

Chapter Six

Shaping the landscape for reform

In 1992 and 1993 the counter-hegemonic work gradually changed focus from a small pilot project to a national reform. At this time, people in different positions often commented that a national reform was something different from a small innovative pilot project. Such advice was either concerned about sharing the power and influence that the future would entail or worries about the capacity of the project to adhere to traditional administrative and bureaucratic structures. The work organised by Umeå University was still based on the view that teacher education should be organised in an integrated way with close relations to practice as had been the case in the ITTP. This view had also been presented in a number of documents.¹

In 1993 the ministerial building in Windhoek, where the then embryonic NIED was housed, became the place of work for TERP staff together with a handful of Namibians and a similar number of foreign advisers from different projects. The major parts of the ministerial building housed the inherited and overbearing administration overwhelmed by a bureaucratic administrative culture that stalled any new effort through silence or the creation of another working group. The early statement by the Minister that only 5 percent of the ministry administration was operative became an obvious reality.² The inactivity in the ministerial corridors was so flagrant that it at times evoked the picture of the previous function of the building as dormitories for railway workers.

¹ Dahlström (1984:a) op. cit.; Dahlström (1989) op. cit.; Dahlström and Shinyemba (1990) op. cit.

² This was said in the introductory note at the Etosha Conference in 1991. See Snyder op. cit.

NIED and foreign project staff brought a breath of air into the building. This was at times interpreted as a presage of bad weather and therefore met with scepticism, reluctance, or straightforward confrontation by the old guard, i.e. those who in different ways represented the former dispensation and soon became significant actors in the war of position.

The new leadership saw the need for a strong counter-hegemonic strategy at ministerial level, even though the number of Namibians that occupied posts at that level and who agreed to such a strategy were significantly outnumbered by the hibernating occupants. In a way, education reform became the means to conquer the preferential right of interpretation at central administration in the first instance. In this situation a reform based on a decentralised system for the development of teacher education would run the risk of being drawn back into the prevailing common sense and soon be turned into a non-reform.

This situation called for a new strategy. The organic and collective intellectualism that had been developed together with Namibian colleagues had a greater value amongst practitioners than at central administration where it was seen with scepticism, even though still recognised by the new political leadership. Therefore, there was a need to create a broader arena for this intellectualism beyond what at times was apprehended as intellectual comradeship amongst former terrorists by the opponents.³ The previously established co-operation with Swedish scholars, like Callewaert, continued. There was also a need for a broader international base on teacher education beyond the Swedish connections. This broader base was initially created through co-operation with Tabachnick and Zeichner at the University of Madison-Wisconsin in the US and at a later stage with Elliott at the University of East-Anglia in the UK. Callewaert, Tabachnick, Zeichner and Elliott and some of their colleagues expanded the sphere for the organic and collective intellectualism. The

³ The common practice amongst people who supported the state policy before independence was that SWAPO as a liberation movement was understood as a terrorist organisation and its supporters were labelled terrorists.

intellectualism that these scholars brought with them onto the reform arena could not simply be dismissed as intellectual comradeship from the struggle as it represented acknowledged international recognition on a much broader arena. This broader base also placed the teacher education reform in Namibia on the international arena of teacher education controversies, conflicts, and developments.

The international arena of teacher education

Internationally, teacher education has for long been a contested area for educational policy and will. The earlier work of Elliott, Zeichner and Tabachnick provides an illustration.

Elliott has made an overview of different perspectives on teacher education related to the struggle over teacher education in England.⁴ His outline has three broad perspectives.

The *rationalist* perspective as the traditional perspective on teacher education that entails that good practice consists of consciously applied theory. The teacher is recognised as a rational-autonomous professional and this perspective creates a rather individualistic image of the teacher. Pre-service teacher education is to develop theoretical understanding and to give opportunity to apply them appropriately in practice. In-service and continued teacher education are based on voluntary patterns. The teacher educator is seen as an expert.

