

## Chapter Nine

### **Altering programme imprints**

The national reform framework that was established through the steering documents had its practical equivalence in programme imprints. *Critical Practitioner Inquiry* was introduced as an attempt to break with the traditional model of theory-into-practice and as a way to enhance students' analytical skills related to their own practice.<sup>1</sup> *School-based Studies* was introduced as a way to broaden students' relationship with practice and to include reflective practice as an integrated part of professional training. And finally, different *assessment* practices were introduced that would carry the BETD further away from the rigid control and selection mechanisms exercised through the assessment practices followed earlier in Namibia.

These programme imprints were reflected in the work of TERP both through its initiatives and the 'support themes' in the Plans of Operation for the project.<sup>2</sup> These programme imprints also became contested areas in the reform discourse and subject to the war of position over teacher education. From a counter-hegemonic perspective they became the means to redefine practice in teacher education. From the hegemonic perspective they became a threat to mainstream common sense and therefore subject to a different redefining process that tried to shuffle the new ideas on to the old pre-independence educational terrain.

---

<sup>1</sup> The concept *theory-into-practice* is from Elliott, J. and Ebbutt, D. (2000) Practice-based inquiry as a capacity-building strategy in a distance-learning context: The problems and potentials. In Dahlström (ed) (2000:a) op. cit. 39 - 50.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 7.

### **From theory-into-practice to critical practitioner inquiry**

*Critical Practitioner Inquiry* (CPI) became an umbrella concept. It attempted to develop a different view on the relation between educational practice and inquiry within teacher education in Namibia.

Historically, an approach that suited the maintenance of the ritualised coulisse-school had been applied in teacher education. It meant that teacher education was a matter of learning piece-meal study guides by heart and to reproduce this information in two ways. During training it was a matter of reproducing facts during test and examination sessions. After training it was to reproduce these piece-meal abstract, so-called theoretical texts, into practice. This was a tradition based on “religious metaphysics and Anglo-Saxon empiricism” according to Callewaert.<sup>3</sup> Through this process academics (traditional intellectuals) manifested their dominance and preferential right of interpretation over the teachers and their practice. It was in this educational climate that CPI was introduced.<sup>4</sup>

CPI was a concept developed and used in the education sector in Namibia to establish a new relation between educational practice and inquiry. It

- attempted to break with the common reductionist view that educational practice was applied theory.
- challenged the preferential right of interpretation which academics had assigned to themselves over educational practice.
- acknowledged the development of theories *about* practice as an academic area in its own right, but did not recognise the reduction of

---

<sup>3</sup> Callewaert (1999) op. cit. p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> Other concepts like school projects and action research were used before and in parallel with the term Critical Practitioner Inquiry that was coined in 1995. Meyer has carried out a thorough analysis of different perspectives on action research and related concepts within a social reconstructive paradigm with reference to Namibia. See Meyer, H.M. (2000) *Creating A Namibian Definition of Action Research: A Case Study from One Namibian College of Education*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

these theories to technical dogma that practitioners were expected to follow.

- supported the development of a theory *of* practice based on practitioner inquiry.
- supported the documentation of accounts of educational change, which collectively contributed to a written knowledge base of education.<sup>5</sup>

Critical Practitioner Inquiry was characterised as a planned intervention by practitioners into their own practice. It followed a critical research approach including contextual and situational inquiries as preparation for practical interventions and further inquiries. Along with these inquiries, practitioners were expected to develop their inquiry skills by adopting different ways to carry out inquiries and analysis. An important aspect of this approach was to make the inquiries available to other practitioners and to other communities. This represented an attempt to develop a written knowledge base of education that acknowledged practitioner inquiry as a basis for the development of systematic knowledge of practice for social change.

