

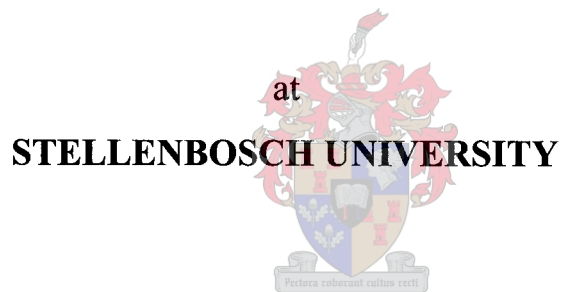
**EXPLORING EDUCATION POLICY TRANSFORMATION IN
NAMIBIA IN TERMS OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE**

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(Education Policy Studies)



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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted it at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

One of the major features of educational transformation in Namibia revolves around the democratisation of education. However, despite various endeavours by the government to transform the education system in an effort to provide quality education, there remain many challenges to the delivery of urgently needed quality education. This thesis seeks to explore how democratic education can possibly contribute towards eliminating identified challenges. My contention is that the promulgation of the education policy document “Toward Education for All” of 1993 was meant to bring about changes in the Namibian education system. However, the promulgation of this policy does not imply the effective implementation thereof.

KEYWORDS: Education policy, transformation, democratic change, curriculum change, teacher education, democratic participation, quality education.

OPSOMMING

Een van die belangrikste kenmerke van onderwystransformasie in Namibië is die demokratisering van die onderwys. Ten spyte van verskeie pogings deur die regering om die onderwysstelsel te transformeer in 'n poging om gehalteonderwys te verseker, is daar steeds baie uitdagings met betrekking tot die lewering van dringend nodige gehalteonderwys. Hierdie tesis ondersoek hoe demokratiese onderwys moontlik daartoe kan bydra om die uitdagings soos geïdentifiseer die hoof te bied. Die skrywer is daarvan oortuig dat daar met die bekendmaking van die onderwysbeleidsdokument, *Toward Education for All* (1993), bedoel word om veranderinge in die Namibiese onderwysstelsel teweeg te bring. Die openbaarmaking van hierdie beleid impliseer egter nie die effektiewe implementering daarvan nie.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Onderwysbeleid, transformasie, demokratiese verandering, kurrikulumverandering, opleiding van onderwysers, demokratiese deelname, gehalteonderwys.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NEED AND FORCES FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

1.1 Introduction

Prior to independence in 1990, education in Namibia was politically characterised by segregation and separate development. Schooling in general was a privilege reserved for a minority, and an education in Mathematics and Science was predominantly for Whites, who constitute a very small percentage of the population.¹ The former South African government with its policies of apartheid and colonialism advocated education for Black Namibian people² as a vocational utility intended to supply semi-skilled and unskilled labour. It is against this background that educational transformation was regarded as a matter of urgency, despite the fact that most Namibian people are sceptical about the process.

Since independence the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government has placed education at the top of its national priorities. It introduced the policy document "Toward Education for All" in 1993, with assistance from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). This policy document created the space for bringing about tremendous changes in the transformation of education for the Namibian nation. It translates the Namibian philosophy on education into concrete government policies. During the apartheid era schools used to make a dual selection by separating people on the basis of race and by an uneven allocation of resources. This policy document envisages transforming the former system from one that provided an education for the elite to one that provides "education for all" (Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), 1993: 2). One driving force of the liberation struggle was a call to establish new schools, more schools and better schools (MEC, 1993: 28). The liberation movement promised to bring an end to segregated schools. As a result a range of policies has been drawn up in a short space of time, and changes have been made such as the implementation of English as a

¹ The White population constituted three percent, compared to the Black population which represented ninety-seven percent.

² Ovambo, Kavango, Herero, Nama, Damara, Caprivi, San, and Coloured.

medium of instruction, the integration of schools, the policy on promotions, fair distribution of resources, the provision of new syllabuses and the provision of access to equal education.

The central question that can be asked is: why the need for educational transformation? A possible answer could be that transformation is geared towards the eradication of racial discrimination and the promotion of democracy (access, equity and equality) in Namibian schools. It is, therefore, my contention that educational transformation has at its foundation a deliberate movement towards the establishment of more democratic practices. With this in mind, this thesis explores whether the new education policies actually translate into more democratic practices at the implementation level.

1.2 Problem statement and focus

As the concept of democracy provides the backdrop to my reflection on access, equity and quality, it is important first to look at its meaning. Waghid (2000: 3) argues that there are several broad conceptions of democracy, including democracy as a representative system of political decision making, and democracy as a sphere for social and political life in which people may enjoy equal opportunities and are engaged in self-development, self-fulfilment and self-determination. The concept of democracy is an ideal to which many societies, groups and individuals around the world aspire and Namibia is no exception. The concept of democracy will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. My concern in this thesis is not with democracy as a political system *per se*, but rather with how democratic education can be a possible solution to address the identified educational problems in Namibia (which include lack of qualified or competent teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, poor physical facilities, higher learner-teacher ratios, and inequalities in the allocation of resources). In the next section I shall indicate why these are problems or challenges.

