing happen – for example,
> today one teacher announced the polio, which are . . . affect our country and
> those children who go to . . . to give information to their parents at home, and
> maybe parents will understand that information.
> *Wendi: So it sounds like in some way you're educating not just the children, but
> the family of the children as well?*
> Titus: Yeah.
> *Wendi: Is there any other role or job that you want to mention?*
> Titus: Mmm hmm, then once again is to give information also to the community
> when either they say, anything which . . . announcing the world, even in the news,
> maybe for example, they what, something, uh, done in India or a country . . .the
> Tsu . . .
> *Wendi: The Tsunami?*
> Titus: Yeah, Tsunami. And, teachers also advise the community about that thing.
> *Wendi: Through the learners, or do you go in the community and tell them?*
> Titus: Even in the community. And there's also the difficulty I think which is
> happening now in the world – HIV/AIDS . . . Teachers are the responsible to have
> a chance to go out with the community to tell them that thing, how to protect from
> this disease, etcetra, etcetra.

The principal of Rural School 2 also voiced the idea that the teacher has a responsibility

to the community, as well as to the nation:

> *Wendi: Okay, then the next one is, what do you think is a teacher's role? What*
> *are the jobs of the teacher?*
> Principal: A teacher is a model to give the right . . . to the kids. The teacher must
> prepare nicely, the teacher must know his duties and . . . if he know his duties, and
> he loves the kids, then he know that I have to do this so that my nation, or my
> community gets knowledge from me to give their knowledge which they get from
> the college or from education to the kids, so that they can also use it.

Embedded in both of these discussions is the notion that the teacher's responsibility goes

well beyond the classroom, to the community as a whole, and possibly even to the entire

nation.

Teacher as Learner
"The teachers are also learners"
(Charles, Rural School 2)

Another role that appears to be of some significance is that of the teacher as a

learner, as a professional who continues to learn. This didn't come up very much when

the teachers discussed the role of the teacher, but is clearly expressed in the policy. And,

as I will discuss later in this dissertation, it does come up more when teachers talk about

quality teaching and the challenges and supports they encounter. Charles did touch on

this when he compared his current views of the role of the teacher to those he had held

when he was younger:

> Charles (Rural School 2): Like now, I can . . . I just made some pictures that the
> teachers are also learners . . . Because they have to be there in class, while the
> learners are . . . while they're teaching, they're also sharing, contributing,
> because some of the things, what the learners might say, it will be very new, even
> to the teacher . . . Because even, the time he was still a learner, he never learned
> of something like that, but the time he's teaching there, the learners, the
> contributions of the learners are, something is going to be new from them.

In sum, a few of the teachers have a sense of the role of the teacher extending beyond the

classroom, to the community, and maybe even to the nation. To repeat what one of the

teachers at Rural School 1 said during the focus group: "The whole nation, because we

are the root of the nation. To give what is needed in the nation." Beyond this one

statement, however, there was not any explicit discussion of the teacher's role in the

nation. As I will illustrate, this contrasts greatly with the policy documents, particularly

Toward Education for All.

Policy

In contrast to the teachers, *Toward Education for All* (much more than the *Broad

Curriculum*) includes significant discussions of the role of the teacher beyond the

classroom, emphasizing the responsibility of the teacher as a leader of the community, as

a social change agent, and as a professional who should continue to learn throughout

his/her career.

Community leader

While *Toward Education for All* seems to emphasize the national-level orientation

toward social change and development, it mentions the important role of teachers at both

the national and the community level:

> Teachers are key to the development of our country and are important resources
> to their communities. It is therefore essential that teachers maintain close contact
> with their communities and assist learners in integrating school and life outside
> the school. (*TEFA*, p. 81)

When listing attributes that pre-service teacher education should stress, it includes:

> – Develop social responsibility towards learners, colleagues, the community,
>   and the nation as a whole;

- Enable the teacher to promote environmental awareness and sustainable management of natural resources in the school and community; (*TEFA*, p. 81-82)

And it also indicates that teachers should be rewarded for playing the role of community leader well:

> A second set of incentives will recognize and encourage sports, cultural, and community leadership. These incentives may be earned either by successfully completing a module accredited by the appropriate national institution or by submitting an equivalent portfolio of performance. (*TEFA*, p. 85)

Social Change Agent

The role of the teacher as a social change agent, while rarely mentioned explicitly by the teachers, becomes an important theme when examining *Toward Education for All*. As the document states: "For Namibia to change, so must its schools. And for its schools to change, teachers must themselves become both agents and facilitators of change "(*TEFA*, p. 76). Beyond playing a role of community leader and fostering particular values among learners, this policy document advocates for teachers to play a significant role in fundamentally changing education, becoming actively involved, even leaders, in the change process:

> It is also essential that our teachers see themselves as contributors to nation building and not simply workers who carry information between curriculum experts and learners. To be effective, teachers must see themselves as active participants, not passive intermediaries. They must be able to communicate their ideas to those who design curriculum and set examinations. And they must see the fruits of those ideas in the teaching materials they receive. To implement the syllabus and curriculum materials for which they are responsible, teachers must have sufficient autonomy to tailor a lesson's objectives to the needs, interests, and abilities of the students in their classes. (*TEFA*, p. 37)

The document notes that:

> Teacher preparation for Basic Education must first and foremost meet the needs of a professional teacher corps – people whose commitment and sense of

responsibility, knowledge, and skills will raise the quality of education in the entire country. (*TEFA*, p. 80)

A significant role of the teacher thus becomes a role of change agent, both within the education system itself and in society, through the impact teachers have on their learners and in their communities. When discussing the significant role teachers are described as playing in the education system, and in particular in regard to curriculum development, *Toward Education for All* explains:

> Classroom teachers are central to an effective process of curriculum and materials development. Their roles are multiple:
> − They must be involved in curriculum development throughout all its stages: pre-study (research), initial drafts, trials, refinement, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
> − They implement the curriculum in classroom settings.
> − They are the principal interpreters of the curriculum as they use it.
> − They are initiators of curriculum as they relate the national curriculum to local needs, thus ensuring its relevance.
> − They monitor the curriculum by examining how its general objectives are translated into specific activities in their own classrooms.
> − They are primary sources of information about the viability and feasibility of the curriculum and materials.
> − Especially imaginative and skilled teachers may be seconded to NIED or resource centers to devote more time to curriculum and materials development. (*TEFA*, p. 122-123)

Teacher as Learner

An additional role that is emphasized in *Toward Education for All,* and which goes beyond the classroom, is that of the teacher as learner. This fits quite squarely with the idea of lifelong learning stressed in policy documents, with the recognition that this applies not just to learners, but to teachers as well:

> In the process of rethinking our philosophy it is important to recognize that we are all learners. Learning is a lifelong activity - a process not an event. It is not something that happens once and then is over. It is something we do, not something we receive. Learners are speakers as well as listeners. And good teachers are listeners as well as speakers. (*TEFA*, p. 11)

And further:

> . . . we must nurture the idea among our teachers (and thereby among the young
> people with whom they work and their parents) that they, too, are lifelong
> learners. We shall adopt the principle that to be a good teacher one must continue
> to study, to be an active learner throughout one's life. (*TEFA*, p. 12)

Also:

> It is essential, therefore, that we help our teachers develop the expertise and skills
> that will enable them to stimulate learning. Their professional education must
> begin before they enter the classroom and continue during the course of their
> professional careers. (*TEFA*, P. 37)

Toward Education for All thus stresses that teachers continue to learn and develop

professionally to become better at what they do. Among the characteristics that teacher

education should develop in pre-service teachers is "a reflective attitude and creative,

analytical, and critical thinking" (*TEFA*, p. 81)

Overall, Toward Education for All stresses the roles teachers play outside of the

classroom, while the Broad Curriculum makes little mention of these roles. Only a few

teachers discuss such roles, instead focusing on the roles teachers play at the classroom

level, in supporting the mental and social/personal development of their learners.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have described the ideas concerning the role(s) of the teacher

that came through my conversations with teachers and analysis of the policy documents.

These ideas came together in three main categories: the role of the teacher in *developing*

the learner mentally, which includes the themes of the teacher as a *guide/facilitator* and

as a *holder/giver of knowledge*; the role of the teacher in *developing the learner*

socially/personally, which includes the themes of the teacher as *instructor or guide for personal development*, as *role model*, and as *parent*; and the role of the teacher *beyond the classroom*, which includes the themes of the teacher as *community teacher/leader*, as *social change agent*, and as *life-long learner*. I then took a step back, as I had done with the purpose of education, and looked across teachers and schools and across the policy documents to see what patterns I might find. In this concluding section I will discuss three conclusions I was able to make: There was an emphasis by teachers on their roles within the classroom, in comparison to the policy documents, which emphasized their roles beyond the classroom; There was a lack of emphasis in the *Broad Curriculum* on the teacher as social change agent, particularly in comparison to *Toward Education for All*; and, similarly, none of the teachers mentioned a social change agent role, and few talked about the teacher as learner.

Looking across the teachers, significantly more emphasis was placed by the majority of teachers on the roles of the teacher in developing the child mentally and in the personal development of the learner than on the roles of the teacher beyond the classroom. As I mentioned previously, within the category of developing the child mentally, most of the teachers described the role of the teacher as a guide or facilitator, with some also mentioning the teacher as a holder/giver of knowledge. While the teachers had not emphasized personal development when explicitly discussing the purpose of education, most of them did emphasize the personal development of the learner as an important role of the teacher. Within the category of developing the child socially and personally, there was a mix across the three themes (guide/facilitator, model,

parent) – giving the sense that across the teachers these three ways of supporting the

personal development of the learner were all valued and significant.

 Toward Education for All discusses all of the three main categories (developing

child mentally, socially/personally, and beyond the classroom) and most of the themes

within these categories, while the *Broad Curriculum* only deals directly with the theme of

developing the child mentally. *Toward Education for All*, in contrast, places heavy

emphasis on the role of the teacher beyond the classroom, describing in detail the ways

that the teacher should be involved as a leader and change agent within the education

system. It is interesting, and perhaps ironic, that the *Broad Curriculum* does not address

this role of the teacher. The closest the document comes to directly recognizing the

teacher as a change agent and potential leader in education comes in the forward, where it

includes a description of how the document should be used:

> It is to be used by schools and teachers to guide the planning, organisation and
> implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning at the school. Schools
> have a special responsibility for using this curriculum guide together with the
> various subject syllabuses to identify locally relevant content within a common
> framework. (p. 2)

This language is something of a departure from that in *Toward Education for All*,

which states:

> It is also essential that our teachers see themselves as contributors to nation
> building and not simply workers who carry information between curriculum
> experts and learners (p. 37).

And emphasizes that "teachers must themselves become both agents and

facilitators of change" (p. 76).

 Like the *Broad Curriculum*, not many of the teachers mentioned roles of

the teacher that went beyond the classroom. None of the teachers at the town

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school mentioned any of the themes in the *beyond the classroom* category, and only one or two teachers overall mentioned any one such theme. While a few of the teachers described one of the purposes of education as supporting and contributing to community and national development, as discussed in the previous chapter, fewer still discussed the role(s) of the teacher beyond the classroom. None of the participating teachers discussed the role of the teacher as a leader or agent of change within the education system.

In sum, it appears that some of the philosophies concerning the teacher that are emphasized in *Toward Education for All* – that the teacher has a significant role to play in the changing education system, in the community, and in the nation – are not fully reflected in either the other policy document examined here (the *Broad Curriculum*), or in the discussions of the teachers. A range of other important ideas concerning the roles of teachers are shared, particularly those at the academic level. But the vision of teachers as social change agents which is portrayed in *Toward Education for All* seems not to have entered the teachers' visions of themselves and their roles.

CHAPTER 8: QUALITY TEACHING

Having discussed the purpose of education and the role of the teacher in the previous two chapters, I will now turn to themes of quality teaching. Again, I will first describe the themes overall that came from interviews with teachers and from an analysis of the two primary policy documents on which I focused: the *Broad Curriculum* and *Toward Education for All*. I will then, in the discussion, highlight variation and draw a comparison between the ideas the teachers emphasized and those discussed in the policy documents.

The themes (see Table 3 for an overview of these themes) came out of both direct questions to the teachers, where I asked how they would define, or describe, quality teaching, as well as discussions centered around classroom observations, and sometimes tangentially during other conversations; they also arose during analysis of the two policy documents. As a way to organize and present these themes, I have placed them into three categories: *Preparation*, *Orientations of Instruction that are Valued*; and *Classroom Approaches*. The first category, *Preparation*, came out of discussions with teachers, who explicitly used the term "preparation" or "being prepared". Within preparation, a number of themes arose when asked teachers what they meant by "being prepared". Under *Preparation*, then, are two primary themes: the *knowledge* teachers

Table 3: Quality Teaching
• **_Preparation_**
o Teacher Knowledge
o Planning Lessons
• **_Orientations of Instruction that are Valued_**
o Interesting and Relevant
o Deeper Understanding
• **_Classroom Approaches_**
o Letting Learners See
o Learner Participation
o Assessing/Following the Learner

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should bring into instruction, which includes knowledge of content, curriculum, and of the learners; and the theme of *planning lessons*, which includes writing lesson plans, preparing learning materials, and reflection.

The next category pertains to ideas that teachers and policy discussed on a somewhat abstract level, concerning the underlying characteristics or *orientations of instruction that are valued*. This category includes two themes: instruction that is *interesting and relevant* and instruction that supports a *deeper understanding* than that associated with the rote memorization of traditional instruction. The final category of themes pertains to the actual *classroom approaches* that teachers and policy documents identified as indicative of high-quality teaching – the actual approaches teachers could take in the classroom that would support the orientations that had been discussed. This category includes three themes: *letting the learners see*, *learner participation*, and *assessment/following the learner*.

Preparation

A recurring topic among the teachers, as well as in policy documents, was preparation. As the principal of Town School told me "good quality teaching is when the teacher is prepared." When asked what comprised good preparation, there were a number of themes mentioned: *Teacher Knowledge*, which includes *knowing the content*, *knowing the curriculum*, and *knowing the learners*; and *Lesson Planning*, which includes *writing lesson plans, preparing materials,* and *reflection.*

When the teachers discussed preparation, they mentioned a number of these themes together, without separating them. I will endeavor to separate them somewhat here in order to explore them, but Justina's comment during the focus group at Rural School 1 shows the importance she sees in preparation and how the "ingredients" of preparation blend together:

> Justina (Rural School 1 Focus Group): I think a good teacher is just coming with a lesson well-prepared. You come well-prepared, making teaching aids, understanding the pupils and so on. And also you have to, to prepare I think, even to prepare.

Teacher Knowledge
"First, the teacher must know the subject itself, the knowledge of the subject. And second, you must look at the objective and the syllabus . . . what is needed to be learned by the learners. How you have to give it to the learners . . ."
(Town School Focus Group)

When discussing how teachers should be prepared, both the teachers and the policy documents mentioned three areas of teacher knowledge as important: knowing the content, knowing the curriculum, and knowing the learners. In this section I will first discuss how the teachers described these elements and then turn to the policy documents.

Teachers

A few of the teachers mentioned that, in order for a teacher to be well-prepared to teach, he or she must have a solid understanding of the content to be taught. Aune describes what she looks for when she observes the pre-service teachers who are doing their practice teaching in her class, how she would determine whether they are demonstrating high-quality teaching:

> Aune (Town School): You have to look at, to the lesson, the format of the lesson. And also you have to follow the step she write on her lesson, and also you have to *look at the content*, *whether she knows the content of the lesson* [italics added].

The principal at Town School echoed this sentiment, asserting that knowing the content is of essential importance in being prepared: "A teacher needs to prepare him or herself by doing daily preparation and knowing the subject itself."

In addition to knowing the content, a few of the teachers discussed the importance of knowing, and following, the curriculum or syllabus. As one of the teachers at Town School said (and which was quoted at the opening of this section):

> Teacher (Town School Focus Group): First, the teacher must know the subject itself, the knowledge of the subject. And second, you must look at the objective and the syllabus . . . what is needed to be learned by the learners. How you have to give it to the learners . .

The principals of Rural School 1 and Rural School 2 both concurred:

> Principal, Rural School 1: Yeah, quality teaching is . . . the teacher must follow the curriculum, they must know the basic competence of the syllabus and the scheme of work. And they have to prepare nicely . . .

> Principal, Rural School 2: Yeah, the teacher must have prepared a lesson, you know, according to he or she . . she must have a, first contacting . . . consult his or her syllabus, so that when he prepares a topic, it must be linked to the syllabus, not to go just with the textbook, but just the syllabus, and come with some resources whereby . . . find the topic.

In addition to knowing the content and being familiar with the curriculum, many teachers also discussed the importance of, as Justina put it, "understanding the pupils". The theme of knowing and understanding your learners relates to a number of other themes of quality teaching (as will be discussed in following sections), and comes into preparation when teachers discuss the importance of considering learners' prior knowledge and interests when they are planning their lessons. As Justina explained:

> Justina, Rural School 1: As I'm preparing for the next topic, then I have to reflect – why should I start here? At the beginning of the lesson plan there is, what do you think learners know, the prior knowledge of the learners.

Aune also stressed that the prior knowledge of the learners is important, and it should be

taken into account when planning lessons.

> Aune, Town School: You know, the mind of the kids, they are not empty vessels.
> They already have knowledge, but you need only to wake up that knowledge on
> them. So that they can gain more.

Policy

The two policy documents also place value on preparation and discuss similar

elements and processes in preparation. *Toward Education for All* emphasizes the

importance of the content knowledge of the teacher as well as his/her knowledge of the

learners, stating, "What teachers do must be guided both by their knowledge of the

concepts and skills to be mastered and by the experiences, interests, and learning

strategies of their students" (*TEFA*, p. 10). It again mentions the importance of the

teacher's mastery of the content when stating that pre-service teacher education should:

> Provide the student with sufficient breadth in curriculum content and depth in
> selected subject areas to be able to identify and select basic knowledge content for
> learners, and to organize and sequence content and learning situations
> appropriately. (p. 82)

Armed with solid content knowledge, the teacher is expected to also know and

follow the curriculum, as noted in the *Broad Curriculum*:

> It is to be used by schools and teachers to guide the planning, organisation and
> implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning at the school. Schools
> have a special responsibility for using this curriculum guide together with the
> various subject syllabuses to identify locally relevant content within a common
> framework. Learners will experience their education as being meaningful for
> them in this way, at the same time as following a curriculum which is common for
> all. (p. 2)

Toward Education for All combines the importance of teachers' knowledge of the

content, curriculum, and learners in one statement:

Teachers must therefore have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to interpret syllabi and subject content in terms of the aims and objectives of Basic Education and to relate these to the learner. Teachers should be able to select content and methods on the basis of a shared analysis of the learner's needs, use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready-made study materials, and thus develop their own and the learner's creativity. (p. 80-81)

Both policy documents place significant emphasis on knowing the learners and drawing on the learners' prior knowledge and interests when planning lessons. While keeping the curriculum and syllabus in mind, they should "tailor a lesson's objective to the needs, interests, and abilities of the students in their classes" (*TEFA*, p. 38). The *Broad Curriculum* states that "It is the teacher's responsibility to find out what the learners are interested in, and to plan learning activities which cater for those interests and which are meaningful to the learner" (p. 27) and explains that, when planning, the teacher should take into account that:

> One of the concerns of the learner-centred curriculum is to take into account the experience of the learners. Experience is the sum of what children have heard, seen, felt and done. Even very young children have a rich store of experiences. Building on the learners' experiences is a sound way of ensuring interest and leading into new, significant and practical learning. (p. 27)

Similarly, Toward Education for All includes the following statements:

> Teaching begins with the interests of the learners, their level of maturity, their previous experiences, and the nature of the subject being taught. (p. 60)

> It is the teacher's responsibility to discover the learners' interests and to plan learning activities that address and build on those interests. (p. 60)

It is clear, then, that the policy documents include an expectation that teachers who are prepared would have sufficient knowledge of the content, the curriculum, and of their learners – an expectation that was also discussed by the teachers.

Planning Lessons
" . . . the person has to make lesson plans, write, or let me use the word preparation. You have to do preparation before you go for teaching."
(Charles, Rural School 2)

The importance of planning for lessons was discussed by most of the teachers, particularly writing lessons plans, or "daily preparation". While mentioned by some ministry officials, lesson planning – particularly creating written lesson plans – was not discussed very much in the policy documents. In this section, then, I will begin by presenting the elements that the teachers felt were important when planning lessons, and will then turn to the discussion that was present in the policy documents.

<u>Teachers</u>

Many of the teachers discussed planning lessons as perhaps the most essential part of being prepared, combined with preparing and bringing appropriate teaching materials. As the principal of Town School said, "Good quality teaching is when the teacher is prepared . . . A teacher needs to prepare him or herself by doing daily preparation and knowing the subject itself." Aune, from Town School, also touched on the importance of the lesson plan itself, saying (as quoted in the previous section) "you have to look at, to the lesson, the format of the lesson. And also you have to follow the step she write on her lesson . . .".

Teachers in the focus groups also described the preparation of teaching materials as an important part of this process:

> Teacher, Rural School 1 Focus Group: I think a good teacher is just coming with
> a task well-prepared. You come well-prepared, making teaching aids,
> understanding the pupils and so on.

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Teacher, Town School Focus Group: And, um, generally, for better lesson, interesting for the learners, you have to prepare yourself well, and use the teaching aids, the right ones.

Charles also discussed the importance of daily preparation:

Charles (Rural School 2, Focus Group): So, to be well-prepared I mean that the person has to make lesson plans, write, or let me use the word preparation. You have to do preparation before you go for teaching. And then you have to develop some activities which are to be done by the learners. And then, I think also even at the end you have to reflect on the lesson, so that you can get and if it's possible, the lesson was not good, then you re-teach the lesson.

Charles' discussion also brings in the idea of reflection, reflecting on the day's lesson in preparation for the next lesson. Justina mentions this as well, describing how reflecting on previous lessons should be a part of the lesson planning process:

Justina (Rural School 1): . . . As I'm preparing for the next topic, then I have to reflect – why should I start here? At the beginning of the lesson plan there is, what do you think learners know, the prior knowledge of the learners. That one should be, it should come after maybe a reflection of the other, the previous day.

When discussing the lessons I had observed, a number of the teachers mentioned that what they would do in future lessons would come out of their reflections on that day's lesson. Peter discussed this:

Peter, (Rural School 2):   . . . when a teacher left a lesson or a classroom after the completion of the activity for the day, he or she is asking himself different questions based on the activities which were, you know, being done in the lesson. Yeah, and so one of those answers are the ones would be, you know, set in the other lessons to come.

While Justina and Peter speak about a reflective process involved with lesson planning, and some of the other teachers mentioned other important preceding factors and processes, such as knowing the learner and knowing the content, many of the teachers and other school staff emphasized the lesson plans themselves as a tool for evaluating teaching. In each of the schools, the teachers were responsible for submitting their

weekly lesson plans, or daily preparation, to the principal or subject heads to review. At

Town School, for example, Loide is the subject head for the local language, and she

collects the week's lesson plans from each of the teachers of that subject each Friday to

review. Those are a lot of lesson plans to go through, and Loide told me that,

"Sometimes I can read them, or . . . or check whether they have done." The principal at

Rural School 2 also discussed how the teacher's lesson plans were checked, indicating

that this was common practice:

> Principal, Rural School 2: . . . in Namibia we used to write a lesson plans, so the
> principal also needed to check that lesson plans per week, or twice a week or once
> a week. Then at our school we just do it once a week.
> *Wendi: But you yourself?*
> Principal: Yeah.
> *Wendi: All of them?*
> Principal: Yeah. But, lucky enough now, I'm having HOD, some of them are . .
> . delegate that be checked by the HOD. For . . . those who are under his
> department . .

These comments indicate that writing out a lesson plan in preparation for teaching was

greatly stressed, though it is not clear how thoroughly the other elements of preparation

would, or could, be reviewed.