The introduction of CPI in the teacher education reform could be traced back to the experiences of the transition period of 1986 - 1992.<sup>6</sup> There were two features that in combination affected what later developed into CPI. One was that teacher education should respond to the constant lack of relevant learning material and, second that it should contribute, as an emancipatory feature, of its own intellectual and material base. At an early stage, student teachers were introduced to the view that they themselves should be involved in productive activities beyond what is

---

<sup>5</sup> This is based on a display at a Sida/SAREC Conference titled *Development of National Research Capacity*, 6-7 June, 2000, at Aula Nordica, Umeå University. The conference included representatives from Namibia. The display was based on material developed at the National Institute for Education Development (NIED) in 1998 and a TERP document. See Dahlström, L. (ed) (1998) op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Five, pp. 91 - 109.

normally the case, when student teachers produce merely for the teacher educator's eyes.<sup>7</sup> The other feature was that each student should carry out a piece of individual development work that was called a school project. Most of these school projects addressed classroom issues. Some developed beyond the classroom like building a school toilet. All school projects ended up in a written report that was presented and discussed in a public seminar. When the national teacher education reform started, these experiences were brought into the reform as relevant experiences made by both Namibians and some of the staff employed by TERP.<sup>8</sup> These experiences contributed to an application of critical practitioner inquiry practices in different ways adapted to the situation at hand.

In the BETD pre-service programme CPI was called Critical Inquiry (CI). The BETD In-service programme developed Practice-Based Inquiry (PBI) as an adapted form for in-service training of teachers.<sup>9</sup> In post-graduate courses for teacher educators the CPI concept was used in connection with research at Higher Diploma and Master levels. Here the discussion is limited to Critical Inquiry in the BETD pre-service programme.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> See the following for a range of examples. Dahlström, L. (1999:b) Critical Practitioner Inquiry and Teacher Education in Namibia: The First Attempts to Build a Critical Knowledge Base of Education. *Perspectives in Education*, Volume 18. No. 1. 81 - 97.

<sup>8</sup> Another factor that boosted these developments was the contacts that were established at an early stage with Tabachnick and Zeichner at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA and their involvement and broad experiences from teacher education and action research. Both Tabachnick and Zeichner became short-term consultants employed by Umeå University and worked on many occasions together with the permanent project staff in Namibia. Elliott and colleagues from the University of East Anglia became engaged at a later stage in our activities in Namibia.

<sup>9</sup> For an analysis of the application of CPI in the BETD in-service programme see Ebbutt and Elliott op. cit. Some of the material developed for the BETD in-service programme in Namibia can also be found at [www.uea.ac.uk/fdl/depts/edu/namibia](http://www.uea.ac.uk/fdl/depts/edu/namibia).

<sup>10</sup> CPI in the staff development courses is attended to under the heading 'Shaping institutional agency', p. 207 ff. A description of the other practices of Critical Practitioner Inquiry in the BETD in-service programme and staff development courses for teacher educators is found in Dahlström (1999:b) op. cit.

*Critical Inquiry* (CI) was identified as one of the eight professional themes in the BETD pre-service programme. The BETD Broad Curriculum stated that student teachers should develop "a critical inquiry approach into one's own practice and context".<sup>11</sup> In the foreword to the first publication of reports from BETD student teachers the role of critical inquiry was further emphasised.

Critical Inquiry is one of the professional themes in the BETD, which permeates the three years of study. Students are expected to develop a critical practitioner inquiry perspective during their studies, which will equip them with the necessary critical, proactive and democratic professional skills, and an extended professional understanding needed by teachers in the future.

Critical Inquiry is also running through the BETD as a 'methodological and pedagogic project' with focus on the learner, the learning environment, and educational practice for change and improvement.<sup>12</sup>

The methodological and pedagogic project started during the first year with observations focusing on individual learners in schools. This was carried out as an introduction to the subject or phase specialisation that the students had selected. It was also expected to create a basis for further studies in their subject areas as well as in the professional studies carried out in the subject area Education Theory and Practice (ETP). Second year students focused on learning environments and contextual issues affecting teaching and learning in basic education. The data from year 1 and 2 formed part of the basis for the students' major action research during year 3. The project was carried out as an integrated part of the students' SBS and was reported through seminars, in the students' SBS portfolios and other written reports.

---

<sup>11</sup> MHEVTST and MBEC (1998:a) op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Swarts, P, and Dahlström, L. (1998) Foreword. In National Institute for Educational Development and Colleges of Education (ed) *Critical Inquiry and Action Research in the BETD. A Collection of Reports from BETD III Students 1997*. i - ii. Okahandja: NIED. p. i.

