

Chapter Two

Through the lenses of hegemony and common sense

The concepts introduced here, hegemony and common sense, are chosen for their explanatory value. These concepts come from the classic work of the Italian Antonio Gramsci and the more recent work of the North American scholar Michael Apple.

The concept of hegemony as applied in contemporary social sciences and critical educational thought is often drawn from the work of Antonio Gramsci.¹ In this respect, Kenway states, “it was Gramsci who, through his notion of hegemony, developed a most persuasive account of the ways in which social groups and collective identities and socio-cultural hegemonies are formed and reformed”.² Hegemony is a condition of power in which the major cultural, social and economic aspects of life are influenced by a dominant group in society. This power is spread amongst the subordinate people in society through socio-cultural influence and the winning of consent. Part of this process is the construct of common sense in society.

Mayo, in his writings about transformative educational action, has summarised the features of hegemony as being non-static, open for negotiation, incomplete, and sensitive to crisis.³ Thus, hegemony is never complete or total. When conditions change the hegemonic group seeks

¹ See for example Apple, M. W. (1996) *Cultural Politics and Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press; and Torres, C. A. (1999) Critical Theory and Political Sociology of Education: Arguments. In Popkewitz T. S. and Fendler, L (eds) *Critical Theories in Education - Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*. New York: Routledge. 87 – 116.

² Kenway, J (1997) Having a Postmodernist Turn or Postmodernist Angst: Disorder Experienced by an Author Who is Not Yet Dead or Even Close to It. In Halsey, E.H. et al. *Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 131-143, p. 137.

³ Mayo, P. (1999) *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education. Possibilities for Transformative Action*. London: Zed Books.

new alliances. There are always areas that are not easily reached by the hegemony. They have the potential or *degrees of freedom* to develop counter-hegemonic powers. The history of Namibia and resistance against colonial rule illustrates this view of hegemony.

The relevance of Gramsci's writings to Namibia can be traced back to the political era during which Gramsci did his scholarly work. Gramsci lived in Italy in the first part of the 20th century. He died in 1937 at an age of 46. He was arrested in 1926 by the world's first fascist regime under Benito Mussolini and spent the rest of his life in prison or hospital. Most of his scholarly work was produced while in prison. Kenway adheres to the view that the concept hegemony can be used to recognise social totalities such as capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism as they are played out at different times and places while still allowing us to recognise their specifics.⁴ Its relevance to Namibia is acknowledged.

Gramsci's view on hegemony is related to the capacity of the ruling stratum to maintain their power and control. This capacity is played out through economic and political domination and intellectual and moral leadership in which intellectuals and education play a leading role.⁵

The intellectuals and education

Gramsci offers a broad view of what he considers as the intellectuals in a society. Intellectuals play an important role in establishing and maintaining hegemony. He claims that all humans are intellectuals, but that not all of them have the function of being intellectuals in a given society. He continues by saying that "there is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded" and that *Homo faber* (The Maker) cannot be separated from *Homo sapiens* (The Thinker).⁶

⁴ Kenway op. cit.

⁵ Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.

⁶ Ibid. p. 9.

However, intellectuals are not a homogeneous group in society. Each social stratum develops its own group of intellectuals. Gramsci makes a distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals. *Traditional intellectuals* exist in every phase of history in the sense that every class formation “which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of a development of this structure, has found categories of intellectuals already in existence”.⁷ These pre-existing traditional intellectuals are socially portrayed as a distinct independent social category, an image which Gramsci challenges as a “social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as “independent”, autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc.”.⁸

With reference to Gramsci’s writings, Mayo makes a distinction between great intellectuals and subordinated intellectuals, which both belong to the category of traditional intellectuals.⁹ The concept of great intellectuals can be generalised to a group composed of public figures with a scholastic image. These public figures have taken it as their social responsibility to educate the populace about the objective role of all strata in society and, by that, to contribute to the common sense in society which keeps the prevailing hegemony intact. The subordinated intellectuals include teachers, priests or functionaries, who work in favour of the prevailing political system.¹⁰

Gramsci’s view is that traditional intellectuals have developed from different historical class formations and are therefore class related. This relationship however is concealed through the inter-class image traditional intellectuals have developed of themselves. This gives them the historical social position for their self-assumed *preferential right of interpretation* of

⁷ Gramsci op. cit. p. 7

⁸ Ibid. p. 8

⁹ Mayo op. cit.

¹⁰ It is possible to make a specific notion about the creation of subordinate traditional intellectuals related to the colonial situation. This notion is related to the assimilated intellectuals (*assimilados*) and the similar *Black skins, White masks* phenomena referred to by Fanon, F. (1967) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

social realities with the attached image that they are considered as objective and true interpreters. In this way traditional intellectuals contribute to the imposition and construct of a common sense in support of the prevailing hegemony.