Policy

While all of the principals mentioned daily preparation as an important part of

preparation, and had some system for reviewing lesson plans in their schools, lesson

plans per se were not particularly stressed in the policy documents, and were discussed

some, but not extensively, by ministry officials. The Circuit Inspector and one of the

ministry officials mentioned that lesson plans were used as one of the elements that

should be considering when looking at the quality of teaching.

Circuit Inspector: . . . You sit there and you listen to what the teacher is presenting and you are also looking at the administration of the subject. Like, does the teacher do the daily preparation . . .

The Ministry Official was describing new national standards that were being drafted, and what they included, and mentioned, "you ask things like quality of the lesson plan, you know . . . adequate human resources."

While the policy documents do not emphasize the writing of lesson plans specifically, the *Broad Curriculum* does stress the importance of preparing by setting learning objectives and identifying materials that will best support those objectives:

> 10.5.3 Once the teacher has clarified the learning objectives for a lesson or sequence of lessons, the most appropriate materials must be decided upon. A chart, a book, a poster, a film, or an audio cassette utilised in a well-planned lesson can all be considered as vehicles to deliver a specific message, to get the learners to reflect over things, and promote understanding. It is very important to clarify exactly what it is that the learners are to understand. It could be information (such as the names of rivers in Namibia), a concept (like the importance of water for human, animal and plant life), or a skill (like irrigating a garden plot). It could be attitudes such as being honest, hardworking and loyal. (*Broad Curriculum*, p. 28)

In sum, the policy documents clearly stress the importance of preparation, but explicit discussion of preparation focuses mostly on the knowledge and attributes the teacher should bring with them rather than on the specific processes of planning and preparing for lessons. The teachers, however, place great emphasis on lesson planning – not surprising, since their written lesson plans are apparently used by principals and inspectors to evaluate them.

Orientations of Instruction that are Valued

Some of the teachers, as well as the policy documents, discussed quality teaching in the classroom on two levels: an abstract notion of the orientation, or type, of instruction that they valued, and the more concrete approaches they felt contributed to quality teaching in the classroom. In this section, I will explore the themes that came under this more abstract perspective: that instruction should be *interesting and relevant* and that it should emphasize a *deeper understanding*, rather than memorization or a more superficial acquisition of facts.

Interesting and Relevant

"And that is quality education, when learners know what is going to be . . . what is . . . if things are functionable or useless."
Rural School 2 Focus Group

Looking across the teachers and the two policy documents, there is agreement that instruction should be interesting and relevant, that it should engage and motivate the learners, and also that it should connect to real-life, both in terms of their current life outside the classroom and the need to connect their education to their lives in the future. I will begin by exploring the ways in which the teachers discuss this orientation, and will then illustrate how the policy documents discuss very similar ideas.

<u>Teachers</u>

A number of the teachers emphasized that it was important for lessons, for instruction, to be interesting to the learners, to engage and motivate them. Peter, for example, explained that he had chosen to use a national student newspaper in the lesson I

observed, because the learners would feel it was relevant, it would be more interesting to

them than a typical textbook:

> Peter (Rural School 2): Yes, it's good also to . . as a teacher, sometimes to mesh, you know, the interest of the learners, when you are bringing a topic in to discuss, because some of the topics might be old or far, you know, or not even . . . Yeah. . . .Like this one belongs to the ministry, open talk. And these are nice things, they are even happening in some of the magazines, you find people talking about their problems. At their age there.

A little later he adds:

> . . . but it must also be something which also opening their mind, something which is also moving around, you know, the immediate environment, the immediate conditions and situations, like girlfriends, those things, you know, and boyfriends, and problems. Yeah, learners can get interesting in those things . . .

When the Principal of Rural School 2 mentioned the importance of preparation, he

simultaneously stressed the importance of making the lesson interesting and inviting:

> Principal, Rural School 2: Yeah, mentally, he just give them again how to think, like maybe, when you come to the class. He wants to introduce a certain topic. So, to make that lesson, *to invite the learner to be interested* [emphasis added], he must first prepare very well, he brings some teaching aids, whereby which make a learner to say, oh, if I'm having this I can do what with this, so . . and the learner can think quickly, because they're having something stimulating his mind, to think.

Some of the teachers discussed how making sure the lesson was interesting to the

learners would ensure that they paid attention and would motivate them to participate.

Peter, who was clearly enthusiastic about the idea of keeping lessons interesting,

discussed how he might use games to do this:

> Peter, Rural School 2: So now I use also, you know, this strategy of teaching of teacher B, in order to, you know, to motivate my learners indirectly. Learners are being motivated, but they can't see it. Sometimes also, if you want to teach by including the philosophy, you have also to focus on teaching with games. It's very important. Because learners, they can repeat something, but if you ask a learner in the class without being taught in a game, he won't even repeat anything. He's afraid of others, even the teacher whatever. Repeat the concept, she's just quiet. But if they are doing something in the game, they end up saying, ay, good

morning boy, good morning boy. Hello, good morning, but they don't know –
they are not aware that they are repeating, what they are doing is a repetition.

He further describes the importance of bringing in interesting teaching aids, such as the

newspaper he discussed earlier, or even plants or other real-life objects:

> Peter: It's [The textbook] useful. But what you have to be in mind is that learners
> sometimes, they hate something which is being used always in a lesson . . .
> They're getting tired of something. Just like somebody getting tired of a color . . .
> And it's a problem. Always black, black, black, black – green, green, green.
> Why? People should be different. That's why also in the school, in the situation
> which are happening in a classroom, people are also getting tired of being taught.
> So you have to bring sometimes newspaper, sometimes NAMPEP [the English
> textbook], sometimes the other books, sometimes just a copy made from
> something else which, you know, match the objectives of the lesson which are
> there in the scheme of work.

Anna explained how she might motivate learners and keep their attention by asking them

to explain their own work to the class, which I had observed her doing in her class:

> Anna, Rural School 2: Oh, it will help because learners, when learners explain,
> learners they will be interested, because they know if I give a wrong answer, if
> I'm just saying two when maybe I'm not listening, then . . . then I just say five,
> the teacher will ask me why five. So, learners, sometimes you can encourage
> them to pay attention more.

> Teachers indicated that interesting and motivating learners might help ensure that

they pay attention and learn in a particular lesson, but also that it could encourage them to

become engaged in education more generally, so that they would see its relevance and

continue to be motivated. Loide touches on this in her interview:

> Loide, Town School: Okay, you can, you can see my . . . if you can . . . catch up
> that, my content, my teaching . . . my control of the learners . . . my influencing .
> . . . to the learners to interest . . .to be interested in the education, or the lesson . . .
> my what, my individual what . . . my contact with the learners also.

One of the teachers in the focus group at Rural School 2 also discussed how showing a

lesson's relevance would motivate learners, both in the current lesson and for education

more generally:

It's also, when you are teaching and explaining the importance of the lesson to the learners' future, because most of, you know, us, when we are teaching, we teach learners to, you know, pass the examination, or pass the examination to be given. Sometimes we have to forget that, we also need to explain the importance of the topic of the lesson, you know, aspects in the lesson for the learners' future education. I'm teaching mathematics, and I'm teaching about, what's called angles, this is 90 degree, I want 80 degree. I should have, you know, to teach them also, why should I have to teach those to the learners – what is important, what this can . . . carry in this . . . in the future vision for theirs. And so, I will tell them about that one. They will ask, why we, why are we, why are we at school being taught these kind of things. And then I tell them, these can be used . . . whereby, one day you'll finish school, one day you'll become a soldier. You will know how to shoot. If you shoot like this, this is the 90 degree, that's what you call right angle, and this is, you see? The function of what you are teaching in school, it can encourage our learners. And that is quality education, when learners know what is going to be . . .what is . . if things are functionable or useless.

Another teacher in the focus group echoed this, giving an example of how learners should be shown how what they are learning in school is useful, that it is relevant to real life:

Male Teacher, Rural School 2 Focus Group: In accounting, if we are teaching cash books, we have to tell that these are the cash books that are using in really life, in daily activity, like at the bank, like at a shop, like where . . . different. If these students become educated, they must know these things, they are really, you know, existing in life.

Policy

Both policy documents include many statements that echo the ideas that the teachers have expressed, emphasizing the importance of instruction that is interesting and relevant to the learners. *The Broad Curriculum* states this quite directly:

Children respond best when they are interested in the things they are learning. It is the teacher's responsibility to find out what the learners are interested in, and to plan learning activities which cater for those interests and which are meaningful to the learner. (p. 27)

The Broad Curriculum expresses this further:

The learners must feel that what they learn is relevant. They will only experience the curriculum as relevant if the knowledge, skills and values to be acquired are

meaningful to them. If they feel that what they learn and how they learn it is significant, interesting, and useful, they will enjoy learning more and put more effort into it. What is taught and learnt must be relevant both to the needs of learners and society. (p. 14)

Toward Education for All also further describes the importance of making

instruction interesting and relevant, or meaningful, to learners:

Teaching begins with the interests of the learners, their level of maturity, their previous experiences, and the nature of the subject being taught. Our emphasis must be on the quality and meaningfulness of learning. Hence, our teaching methods must strive to facilitate and encourage learning. Accordingly, our approach to learning and teaching should be learner-centred, which means that:
– the natural curiosity and eagerness of all young people to learn to investigate and to make sense of a widening world must be nourished and encouraged by challenging and meaningful tasks (p. 60)

As one of the ministry officials explains, quality teaching will involve knowing the

learners and motivating the learners according to their needs and in a way that is

meaningful to them:

Ministry Official: [The teacher] is a person who is well-informed, or at least he's aware of the diverse needs of the learners. And, and, to fulfill those needs in ways that are meaningful for every learner. Yeah. . . . So, it all boils down to teaching, motivating learners, encouraging learners to set their goals, encouraging learners to also look forward, apart from personal development, they should inculcate in the learners, ideas that would also help develop their own communities.

Deeper Understanding
"It's not good you just learn something, but you know it as a poem."
Titus, Town School

In addition to believing that instruction should be interesting and relevant, some

of the teachers, and particularly the policy documents, stressed that it should also focus

on a deeper, more thorough understanding of the content, particularly in comparison to

the rote memorization that was typical before independence. I will first present the ways

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in which the teachers discussed this theme, and then look at how it is discussed in the

policy documents.

<u>Teachers</u>

The teachers that discussed the need to stress a deeper understanding were

mindful of the contrast with traditional, pre-independence instruction. Peter gives an

example of this comparison when discussing how two teachers, A and B, might approach

the teaching of novels:

> Peter, Rural School 2: Because, if I . . .let me say, if I'm going to teach about, about novel books, I can teach in the way teacher A is teaching, like I bring all maybe 10 or 20 novel books to the class, in my lesson, when I'm teaching language for example. Then I want them to read, and from there I ask exactly as what is in the novel books. Learners are able to tell me, if you are there to supervise me, they will say yes, we have been taught. But, they have never been taught because they are just saying which is in the book, they did never using their own opinion, never even thinking critically. They were just reading things provided and giving the exactly answer. Then I say, yeah, my learners know, they know how to read. Sometimes, this is how teacher A used to, to teach. If I am focusing on one of my philosophy that I want learners to know, know the world behind them, or the country where they live. So, I have sometimes to teach differently, like teacher B again.

Another teacher in the focus group at Rural School 2 echoed this idea, emphasizing that

learners' performance should be expected to go beyond regurgitating answers:

> So, master in that sense, I mean that the learners when they're asked at the end, they are able to explain that, no, if you ask them a question referring to the topic, they can still give you answers, even after weeks, or even after some time . . . they can still give you, even developed their own . . if it's sentences they were doing, they can add and make another sentences too. So that one is good quality . . . you know, giving them quality education.

While Anna described her requirement of learners to explain how they got their answers

as a way to motivate them, she also explained that this enabled her to make sure they

really understood what they were doing:

> Anna, Rural School 2:. . . some of the learners cannot . . . .you can ask them, what's the answer, they said two. So that person just think of two, did not even calculate – just say any answer which comes in their head, they said it. So you can say, but how did you get this, so they have to explain.

Titus sums up the importance of emphasizing and encouraging a deeper understanding quite well:

> Titus, Rural School 1: It's not good you just learn something, but you know it as a poem" – knowing a poem without knowing the meaning of it, that's to make . . . that make you to go further. But, knowing the poem and know the meaning of the poem, then it means that you know something.

Policy

While many, but not all, of the teachers emphasized instruction for deeper understanding, the policy documents greatly stress the importance of going beyond the rote memorization and regurgitation so common in the past. *Toward Education for All* states:

> . . . to address the problems we face and to lay the foundation for a self-reliant and prosperous Namibia we need our young people to go beyond relying on what they have read or been told. Indeed, learning is more than memorizing and repeating. Our children need to learn to think independently and critically. They must master strategies for identifying, analyzing, and solving problems. (p. 119)

It also states that teaching must aim toward "a methodology that promotes learning through understanding and practice directed towards the autonomous mastery of living conditions" (p. 120).

The policy documents are particularly explicit about advocating a deeper, critical understanding when discussing the way that learners should be assessed, the kinds of skills and performance that should become the focus. *Toward Education for All* stresses that the assessments that were used in the education system before independence worked against the kind of deeper understanding that the reforms sought to foster:

although we say we want our students to develop their ability to think critically, to compare and contrast, to analyse, to synthesise, to imagine, and to innovate, in practice our principal measure of progress checks on none of those abilities. (p. 125)

It goes on:

It is possible to design examinations that stress concept formation, analytic skill, the ability to integrate diverse understanding, facility at bringing knowledge to bear on unfamiliar themes and settings, and generating new ideas. The philosophy underlying our education reform requires us to move toward examinations of this sort. (p. 126)

In its descriptions of the competencies that education is meant to develop in learners, the *Broad Curriculum* makes clear that the aim is a critical understanding, and that an ability to transfer learning to real-life, novel situations, takes precedence over memorizing discrete facts or regurgitating what the teacher has said. It describes the skills that teachers should look for and assess throughout a number of different "life skill" competency areas:

Interpreting
This competency is based on the learner's need to try and make sense of the world. The teacher will observe and record the learner's growing ability to classify things according to similarities and differences, to put things in context, to synthesise, to see connections between things, to sort out what is relevant and essential and what is not, and to understand the meaning of things.

Applying knowledge and skills
This competency is based on the learner's need to put knowledge and skills into practice. The teacher will observe and record the learner's growing ability to act on things learnt, to perform practical tasks, to use tools and equipment, to measure things, to see what action should be taken on the basis of knowledge and experience, and to act creatively, considerately and responsibly.

Valuing
This competency is based on the learner's need to find out and decide upon the importance and worth of things. The teacher will observe and record the learner's growing ability to be appreciative, to be critical, to weigh up alternatives, to make decisions, choices and judgements, and to evaluate opinions, beliefs, ideas and processes. (pp. 10-11)

Summing up many of the attributes discussed in this section, *Toward Education for All* poses questions that demonstrate the types of instruction that are valued:

> How successful are our schools in helping learners become skilled at using the information they acquire? Do our education programmes enable learners to integrate scattered bits of information into a coherent understanding and then apply that understanding to unfamiliar situations? Do we succeed in making learning itself a self-directed, interactive, exciting, and intrinsically rewarding activity? (*TEFA*, p. 39)

It is quite clear that there is agreement in policy and at the ministerial level as well as among many of the teachers, that instruction in the new education system should be interesting and relevant to learners and that it should foster a deeper understanding – particularly in contrast to the superficial understanding fostered by the old system.

Classroom Approaches

Discussions about classroom approaches that teachers believed exemplified quality teaching, and why they did, were quite rich. Teachers enthusiastically shared specific examples of how quality teaching might look, and how the classroom approaches tied back to the orientations they valued. Much of the teachers' discussions paralleled ideas that were discussed in policy documents and by ministry officials. The three approaches, or themes, that were discussed the most included *letting learners see*, *participation*, and *assessment/following the learner*.

Letting Learners See
"Because they can see, themselves they can see. And they will never forget"
(Town School Focus Group)

The notion of "letting learners see" came up frequently in discussions with

teachers about quality teaching, though there were a few different meanings this took,

including primarily: the use of teaching aids, especially visual aids, and connecting

lessons to real life. While the policy documents do not specifically mention "letting

learners see", they do touch on some of the same approaches discussed by teachers,

particularly the use of teaching aids. I will begin by sharing the teachers rich discussion

of "letting learners see", and will then turn to the discussions in the policy document that

touch on the same theme.

Teachers

Teachers explained that "letting learners see" – using teaching aids and

connecting lessons to real-life – could motivate students and make lessons more

interesting, and also that this could help the learners to understand better. One of the

teachers in the Town School focus group provided an example of a lesson that he had

experienced, and later used as a teacher, that exemplified the idea of using visual aids to

capture the learners' interest, and which he felt would help them to remember the lesson

learned:

> Male Teacher, Town School Focus Group: Anyway, a good lesson . . . for
> example . . is, uh . . teaching air, asking learners, what's air, and the learner will
> answer you, the air is . . . [unclear]. Then, after that you maybe show them
> outside, see that the branch of the trees is moving. What is moving those
> branches of the tree? Then you tell them, this wind . . . that's air. I think wind
> and air is almost the same. The other thing, you can also prepare an experiment to
> find out, for the learner to find out what air is. You may have got a candle, a
> burning candle, a flask, and then a matchbox, you light the candle, then after that I

put the candle on the container which has got water, then all of them they can see what you are doing. Then, after that, you know after a while, maybe the candle will go off . . ..the light will go off . . . Then you tell them, why the light goes off? If somebody knows among themselves that . . then this, in this way, the learner will make very much interesting.
Wendi: Because?
Teacher: Because they can see, themselves they can see. And they will never forget.

When I observed Peter's English class, he had brought a rather simple teaching aid – two tin cans connected by a string. He presented this to the class as a phone and asked for volunteers to speak with each other over this "phone". He later explained why he did this and how it fit with his idea that such teaching aids would help motivate the learners:

Peter, Rural School 2: Mmm hmm . . so, it's something which, which you know, motivating learners to speak, but they are not aware that they are speaking same way if they can speak without it.
Wendi: Because why? Why does it more motivate? Why is it . .
Peter: To motivate them, with this.
Wendi: Why, why do you think it motivates them, that thing?
Peter: Yeah, it's . . it's a kind of . . . telecommunication instrument, which are being used currently, and the learners . . . so, learners will be interesting by using it, even though they are not aware that they are speaking the same way as they are not having it. It's good to bring some that force learners to, you know . . . yeah.

Peter used a teaching aid that represented a real-life object, a telephone. Many of the teachers, in fact, explained that teaching aids that connected to real-life were most helpful for "letting learners see", enhancing both their interest and their understanding. One of the teachers in the Rural School 1 focus group gave an example of this aspect of quality teaching:

Male Teacher, Rural School 1: But, me myself, when it comes to that of your question, I think the quality teaching is only when you come in the class well-equipped with teaching aids, that you can also let the learner to know the really, to bring up the picture of what you are talking about. For example, maybe you are teaching the time – what you can, you have to bring what? The model of the watch, so that the kids can understand really the specific point of what you are talking about.

Hilde and Aune also described how they both felt it was important to use real-life objects

in their maths classes to help learners understand:

> Hilde, Rural School 1: Especially when you are introducing the lesson to the learners for the first time. You'll do it in many topics, like for example, the fractions – you can come up with, like an apple, and you cut it . . . in parts, in four parts, or the parts which you want to cut it, while they come up with the [unclear] themselves, then they come up then, or a mark pen or a highlighter or whatsoever. They can even do it by themselves, so that they can see the clear picture before they go and do it at home.

> Aune, Town School: . . . I like to pick something from the real world . . . to referring from that mathematics world . . . That's the better one. Yes. The learner can cope with it, will take something from the really life, to connect into the mathematics world. Yeah. For them, they can understand it more easily.
> *Wendi: . . . why do you think that is particularly useful?*
> Aune: Yeah, usually what they are . . . I noticed on my former teachers . . . They used only to teach us the formula, but we don't know how it come up, how they get it from . . . the formula. Therefore, we should . . . we used to forget the formula in our heads, because we don't know where is it. But once they are . . . I take like maybe, I take the glass of water. Then I put in another, the big container. Then I set up a certain equation – how many maybe, how many of this cup can fit in that bottle? They can realize a way, how can they come up with it. When I ask them to measure, to calculate the formula of that thing, they know to compare with that, or compare with the small container to the big one, they see where does that come from.

Peter also described how he might use a model of the planets as a teaching aid to teach

geography, which he felt would help them to understand, so that the "picture is clear":

> Peter, Rural School 2: . . . One day I was teaching geography there, I was teaching about the rotation of the earth. Yeah, so I just make something and put a stone, and then I say . . . I do like this . . You see – the picture is already clear, that the earth is just rotating around the sun . . . And the stone will represent the earth, and where I'm standing is the . . . is the sun, in the middle of the system itself. And the earth has to move around the sun. And what connected? What's connected the, you know, the sun and the earth together? The gravitational force . . . Which can be represented by the string itself, that's moving. So, all those things you can make learners understand things which they don't know. Yeah, you can also encourage them.

Some of teachers even described how they could use the learners themselves as teaching aids:

> Hilde, Rural School 1: Even the learners, even the learners themselves, you can use them as teaching aids. And you can also use them in front of the others. By just calling them, by that way they can see the [unclear] picture of the topic which you have to talk about.
> *Wendi: Can you talk a little bit more about how you learn, can use learners as teaching aids. I don't know if you can give an example of that?*
> Hilde: Let me say for instance, that in mathematics now, they are talking about the greater than, less then, or whatsoever, you can even call up a fatter learner and a thin learner, and then you ask them, which one is fatter than the other? Then, in that way you are comparing.
> Male Teacher: That way you can also use, especially mathematically. Maybe for example you are teaching ratios. You are, now you have to compare the number of girls and the number of boys. I can call them, then the number of learners and the number of boys in front of the class, as a teaching aid, you see. So the learners they can see that this is how they can compare, the ratio of boys to girls and girls to boys.
> Female Teacher: You can even use this when you are teaching comparatives and superlatives and so on. Let them to know which one is bigger and smaller and so on. Taller and shorter and so on.

I had observed one of the teachers in her maths lesson, using story problem-type examples that included the learners. When I asked her why she had done this, she connected it back to these ideas of quality teaching, connecting the lesson to real-life:

> Justina, Rural School 1: I'm doing this one because I cannot just put a problem on the chalkboard while the learners do not understand, why is she doing this one. So they must have to get the picture, what is this one? What is that fraction? Then how do you learn to work out the fractions, what? So I wrote one over ten, then multiplied by the number of learners, so they have to see the picture first before we go to the problems themselves.

After a little more discussion about this approach, Justina adds, "It seems to be useful because you are giving the example, the example which the learners themselves can see."

Anna echoes this idea that making connections to something real through the use of teaching aids helps learners to understand the material:

Anna, Rural School 2 Focus Group: Yeah, you can also use the appropriate teaching aids. For example, in the case of business, like today I was teaching about branding and trademarks So, you must at least use teaching aids, so you come up with those things which are new, so the learners can see this is what, so learners can see, so learners can touch it, and the learners also something [unclear] . . . must create some really things that can make some connection between the book and what you are teaching.

Some teachers also emphasize that drawing connections to real-life is important even without teaching aids, because these connections can help learners "see", supporting their understanding because they can link new information to something familiar. One of the teachers in the Town School Focus Group describes how she did this in a social studies lesson:

> Female Teacher, Town School: Um, I tried it in social studies, about transport. How the transport . . . the things of the transport, up to now. How the transport started. What we used that time, during those days. How it started with the [unclear] . . . and these other things . . .what what, up to the airplane. They were so much impressed with the airplane . . . How does it come the airplane, there are the people in the plane. How does it come from the ground and up. So it was really interesting to them.
> *Wendi: Okay. So, what was especially . . . what do you think made that a very good lesson?*
> Teacher: Because they see everything, from the car, airplane, everything they know about it.