The *social-market* perspective applies the production-consumption systems that prevail in the economic sphere of modern capitalist societies and adapts it to the cultural/social sphere of the public services, including teacher education. Learning outcomes are conceived as behavioural, with an emphasis placed on the atomistic specification of discrete practical skills, through constructions like outcome-based education and competencies. The school is the main site of training even in pre-service to

⁴ Elliott, J. (ed) (1993) *Reconstructing Teacher Education*. London: Falmer Press.

identify a few basic behavioural skills that are sufficient to assure the organisation that the trainee is able to function within it. The school identifies in-service training needs of the teachers. The teacher educator becomes a part-time technical operator.

The *hermeneutic* perspective, where Elliott can be placed himself, has its roots in what is commonly known as action research approaches and the notions of teachers as researchers and reflective practitioners. The key concept is situational understanding, which implies that practice is grounded in interpretations of particular situations as a whole and cannot be improved without improving these interpretations. Theory may play an important role in improving situational understanding but it is subordinate to the latter. A theoretical analysis of particularly problematic aspects of a situation, that one is trying to understand as a whole, is often an important episode in the development of a new synthesis. Good practice is not a matter of reproducing pre-programmed responses but responding intelligently and wisely to a situation as it unfolds on the basis of discernment and insight. Teacher education, both pre- and in-service, becomes a matter of scaffolding teachers' capacities for situational understandings as a basis for wise judgement and intelligent decisions in complex, ambiguous and dynamic educational situations.

These perspectives are, according to Elliott, related to more fundamental values of what constitutes knowledge and how it is arrived at. The rationalists rely on expert knowledge derived from theoretical assumptions about what they see as isolated entities in the reality. This has for long been the dominant perspective and its implications on teacher education are for many experienced educators assimilated into their thought processes. Much of traditional teacher education is founded on this view and has been questioned lately from the social-market perspective.⁵

⁵ For further readings related to England, see Carr, W. and Hartnett, A. (1996) *Education and the Struggle for Democracy. The politics of educational ideas*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

What counts in the social-market perspective is what the market and the consumers want, thus transforming education to a commodity and a production technology. By this the spokespersons of this perspective also hope to move teacher education away from the explicit ideological field of teacher education institutions and relate it more to concepts like efficiency and management.

The hermeneutic perspective looks at understanding as derived from situational interpretations by student teachers and practitioners in a participatory process. The accumulated theoretical knowledge can act in a supportive way to the interpretations while the holistic understanding of a situation will be the basis for action.

Based on their work in Namibia Ebbutt & Elliott expressed the opinion that the development vision of education in Namibia "is imbued with radical nuances that resonate with injustices of the past".⁶ Ebbutt & Elliott also reflected on the national goals in Namibia and the fact that they differ significantly from contemporary goals set up in affluent societies.

It is interesting that the national goals are formulated as a set of values to be realised in the educational system and its constitutive practices rather than as a set of tangible outcomes of the system which one can clearly and precisely describe in advance of any decisions about how they are to be produced.⁷

Based on their own extensive work with teacher education in the USA and internationally, including Africa, incorporated with the work of other scholars, Tabachnick & Zeichner have identified several distinctive orientations to teacher education found in Africa today.⁸ With reference to

⁶ Ebbutt, D. and Elliott, J. (1998) Practice-based Inquiry in the BETD In-service Programme - some key issues. *Reform Forum*, No. 6, 29 - 37. National Institute for Educational Development. p. 29.

⁷ Ibid. p. 30.

