

## Chapter Four

### **Deposits into common sense about education**

A hundred years of colonialism has become engraved in Namibian society. These engravings are best observed today through the ways any urban community is organised, not only in Namibia but throughout the African continent. Modernisation has arrived on the colonisers' conditions. Smaller communities and towns are still today mirrors of a segregated society with the commercial centres usually surrounded by the living areas for whites with gardens either hidden behind walls or defended by the Beware of the Dog-signs.

I lived for a period in a part of Windhoek for mainly white middle class. This area is colloquially called *White after Dark* by the black maids and gardeners who toil in the whites' houses during the day before they return to their own children and low cost houses in the location. I once attended a neighbourhood watch meeting, where the question was raised: How many of you are armed? All 25 neighbours lifted their hands, except the two foreigners of whom I was one.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond these areas that are obviously built on fear you will find the industrial sites where some of the economic conditions for a segregated society are created. Further beyond at the dusty outskirts you will meet the majority of the people in what are normally called the locations.

Asplund, a Swedish scholar, makes a distinction between the levels of material conditions, conceptions and discourses.<sup>2</sup> If summarised for the present purpose, Asplund claims that conceptions are based on material conditions. He further notes that time travel faster at discourse level than at conceptual level with the consequence that conceptions have a

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<sup>1</sup> Dahlström, L. Personal experience, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Asplund, J. (1979) *Teorier om framtiden*. (Theories about the future) Stockholm: Liber Förlag.

tendency to lack behind and influence new discourses and practices in a conservative direction. If we accept Asplund's notion that the way we think has its origin in material and practical conditions and that mental engravings (conceptions) are sustainable beyond its material basis, we must look back into history to understand what happens today.

Namibia was the last colony in Southern Africa until the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1990, when the country and its people became politically independent from South Africa after almost three decades of political and armed liberation struggle mainly through the liberation movement SWAPO. The new government formed by SWAPO in 1990 started the difficult process to undo the legacy of the previous regime that was characterised by inequality and inequity in all spheres of life created through the previous government policy based on the racist philosophy of apartheid. The apartheid policy had been implemented in the education sector through bantu education for the blacks and an elitist system favouring the white minority.<sup>3</sup>

The racist notions of apartheid took root after the arrival of the Dutch (Afrikaaners) in the Cape in 1652, through their Calvinist Christianity. The Calvinist original belief was that of religious separateness and the Calvinists recognised themselves as a chosen people of God, based on “the twin doctrines of ‘predestination’ and ‘election’”.<sup>4</sup> This religious separateness was soon conveniently confused with separateness in race and colour that later became the acknowledged state policy in South Africa as well as Namibia. This state policy was created for “legalised thuggery, brutality and theft on a large scale and was a

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Dahlström, L. (1999:a) Transforming teacher education for a democratic society - the case of Namibia. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 15. 143-155.

<sup>4</sup> Du Pre, R. H. (1992) *The Making of Racial Conflict in South Africa*. Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers. pp. 13-14.

disguise to enrich, empower and ‘emprivilege’ /the whites/ on a massive scale”, according to the South African scholar du Pre.<sup>5</sup>

Many scholars, who have written recently on education in Namibia have attended to the historical aspects of education as an important factor for the understanding of the present situation.<sup>6</sup> As Swarts points out, there are three major historical periods for education in Africa: the pre-colonial, the colonial, and the post-colonial.<sup>7</sup> If we look at these periods as dominated by certain traits in education, we can also add the period of the liberation struggle as a fourth category, which operated in parallel with the colonial period. The period of the liberation struggle can be looked at as a counter force to colonial education and a pre-stage to the post colonial period, but in many cases with distinct differences created by the specific social and political conditions.

The relevance of these historical stages of education for this study is related to the dynamics of education in Africa in contrast to education in affluent societies in the North. Formal education as we know it in these societies is more or less taken for granted. In principle, it stands out in these countries as an almost uncontested way to bring up, educate, and socialise the next generation. The fundamentals of that system are seldom questioned, while the discussions on methodological and organisational

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<sup>5</sup> Du Pre op. cit. p. 248.

<sup>6</sup> The most significant are: Mbamba, M. A. (1982) *Primary Education for An Independent Namibia*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International; Diescho, J. B. (1992) *The role of education in the politics of control in Namibia: 1948 – 1988*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. New York: Columbia University; Amukugo, E. M. (1993) *Education and Politics in Namibia: Past trends and Future Prospects*. Windhoek: New Namibia Books; Cohen C. (1994) *Administering Education in Namibia: the colonial period to the present*. Windhoek: Namibia Scientific Society; Kustaaa, F. J. (1997) *The International Dimensions of School Failure and Racial Inequalities in the History of Adapted Colonial Education in Namibia and South Africa, 1652 – 1989: PT. 1 – 2*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico; and Swarts, P. (1998) *The Transformation of Teacher Education in Namibia: The Development of Reflective Practice*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Oxford: Oxford Brooks University.