As the many examples and descriptions show, the teachers greatly emphasized the importance of letting learners see, particularly using teaching aids, and felt doing this helped them to make instruction more interesting and relevant, and also that it promoted a deeper understanding.

Policy

Although it does not explicitly mention "letting learners see", the *Broad Curriculum* includes discussion of how and why teaching aids should be used in order to support the aims of making instruction relevant and interesting and deepening

understanding. It includes a section on "learning and instructional materials" which

explicitly discusses how this approach addresses those aims:

> 10.5.1 Effective learning and teaching are closely linked to the use of materials (e.g. books, posters, charts, or reworked wire, egg cartons, etc.) and media (e.g. radio, newspaper, audio cassettes, films). The teacher must select and develop the most appropriate materials and media for the learners to enrich and reinforce learning and assist them in achieving the learning objectives.

> 10.5.3 Once the teacher has clarified the learning objectives for a lesson or sequence of lessons, the most appropriate materials must be decided upon. A chart, a book, a poster, a film, or an audio cassette utilised in a well-planned lesson can all be considered as vehicles to deliver a specific message, to get the learners to reflect over things, and promote understanding.

> 10.5.4 It may be necessary and preferable in some cases, for teachers to improvise teaching and learning materials from easily available and inexpensive objects in the immediate environment such as sticks, string, bottle tops, cardboard, etc., provided that they are safe and hygienic. Materials can often be prepared together with the learners, following discussion of the learners' experiences, stories or ideas. Reading materials can be developed from the learners' own creative writing. Some materials will be prepared by specialists, and some will come in the form of textbooks. (p. 28-29)

Toward Education for All also endorses the use of teaching aids:

> The most effective materials are learner-friendly. They meet the learner's needs and are stimulating and easy to use. They engage attention, actively involve the learner, and combine challenge and enjoyment. Materials of this sort are also carefully designed for specific learning objectives, to get a message across, to help learners understand, and to be easy for the teacher to use. (p. 61)

The policy documents clearly have stressed that instruction should be interesting

and relevant and should promote deeper understanding. The *Broad Curriculum* briefly

discusses how teaching aids can be used to these ends, and *Toward Education for All*

does as well, though less so. Both policy documents thus mention the idea of "letting the

learners see", particularly through the use of teaching aids, but there was a much more

extensive discussion of this among teachers.

Participation

" . . . our learners in Namibia need to learn to share their views. They need to learn to participate. They need to learn to discover things for themselves."
(Ministry Official)

Learners participation is another area that was discussed extensively by teachers, and it is also stressed by the two policy documents. Both teachers and policy also stress that such participation is a great departure from instruction in the past, and both discuss numerous reasons why and ways how participation should be encouraged. I will begin here by discussing those ideas that were shared by teachers regarding learner participation and will then present those from the policy documents.

Teachers

Most of the teachers stressed that high-quality teaching involves learner participation. The principal of Rural School 2 describes this idea as part of learner-centered teaching, and as contrasting significantly with instruction in the past:

> Principal, Rural School 1: Like Namibia now we have, this one learner-centered, whereby the learner must be given a lot of activity to do in the lesson, they do . .a lot of activity to participate . . . involved . . . so that they can . . . where they can just facilitate or somebody who gave them to do . . . so that you give them a clue . . . yeah, to show them a little bit . . . not a preacher as we had in former, previously in Namibia we were having education one, whereby the teacher always is having a lot, as a . . .you can compare in my [unclear] work, an example, where the learner empty and need to be filled. But now it's not like that. Yeah. We must consider, the learners must be . . . do something. So 75 percent for learner and 25 for teacher in the lesson.

There were a number of different benefits that the teachers mentioned as deriving from learner participation, including increasing learner interest, as well as providing opportunities for learners to "discover for themselves" and to learn from each other.

Some teachers also stressed the importance of encouraging equal participation among

learners, with an emphasis on gender equity.

Peter, who consistently emphasized the importance of supporting and maintaining

learners' interest and motivation, described how a teacher might use participation in

groups to get the learners actively involved and interested in the lesson:

> Peter, Rural School 2 Focus Group: . . . when it comes to speaking when you are teaching language, it's good, because it's always when you give different topics . . . [unclear] about the classroom. You give topics like you want to test their own ideas and opinions, attitudes, feelings, to certain events happened in the real life, or sometimes it might be the same thing that happened . . .like, you ask whether a certain, you know, town should be built at, you know, a place where there a lot of people, most of those people are farmers. Now, you should have them to debate, the learners in small groups . . . Some should be given some people from the municipality. Other groups should be members of the community where the tower is to be built. And others should be also the farmers, just the farmers, discussing the farmers problem. Because there are a lot of people there, some are farmers, some are just people. These are also . .
> *Wendi: So you're giving them a role to play?*
> Peter: Yeah, give them different roles. Yeah. Constructors, because, you know, constructors must be paid each month when they are constructing . . . something like that. There you can find learners are very active, because everybody is fighting for his own topic, and that is what you call competition, really it's something like a game. Now they are active enough to say, okay I'm going to do this . . . different topics are given to different groups. And they might be very interesting.

Another teacher at Rural School 2 added that using participation through group work

might motivate more learners to participate, including those who might be hesitant to

speak in front of the whole class:

> Female Teacher, Rural School 2, Focus Group : Also on group work . . when we use group work, some learners can be shy to participate free to the teacher, but when they are in groups, you can find they can give their ideas also.

Aune also indicated that making participation an expectation, where learners know they

will be called on to share their answers and explain their work, will help to ensure their

active involvement in the learning process:

Aune, Town School: Yeah, also you know that, why I use that . . . sometimes the learner, sometimes really cope when you are talking, but when you give them something, and you have to tell them, you have to do this work, and you have to present, and you have to tell me that, how you get the answer. You must work out with this.

Beyond simply increasing learners' interest and motivation in class, a number of teachers described how ensuring learner participation can contribute to learning, and particularly to the kind of deeper understanding toward which they are aiming. A teacher in the Rural School 2 Focus Group explained how learning is enhanced when the learners' active participation provides opportunities to build on their prior knowledge:

> Female Teacher, Rural School 2, Focus Group: . . . when you give a certain topic, using their own knowledge. Say for instance I was teaching alcohol and drug abuse, then I will ask them to draw, to illustrate with drawings, how alcohol can result in violence. So, without me giving them information, they just come up themselves, because they know it themselves. So, I think it can also help.

When I observed Anna's class, she had asked some of the learners to find the perimeter of the chalkboard. In our discussion following this lesson, Anna described how combining learners' participation with real-life contexts and materials can be a powerful approach for helping them to discover new things, and ultimately to understand better:

> Anna, Rural School 2: . . . they have to be able to discover . . .if I'm talking of perimeter, so you are talking about this thing, I wanted them to find that, the actual distance, so that we can find that this is the really . . . the meter for . . . the perimeter, the distance around our chalkboard is equal to this.
> *Wendi: Why do think that would be helpful for them?*
> Anna: It's helpful because they can see and they can touch . . . it's real.

She further explains:

> . . . if you give learners chances also to do something . . .let me say now, you are setting, even a lesson about . . . for example, in mathematics, maybe you are teaching about different shapes . . . like three-dimensional shapes and what what, plane shapes, those ones. So, if you are just explaining to the learners, three-dimensional shape is what what, like this, but you are not showing them, you are not making the learner make . . . to come up and make the things, three-dimensional shape, the plane shape, so that they can be able to discover for

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themselves. That it's something can stand on it's own, we call it what what, if it cannot . . . so, learners can easily think . . .

Aune also emphasizes the importance of having learners discover:

> Aune, Town School: Yeah, mine . . . my ideas, like I told you already, the best way now in education is to let our learner to discover things by themselves. You guide them, you give them some information. You give them enough time to read different books. They come up with something by themselves.

Some teachers also emphasized that, when learners actively participate, they can learn from each other. Hilde explains how she likes to use such an approach in her math class, having the learners explain their answers to the class (an approach I saw her use when I observed her lesson):

> Hilde, Rural School 1:. . . I choose that method because, it's good, because maybe you find the learners do it and then go and sit down – the others, the rest, there are also other learners that don't know how she or he come up with that answer. That's why I choose that method, because I think it's better, it teach others also. The moment a learner says the what what, then the others also learn. It's easy for them, then go and sit down. Is this correct? Yes. That's why I think it's better this way.

Peter also tries to use a participatory approach where students learn from each other. After his observed lesson, he explained why he asked students to correct each other, rather than he as the teacher always being the one to correct students:

> Peter, Rural School 2:   . . . It's a good, you know, interest a learner to listen to the other, you know, learners, when he or she is giving a correction. Learners are concentrating very well to listening to the others when they are speaking. Yeah. And it's also a type of encouragement for the other learners, you know, to do the same as the other one who gave the correction to the other person. To do the same thing.
> *Wendi: To also make correction?*
> Peter: Yeah. Most of the learners from there, by getting such good examples, you know, they will keep on doing like that. Some will wish, you know, to give the correction to the other learners when they went wrong, and the other days, and some will find out that, oh, we have also, you know, to learn very hard, you know, to be given a correction from somebody else.

While not always explicitly stated, there seems to be an implied assumption that there is

an added value when students learn from each other, rather than just directly getting

information from the teacher. Aune and Loide discuss more directly how encouraging

learners to actively share their ideas can enhance learning:

> Aune, Town School: Number one, it can give the learner freedom of thinking . . .Yeah, freedom of thinking. And also, it helps also the others who maybe don't have more idea about that topic. When they share the idea, they get more information from the others, not like to compare the old one, you just need to do your own thing only. You won't share the idea from the others. Or just memorizing things you don't understand.

> Loide, Town School, Focus Group: When the learners share the ideas they won't forget. Like, when you're reading the book, it's easy for you to forget, but when you discuss something, you remember that, oh, Hilde say this one and that one, and Toini say this one. Now you, once you . . . something you don't know or don't understand, you have a right to ask whether the others they can help you to understand the things.

Thus, learners may somehow be more motivated when they have an opportunity to hear

each others ideas, may expand their thinking further, may be more open to asking

questions of others, and may even remember the information better.

One other sub-theme under participation that is stressed by a few of the teachers is

the importance of encouraging participation of ALL students, of supporting equity

through participation. This came through perhaps most clearly in relation to gender.

Hilde and Charles both explain why they think it is important to try to get all of the

children to participation, and to emphasize this by gender if necessary. In the lessons of

both of these teachers, I had observed them specifically asking for a girl to participate

when all of the volunteers had been boys, or vice versa. Our discussions afterward led to

their explanation of how equity should be part of participation:

Hilde, Rural School 1: It's very, very important. Because, if you talk of only one gender, it's not good. Maybe you focus on the girls, but the boys – I want to make them equal.

Charles, Rural School 2: . . . you should balance in the class, not only pointing at one side, the girls, but you should also point to the boys also. If you see the boys are quiet, you say, no I want from the boys. If you see the girls are quiet, then you say, no why don't I get the answer from the girls now. That's why I was just referring, because I could see that most of the girls were just keeping quiet instead of taking part in the activity, that's why I used to say that.

Overall, teachers clearly gave importance to participation, expressing ideas that participation could make learning interesting and could support learning, and that it was important to encourage all learners to participate.

Policy

Participation of the learners is also stressed in both policy documents. *TEFA* indicates this when discussing the general approach to teaching, which it says should be learner-centred. Included among the characteristics of learner-centred education it discusses are:

- the natural curiosity and eagerness of all young people to learn to investigate and to make sense of a widening world must be nourished and encouraged by challenging and meaningful tasks;
- learners should be empowered to think and take responsibility not only for their own, but also for one another's learning and total development; and
- learners should be involved as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth. (p. 60)

These attributes depict the learners as active participants in the classroom. Similarly, and somewhat more explicitly, the *Broad Curriculum* encourages active learner participation, while also stressing that a variety of methods should be used to achieve this:

10.1.1 Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process, and the teaching methods used should be chosen to encourage the active involvement and participation of the learners. Teachers should structure lessons appropriately for each task. There should be variation in the organisation of the

class according to which will be optimal for the task in hand: individual work, work in pairs, small groups, larger groups or the whole class. There should be variation between teacher directed, teacher facilitated, and learner directed work, depending on which is the most effective in relation to the learning objectives and content of the lesson. (p. 26)

It further states:

A variety of techniques will be used, such as direct questioning, eliciting, explaining, demonstrating, challenging the learners' ideas, checking for understanding, helping and supporting, providing for active practice and problem solving, etc.

As learners take on increasing responsibility for their learning, they can participate in planning their work ahead for a topic or project, and evaluate the process together with the teacher on its completion. When planning teaching that will take into account the needs of learners and provide for their participation, the following should be the point of departure. (p. 26-27)

And the policy documents make clear that equitable participation is of great importance,

particularly gender equity. As the Broad Curriculum states:

Gender equity is not just a question of equal opportunity in receiving a common curriculum, or equal opportunity of choice of optional subjects. It is also a question of being treated equally in the classroom, and seeing that men and women are treated equally in the school as a whole. Teachers must be aware of the ways in which boys/girls often become favouritised in classroom interaction, and ensure that their teacher role is one which promotes gender equity. (p. 27)

In line with the policy documents, as well as the teachers ideas, one of the

comments made by a ministry official perhaps best summarizes the importance of

participation:

[The learners] need to learn to participate. They need to learn to discover things for themselves. That's why this particular philosophy was preferred. So that the learners can be more actively engaged in activities, they should ask questions, they should be given tasks to go out to explore for themselves.

Assessing/Following the Learner
"So you have always when you teach, you have to evaluate your teaching by giving some task to the learners."
(Principal, Rural School 1)

Closely connected to the need many teachers saw for knowing the learner and taking the learners' prior knowledge into consideration when planning, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, some teachers and both policy documents also stressed the importance of following the learners, of assessing their learning in class as well as in more formal tests or examinations. The policy documents, as I will show, place great emphasis on this theme, and speak more extensively about it than do teachers. I will start with teachers, though, to present what they say about assessment and following the learner and then will turn to what the policy documents have to say.

<u>Teachers</u>

The two main reasons that the teachers who discussed this theme gave for assessing and following the learners' performance were to see which students needed additional assistance, which they felt responsible for giving as much as possible, and to reflect on their own instruction and see whether they might need to make adjustments in future lessons.

Justina explained that using daily class-work as informal, in-class assessments helped her to identify those who needed extra help:

> Justina, Rural School 1: . . . Sometimes they said no, I don't understand, then I have to ask what is it you do not understand? Then I have to repeat again. But most of the time you can ask them, do you understand? They are saying, yes we understand – but they don't! . . . One thing which has solved the problem, just by giving the work for them to do, so that we can see which one understands, which one does not understand. And after that one, you can now work with those who do not understand.

Wendi: Okay. So how you do you work with . . . for those students who do not understand, how do you help them?
Justina: I can help them . . . for instance, to be left, or to stay, after school, one of the days after school, even they are not in the study [period, after school].

Aune also explains how she feels responsible to identify and then offer more help to those learners who do not understand:

> Aune, Town School: Yeah, you have to walk around to all the learners, you know so that this person is right, and sometimes if I know that maybe most of the learners, they don't understand – those who understand, they can stand up and go sit at the back, then I give them extra work. And for those who don't understand, I will say come closer to me, then I give something so that they can understand.

> In another discussion, Aune describes how an understanding of her learners and their abilities prompts her to work to provide the support they need, whether through additional help for certain students, or through adjusting her instruction as she feels is necessary:

> Yeah, it can change, depend to the kids you have. You know that some kids they are . . . you gets one class, most of them are slow learners, and we have also experience that some kids they are come from the lower primary to the senior primary, but they don't know how to read properly. They know how to read that time-table, but they can't catch the idea within the sentences, that's the main point. But if you have those kids, you need more time, you need to put more effort, you need to go beyond the syllabus, because they are stay behind to the others.

One of the teachers from the Rural School 1 focus group echoes this idea of reflecting on student performance in order to adjust instruction, explaining that a teaching strategy may be judged effective through its impact on the learners – whether they have understood the material and whether they have participated:

> Male Teacher, Rural School 1, Focus Group: Yes, I say that – you know, I have to know that this strategy is very effective, due to what? Due to the understanding of the learners. Through their participations. That will give me the impression that, okay this one, I did it, I think I did it well. Yeah.

And the principal of Rural School 1 also described how assessments of learner

performance should be used by the teacher to reflect on his/her instruction, and to make

adjustments where necessary:

> When you give your lesson – after giving your lesson, you do some assessments, you find that your learners did not . . . get the right . . .what they're supposed to have . . . right questions and so forth. So you have always when you teach, you have to evaluate your teaching by giving some task to the learners.

Charles and Peter also both stress that assessing the learners, whether formally or very

informally in the classroom, allows the teacher to see what has gone well and what may

need to be adjusted in his/her instruction:

> Charles, Rural School 2: . . . without reflection, if a person does not reflect, so that is why you, most of the people end up, it's like the learners are failing, because a person does not reflect on his teaching. He only says, me I'm teaching the class, I know how to teach, but he does not go back to himself, maybe the mistake comes from the teacher, the teacher just only say, open on page what, then goes out. That's not teaching. So at the end of the day, he says, no I thought the lesson was very good. Which, of which the teacher did nothing. So it's better for, when a teacher is reflecting, it's like . . .like how I always reflect on my lesson – I'll spend more time thinking, it's like I'm viewing the whole lesson, how I did everything.

After the classroom observation, Peter explained how he would adjust his lesson plans

based on problems he saw that the learners were having during the lesson:

> Peter, Rural School 2: Yeah, because even if you check my lesson plan, it's disturbed because of that problem. I was supposed to teach something written, you know, in writing.
> *Wendi: You decided you need to . . .?*
> Peter: Because they are there in the scheme of work, but learners still did not knew them very well, so I have to go back . . . That's why my lesson plan is . . . change, but I will come again in this one . .
> *Wendi: But you're basing it on what you saw in the class?*
> Peter: Yeah, that's how is it. And that's what we call reflection.

Peter and Charles both explained that lesson plans could not be thought of as static and

unchanging, that instead they must make adjustments as necessary while teaching,

depending on the response of learners and the situation. As Peter put it:

> Peter, Rural School 2:   . . . I believe also in practice. It means that even you plan
> something, it's not really that you are going to based on your planning, because
> things can happen in the situation. The situation can tell you, you know. Because
> changes are according to the conditions in the teaching and learning.

He later added:

> Because also, you know, the successful teacher is the one who is using a variety
> of teaching methodologies within, you know, a purpose of something which he is
> aiming to obtain or to get at the end.

Coupled with the need to consider learners prior knowledge when planning a lesson,

many teachers felt that it was necessary to assess and follow the learners, observing their

progress to see where extra help was needed and to evaluate and re-focus instruction

where necessary.

Policy

A fair amount of attention is paid to assessment in the two policy documents.

According to the *Broad Curriculum*, "In learner-centred education, assessing the progress

and achievements of each learner continuously is an integral part of the teaching and

learning process" (p. 32). Both the *Broad Curriculum* and *Toward Education for All*

include sections that are devoted to the discussion of assessment, particularly in an effort

to contrast the previous examination system, which were high stakes formal examinations

and placed an "emphasis on failure". These sections described the benefits and uses of

assessment, especially continuous assessment, with an emphasis on using assessment to

provide information to the teacher to follow the learners' progress in order to review and

improve instruction and to offer additional support where necessary, as well as to provide

information to the learners themselves.

When presenting the purposes of assessment, the *Broad Curriculum* states:

The progress and achievements of the learners can be used by the teacher to evaluate the teaching and learning process in terms of relevance of content, learner participation, appropriate methods of teaching, optimal use of group work, individual work, teacher directed teaching etc. (p. 32)

Both the *Broad Curriculum* and *Toward Education for All* endorse formative assessment,

and assert that the information from such assessment should be used by the teacher to

"improve teaching methods and learning materials" (*Broad Curriculum*, p. 33; *TEFA*, p.

129).

Both documents include discussion of the importance of following the students'

progress in order to identify those who need additional support and to offer that support.

When presenting the purposes of assessment, *Toward Education for All* states that one of

these purposes is to "inform teachers of problems and guide ensuing compensatory

teaching" (p. 128), and describes appropriate uses of examinations, which include:

to enable students to see what they have accomplished and where additional study is necessary. Teachers can also use the diagnostic information to determine appropriate supplementary or remedial strategies. (p. 125)

Both documents assert that assessments should be used as diagnostic tools to help

identify where additional help is needed and that the teacher has a responsibility to

provide such help. The *Broad Curriculum* explains:

Compensatory teaching is the teaching given by the class or subject teacher to learners who seriously under-achieve or are low-achieving, in order to improve their levels of achievement. Compensatory teaching can be given by the class or subject teacher, and the teacher can also tap other human resources to provide compensatory teaching. These could include the learner's peers, older learners, community volunteers, educated/literate parents, retired teachers, etc. (p. 39)

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And further:

> The needs of all learners should be catered for, and any problems identified as they arise, so that appropriate support may be built in to school work. (p. 39)

Similarly, *Toward Education for All* states:

> at each stage compensatory teaching will be provided by class or subject teachers for learners who are not making satisfactory progress in order to improve their levels of achievement. Often, special assistance of that sort will enable learners who are experiencing difficulties to progress with their class rather than being held back. (p. 62)

An additional purpose that both policy documents discuss for assessment is of providing information to the learner about his/her strengths, weaknesses, and progress.

The *Broad Curriculum* presents this as one of the primary purposes of assessment:

> The information gathered about the learners' progress and achievements should be used to give feedback to the learners about their strong and weak points, where they are doing well, and why, and where they need to try more, how, and why. (p. 32).

Both documents advocate that assessment has a "formative role for learners" if it "motivates them to extend their knowledge and skills, and establish sound values" and "promotes good study habits" (*Broad Curriculum*, p. 32-33; *TEFA*, p. 129).

The Policy documents thus placed emphasis on assessment, which makes sense given the shift to continuous assessment and the need to explain and support this shift away from singular year-end exams. Some, but not all, of the teachers seemed to also view assessment as quite important for many of the same reasons, though none of them mentioned providing information to the learner about his/her strengths and weaknesses.

Discussion

I have presented numerous themes discussed in teacher interviews and the two policy documents concerning the meaning, or elements, of quality teaching. To facilitate this presentation, I broke these themes into three groups: *Preparation*, which includes knowledge (of the *content, curriculum, and learners*) and planning (including *writing lesson plans, preparing learning materials, and reflecting*); Underlying *orientations of instruction that are valued*, which includes instruction that is *interesting and relevant* and instruction that supports and develops a *deeper understanding*; and, finally, classroom approaches that support those orientations, including *"letting the learners see", learner participation,* and *assessment/following the learner*.

Following this exploration of themes, I then took a larger view in my analysis, looking across teachers and across the policy documents in order to describe trends and observations that come from comparing and contrasting teachers with each other and with policy. In this section, I will discuss the three primary conclusions that arose from this analysis: Collectively, the teachers touch on most of the themes described here and in the policy documents, though the themes of instruction for a deeper understanding and assessment were mentioned less often among teachers; Idiosyncrasy among teachers is again very salient; and, Although teachers discussed most of the themes found in the policy documents, there were a number of differences, particularly differences in the emphasis and depth of discussion by teachers and policy documents about particular classroom approaches.

The first observation that came from this step in analysis is that all three of the overarching groupings, *preparation*, underlying *orientations*, and *classroom approaches*,

were discussed by most of the teachers at each of the schools, and were addressed in policy. In other words, when asked what the definition or elements of quality of instruction are, most of the respondents mentioned ideas that related to all of these areas, and these were also all addressed in policy documents.