⁸ Tabachnick, B. and Zeichner, K. (1999) Participatory Development and Teacher Education Reform in Namibia. In Zeichner, K. and Dahlström, L. (eds) *Democratic*

Avalos, who is involved in teacher education reform in Chile, they acknowledge that a *behavioural skills-training* approach has been the dominant model of teacher education in Third World countries. "This approach concentrates on producing changes in discrete teaching behaviours such as questioning strategies and lesson pacing. The goal is to train teachers to behave in particular ways, not to exercise their judgement."⁹

A second orientation is an *academic* approach, which put the emphasis on academic subject knowledge and assumes that the more you know of the academic subject knowledge the better you will perform as a teacher. Usually, the achievement of the academic subject knowledge is a matter of transmission and pedagogical content knowledge is either marginalised or ignored, as it is considered as something that can be learnt on the job.

A third orientation is what Avalos has called the *model* approach. This is a dogmatic package solution which aims at transmitting a particular educational model based on a specific methodology like Skinnerian behaviourism, Piagetian psychology, or Freirian reconstructivism.¹⁰ A similar transmission model is described by Harber, where little attention is given to practical teaching skills and the emphasis is on the reproduction of acknowledged wisdom.¹¹

A fourth orientation is what Avalos calls the *heuristic-interactive* approach. It is a participatory and inquiry-oriented approach. "Here the goal is to prepare teachers who are able to exercise reasoned judgement about the goals to be achieved in schools and about appropriate teaching

Teacher Education Reform in Africa - The Case of Namibia. Boulder: Westview Press. 207-221.

⁹ Ibid. p. 215

¹⁰ Avalos, B. (1985) Training for Better Teaching in the Third World: Lessons from Research. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 1 (4). 289-299. Referred to by Tabachnick and Zeichner op. cit.

¹¹ Harber, C. (1997) *Education, Democracy, and Political Development in Africa*. Brighton: Sussex Press. Referred to by Tabachnick and Zeichner op. cit.

methods and curriculum."¹² According to Tabachnick & Zeichner the focus is on solving teaching and learning problems in the classroom and the teacher is both an active participant and a constructor of knowledge.

A fifth orientation is the *social reconstructionist* approach or what has also been named the *transformational* approach. This approach "directs the inquiries of student teachers and teachers toward the building of a more just and equitable society".¹³ Tabachnick & Zeichner claim that the heuristic-interactive approach can easily develop into narrow perspectives when reflection and participation become ends in themselves. Teachers should rather be viewed as vehicles for greater equity, humanity, and social justice in the classroom, the school, and the society. In this way, transformational approaches can become an important force for social change as opposed to becoming a tool for the degradation and intensification of teachers' work.

The orientations presented above with reference to Elliott and Tabachnick & Zeichner can be combined and are not in that sense exclusive in relation to each other. Tabachnick & Zeichner express their own caution about the five orientations they present and say that they are not mutually exclusive. They give an example from Namibia, where several of the characteristics of these orientations are operative in the reform efforts, not necessarily as part of conflicting orientations, but as parts of a broader reconstructionist framework.

Typologies can be both functional and problematic. The functionality is related to the way they can assist in the analysis of ideas and systems to identify trace and structure. However, social constructions are seldom logical in such a way that they fit highly structured typologies unless we discharge anomalies as insignificant. Social constructions can rather be characterised as a mesh formed by different external influences, from which we try to create some sense and understanding. The concept

¹² Tabachnick and Zeichner op. cit. p. 216.

¹³ Ibid. p. 216.

of hegemony and its lack of totality as described by Gramsci can be helpful in this respect and in the attempts to describe and analyse hegemonic aspects of orientations in teacher education.

Nyambe, a Namibian scholar involved in the teacher education reform, places the reform in Namibia in a broad transnational and global policy network where he identifies two dichotomised paradigmatic perspectives: the technocratic-modernisation paradigm and the critical-transformative paradigm. The norm in this global network has for long been the technocratic-modernisation paradigm dominated by the perception that Third World countries should follow suit in the footsteps of the West. The consequence, also for teacher education, is that it becomes dependent on the Western philanthropic generosity through an overwhelming will to assist in the formulation of policy that reinforces the dependency relationship of the Third World countries towards the Western countries. Nyambe states that "exemplars in the critical/transformational paradigm remain to date exceptional".¹⁴

When looking at teacher education in Namibia it is also possible to add the broader historical perspective attended to earlier in this thesis. Before independence teacher education was part and parcel of the political agenda of separation to maintain social injustices. Teacher education in exile was an integrated part of the liberation struggle and in that sense part of a politicised transitional stage. After independence the aim was to create a democratic system through a national programme for all, with characteristics of what has been called above hermeneutic, reconstructionist and transformational orientations to teacher education.