Variations between colleges were observed within this general framework for Critical Inquiry. Meyer, a former employee of TERP, reported on internal development at one college where an initial allowance for broader community related action research reports of BETD III student teachers were later on "all confined to classroom issues".<sup>13</sup> The School-based Studies Handbook from OCE expressed Critical Inquiry in the BETD as "a three-year process of observation, data collection, reflection and action, which provides a bridge between college and school-based studies and forms an integral part of the BETD programme".<sup>14</sup>

The potential for critical practitioner inquiry as applied in the BETD pre-service programme was expressed by a Namibian teacher educator in her elaboration of the Namibian experience of inquiry and reflection.

...there is a need to build a bank of indigenous local knowledge in Namibian education. The pre-service teachers' reports are a beginning in that direction and although most of them may be described as amateurish, they contain much valuable information. Through their availability to a wider audience we hope that new insight will be shared, new theories will emerge and a better collective understanding of the forces underlying and shaping Namibian education will develop.<sup>15</sup>

Critical Inquiry in the BETD carried also a broader message to student teachers. It was a message of empowerment and rethinking of the construction of knowledge. Previously schooling and teacher training programmes in Namibia were part of the technocratic paradigm and Critical Inquiry became one of the challenges to this paradigm. An analysis of the twelve action research reports by BETD student teachers referred to above show that student teachers were able to carry out

---

<sup>13</sup> Meyer op. cit. p 319.

<sup>14</sup> Ongwediva College of Education (1999) SBS Handbook, BETD Years 2 and 3. Ongwediva: SBS Department. p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Mayumbelo, C. (1996) Inquiry and Reflection in the BETD: A Namibian Experience. *Reform Forum*. No. 4. Okahandja: NIED. 2 – 10. p. 8-9.

planned inquiries, to affect classroom practices, and to develop their own knowledge about practice.<sup>16</sup>

The case study reported by Meyer, looked into the student teachers' understanding of action research during their studies in the BETD programme. Meyer's thesis confirms the potential of Critical Inquiry in the BETD.

In interviews, the student teachers spoke highly of the power of action research. They felt personally empowered. They could solve problems. They felt action research was a powerful tool for national development. It could be used to evaluate change in schools and it created a Namibian knowledge base about schooling in Namibia.<sup>17</sup>

Meyer also acknowledged the conservative influences in the development of critical inquiry. She pointed to the tendency to limit the third year action research activities to a kind of hypothesis testing exercise of narrow classroom improvement through problem solving based on a tendency of problem identification through a deficiency perspective on learners. Very little critical thought about the student teachers' own assumptions were noted. This is all confirmed by the collection of reports published by NIED and Colleges of Education referred to above and needs to be thought about in the future, otherwise Critical Inquiry will be reduced to its technicalities.

A case study at a different college carried out by Mbamanovandu, another Namibian teacher educator, looked into attempts to develop a critical pedagogy in pre-service teacher education through Critical Practitioner Inquiry. Mbamanovandu confirmed the tendency to focus on the technical aspects of classroom improvements and report writing at the expense of the critical aspects related to student teachers' underlying

---

<sup>16</sup> NIED and Colleges of Education op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Meyer op. cit. p. 322.

assumptions and considerations of ethical, moral, and political principles in education.<sup>18</sup>

Another aspect of Critical Inquiry was its function as a professional theme permeating the practices of the teacher education programme beyond its development into a methodological and pedagogical project. There was evidence that student teachers in the BETD programme develop a reconceptualisation of teaching and learning, a consciousness of their own thinking, and reflective teaching practices.<sup>19</sup> These broad aspects could be further developed through a more integrated view of Critical Inquiry as a professional theme in the BETD programme.

A final note: Student teachers were able to carry out classroom inquiries and to act on the results of these inquiries to broaden their knowledge and understanding about schooling, and to improve their own practice. This is a long way from what happened in teacher education just a few years ago before the reform started. At that time concepts like practitioner inquiry and students' construction of knowledge were alien to both the educational discourses and practices in Namibia.