<sup>7</sup> Swarts, Ibid. p. 20.

issues are fierce. In African societies the influences from different forms of education are still significant due to the social patterns of the African societies. This creates a situation that on a societal level has been characterised as an “overlapping structure under transformation”.<sup>8</sup> It creates a kind of a layered pattern with residual deposits that inflict on the common sense about modern schooling and education at large. The origins of these residuals are addressed below.

### **Indigenous African education**

Education in the pre-colonial societies had a number of characteristics under the guiding principle of functionalism.<sup>9</sup> Rodney summarises the characteristics of African education as follows:

Its close links with social life, both in material and spiritual sense; its collective nature; its many-sidedness; and its progressive development in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child.<sup>10</sup>

When we talk of indigenous African education, we must keep in mind the variations, also when we try to identify the commonalities. One of the strongest general characteristics was the oral tradition that was expressed in many different ways and for many different educational purposes. Proverbs, riddles, word games, puzzles, tongue-twisters, fables, myths and legends were used e.g. to carry forward ideas and experiences in the shared cultural knowledge, to develop innovative and creative skills, to carry out problem solving, and to stimulate discussion for intellectual

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<sup>8</sup>Callewaert, S. (1998) *Society, Education and Curriculum*. Copenhagen: Department of Education, Philosophy and Rhetoric, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup>Ndilula, N. (1988) Namibian education and culture. In Wood, B. (ed) *Namibia 1884 - 1984: Readings on Namibia's history and society*. Lusaka: Namibia Support Committee and United Nations Institute for Namibia. 383-406.

<sup>10</sup>Rodney, W. (1989) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers. p. 262

development.<sup>11</sup> An important characteristic was that indigenous education took place through the media of the mother tongue.

Other characteristics of indigenous African education were its integration with the society at large and its life-long endeavour.<sup>12</sup> Learning was not considered as something that in an absurd way had to be concentrated to an early period in life, but something that was staged according to age with the effect that the highest insight was the privilege of the elders.<sup>13</sup> Indigenous African education had a conservative influence in the sense that it in most instances and with a few exceptions only allowed for the type of learning that supported status quo.<sup>14</sup> It was strongly gender divided and authority bound like the rest of the traditional society.<sup>15</sup> When these aspects were transferred to the modern enclaves of African societies, they often affected meanings and attitudes in transformed ways as expressions of oppression or authoritarian rule through their decontextualised transfer.

It would be wrong to call indigenous African education a type of informal or non-formal education just because it followed a different logic as compared to the global forms of western education. Specific functionaries existed, i.e. persons with specific competencies, who the learners met under specific learning arrangements throughout life.

It is without any attempts to glorify indigenous African education beyond its relevance to the social settings in which it was situated that we can point to parallels in the recent discourses of modern schooling. However, when we today e.g. hear about the needs to create links between school and community and for life-long learning it is usually for different

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<sup>11</sup> Reagan, T. (1996) *Non-Western Educational Traditions. Alternative Approaches to Educational Thought and Practice*. New Jersey: LEA Publishers.

<sup>12</sup> Amukugo op. cit.; Swarts (1998) op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Callewaert (1998) op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Reagan op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Tubaundule, G. M. (1999) Promoting Active Participation in the Education Theory and Practice Classroom. In Zeichner and Dahlström (eds) *Democratic Teacher Education Reform in Africa. The case of Namibia*. Boulder: Westview Press. 144-156.

reasons. It can be used for the purpose to bring back relevance into schooling for later productive surplus reasons and to create a flexible work force that can respond to the changing needs of the global capitalist mode of production. It can also be used for other reasons related to transformative practices for empowerment that goes beyond market considerations.

The social formations that created indigenous education are still present in many African societies, even though modern schooling has taken over the socialisation functions that are directed towards the modern society. However, remnants of indigenous African education are still operative in its social base and with them their common sense. From a broad perspective it is worth to note the contrasts between indigenous African education with its oral tradition, gender division, authority confinement and support to the status quo and the written, gender equity, learner-centred, and emancipatory intentions expressed in post-colonial policies. The deposits into common sense from the traditional historical layer are mainly related to these contrasts. When decontextualised in modern schooling they support teacher talk, uneven gender concerns, authoritarian behaviour, and a neglect of change.

### **Colonial education**

The concept colonial education is used here to describe educational interventions that are based on the westernised mode of formal education and that were utilised purposefully for reasons of subjugation. Colonial education introduced western schooling and broke definitely with indigenous education that was considered heathen and reactionary by the colonisers.