Organic intellectuals are socially identified as belonging to a single social class or group. Their role is to be the spokespersons for their social class. Organic intellectuals are found in all classes, both amongst the strata in power and the subaltern groups. They play a mediating role in the society. Organic intellectuals act as the “thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class”.¹¹ Organic intellectuals are not identified primarily from their profession but from the function they play in their social group. International examples of organic intellectuals from the philosophical/educational arena are Freire (Brasil) and Freinet (France). More recent examples from the political arena are Gusmao (East Timor) and Subcomandante Marcos (Mexico). They possess/ed during specific periods of their life conscious responsibilities towards their social class. The organic intellectuals from the dominant class (like Kissinger in the US) serve to mediate the existing hegemony like traditional intellectuals, but more consciously. Their counterparts amongst the subaltern groups are involved in what Gramsci calls the *war of position* to create *historical blocs* for the ultimate overthrow of the prevailing hegemony by affecting and altering the prevailing common sense. Organic intellectuals act as the *dirigenti*, conductors, who mediate the creation of “a new historical bloc of the exploited, capable of overcoming ruling-class hegemony” by undermining hegemony through civil actions in their war of position.¹²

In a situation where dominance is developed in a society there is a parallel forging of alliances with, or the conquest of, traditional intellectuals. This process is, according to Gramsci, more efficiently

¹¹ Gramsci op. cit. p. 3

¹² Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (1991) *Sociology. Themes and Perspectives*. London: Collins Educational. p. 157

carried out when the stratum aspiring for dominance also develops its own organic intellectuals. The underlying logic is that traditional intellectuals, who see themselves as independent, have a self-interest in keeping their hegemonic position and, by that, are willing to negotiate their traditional position around new powers.

Gramsci gives the example of *Ordine Nuovo*, the magazine he edited during his militant years in Turin, as a means of developing forms of new organic intellectualism. "The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions (more like an agitator), but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator".¹³ The role of the intellectual is developed through a combination of skills and knowledge used for political ends. It "depends on the circumstances in which they attempt to act; what opposing or alternative 'discursive formations' contend within the same or adjacent spaces; and the degree to which they succeed in cementing alliances to exercise power".¹⁴

Gramsci also makes a distinction between urban and rural intellectuals. Urban intellectuals are to a large extent confined to the powerful forces established in the modern industrial society and act as their executives. Average urban intellectuals have a general executive role, as described above, while top urban intellectuals identify themselves with the industrialists.¹⁵ Rural intellectuals, on the other hand, are less organic

¹³ Gramsci op. cit. p. 9-10.

¹⁴ Aronowitz, S. and Giroux, H.A. (1991) *Postmodern Education. Politics, Culture, and Social Criticism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 154.

¹⁵ Recent analyses of the modifications of social classes reported by G. Greider during the Socialist Forum in Umeå, February, 2000 confirm Gramsci's analysis. The top layer of the middle class tends to identify itself more and more with the upper class strata in society. They are also treated more often as part of the upper class, in respect to their privileges, through new types of economic increments like options and other benefits. In Namibia, many previous leaders of the liberation struggle became not only top state bureaucrats but also hostages of the capital interests when offered seats in company boards and when they transformed the former liberation movement's assets, based on

than traditional and bring the people into contact with the local state apparatus executed through administrative offices, clinics and schools, i.e. as the institutional representatives of services for civil society. Rural intellectuals retain a different living standard from that of the people. Therefore, their example contributes to the ambitions amongst the people to improve their own living standards. This is done by encouraging at least one member of the family, preferably one of the sons in the patriarchal society, to become a rural intellectual and “thus becoming a gentleman and raising the social level of the family”.¹⁶ In this way, education becomes the key for a better life. However, this key does not always open the door for everyone. As Callewaert expressed it in relations to the functions of the pre-colonial education system in Namibia: “To go to school was to leave the homestead and to return as a different but not more competent person”.¹⁷

Gramsci relates the expansion of education in all societies as a sign of “the importance assumed in the modern world by intellectual functions and categories”.¹⁸ Education in its broadest sense plays an important role in Gramsci’s strategy for social transformation. He developed his own example of an alternative function of education through the factory council movement. This was a movement to create the space for workers to develop a new kind of sense beyond the narrow control over their practical work towards a broader understanding of and control over the means of production. Gramsci also claims that “every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is

accumulated international donor support to the liberation movement, into party companies.