Critical Inquiry as it was introduced in the BETD programme was closely linked to another central feature of the programme, i.e. School-based Studies.

### **From teaching practice to school-based studies**

Before the reform started and during its initial stage 'teaching practice', alternatively called 'practice teaching', were the concepts used to describe the relation between pre-service teacher education and schools. Practicum

---

<sup>18</sup> Mbamanovandu, E. T. (2000) Critical Practitioner Inquiry: An analysis of some of the attempts to establish a critical pedagogy in pre-service teacher education in Namibia. A case study. Unpublished Master Thesis. Okahandja: National Institute for Educational Development, Okahandja and Department of Education, Umeå University.

<sup>19</sup> Andersson, S. B. and Murangi, V. K. (1997) *National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma: Professional Issues*. Okahandja: National Institute for Educational Development; Swarts (1998) op. cit.

was used as a collective concept for all practical parts of teacher education. The concept School-based Studies (SBS) was introduced in 1992, when the first draft versions of the Broad Curriculum were produced.<sup>20</sup> It was stated that SBS was to be organised in "a progression of a three week period of project work and field studies in Term 3, six weeks group practice in Term 6, and individual practice for the whole of Term 8 (13 weeks)".<sup>21</sup> This was in contrast to the previous pre-service programmes where teaching practice was normally minimised to two weeks per year.<sup>22</sup> In previous programmes it could also happen that teaching practice was abandoned all together, because time was needed for the 'basics'.<sup>23</sup> The SBS Handbook from OCE summarises SBS in the following way:

School-based Studies (SBS) in the BETD programme is more than "teaching practice". Besides teaching in the classroom, the students are expected to produce teaching and learning materials; carry out a learner study and classroom observations; explore the school administrative system; learn about rules and regulations, registers and records; practise remedial teaching, counselling and vocational guidance; arrange parents meetings; and take initiative for different school development projects.<sup>24</sup>

SBS in the BETD was further elaborated in the final version of the Broad Curriculum. Its relationship to other parts of the programme was explained.

---

<sup>20</sup> See for example Ministry of Education and Culture (1992) *The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma*. October, 1992. Windhoek: MEC.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> This was communicated to the author before the reform started. The reference to 'basics' was a way to say that the time was needed for subject content at the college.

<sup>24</sup> OCE (1999) *op. cit.* p. 4.

School-Based Studies in Year 1 will be an introductory project which is shared between Education Theory and Practice and the major option. As far as possible, School-Based Studies in Years 2 and 3 should include community-orientated activities, e.g. parental involvement in school, and parents' meetings.

School-Based Studies is integrated in Education Theory and Practice and in the major and minor subject specialisations. The minimum number of periods is a framework to be shared between subjects, beginning with observation in Year 1 and building up to a full independent teaching load by the end of School-Based Studies in Year 3.<sup>25</sup>

It was also stipulated that the SBS should be organised through a co-operation between the college and a selected number of what was described as partnership schools. It should also follow a whole school approach over a number of years based on a suggested contractual agreement between the college and the school. This system was based on the belief that student teachers needed ample opportunity to relate their initial practical understanding to an informed contextual analysis created and supported through teacher education. This could only be provided under prolonged co-operative conditions between schools and colleges. The partnership approach was also seen as a way to broaden the teacher education reform by extending it to schools in a more systematic way. By reducing the number of schools involved the partnership approach was also a response to the logistical problem of transporting groups of student teachers to scattered schools on a daily basis.<sup>26</sup>

Each college developed its own SBS Manual/Handbook for students. The SBS Handbook elaborated further on the local conditions and was revised continuously as conditions changed from year to year. The Handbook became the document that created a formal basis for the student teachers' SBS as well as the partnership arrangements between schools and colleges. It also informed all stakeholders about these

---

<sup>25</sup> MHEVTST and MBEC (1998:a) op cit. p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Dahlström (2000) op. cit.; OCE (1996) op. cit.

arrangements, including regional offices, inspectors, school and college staff. The Handbook usually included a description of SBS in the BETD and the reasons for the partnership system with reference to the appraisal process and information about the national policy and relevant instructions from NIED. The partnership system was further elaborated with respect to the schools involved, the role and training of support teachers, and the administrative infrastructure. The Handbook also included guidelines about the student teachers' tasks during SBS, assessment, and reporting.