The Namibian experience of colonial education is not only related to German imperialism and South African apartheid policies, but also to missionary endeavours, as the introduction of missionary education laid

the foundation for the future to come.<sup>16</sup> This description will be limited to the general aspects of colonial education that are relevant for the further analysis of the post-colonial reform efforts in Namibia. Diescho, Cohen and Kustaaa have carried out broader analyses of colonial education in Namibia.<sup>17</sup>

### Missionary schooling

The first missionaries came to Namibia in 1805 representing the London Missionary Society. During the period until the formal colonisation by Germany in 1885 nine different denominations sent their representatives to Namibia, of which the Rhenish Mission Society and the Finnish Mission Society became the most significant.<sup>18</sup>

The early missionaries were not very successful in their attempts to turn what they saw as the heathen and primitive societies in Namibia into societies based on Christianity. It took the Germans, under the influential missionary Hahn, several decades to install the Christian ideology amongst the traditional chiefs as a conscious way to infiltrate the traditional African societies. It was not until the establishment of Augustineum in 1866 that the sons of Chiefs converted to Christianity.<sup>19</sup> The strategy with the establishment of Augustineum was to train teacher assistants to the missionaries from the sons of chiefs in Hereroland and Ovamboland. This slow process of Christianisation was the main reason for the missionaries in Namibia to request the total colonisation of Namibia by Germany and Britain under the pretext of protecting the lives and property of the white settlers.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mbuende op. cit.; Kustaaa op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Diescho op. cit.; Cohen op. cit; and Kustaaa op.cit.

<sup>18</sup> Kustaaa, Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Augustineum was the first institution created in the country that resembled a teacher education college. It was established at Okahandja in 1866. Okahandja is today the place for the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) from where the post-independence teacher education reform has been organised since 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

There are ample examples given by Kustaaa of the missionaries' colonial mentality that totally ignored Namibian customs and beliefs, and saw themselves as bearers of a superior culture as was the common sense of the time in Europe with far reaching consequences for other cultures.<sup>21</sup> Kustaaa refers to the conflicts created by Hahn, mainly through his oppressive and ignorant behaviour towards the blacks. Hahn also became the person, who encouraged Finnish missionaries to share the de-heathenisation of Namibia. Kustaaa claims through his reference to Nambala, that the Finnish missionaries followed the main stream paternalistic tradition, even after the 1961 visit by Professor Juva to Namibia, when he "persuaded the FMS [Finnish Missionary Society] missionaries to take a more active role against Apartheid in Namibia".<sup>22</sup>

The entrance of missionaries in Namibia was on occasions built on a misinterpretation of the Chiefs' requests for missionaries to settle in their areas. While the missionaries interpreted it as a sign of interest in Christianity as indicated by Lehtonen, the Chiefs saw it as an opportunity to expand their power and empires, through the availability of goods and services, according to Nambala.<sup>23</sup> This difference in expectations created its own problems. For example, one of the Finnish artisans, who arrived with the first Finnish missionaries, had to leave his station in Ovamboland when he refused to assist as a gunsmith on the request of the king.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Western notions about Africa and *the less intellectual races* as the saying was in the early times of colonialisation have recently been addressed by Lindqvist, S. (1992) *Utrota varenda jävel. (Exterminate all the brutes)* Stockholm: Bonniers; and Hochschild, A. (2000) *Kung Leopolds Vålnad (King Leopold's Ghost)*. Stockholm: Ordfront.

<sup>22</sup> Kustaaa op.cit. p. 751 and Nambala, S. V. V. (1990) *Church and state in Namibia, 1806 – 1989*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. St. Paul, Minnesota: Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary.

<sup>23</sup> Lehtonen, L. (1999) *Schools in Ovamboland from 1870 – 1970*. Helsinki: The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission; and Nambala op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> Kustaaa op.cit.

Kustaaa describes missionary education as based on a *tabula rasa* theory, meaning that the missionaries' attitude was that there was no significant knowledge related to culture and religion available amongst the blacks at the outset. Kustaaa also refers to Freire's concept of banking education as the way missionary schooling was carried out.<sup>25</sup> Kustaaa argues, that

The development of adapted colonial education for Namibian Blacks under the aegis of missionaries representing various Christian denominations was not an isolated event. Missionary education in Namibia developed as part of a global system of adapted colonial education for Blacks and oppressed groups at a time when missionaries acted as agents of a global and expanding capitalist system.<sup>26</sup>

The missionaries introduced the western type of formal schooling for religious indoctrination.<sup>27</sup> Even as late as 1958 the Finnish Missions in Namibia responded to a questionnaire by the South African authorities in Namibia, with the words "The Finnish Missionary Society and the Ev. Luth. Ovambokavango Church always try to make the teachers realise that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge'".<sup>28</sup>

It was not until after the German colonisation of Namibia in 1885 that missionaries started to make an impact on schooling. The *bush schools* were an important development initiated by the Finnish missionaries. However, missionary schooling also contributed indirectly

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<sup>25</sup> Freire op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Kustaa op. cit. p. 743.