¹⁶ Gramsci op. cit. p. 14

¹⁷ Callewaert op. cit. p. 224

¹⁸ Gramsci op. cit. p. 10

composed, but also in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations”.¹⁹

Gramsci’s views on education have been contested and sometimes judged as conservative, when he has pointed to what he sees as the good aspects of traditional schooling. However, he has also stated that traditional schooling was intended for the new generation of the ruling class and therefore oligarchic. In Gramsci’s elaboration of what he calls the future common school he borrows characteristics from the traditional school and blends them with a common school for all, building on a democratic notion.²⁰ This democratic notion reaches beyond the technical aspects of schooling into the field of politics and education for democracy.

But democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every ‘citizen’ can ‘govern’ and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this.²¹

According to Mayo, Gramsci “argued for the provision of a broad education, with a strong humanistic basis, for all children”.²² Gramsci also rejected educational practices that did not consider the learners’ previous knowledge and their social realities, i.e. “learners’ background and framework of relevance”.²³ The common school that Gramsci outlines is characterised as an active and creative school, where the aim is to develop situations where learning takes place “through a spontaneous and autonomous effort of the pupil, with the teacher only exercising a function

¹⁹ Gramsci op. cit. p. 350.

²⁰ Hoare and Smith have addressed the seemingly conservative view expressed by Gramsci at times. Their explanation is related to Gramsci’s many initiatives “to circumvent the prison censor, by disguising the future (ideal system) as the past in order to criticise the present”. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G.N. (1971) *On education*, Introduction. In Gramsci (1971) op. cit. 24-25. p. 24.

²¹ Gramsci op. cit. p. 40.

²² Mayo op. cit. p. 36.

²³ Gramsci op. cit. p. 42.

of friendly guide – as happens or should happen in the university”.²⁴ To reach this situation the educator must also be instructive and has an obligation to create learning situations both in intellectual and physical terms. These learning situations must cater for the creation of critical and dynamic perspectives in the learning process and, by that, moving the learners away from a folkloristic view based on superstition. It is these uncoordinated remnants of the historical social environments that form what Gramsci calls *folklore*. These remnants are building on opinions and notions that are removed from their context and included into the popular opinions in a more or less distorted form.²⁵

Educators who aspire to act as organic intellectuals for those they teach must be politically committed to the subaltern groups and their aspiring for power, according to Mayo.²⁶ Gramsci’s critique of the contemporary education system in Italy has a parallel in the critique of the colonial education system in Namibia. Gramsci objected to attempts by the fascist regime in Italy to create streaming in the system either through the establishing of early specialisation or the creation of vocational streams for children from the working class. These structures mirror the system of parallel development of adapted education applied during the colonial period in Namibia.

On the construct and reconstruct of common sense

Under the heading *The philosophy of praxis* Gramsci elaborates on the concept *common sense*. Gramsci looks at philosophy as “not just the abstract cogitation of a few professional intellectuals, but a concrete social activity in which, implicitly, all men are engaged”.²⁷ According to

²⁴ Gramsci op. cit. p. 33

²⁵ Ibid.; Gramsci, A. (1985) *Selections from Cultural Writings*. New York: International Publishers.

²⁶ Mayo, op. cit., See p. 35 for a related issue and the concept “intellectual defector”.

²⁷ Hoare, Q. and Smith, G.N. (1971) *The study of philosophy, Introduction*, in Gramsci (1971) op. cit. 321-322. p. 321.

Gramsci, spontaneous philosophy, i.e. the philosophy that is proper to everybody, is contained in our language plus what he collectively includes under the term folklore. It is socially played out in our *common sense*. We need to critically investigate the composite historical deposits into our conceptions of the world and common sense. By becoming aware of these deposits we can develop a philosophy of praxis and construct an intellectual-moral bloc in pursuit of the subaltern groups in society.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Apple reported an analysis of how this deposit process works in a modern society, like the US.²⁸ He based his analysis on the hegemonic restructuring of the popular common sense by the groups in power, i.e. the New Right. Apple demonstrated how the New Right managed to alter the common sense conception of equality from being based on the conceptions of person's right towards something related to property rights and associated free market conceptions. The redefinition of the New Right:

seeks to intervene 'on the terrain of ordinary, contradictory common-sense', to 'interrupt, renovate, and transform in a more systematic direction' people's practical consciousness. It is this restructuring of common-sense, which is itself the already complex and contradictory result of previous struggles and accords, which becomes the object of the cultural battles now being waged.²⁹

This restructuring of common sense was carried out by linking reactivated conservative political and cultural themes with the fears of the large portion of the population towards their future social and economic wellbeing.³⁰ As Apple states, the process of altering the common sense

²⁸ Apple (1996) op. cit

²⁹ Ibid. p. 22

³⁰ Representatives of the former white hegemony demonstrated similar assaults in connection with the work on the Presidential Commission of Education and Culture in Namibia in 1999. There were attempts to link right wing moral values to the perceived general lack of values in schools and the popular worry about the exam results and

and the creation of a new hegemonic perception of the world is not something imposed on unthinking subjects. It is carried out through a war of position over the symbolic power to define reality for others. This works out by redefining “existing themes, desires, and fears” embraced by the popular common sense.³¹