The Namibian teacher education reform was affected by a number of orientations and agencies that created new alliances. It was also constrained by the historically formed common sense about education that

¹⁴ Nyambe, J. (1996) *Teacher Education and Societal Transformation in Post Apartheid Namibia: The Limits and Possibilities of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma Program*. Master Thesis. Edmonton: University of Alberta. p. 22.

was embedded in the ritualised coulisse-school or in the utopian hope for white education for all.

At independence, the new government of Namibia saw teacher education as the most important priority in the transformation of the inadequate, inappropriate, and irrelevant education system inherited from the colonial period.

The teachers are prime movers in education delivery. Their attitudes, inclinations, and competencies will, to a large measure, determine the quality and operation of an educational enterprise. Priority should therefore be given to teacher training and the management of the teaching service. There is an urgent need to develop in-service programs of different kinds to help teachers improve their professional competencies. Similarly, the pre-service teacher training programs should be improved and revamped to respond to the critical demands of participatory learning.¹⁵

A more pragmatic side of the situation at independence was that it seemed to be a fairly surmountable task to move teacher education. In quantitative terms it amounted to four college institutions, around 150 teacher educators, and an approximate of 400 student teachers recruited every year. For these and other reasons, like the fact that there were alternative experiences and external support available, teacher education got a rather unique leading position after independence. Zeichner & Dahlström refer to Samoff when they conclude that teacher education became the leading edge of reform in Namibia and not, as in many other countries, an appendage to other reforms.¹⁶

A word needs to be said also about the Republic of South Africa in connection with international trends and influences. Even though South

¹⁵ Angula, N. (1990:b) *The National Integrated Education System for Emergent Namibia*, Draft proposal for Education Reform and Renewal. Windhoek: SWAPO of Namibia. p. 24

¹⁶ Samoff, J. (1998:b) Interview with Lars Dahlström and Ken Zeichner. Durban: University of Durban-Westville. Referred to by Zeichner and Dahlström, op. cit.

Africa is the overwhelmingly largest economic and political force in the Southern African region, it is noteworthy that there have been no large direct influences from South Africa on the education reforms in Namibia. The main reason is that the education reforms in South Africa started four years later than in Namibia. It was also the very dependency on South Africa that the new regime in Namibia wanted to get rid of. South Africa also had huge problems in their own attempts to reverse the effects of the previous system and for many South Africans Namibia continued to be insignificant in many ways considering their own efforts and different emphasis in the reform.

Education for All - the Namibian way

The slogan *Education for All* is often connected with the Jomtien Meeting in 1990. At this meeting international organisations, including UN institutions and other financial and technical assistance agencies from the North, together with representatives from countries in the South met in Thailand and decided that universal primary education for all children in the world should be accomplished by the year 2000.¹⁷ Even though Namibia also adhered to that slogan, it is interesting to note that at the schools in exile, organised by SWAPO, teachers and learners used *Education For All* as a political slogan replacing the prayer at the morning assembly already in the beginning of the 1980s.

After several policy papers from the desk of the Minister of Education, guidelines from committees, and expressions of ideas and will by external consultants, a broad policy document was produced for the educational reforms. This statement of vision, *Toward Education for All - A Development Brief for Education, Culture, and Training*, further emphasised teacher education as a central part in the reform strategy and the need for a unified and national programme.¹⁸

¹⁷ That goal has now been re-set for year 2005 as it was not accomplished during 2000.