<sup>27</sup> Ndilula op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Lethonen op. cit. p. 186. The relationship between the introduction of Western schooling through the missionaries and the need for labour in the expansion of the capitalistic mode of production was not limited to the international colonial system between Europe and Africa. Ambjörnsson's analysis of the contemporary alliances between religion, schooling, and industrial development in a small community in the northern part of Sweden exemplified this broader perspective on schooling. He notes that the common interests amongst the industrialists and the clergy was acted out through schooling to inculcate a way of living that satisfied their paternalistic outlooks on the workers. Ambjörnsson, R. (1988) *Den Skötsamme Arbetaren* (The Conscientious Worker). Stockholm: Carlssons.

to a segregation policy by starting separate schools for the different groups in the country.

#### Schooling under German colonialism

Segregated schooling that started with missionary education directed towards the upper strata in the traditional Namibian societies, was further developed during the German rule. Schooling was made compulsory for all white children in 1911, while schooling for blacks was left with the missionary societies, but under German control. Towards the end of the German colonial period, 1915, there were approximately 115 mission schools for all non-white groups enrolling 5 490 learners out of a total black population around 180.000.<sup>29</sup>

The preparing of the ground for the apartheid policy was furthered through the expressed preference for the boer system by the German administration as referred to by Kustaa.<sup>30</sup> The system of unequal funding for black and white schools was another structural characteristics introduced by the Germans that in principle remained in Namibia through the apartheid era up until independence 1990 and beyond.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Mbamba op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> Kustaa op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> A Presidential Commission stated as late as 1999: "Although Namibia has made commendable progress in improving access to basic education, the same cannot be said of equity and quality, which are closely linked for disadvantaged groups. The Commission therefore recommends that unit costs should be calculated for each learner. These unit costs should include all components, including staff salaries. (Presently unit costs are used only for textbooks, stationary, and other materials.) The allocation of funds to a region should therefore be in terms of the number of learners it has at each phase of education, and the unit costs of that phase. Such measures should be phased in over a period of three years, by 2003. A system of unit costs should also be developed for other components of the education sector." Government of the Republic of Namibia (1999) *Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training*. Windhoek, p. 23. The first effects of this recommendation came in the beginning of 2002 when the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture announced that some teachers would be moved to disadvantaged schools to reduce inequities between regions. Maletsky, C. (2002) Teachers face D-day on new deployments. Windhoek: The Namibian web edition, 08-01-2002. <http://www.namibian.com.na>.

The most significant impact of the short and brutal German rule was the genocide of thousands of Namibians which reduced the number of Hereros and Namas from the estimated 75 – 100.000 to approximately 25.000 during a period of four years in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> This was a cause for concern amongst the traditional leaders in Namibia even after independence. The German Chancellor Kohl made his first visit to Namibia in September 1995. Traditional Herero warriors used that occasion for a demonstration in the middle of Windhoek. They asked the German Chancellor to make an official apology and demanded war reparations to the Herero people, a request, which Kohl did not adhere to.<sup>33</sup> During the second visit of a German high rank official in 1998 a formal request for compensation was handed over by the Herero and Mbandery tribal authorities, still without any positive responses from the German side.<sup>34</sup> By 1999 the Herero people were prepared to take the German government to the International Court of Justice in a bid to win reparations for the 1904-1907 war.<sup>35</sup> The latest development of this issue is that the Herero People's Reparations Corporation has placed its case in US courts and claim US\$ 2 billion from the German government and a further US\$ 2 billion from Deutsche Bank and Woermann Line for atrocities committed in colonial times.<sup>36</sup>

The German relation with the largest group of Namibians, the Owambos who lived in the northern part of the country, was somewhat different. The fact that the number of potential African labourers from the other tribes was severely diminished through the genocide, directed the

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<sup>32</sup> Katjavivi, P.H. (1988) *A History of Resistance in Namibia*. Paris: Unesco Press.

<sup>33</sup> Gewald, J-B. (1999) *Herero Heroes*. Oxford: James Curry and Ohio University Press. p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Moyo, T. (2000) Hereros bemoan German inaction. The Namibian web edition 24-08-2000, August. <http://www.namibian.com.na>.

<sup>35</sup> Maletsky, C. (1999) Hereros pledge to take Berlin to World Court. Windhoek: The Namibian web edition, 25-08-1999. <http://www.namibian.com.na>.

<sup>36</sup> Maletsky, C. (2002) Herero claim in US courts makes progress. Windhoek: The Namibian web edition, 07-01-2002. <http://www.namibian.com.na>.

German need for cheap labour towards the Ovambo tribes. According to Töttemeyer, the Germans preferred to keep the Owambos within their traditional political infrastructure and without external involvement to avoid military conflict as long as the region could furnish the Germans with cheap and abundant labour.<sup>37</sup> German suspicion against the missionary societies was linked to their need for cheap labour, because they thought that education was not necessary for natives, as

a “stupid” local inhabitant would make a humbler and more useful worker than an educated one - a viewpoint which originated in the Herrentaum (autocratic) philosophy characteristic of the German colonial period.<sup>38</sup>

The differences between the traditional indigenous African schooling and colonial schooling, as introduced by missionaries and the German colonisers, became already obvious in relation to its socialisation functions in these early days of colonisation. Indigenous schooling was a matter of inclusion and incorporation into the society.