Calls for efficiency, new effective management models, cutting of expenditures, introductions of measurable competencies, individualisation, privatisation, competition and the like have entered the field of education and become mainstream conceptions for the solving of school problems today. The real effect of these calls will be exclusion rather than inclusion as a logical consequence of the mental shift from personal to property rights. Knowledge-as-property replaces the right to become educated. Common sense about education will move away from a concern about human values towards prioritising economic values following the trend in the commercial market place. There we have observed the shift from production values for improved living conditions to an emphasis on capital generation through speculative money transactions, even for social security reasons.³²

The promises of what is left of the welfare state will transform the fear for the future into a part of what the Swedish unionist Perjus has called *Casino Earth*, i.e. the speculative money market.³³ The effect will be an ultimate exclusion as observed in what Castells has called the black holes of the Fourth World.³⁴ These black holes symbolise in an absurd

learners' future. The Presidential Commission of Education and Culture, discussion website, 1999, <http://www.edcom.org.na>.

³¹ Apple, M. W. (1993) *Official Knowledge - Democratic Education in a Conservative Age*. New York: Routledge. p. 31.

³² The recent reforms of the Swedish pension funds has forced every person in Sweden with a right to receive a pension when retiring, to put a part of their accumulated pension funds on the stock market. Something similar has as yet not happened in Namibia.

³³ Perjus, B. (1998) *Casino Jorden (Casino Earth)*. Stockholm: Utbildningsförlaget Brevskolan.

³⁴ Castells, M. (1998) *End of Millennium*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

way the repayment from the Third World to the First World for the First World enclaves established in Third World urban centres under colonialism that until today has created the conditions for survival of mainstream development workers. A similar development on a more local scene was the over-commercialised northern parts of Namibia that constituted the war zone before independence. In the midst of a society where the overwhelming majority were dependent on subsistence farming, Oshakati existed as a large shopping area consisting of depots and liqueur shops, themselves outgrowths of the South African military machinery.

Common sense, identity and civil society

Gramsci writes about civil society and the State, i.e. political society. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the hegemony that the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of direct domination or command exercised through the state and juridical government.

Civil society is an ambiguous concept, according to Castells.³⁵ Usually we think of civil society as something independent and something that is constituted by the mass of ordinary people, democratic in nature, and more or less untouchable by external powers.³⁶ According to Gramsci, civil society is formed by a number of institutions and organisations like business, church, parties, unions, civic associations, etc. through which hegemony is exercised by spontaneous consent that is acted out through common sense. However, the institutions and organisations that form civil society are at the same time strongly rooted among people and constitute a terrain where political struggle can be exercised for the overthrow of the prevailing hegemony through a war of position. This war of position is

³⁵ Castells, M. (1997) *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

³⁶ Widmalm, S. (Ed.) (1999) *Utveckling på det civila samhällets villkor*. (Development on the conditions of civil society) Rapport från Kollegiet för bistånds- och utvecklingsstudier. No. 6. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet.

the first step in which civil society is transformed politically as a prerequisite for the creation of a counter-hegemonic power.

Castells has put the concept of civil society in the context of the construction of identity in societies at the end of the 20th century.³⁷ He proposes a distinction between three types of identity formation that can be related to the writings of Gramsci. *Legitimising identity* is initiated by the state and influences civil society as defined by Gramsci. It follows that the identity of the functionaries corresponds to the role of subaltern traditional intellectuals carrying out the functions of creating consent with the agenda of the hegemonic powers.

Resistance identity is, according to Castells, generated by excluded or stigmatised actors who build trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society. In Gramscian terms, they are the communities of resistance which hegemony does not reach.

Project identity creates subjects who are seen as collective social actors. It is "the building of identity as a project of a different life, perhaps on the basis of an oppressed identity, but expanding toward the transformation of society".³⁸ In a sense this is an identification of the past and the present that can reach into the future as organic intellectualism.