¹⁸ Ministry of Education and Culture (1993:a) op. cit.

The new education system was build on the Constitution of Namibia, which expresses that all persons have the right to education and that primary education is compulsory.¹⁹ The major goals of education were formulated under the concepts of access, equity, quality, and democracy. In a way these broad goals became prominent features in the discourse over achievements and non-achievements and in the discussions over educational approaches as they were supposed to affect education in a systemic and integrated way.²⁰

An interpretative analysis of the major goals indicates that *democracy* was the broadest concept. It was to be backed up through *access, equity, quality, and systemic efficiency*. All concepts were defined in broad terms beyond their technical aspects.

Democracy was the broadest concept used for stating the goals of education. It was seen as a central purpose of education at all levels and could not be reduced to a set of lessons when democracy was taught to learners. The belief was that education for a democracy could only be developed through a democratic education. Democratic education was seen as a process of participation and responsibility at all levels and the right to participate in the construction of human processes had its counterpart in the shared responsibility for the results.

The goal of *access* was translated to ten years of comprehensive schooling for every Namibian child through an expanded physical capacity and by addressing barriers that kept children out of school. In many cases these barriers worked beyond the physical access to education and were also identified as barriers to learning like rote memorisation, punitive discipline, and other intellectually stifling classroom routines.

Equity was largely connected to affirmative action, i.e. the positive treatment of previously disadvantaged groups, as a means to create greater fairness in the education system and to accomplish equity in the effects of

¹⁹ Government of the Republic of Namibia (1990:a) *The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia*. Article 20. Windhoek: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

²⁰ MEC (1993:a) op. cit. pp. 31-44.

schooling. Equity was therefore related to questions about systematic disadvantage in schooling e.g. in respect of gender, regional, and ethnic bias.

The role and preparation of teachers were emphasised in relation to *quality*. It was said that the teacher was the key for education. The teacher structures the learning environment. Therefore it is the teacher who can make learning exciting and satisfying or who makes schooling a pain. It was expressed that teachers should look at themselves more as active participants than passive intermediaries in aspects of curriculum and materials development. There should also be enough room to structure education to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of the students. It was also emphasised that quality education goes beyond the measurement of educational output through examination results and it was stated that examinations were too narrow to judge the quality of the education system. Instead, quality of education had to be related to the learners' skills to use the information they acquire, to integrate scattered bits of information into coherent understanding and to apply such understanding to unfamiliar situations. School learning should also become a self-directed, interactive, exciting, and intrinsically rewarding activity.

The *systemic efficiency* was related to the effective utilisation of funding for education as, since independence, it had been such a large part of the national budget. The concerns about the efficiency of the system were however extended beyond the unit cost and included e.g. inefficiency related to late arrival of teachers, authoritarian principals focusing on discipline instead of the fostering of learning, and teacher education programmes that did not help teachers to be resourceful. Systemic efficiency was also related to the development of an effective monitoring system as the reforms aimed at moving the education system away from educating an elite to education for all. This demanded a new sort of schooling and therefore also a new form of monitoring.

Because education for all requires a new sort of schooling for Namibia, we shall have to develop new, better, and more appropriate measures of expanding access, the reduction of inequalities, the quality of instruction and materials, and the effectiveness of education spending. Most important, we shall need to develop better ways to assess learning, both to help our schools and to help the learners themselves.²¹

Swarts uses the term *policy formation* to describe how policy was developed after independence.²² The term policy formation is used by Swarts to describe the fluid process of policy making as opposed to the view that policy making is a strict linear process starting in central directives and ending with multiplied implementation. Similar views have also been expressed elsewhere.