The young people who were initiated into their communities became full members of society, i.e. the young person became an Ovambo, an Okavango, a Nama, or a Herero. One's ethnic identity was associated with this participation in the activities of one's community.<sup>39</sup>

This purpose of schooling made sense to the young people, as it made them to become part of the social fabric of their society. Colonial schooling was based on the notion of fundamental exclusion that worked in two ways. First, it did not recognise the African societies, but downgraded them into second order societies, without fully realising the Namibians' memberships in those societies. Secondly, it tried to inculcate the beliefs and values of the European societies, without allowing a

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<sup>37</sup> Töttemeyer, G. (1978) *Namibia Old and New. Traditional and Modern Leaders in Ovamboland*. London: C. Hurst and Company.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 42

<sup>39</sup> Kustaa op. cit. p. 820

membership in that society. The overall effect was exclusion and alienation. This policy was further advanced under the South African rule.

#### Schooling under South African rule

After the German defeat in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War South Africa, then a member of the British Commonwealth, administered Namibia on a mandate from the League of Nations. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War when South Africa became an independent republic the newly established United Nations demanded that Namibia should gain its independence. South Africa refused to adhere to this demand and tried to incorporate Namibia as much as possible into the South African hegemony. It was after the election victory of the Nationalist Party in South Africa in 1948 that the politics of apartheid became the official state policy of South Africa as well as Namibia.

Formal education and schooling under the period of South African rule in Namibia was to a large extent a prolongation of many of the characteristics of colonial education introduced previously, but with an even stronger institutionalisation through the state apparatus. The fully-fledged apartheid policy in education was introduced in Namibia through the recommendations of the Van Zyl Commission in 1958.

Not surprisingly the Commission found ‘a striking similarity in the background of SWA (South West Africa/Namibia) natives and that of the Bantu of the Union (of South Africa)’. It recommended:

- The introduction of South Africa’s Bantu education syllabus;
- The handing over of church schools to the state;
- An education levy on Africans; and
- The setting up of a separate education department for Africans including a Language Bureau which should be headed by a white.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ellis, J. (1984) *Education, Repression and Liberation: Namibia*. London: CIIR and WUS. pp. 23-25.

According to Ellis this plan had three components. First, the ambition was to put 80 % of the black children through four years of schooling. Through this measure the administration wanted to respond to the need for literate workers for the whites, to transmit the ideology of parallel development, and to produce low-status staff for the administration. Secondly, by being responsible for the church schools, the administration hoped to control and to stall the opposition to apartheid that started to grow also within the church organisations. Thirdly, only 20% of the black students who completed the four year of schooling, were expected to continue their studies beyond that level. By that the administration created evidence for their own propaganda through a self-fulfilling prophecy that could explain that blacks did not need any further schooling.

Amukugo calls the later part of South African rule in Namibia the false de-colonisation period. This period was characterised by the attempts of the South African administration to give the racist education system a general face-lift. This manicure was prompted by the growing resistance by the Namibian people that led to the launching of the armed struggle in 1966; the international pressure on South Africa for its illegal occupation of Namibia that was ruled by the International Court of Justice in 1971; and the growing fear of communism in the region through the new governments in Angola and Mozambique after the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire in 1974.<sup>41</sup>

The most obvious effect of the false de-colonisation was the so-called free elections in 1978 following the Turnhalle talks, and with the election victory of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) under the supervision and control of the South African government.<sup>42</sup> Following on the 1978 mock elections was the practice of homeland/bantustan

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<sup>41</sup> Amukugo op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> The DTA later became the main contestant to SWAPO in the 1989 independence elections through massive South African backing. DTA is still one of the opposition parties in Namibia.

development introduced from South Africa, which meant a further fragmentation of education along ethnic and tribal lines. For that reason eleven (11) different departments of education were introduced after 1980 that remained in effect until independence.

Kustaa refers to the correspondence theory in his analysis of colonial education in South Africa and Namibia.<sup>43</sup> According to this theory there is a correspondence between the education system and the social, economic, and political institutions of a given society, in such a way that the education system reproduces the inequalities in the society at large. But, as Apple puts it:

this is not a mechanistic process where 'external pressures' from an economy or the state inexorably mould schools and students within them to the processes involved in the accumulation of economic and cultural capital...something of a process of self-selection as well as institutional selection goes on.<sup>44</sup>

The Namibian experience gives proof to this end and also of its crude sides as testified by many Namibians.<sup>45</sup> However, the Namibian experience is also an example of the lack of totality in the correspondence theory. It did not create a total correspondence. The resistance to Bantu education verified that educational systems are ideological battlegrounds – sites for political struggles and a war of position - that were also entered by the liberation movement.