It is to be expected that not all themes would be discussed by every teacher. Most of the themes at the next level – *knowledge* and *planning* under *preparation*, *interesting and relevant* and *deeper understanding* under orientations, and *letting the learners see*, *participation*, and *assessment* under approaches – were, in fact, mentioned by almost all of the teachers. The two themes that came up somewhat less frequently than the others (though still by the majority of teachers) were an orientation toward *deeper understanding* (this was not mentioned at Rural School 1) and *assessment*. Both policy documents had some mention of all of these.

Another observation, which parallels those from the discussions of the purpose of education, is that philosophies held by individual teachers about quality teaching seem to be somewhat idiosyncratic. Thus, while many of the ideas about quality teaching are shared among many of the teachers, individual teachers may stress different themes more or less, or may see different ideas as being more or less important. For example, Peter put great stress on the importance of instruction being interesting and on encouraging participation in the classroom throughout my discussions with him. While Aune mentioned these aspects, she put the most stress on the importance of learners discovering for themselves, and thus supporting an understanding that goes beyond the memorization of formulas. Similarly, Hilde stressed gender equity in participation.

Thus, while most of the ideas about quality teaching that come into the policy documents appear to be recognized and shared by most of the teachers, individual teachers may find that particular ideas resonate more for them, and are thus more salient in their own philosophies. Potentially, some teachers may not find many of the ideas resonating with them at all. Also, some elements may be seen as important by two different teachers, but for different reasons. Participation, for example, is discussed variably as an end in itself, as a way of supporting the value of democracy, and/or as a way to make lessons more interesting. This being said, the themes that seemed to cut across the various groups and seemed to resonate with perhaps the most respondents were those of participation, knowing (and following) the learners, and using appropriate teaching aids which connect to real life.

Finally, a number of differences between teachers and the policy documents should also be noted. First, within preparation, fewer teachers discussed the teacher's content knowledge and knowledge of the curriculum as important elements of preparation, as compared with knowing the learner, lesson planning, and preparing learning materials. The policy documents also discuss knowing the learner and preparing appropriate materials, but emphasize the knowledge the teacher should have. Policy documents also do not pay as much attention to how teachers should go about preparing for teaching. In addition, the policy documents mention that it is important for teachers to use a variety of techniques and discuss the utility in sharing information from assessments with learners. Only one teacher explicitly stressed the importance of using a variety of techniques in the classroom. No teachers mentioned that a purpose of formative assessment should be to share information with the learners about their own

learning. Thus, while most of the themes found in the two policy documents were

mentioned by teachers, some important areas are not mentioned, or not very developed,

in teachers discussions. Conversely, some areas are discussed more, and in a more

nuanced way, by teachers than in the two policy documents.

CHAPTER 9: CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS

As I've shown in the previous chapters, teachers have a number of ideas as to what the purpose of education is, what roles teachers should play, and how quality teaching might look. Many of these ideas are also quite in line with the philosophy espoused in the two Namibian education policy documents that I examined. It quickly became apparent, however, that some teachers and many officials at other levels of the education system did not feel that these ideas were sufficiently, and/or consistently, put into practice.

In addition to trying to understand teachers' beliefs concerning the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, I also sought to understand how teachers viewed the connection between these beliefs and their practice. There were a number of ways that I attempted to get a sense of this connection, whether through directly asking teachers how their ideas connected to practice, through asking them to share examples from their own teaching or lessons they had seen, or through reflecting with them on classroom observations. Through such discussion, it became clear that there were a number of factors that teachers felt could hamper their ability to teach in a way that best exemplified their ideals – or, in the converse, could support them.

In this chapter, then, I will turn to these challenges and supports. My approach here is somewhat different from the last three chapters, where I focused only on the interview and observational data coming from the school or ministerial level, and on the two primary policy documents. When trying to understand these supports and challenges better, I generally started with the ideas mentioned by the teacher participants, their

perceptions of the supports and challenges, but expanded from there to include informal

and formal discussions with other teachers, teacher educators, and ministry officials.

This allowed me both to confirm which of the perceptions of the participant teachers

were shared by others in the education system, and to gain a better understanding as to

why these concerns arose. It may not be surprising that many of the discussions centered

on things that were lacking – supports that teachers don't have, which then become

challenges.

In order to organize and present the various themes that arose concerning

challenges and supports to quality teaching, I group them into three categories: Those

that pertain most directly to the *Teacher*, including teacher's *content knowledge*,

pedagogical knowledge, and *communication and collaboration* between teachers; those

that pertain most directly to the *Learners* and the learners' home environment, including

mastery of basic skills, *discipline/motivation*, and *parental/family support*; and those that

are most directly related to more *Systemic* or institutional issues, including *resources* and

support for professional development. In this chapter I will present the themes in each of

these categories, describing why and how teachers felt that they were important as

potential supports, and explaining why most of them are seen as challenges in the

Namibian context.

Challenges and Supports – Considering The Teacher

I start here with the teacher not because I believe those challenges or supports that

pertain to the teacher are the most significant, that systemic issues and family support are

somehow less important, but because this study centers on the teacher. With that in

mind, I will begin this section with two themes that many participants did feel were very important, and which they saw as a challenge in the Namibian context: *the content knowledge* and *pedagogical knowledge* of the teachers. I will then turn to another theme that was not mentioned as much by participants, but which I will argue is still an important potential support to consider: *communication and collaboration* between teachers.

Teacher Content Knowledge

I have already discussed how policy documents and some of the teachers identified teacher knowledge as part of what makes a teacher well-prepared, an ingredient for quality teaching. This theme also arose, however, when discussing challenges and supports, and so I believe it is important to consider here as well – particularly to better understand the contextual factors involved. Putting teachers' discussions together with perceptions shared by teacher educators and ministry officials, it became clear that the level of content knowledge of teachers in Namibia is a serious concern. As one of the teachers told me, there are "some teachers, not only this school, just in general, who don't know the subject content very well." The principal at the same school echoed this sentiment when he commented that there were some teachers with content problems, saying, "So, when they come to classes then, the teachers are finding it very difficult again to understand the subject itself." Another principal also identified this as a problem, pointing towards one of the underlying factors that led to it:

> Principal: You know, uh, up to now, up to now, we still have some teacher who teach with very low qualification, or unqualified, you see. And because now we have no alternative, we just give him to teach that level, if it's not his normal level, you can find a teacher having grade 10 teaching up to grade 10 again.

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Teacher Content Knowledge – Roots of the Problem

The two subjects that I was most concerned with in this research study,

mathematics and English, in fact appear to be particular areas of concern in relation to

teacher knowledge. This is evidenced by the poor results of teachers on the teacher test

portion of the SACMEQ study[46] and makes sense given the historical context. English

replaced Afrikaans as the official language of Namibia, and simultaneously became the

medium of instruction, in 1990. Most teachers don't speak English as a first language,

and many went to school either when English was not the medium of instruction, or

during the transition period (when their teachers wouldn't have had strong English skills).

Mathematics was a subject that black learners once did not have the opportunity to study,

and so there is a weak foundation in this subject. As one of the ministry officials

explained:

> You see the system that we had . . . for example, there was no focus on
> mathematics for instance, mathematics and science . . . In the previous system.
> Because, for certain groups, because apartheid policy says the kind of work that
> you will be doing won't need mathematics and physical science. So, of course,
> this . . . it was also not used, I mean, society also didn't want it.

The fact that there was not a strong base of teachers for these two subjects left the

Ministry of Education and the colleges of education with a conundrum after

independence: There weren't sufficient numbers of secondary graduates who were

highly qualified in these two subjects to meet the needs of schools. As a result, the

colleges of education set entry standards that enabled them to enroll teachers for these

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[46] In mathematics, teachers in Namibia scored the next to lowest of all SACMEQ countries, and only 20%
of teachers nationwide scored at the highest *learner* competency level (only 4% in the Oshana region). In
reading, teachers scored somewhat better, though about 5% of teachers still did not reach the "desirable"
competency level for *learners*.

subjects at a rate that was necessary for meeting demand, but it is questionable whether these standards could ensure that pre-service teacher candidates arrived with sufficient grounding in the subject. As one math lecturer explained to me, even at higher minimum standards that had been recently implemented, "you still find there is a problem of understanding some of the concepts in mathematics".

Teacher Content Knowledge and the BETD

A further, related, conundrum is the need to include the teaching of pedagogy while trying to make up for a weak subject knowledge base among some of the teacher candidates. Not all the pre-service teachers have a weak base, of course, but as one math lecturer told me, "I have a mixture of students. There are some students who don't even understand the basic, basic, basic concepts." The BETD has received criticism from those who see it as being weak on subject content, and focusing too strongly on methodology. As one of the lecturers points out, however:

> I think that problem is that, we, we are a teacher training college, and we assume that, because the teachers we're going to train are going to teach from grade 1 to 10, and they are grade 12 graduates, so we assume that the knowledge that they have, grade 12, I think is sufficient for them to teach from grade 1 to 10."

A further difficulty that some teachers and teacher educators raised was that some aspects of the BETD program may work against ensuring high content standards. After a foundational year, students at the college who are focusing on upper primary choose a major and a minor subject area. Some of these subject areas, however, are grouped so that students might select, for example, Mathematics and Natural Science, or Languages. Theoretically, a student graduating with a major in Mathematics and Natural Science would be qualified to teach either maths or science, and a Languages major could teach

either English or an applicable local language. This means that a teacher who wants to specialize in science must enroll in the Mathematics and Science major – which will then qualify him to teach either science or mathematics – even if he does not like or feel confident in math. Similarly, a pre-service teacher interested in teaching Oshiwambo must take the courses qualifying her for English as well, as part of the Languages major. On paper, she will then appear to be qualified to teach English, even if she is actually poor in that subject. One of the teacher educators described this problem for both math and English:

> But in the case of these combination subjects, it's a big problem, especially for mathematics. Mathematics is integrated with ag . . with science, sometimes, as I told you, a person is just teaching life, life science, you understand? Or maybe he or she is just a teacher of agriculture. Then he or she is forced to take that area . . . with mathematics . . . they are struggling a lot. Yeah, they're struggling . . . the same applies to languages, because if somebody is teaching Oshindonga, he has to apply for languages – it's compulsory, if you are doing languages, then you have to do – here you have to specialize, you have to do English language education, together with Namibian languages. You cannot only . . there's no way that you can only specializing in Namibian languages . . .

This teacher educator felt that the best way to deal with a situation like this was to advise the student to consider changing his/her major. Other teacher educators, however, felt that this was not particularly encouraged. One teacher educator told me:

> but it's up to the person to . . because it's very difficult for me to tell them, don't choose, don't do mathematics . . . It is learner-centered, and democratic system they are trying to implement in Namibia, you cannot tell a person don't do mathematics.

Students also choose a minor area as well, and often end up teaching as much in their minor area as in their major. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 4, many teachers end up teaching in multiple areas: their major area, minor area, and non-promotional subjects

as well[47]. One of the teachers in the Rural School 2 focus group expressed his concern

for this situation and its impact on teachers:

> . . . now we are teaching a lot of different subjects you find that you are going to
> be suffering. You go to this class now, you become ineffective. In other words,
> the person becomes weak, because now he's combining all the skills and, you, we
> are teaching, but you find that at the end of the day, you are now changing from,
> you are now going to take the different subjects, the other style of another subject.
> So at least if a person was going to have one subject, like geography, that's all.
> That's why, in other countries, you find teachers only teaching one subject,
> majoring in one subject. Not taking, majoring in agriculture again, life science
> again, another one, biology or whatever. You find that a teacher becomes weak.

This practice is in fact contrary to policy, which states that "the register [homeroom]

teacher and other subject teachers should be organised as a teaching team, teaching the

same subjects to the class each year, and following the class through the Upper Primary

or Junior Secondary Phase respectively" (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture,

1996, p. 29).

As a result of these various factors, teachers are often spread thin and may be

teaching in areas in which they lack knowledge and confidence. In addition to the

comments that I heard from teachers and officials, I also noticed this problem in some of

my classroom observations (though certainly not in all of them). In some observations, I

saw some indications that the teacher did not fully understand the particular math topic

being taught, or taught a grammar rule incorrectly[48]. For example, I saw serious errors in

two of the maths lessons and observed an English lesson in which the teacher was clearly

neither fluent nor confident in the language. The multiple reasons for this situation are

understandable, and it is probably unfair to let the blame fall only on the pre-service

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[47] As discussed in Chapter 4, "non-promotional" subjects are those which are not examined in grade seven, such as religious education, art, and physical education.
[48] I happened to also observe some pre-service teachers who were doing their practice teaching, and saw examples of this in some of those classes as well. These pre-service teachers were majoring in the subject I saw them teach.

education, since it seems to be a cyclical problem with historical roots – but it is one that needs to be addressed.

Pedagogical Knowledge

Discussions related to pedagogical knowledge generally revolved around learner-centred education. Ministry officials, in particular, clearly felt that it was important for teachers to understand learner-centred education and to know how to implement it. Many participants discussed their perceptions about how, or whether, teachers generally understood and implemented learner-centred education (LCE), and, as I will show, these discussions showed that perceptions were mixed. One area where there was some agreement concerned a popular misconception of LCE: a tendency to equate LCE with group work. In these discussions, BETD and INSET[49] graduates, as well as teacher educators, also shared their ideas concerning the ways in which the BETD program did, or didn't, ensure strong pedagogical knowledge among its graduates.

Pedagogical Knowledge - The State of LCE

There was a somewhat mixed review concerning the question of how well LCE has been understood and implemented. Some participants expressed pessimism concerning the progress made in the adoption of learner-centred approaches. One ministry official, for example, told me:

> But now if you look at particularly the learner-centered education approach in Namibia. To be very honest with you, we have, we did not make that much inroads yet into the issue. Because we still sit with a lot of old school of thought teachers. That's the one thing. And that is maybe why you find that our teaching and learning is not that successful. Because we are still trying to come with the old chalk and talk method. And the learning material is not suitable for that. It is

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[49] Distance version of the BETD, which is used for practicing teachers to upgrade their qualifications.

some . . . it is learning material that, you should handle it. It's not something where you sit and you listen. And you get it in. These are things that you have to work with and interpret. And I think that's one of the reasons that we are not that successful with the learner-centered education.

Others feel that there has been a change and speak more positively about the current situation. Most of the respondents, however, expressed both sides of the coin, explaining that there were many teachers who understood LCE and were doing a good job implementing it, particularly younger teachers who were graduates of the BETD program. One of the ministry officials commented:

> No, BETD graduates, they tend to perform quite well when it comes to learner-centered approach, very quite well. Other factors like, they are quite proficient in English, or you know, they handle the situation in the classroom quite, uh, quite well. And, uh . . and that is . . and that's because the system they were trained, they were trained in the system when the system was implemented earlier.

One of the teacher educators echoed this perception, and also commented on the difference he sees between these younger teachers and older teachers in the system:

> So I have that kind of situation, so, yes, those who are familiar with this learner centered things now-a-days that they are, now, the one's who are becoming grade 12's now. Recent ones. They have a better idea of learner-centered things and how to teach, and how to control class, and, what's happening in learner centered, because they have been practically been into that situation. But those who have done a few years ago where there was no learner centered teaching, and teachers were not qualified to teach certain things and subjects. They find it difficult to grasp it.

A number of participants echoed this comparison between the younger and older teachers, and explained that the older teachers had a more difficult time changing their practice because they were used to the traditional way of teaching, or else didn't understand or appreciate LCE. One teacher educator explained:

> As, you know that . . . many teachers in our country, especially . . . those who graduated in the 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s there. They were trained based on a teacher-centered education, or philosophy. So it's not easy, you know, for them, to switch from teacher-centered to learner-centered because . . . that philosophy is having a really a . . . chronic in their minds.

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A ministry official offered additional reasons that he felt older teachers had more trouble

implementing LCE:

> Especially the older generation of teachers, you know, they don't implement it the
> way it is supposed to be implemented. And that is due to many factors. Their
> qualifications of course, number one. The language proficiency, which is the
> medium of instruction, English, which they are not capable to . . . to speak in the
> proper way as to . . . implement these new policies that the government is coming
> up with – that's another thing.

Charles, however, notes that he sees many of the older teachers in his school

making an effort to learn about and adopt learner-centred approaches, and that they

sometimes even talked with him about it:

> Charles, Rural School 2: Because even now, if you're having this BETD INSET,
> for those old teachers who were not . . . so that, they are now teaching them all
> how to teach this learner-centered education, because most of them, they just only
> used to teach, teach – they don't care about the learners, whether the learners
> know or they don't know, they don't care.
> *Wendi: So, do have a sense if there are some older teachers at this school, do you
> have some sense if they really if they manage to, to adjust to this learner-centered,
> or is this somehow they tend to stay in their old way?*
> Charles: yeah, but like, here, I've noticed that they are trying . . . Trying to make
> learners to take part in the activity.
> *Wendi: How do you . . . how can you tell that, that they are trying?*
> Charles: yeah, it's because you find that when you are just passing, you find a
> person, even a learner asking a teacher a question . . . Eehhh [yes], asking. Or
> you find learners are raising up hands . . . So sometimes you find, although they
> say learner-centered especially is not only group work or participating in lessons,
> but you find the learner presenting a lesson even in front there . . . Asking, trying
> to ask other learners, how, this can help me, what is this?

He later adds:

> So that is how they just only – they used to come, then they ask us. Because, like,
> 2004, at the time I came, 2004, most of them used to approach me most of the
> time, asking me, that, no, how can I help these learners who are quiet in my
> classroom.

So, it seems there is a mix, rather than a monolithic grand conclusion concerning the

adoption of LCE. There is instead something of a continuum, with some teachers

grasping and embracing LCE more than others, and with a general sense that the younger

teachers may be more able to do this than the older teachers.

The Group work Misconception

One of the misconceptions about LCE that appears to be commonly discussed by

ministry officials, teacher educators, and even teachers, is that learner-centred education

is equivalent to group work. As one ministry official put it:

> Some of them [the INSET students] actually equate learner-centred education to group work . . . They would put their learners in groups, and then they don't give learners anything to do, and then they'll say I'm using learner-centered teaching. But what are you teaching? Nothing.

The National Institute for Educational Development has, in fact, undertaken a

campaign to try to dispel this misconception, and it is clear from comments of teachers

that at least some of them have heard the refrain that LCE does not equal group work.

One of the teachers at Rural School 2, for example, mentioned explicitly that, "learner-

centred doesn't mean group work". When examining the discussions among teachers

concerning LCE and group work, however, it is clear that the degree to which this

misconception has been successfully dispelled remains an open question. While a few

teachers explicitly say that group work and LCE are not synonomous, and many are able

to discuss reasons for using group work, some return to talking about group work almost

as a proxy for LCE or seem to believe that you need to be using groups in every lesson in

order to be truly implementing LCE. One of the teachers at Town School, for example,

explained that leaner-centered meant "work in groups. Learners should be in groups so

that they can discuss, they can share the ideas." And, similarly, one of the teachers at

Rural School 1 explained learner-centered teaching:

It's the teacher who can organize learners in different positions. And you give them material maybe, give them material, and their books, and you can introduce the lesson in the presentation and then they should think all together in their groups . . .

In focus groups, teachers had lively discussions about group work and LCE, which often turned towards a conversation about the pros and cons of using groups and about different ways groups could be used. Many teachers were frustrated with some of the challenges of using group work with large classes, or with learners who were far behind, while others offered strategies they had found useful. Thus, while the "misconception" of group work may not be settled, it may have the potential to stimulate a healthy discussion concerning this strategy.

BETD and Pedagogical Knowledge

The BETD program, and the INSET version of BETD, is intended to offer students a strong grounding in pedagogy. In fact, as mentioned, it is sometimes criticized for putting too much emphasis on pedagogy. At the same time, some have claimed it is weak in this area. One of the teacher educators, for example, told me that external evaluators who periodically observed pre-service teachers during their practice teaching sometimes stated that the teachers were methodologically weak (essentially meaning they weren't sufficiently implementing learner-centred education).

Some of the teachers, as well as some of the teacher educators, indicated that there was an emphasis on passing students, and that sometimes meant that students who were not very serious could move through the program too easily. While most of the teachers who were BETD graduates were very positive of the BETD program overall,

some agreed that it was not as rigorous as it could be. One of the BETD graduates

expressed his frustration:

> Okay, so what happens is that, where we are attending training, so you find that some of the tutors, they are not so serious. They only give activities, and say now write an assignment about this. Whether you write an assignment which looks at that . . . you are going to get very nice symbols, so that's where I think maybe they should be improved, because some of the tutors are not so serious.
> *Wendi: So it's easy to get a nice mark or something like that?*
> teacher: Yeah. So, because like what happens, even if you . . ., for example when you observe some primary school where we did our second year training. So the other tutor used even to come late, not even seeing the lesson of this one student. But he's just to come late and ask, oh, how was your lesson? Then writing, outside, even at the car, or even after school, how was your lesson that you got today? Oh the lesson was fine, the lesson was what, then he writes, then give a symbol.

From the teacher educator's point of view, one of the lecturers expressed how he felt

pressured to give good marks to students:

> Teacher Educator: Now, if you get an incomplete, then I as a lecturer have to give you some remedial teaching. I have to help you in whatever way I could assist you as a student . . . teacher. And I would have to make a new test or the new task, which was very similar to the one I gave, and ask you to redo that. So, you are given two chances, for everything. Okay, the rules, there are some regulations that you could be given so many chances only in the term. Things like that. And if you don't qualify then they send APC committee at the college . . . Appraisal and Promotion Committee. And I have to give your name to the committee. And the committee sits, and decides what will take place. But, 90 percent of the time the committee's always in favor of the student rather than in favor of the lecturer. So . . .
> *Wendi: Some how, some kind of pressure to not . . .?*
> Teacher Educator: Towards me, rather than towards the student. So, if I don't want to go in front of the APC committee, I would somehow give that person a complete in the second part. He has received incomplete. Ok, good, I will do some teaching with him, sit with him, do the same paper again. Maybe some similar examples..
> *Wendi: Make sure he has his . . .*
> Teacher Educator: Yeah, and make sure he passes the second term. Doesn't matter he qualifies or he doesn't qualify. I don't care. I don't want to go and sit in front of APC committee.

I was also told that:

> We bring in 300 students every year. Every first year we have 300, plus minus 300 students coming into the system. At the end of 3 years all those 300 go out as teachers. I personally don't believe that all of them are qualified to go out. So you are, I mean, there must be few that don't deserve to be out. But the system is like that, they just, they are thrown into the market. So what will happen eventually, these are the very teachers who will go to schools and make.. It's a vicious circle kind of situation. They were taught by those teachers. They are the ones now teaching the new students. It's going around.

This sense that the rigor within the program is not as high as it could be appears to have impacted the aspects of the program that are meant to involve the students in in-depth critical inquiry and action research, which are meant to help them apply and examine theory and build a foundation in reflective practice. Each year in the program students have a school-based critical inquiry project to complete. In the first year, it focuses on a student in the classroom and in the second year on a problem they identify in the classroom. In the third year, during their practice teaching, they undertake an action research project, where they are supposed to identify a problem or difficulty related to their instruction, identify possible ways to tackle that problem, and reflect on the outcome. One of the teacher educators explained that he felt the students' efforts in, and thus outcomes from, the action research projects were mixed:

> It's only that you find some people who are not really serious, but you find students who are very serious, and they want to implement and really see whether it's working . . .Because what we are doing mostly is to . . . to see whether they can really, whether the problem they identify, why that really occurs in their classes, and what actions can they take, and whether it can work . . . So, you find some who are really committed and serious, who can really do something like this. But you find someone is just coming, just to get a diploma and, just to get a diploma and get out from here. Just because they have, because it's a compulsory part of, they have to do it.