Firstly, soon after independence the Namibian government decided to phase out the existing South African teacher training programmes, such as the National Education Certificate, Education Certificate Primary and Lower Primary Teacher Certificate. At the same time the Namibian government with the assistance of the Swedish

government introduced the new teacher training programme called the Basic Teacher Education Diploma (BETD). This new programme was intended to eliminate or reduce the unfortunate heritage of the high number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers in the country. However, the new programme which the government perceives or claims to be more effective compared to former programmes still does not provide adequate training nor does it redress the inherited problems. The inadequate standard of the new programme in fact contributes to the pool of unqualified and under-qualified teachers (Meyer, 1998: 103). The training was rushed and the educators were incompetent. It thus failed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to cope in classrooms. In addition, the government introduced the new programme (BETD) without paying enough attention to training or preparing educators. This has added to a pool of teachers, principally in Grades 1-10 and principally in the northern regions of the country, who are defined as unqualified or under-qualified. Some of the teachers involved can improve their training and qualifications through the in-service training and pre-service teacher training programmes. But some of them are not eligible for entry into training at this level. These teachers lack the appropriate certificate or qualification which can allow them to further or improve their qualifications. They lack an appropriate knowledge base and the necessary competence in English (Meyer, 1998: 103; MEC, 1993: 75-76). Even though the standard of teacher training was raised, teachers are still less adequately trained. For instance, about thirty percent of primary school teachers in the centre and south of Namibia are reported as lacking a Grade 12 education. The figures for the four main northern regions (Ondangwa East and West, Kavango and Caprivi) range from fifty-five percent to seventy-five percent. In the centre and the south about twenty percent of primary school teachers are reported as lacking any specialised teacher training. For the same four northern regions, the figures range from thirty percent to sixty-four percent (Meyer, 1998: 106). These percentages rise sharply in the northern regions, reflecting the differential resources and standards of the apartheid system. The higher education institutions such as the University of Namibia (UNAM and the colleges) produce a few hundred teacher graduates per year for primary, junior secondary and senior secondary education. It is, however, unlikely that these institutions will be able to fulfil the need to replace the large number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers the Namibian system has identified.

Graduates from the higher education institutions (University of Namibia and colleges) are surprisingly incompetent and unproductive in terms of rendering effective, high-quality and sufficient work in the classroom. In other words, students at school and tertiary level are poorly trained. The majority of teachers cannot express themselves in English (Meyer, 1998: 103 & Wolfaardt, 2004: 369). The question can be asked: how will the government achieve the quality of education if teachers are still as inadequately trained as they were in the past? Yet the government insists it wants to ensure quality education in Namibian schools. The notion of what comprises quality education shall be addressed in Chapter 3.

I contend that the BETD programme, by pulling the country back to the past situation, does not seem to be alleviating the problem. It is an indication that teacher training institutions in Namibia are not yet able to produce competent teachers. In addition, many of the teachers who need retraining have not in fact completed Grades 10 and 12 (Meyer, 1998: 113). Namibia will for a considerable period still remain in a situation in which many teachers have an uncertain status. I shall clarify my position on Namibian teacher training in Chapter 4, where I shall show the impact of this situation on the education system.

Moreover, Namibia faces the problem of the scarcity or unavailability of well-qualified teachers in the fields of Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and English (MEC, 1993: 77). My own experience and observation has been that every year learners from different corners of the country demonstrate or stay away from classes because of the shortage of Science teachers. This seems to have become a habit for Namibian schools. According to “World Teach” (2004), Namibia now needs volunteer teachers more than ever before. World Teacher volunteers have served in posts in the fields of Mathematics and Science that otherwise would have remained vacant.

The severe shortage of skilled teachers coupled with the prevalence of inadequately qualified teachers result in poor-quality learner performance. This is a feature of, and a problem common in developing countries such as Namibia. This problem arises partially from the fact that little attention is devoted to – or no account at all is taken of future teacher requirements in anticipating socio-political and economic

development. The gravity of the situation is partially obscured by the fact that higher education institutions (universities and colleges) seem to be unable to produce well-skilled and qualified teachers in the field of science. Presently the Ministry of Education relies heavily on foreigners to assist in those fields where few or no well-qualified Namibian citizens are available to fill the posts (MEC, 1993: 75). Consequently, the results of national examinations are always poor. The Ministry of Education aims to take vigorous measures to remedy this situation. The question can be asked: how can democratic education help to address the problems of unskilled and under-qualified teachers?