A Gramsci-related consequence of Castells' view on the construction of identity is that the war of position is carried out by the subaltern and organic intellectuals within the sphere of a civil society under disintegration. This war of position is an intellectual war over the positioning of the incoherent historical deposits into common sense and a good sense in the service of the subaltern groups in society. *Good sense* is the conceptualisations generated within subaltern groups that reflect the genuine interests of these groups. Gramsci sees a nucleus of good sense in common sense as a conception of necessity that gives a conscious

³⁷ Castells (1997) op.cit.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 10.

direction to one's activity.³⁹ Collective social actors holding project identity initiate the attack on the prevailing hegemony as a constructive extension of communal resistance identities, i.e. a countervailing force based on a people's revolt.⁴⁰

A successful countervailing force is a combination of collective human agencies played out as a war of position over common sense and the positioning of the associated organic intellectuals. The question remains as to whether such a countervailing force can be generated in a post-apartheid educational context involving development co-operation? It is with an initial reference to the concept 'outsider-within' that an elaboration on this issue can be done. The outsider-within conception speaks of someone who acts within a milieu and a social setting that is basically foreign to that person. If the 'withinness' is an expression of the acceptance of an outsider who works towards the same goal as the 'ordinary' people, this person could as well be characterised as an 'intellectual defector', i.e. a traditional intellectual who has defected to the counter-hegemonic side of the struggle.⁴¹

Common sense, educational texts and official knowledge

We are all influenced in different ways in the construction of our understanding of education. As young learners we listen to what our parents say about schooling. Our own school experiences have strong effects on our understanding of what schooling is about.⁴² As student

³⁹ Gramsci (1971) op. cit., p. 328.

⁴⁰ This is what happened in Namibia with the Old Location protests in 1959 that later on developed to the organised resistance through the liberation movement. See e.g. Pendelton, W. C. (1994) *Katutura: A Place Where We Stay*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan.

⁴¹ See Leonard, P. (1993) Critical Pedagogy and State Welfare: Intellectual Encounters with Freire and Gramsci, 1974 – 86. In McLaren, P and Leonard, P. (eds) *Paulo Freire – A Critical Encounter*. London: Routledge. 155 – 168.

⁴² Ahlström has written about the conservatism of the *apprenticeship of observation* and of most school-based experiences if not counterbalanced by community-based experience

teachers we start to get the view of the academics and their assumptions about education in society during our training. And as teachers we develop our own strategies for the practical situations we face, based on the conglomerations of ideas we have collected that will add up to our common sense about schooling and education. All along there is also the official knowledge of education, i.e. the messages in the official discourse about education that are expressions of the preferential right of interpretation by the strata in power. In a situation of reform and change, official knowledge plays an important role as a mediator of reform efforts and needs therefore to be considered and studied. Common sense is the type of knowledge, which has become internalised by groups of people in a society, as a taken for granted knowledge as previously outlined in relation to the writings of Gramsci.⁴³ If issues that are part of common sense are questioned people react with statements like "but that's how things are", "it's how things must be done", or "it's natural". There are of course different kinds of common sense in a society and there are also versions of common sense that are sanctioned by people in powerful and hegemonic positions. In other words, when the meaning of education as perceived by the hegemonic forces in a society has been made public as official knowledge and become internalised by a portion of the people in that society it becomes part of their common sense. For example, the official knowledge of education in Namibia during the apartheid era, that education had different purposes for different races because of their constituted racial differences, became part of common sense even for the blacks and contributed to their consent through an inferiority complex. However, this consent was never total. Thus, education became a contested area in the war of position. An early example from the refugee camp in Kwanza, Angola can illustrate how the common sense affected

and college-based theoretical reflection within teacher education. Ahlström, K-G. (1988) *The University and Teacher Training*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. No. 56.

⁴³ Bourdieu uses the term *doxa* (Greek – belief) for a similar analysis. See e.g. Geckler op cit.

educational situations. I brought with me the pedagogical idea that the construction of texts in the classroom should have a meaning to the learners beyond the significance for the teacher, and that texts can be produced with the involvement of learners based on their experiences in and out of school.

I had organised some activities for the teachers I was working with, and we ended up with a number of short stories about life in the refugee camp. We discussed how these and similar texts could be produced and used in the classroom together with learners. I rounded off the discussion by asking if there were any other ideas to discuss about the use of the stories. By that I wanted the teachers to bring up any issue that we had not touched upon that might be worth mentioning as a pedagogical note. One teacher who had been very silent during the discussion eagerly asked a question by referring to the factual information in one of the stories: How many vehicles were there in the convoy?⁴⁴

This teacher's mind was still locked into the common sense about the use of texts in school as a source to check factual knowledge. This and similar experiences tells a lot about how educational texts and for that matter how the meaning of schooling can be perceived.⁴⁵ According to this perception, schooling seems to be constructed for control purposes and school texts as a means of control of factual knowledge and not something, which can be used for broader developmental purposes. It is a plausible assumption that for many learners, school texts represent generally acknowledged facts, and often are presented as such by the teachers, and therefore something unproblematic and taken for granted, i.e. as part of official knowledge transformed to common sense. The introduction of assessment procedures like continuous assessment and

⁴⁴ Dahlström, L. Personal experience, 1994.