Even though the transformation of teacher education was a planned intervention into social processes, it tried to accommodate the human and social perspectives by avoiding a slavish adherence to grand plans.²³

Even a central document such as *Toward Education for All* was the result of dynamic feeding loops through broad consultation with people and draft policy documents already produced. Even though the intention was to follow such a cyclic policy formation process, it has been shown by Swarts' own data and from other evaluation data collected, e.g. during the Critical Self-Evaluation of the BETD, that this was not always the perception of the people involved at the colleges.²⁴ Some explanatory value can be found in the mandatory aspects of the reform "necessitated by the legacy of apartheid and the policy of national reconciliation after independence".²⁵ The protection of the non-negotiable parts of the policy

²¹ MEC (1993:a) op. cit. p 44.

²² Swarts op. cit. pp. 90-91.

²³ Dahlström, L. (1999:b) *Toward Learner-Centered and Democratic Teacher Education*, in Zeichner and Dahlström (1999) op. cit. p. 58.

²⁴ Swarts op. cit.; Swarts (ed) op. cit.

²⁵ Swarts op. cit. p. 63.

related to the broad goals referred to above and the policy of learner-centred education that will be attended to below, was expanded into other areas as semi-mandatory consequences of the policy. This had restricting effects on the teacher educators' control and therefore also a reason for questioning and conflict. A reflection at this stage is that the possibilities created by the dynamic policy formation approach were to some extent not utilised, due to this expansion of power and the perceived threats from the past. An alternative interpretation could be that the policy formation approach was more of an ideal vision that at times turned into a spontaneous state of affairs called for by reality and the national piloting process rather than by a consciously applied strategy.²⁶

The essence of reform: learner-centred education

To accomplish the broad goals expressed in *Toward Education for All* another policy directive concerning educational approaches was developed. This directive stated that education reform should follow the policy of learner-centred education.

As we make the transition from educating an elite to education for all we are also making another shift, from teacher-centred to learner-centred education.²⁷

In this way *learner-centred education* became the concept to represent the new reformed educational practices at all levels. The development brief *Toward Education for All* makes an extensive number of references to the traits and characteristics of learner-centred education, relating it to concepts like learners' background knowledge, curiosity, participation, involvement, liberating, integration, individual achievement, democracy, responsibility, intellectual and personal development, social and cultural

²⁶ See Chapter Seven, p. 133ff.

²⁷ MEC (1993:a) op. cit. p. 10.

development, and self-fulfilment. In relation to basic education the document outlines learner-centred education as a practice, where

- the starting point is the learners' existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school;
- the natural curiosity and eagerness of all young people to learn to investigate and to make sense of a widening world must be nourished and encouraged by challenging and meaningful tasks;
- the learners' perspective needs to be appreciated and considered in the work of the school;
- learners should be empowered to think and take responsibility not only for their own, but also for one another's learning and total development; and
- learners should be involved as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth.²⁸

And to accomplish this "our teaching methods must allow for the active involvement and participation of learners in the learning process".²⁹

The *BETD Broad Curriculum* was the frame policy document for the BETD programme from which course/subject syllabi and the programme activities at the colleges of education were to emanate.³⁰ The rationale of the Broad Curriculum stated that the programme was based on the goals expressed in *Toward Education for All* and that it was "based on a democratic pedagogy, a methodology which promotes learning through understanding, and practice directed towards empowerment to shape the conditions of one's own life. As such it relates closely to the curriculum

²⁸ MEC (1993:a) op. cit. p. 60.

²⁹ MEC (1993:a) op. cit. p. 60.