Another teacher educator agreed that there were often problems with the action research projects:

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Teacher Educator: Imagine, or understand the situation from a student point of view, that the student is doing these things because he wants to get a better grade. So, what he does is, he looks at various reports of his previous friends or colleagues, or peers, or whatever you call them. And [his friend] says, oh, I just did on this one, and I got a distinction because I mentioned A,B,C,D, and I did this and I did this. Ok, no problem, I will also do the the same, possibly, if not distinction, I will get credit. You know, so..
Wendi: Okay, so that's a good topic, I'll use that topic . . .
Teacher Educator: Yeah.
Wendi: Instead of actually coming out of their own experience in the . . .?
Teacher Educator: Or new topic on their own, or something like that, you know. So, yes, from that point of view, the student will pick up the easiest topic.

Interestingly, when I asked participants (both teachers who had had BETD or INSET and teacher educators) where students learned about learner-centred education and pedagogical theory, the consistent answer was ETP (Education Theory and Practice). In other words, this course, which they attended throughout the BETD program, was the place for theory. There was some, but limited, mention of integrating this theory into other courses. So, whether or not the ideas they learned in ETP were integrated into any other part of their program, including the subject areas in which they would teach, would seem to depend on the individual lecturers and is definitely an open question.

Part of the problem with such integration, or lack thereof, may be that the level of comfort that teacher educators have with learner-centered approaches, and theories connected to it, may vary significantly. One of the lecturers explained:

Teacher Educator: I think, I think that is a really serious problem because, what we try to do . . . what learner-centered education was part of the thing that was for the subject areas. And . . . I don't know whether the implementation of it made it not that good, because most of us . .
Wendi: Within the college you mean?
Teacher Educator: Yeah, most of us . . . are not really very well versed on issues pertaining to learner-centered education.
Wendi: Meaning you yourselves don't necessarily know how to use this methodology?
Teacher Educator: yeah, how to use this methodology, yeah. And I think part of it is from that period, uh, we know what it is, but, eh, sometimes, but what should

. . .what we try to do is to replicate what learner-centered education is in our classroom, in our teaching . . .um . . . As to whether we do that effectively, I don't know. We don't model it so well in the classroom. And that is maybe the problem, that we have this, this misconception. What I'm trying to say is that, we, you know, in the college mostly we give lectures, we give . . sometimes give them group work, allow them to contribute in the classroom, stuff like that. But the actual problem is that we ourselves, I think, are not really clear as to what learner-centered education is.

In sum, there is clearly general recognition that teachers' pedagogical knowledge is important for quality teaching – it entered into both discussions of elements of quality teaching (preparation) and discussions of supports and challenges to quality teaching. As to the current level of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, there was a mixed review. Overall, participants at all levels (teachers, principals, teacher educators, ministry officials) feel that there are many teachers who have grasped and embraced the new theories of learning and teaching, but many others who have not. There seems to be an equally mixed review concerning the preparation in pedagogy that teachers are receiving through the BETD.

Communication/Collaboration

The theme of communication and collaboration between teachers was not brought up by participants nearly as often as many of the other themes I am discussing in this chapter. I have included it, however, because it is so heavily emphasized in literature on teacher change and development, which holds that communities of reflection and practice can provide significant support for teachers and helps them to learn and develop (Hammerness et al., 2005).

Only a few of the teachers mentioned communication between teachers, particularly sharing ideas, when discussing supports and challenges. When listing some

of these supports, for example, one of the teachers at Rural School 1 said, "Maybe you can have some information from the colleagues that's having some." Another teacher in the same group mentioned, "You can share the ideas with those who are having also that subject . . . about some topics in which you are not so strong."

When I directly asked teachers about their opportunities for collaboration and communication, more teachers commented that they thought it was a good thing, that teachers could help and learn from each other. One main area they say they come together on, or communicate about, are seeking or giving help for a subject topic that one of the teachers finds difficult – either the topic itself or how to teach it:

> Charles, Rural School 2: Yeah, we always share how we can present a lesson. Because some of the topics maybe I don't understand it, some of the scheme of work or syllabus topics there, you find that it's quite difficult, I cannot understand, how can I teach this one . . . then I'll go to him, I'll ask, so how I can present a lesson using this one? So he's going to give me some of the ideas, then I'll also put some of them which I know.

> Hilde, Rural School 1: If I find something is really difficult, especially in mathematics, I need to go find those teachers who teach before I plan. I have to consult those mathematics teachers and ask them. If I find this topic is in the syllabus, then I have to go.

> Aune, Town School: Yeah, it means . . .; maybe [another teacher] have a problem understanding some, one lesson or that topic, she says, oh my learners . . . they won't uh . . . uh . . . I don't know. Can we please . . .can you give me any idea how to make any improvement in this topic? Yeah, we can share the idea like that.

Some teachers also mention that they might discuss learners and their behavior. Hilde, for example, explains this:

> Hilde, Rural School 1: . . . we do like that. Maybe, let me give an example. Like maybe grade six – if you found that there is one grade six who maybe who is behaving funny, that or. . .
> *Wendi: A certain learner?*
> Hilde: Yeah, we can come and say, what can we do now, and then we discuss which step can we take to stop that.

And a number of teachers mentioned that they would discuss together where they are in

the scheme of work and discuss exam preparations:

> Justina, Rural School 1: . . . like the learners' behaviors, the examination for
> instance, when to set up the examination, when to start setting up the examination,
> those which are school based, cause some are being circuit based, cluster based
> and whatsoever.

> Charles, Rural School 2: So, but, working . . the scheme of work and the syllabus
> we share, we always work together, but his presentation of lessons and topics . . .
> just depends to him.

> As Charles indicates, while there seemed to be some sentiment that

communication between teachers is beneficial, and some of the teachers even talked

about sharing teaching ideas, none of the teachers actually planned lessons together, and

only a few ever shared their lesson plans with others. In addition, I heard a number of

comments about communication being somewhat limited at times – that there wasn't

always enough time for this, and that some teachers didn't seem to be interested in

sharing ideas. One of the teachers explained:

> Information from teachers is good, but [our school] . . . we do sharing information
> to each other, but some of the teachers, they just know themselves, and they don't
> want to give the information to others and so on. You find that.

Another teacher, at another school, told me:

> Teacher: We were supposed to stay some minutes behind maybe before we go
> home, but we used to go early . . . But once we stay, we can also discuss about
> maths.
> *Wendi: Okay, so when does that happen, like when there's a study or something?*
> Teacher: Yeah, because we used to supervise the study on the same day.
> *Wendi: So what are some of the things that you might discuss with each other?*
> Teacher: It's more like . . . when we are giving tests, we try to be . . . the same.

One of the principals commented, with humor, that the time during which teachers stayed

after school (in keeping with policy) was often not used to discuss teaching:

Wendi: So, do you find them more talking with each other, or working individually . .. during that time, when they . . . ?
Principal: They – no, no. They don't really use that time to discuss school matters. That's talking about things outside. Talking about Brad and Angelina and (laughing) . . . Yeah, normally they just discuss about their own business and so on and so on.

So, while teacher communication is important to some teachers, and there is some collaboration going on, this collaboration most often pertains to making sure they are in the same place in the syllabus and setting examines and to addressing problems of the school or learners. Some teachers do seek help from others when they recognize their content is weak or they don't know how to teach a particular topic, which is important considering the problems with content knowledge among some teachers. It appears that it is less likely, however, for teachers to plan together, to share lesson plans, or to make or share teaching aids together, much less to create communities of learning where:

> Both new and more experienced teachers pose problems, identify discrepancies between theories and practices, challenge common routines, draw on the work of others for generative frameworks, and attempt to make visible much of that which is taken for granted about teaching and learning.(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 293)

Learner Characteristics and Home Environment

It was clear in discussions with all participants that learner characteristics and the home environment of the learner are seen as important elements that can be either supports or challenges to quality teaching. The principal of Rural School 2 puts it quite simply, saying:

> Principal: The learner must also be ready, means that they come to school, understand, and they have that mood that they're going to learn. So that, even the

teacher prepare the lesson and the . . but the learner are not ready, I think there's no quality teaching, no quality teaching.

The three areas that were repeatedly mentioned as being most critical, and often a problem, were the learners' *mastery of basic skills*, *discipline and motivation* of the learners, and *parental/family support* for education. In this section, I will discuss each of these themes, showing why teachers felt they were important, and why they were seen as challenges.

Mastery of Basic Skills

Just as math and English are particular problem areas for teachers, so they are also particularly difficult subjects for learners. This is born out in the SACMEQ study, in which Namibian learners scored quite low in both of these subjects (Makuwa, 2005). Participant teachers mentioned a lack of basic skills in both these areas, explaining that learners often came to grade six without the foundational skills that would allow them to move on competently. Anna, for example, shared her frustration that many of her learners don't even know their time-tables by grade six:

> My biggest challenge . . . it's a lot. Ah, it's a lot. Especially, I don't know, learners have, even you ask, what is 3 times 5? So . . . a learner is 3 times 5, so he's counting now on hands. Two times 5, it's 10 learners can . . . I don't even know what can I do.

The learners' capacity in English is a particularly critical element, since by grade six the medium of instruction for all subjects is English. In addition, if quality teaching is closely linked to learner participation, their ability to express themselves in the language of instruction is vital. The teachers in the two rural schools were in general agreement that the weak English skill of their learners was a significant problem. As one of the

teachers in the Rural School 1 focus group told me, "Madam, there are many challenges. The main challenge here is the language." I witnessed this low level of English of the learners in many of the lessons I observed, most clearly perhaps when I came to observe Justina's lesson. When I entered the class, she asked one of the learners, in English, to bring a chair for me. The learner didn't respond until the teacher repeated the request in the local language, and then he fulfilled her request quickly and respectfully.

Many of the teachers in Rural School 1 and Rural School 2 explained that they thought the English problem was worse in rural schools such as theirs than in more urban schools, a claim that certainly seemed valid when considering the differences I observed in the classrooms in Town School, as well as the fact that teachers there didn't complain about their learners' English. The rural teachers felt that this largely stemmed from the fact that learners in rural areas only encountered English when they were at school, receiving no additional English exposure at home or in their community. They were also less likely to watch TV or read magazines and newspapers, which could offer additional exposure to English. As one of the teachers at Rural School 1 described, "that one is very difficult, because they only had English at school. But when they go home they only speak our vernacular . . . It's very difficult for the learners to speak fluently." She goes on to explain that learners in town schools have better English, because English is now so widely used in town (in the region of the study).

When teachers and principals brought up the fact that learners were not exposed to English outside of school, I wondered, and asked, about their exposure at school during the lower primary grades. I had noticed that most of the lower primary teachers in both rural schools appeared to be older than the teachers of the higher grades – which

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made me wonder about their English ability and how well they would be able to prepare

learners to have all promotional subjects in English by grade four. Participants confirmed

that it was indeed the case that lower primary teachers often tended to be older and that

their capacity in English was often weak. This was partly explained by the idea that,

since they only have to use English when instructing that subject, it was not as important

for them to have higher level English skills. One of the principals also explained that this

tendency might have cultural roots as well. After she first explained that, "sometimes we

used to put those teachers who have poor English, grade 1, at the lower primary", she

adds, "we know that those old teachers like kids, they treat them like a grandmother,

mama . . . they know how to care . . . than the young ones."

Another factor underlying the weak foundational skills teachers encountered in

mathematics and English was explained as being connected to the promotion policy.

Many of the teachers made it clear that they had reservations about this policy. The

promotion policy, as stated in the *Broad Curriculum* is:

> Nearly all learners will progress through Grades 1-7 without repetition. Only in cases where the class teacher/teaching team in consultation with the principal and parents are absolutely convinced that a learner would definitely not benefit from progressing to the next grade, should a learner be held back and receive compensatory teaching towards promotion the next year. No learner should repeat more than once in the Lower Primary phase, and more than once in the Upper Primary phase. (p. 37)

This policy relies heavily on the precept that compensatory instruction will be

available to help learners who are falling behind; Instead of repeating a grade, these

learners should receive extra help to get them back to grade level. The teachers didn't

always discuss these two elements together, but clearly felt that they didn't have the time

or resources to offer compensatory instruction to all of the learners who needed it. They

clearly felt that it was a serious problem to have learners being promoted who were

below the appropriate level for the grade. One of the ministry officials explained his

recognition of the issues associated with the promotion policy and echoed the very

reasons that the teachers found it problematic:

> I think what needs to be said with that is, the system could work better. If there is
> actually implementation of the policy that goes with that, and that is remedial
> teaching. Now, if the remedial teaching doesn't work, you are compounding these
> problems of these kids. These kids . . . Because the idea of remedial teaching is, I
> will let this child go through, because this child has done, good in say four or five
> subjects, but lacks maybe skills in mathematics. Falling behind in mathematics.
> Now this child has been promoted to the next grade on the basis that this child
> will now be helped in mathematics. And that doesn't happen. Because the
> obvious first question is how do you do that, how do you help him. If there are 35
> learners in a class, you expect the same teacher to help him. The teacher cannot,
> with 35 learners. The teacher will focus on the 34 that has a chance to go through
> to the next grade, and not focus on the one. That's unfortunately how it is. Now,
> so it's the, the policies are in place, but exactly how. So it means that, maybe, can
> you take them in the afternoon, these kids. Then you have to have the teachers to
> be able to do that. And then we don't have specialized teachers, remedial
> teachers, and maybe that's the biggest problem, because of money, money
> constraints, we don't have career guidance teachers, we don't have remedial
> teachers, we don't have teachers, library, you know, you know, those specialized
> teachers we don't have any more.

Teachers and other participants had already discussed how important a

consideration of prior knowledge is for preparation. By grade six, part of the prior

knowledge that teachers depended upon was solid foundational skills that would allow

them to teach at grade level. Where they didn't find this, they found it quite a challenge

to their efforts to put their ideas of quality teaching into practice. While teachers

understood that part of their response needed to be adjusting to the level of the students,

they found it hard to do when there was a continuum of different levels within one large

class, and when they were still expected to follow a grade six curriculum.

Discipline/Motivation

The discipline and motivation of the learners was also quite frequently mentioned

as a problem among the learners at all three schools. One teacher in Town School, for

example, shares her frustration about this:

> Teacher, Town School: Therefore, they can do whatever they want to do, because
> they say you don't have a right to do any . . .to do something to me, you don't
> have a right to insult me, you don't have a right to beat me . . . it is, they say that
> it is my right, even if they are wrong . . . Therefore, most of the learner in the
> schools, teacher are really suffering of it, because of their behavior.
> *Wendi: So the discipline is somehow worse?*
> Teacher: Yeah, the discipline in Namibia is really worse.

In fact, I was told a few times that this was a larger societal concern, that the young

people had less discipline and respect than in the past. One of the ministry officials also

discussed this:

> Ministry Official: And, um, another thing of course, is the discipline in schools,
> has, you know, greatly collapsed, you know.
> *W: What, what . . .do you have some sense of what's going on there?*
> Ministry Official: Yeah, um, I mean . . there are learners who don't really, really
> listen to teachers when they are asked to behave in a proper way during . . I mean,
> during lessons presentation. You know, there are learners just making noise -
> teachers, you know . . . [unclear] to carry out this kind of . . I mean discipline.
> Yeah,. that's one area. Yeah.
> *Wendi: Do you have any sense, or has anybody, um, looked into trying to figure*
> *out why that has started to become such a problem?*
> Ministry Official: Yeah . . I mean, not really, there is nobody that has really went
> into that to study, but I think it's . .all, general, in general it's a discipline collapse
> from home, it's carried over to the school level . . . A lot of parents nowadays . .
> .when you listen to the radio, into the media, you know, they will tell you kids are
> out of hand.

Some of the teachers felt bewildered as to why this was the case, and suggested it

was because there was a problem stemming from home, as this ministry official

indicated. Interestingly, the circuit inspector I interviewed felt this was almost the

opposite, that learners would never behave as unruly at home as they did in school these

days:

> Now, but still today, you have these huge, huge disciplinary problems in schools.
> It's because at home that child is an angel. Make no mistake. There's no way
> that that child will do something wrong. Because it is not acceptable. But now at
> school, now with all these freedoms and all these rights and whatever, you find
> this child is getting totally deviant. And that's where you have no, not a core split
> personality, but these two different types of personality. At home, even if you
> call the parents and say this is what Festus did, it's impossible. Now, that's
> what's interesting to me, is what I keep on asking the . .my colleagues, I said,
> when I was a principal and even today, even if I go to the village and visit one of
> my parents, of the children of my parents, it doesn't matter where the child is, if
> he sees my car there, he will come and greet. But tomorrow, at school, or here at
> the office, he will stand right there, in front of my door. I want to open, and he
> will not even greet me. And I'm very worried about this type of thing.

Some of the teachers at the Town School blamed the town environment, telling

me that learners were exposed to drugs and gangs and a sort of Namibian street culture

> Teacher, Town School: And also this life in town . . . it can also influence many
> kids to become bochochos (criminals). Something they won't come to the school
> because they want to start their business, to make a [unclear] or what, so they can
> get money. Therefore, three days to school and two days on the streets.
> *Wendi: And the parents don't know?*
> Teacher: Sometimes they don't know. The learner just puts on the uniform
> properly and takes the school bags, but they go somewhere.

Some of the teachers blamed elements of the education reforms themselves. They

explained that learner-centered education, and efforts to make the classroom more

democratic, had caused learners to lose respect, to think they could get away with

anything:

> Teacher: That's what they are just . . . and even democracy, they refer to free,
> somebody should be free to say whatever he wants to say in . . whether it's
> wrong, whether it's right. So I think that one is just together with the, this
> learner-centered education also, it goes hand in hand . . .

He goes on:

> Teacher: . . . some of the learners' behaviors in the class, now it was, it's very
> much disruptive because of freedom . . . They can do whatever they want to do,

even telling the teacher, no you cannot teach us, because you don't know anything . . . The person, like for example even me, I just got a such kind of a problem in the class. The time I'm teaching, I'm teaching, then, or I say anybody to ask a question, then the other one will raise up their hand and ask me, teacher can you tell me what is geography . . . Then I say, me I cannot tell you what is geography. Let me just use your question to refer to the whole class. Others will say, oh the teacher doesn't know. But me, I want them to . . .I want learners . . . to share their ideas in the class so that they can, others who . . .there are others who know, who are going to help others, but then they are going to take me as if I don't know.

Another teacher was more direct:

. . . Democracy, I think is good because learners are, they are learning there . . . but I don't like democracy sometimes. Learners sometimes they can do whatever they want, because of that democracy, I just don't like it.

"That democracy" is, of course, a far cry from the tenor of a classroom before independence, when corporal punishment was the norm. And while none of the teachers told me they endorsed a return to corporal punishment, they told me that there were people who did:

Female Teacher, Town School Focus Group: Some, they want the corporal punishment, because we are not allowed to beat children here in the schools. And whenever you call the parents to come for to discipline their children, they say we should, why don't we beat them?

Ministry Official: Of course, many of the conservatives, uh, feeling these kind of things are due to . . . you know . . . abolished corporal punishment.

Teachers and other participants seem to feel that learners' discipline and motivation is a problem. What their comments point to, however, is that this change in discipline might somehow be related to the changes in instruction. Given the extremely high expectations for discipline before independence, and the fact that I didn't witness what from my perspective would be major discipline problems, I was left to wonder whether this was more a factor of both teachers and learners trying to figure out how to balance a higher level of freedom in the classroom with a respect for the teacher: how to discern between

sharing ideas and talking back, and how teachers can find ways to manage the classroom without resorting to physical punishment or total authoritarianism.

Parental-Family Support

Moving from the characteristics of learners to the home environment, there was general agreement that parents play an important role in their children's education, and that positive collaboration between the parents and the school is vitally important, as these quotes from teachers show:

> Female Teacher, Town School Focus Group: Everybody must be involved in it. The teacher, the parents, the community must also involve in the teaching for each child. Therefore, the teacher she can't give the good quality if it's not with the parents, and also the community. Therefore, the teacher must prepare something for the learners, and the learner given something to take home. The parents support the learners, the parents must follow up with the progress of their kids, and the community must know what must be done in the school and what expected of the child to do at home, by themselves or himself.

> Teacher, Rural School 1 Focus Group: I think something that can motivate me to be a teacher is only when there is a cooperation, a relationship between what? The parents, teachers, as well as the learners.

And *Toward Education for All* endorses this kind of collaboration:

> In schools that are responsive to their communities, parents and neighbours are not regarded as generally unwelcome outsiders. Instead, the schools are organized to enable them to be active participants in school governance, active contributors to discussions of school management and administration, and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning. Similarly, adult learners are expert consultants on curriculum content, scope, and orientation. (p. 41)

Yet the teachers at the three schools in the study expressed concern about the relations between the parents and their schools. As has been mentioned, some of them placed blame on the parents for the discipline issues they saw in the learners. More generally, though, they felt that many of the parents did not play an active role in their

children's education by maintaining regular contact with the school, coming in for school functions, or sometimes even ensuring regular attendance of their children.

All three of the schools held at least some events where parents were periodically invited en masse, and these were often well received, but attendance was not always as high as they would wish.

> Principal: We try as a principal, we try to make during the parents meeting, to put some topics to motivate the, why education is important and what benefit you expect if you have a well educated child. We used to do things like that. Yeah, yeah.
> *Wendi: You find a response? Good response for that, when you are doing like that?*
> Principal: Yeah, yeah. You can maybe find, if you were 50 . . . 100 parents, you can maybe . . . 60% can answer positively and the 40 remain.
> *W: And then some are not coming maybe?*
> Principal: Yes. Many of them will not attend the meeting.

Teachers and principals noted that some parents did attend regularly and were quite active. Each school has a school planning committee that includes parents as its members. At Rural School 2, a number of parents were also involved enough to contribute monetarily and through labor to help build the temporary (corrugated tin) classrooms. At the same time, despite a core group of quite active parents, there were many parents who didn't participate as actively as the principal and teachers would like.

Teachers expressed frustration that some parents did not respond even when they expressly asked a parent to come to see them, or contact them, about a specific issue with their children. This conversation came up during one of the focus groups:

> Male Teacher: You know, we do try to invite the parents to have a parental meeting with those people to let them know, but anyhow, some of them they come and, you know, not all of them when they come to, to . . .it's very possible to [unclear]
> Female Teacher: And also try to meet with them individually, but they didn't come. Trying to do something. You say, can you come with your parents? Their parents cannot come to school.

Female Teacher: Sometimes there might be a certain problem with the learner, and now I'm trying to call the parent of that learner to call them to the school, so that we can discuss. But now that parent is refusing to come to the school.

Teachers also discussed the issue of parents not ensuring their children attended school, or even keeping their children out of school to do work at home, such as farming tasks, cattle-tending, or caring for other children in the household.

Principal: Yeah, I think so. Because sometimes they say, eh, today will not go to school . . . Maria will not go to school . . . going to work my mahangu [millet] today. Because we are not eating food from school, we eat here . . . Yeah, yeah, it's why you can finding, at one day you can find a parent just take a child from school, from class, and take her to the cattle post. For maybe two months, without inform the teacher or the principal that I'm going to take the child.

I invited teachers to share their perceptions as to the reasons why this lack of participation occurred. I heard in response that many of the teachers felt that some of the parents did not fully understand the purpose of education, or did not sufficiently see its value.

Teacher: You can say maybe, but there are some people still they don't understand about education. They are very far about what we are doing here. And you can see some of our learners in the classes, also they're far from the what we are doing here, because of the parents which is not understand what is going on the education.

Or that they felt that education was the school's job, and that they did not need to be involved.

Principal: Now, our learners are understand, are not well motivated to understand why he must go to school. That's why you'll find, I think that problem is by their parents side. Only few parents who understand that they really, really to be involved, and say something on their learners' education.

Teachers, particularly at the two rural schools, also mentioned that they thought many of the parents were not well educated themselves and that this caused a barrier. In fact, some of the "parents" were actually grandparents, as it was explained to me in

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informal conversation that it is common for young adults to leave their children with their parents in their home villages while they attend post-secondary school or begin their careers in one of the towns, near or far away. Thus, a portion of the guardians with whom the school deals directly finished their education well before independence and may not fully understand the reforms or the value of the new education system. In an informal conversation with a teacher at a different school (outside the study), she told me that she felt that they did not have this disconnect problem with the parents at their school, and that that was because after independence a local war hero had sensitized the parents, repeatedly convening community meetings in which he emphasized the importance of education.