A comparative analysis of SBS Handbooks from 1996 and 1999 showed changed emphases.<sup>27</sup> The 1999 Handbook showed more structured and focused information about the different components of SBS. It also contained more clear and guiding instructions concerning the assessment and evaluation procedures, including band descriptors for the assessment of the student teachers' teaching skills and performances in year 2 and 3 of the programme. It also gave thorough instructions to the students' collection of evidence in their portfolios over the School-based Studies in year 2 and 3. The significance of the portfolios in the BETD programme was further emphasised as they turned out, from 1995, to be an important source of information for both the annual external moderation of the BETD programme and for the BETD III student teachers' performances.<sup>28</sup>

Findings from the National evaluation of the BETD showed that at an early stage in the reform process a majority of both teacher educators (86%) and student teachers (84%) had a positive attitude towards SBS. It also demonstrated that discrepancies were found between the intentions with School-Based Studies and their practical application, between the

---

<sup>27</sup> This comparative analysis is based on the SBS Handbooks from OCE. OCE (1996) op. cit.; OCE (1998) op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> See pp. 230 - 231 for an analysis of the annual monitoring and moderation exercises and its role in the controversies over the BETD programme.

attitudes of teacher educators and student teachers, as well as between different colleges.<sup>29</sup>

One of the first groups of BETD students were encouraged to report about their experiences from SBS in the Reform Forum, the journal for educational reform in Namibia, published by NIED.<sup>30</sup> This report included a catalogue of deficiency problems related to overcrowded classes, misbehaving children, shy girls, lazy teachers, corporal punishment, lack of proper English lessons, and bad management styles. The student teachers also made a list of what they had learned from SBS. This was related to different teaching methods including creative classroom activities, co-operative attitudes and positive behaviours amongst teachers, the strong interest amongst both teachers and learners in the English language, and good relations between the school and the community. Student teachers also emphasised that there was a need to improve the preparations for SBS at the college.

Reimers, a teacher educator involved with SBS at one of the colleges, concluded that SBS had been successfully implemented despite some initial scepticism and that the partnership model was beneficial to the college as well as schools involved. Reimers further concluded that student teachers regarded the new assessment approach as more realistic and conducive to their development.<sup>31</sup>

The level of performance of student teachers during SBS was in most instances acceptable to the moderation teams and in line with the broad curriculum as indicated in the annual moderation reports during the period 1995-1998.<sup>32</sup> The moderators also reported successful learner-

---

<sup>29</sup> Frykholm (1997) op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> BETD Students (1994) We have learned new ideas for school-based studies. *Reform Forum*, No. 1. National Institute for Educational Development. 25 - 27.

<sup>31</sup> Reimers, G. (1998) School-based studies as part of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma in Namibia. *Reform Forum*, No. 7. National Institute for Educational Development. 8 - 12.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1995) Report: Moderation of BETD III. Okahandja: NIED; Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1996) Report: Moderation

centred teaching. It should be noted that observations by moderators were based on selected student teachers representing different levels of achievements. From this followed that the moderators were confronted with all kinds of performances, i.e. even the weakest. Weaknesses were noted in the absence of student teachers' self-reflection after lessons taught, absence of developed questioning techniques, teaching that could rarely be described as learner-centred, problems with subject contents especially in Mathematics and Natural Sciences in junior secondary grades, and the narrow scope of critical inquiry reports. A notable change occurred in the 1998 moderation where it was noted that the moderators focused their exercise around the professional themes of the BETD programme. In that way the broad professional aspects of teacher education came to the fore.