The deposits from colonial education into the common sense about education are at one level related to the apprenticeship of observation. This apprenticeship is conservative in nature in the sense that it takes the

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<sup>43</sup> Kustaa op.cit.

<sup>44</sup> Apple, M. W. (1982) *Education and Power*. Boston: ARK Paperbacks. p. 59

<sup>45</sup> See for example: Ya Otto, J. (1982) *Battlefront Namibia*. London: Heinemann; Integrated Teacher Training Programme, ITTP (1991) *Stories from the Struggle*. Umeå: Department of Education. Umeå University; Teacher Education Reform Project (1992:a) *Wipe your face and get ready for school*. Umeå: Department of Education, Umeå University.

mode of delivery of education for granted. Further on, the traits of exclusion and parallel development in colonial education created an urge towards the forbidden green pastures of white education as a lever for modernisation.

### **Education and the liberation struggle**

The political programme of SWAPO, as a liberation movement, included a section on education and culture. To ensure a socio-economic transformation of the Namibian society this programme outlined the broad framework for education and culture. This framework emphasised the training of technical and professional cadres, the development of work-oriented and comprehensive education, the creation of a foundation for free and universal education in the future through the training of educators, to develop cultural creativeness as a weapon in the struggle for liberation, and to strive to eliminate vestiges of tribal, feudal, and superstitious mentalities.<sup>46</sup>

Within this framework, the SWAPO Secretary for Education and Culture outlined the specific aims of the education programme.<sup>47</sup> These aims were in sharp contrast to the previous educational ideas in Namibia. They

- emphasised the need for a common system for all on a national level, as opposed to separate and parallel developments applied by the apartheid regime,
- put forward rationality and science as the basis for education, and challenged by that both traditional and colonial schooling,

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<sup>46</sup> South West Africa People's Organisation (1981) *SWAPO Political Program of the South West Africa People's Organisation*. Lusaka: SWAPO Department for Publicity and Information.

<sup>47</sup> Angula, N. (1983) *Education for the Future: Programmes, Prospects and Needs*. Luanda: Department of Education and Culture, SWAPO.

- introduced a view on productive work that supported a developmental and emancipatory position in contrast to the previous adapted colonial education model for blacks,
- recognised the international arena as a source for knowledge and learning in contrast to the narrow South African apartheid perspective, and
- acknowledged the role of culture and creativity as well as the socio-political context for development through education as opposed to a situation where these aspects were used as reasons to limit educational experiences.

Education became to a large extent *the* battleground and a persuasive means to fight the colonial regime. Experiences from colonial education were evident to young Namibians, who listened to the messages from the liberation movement. These messages called them to join the liberation struggle in exile and promised them proper education. They were told that they needed the weapons of education to accomplish other rights through national liberation. The struggle over education became the struggle between the two opposing ideologies of domination and liberation.<sup>48</sup>

It was relatively easy for the liberation movement to express their long-term political policy ambitions with education. It was more difficult to develop classroom practices along the lines of a liberatory educational praxis. The transformation of policy aims into classroom practices is always problematic. The fundamentals of modern schooling work at large in different ways, beyond the official aims and objectives. Callewaert has addressed this discrepancy, or misleading assumption, in relation to the work of Bourdieu, the French sociologist.

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<sup>48</sup> Diescho op. cit.

In all Bourdieu's studies of modern formal public education systems, he has attempted to show that these systems, neither in relation to the societal conditions, their internal way of functioning, nor in their external societal effects, can be seen in the way they portray themselves, namely as meritocratic-based institutions for the democratic advancement of universally-valid knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

If we accept this discrepancy we must also acknowledge that the liberation movement was by its very nature beyond the control and influence of a national state apparatus and the societal and social mechanism at work in any normal situation. Many of the Namibians who left their country to be able to fight the system from outside, became members of a different kind of community. This was valid for many Namibians in exile, but especially for those who lived and worked for longer periods in the education centres in Angola and Zambia. Much of the space left open by the absent state apparatus was taken over by the liberation movement and its internal hierarchy and control system.<sup>50</sup> However, even under the conditions of an armed liberation struggle with its own power structure, there was space left for transformation within the framework of the political rhetoric of the liberation movement. This space was also utilised by external agencies through the appearance of donor projects like the one organised from Umeå University.

#### Educational practices within the liberation movement

Before we look at these educational practices as they were played out in mid 1980s based on examples from the education centre in Kwanza, we must acknowledge that the education of many Namibians in exile was not an internal affair for the liberation movement. In most cases individuals and groups of Namibian students were recruited into different support programmes carried out at established institutions all over the world,

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<sup>49</sup> Callewaert (1998) op. cit. p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> See Leys, C. and Saul, J. S. (1995) *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword*. London and Athens: James Currey and Ohio University Press.

through development co-operation agencies or the United Nations. This was a conscious policy by the liberation movement, for at least three reasons. First, the leadership wanted the Namibians in exile to get experiences from a range of educational and societal conditions to be able to take informed decisions in a future and liberated Namibia. Secondly, there was no other option than to rely on external support, provided the liberation movement was going to fulfil its promises to the cadres of young Namibians who left their country to become educated. Thirdly, it was a pragmatic way to keep people in exile busy and to carry over some of the logistical problems to external agents.