Before considering the question in more detail, I shall clarify my position on two concepts: “unskilled” teachers and “under-qualified” teachers. In the Namibian context “unskilled” teachers refer to those teachers with Grade 10 and 12 (or less) and with no further teacher training beyond Grade 12. “Under-qualified” means teachers with less than the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) or its equivalent, or teachers with only Grade 10 plus some certified teacher training (Meyer, 1998: 114).

As I have clarified my position on these two concepts as they are interpreted in Namibia, I shall now return to the question of democratic education. In my view, democratic teacher training entails the education and training of prospective teachers. Those future teachers should take responsibility for educating learners. Teacher education programmes should focus on changing attitudes amongst teachers and learners who may resist democratic change. Therefore, training in democratic values should give educators and learners the chance to share experiences and reflect on those experiences, which can lead to a change in attitude. There should be mutual collaboration between supervising teachers in the schools and the institutional staff during teaching practices (Mannathako, 1998: 82).

To achieve democracy, educators and learners need to articulate a common vision, identify aims for democratic teaching and learning, as well as to develop and implement programmes to address them. This can be achieved by modelling diversity, critically analysing social inequality and engaging in social action through democratic teacher education curricula. Modelling diversity can mean encouraging learners to confront and appreciate racial and social class differences in their own classroom, as

well as in their communities. Prospective educators should acquire democratic problem-solving skills and develop conflict-resolution techniques for the classroom community through free and safe public debates, and to teach their learners to do the same (Moletsane, 1998: 91).

Moreover, to translate policy into practice, action research that examines and aims to improve on the actual classroom practices in teacher training programmes is important. Teacher training programmes based on democratic principles can only endure if institutions and individuals translate their formal statement of commitment into actual democratic teaching and learning. As stated earlier, democracy can succeed only if Namibian citizens participate fully in the maintenance as well as the transformation of the education system. If education training programmes do not succeed in inviting and enabling students to contribute to their own learning, democracy is bound to fail. Therefore, the training of teachers both at the start of their careers and in the form of in-service training should include developing the skills of participation and strategies for teaching those skills to school learners. If this is achieved, the path of democratisation may become very much easier in Namibian schools.

Secondly, the policies of racial discrimination have left a legacy of differential allocation of resources to different racial groups within the education system of Namibia. As a result, the Ministry of Education is facing the problem that some schools have well-trained teachers, extensive equipment and other resources, and relatively small classes. At the same time, other schools have classrooms that are overcrowded and poorly equipped (MEC, 1993: 19). In the four northern regions the situation is much worse. Their schools are much weaker than those of other areas – weaker in terms of learners' performance and because facilities are far less adequate. Good teaching and learning materials are scarce. This unfavourable situation hampers the teaching and learning activities.

Thirdly, the majority of schools in Namibia, especially in remote areas, are far from one another. Therefore, schools experience isolation not only because of the distances, but for many other reasons that shall be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. According to Fritz, John and Viv (2002: 3), the current situation is that teachers are

unable to share their ideas with others who are doing the same work or to benefit from the experience of their colleagues. They found that most teachers interpret and prepare their lessons and examinations in isolation year after year. This has led to an isolated individualism amongst teachers, because their training lacked the conceptual background and methodological underpinnings for collaboration. These problems arise out of an almost complete lack of knowledge or experience among teachers about how to negotiate, and how to develop the changing relationships between them on a basis of increased respect.

Consequently the interpretation of the syllabi seems to be a dilemma in most Namibian schools, since each teacher interprets her syllabus differently, prepares different schemes of work and sets different standards of examinations. It seems that scant attention has been paid to the question of inter-school relations. Therefore, Fritz *et al.* (2002: 3) posit that it is hardly surprising that the results in both Grade 10 and Grade 12 of the national examinations are always poor. I disagree with Fritz *et al.* on their interpretation of the notion of difference. I argue that difference is based on democratic principles. Teachers should have the right to prepare different schemes of work according to their understanding of the needs of learners. There should be some differences in teachers' activities. The differences in preparing schemes of work and interpretation of the syllabus could potentially encourage teachers to hold workshops and seminars, where teachers can present their ideas. In my view, it is less democratic to oblige teachers to eliminate differences in their teaching activities. Teachers have a different understanding of, and use different teaching approaches as to, the subject content. Moreover, they teach different learners with different abilities. For example, some learners have difficulties in learning (slow learners). Therefore, the teaching approach for such learners may not necessarily be the same as those of above average learners, otherwise slow learners may not understand the content of the subjects.