³⁰ The concepts *curriculum* and *syllabus* are used in this text following the meaning these concepts were given officially in Namibia during the reform process. At the 4th National Seminar the following working definitions were given. *Curriculum*: this relates only to the Broad Curriculum which is seen as the overall document to guide the three years of the BETD programme. *Syllabus*: this relates to the overall document used as a guide for each subject area over the three years of the BETD programme.

intentions of Basic Education, and to the context of the school in society".³¹

Under approaches and methods it was established that basic education in Namibia, and therefore teacher education for basic education, was based on learner-centred principles. Referring to the role of student teachers in the BETD the Broad Curriculum states:

Students will therefore be prepared to be able to stimulate the natural curiosity and eagerness of young people to investigate and make sense of a widening world through varying, challenging and meaningful tasks. Students will be enabled to organise teaching and learning so that the starting point at each stage of a learning process is each learners' existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school. They will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to organise, sustain, and evaluate learning environments and learning experiences which are meaningful to the learner. They will be able to formatively and summatively assess each learner's progress and achievements as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.³²

In 1992, during the transition period between ITTP and TERP, the project suggested the production of a document that could be used in the anticipated discussions about the new philosophy of education in Namibia. The background was that a number of studies, including sector reviews by donors, and analyses by external and internal agents had been carried out for different parts of the education system. The intention with addressing the philosophy of education was to illuminate and to make more explicit the philosophical underpinnings of the policy directives

³¹ Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology and Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1998:a) The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma. Okahandja: NIED. p. 2.

³² MHEVTST and MBEC op. cit. p. 15.

after independence. Callewaert & Kallós were commissioned to produce the document in co-operation with TERP staff.³³

Among other things Callewaert & Kallós addressed the issue of learner-centred education and outlined two distinctively separate views of what it implied.

The first view of a learner centered pedagogy regards the child as active and curious, striving to acquire knowledge and skills to master its surrounding world and able to do so under certain circumstances. The ensuing pedagogy is accordingly adapted to the experiences of each learner and uses these experiences and the knowledge already acquired by the learner as a starting point for the teaching process. The necessary pedagogy is flexible and highly individualized in terms of content, methods of instruction and pacing.³⁴

Callewaert & Kallós connected this view with a break with authoritarian education and the introduction of a democratic pedagogy characterised by joint planning and influence by teacher and learners, and changed behaviour by both teachers and learners.

The second view of a learner centered pedagogy is anchored in a different theory of knowledge and knowledge acquisition. This second view focuses on the presumed capability of each child to learn predefined skills and regards knowledge as definable as such and accordingly does not regard knowledge as contextually dependent. Its emphasis is on a behavioristic view of learning and the ensuing pedagogy is accordingly highly dependent on the instructional media used. The pedagogy is individualized principally in term of pacing but not necessarily in terms of contents or methods of instruction. It regards knowledge

³³ Callewaert and Kallós (1992) op. cit. Also published in Callewaert (1998) op. cit. The document was presented to the Ministry, but was never used as intended. The reason was that it was considered to be too provocative for some players on the donor arena and therefore also considered to be in contradiction to the consensus and reconciliation intentions. To some extent the intention with this paper was met later by the development brief *Toward Education for All*.

³⁴ Callewaert and Kallós (1992) op. cit., in Callewaert (1998) op. cit. p. 163.

acquisition as a cumulative process which is to be closely monitored in a step by step instructional process via the use of instructional media that allow the learners to work in their own pace supervised by the teacher. Essentially this pedagogy epistemologically regards the child as an object.³⁵

Callewaert & Kallós connected this view with the right of the child to acquire predefined skills and knowledge. "It assumes a changed meaning of teacher authority but does not imply a democratic relationship between teacher and taught".³⁶ It requires new behaviour of the teacher to manage new instructional media and de-emphasises the teacher as a professional.

Van Harmelen made a distinction between child-centred and learner-centred education in her contribution to the educational debate in Namibia that can also be related to the two views expressed by Callewaert & Kallós above. Van Harmelen claimed that the myths and folklore of child-centred education interferes with the conceptions and practices of learner-centred education in Namibia. While the child-centred ideas have a strong theoretical correspondence in stage theories still within a largely behavioural paradigm not very different from behaviourism, van Harmelen placed learner-centred education within the social constructivist paradigm.³⁷ It can even be argued that child-centred education and its strong links to stage theories have similarities with the apartheid ideology. In that sense it can easily be confused with the view that different races were at different stages in their development and therefore should be kept apart and treated differently.³⁸

³⁵ Callewaert and Kallós (1992) op. cit. p. 164.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 164.