Systemic/Institutional Challenges and Supports

Moving beyond school and local level concerns, there were also a number of factors that were more systemic or institutional that could create supports or, more often in this case, challenges to the teachers. While there might be other systemic factors that a ministry official or an outside analyst might identify as important (such as administration and accountability), the two factors that dominated discussions with teachers were *resources*, particularly *teaching materials* and *class size/facilities,* and *support for professional development*. In this section I will examine each of these themes, discussing why teachers view them as important potential supports and explaining why they are seen primarily as challenges.

Resources

One of the most significant and most discussed challenges to quality teaching emphasized by almost all the participants in the study is the lack of resources. This issue is well recognized, as is the continued inequity in resources, despite the ministry's platform and efforts to make the system more equitable (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999; Makuwa, 2005). While this lack of resources affects every level of the system, the effects felt most dearly by the teachers are the lack of teaching/learning materials, class size, and facilities.

Teaching/Learning Materials

As the description in Chapter 5 demonstrated, the teaching conditions for teachers in the three schools in my study were far from ideal. Teachers and learners have to share textbooks – meaning teachers have to bring the books into class with them (if they are not in use by another teacher) and once in class, learners must share the books. Teachers do make some photocopies, but the teachers must limit their use of photocopying.

> Teacher, Rural School 1 Focus Group: We might use the textbook – maybe certain picture in the book which you want the learner to see, but if you are only having one book for the teacher only, there's no other way the learners can see that picture. Cause, if we could have the photocopy machine maybe we could make copies, you can make copies and then distribute to the learners. But there's nothing, no textbook, no copy materials.

> Teacher, Rural School 2: And also, another problem is those books have grade one, they are very, they are lacking. Grade one learners cannot share a book I think. And they are sharing books. So some of them are making noise. How can grade one learners share a book in a group? They are there, they make about seven sharing the same book. Now, look there, can you see it? No, at least every learner should have a book.

Other materials, such as poster-board and markers to make class displays, are also in short supply, and many teachers are afraid to leave such displays in classrooms for fear

that they will be stolen or vandalized. Often such supplies, including basic mathematical

toolkits (compasses, protractors), have to be purchased by the teachers. This is common

and unfortunate in the US as well, but the purchasing power of teachers in Namibia, and

the much higher cost of school supplies there, makes this an even more daunting prospect

for Namibian teachers. While all of the classes have blackboards, not all of them are

well-maintained, and the adequacy of the rooms for teaching varies (see my description

of the classrooms in Chapter 5 for more details).

Teachers clearly feel that this lack of teaching materials seriously hampers their

ability to teach in a way that matches their vision of quality teaching. This makes sense,

considering the heavy emphasis that participants (and policy documents) put on the use

of teaching aids. The policy documents stress the need for teachers to make teaching aids

using local materials, and even to include learners in this endeavor:

> It may be necessary and preferable in some cases, for teachers to improvise teaching and learning materials from easily available and inexpensive objects in the immediate environment such as sticks, string, bottle tops, cardboard, etc., provided that they are safe and hygienic. Materials can often be prepared together with the learners, following discussion of the learners' experiences, stories or ideas. Reading materials can be developed from the learners' own creative writing. Some materials will be prepared by specialists, and some will come in the form of textbooks. (*Broad Curriculum*, pp. 28-29)

And it is clear that at least some of the teachers make an effort to do this. As I have

mentioned, I observed Peter using a teaching aid that he had made (the "telephone"), and

many of the teachers talked about bringing objects in from home or making things to use

in their classes.

However, teachers still feel that this is a significant obstacle, and the problem is

recognized by ministry officials. As I described in Chapter 5, I also witnessed this

problem when I observed classes, as I watched five or six learners trying to share a

textbook, or a teacher trying to use a small blackboard that was set on a chair and leaning against a wall of the classroom. One of the mathematics teachers had a small number of rulers for the learners to use in groups during class; she told me after the class that she had purchased them herself.

Whether or not we hypothesize that teachers could or should be creative and find ways to develop teaching aids with local materials, it is hard to deny that the need to do this, and the lack of even basic materials, could make teaching more challenging – even just considering the extra time and energy that takes. And this is compounded when we consider some of the other constraints (especially teacher knowledge).

Class Size & Facilities

Class size is a major source of frustration for teachers in my study and a problem recognized by participants at all levels. The generally large class size – in the region in which I undertake this study – was quite apparent in a number of the classes that I observed, and all participants recognized this as a formidable challenge. Teachers described the large size of classes, often in combination with small or inappropriate classroom space, as frustrating their efforts in a number of ways:

> Principal, Rural School 2: Resources. Like our school, it is overcrowd – many learners, few teachers, no classrooms.

> Teacher, Rural School 2 Focus Group: And also the number of learners in classes. If these learners could only be 35 it could be very good. But now you are having 50 learners, 40, 49, what – they are overcrowded in the classes, like those in grade six, they are very small. So, the teaching will not be . . .and sometimes you want to put your teaching materials – where can I place them in this, on a chair in this classroom.

Ministry officials are also aware of this problem, as one official indicated:

And then again . . . in other areas, the number of the learners in the classroom. You know, the classroom environment of course is another factor which doesn't allow them to carry out the reform the way it's perceived that they should do. Yeah. You find a classroom, of course, up in the north of . . . close to 50 learners in the classroom, and a very quite small classroom and limited furniture, you know, for that matter.

As this official indicates, the problem of classroom size is most significant in the north. Classroom size varies across the country, though less so than in the past – in 2003, average class size in upper primary school varied from around 33 in the southernmost regions to around 37 in the northern regions (EMIS, 2005). One of the principals told me that, to his understanding, the policy regarding classroom size concerned the average learner:teacher ratio for the whole school. This meant that if the higher grades, such as grade ten, had fewer learners, the lower grades might have many more learners – and the school would not be given an additional teacher because the overall average remained below the maximum set by the ministry. As a result, one of the grade three classes in that school had 45 learners. Whether or not that is the policy as the ministry intended it, that is how it is being implemented at some schools, resulting in quite large classes in some cases.

As with the problem of resources, I also witnessed some of the constraints stemming from class size and inadequate facilities. In Chapter 5, I described the conditions of some of the classrooms at the two rural schools. In addition to those conditions (such as the corrugated tin rooms, the sandy floors) in some of the classes the number of learners was clearly too large for the room. The teachers could not have realistically asked the learners to move their desks around or group themselves in different ways. While the teachers still managed to have the learners work in groups at

times, it was very difficult, sometimes impossible, for the teacher to circulate around the room to observe or assist the learners.

The problems that stem from a lack of resources are well-recognized and difficult to overcome – both for the ministry and for the teachers – as are disparities between regions and schools. Two important questions that then arise are: To what extent can teachers be expected to compensate for these by their own innovation and creativity? And, to what degree do such resource constraints fundamentally hamper the ability of teachers to put their ideas of quality teaching into practice, not withstanding any other challenges they may face? I will return to these questions in Chapter 10.

Professional Development

Another systemic/institutional area that teachers emphasized was professional development, particularly the support for professional development provided (or not provided) by the Ministry of Education. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the main opportunities that teachers have for professional development (excepting those teachers who are completing their BETD through the INSET program) are periodic workshops that are held at the circuit and/or cluster levels, with an increasing emphasis on the cluster system. Teachers generally spoke about the workshops as a positive thing, something that could support their efforts towards quality teaching, because they gave the teachers an opportunity to share ideas and learn about new approaches to try, as well as about new policies and information:

> Teacher, Rural School 1 Focus Group: Those workshops, they are useful, because you know that there you can get something new, see. Because you know that people are using, we are using different strategy of teaching. Therefore, if you're

contacted maybe to a workshop, sometimes you can get new methods, or even new methods of giving classes.

Teacher, Rural School 2: Yeah, the workshops I think they always teach us very much. They always help us very much, because there are other things that we, we as teachers, like what I said yesterday, you might not be knowing how to teach a certain topic, so other colleagues, there are other colleagues who have been teaching more, have past experience, they can just help, they say no, a topic like this one you can approach it in this way.

At the same time that teachers felt that professional development was a good thing, they felt that there were a number of ways in which the opportunities they had were not sufficient. Some teachers felt that there were simply not enough opportunities, particularly in certain subjects. The teachers at one of the schools discussed this in their focus group:

> Female Teacher: I think it's only in term of the subjects. Like, sometimes like maths, I find people used to make a lot of workshops, but in business, not even one . . . Not even one workshop.
> Male Teacher: Yeah. In other words, some subjects I do not, they are only concentrating now, especially in mathematics and science [unclear]. They started already, but it's not really up to today . . . Because, yeah, what happens is that, why I'm saying so is like, since I came here, no workshops in geography, no workshops in history. Nothing even, no other information that, I have to find other information. If I want a topic, some of the topics in our books are very short. You have to found out through other materials from somewhere else.

It appears that both the quality and frequency of workshops at the cluster level were variable – that the strength of the professional development available through the cluster system varied according to the strength of the cluster and the subject facilitators in that cluster. The teachers at one of the schools discussed this:

> Teacher A: And that one I think just depends to the facilitator of each subject.
> Teacher B: Yeah.
> Teacher A: And another one I might say is that because the facilitator is also old, but I might find myself I'm [unclear] . . . Because my facilitator is a little bit lazy or whatsoever, I don't know.

One of the teachers was particularly frustrated with the lack of participation in her cluster, and so chose to visit other schools on her own in order to expose herself to new ideas.

> *Wendi: Is there some official workshop in the cluster, like in [your] cluster?*
> Teacher: Yeah, we have it but you find only, you can find yourself you are 2 or you are alone.
> *Wendi: So the, it's not really . . .*
> Teacher: Yeah, yeah, the other clust . . . the other schools, they won't, they didn't come.
> *Wendi: Why is that, do you think?*
> Teacher: I don't know what's the problem, but maybe it's not well-organized, or people they are not interested . . . for what. I don't know.
> *Wendi: Okay. So somehow the workshops are not really going so well?*
> Teacher: Like, really since I started I didn't really attend the proper workshop.
> *Wendi: One that you thought was well done?*
> Teacher: Yeah, mmm hmm (yes).

There was also some agreement that workshops where one teacher attended and was then expected to share with the other teachers were really just useful for that one teacher. If this kind of cascading does take place, it appears that it emphasizes the passing on of policy or procedural information – the rich opportunity for sharing and picking up new teaching ideas was lost.

Overall, teachers clearly felt that professional development was something that could be very helpful to them, and which would go far in supporting their efforts to implement their ideas of quality teaching – if it was done well and more often.

Discussion

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I reviewed the interviews to get a sense of the challenges and supports for quality teaching from the perspective of the

teachers, and then explored these further through conversations at other levels. I have laid out the factors that became salient through this analysis, an overall picture of the various potential supports, but in reality usually challenges, that are of concern to teachers and other education officials. I now will look across the teachers and principals, and at comments at other levels, to get a sense of the comparative importance these issues seem to have, or at least their salience. Very simply, I looked to see which factors were mentioned most often and which were discussed at all three schools. I then looked to see which factors were brought up by education officials at other levels (teacher educators and ministry officials).

The three issues that were raised by the most teachers and principals, and which were mentioned at all three schools were parent support/collaboration, workshops/professional development, and resources – in that order. In other words, the issue of working with parents to ensure quality education was mentioned as an important support, and a problematic issue, at all three schools and by the highest number of school-level participants. This is followed by professional development (workshops), which teachers felt had the potential to be very useful, but which they found lacking in quality and frequency. The third, but clearly still important, issue of concern was resources – also mentioned at all three schools. The issues of learner discipline and teacher knowledge were also mentioned frequently, but not at Rural School 1. The issue of the learners' mastery of English was not mentioned at Town School and was not raised by the principals at any of the schools. Teacher communication was not mentioned at all at Rural School 2 and was only mentioned a few times overall.

When I turned to the higher levels of education, notably teacher educators and ministry officials, the two issues that were mentioned most frequently were teacher knowledge and resources. Learner motivation and English language problems were mentioned a couple times each. Workshops/professional development, parent collaboration/support, and teacher communication were not raised at all in discussions of challenges and supports to quality teaching.

I should mention, as a caveat, that while I was hoping to illicit responses concerning the perceived challenges faced at the school level, the responses of some of the teacher educators and ministry officials indicated that I might not have made that clear enough – many teacher educators responded first, and often extensively, about the problems they faced at the college (most often resources). Still, it seems that there is a schism between the challenges and supports that teachers perceive as important, and as problematic, and those regularly recognized at other levels of the system. It is particularly striking that there was so much concern about parental support/collaboration and professional development among the teachers and relatively little discussion of these at other levels. To be fair, there is recognition in the ministry that professional development needs to be enhanced, and there has been work recently to begin to develop/enhance the system for professional development[50]. It is probably also a good sign that most of the teachers in my study recognized the importance of professional development and wanted to have more and better opportunities. One hopes, however, that the lack of recognition of its importance that seemed to appear in my study is not indicative of the value and priority it will be given by the ministry.

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[50] As discussed in Chapter 4, the *The Ten-Year Plan for Educator Development and Support in Namibia* (Coombe et al., 1999) laid the groundwork for this work, and interviews and informal discussions during my fieldwork indicated professional development was indeed beginning to receive more attention.

It also becomes apparent that many of the issues faced by teachers are exacerbated in rural areas. Difficulties related to resources and English language problems were both brought up more in the two rural schools than in the town school. Such differences would undoubtedly be even more stark if I had compared the rural schools in my study to schools in the Windhoek (the capital) area instead. Teachers feel this difference quite clearly, which in some ways may be an additional challenge – the teachers at the rural schools perceived a rural/urban divide that left them even farther behind in terms of supports. As one of the teachers in Rural School 1 told me, "They only focus on the schools that are living in the cities and they ignore the schools in the rural areas." Ministry officials also acknowledge a disparity between rural and urban schools. As one official told me:

> . . . urban schools are much better equipped. So in that way, it gives room to a person implementing these kind of approaches, approach. Than schools in the rural area. A school like in Keetmonshoop, in Karas, you know, with very few number of learners in a classroom and, for that matter, also better qualified teachers than a school in Tsumkwe area . . . you know, where war took place in those years, you know, with limited school and furnitures, and all those kind of things. So it would, perhaps, difficult in implementing some of these kind of policies, like a learner-centered education.

In actuality, then, the ministry does realize that rural schools have more challenges, and efforts have been made since independence to redress long-standing inequities, despite overall budget problems. But the perceptions of teachers in rural schools as being forgotten or overlooked is still an important issue to consider.

Overall, the challenges and supports that were raised most often among the higher levels of the system, from teacher educators and ministry officials, were those associated with teacher knowledge and resources – the idea that teachers do not have sufficient capacity in content or teaching methodology and/or that there just aren't enough

resources to do learner-centered education well. While we can surmise that teachers may

have underplayed the significance of teacher factors (teacher knowledge and

communication), perhaps not wanting to have the blame put on themselves, we should

not ignore the fact that teachers recognize many other factors that can challenge or

support their efforts to put their ideas of quality teaching into practice. In fact, the factors

they mention are quite in line with necessary supports for teacher learning and change

that one can find in the literature (Craig et al., 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Leu &

Price-Rom, 2006; van Graan et al., 2006). Certainly, we can surmise that if all of those

supports were in place, they could go a lot farther in teaching according to their beliefs.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

From the literature on teacher thinking and teacher change, we know that teachers' beliefs are important, that these beliefs impact practice and can affect how teachers' respond to reform (Fang, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Spillane, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002). This literature also tells us that the process through which teachers develop their beliefs, and the connection between their beliefs and their practice, are both quite complicated (Fang, 1996; Johnson et al., 2000; Richardson, 2001). In the context of a wide-sweeping reform as has taken place in Namibia, one which was strongly based on specific philosophies of education, it would seem that both beliefs and practice would have needed to change for the reforms to take root. The literature would certainly imply that a shared belief by teachers in the philosophies underlying the reform could be an important contributing factor in changing instructional practice.

In this study I have explored the beliefs that teachers espouse about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching. I chose these three areas because a preliminary examination indicated that these were areas that were significant in the reform. I have also looked at what the two policy documents on which I focused (*Toward Education for All* and the *Broad Curriculum*) say about these same topics. In addition, I have looked at how teachers' view the connections between their beliefs and practice, and observed practice myself. In this chapter, I will bring these ideas and observations together and discuss possible implications. First, I will return to my research questions and review how I can answer them given the research I have done. Then I will turn to some of the implications of the exploration and analysis I have done. I

will also discuss some of the many possibilities for further research that come out of this

study. Finally, I will close with some important questions that I feel this research raises.

Review of Findings

My research was driven by the following questions:

1) What beliefs do teachers espouse about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, and how do they view the connection between their beliefs and practice?
2) What messages about the purposes of education, the role of the teacher, and the definition of quality teaching are communicated in policy and to what extent do teachers' beliefs reflect these "official" messages?

In this dissertation I presented an overall picture of the ways in which teachers

and policy speak about the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning

of quality teaching. I will not describe the various themes and sub-themes here, as they

are laid out in Chapters 6-8; Instead, I provide here a table displaying an outline of these

themes (see Table 4) and will focus in this section on the observations and conclusions I

was able to draw based on looking at these themes across teachers and policy.

Table 4: Overview of Themes – From Teachers and Policy Documents

Purpose of Education	Role of the Teacher	Quality Teaching
• *Personal/Family*	• *Develop the Child Mentally*	• *Preparation*
o Economic Advancement	o Guide/Facilitator	o Teacher Knowledge
o Everyday Utility	o Holder/Giver of Knowledge	o Planning Lessons
o Personal Development		• *Orientations of Instruction that are Valued*
• *Community/National*	• *Develop the Child Socially/Personally*	
o Economic Development	o Instructor/Guide	o Interesting and Relevant
o Other Forms of Development	o Model	o Deeper Understanding
	o Parent	• *Classroom Approaches*
	• *Beyond the Classroom*	o Letting Learners See
	o Community Teacher/Leader	o Participation
	o Social Change Agent	o Assessing/Following the Learner
	o Teacher as Learner	

Beliefs – Looking Across Teachers and Policy

While the table I present above portrays the overall picture of beliefs regarding the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching, in this section I turn to the findings that came out of looking at these beliefs across teachers and policy. By using simple matrices, I was able to examine the variations and patterns of beliefs across teachers and to compare teachers and the two policy documents on which I focused. In this section, then, I focus on important conclusions that I was able to draw, including a national focus in policy versus an individual focus among teachers; commonality and idiosyncrasy among teachers; and the ways in which teachers appeard to struggle with certain ideas.

National vs. Individual Focus

Looking at both the *purpose of education* and *role of the teacher*, there is a tendency for the two policy documents to emphasize the community/national level and for teachers to emphasize the individual level. Perhaps this is to be expected, since policy is by nature interested in the nation as a whole, and teachers' primary concern is their own classroom. At the same time, there are some related findings that are not as self-evident. First, when looking at the *purpose of education*, I found that the policy documents tended to emphasize social, non-economic aspects of development, such as instilling values that would support an equitable, democratic society – as opposed to valuing only the contributions education could make to economic growth. There has been a tendency in developing countries, particularly in the context of foreign aid, to highlight the economic benefits of education (Arnove, 2005; Carnoy, 2000; Jones, P. W.,

2000). While it recognizes these economic benefits, *Toward Education for All* stresses more the use of education to build a new, post-apartheid society.

In contrast to the two policy documents, the teachers seem to be most focused on the level of the individual. Some of the teachers do mention purposes at the community and/or national level, and some of the teachers mention roles of the teacher that go beyond the classroom. The majority of the discussion by teachers of these two topics, however, centered around purposes and roles related to the learner: the personal economic advancement and everyday utility for the individual; the role of the teacher in guiding learners in their personal development, as well as their intellectual development, by acting as a guide, role model, or even substitute parent. In a positive light, we might look at this as the teachers' focus being centered on the learner, which would seem to be part of what learner-centred education is about. In a less positive light, we might be concerned that teachers are less cognizant of the important role they might play in the community and of the connections between the microcosm of their classroom and the larger education system, and possibilities for community development.

This lack of emphasis by teachers on roles beyond the classroom is perhaps most striking when we consider the stress placed in *Toward Education for All* on the teacher as a social change agent, and particularly as a force for change in the education system. *TEFA* makes it very clear that teachers could and should play an active role in changing education and, ultimately, changing society. As the document states, "It is also essential that our teachers see themselves as contributors to nation building and not simply workers who carry information between curriculum experts and learners" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992, p. 37). Only a couple of teachers, however, mentioned that

teachers were the "root of the nation", and no teachers described the teacher as an agent

for change in the education system. Even more striking, perhaps, is that even the *Broad*

Curriculum seems to be out of sync with *Toward Education for All*. If teachers were

supposed to play an active role in the education system and not simply be workers

carrying information from curriculum experts, that is not expressed in the *Broad*

Curriculum.

Commonality and Idiosyncrasy

Another important finding is that most of the philosophies about the purpose of

education, the role of the teacher, and the meaning of quality teaching that are expressed

in the two policy documents on which I focused are expressed by at least some of the

teachers. While few teachers echo all of the ideas that we can find in the policy, when we

look across teachers we find most of the ideas represented. Importantly, there are no

obvious patterns as to who among the teachers hold these ideas – my findings did not

allow me to come out saying, "all the teachers in this school think this way", or "all the

teachers trained before independence think this way", or even "all the teachers trained

through the BETD think this way". Instead, it appears that the beliefs of individual

teachers are more idiosyncratic. It seems that different elements of the philosophies they

may have read about or learned about in their teacher training, or from other teachers, are

salient to different teachers. Thus, what might have been most striking to one teacher in

her teacher training, or when reading *Toward Education for All*, is that learners should

discover things on their own. What might be most striking to another teacher is that we

should try to treat girls and boys equally. This accords with literature on teacher

thinking, and particularly biographical perspectives on teacher thinking (Goodson, 1992;

Raymond et al., 1992), which stress that the personality and experiences of individual teachers are important and significantly influence their beliefs, how they practice, and how they respond to reforms (Kelchterman, 2004; Raymond et al., 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

Out of this seeming possible chaos of teachers' philosophies, I found that most of the philosophies in which the Namibian government attempted to ground its reforms (at least as expressed in *Toward Education for All*, the *Broad Curriculum*, and secondary documents describing the reforms) are "out there" in the field. In fact, there are a number of areas in which teachers have not only embraced a philosophy but are sometimes able to discuss it in a more nuanced way than what is found in the policy documents. For example, when the teachers discuss their role in supporting the learners' personal development, they see a number of different ways they do this: as an instructor, as a role model, and even as a substitute parent. Similarly, when discussing quality teaching, the teachers discuss subtleties of "letting learners see" and using teaching aids that are touched upon in policy, but not expanded upon; the teachers are able to expand on these ideas. So, while it's likely rare to find a teacher that espouses all of the beliefs found in the philosophies of the reforms, if we get a group of teachers together, it is likely that many of those ideas will be represented among them. If these teachers were to share their ideas, their philosophies of education and of teaching, they would be further exposed to many of the ideas that we find in the reform policy documents, perhaps even in a way that would resonate with them more than by reading about them in policy documents or learning about them in classes.