For those reasons, secondary education was carried out in Cuba and West African countries, Namibian students joined English language programmes at different colleges and universities in the United Kingdom, and Masters courses at the University of Moscow, etc.. Many students also entered educational programmes on the African continent and elsewhere through the Nationhood programme.<sup>51</sup> In her attempts to give a comprehensive description of the training of Namibians in exile based on data collected in the latter half of 1980s, Cohen refers to a number of obstacles.<sup>52</sup> The collection of statistical data was hindered by such factors as the lack of national records on support programmes, national confidentiality regulations and other political reasons, such as the fact that countries in the Eastern Bloc were not willing to supply researchers in the West with their data. However, based on Cohen's data a conservative estimate of the number of trained Namibians on post-secondary level as teachers or other types of educational professionals reaches a thousand (1000) during the ten years preceding independence<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> United Nations Council for Namibia (1981) *The Nationhood Programme for Namibia*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>52</sup> Cohen op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> The urgent need for educated Namibians in all sectors of the administration after independence had the effect that many of the trained educators from exile ended up in positions outside the education sector.

These arrangements meant that many Namibians were educated on commission *for* the liberation movement and not *by* the liberation movement.<sup>54</sup> These arrangements were necessary, as the liberation movement did not have the material or human resources to organise their own educational programmes for its cadres in exile. The movement had to rely on the goodwill of external support organisations, even though the programmes for the Namibian students were in most cases developed together with Namibian partners. A consequence was that the liberation movement did not develop its own practices as a matter of urgency, but relied to a large extent on formal qualifications from elsewhere as a means to furnish their own schools with teachers, when students came back after the end of their scholarship periods. Many who returned from a scholarship period abroad took the first opportunity to receive a new scholarship that as soon as possible could bring them away from the troublesome situation in the centre to a more comfortable life at an institution in Europe or elsewhere. Another option for returning scholarship holders was the risk/possibility for recruitment to the front in Southern Angola. Any of these options had negative effects on the possibilities for the liberation movement to build up continuity in their own practices, as there was a constant flow of practitioners through the classrooms, especially at the centre in Kwanza. This aggravated the situation at this centre that was already a difficult place for formal schooling due to the war situation. The fact that activities organised by Umeå University followed a different logic from the start in 1983, with much of the activities taking place at the school in Kwanza, worked as a counter-force in this respect. The effects of the activities could actually be experienced at first hand by the people in charge. These experiences could then influence decisions taken about the future.

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<sup>54</sup> The teacher education programme at the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka involved some Namibians but was as all other programmes dependent on external human resources.

The situation at the centre in 1983 resembled the model of *ritualised schooling* that often has been the characterisation of modern schools in southern African countries.<sup>55</sup> Early classroom observation revealed that class teaching was the rule at the centre in Kwanza. A common procedure was that the teacher made some notes on the board that always started with the date, the subject and the topic. The notes were explained shortly, and the rest of the time was used by the students to copy the notes in their exercise books. Occasionally, students were called to the board to carry out some exercises, especially in Mathematics, and in many cases they failed to do these exercises, why somebody else was called to make a try. Most of the time of the lesson was taken up by teacher talk. In some English lessons the students merely said one word of English beyond the stereotyped chorus repetitions of isolated words or phrases.<sup>56</sup>

Even the rituals of formal schooling could be observed in the behaviour of teachers and learners, in spite of the obvious lack of the physical prompts, like classrooms, which the following incident illustrates, which happened during one of the early visits to Kwanza.

An opening in the bush is used as a classroom. There is a small board pinched to the trunk of a tree. The learners are sitting on benches made from branches. Two learners come late. They approach the area, but stop at a distance, where a possible door could have been placed in an invisible wall. After some time the teacher “notices” the late comers. The learners ask: “Can we come in?” And the teacher answered: “Yes, come in.”<sup>57</sup>

This description is comparable to observations by Callewaert & Kallos before independence in northern Namibia, the area from which most teachers in exile had their early school experiences.

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<sup>55</sup> See for example Palme op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Dahlström, L. (1983) Basic Education at Kwanza-Sul. A Consultancy Report supporting the Basic Education Programme of SWAPO at the Namibian Education Centre, Kwanza-Sul. Umeå: Department of Education.

<sup>57</sup> Dahlström, L. Personal experience, 1984.