⁴⁵ When references are made to educational and school texts it is to its broadest definition embracing all types of inscriptions related to education including research reports, policy documents, curricula documents, textbooks, the teacher's notes on the blackboard, as well as the learners' own writings.

portfolios in the BETD were often questioned from the same perspective as the question above about the number of vehicles, i.e. a perspective that reduces the educational process to objectively measurable outcomes, like in outcome-based education.

The structures and operations of modern formal education systems are in broad terms the same all over the world and may be even more so in the future, provided societies continue to converge towards market-oriented societies under global capitalism. The international convergence of national education systems has been influenced historically by the different globalisation trends like colonialism, imperialism, development co-operation, pressures from international organisations, and now even more so by the new information technologies. "Institutionalisation of international influence" has with few exceptions come from the North and gone to the South.⁴⁶ It goes without saying that this international convergence is not a process without variations. However, there is a core in modern education systems that has fundamental similarities across cultures and nations, even when they operate under pre-modern contextual situations like in Africa. Part of this core is the selective role of modern schooling that becomes so starkly obvious when operating in African contexts. Another core function is the significance of educational texts as presented through curriculum documents, teachers' guides, textbooks or simply through the learners' note-taking from the blackboard. It is also often the use of texts, e.g. presented as notes on the blackboard or even orally that create the patterns in the ritualised African classrooms.⁴⁷ It is because of the important role of educational texts in their broadest sense that analyses made elsewhere can develop an

⁴⁶ Samoff, J. (1998:a) Institutionalizing International Influence: The Context for Education Reform in Africa. Keynote address at the Conference on International Trends in Teacher Education. Durban: University of Durban Westville. p. 1.

⁴⁷ Palme, M. (1999) Vad händer i undervisningen? (What happens in education?) In Christoplos, I (Ed) *Skolans kris i Afrika*. Rapport från Kollegiet för bistånds- och utvecklingsfrågor, Nr 11. Uppsala University. 5 - 14.

understanding also of education reform in Namibia. Support for this idea is received by Apple's statement, related to his analysis of educational texts, that the connections between education, state and economy from class, gender, and race perspectives are universal. He claims that "these dynamic interconnections are essential as building blocks to any complete understanding of education, even where their articulations to each other may be different due to historically distinct developments".⁴⁸

In countries like Namibia where "new kinds of governments, new possibilities for democratic, political, economic, and cultural arrangements" are created,

the role of education takes on even more importance, since new knowledge, new ethics, and a new reality seek to replace the old. This is one of the reasons that those of us committed to cultures that are more participatory and democratic, both inside and outside schools, must give serious attention to changes in official knowledge in those nations that have sought to overthrow their colonial or elitist heritage. Here the politics of the text takes on special importance, because the textbook often represents an overt attempt to help create a new cultural reality.⁴⁹

According to Apple it is necessary to "seeing schooling relationally" by relating it to the "complexity of the power/knowledge nexus".⁵⁰ This power/knowledge nexus is only revealed if an externalist view is applied. Such a view includes critical cultural, political and economic considerations, to contrast the false de-politicised agenda adapted worldwide as part of the individualistic and market-oriented developments in capitalist societies in general, including education.

⁴⁸ Apple, M. W. (1996) op. cit. p. 186.

⁴⁹ Apple, M.W. and Christian-Smith, L.K. (1991) The Politics of the Textbook. In Apple, M.W. and Christian-Smith, L.K. (eds) *The Politics of the Textbook*. New York: Routledge. 1-21. p. 11.

⁵⁰ Apple (1996) op. cit. pp. 4-5.

The making of common sense and consensus around neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies is the focus of Apple's concern about the development of schooling in the US. Apple claims that parents' worries have been utilised to create the support needed for shifting policies from a concern about human rights to a drive towards consumer rights. The human rights movement was part of a different project, where a strong welfare state would, among other things, guarantee education for all. The urge for consumer rights is part of the neo-liberal/neo-conservative alliance between liberal market-oriented, neo-conservative intellectuals who call for high standards, professionals in the new middle class who are committed to accountability, measurement and management, and conservative moral claims based on fundamentalist religious beliefs.⁵¹ Apple makes a similar distinction between person and property right and relates this to the changes in the definitions of concepts like freedom and equality. From a human rights perspective freedom and equality are related to democracy, i.e. democratic notions of the welfare state. From a property rights perspective freedom and equality are related to commercial needs, i.e. the right to choose your tooth-paste based on a competitive market ideology following consumerist ideals.⁵²

This development has had tremendous effects on schooling and education in the sense that it affects the learners' hopes for the future. The worthiness of an individual is calculated on the basis of his/her contribution to the economy according to the official knowledge engineered through the policies of, what Apple calls, authoritarian populism. It is no coincident that lotteries and *Who wants to be a Millionaire* - TV shows are the type of intellectual activity that remains as the last chance for someone to become a somebody. If this is what is perceived as the remaining hope for many, it is understandable that critical schooling becomes an obstacle.