The partnership relation between colleges and schools successively improved over the years. One such area was the preparations and training of support teachers. Each college developed its own model with the effect that the partnership relations existed at different levels. There was an attempt at an early stage in the reform process to develop a more formalised and nationally accredited training programme for support teachers.<sup>33</sup> These ideas followed a strategy to establish school-based teacher educators as an attempt to create a cadre of practitioners in schools who were prepared for their specific role as support teachers. Such a system could create a more equal and dynamic partnership relation between colleges and schools, and be developed into a recruitment base for

---

of BETD III. Okahandja: NIED; Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1997)  
Report: Moderation of BETD III. Okahandja: NIED. Ministry of Higher Education,  
Vocational Training, Science and Technology and Ministry of Basic Education (1998:b)  
Report: Moderation of BETD III. Okahandja: NIED.

<sup>33</sup> TERP assisted in the development of a curriculum for the training of support teachers. This curriculum was never implemented. Ministry of Education and Culture (1994:c) Curriculum for a Proposed Course in the Theory and Methods of School-based Teacher Education. Windhoek: MEC. Draft Document.

teacher educators at the colleges. However, these ideas were never developed in a systematic way.

### **From assessment as control to assessment for development**

Assessment was at the core of the whole reform process more than anything else. It also became the area for the prolonged war of position between the hegemonic power and the new view on assessment.

A new assessment policy followed with the new educational ideas. Education was not seen as a process to weed out the failures, but to educate a larger portion of the population under the banner *education for all*.<sup>34</sup> This called for a different assessment and examination emphasis geared towards ideas such as continuous and portfolio assessment for diagnostic purposes, as opposed to the previous examination-oriented assessment policy designed for exclusion.

We need to re-educate ourselves in this regard...our commitment to education for all requires us to re-think what we have been taking for granted...And we need to show them [students and parents] that we are improving the quality of our education system, not lowering its standards.<sup>35</sup>

The assessment guidelines were given due attention in the Broad Curriculum all through the reform process as indicated in the different versions from 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> See previous pages under the heading 'Education for All - the Namibian way', pp. 120 – 124.

<sup>35</sup> MEC (1993:a) op. cit. p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Education and Culture (1992) op. cit., pp. 21-25.; Ministry of Education and Culture (1994:b) The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma. June. Windhoek: Namibia. pp. 16-22.; Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology and National Institute for Educational Development (1996) The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma. January. Okahandja: NIED. pp. 13-19; MHEVTST and MBEC (1998:a) op. cit. pp. 17-22. It should be noted that all versions of the Broad Curriculum before the one from 1998 were draft versions. These versions were used during certain periods as temporary guiding documents by the colleges.

Concerns over the assessment procedures in the BETD programme surfaced during the data collections for the pre-study of the national evaluation in 1993.

The most controversial part of the programme seemed to be the assessment and evaluation system, where there were different opinions. Some liked the new system with continuous assessment. They also recognised the problems, risks for subjectivity, that the system can be abused, etc., but thought they would be able to handle these problems. Other expressed more of a "wait-and-see" attitude. One respondent rejected the new system in favour of an external examination system. Everyone is in agreement with one thing: that the guidelines were received too late.<sup>37</sup>

The negative attitudes of the assessment policy often appeared in the official discourse about the BETD programme. Teacher educators as well as student teachers often showed a more balanced and positive attitude in the beginning of the reform process in 1993 and 1994. There was however already at this stage a marked difference between the attitudes of teacher educators at WCE, who were more negative to the new system, compared to their colleagues at the northern colleges. The same differences were observed in interviews in 1995 with teacher educators.<sup>38</sup>

Parallel to the continuation of the reform process the discourse about assessment changed rather dramatically especially amongst student teachers. From having shown positive interests in the new assessment policy, seen as a symbolic effort to leave the previous practices behind, assessment turned out to be perceived as the main obstacle for the climbing of the societal ladder. This became accentuated when graduates realised that the BETD diploma did not give them any recognition when they

---

<sup>37</sup> Dahlström, L., Frykholm, C-U and Åsemar, C. (1998) National Evaluation of the BETD Programme: Pre-study - Experiences of and attitudes towards the BETD programme. In Åsemar, C (1998) *National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma BETD 1994 - 1996, Evaluation Plan and Pre-study*. Windhoek: NIED and MEC. Revised edition.