Furthermore, I view it as a strength for teachers to prepare schemes of work, interpret their syllabus differently and set different standards of examinations. Democracy is the mechanism by which diverse social needs and wants can be integrated and prioritised (Stewart, 1997: 4). In democratic schools these differences should be brought to the surface. Teachers find it difficult to deal with differences, therefore the necessity of having to learn to negotiate a way to consensus, to develop a working

relationship based on compromise, while admitting the inevitability of differences (Davies, 1984: 50). Democracy demands that the differences be confronted and talked through. A school striving towards democracy should be prepared and equipped to teach its pupils how to participate in democratic practices. According to Brynard (1996: 143), participation provides a mechanism to ensure the democratisation of the process of educational transformation. The point of participation is to encourage possible social co-operation and trust among different teachers on educational activities. Participation is useful for teachers to work together towards improving learners' performance.

Moreover, through participation educators will be able to share ideas. Waghid (2003: 83) states that democracy allows individuals and groups to live out their differences and at the same time creates the opportunity to share ideas. The sharing of ideas offers possibilities for all schools to consolidate inter-school relations. The sharing can take the form of, for example, better performing teachers in specific fields of study (Accounting, Business Economics and Economics) coming together and sharing ideas which can improve learners' performance. In this respect Waghid's idea of democracy as reflexive discourse is useful, in that democracy liberates thoughts and practices in a way that offers more choice, freedom and possibilities for emancipatory education. This is useful because many teachers throughout the participation process will be able to learn more, which will in turn enable them to improve on their method of teaching.

According to Ellis *et al.* (in Chamberlain, Diallo, & John, 1981: 17), the word democracy is used to justify actions both in support of and against the structural and physical violence of formal education, which was particularly virulent in pre-independence Namibia. The main challenge for Namibia at independence was to transform education into a democratic system with a reasonable quantity of collective and wide-ranging opinions about what democracy is (Avenstrup, 1998: 8). The National Ministry of Education viewed educational transformation as key to developing Namibian civil society and promoting the human and civil rights enshrined in the Namibian Constitution. The National Ministry of Education now claims that for the first time in Namibian history education reaches all people in the nation. Furthermore, educational transformation is used as the main vehicle for promoting democratic knowledge and practice (Avenstrup, 1998: 9).

All the proposed democratic education policy changes were completed within six years from 1991-1996. This led to rapid results, but to poor articulation of subject content between primary and secondary levels. The Ministry of Education seems to have lacked the kind of specific detailed planning that should form part of the 5-year plans, which could include, for example, a statement of the effective strategies to improve the schools' and learners' poor results, and a plan to equip or finance the formerly disadvantaged schools with relevant resources. The Ministry seems to have clear ideas of what kind of teachers it has to produce, but unfortunately it does not seem to have a clear idea of how many teachers should be produced³. According to a workshop for the Secondary Science Education for Development organised by the "World Bank Human Development Education Group" in April 2000, the low output at school level is making it difficult for tertiary institutions to enrol sufficient numbers of learners in all fields of study. In order to increase the enrolment figures, tertiary institutions have to lower the entrance requirements. I argue that the Ministry of Education will face the same problems (which include lack of qualified or competent teachers, poor physical facilities, higher learner-teacher ratios, and inequalities in resources allocation) for many years to come for various reasons, which I shall explore and analyse in the following chapters.

The purpose of this study is an attempt to show how democratic education has the potential to eliminate educational problems.

1.3 SCOPE OF STUDY

Before independence the education institutions in Namibia were in line with the education policy of apartheid, meaning that Blacks, Coloureds and Whites were forced to receive schooling in separate schools, underscoring the notion of separate development. Chamberlain *et al.* (1981: 12) state that the separation of authorities and the inequality of education were emphasised. In this chapter I shall, firstly, provide a short historical background to the need for transformation in education in Namibia as well as to the forces for change; and secondly, the way that the current government

³ Too many primary and social science teachers are trained, whilst there is less attention paid to secondary teachers in the fields of Science, Mathematics and English.

has attempted to change the education system and what progress has been made so far in terms of education policy transformation.

1.3.1 Pre-colonial education

The Wesleyan Missionary Society was the first missionary society to arrive in Namibia. Upon their arrival the Mission education training process was introduced into Namibian society in about 1805. The missionaries introduced industrial education for Black Namibians in order to meet the missionaries' and the settlers' needs for Black labour (Tjitendero, 1984: 7). The education and training were to impart certain skills such as reading the Bible and other Evangelical literature (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 2; Geingob, 1968: 219). I argue that the education system offered at that time was not designed to empower the nation, because people did not acquire any skills or were consequently not in a position themselves to enable the nation to acquire the necessary skills in terms of getting administrative jobs or the skills of communicating globally. The mission society worked amongst the Nama, Damara and Herero tribes until 1842. Thereafter the Wesleyan Missionary Society was replaced by the Rhenish Mission Society. The missionaries offered an education system similar to that of the Wesleyan missionaries (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 2).⁴

1.3.2 Colonial education

German missionary societies arrived after other missionaries, such as the Wesleyans, Rhenish and the Catholic missionaries which had worked in Namibian territory. During the period of German occupation (between 1884 and 1915) attempts were made to organise education for White children with the opening of the German *Realschule* in Windhoek (1909). By 1913 twenty schools for Whites (Germans and others) were made available all over the territory. School attendance for all White children within a distance of four kilometres from a school was made compulsory (Tjitendero, 1984: 3; Amukugo, 1993: 45). With regards to education for the Black population, the German mission was not interested in other educational objectives, apart from reading the Bible. The South West Africa Survey (1967: 109) and Geingob

⁴ The education and training were to impart certain skills such as reading the Bible and other Evangelical literature.