³⁷ van Harmelen, U. (1998) Is learner-centred education child-centred. *Reform Forum*, No. 8. 3 - 10. Okahandja: NIED.

³⁸ This confusion between child-centred and learner-centred education might be one explanation of the fact that some representatives from the former dispensation time and again claimed (lately officially during a conference at NIED in 1998) that 'we have always used learner-centred education in Namibia'.

Nyambe identifies three different understandings of learner-centred education in his analyses of the views of students, teacher educators, and other significant persons about the BETD programme. These are: (i) learner-centred pedagogy conceptualised as "democratic participation and increased involvement" by student teachers in the teaching and learning process; (ii) learner-centred pedagogy perceived as a challenge for transforming the authoritarian teacher centred system, frequently referred to as the old system, to a more learner-centred democratic system, also referred to as the new system; lastly (iii) learner-centred pedagogy conceptualised as collaborative work through the use of group-exercises in conducting lessons.³⁹

An analysis of more than 400 critical incidents reported by BETD students during their college-based studies were developed into a conceptual map representing the students' collective view of learner-centred education.⁴⁰ At the centre of this map you found incidents related to concepts like participation and sharing. These concepts constituted almost a quarter of all mentioned characteristics of the BETD philosophy and were geared towards an individual level, even though within a participatory social environment. Another central cluster of incidents was identified around collective work and research. This cluster contained different methods for co-operative learning, mainly through group work and expressed more collective concerns even in relation to research as it symbolised membership in a professional community.

Learner-centred education was at the centre of the education discourse in Namibia after independence. It became largely accepted and

³⁹ Nyambe op.cit.

⁴⁰ Dahlström, L. (1997:b) *National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma, Subject Area Issues. Report 1. What's going on during College-based Studies?* Okahandja: NIED. pp. 31-34.

understood at the discursive level as an expression of a break with previous practices.⁴¹

Annotation: a basis for a counter-hegemonic reform

It was a combination of factors that created a basis for a counter-hegemonic force in the teacher education reform in Namibia. First, it was the expressed will to accomplish change amongst the political leadership in education as well as the majority of practitioners.

One of the fundamental factors was the political pressure at that point in time. Everybody wanted something new. People didn't know what but they wanted something new. SWAPO came into power with a lot of promises. It was the strong political will of the minister to push ahead.⁴²

Secondly, it was the practical encounters in teacher education that preceded the reform and started as a counter-hegemonic process already before independence. Thirdly, it was the conscious placement of the reform within an internationally acknowledged orientation presented in this chapter. These factors transformed the previous liberating intentions of education during the struggle into a national agenda under the slogans of education for all and learner-centred education. This agenda placed the new national teacher education programme, the BETD, at the hermeneutic, reconstructive and transformative end of the international teacher education spectrum as a counter-force against the prevailing practices with their traits of the rationalist, behavioural skills-training and academic modernisation tradition embedded in the ritualised coulisse-school.

⁴¹ The effects of learner-centred education on classroom level have been addressed by Shinyemba, D. N. (1999) *Learner-Centred Education: Development of Teacher's Concepts and Practice of Teaching in the Context of Namibian School Reform*. Unpublished MEd thesis. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University; Storeng, M. (2001) *Giving Learners a Chance. Learner-Centredness in the Reform of Namibian Teaching*. Stockholm: Institute of International Education.

⁴² Interview M1, 2001.

The BETD became the strongest challenge to the status quo and the prevailing common sense about education. Therefore, it also became the most discussed part of the education reforms in the country and a symbol of the attempts to create a counter-hegemonic reform. The situational conditions for the different actors in the war of position over the preferential right of interpretation are attended to in chapter seven.