<sup>38</sup> Frykholm (1997) op. cit.

applied for BEd studies geared towards senior secondary education.<sup>39</sup> The main reason for this was that UNAM did not want to acknowledge three years of studies at graduate level that did not, according to them, followed a proper examination system. This situation was further aggravated as the raising of a person's salary level followed his/her academic credentials. The strong relationship between salary and further studies meant that a BETD graduate could raise his/her salary significantly through post-BETD diplomas and degrees. Thus, the ideological struggle over teacher education between the ministries and colleges on one side and UNAM on the other led, through new alliances, to calls for a return to a more examination-oriented approach.

The struggle in the official discourse over the BETD programme was at its height during the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training that was in operation during the period March - October, 1999.<sup>40</sup> The commission traced the main complaints from members of the public about the BETD to the poor quality of work done in many of the primary schools. However, the Commission did not carry out any deep analysis of such relations beyond stating that BETD graduates might have found a milieu in schools that was hostile to the implementation of their newly acquired teaching skills.<sup>41</sup> A deeper analysis would have acknowledged that the number of teachers graduated from the BETD programme still constituted a very small portion of the total teaching corps at that time. The total number of teachers in Namibia was 17 085 in 1998 and the four colleges had contributed with a maximum of 1 125 BETD graduates (i.e. 6,5 %) since its inception. This

---

<sup>39</sup> BETD students received a government scholarship that in principle gave them a free education to become basic education teachers. However, graduates were bonded and had to work for the government for three years after graduation. Therefore, many BETD graduates took up part-time studies after graduation parallel with their work as teachers. This had the effect that the problem with accreditation soon surfaced as a major problem as from 1996.

<sup>40</sup> Government of the Republic of Namibia (1999) op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

small portion of BETD graduates could neither be blamed nor praised for the quality of basic education.<sup>42</sup>

The Commission further pointed out the inconsistency in placing a high value on the process of teaching learners how to learn while continuing to place the greatest importance on the outcome of traditional examinations as a plausible reason for the lack of quality in schools. The Commission also stated that analysis of this inconsistency had not received the attention it deserved.

Historically, the assessment and evaluation guidelines in the 1992 and 1994 versions of the BETD Broad Curriculum were the same with only marginal editorial differences. In the 1996 version the assessment guidelines were more or less still the same but were separated from evaluation and received their own headings. It was not until 1998 that major changes took place in the assessment guidelines for the BETD programme. A representative way to compare the 1998 version of the Broad Curriculum with the previous ones is to look at the headings, sub-headings and concepts highlighted in the text.<sup>43</sup>

The most notable difference was that the catchword for the introduction of the new assessment policy, *continuous assessment*, disappeared not only as a heading, but also as a concept, in the final and approved Broad Curriculum of 1998. The focus was shifted to *criterion-referenced assessment* as a way to assess the student teachers' achievements in relation to the professional themes and competencies. In previous versions criteria were only mentioned in connection with the different grades that were specified in the subject area syllabuses. These criteria were to be related to the three main areas of (1) personal growth and professional development; (2) subject knowledge, understanding and

---

<sup>42</sup> Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1999) *1998 Education Statistics*. Windhoek: Education Management Information Systems (EMIS); Data collected from colleges by the author.

<sup>43</sup> See Table 17, Appendix 14.

skills; and (3) application to school-based activities. Criteria got a far more central role in the 1998 version.

Assessment in the BETD is criterion-referenced. This form of assessment is used to measure each student's personal and professional growth against a set of explicit criteria developed for each competency and professional theme.<sup>44</sup>

The way instructions were written under the heading *Assessment for formative purposes* indicated that learning tasks had to be accompanied with criteria "by which the achievement of the competencies will be measured" and that these had to be "made explicit to the students before they begin the task".<sup>45</sup>

Under the heading *Assessment for summative purposes* explicit criteria were identified as a means to provide a summative description of the student's performance and progress within a subject area or across subject areas at the end of a teaching unit or a term.

What were the reasons for a fundamental shift in emphasis from a general policy-related description of intentions to a rather technical description centred around the expression 'explicit criteria'? A possible answer is that it could be seen as a way to meet the calls for a return to the pre-reform examination practices through a more elaborated criteria-referenced assessment without accepting a conservative turn in full.