Struggling with Ideas

At the same time that there are many ways in which teachers seem to be in sync with the philosophies underlying policy, there are gaps. While I worked to get past superficial or "party-line" answers by probing, asking for examples, and discussing actual classroom observations, there were times when it appeared that a teacher might be telling me about an idea that he/she knew was generally accepted, but perhaps not as internalized for him/her. Examples include when Charles used the phrase, "they say"; or when Teopo seemed to contradict herself by first saying a teacher should be a facilitator, and then saying that sometimes you have to "tell them again and again and give them". Because teachers shared things that they didn't like about the reforms, like automatic promotion, I believe we were able to get past the "party-line". Instead, some of the philosophies that teachers discussed in a more vague or inconsistent way, or about which they couldn't think of examples, might indicate that they struggled with those ideas. As mentioned in Chapter 7, I got the sense that teachers felt that the teacher was no longer supposed to be the "giver of knowledge", but at the same time they felt that there was a place for that role. It seems that some of the teachers might struggle with the balance between "facilitating" and "giving knowledge" to the learners. Group work was another area where this arose, where some teachers clearly stated that learner-centred education isn't group work, but then some of the same teachers seemed to collapse group work and learner-centred education, implying that the first was a necessary and sufficient ingredient of the latter.

In addition to the areas where teachers' discussions were vague or otherwise seemed to indicate that the philosophy or idea was not fully embraced, there were some

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In addition to the areas where teachers' discussions were vague or otherwise seemed to indicate that the philosophy or idea was not fully embraced, there were some

elements from reform policy that were absent or not well represented in teachers'

discussions. I have already mentioned the absence of teachers suggesting that they

should play the role of a change agent. There were also a few themes related to quality

teaching that were discussed in reform policy documents but were not raised, or not

discussed very much, by teachers. Only one teacher mentioned that quality teaching

involves using a variety of techniques. This seems quite significant given the fact that

there still seems to be confusion about group work and that some teachers may be

struggling with the balance between the teacher as "facilitator" and the teacher as "giver

of knowledge". It is also noteworthy that no teachers discussed the potential for sharing

assessment information with learners. In both policy documents, this goes along with the

idea that the learners are responsible for their learning, that they should be active partners

in their own learning process. Teachers see assessment as a way for them to follow the

progress of the learner, and to figure out how to better help the learners, but apparently

not as information that would be shared with the learner as part of the learning process

itself (aside from just letting them know what marks they were getting).

These areas where teachers may struggle with ideas that underlie the reform

policies, or where they are absent in teachers' discussions, have implications for

professional development, which I will address further in the section on Implications.

The interesting and enthusiastic discussions that ensued when group work was discussed

in the focus groups represents one possible way that such ideas can be considered for

professional development. In these discussions, teachers ended up discussing the pros

and cons of group work, as well as ways that some teachers had found to make group

work work. I was there primarily to listen to the teachers, not to implicate myself as a

teacher trainer with more expertise than them; but had I been leading a session for professional development, that would have been a good opportunity to bring up the idea of using a variety of techniques and for reinforcing positive examples of using group work.

Connections with Practice

When turning to connections with practice and how teachers view this connection, I sought to answer this question through both teacher interviews and observations. I asked teachers explicitly to link what they were saying about their beliefs with their practice by asking for examples, or how they might do this when they're teaching (for example, how they might guide learners in their personal development). This also came out of discussions that were based on observations, where I asked teachers about the choices they had made in the lesson. And of course, there were the observations themselves.

The degree to which teachers were able to give examples for how their ideas might be implemented in a classroom, including concrete examples of things they have done and seen in lessons, is indicative that the ideas they express go beyond simply repeating things they have heard or been told is policy. When discussing quality teaching, we most often began with descriptions of lessons that they felt exemplified quality teaching and then moved to the teachers discussing the attributes that made these examples of quality teaching. Thus, most of the teachers could clearly go beyond the use of popular terms and showed more than a superficial understanding of the elements they felt contributed to quality teaching. At the same time, for each teacher there were

elements that are discussed in policy, and often discussed in secondary documents, that he/she either didn't address or was less easily able to describe using concrete examples. For instance, the focus on deeper understanding was not mentioned by all of the teachers, some teachers clearly still struggled with the relationship between learner-centred education and group work, and some teachers talked about the teacher as a "facilitator" in a vague way, without clearly specifying what this meant.

As I have described, different teachers appear to have beliefs about teaching that connect with, or embrace, reform policy in different ways: where certain elements are salient to one teacher and different elements are salient to another. This variation and idiosyncrasy comes through in classroom observations as well. This is apparent in the classroom observations I undertook as well as in a number of previous research studies that have included, or focused on, classroom observation (Luecke, 2004; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003; van Graan et al., 2006). The conclusions that classroom researchers in Namibia have drawn varied from pessimistic declarations that teachers are stuck in traditional modes and failing to implement learner-centred education (Mutwa & Reines, 2002; Shaalukeni, 2002), to those who stress the variation between teachers and even within the practice of an individual teacher. What the observers have seen is often some combination of apparently traditional modes of teaching and more learner-centred modes (Luecke, 2004; Storeng, 2001; van Graan et al., 2006). This variation in perception of the researcher may be explained by a number of factors, including the teachers they happened to observe, the researchers themselves, as well as the timing of the research – undertaking observations just before examinations (Mutwa & Reines, 2002), for example, can certainly influence the mode of instruction.

In addition, the use of appropriate variation in techniques would mean that the teaching of some topics involves more memorization, or even lecturing, while other lessons would match more idealized visions of learner-centered lessons (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999).

My perceptions of the lessons I observed fall with the latter group of researchers, who have stressed a more complicated mix of teaching modes. As I described in Chapter 5, there were a number of elements of more traditional teaching that appeared somewhat common among the lessons, such as an apparent lack of emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills, significant reliance on whole-class instruction, and a very routinized structure in the mathematics classes. At the same time, there were a number of differences and examples of creative and innovative approaches, such as encouraging learners to explain their work to the class, teacher-made materials that encouraged participation, and attempts to connect to real life in activities and presentations.

The teachers thus did demonstrate a number of approaches and strategies that were in line with the beliefs they had discussed with me, and which resonate in the policy documents. There were also examples where teachers appeared to be trying to implement such approaches, but did not fully succeed. One of the English teachers, for example, repeatedly tried to direct the learners to discuss in pairs or in small groups. When they made no move to do so, he seemed to give up that tact and resorted to continuing with whole class instruction. One of the mathematics teachers seemed to want to utilize a discovery approach and so had asked her learners, for homework, to find out what "perimeter" means. Not surprisingly, no one came into the class the next day with an

answer; the definition of the word "perimeter" is not something you can "discover" without some scaffolding or guidance (which she hadn't provided). Another teacher was tapping into learners' prior knowledge about place value as a precursor to her lesson on adding decimal numbers, but she missed the important key connecting piece – that decimal place value is the reason you line up the decimal, just like when adding or subtracting whole numbers – and thus these parts of the lesson seemed disconnected. These three examples alone point to a number of the potential challenges that may frustrate teachers in their attempts to put their beliefs into practice, such as learners' dispositions[51] as well as the teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge. Overall, the classroom observations left me with the impression that the teachers in my study have been making an effort to put their beliefs into practice (which, for some teachers, means changing their practice). They have succeeded in some places; they have not yet succeeded in others, for a variety of possible reasons.

Challenges and Supports

It quickly became apparent, in fact, that the teachers felt there were a number of factors that might impede their ability to practice in accordance with the beliefs they had expressed. This led to conversations about challenges and supports to quality teaching, which produced a long list of such factors. In short, the list of potential supports, but most often challenges, that came from these discussions was (in approximate order of frequency of mention by teachers): parent collaboration, professional development,

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[51] There are a number of possible reasons the teacher could have had difficulty with the learners: They could lack confidence in their English or might not have understood the teachers' instructions (this teacher doesn't speak the local language); they could lack experience in doing pair or group work and feel uncomfortable with it; they could have no motivation to do what he's asking, and know from experience that he'll give up and resort to whole class instruction anyway; and so forth.

resources, learner discipline and preparedness, and teacher content and pedagogical knowledge. There are no real surprises in this list, as they have been named in a number of research documents, (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999; Luecke, 2004; Murangi, V. K. & Andersson, 1997; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003; Tjivikua, 2003), both as general problems in Namibian education, as well as obstacles that may prevent teachers from implementing policy. It has also been acknowledged that many of these problems are exacerbated in rural areas (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999; Makuwa, 2005), a reality that resonated in this study as well.

What was particularly highlighted through this research is the emphasis that teachers put on the need for better working relationships with parents, on the need for professional development, and on the challenges they find that connect to the learners – namely discipline and foundational knowledge/skills. Some areas that teachers did not discuss as much, but which participants at other levels did – and which came through my observations and are discussed in some previous research studies (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999; Makuwa, 2003, 2005; Pomuti, LeCzel, Liman, Swarts, & Graan, 2004) – are the challenges that come from insufficient teacher content and pedagogical knowledge.

A number of previous studies in Namibia have noted a lack of support for new teaching techniques at the school level (Murangi, V. K. & Andersson, 1997; Mutwa & Reines, 2002), where other teachers or the principal were negative about teachers' attempts to try new methods. I did not see or hear about this challenge, which may be a factor of time; studies that took place closer to the beginning of the reforms may have

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encountered more resistance among practicing teachers. At the same time, it is notable

that teachers expressed appreciation for professional development opportunities, but

teacher communication in terms of sharing teaching ideas or planning together and

sharing teacher-made materials was somewhat limited – as though professional

development is necessarily something that must come from the outside. Perhaps this is

why there was almost no mention among teachers about the Teacher Resource Centres,

which would ideally serve both as locations for workshops as well as places teachers

could go to find resources on their own. Only two teachers mentioned finding their own

avenues for professional development – going to other schools to observe classes and talk

with teachers or reading books on theory and practice – though a number of teachers felt

that they would like more professional development opportunities. The importance of

professional development, in fact, resonates throughout my findings and will be

discussed further in the next session.

Implications

As I have mentioned, recent research studies on primary-level teachers in

Namibia have indicated that teachers appear to understand the principals of learner-

centered education, but that they don't apply these principles sufficiently in the classroom

(Pomuti, 1999; van Graan, 1999; van Graan et al., 2006). Pomuti et al. (1999) concluded

that this was because teachers do not have sufficient capacity, particularly in critical

reflection, to do this. Others have also stressed contextual factors such as resources, class

size, and a lack of support from school administration (Government of the Republic of

Namibia, 1999; Makuwa, 2003; Murangi, V. K. & Andersson, 1997; Mutwa & Reines, 2002). Based on this study, I would agree with many of these assertions – particularly with the recognition of the problems of resources, class size, and to some degree teacher capacity. Most of these were specifically mentioned in my research. I would also agree with the conclusion that has been drawn by many of the researchers, who particularly emphasize the importance of continuing professional development (Luecke, 2004; O'Sullivan, M., 2002; Pomuti et al., 2004; van Graan et al., 2006).

Based on this research, this is an opinion shared by teachers as well: continuing professional development is vital for teachers to be able to fully develop their teaching skills. As *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992) points out, "learning is a lifelong activity - a process not an event. It is not something that happens once and then is over" (p. 11) and " . . . to be a good teacher one must continue to study, to be an active learner throughout one's life" (p. 12). Pre-Service teacher education, no matter how strong, cannot be expected to be the end of a teacher's development. Unfortunately, because of the vast shortage of teachers with any training at the time of independence, the focus has had to be on initial training, and upgrading of practicing teachers (meaning making sure they meet qualification criteria and are exposed to the reforms). Continuing development of teachers already "trained" in the reforms has received scant attention until recently. The Ten-Year-Plan for Education Development Support (Coombe et al., 1999) was designed to continue focusing on upgrading qualifications of under-qualified teachers until 2007, but to begin also to consider continuing professional development starting in 2004. In the meantime, professional development has been somewhat piecemeal, with a number of small projects and

programs aimed at certain portions of the teaching force (Tjivikua, 2003), and an increasing reliance on clusters that appear to be uneven in terms of level of activity and quality of support. It is encouraging, though, that there are many voices that are stressing the need for continuing professional development, among both teachers and ministry officials, and that policy now places some emphasis on this area.

This study speaks substantially to professional development. It certainly supports the findings from previous research that the pedagogical capacity of teachers should be supported and enhanced through professional development. Based on this research, I would add additional concerns as well, which have been dealt with somewhat less in recent research in Namibia: the importance and impact of teacher content knowledge; learner behavior and classroom management; the range of strategies currently being used by teachers (as opposed to an emphasis on what they are NOT doing); and the teachers' perceptions of their role in the community and the education system. In this section, I will begin by discussing these additional areas, offering the reasons for their importance and possible connections with professional development. Then I will raise more general considerations regarding teacher education and professional development, as well as how professional development can integrate some of these additional concerns.

Concern with Content

Concern over teacher content knowledge is not new in Namibia, though it is not always emphasized in discussions of pedagogy and professional development. In the subject areas on which I focused, however, it is clear that there is a content knowledge weakness among many teachers. This may include, for example, teachers having weak

mathematics procedural skills, as well as teachers not having a deep conceptual understanding of the subject. Making decisions about which topics can be approached through discovery activities, how to tap into learners' prior knowledge related to a topic, and gauging the appropriate level for activities that learners can participate in actively demand not just knowledge of and skill in pedagogical theory, but also a solid understanding of, and confidence in, the subject matter.

As I discussed in Chapter 9, there has been a lot of criticism of the BETD program because too many teachers appear to come out of it with weak subject content knowledge. Realizing that this is not just a matter of the program itself, but of the skills with which students enter the program, entry requirements have been raised. This solution is probably only partial, however, because the country still needs a certain number of teachers in each subject. Thus, teachers with less than ideal content knowledge are teaching the next generation of teachers. As one of the mathematics lecturers pointed out, "there are the very teachers [with weaker maths skills] that will go to schools and . . . it's a vicious circle kind of thing."

For a while yet, because of this "vicious circle", there are likely to be teachers with weaker than ideal skills in the subjects they teach – even for some of those teachers who are teaching in their "major" area. There is potential, however, for teachers to be consistently upgrading their content knowledge, as well as their pedagogical skills, through professional development. And if programs of professional development also encourage and support teachers' self reflection and evaluation, teachers may become better at identifying their own areas of weakness and maybe even at seeking support or

finding new avenues for improving in these areas without needing to rely on formal training events[52].

Classroom Management

There is clearly a body of research that supports the finding in this study that teachers feel challenged by the behavior of learners in the classroom, by what they see as a lack of discipline (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999; Luecke, 2004; Storeng, 2001; Tjivikua, 2003). From complaints about learners not being willing to participate to learners being disrespectful of the teacher, many teachers appear to feel that learners do not behave in a way that is conducive to quality teaching and learning, to implementing learner-centred education.

Teachers appear to have a range of explanations for this, from the impact of the "rights of the child", to a general breakdown in discipline among the younger generation because of changes in society. From an outsider's perspective, I suspect this is impacted significantly by the pains felt by both teachers and learners stemming from a change in instruction that no longer relies heavily on authoritarianism and corporal punishment. It seems possible that both teachers and learners may have a difficult time walking (or seeing) the line between sharing ideas and building a more democratic classroom, and simply being disrespectful. In addition, if learners have experienced more traditional, authoritarian teaching in the lower grades[53], it will be that much harder for them to

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[52] While many of the teachers appear to be in the habit of asking each other for help on particular topics, and this is to be applauded, it seems that this should be a minimum level of continuing development, not the extent of it.

[53] While my study didn't examine this, I was told informally that there was a tendency for teachers who had not become qualified (that is, gone through BETD or its INSET equivalent) to be moved down to lower grades.

transition to approaches in the higher grades that depend on active participation and respectful sharing of ideas. While classroom management is meant to be covered during the BETD, the challenges faced by teachers in this respect may demand more, and more in depth, attention.

Learning from Differences

Given the findings from this research – that teachers share a number of beliefs about teaching, but that they also have a number of differing ideas – the question arises, what does, and could, this mean for professional development? The answer would seem to lie in the realization that most of the reform ideas are shared by at least some teachers, and that many of them come through in some form, and to some extent, in practice. If somehow these practices and ideas could be built upon, it would seem that there would be a good foundation for developing them further, and for sharing them with teachers who are struggling more with some of the ideas involved and/or with putting them into practice.

In many ways, this comes down to approaching professional development from an asset, rather than a deficit, perspective. As Van Graan (1999) pointed out, there was never an opportunity to do an assessment of the beliefs that practicing teachers held about education and teaching after independence. Certainly, there was little opportunity to find those pockets of better practice among the more common traditional approaches. However, as I pointed out in Chapter 3, some such pockets did exist even before independence. The circuit inspector spoke to this as well, mentioning that for him, discovery and active learning was something he had embraced when he was teaching before independence and the reforms came:

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when I was teaching, I used to, I'm a geography teacher, and I give you an assignment for six months. Where you take a particular country, an African country, and you do research on that country. For six months and in June you're handing in your project. And it's a thick book with each and every, every, every thing about that particular country.

As one ministry official explained to me, however, after independence teachers ended up being given the implicit message that their teaching was a vestige of apartheid, and wrong, regardless of what their actual teaching approach may have been.

In many ways, this is similar to the way observations of teachers, and discussions of professional development, have sometimes been approached – where the focus becomes only the aspects of teaching which are still very traditional, the "misunderstanding" teachers have about learner-centred education. This approach, however, at best overlooks some potential tools for helping teachers to develop professionally and, at worst, can be a form of disempowerment for teachers. It also ignores the possibility that the ultimate forms of teaching that will be most appropriate in the Namibian context will look somewhat different from the ideal forms that the policy-makers envisioned, and may even differ from one context within Namibia to another.

Teachers' Perceptions of Roles Beyond the Classroom

One of the clear findings from this study has been that the teachers focused much more on their roles in the classroom than on their roles beyond the classroom. In fact, only a few teachers discussed playing a role as a teacher or leader in the community, and no teachers discussed their role as potential change agents in the education system. At the same time, teachers felt that their ability to teach in accordance with their beliefs was hampered by a lack of parental collaboration.

As I have mentioned, the *Broad Curriculum* itself departs from *Toward Education for All* in that it focuses more on the teachers' roles in the classroom and because it speaks much less directly about the teacher's role in the community or as a change agent in the education system. It appears that, just as with the potential for asset-based approaches to professional development (building on the innovative practices that are happening among some teachers in some places) has tended to be overlooked, the potential for teachers to contribute to change in the education system seems to have been forgotten to some degree on the side of the Ministry.

At the same time, the emphasis on the relationship between teachers and the community seems to have perhaps been forgotten to some degree on the side of the teachers. It is perhaps telling that the two teachers that most emphasized the role of the teacher in the community were two older teachers at Rural School 2 (the Principal and Titus), both of whom were from one of the surrounding villages and had a long history with that school and community. Among most of the other teachers, many of whom commuted to schools from towns a fair distance away, there was less of a sense that they saw themselves as part of the community with which they would be attempting to collaborate. Given that teachers clearly saw the importance of collaboration with parents, it seems that it would be greatly beneficial to work towards renewing the idea of the teacher as playing an important role in the community.

Professional Development – Considering Possibilities

I have mentioned a number of issues that may need to be considered in professional development in Namibia, such as classroom management and weak

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foundational skills among learners. In fact, these issues further impede what is already a

challenging process: putting into practice ideas that are counter to what the teachers may

have previously experienced as learners. The good news, as has also been mentioned in

some previous research (Luecke, 2004; Mutwa & Reines, 2002; van Graan, 1999), is that

the beliefs that teachers hold about education and teaching seem to be in line with

learner-centred education, the centerpiece of reforms. However, even without issues of

content knowledge and concerns over learner discipline – not to mention a lack of

resources and a second language as medium of instruction – putting these ideas into

practice would still be challenging. Heaton (2000) writes about the difficult process of

changing her own practice in the US context, even with lots of support and a clearly

reflective orientation. The changes that have taken place among teachers in Namibia

should therefore be seen as impressive, though admittedly the road ahead is likely still

long.

In addition to concerns about content knowledge and classroom management,

both this and previous research has also pointed out that teachers could benefit from more

support for reflective practice (Luecke, 2004; Pomuti et al., 2004; van Graan et al., 2006),

which is not as ingrained and integrated as the reformers would have hoped. In this

study, I spoke with a number of teachers who appeared to think deeply about what quality

teaching was and what the teacher's role should be and seemed to struggle with this at

times. At the same time, just a few teachers specifically mentioned reflection, and then it

was mostly reflecting technically, thinking about what happened in their class (as

opposed to regularly considering social context or other ramifications beyond the current

or next lesson). In addition, communities of reflection, where teachers can have rich

conversations about their teaching, and maybe even plan together, seem to be sparse. This study has also shown that teachers may have an idea of what quality teaching could be like, but may not have a clear vision as to how to get there, or even as to how exactly that would look in their own teaching context.

Teachers appear to have a two-pronged need for development support in order to better realize their ideas of quality teaching: in pre-service education and also in continuous development during their teaching career. It would appear the BETD is contributing to the development of ideas among teachers about education and teaching, and enabling them to start trying to put their ideas into practice. It has been pointed out, however, that teacher educators aren't always confident in their own understanding of and ability to teach in line with reforms. So, student teachers may end up without a model from which to learn experientially, a situation which may go far in explaining why the notion that group work is necessary and sufficient for LCE is still so common. In addition, it would appear that theoretical and methodological aspects of teaching are taught in ETP while, for some subjects, subject matter is taught in isolation in subject courses (or learner-centered education approaches within a subject may be taught as a discrete topic). While some of the subject lecturers discussed their efforts to bridge that gap, others see their role as conveying the subject matter alone and may not feel confident in bridging the gap. This may further hamper the teachers in their ability to apply their teaching philosophies to particular subjects – especially when some of them may be weak in that subject to begin with. For example, new teachers may need help in figuring out how to apply notions of discovery learning specifically in mathematics, or what an appropriate group task would be in English.

Once students have graduated from the BETD and are practicing teachers, their learning continues. Even if the BETD equips them with the tools for beginning to develop their skills in teaching and in reflection, it is unreasonable to expect that they would have received everything they need from those three years and now will be able to smoothly put all their ideas into practice. Recognizing this, one of the ministry officials I spoke with mentioned that he is interested in developing an induction process for new teachers, and as I have mentioned, there is a policy statement that continuing professional development will now receive the attention it deserves (Coombe et al., 1999).

Since independence, there have been a number of models for professional development that have been attempted – some more successfully than others (Ottevanger, Macfarlane, & Clegg, 2005; Snyder, 2000; Tjivikua, 2003; van Graan et al., 2006). Certainly the ministry will be able to learn from these. At the same time, it is important that the experiences of current teachers are considered, and particularly the ideas and skills that they have developed. It is likely that the cluster system will continue to be a predominate method for delivering professional development – which makes sense given the logistic and economic difficulty of bringing teachers together in one place and the well known weaknesses of cascade approaches (Craig et al., 1998; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Certainly the cluster system offers potential opportunities for teachers to share their own teaching ideas and to reflect together. This study indicates that the cluster system at the moment, however, is uneven in effectiveness, and that the capacity, and therefore quality, of support provided through the cluster system may vary.

This leaves a difficult question to answer: how to support teachers in an ongoing fashion even though resources are limited, which also means how to encourage them to

develop communities of reflection and practice when they don't necessarily have good models for this. Ideally, this support would also enable teachers to think about teaching in a flexible manner, reinforcing the notion that teachers can use a variety of techniques – that different techniques may be appropriate for different learners, different topics, and so forth, but they may still all be in line with their own philosophies and with learner-centred education. Luecke (2004) offers some suggestions for doing this, emphasizing that the hybrids that have arisen should be embraced. She recommends that "studying and documenting such hybrids, and disseminating this information, will model for other teachers across the nation both general concepts and specific strategies for crafting meaningful implementation in one's own classroom" (p. 369).

While sharing ideas and examples among Namibian teachers within a cluster will be beneficial, a balance will need to be struck somehow between the ideas that teachers are able to share with each other, and where external support needs to be provided. Where teachers have weak subject knowledge, they will need support from beyond their cluster. Similarly, if teachers are not used to reflecting critically, alone or together, and if they have difficulty envisioning actual lessons that will put their philosophies (that are shared with those of learner-centred education) into practice, they may need additional assistance.