⁵¹ Apple, M. W. (2000) Can critical pedagogies interrupt rightist policies? Markets, standards, and inequalities. Paper presented at Umeå University, June 2000, pp. 1-2.

⁵² Apple (1993) op. cit.

These dichotomising economic trends in western societies, with the US as the trend-setter, have their established parallels in countries like Namibia, when attempts are made to accelerate the modernisation project in times of globalisations. A recent publication from the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) in Windhoek confirms the constraints that the Namibian society is facing and the fact that many of these constraints have their roots in the legacy of the previous apartheid system.⁵³ Almost a decade after independence the Namibian society is still characterised by contrasts. The labour market has a dual character with a high-wage urban sector and a low-wage rural-informal sector. Namibia is actually one of the most unequal societies in the world with an income distribution where the richest 10% of the society receive 65% of the total income.⁵⁴

In general terms, the advancement of the official knowledge of authoritarian populism and its integration into the common sense is not made by decree or force, but through a process of cultural incorporation of the knowledge and perspectives of the less powerful, with a residual cultural domination as a result. This is true for curricula as well as other educational texts like schoolbooks. One of the obvious results of this process is what is called "mentioning".⁵⁵ Mentioning stands for the process in which textual or conceptual inclusions of external demands are made at facial levels, while the dominant cultural perspective remains. The translation of official knowledge into common sense in a society follows Bennet's (1986) description:

⁵³ Hansohm, D. and Mupotola-Sibonga, M. (1998) *Overview of the Namibian Economy*. Windhoek: NEPRU, pp. 1 and 5.

⁵⁴ UNDP (1997) *Namibia - Human Development Report 1997*. Windhoek: UNDP. p. 9. The corresponding income figures for the richest 10% in the USA are 30% and in Sweden 20%. UNDP (2001) *Human Development Report 2001*, Human Development Indicators. <http://www.undp.org>.

⁵⁵ Apple (1993) op. cit. p. 56.

Dominant culture gains a purchase not in being imposed, as an alien external force, onto the cultures of subordinate groups, but by reaching into these cultures, reshaping them, hooking them and, with them, people whose consciousness and experience is defined in their terms, into an association with the values and ideologies of the ruling groups in society. Such processes neither erase the cultures of subordinate groups, nor do they rob "the people" of their "true culture": what they do is shuffle those cultures on to an ideological and cultural terrain in which they can be disconnected from whatever radical impulses which may (but need not) have fuelled them and be connected to more conservative or, often, downright reactionary cultural and ideological tendencies.⁵⁶

This displacement process is effective in the sense that it can give credit to the official dominant culture for listening to and considering other viewpoints through mentioning and other facial forms of consensus willingness. The real invasion of common sense by dominant cultural perspectives happens behind the curtain of the facial consensus. The cultural dominance through classical as well as modern colonialism works/ed very much in the same way, but with different degrees of external force.⁵⁷

As the new society emerged in Namibia new conceptions of education developed that qualified for careful considerations and critical analysis. They were presented as the official knowledge of the new order

⁵⁶ Bennett, T. (1986) The Politics of the 'Popular and Popular Culture'. In Bennett, T., Mercer, C. and Woollacott J. (eds) *Popular Culture and Social relations*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. 6-21, as cited by Apple (1993) op. cit. p. 56.

⁵⁷ Classical colonialism refers to the type of colonialism that started on a large scale after the chopping up of Africa in the 1884-85 Berlin-meeting and ended with the political independence of African states - after a time span of roughly one century. Modern colonialism is the type of overlapping colonialism that we have seen effected during the last 50 years through the work of transnational capital interests, international monetary and donor agencies, streamlined globalised media productions, and the emerging information highways.

in documents like *Toward Education for All*.⁵⁸ Therefore, another lengthy quote on the effect of dominant conceptions.

Ruling or dominant conceptions of the world do not directly prescribe the mental content of the illusions that supposedly fill the heads of dominated classes. But the circle of dominant ideas does accumulate the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others; its classifications do acquire not only the constraining power of dominance over other modes of thought but also the initial authority of habit and instinct. It becomes the horizon of the taken-for-granted: what the world is and how it works, for all practical purposes. Ruling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world by setting the limit on what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or thinkable within the given vocabularies of motive and action available to us. Their dominance lies precisely in the power they have to contain within their limits, to frame within their circumference of thought, the reasoning and calculation of other social groups.⁵⁹

It would be premature to evaluate the new conceptions introduced in Namibia after independence at this point beyond the fact that a majority agreed to the need for change. However, there were at the outset very few ideas about what these changes would entail beyond the unreflective and utopian hope for white education and privilege for all.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ministry of Education and Culture (1993:a) *Toward Education for All - A Development Brief for Education, Culture, and Training*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan.