The whole issue of assessment and control did affect the expected result of the teacher education reform since these issues re-entered the reform arena as a backlash from basic education.

---

<sup>44</sup> MHEVTST and MBEC (1998:a) op. cit. p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

We are talking about education for all and learner-centred education but it is actually false. The examination and assessment system negates and destroys all the nice things we want to achieve. It is not education for all when you have these examinations that sort out and discriminate against people in the way they do. This was the negative spin off of teacher education because these things were not dealt with in basic education. Our colleges now claim that they must go back to examination because this is what is happening in the schools.<sup>46</sup>

Shilongo, a Namibian teacher educator, concludes in her study of the assessment system of the BETD programme that examination systems and academic achievements in any society are closely linked to the social stratification of the very same society. The educational history of Namibia is a good example of this conclusion. Shilongo also adhered to the view that the assessment system of the BETD programme originally was an expression of an attempt to support the upward movement of lower strata in society.<sup>47</sup>

**Annotation: forces at work at programme level**

Three selected aspects of the BETD programme have been used to look into its programmatic imprints. Both Critical Inquiry and School-based Studies challenged the previous theory-into-practice model. Continuous assessment and other assessment models like portfolio assessment challenged the view of assessment as a tool for selection and the weeding out of failure.

Critical Inquiry became an established concept in teacher education in Namibia. It became foremost acknowledged in connection with the students' analysis of their own practice and action research in the third year of studies. Setbacks were related to the tendencies of transforming

---

<sup>46</sup> Interview F1, 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Shilongo, E. (2000) *Tension and Anxiety in Assessing Students: The Case of the BETD Course*. Unpublished Master Thesis. Okahandja: National Institute for Educational Development and Department of Education, Umeå University.

critical inquiry to fit the mainstream common sense about research through hypothesis testing and a deficiency perspective on learners.

School-based Studies was another contested imprint. The prominent position of SBS in the programme moved the focus of teacher education closer to its central object of study, i.e. schools and classrooms in basic education. It was in combination with Critical Inquiry and the partnership system that SBS became part of the move away from the theory-into-practice model and towards a social reconstructivist model of education. Problems identified in relation to SBS were in most cases of administrative and practical kinds. The full potentials of SBS were not developed with the effect that restrictions were called for.

Assessment became the hottest issue in the BETD. Issues like critical inquiry and school-based studies did not surface in the same way in the official discourse. Much of the previous education policy had been operationalised through its assessment policy and as the reform proceeded it turned out that the tail continued to wag the dog, i.e. assessment became the focus of the reform. Assessment in the BETD started off with broad goals that were connected with professional judgement. It was soon drawn back into the control and differentiation thinking as an effect of the drawbacks in the war of position over the preferential right of interpretation mainly due to the urging tendencies of upward social movements through certification.

People are too worried about a situation where you have open-ended results, because of the past. In a way people think that you need to measure in what areas people grow and I think that is the major problem. There is a kind of process of infiltration of old thinking that is eroding the system in different ways. One crucial issue is the whole assessment policy because it is central to the mindset of people in Namibia, because of the historical context.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Interview M2, 2001.

The official discourse about teacher education reform and the BETD programme in particular became to a large extent centred around assessment both as an integrated matter of the programme and as a backlash from the ‘false reform’ in basic education. As such, the hegemonic thinking of the past shuffled the new assessment policy on to a neo-conservative terrain disguised as criterion-referenced assessment. Assessment was a well-known concern related to common sense. It was also the means through which the climbing of the social ladder towards modernisation was accomplished.

The prominent position of assessment came from its implications for stratification beyond the classroom. Critical inquiry and school-based studies were not perceived as educational issues with the same social potentials and implications beyond the classroom. These practices were more of an internal interest for teacher education, even though still contested.

Good practices in critical inquiry and school-based studies became part of the counter-hegemonic efforts connected to the BETD programme and the colleges. It contributed therefore indirectly to the shaping of the institutional capacity and the role of the colleges as tertiary institutions that is attended to in next chapter.