... the content is taught in some remarkable way in a vacuum. The conflicting and complicated real life relevance of all subjects being systematically evacuated creating instead a type of autonomous examination ....from a methodological point of view the most striking fact is the total passivity of the pupils ...as far as the syllabus on the board is concerned, it is structured as a pure list of plain facts.<sup>58</sup>

The classroom practices in Kwanza, as observed in the beginning of the 1980s, were to a large extent mirroring the conditions inside Namibia as observed by Callewaert & Kallos in 1989. This was not in any way unexpected as the teachers in Kwanza in most cases were untrained and relied to a large extent on the practices they themselves had experienced as students in Namibia, in spite of the different political contexts, following the principle of *apprenticeship of observation*.<sup>59</sup> It was estimated that 90 % of the teachers in Kwanza were untrained in 1983.<sup>60</sup> However, if the classroom processes were similar to the situation inside Namibia, the teaching and learning content was different in many subject areas. Subjects like Mathematics and Science had been neglected by the colonial powers and were prioritised by the liberation movement. The development of Mathematics and Science in Kwanza was also supported by a group of teachers from what was East Germany (GDR) at that time. The content in a subject like Social Studies was changed to reflect the Namibian perspective as opposed to the coloniser's perspective.<sup>61</sup> The production of textbooks in Mathematics and English (through a project supported by Finnida) reflected the Namibian culture in a different way from the previous colonial material.<sup>62</sup> However, these differences in the teaching

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<sup>58</sup> Callewaert, S. and Kallós, D. (1989) *Teaching and Teacher Training in Namibia: Today and Tomorrow*. Stockholm: Sida Document. Appendix p. xx.

<sup>59</sup> Ahlström, K-G. (1988) op. cit.

<sup>60</sup> Dahlström (1983) op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> Melber, H. (ed) (1986) *Our Namibia. A Social Studies Textbook*. London: Zed Books.

<sup>62</sup> For an analysis of previous material see Ellis op.cit. Example of new material: Nangolo, K. and Shaketange, L. (1985) *Namibia primary English 1*. Helsinki: Otava

and learning content were often overridden by the general educational processes with rote in colonial education and to a certain extent furthered by the German educators operating in Kwanza, but from a different ideological stance.<sup>63</sup>

The professional training that took place for example at the education centre in Angola and at the Lodima secondary school in Kongo-Brazzaville, were carried out under different conditions as compared to professional training e.g. in Europe, even though all being heavily dependent on external human resources. There was a difference between professional programmes carried out in a Namibian exile context on the African continent with close relationships to the practices of schooling and programmes based at institutions in Europe. The programmes in semi-Namibian contexts in exile, contributed significantly to the base for the post-independence policies simply because of its presence during this pre-independence period. This was also the case for junior secondary education.<sup>64</sup>

#### **Annotation: historical residues**

The way we think about education has its origin in experience. If these experiences are moulded through a practice based on notions of colonialism and racism they have created specific types of mental engravings amongst both the masters and the victims of this practice. The white masters developed a superior attitude and the black victims a feeling of inferiority, but most of all history developed a common sense about

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Publishing Company; Aipinge, J. and Ndume H. (1989) *Namibia Primary Mathematics 1*. Helsinki: Otava Publishing Company.

<sup>63</sup> Dahlström (1999:a) op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> For the case of junior secondary education, see e.g. Avenstrup, R. (1999) *No change without pain*. Transforming education in Namibia after independence - the secondary level. Unpublished doctoral thesis, School of Education, Oxford: Oxford Brooks University; Geckler (2000) op. cit.; Ottevanger, W. (2001) *Teacher support materials as a catalyst for science curriculum implementation in Namibia*. Amsterdam: Vrije University.

educational practice that was even carried over to the educational practices of the liberation movement. This common sense was the basis for the endurance of the type of modern schooling that is here characterised as a *ritualised coulisse-school*. Serpell and Palme have made similar characterisations of formal schooling.<sup>65</sup> The combination of the concepts *ritualised* and *coulisse* is created for the sake of this thesis. The aim is to illustrate the external illusion (*coulisse*) that modern school buildings create of a well-functioning institution and the characteristics of the internal life in the classrooms that are built on strong routine (*ritualised*) behaviour by their inhabitants. In other words, the *ritualised coulisse-school* looks real at a distance but becomes a facade without the official educational content it is supposed to foster at a closer look. The rituals behind this facade can as well be replaced with a tape-recorder.

The *ritualised coulisse-school* continued to live as system residues even under the slogans of education for liberation amongst those who left Namibia to fight back against an unjust social system. All along did the decontextualised traditional views on authority and gender affect the development of the *ritualised coulisse school*. These views worked in tandem with the colonial experiences in the further deepening of the mental common sense engravings about education and schooling.

When the possibility was created to act in pursuit of a more coherent relation between liberating educational thought and its practice the degrees of freedom that the hegemonic situation offered were utilised to alter the praxis of schooling beyond the *coulisse* and the rituals. These became the first attempts to create a counter-hegemonic bloc.

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<sup>65</sup> See Serpell op. cit.; Palme op. cit.