(1968: 213) express similar opinions when they state that most of the mission schools, including German schools, were established with the aim of enabling Blacks to study Bible reading and to write their own names. Apart from reading the Bible, the aims of the Germans were different when they introduced education for Black Namibians. The aim was to promote the “horse and rider” relationship between Blacks and Whites (Tjitendero, 1984: 7). All the missionary societies had almost the same attitude towards education in Namibia. The German administration ended during World War 1, after South African forces annexed Namibia in 1915.

1.3.3 Apartheid education

Namibia was colonised by South Africa from 1915-1990. In 1920 some organisation of educational services took place. When South Africa took over from the German missionaries, it introduced its own education system. The aim of the South African government was to promote the policy of segregation and, later, apartheid that was intended to minimise threats to White “supremacy” both in South Africa and Namibia (Tjitendero, 1984: 7). Moreover, the policy of apartheid was articulated by the nationalists in their election manifesto in 1947 as follows: in general terms their policy envisaged segregating the most important ethnic groups and sub-groups in their own areas, where every group would be enabled to develop into a self-sufficient unit. They endorsed the general principle of territorial segregation between the “Bantu” and the Whites (Tjitendero, 1984: 7). In addition, Bantu Education was a component part of the apartheid policy that was designed to foster and to inculcate a passive acceptance of racial inferiority among Black people, while accommodating the myth of White superiority. Apartheid is the ideological and legal basis for the inequalities in access to education and to culture, and interferes with scientific development and freedom of information (UNESCO, 1968: 15).

According to Article 15 of the manifesto of the Institute for South African Legislation, Black education is based on the principles of trusteeship, on inequality and segregation. Its purpose was to inculcate the White man’s view of life, especially those of the Afrikaner nation, which was the senior trustee (Tjitendero, 1984: 70). Moreover, education was compulsory for White children from the age of seven until the age of sixteen, but this was not applicable to Black children (Tjitendero, 1984: 8).

As a result, the majority of children selected for further education at higher education institutions were White, but fewer Blacks qualified for universities. Moreover, in 1948 the nationalists came to power in South Africa with a clearly defined policy of apartheid (Tjitendero, 1984: 4). The impact that this had on education in Namibia will be clarified in Chapter 3.

In the 1950s the question of education in Namibia was thoroughly re-examined by different Commissions, such as the Eiselen Commission⁵, the Van Zyl Commission⁶ and the Odendaal Commission⁷, which investigated Bantu education in Namibia. In their findings the commissions identified some shortcomings and recommendations were made. The findings and recommendations shall be discussed in Chapter 4. South Africa deliberately pursued its apartheid policy in all spheres. The apartheid policy was expanded into all educational activities. Education was implemented differently for Whites and Blacks in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction, financial provision and teacher training, as well as salaries. From this point I shall formulate an argument to substantiate this claim under the following relevant headings:

1.3.3.1 Curriculum

The inequalities were extended into the curriculum structure. The curriculum which the National Ministry of Education inherited from the previous administration is very distant from the lives and experience of most Namibians (MEC, 1993: 120). Avenstrup (1998: 11) states that the administration manipulated the curriculum structure as an attempt at system reproduction. Therefore, the curriculum structure for Black schools was rigid and the education practitioners, including the learners, did not have a say in it. Teachers were the centre of the process and learners were passive. Moreover, the curriculum was very narrow in its scope (MEC, 1993: 120-121). This implies that it was designed in such way that it was concerned with describing,

⁵ Bantu education was broadly conceived and it was organised in such a way as to provide schools with a definite Christian character. It was based on the three principles of guardianship, no levelling and segregation, as defined in the policy statement of the Institute of Christian National Education.

⁶ Black schools were still in the hands of the Missionaries and Afrikaans was the medium of instruction. The Commission recommended mission schools to be replaced by the communities and Bantu education syllabus to be introduced.