While some teacher support programs in the early nineties that included scripted lessons[54] were not favored by policy makers, who feared that they would not allow teachers to develop skills in reflective practice and the ability to adjust lessons to their learners and learning environment, they were reportedly popular among teachers (Snyder, 2000). The policy-makers' fears were justifiable, but at the same time scripted lessons

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[54] Utilizing highly structured – sometimes literally written as a script – lesson plans

can compensate for content knowledge gaps among teachers, and they have the potential for actually giving the teacher new insight into a topic. Perhaps there is a balance, or a middle ground, where teachers could be provided with well-developed lesson plans for particularly difficult topics, in combination with facilitated discussion and examination as to how they could be adapted. Adding to Luecke's (2004) suggestion, disseminating strategies and well-developed lesson plans that Namibian teachers have developed, as well as possible alternatives that teachers could examine and consider, could contribute to teachers' flexibility and the variety of techniques they have access to and eventually to their skill in selecting strategies that are appropriate to their local teaching context.

Other models that have been used in Namibia, on a small scale, that combine examining and reflecting on teachers' own practice and scaffolding that comes from "outside" include supervised practice and feedback, micro-teaching, lesson study, and self-evaluation. O'Sullivan (2002) combined many of these when facilitating a Namibian in-service teacher training program. In her experience with this INSET program, O'Sullivan found a scaffolded approach useful in helping teachers to begin to develop stronger skills in reflective practice. Similarly, Pomuti et al. (2004) discuss how video lessons have been used to stimulate discussion and how they can be combined with a cycle of experimentation and reflection, as well as with a school-level self-evaluation process. These methods can provide teachers with models of good practice. When they are able to participate in micro-teaching, practice with feedback, or to view videos of themselves, they are better able to connect these models to, and reflect on, their own practice. Similarly, teachers could observe models of different ways to teach the same lesson, which could provoke discussion and reflection on these approaches and the

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strengths and weaknesses of each for their own contexts. While these efforts have admittedly been intensive and small-scale, they offer possibilities for thinking about what could be done on a larger scale and/or through the cluster system. Clearly, not every teacher can have intensive feedback sessions with a support provider, or have his/her lesson video-taped. However, such resources as copies of video-tapes to be used by cluster teams, possibly with suggested discussion questions; model lesson plans to be experimented with and discussed; and self-evaluation tools, could move cluster meetings in a positive direction, as a start.

Looking Beyond Namibia – Further Implications

While I have discussed a number of implications that I believe this study has for the Namibian context, and particularly for teacher professional development, there are implications that go beyond this context. Certainly there are other contexts with similar challenges and in which some of the considerations I have discussed will also make sense. Beyond the implications coming out of the specific "findings" from Namibia, however, I believe there are additional lessons to be learned related to the focus of the research and some of the fundamental findings.

First, the approach I have taken in this study is somewhat different from many studies that have focused on teachers in reform processes, particularly in African contexts. Starting with teachers' philosophies and beliefs, as opposed to asking them to respond to policy statements and related vocabulary, enables us to better understand where the teachers are coming from. It is very possible – and I certainly suspected that was the case with some of the teachers in my study – that teachers have beliefs that are

in line with particular reforms, but that they do not really even realize it. When I heard some teachers make statements that seemed to equate learner-centered education with group work, this seemed to contrast with many of the things those same teachers had just described as "quality teaching". It seemed they might have a richer base for building and supporting learner-centred teaching than they themselves realized, because they might have hooked the term "learner-centred education" to a much more narrow definition. Those same teachers might have come out very poorly had I tested them on their "understanding of LCE" or on particular terms that have been connected with LCE.

Another element that stands out very clear in this study is the idiosyncrasy among teachers – the fact that individual teachers have individual constellations of beliefs about education and teaching, and that they connect in various ways to reform policy. Similarly, while there are similarities in their classroom teaching, there is much individual variation and, sometimes, innovation. This would seem to reaffirm the claims made by scholars who stress the importance of teachers' biographies – that how teachers think about teaching, and how they change their practice, is bound up with who they are and the experiences they have had (Goodson, 1992; Kelchterman, 2004; Raymond et al., 1992).

While I did not undertake in-depth analyses of the school contexts, I also didn't find any obvious, overarching trends by school, or by teacher training. There were some themes that had more concurrence within a specific school, or among the most recent BETD graduates (such as a tendency for rural teachers to discuss their learners' English, or more of the recent graduates to discuss gender equity) – but there were many more themes that didn't. In fact, one of the teachers who had been educated within Namibia

well before independence was one of the most enthusiastic in discussing discovery

learning and her own efforts to improve her practice. One of the most recent BETD

graduates, on the other hand, was the most negative when talking about her learners and

how some of them "couldn't think". This was certainly contrary to conventional wisdom

in Namibia. Spillane et al. (Spillane, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002) point out that the

meanings that individual teachers make of policy depend on a constellation of factors

that may be unique to individual teachers. The research I have done underscores this and

highlights the importance of not assuming that teachers are going to react to policy

similarly – even teachers within the same school or training program may make different

meanings of the policy – and that the factors that influence teachers' thinking are

multiple and highly individualized.

Areas for Further Research

While implications for professional development stand out in this study, and so I

have focused on them here, there are a number of other issues that are raised as well that

bear further investigation: notably collaboration with parents, learners' preparedness

(particularly in English), and the lack of resources. In addition, there is apparent discord

between the way in which *Toward Education for All* positioned teachers as social agents

in the education system, and the way they have been portrayed in later documents, as

well as by teachers themselves. Some of these issues – such as weak English competence

among learners and the lack of resources – are fairly well understood, if not very easily

addressed[55]. Other elements deserve further research – certainly a more in depth analysis of their manifestation, causes, and possibilities for addressing them than this study could include.

Some researchers have included parents in their research, but the conclusions drawn focus mostly on teachers (Luecke, 2004; van Graan et al., 2006). This study has touched on the importance of collaboration between parents and schools/teachers and the challenges that have arisen in some instances when this collaboration is not present. Some of the teachers in my study said that they felt the parents did not share their ideas of the purpose of education or didn't really believe in the benefit of education. In order to understand this picture better, it would be necessary to have the parents' perspective as well – to more fully understand the choices parents are making about sending their children to school, supporting their education, and participating in school activities. It might be useful, in fact, to make this the focus of study, instead of an add-on to research centered mainly on teachers.

A similar argument can be made for the issue of learner discipline. Certainly, in relation to discipline, it will be useful to better understand the factors involved. There has been very little, if any, research on education in Namibia that has focused on learners and in understanding how learners think about and adapt to changes that have taken place in education in Namibia. The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture, and Training (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999) included focus groups of parents and learners, and there were a number of complaints made about teachers in these

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[55] The Presidential Committee on Education, Culture and Training Report (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1999) discusses both of these issues and in 2000 a conference on Language and Development in Southern Africa (Trewby & Fitchat, 2001) was convened in Okahandja, Namibia and included numerous presentations on the challenges and ramifications of English medium instruction in Namibia.

– many of which did not come up in my research. I heard informal comments now and again about, for example, teacher absenteeism or teachers having inappropriate relationships with their learners[56], but few of these were discussed in formal interviews or arose as themes in my analysis. It is not too surprising that the teachers in my study didn't talk much about such issues. However, the perspectives of parents and learners on these matters are important as well, and even the Presidential Commission didn't separate out the perspectives of parents and learners in its report.

Another area to examine is the possible regional variation in beliefs about education and teaching. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, it is possible that teachers in different regions of the country might have different feelings about the reforms and possibly even have developed different beliefs about education and teaching, particularly given that the northern regions have received somewhat more attention and a greater influx of resources since independence. This attention, while important to redress inequities, may have impacted the receptiveness of teachers in these regions to reform, in comparison to teachers in other regions. It would be interesting to investigate that possibility.

Lastly, recent policy developments bear examination. For over ten years after independence, the theme of policy development in Namibia was "change in continuity" (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003). Changes that were made in the education system, and new policy documents that were released, basically rested on the foundation of the post-independence policy reforms. Throughout many such documents, one could find reference to the four goals of education presented in *Toward Education for*

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[56] While these complaints were sometimes framed as relating to the new, young teachers who had come up since independence, I heard all the very same complaints when I lived there in 92-95.

All – Quality, Access, Equity, and Democracy – and of the importance of learner-centred education. In the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) document released in 2006 (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2006), however, "democracy" is mentioned only as a positive by-product of education and as a curriculum topic (along with ICTs, entrepreneurship, and environmental education). I have not undertaken an in depth analysis of this document (because it was a ministerial-level discussion document at the time I was there), but it appears that, in it, education becomes primarily a force for economic growth – an obvious contrast from *Toward Education for All*. ETSIP grew out of Namibia's *Vision 2030* (Office of the President, 2004), which was released in 2004 as the "Policy Framework for Long-Term Development" and was a government document that cuts across numerous sectors.

It would be interesting to do an in-depth analysis of both the most recent policy documents and of the policy process that created them. I heard mention that Vision 2030 was closely tied to World Bank research and funding around the same time (and the World Bank's report, *Namibia Human Capital and Knowledge Development for Economic Growth with Equity* was released in 2005) – which would certainly explain a heavy shift toward economic growth and human capital orientations to education. However, this was a comment made to me offhandedly, not a research finding. If this apparent shift in orientation is indeed real, it would seem to represent a change in the way the purposes of education are framed at the national level. This begs further exploration. And, if this is really the sign of such a shift, it will again be interesting, and useful, to examine over time how this shift filters down to colleges of education and to the level of the school and teacher – and how, or whether, this impacts their beliefs and their practice.

Questions for Consideration

I have presented my findings – the ideas espoused by teachers, principals, ministry officials and in two key policy documents – and I have expounded on some of my interpretations and the implications that I see as important. In closing, I wish to return to the spirit with which I undertook this research, to serve not as an external expert, providing policy prescriptions, but as a "critical friend" offering a basis for "reflection and development of further practice". As such, I end here with a set of questions that the research I have undertaken raises, and which I believe are worth considering and discussing – in Namibia and, I think, in other contexts as well.

- How/Can we (as teacher educators, ministry officials, advisory teachers, administrators, and so forth) build an asset-based approach to teacher development, which would enable teachers to share their ideas and experience, while at the same time supporting them in developing areas where they may be weak, such as critical reflection and content knowledge?

- How can content and pedagogical knowledge be integrated in a way that will enable teachers to think more flexibly about both their subject and their teaching, and which will help them to develop the ability to identify appropriate teaching techniques according to particular subjects and topics, as well as according to their learners and their teaching environments?

- How important is it that teachers correctly define the term "learner-centred"? Is it possible to focus more on the philosophies and orientations to teaching that

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underlie reforms? And to focus on teachers' own philosophies and beliefs, and then build on these?

- When we (as teacher educators, ministry officials, researchers, outside "experts") seek to examine practice and, particularly, whether practice is "learner-centred", can/should we consider the possibility that there is not one ideal model for what "learner-centred" must look like – that, in fact, it may and should look different from lesson to lesson, from day to day, from class to class? Is it possible that what is ultimately the best approach for a particular context might combine techniques that appear more traditional with those that match our idealized notions of "learner-centred"?

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

Protocol for Classroom Observations

Teacher: _____   Subject: _____   Time: _____

Number of students: _____

Draw a rough diagram of the classroom, including positions of teacher and students.

Decorations/displays – Describe materials displayed on walls or around room, note in particular: Student work displayed; content/subject of materials displayed; whether any displays appear to be made from local materials.

During session, take running notes, with times indicated when possible, with focus on the teacher. Where possible, note the following teacher behavior items (See Teacher Behavior Definitions below):

Activity   Assessment   Discipline
Grouping   Content   Connect to Context

Following the observation, respond to the following questions as possible:

Books: What is the student/book ratio? How are the books used?
Manipulatives: Are manipulatives used? What type of manipulatives – made of what materials? How are they used?
Visual aids: Are any visual aids used? How?
Activity: What activities did the teacher use most often?
Grouping: How are groups formed – by teacher selection, student choice, proximity? Do groups appear to correspond to level in some way? If so, is work differentiated in any way? What does teacher do while students are working in groups?
Assessment: When/how does teacher give student(s) feedback? Does there appear to be a stress on negative and/or positive feedback? Does feedback tend to include only "right" or "wrong", or also include "why"? When/how does teacher discuss assessment/grades/tests, etc with students? If assessment is clearly taking place, what type of content is being assessed (see below)?
Content: What type of content focus did the teacher have most of the time?
Discipline: What behaviors does the teacher react to in a disciplinary fashion – what does the teacher appear to consider "out of line"? What do the standards seem to be? What forms does discipline take? What does the teacher seem to do, in general, to maintain student behavior overall (routines or rituals that appear to maintain control)?
Connection to Context: When/does teacher discuss reasons for learning a particular topic / for being in school? What reasons are discussed?

Teacher Interview – Part I

Note: Since these interviews will be conducted in the semi-structured interview format, the questions below represent themes. Each of the themes will be investigated, but some of the specific questions may not be asked, depending on the flow of the interview.

Personal Background:

When and where did you start teaching?
What teacher education/training have you received? (for example, BETD graduate, versus INSET graduate or current student, pre-independence training, etc.)
How long have you been teaching at (Name of school)?
What subjects and grades do you teach?
What other duties, if any, do you have in the school?

Teaching background:

How did you come to be a teacher at (Name of school)?
How did you decide to become a teacher?
How long have you been a maths/English teacher?
How did you come to be a maths/English teacher?

Schooling and Teaching:

In your opinion, is it important for children to go to school? Why?
Why do you think it is important for students to learn English/math?
What do you think a teacher's role is *(Additional prompst: How would you describe the job of a teacher? What are your most important responsibilities?)*
Think about the images you had of education and teaching when you were young, before your teacher education. Do you think they were different from now? Tell me about them *(Additional prompts: what did you think a teacher's job was? What did you think was important about school?)*
Do you think your ideas changed while you were in your teacher education program? If so, how?
Have your ideas changed since you started teaching? If so, how?
Do you think your practice (the way you teach) has changed over time? If so, how?
How do you think most people in Namibia view school today? *(Additional prompts: What do people think the purpose for school is or why people should send their children to school?)*
How do you think people in Namibia view teachers *(Additional prompts: what role do they think teachers should have? Do they think teachers are important – why?)*
Do you think different people – like parents, teachers, school administrators, ministry people – see these things the same way? If not, what are some of the differences?

Teacher Interview – Part II

Note: Since these interviews will be conducted in the semi-structured interview format, the questions below represent themes. Each of the themes will be investigated, but some of the specific questions may not be asked, depending on the flow of the interview.

Lesson Reflection:

How did you plan for that lesson?
What did you think went particularly well about that lesson? What went not so well?
How did you decide to . . . . (discuss a feature of the lesson)?
What will you do in your next lesson? How do you decide what to do next? Is that generally how you decide what to do from one lesson to the next?

General Reflection:

In general, how do you go about planning for your lessons? *(Prompt: For how many days do you plan at a time? How do you decide what to do in a lesson?)*
Where did you learn how to plan for your lessons? In what ways have you changed the way you plan since then?
Do you have a chance to reflect on each lesson and think about what went well and what didn't go so well? If so, when do you do this? How do you decide what went well and what didn't?
Do you have a chance to talk with other teachers about your teaching? If so, please tell me about when these opportunities happen. What do you find most useful about talking with other teachers?

Professional Development:

Tell me a little bit about in-service training that you have had.
When you were doing your teacher education, or at in-service training, how was reflection incorporated into your training? *(Additional Prompts: What activities did they have you do that they would call reflection? What kinds of questions did they ask you about your practice teaching?)*
Do you think you still continue to do some of the same kinds of reflection activities that were part of your training? Why or why not? Which ones?
When you were doing your teacher education, or at in-service training, did the training include discussions of the purpose of school – why it is important for children to go to school or learn certain subjects?
In what ways do you think your training has been useful (both pre and in-service)?
In what ways do you think your training could be improved?
In general, what changes in your school or in Namibian education In general, do you think would help to support you in your teaching?

Teacher Focus Group

Note: Since these interviews will be conducted in the semi-structured interview format, the questions below represent themes. Each of the themes will be investigated, but some of the specific questions may not be asked, depending on the flow of the interview.

Personal Background (for each participant):
When and where did you start teaching?
What teacher education/training have you received? (for example, BETD graduate, versus INSET graduate or current student, pre-independence training, etc.)
How long have you been teaching at (Name of school)?
What subjects and grades do you teach?
What other duties, if any, do you have in the school?

School and Teaching:
What do you think is the purpose of school? (*Additional Prompt: Is it important, or good, for children to go to school?*)
What do you think a teacher's role is *(Additional prompts: How would you describe the job of a teacher? What are your most important responsibilities?)*
How do you think most people in Namibia view school today? *(Additional prompts: What do people think the purpose for school is?)*
How do you think people in Namibia view teachers *(Additional prompts: what role do they think teachers should have? Do they think teachers are important – why?)*
How do you think officials at the Ministry of Education view school and teachers?

Quality Teaching:
Try to think of a lesson you have taught or seen that you thought was really high quality.
Tell me a little about that lesson, especially what you thought was particularly good.
Can you explain why you think that particular example shows good teaching?
How do you know when one approach/teaching strategy works better than another?
What are the main things that support your efforts to become a good quality teacher?

Pre and In-service Teacher Education:
How has the BETD shaped your practice?
What were the most useful things you learnt in the BETD?
Was what you learned in the BETD relevant to your present teaching?
Explain the kinds of in-service training you have had.
In what ways has in-service professional development influenced or shaped your ideas about education quality?
In what ways has inservice professional development influenced or shaped your practice (what you do in the classroom, how you do it)?
What do you think are some of the challenges that teachers face that might keep them from always teaching at a high quality level?
What changes would you like to see, in your school or in Namibian education in general, that you think would best support high quality teaching?

Principal Interview

Note: Since these interviews will be conducted in the semi-structured interview format, the questions below represent themes. Each of the themes will be investigated, but some of the specific questions may not be asked, or others may be added, depending on the background of the interviewee and the flow of the interview.

Personal Background:
When and where did you start teaching?
How long have you been at this school? How long have you been a principal>
What other duties, if any, do you have in the school (teaching any subjects?)?

School and Teaching:
What do you think is the purpose of school? (*Additional Prompt: Why is it important, or good, for children to go to school?*)
What do you think a teacher's role is *(Additional prompst: How would you describe the job of a teacher? What are your most important responsibilities?)*
How would you define or describe good quality teaching?
Can you give examples of good quality teaching?
How do you see your role in creating quality teaching in your school?
How would you define or describe a high quality school?
What are some of the things you do to encourage good quality of education in your school?
Does your school have a mission statement or school motto? If so, what is it, and how was it developed?

Pre and In-service Teacher Education:
Which program or intervention in your opinion has had a positive impact on improving the quality of education in the region?
Describe the impact that this program/intervention has on the way you manage your school.
What kinds of changes in teaching practice do you think this program has made among your teachers?
Why do you think this program had this effect? What about it made it so successful?
Does the school have a policy to promote continuous professional development of teachers? If so, what is this policy?
Describe how the professional development activities are implemented.
What do you think are some of the challenges that schools face that might keep them from always performing at a high quality level?
What changes would you like to see, in your school or in Namibian education in general, that you think would best support high quality education?

Teacher Educators & Ministry Officials Interview

Note: Since these interviews will be conducted in the semi-structured interview format, the questions below represent themes. Each of the themes will be investigated, but some of the specific questions may not be asked, or others may be added, depending on the background of the interviewee and the flow of the interview.

Personal Background:
What is your current position?
How long have you been in this position?
Please tell me your background – how you reached this position.
Please describe your duties in your current position.

Teacher Education Policy/Programs:
From your perspective, how would you describe how the BETD was developed?
At the time the BETD and INSET programs started, how would you describe their underlying philosophy about the purposes of education and the role of the teacher?
 In what ways do you think the BETD program, and/or the underlying philosophy, was contested? (*Additional Prompts*: Did everyone agree, or was there controversy about it?)
What do you feel were the most important features of the BETD at that time?
From your perspective, how would you describe the development of various in-service training programs that came about in the mid-90s?
In what ways do you think in-service training in the mid-90s was, or wasn't, in line with the BETD program?
Please describe the relationship between the colleges of education and the University of Namibia during the mid-90s.

Policy/Program Change:
In what ways do you think teacher education has changed in Namibia since the mid-90s?
How has the BETD, and/or its underlying philosophy, changed over time?
In what ways are the underlying philosophies you discussed just now, about education and teaching, discussed and/or contested now?
What do think are the most important features of the BETD now?
How would you describe the arena of in-service training now? In what ways is, or isn't, in-service training in line with the BETD program now?
Please describe the relationship between the colleges of education and the University of Namibia during the mid-90s.

Teacher Education and Reflection (Teacher Educators Only):
In what ways are the teacher education programs meant to encourage or support reflective practice?
In what ways do you think the programs currently DO encourage or support reflective practice? (*If there's a difference from the ideal*: Why do you think this is different from what they are MEANT to do?)

APPENDIX B: THE GOALS OF BASIC EDUCATION

The following text, describing the goals of basic education appears in both *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992, p. 55) and the Pilot Curriculum Guide for Basic Education (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 1996, p. 4):

> The goals of Basic Education are to:
>
> - promote national unity, liberty, justice and democracy;
>
> - promote human rights, respect for oneself and respect for others, their cultures and religious beliefs;
>
> - foster the highest moral, ethical and spiritual values such as integrity, responsibility, equality, and reverence for life;
>
> - support and stimulate learners through childhood and youth, and prepare them for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life and citizenship;
>
> - encourage perseverance, reliability, accountability, and respect for the value and dignity of work;
>
> - develop literacy, numeracy, understanding of the natural and social environment, civic responsibility, artistic appreciation and expression, social skills, and promote physical and mental health;
>
> - develop knowledge, understanding and values, creativity and practical skills, as a solid foundation for academic or vocational training, and for a creative, meaningful and productive adult life;
>
> - promote maximal development of the individual learner's potential, including those with special learning needs;
>
> - foster and promote the spiritual and religious well-being of the learner, with due regard to the diversity and freedom of beliefs;
>
> - extend national unity to promote regional, African and international understanding, co-operation and peace; and
>
> - lay a foundation for the development of human resources and economic growth of the nation.

APPENDIX C: GOALS FOR BASIC TEACHER EDUCATION

The following text appears in *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992, pp. 81-82):

Basic Teacher Education will strive to:
- develop a teacher who will respect and foster the values of our Constitution, contribute to nation building, and respond positively to the changing needs of Namibian society;
- develop understanding and respect for diverse cultural values and beliefs;
- enhance respect for human dignity, sensitivity, and commitment to the needs of learners;
- develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical, and critical thinking;
- develop the ability to participate actively in collaborative decision making;
- develop social responsibility towards learners, colleagues, the community, and the nation as a whole;
- promote gender awareness and equity to enable all Namibians to participate fully in all spheres of society;
- enable the teacher to promote environmental awareness and sustainable management of natural resources in the school and community;
- develop awareness of the varying roles and functions of a teacher and a commitment to the teaching profession;
- develop an understanding of learning as an interactive, shared and productive process;
- enable the teacher to meet the needs and abilities of the individual learner through organization, management, and assessment of teaching and learning processes;
- prepare the teacher to strengthen the partnership between school and community;
- develop adequate command of English and another language of Namibia to be able to use them as media of instruction;
- prepare the teacher to be able to develop and use the creative and expressive abilities and skills of the learners;
- develop the ability to create learning opportunities which will enable learners to explore different ways of knowing, and develop the whole range of their thinking abilities;
- provide the student with sufficient breadth in curriculum content and depth in selected subject areas to be able to identify and select basic knowledge content for learners, and to organize and sequence content and learning situations appropriately;
- enable the teacher to understand and utilize current knowledge of children's intellectual emotional, social, physical, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual development; and
- develop a positive attitude toward individual differences and enable teachers to utilize them to meet social and individual needs.

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