⁵⁹ Hall, S. (1988) *The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists*. In Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds) *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, III: University of Illinois Press, as quoted by Apple and Christian-Smith, Op. cit., p. 12.

⁶⁰ Kann, U. (2000) Comments and reflections by a peer evaluator. In Swarts (ed) op. cit. 68 – 79. p. 72.

Towards a counter-hegemonic alternative

The tendencies in authoritarian populism, including the market-orientation in schooling through "strict accountability systems, competency-based education and testing, management by objectives", leads to a degradation of teachers' work.⁶¹ This degradation is affected by two related phenomena from industry, according to Apple. These are the separation of conception from execution and deskilling.

The managerial perspective on education and schooling accelerates to the extent that management seems to become the way to solve educational problems. As a consequence the *deskilling* of teachers is furthered when the focus of educational development is moved out from the classroom to the principal's office. This move is of a specific relevance in the Namibian situation where the view that position is a strong social marker of power rather than a place that generate social responsibilities. This common sense has been inherited from the colonial times. Another indirect deskilling phenomenon is the frequent calls for external evaluations as a strong control mechanism that enters all spheres of schooling and education. Evaluation robs the practitioners of their preferential right of interpretation unless carried out through a truly participatory strategy within a forward-looking perspective.

Another development in education is the intensification of educational labour that results in the chronic work overload experienced by many educators in western societies. The intensification of educational labour is sometimes even misrepresented as professionalism as it is to a large extent coupled to new duties of a technical character related to information and communication technologies and makes the effects of the deskilling process even more serious.⁶²

⁶¹ Apple (1993) op. cit. pp. 121-122.

⁶² Apple, M.W. (1989) *Teachers and Texts. A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education*. New York: Routledge.

Apple links the above developments to the kind of knowledge we want to foster through schooling. These are *knowledge that* (factual knowledge), *knowledge how* (skills), and *knowledge to* (dispositional knowledge) which includes norms and values that guide future conduct such as knowing to be honest. The combination of these different types of knowledge constitutes what Apple calls critical literacy. The recent trends escalating through the conservative triumphalism are geared towards *knowledge that* and thus narrowing down the span of knowledge that schools value and want to offer. A fourth category of knowledge that is even further distanced in the conservative turn is *knowledge why*, by whom, for whom and under what conditions.⁶³ This category should then work in tandem with Apple's categorisation in the following order of critical dyads: *why – to*, *why – how*, and *why - that*. These dyads constitute in combination a basis for what can be called *critical literacy of pedagogy*, as an expansion of Apple's concept. A critical literacy of pedagogy that embraces the critical dyads can be used for curriculum development and educational praxis, as a counter-hegemonic force in pursuit of social justice, provided its moral basis is aligned with such considerations.

An initial bridging to the African landscape

The foregoing analytic concepts originated far from Namibia. Even though, concepts like hegemony were considered highly relevant for an inquiry that was related to the remnants of colonialism or the continuation of it by other means together with a critical perspective on international development co-operation. Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony is

⁶³ This fourth category is a reflection of an elaboration together with Callewaert in connection with the formulation of a position paper for staff development courses in Namibia. See Dahlström, L. (ed) (1998) A Position Paper for An Integrated In-service Staff Development Programme for Sustainable Capacity Building in Teacher Education for Basic Education in Namibia. Umeå: TERP Document.

connected with the role of the intellectuals and the formation of common sense through a war of position. This created a plausible conceptual basis for an understanding of the attempt to overhaul the colonial teacher education system in Namibia.

Apple's work gave an example of how hegemonic powers penetrate common sense in a conservative direction by the mobilisation of people's fears for the future. It was also Apple's work that led to a conceptualisation of a critical literacy of pedagogy as a plausible representation of a counter-hegemonic praxis and a good sense. The concept degrees of freedom was introduced as a label for the areas that are not reached by hegemonic powers. The preferential right of interpretation became an expression for the instrumental tool in the formation of and influence over common sense and official knowledge through a war of position.

This conceptual basis created a plausible explanatory value, even on a teacher education reform far away in time and place. In other words, a pre-judicious understanding of an outsider-within became dressed in a conceptual attire that will be used for a retrospective analysis of the teacher education reform in Namibia.

Human endeavours are placed on the past-present-future continuum and they need to be analysed on that continuum. Therefore, with reference to the importance of the past, especially in an African perspective, the following journey will start in a landscape created by the broader global layers with historical connections that influence an African nation state like Namibia today and in the future.