⁷ The education of the Whites should continue to be the responsibility of the South West African administration.

labelling and categorising. Learners spend time memorising what things are called and how their textbooks and teachers organise those names. It is not surprising to find people in Namibia who claim to be educated, but lack critical skills and knowledge. Learners mastered the knowledge only for examination purposes, which was the only form of assessment that was meant for achieving objectives (Avenstrup: 1998: 11; MEC, 1993: 121). The Secretary for Bantu Education stated that the Bantu education curriculum was geared to achieve the following objectives: Standard Two for literacy, Standard Six 'for a better class of labourer', Standard Eight for training teachers, nurses, and police; and Standard Ten for those who are to proceed to university for further education (Tjitendero, 1984: 14).

1.3.3.2 Medium of instruction

Regarding the language policy, Afrikaans was the effective lingua franca in Namibia. In secondary schools in all regions except Eastern Caprivi, where English was used, Afrikaans was introduced as the medium of instruction. Therefore, the emphasis was placed on teaching Afrikaans at the expense of the other indigenous languages for both political and administrative reasons. In addition, the quality of teaching Afrikaans was better than that for the other local languages or English, and the learning of Afrikaans had a higher priority than the learning of local languages. As a result, most Namibians considered Afrikaans as the language for the elite (Chamberlain *et al.*, 1981: 8; Tjitendero, 1984: 16). The content of education has also been seriously affected as a result of the fact that readers and textbooks were not always available in the mother-tongue of the learners (Tjitendero, 1984: 15).

1.3.3.3 School segregation

In the late 1980s schools in Namibia were still segregated and education for Blacks was consistently substandard. Even though there was plenty of space available in former White schools, Blacks were denied entry. As a consequence of this, Blacks were discouraged from accessing any form of schooling. A further indication of this was that under no circumstances were White children to be taught in the same classroom with Black children as they perceived Blacks as being inferior to them. During the apartheid era Black children were not considered worthy of education.

However, White children were privileged. Dr Verwoerd was the Minister of Native Affairs in South Africa during the early apartheid era. He stated the following during a debate in the House of Assembly: “When I have control of native education I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them - people who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for natives”. He continued by saying that there is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour (Ellis, 1984: 23; Tjitendero, 1984: 7).

1.3.3.4 Teacher/pupil ratio

Regarding the policy on teacher/pupil ratio, according to the study done by the United Nations Institute for Namibia, the teacher/pupil ratio in Black schools was higher than for White schools. Geingob (1968: 219) states that the official policy governing the teacher/pupil ratio in White schools was that a teacher should not under any circumstances have more than 15-25 children in his/her class, in order to enable the teacher to give greater individual attention to their learners and also to pay attention to problem children and the slow learners. In contrast, there was no limitation on the number of learners in Black classrooms. In many cases in Black schools a teacher had 100 children at a time in the class. As a result, Black teachers experienced difficulties in rendering effective quality teaching, and it was also difficult for them to pay attention to slow learners (Geingob, 1968: 219).

1.3.3.5 Teacher training

Moreover, teacher training and supply in Black communities was ineffective. The training which was offered had no link to specific subject areas within the country. Therefore, the standard of teaching in Black schools was inadequate. Another contentious issue was that legislation did not allow White teachers to teach in Black learners at primary school level. The majority of Black teachers were qualified to teach at primary schools and they were unlikely to express themselves in English or to teach it as a subject. Hence legislation forbade the use of Black teachers in White schools (Geingob, 1968: 219). Schooling for the Black communities was by no means easy, particularly when one reflects on the political situation at that time. It also

required great costs in terms of effort, will power and sacrifice. Parents together with their children experienced hard times. I remember from my school experience at a secondary school in the Kavango region that, if learners committed a minor offence, like forgetting their homework book or arriving late at school, that particular learner would get up to fifteen strokes on the back. After receiving the fifteen strokes the learner would be compelled to crawl on his/her knees to the front of the classroom. Such a school environment was not conducive to learning. Schools did not teach learners to deliberate, nor was there freedom of communication. The notion of no “freedom of communication” shall be clarified in Chapter 4. It is my considered view that in the past schools were like jails, learners were like prisoners and teachers were like prison wardens. The former authorities strongly believed that corporal punishment was the only method to maintain discipline in Black schools. Consequently, this practice contributed heavily towards the majority of learners not going to school (MEC, 1993: 132).

1.3.3.6 Financial provision

Tjitendero (1984: 7) points out that education in Namibia was structured on the basis of apartheid, the separate systems existed with huge gaps and inequalities between racial groups. The funding of schools was based on racial grounds. However, school fees were compulsory for Black children, while education was free for Whites and Coloureds (Chamberlain *et al.*, 1981: 11). According to a survey conducted by Chamberlain *et al.* in 1979 for the United Nations Institute for Namibia, education for Coloureds and Whites was fully underwritten by the former administration, while Blacks had to contribute financially. The majority of Black parents were unemployed, received low salaries and could not cater for their children’s education. Thus it was that if Black parents wanted their children to go to school, they had to work at mission stations to pay for their children’s education in terms of hard labour or cash. Consequently, only a few individuals had the opportunity to go to school and the majority of them were boys. Education for girls was actively discouraged (Tjitendero, 1984: 17).

Now that I have given some insight into how education policy under apartheid reinforced segregation, I move onto the post-apartheid era. Before exploring post-

apartheid education, I shall provide a glimpse into the government's envisioned educational transformation programmes. The existing administration and management structures for education in Namibia were specifically designed to strengthen and foster the apartheid policy. It is therefore important to consider the necessary administrative, management and organisational changes that should be introduced at the outset to meet the aspirations and needs of the Namibian people in a free and democratic society. These changes are imperative, for it would be wrong to assume that the needs of the Namibians will be met through the existing educational infrastructure with its history of suppression of the aspirations of Namibians to be free. Structural change in the administrative and management infrastructures will signify the achievement of the new objectives for the liberation, and do away with the former system under which total stratification of the Namibian society took place. Considerations of meaningful educational policy changes should be followed by significant structural changes responding to the policy directives. Experience from other African countries has shown that policy changes without accompanying structural changes do not lead to the achievement of the intended goals and objectives. Therefore, in independent Namibia it will be necessary to completely overhaul the administrative infrastructure to reflect the aspirations of Namibians; to provide equal educational opportunities to all people regardless of race, colour or creed; bring about efficiency in the education system; and to relate education to socio-political and economic development of the country as a whole. The core and diversified curricula will need radical changes in their content and structure. The establishing of a curriculum design and development centre for administering curriculum development activities through the country should be a priority (Tjitendero, 1984: 45).

1.3.4 POST-APARTHEID EDUCATION

In 1990 Namibia gained its independence. Soon after independence the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government took on the challenge to transform education, and it placed education at the top of its national priorities. In 1993 the government introduced the policy document "Toward Education for All". This policy document created the space for bringing about tremendous changes regarding the transformation of education in Namibia. I shall highlight some of the changes emphasised in this policy document to give a glimpse into the government's

envisioned educational reform programme. Firstly, this policy document envisages transforming the former system from being one providing an education for the elite to one that entails “education for all” (MEC, 1993: 3).

According to article 20 of the Namibian Constitution:

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

The restructuring of the education system consisted, among other things, of changing the ethnically based administrations into seven non-ethnic regional offices. The new education policy claims to ensure integration in schools in independent Namibia to avoid racial discrimination. The Ministry of Education attempts to expand education facilities for all children and to eradicate the backlog for learners who were previously denied access to education. It claims not to discriminate between children on the basis of their colour, race or ethnic group. Its purpose is to give every Namibian an equal opportunity to complete his/her primary education until a child reaches the age of sixteen (Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution).

Moreover, the Ministry of Education makes provision for needy learners (orphans, vulnerable children, and learners whose parents are not working) who cannot afford to qualify automatically for remission schemes (which exempt children from paying school fees). The Ministry claims that school fees should not be used to discourage some children from not going to school. Furthermore, the National Ministry of Education states that for those learners whose parents can afford school fees, the Ministry proposes a reasonable fee, which it could not disclose in its policy document. In addition, the school fees should not be a stumbling block for children to get access to schools or education (MEC, 1993: 33). Regarding the issue of the curriculum, the new National Ministry of Education developed a curriculum which included two examinations, namely the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) (Avenstrup, 1998: 12).

The Ministry of Education changed the education policy on teaching methods from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. The Ministry argues that a learner-centred approach is more appropriate in Namibian schools, since teachers should be the facilitators. The new education policy claims to create space that encourages teachers to use group work and teamwork to consolidate the new approach. Learners should at all times be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and they should be motivated by constant feedback and affirmation of their worth. The new policy posits that rote learning or memorisation should not be used or promoted as methods of teaching or learning in Namibian schools (MEC, 1993: 121).

I contend that our Namibian learners are still spoon-fed too much. By discouraging the use of rote learning and memorisation I believe the situation can improve. Rote learning or memorisation does not necessarily promote learners to become self-reliant and critical thinkers. My own experience is that when teachers use rote learning as a method of teaching, learners sit in the classroom like patients waiting for the nurses and doctors for treatment. They are passive and unable to make a contribution towards their own learning. It is my considered view that the teaching and learning methods in schools need to be transformed by letting the learners seek information out for themselves, with suggestions and help, of course, from the educators. Learners should read, experiment, express themselves in talking, in writing, and artwork. Educators should be primarily advisors, not just imparters of information in small doses. Learners should possess the knowledge for identifying, analysing and solving problems. Learners should develop self-confidence, and their own sense that they have the ability to contribute productively to their society to help it grow. Moreover, they should be active participants in their classrooms conversation, and in other school and social activities.

On the issue of medium of instruction, the new education policy on medium of instruction introduced English as a medium of instruction in all schools. This was announced in November 1991 and implementation was discussed at a National Conference in June 1992. English now enjoys the privilege of being considered by the majority of Namibians as the language of liberation and they are highly motivated to learn it.

Access - relates to the provision of education for all by expanding the school system and removing barriers that prevent children from going to school. It means not only getting children to school, but also making knowledge and understanding accessible to them. This means that what they will learn, as well as how they do it, has to be approached in such a way that all learners can develop as fully as possible, and achieve to the best of their ability. The Ministry of Education states “schools themselves can be barriers to learning. Rote learning and repetition can stifle curiosity. Unchallenged learners can become bored and bored learners lose motivation to follow and join in class activities. When teachers disrespect learners, learners come to have little respect for themselves. If we are to expand access to education that is meaningful to our young people and our country, we should be clear that our focus is on learning. Schooling without learning may lead to diplomas and certificates, but for many learners it leads to frustration and self doubt. Learning in schools or outside schools leads not only to the individual’s achievement, but also to self-reliance, self-confidence, and empowerment” (MEC, 1993: 34). The Ministry should make sure to expand capacity and increase the number of schools and classrooms to be sure that there are sufficient places for all Namibian children. The Ministry should also make sure that schools are adequately staffed.

Equity - reflects a commitment to allocate educational resources fairly throughout the nation. It means that learners are not only treated equally, but that where there is inequity, measures are taken to redress it. Particularly in terms of race, gender and social class there can be overt or covert prejudice, or bias or assumptions. It is not only a question of the teacher treating the learners equitably, but also bringing up the learners to treat each other in the same way. The MEC notes that “indeed, we cannot be sure that all learners have equal opportunities unless we have looked carefully at the outputs. For instance, do girls stop their schooling more than boys? Are completion rates systematically and consistently higher in some regions than in others? Are race and ethnicity visible in the examination results? Achieving equity in results is far more complex and difficult than achieving equality and access. But we shall have failed if we aim at anything else” (MEC, 1993: 37). The Ministry has to make sure that there are enough schools and classrooms for all children. Also, the allocation of resources should be fairly done. This means that all schools should benefit from the resources available.

Quality – quality refers to the provision of good education by supplying schools with well-prepared teachers and ensuring that the educators, advisory teachers and other officials strive to improve the system. It also means that the relevance, meaningfulness and reasonableness of the challenges in education are in the foreground. The curriculum, the teacher, materials and the learning environment should all be of a high standard. Those standards need to be defined so that the quality of education can be monitored and improved where necessary. The MEC states that “our challenge is to develop instructional strategies that make it possible for learners from varying backgrounds and with differing abilities all to progress. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that a learner-centred approach is so central to the education system we are creating. More than anything else, it is the teacher who structures the learning environment to the needs, interest, and abilities of the learners in their classes” (MEC, 1993: 39-40). It is my contention that teachers should be well prepared for the major responsibilities they carry. It is important that we help our teachers develop the expertise and skills that will enable them to stimulate learning. Their professional education should begin before they enter the classroom and continue during the course of their professional careers.

Democracy - means that education should be democratically structured, democracy should be taught and experienced, and the aim should be to promote a democratic society. The MEC states that “democracy must therefore not be simply a set of lessons in our schools but rather a central purpose of our education at all levels ... to teach about democracy, our teachers and our education system as a whole should practice democracy ... teachers should be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its masters or caretakers ... (MEC, 1993: 41-42). Dewey (1916/1985: 92) claims that democracy is dependent upon circumstances that allow all people to participate on equal terms in identifying and working toward their “shared common interest” within a localised community, while at the same time allowing for what he calls the “flexible readjustment of institutions within groups through productive interaction with other communities”. In this case teachers should not operate in isolation. Instead they should engage in group work themselves, participating in workshops and sharing advice with others. This is useful because many teachers throughout the participation process will be able to learn more, and

discover and experience many things, which will in turn enable them to improve on their method of teaching. This will improve the capabilities of incompetent teachers. Furthermore, I view democracy as entailing equal opportunity for all, in order that every learner may be able to develop to the highest possible stage his or her innate capacity, and thus contribute to the social wealth or culture the work of his/her own unique individuality. With this in mind, in the next chapters I shall seek to broaden my perspective by exploring further how democratic education can help to address the educational problems I have already alluded to.

Before concluding, I need to clarify my position on the type of analysis I shall employ in this study. Ham and Hill (in Van Wyk, 2004: 3) draw a distinction between “analysis *for* policy” and “analysis *of* policy”. “Analysis *for* policy” contributes to the formulation of policy and takes two forms: policy advocacy (which involves the making of specific policy recommendations) and information for policy (which provides policy makers with information and data relevant to policy formulation). “Analysis *of* policy” can also take two forms: analysis of policy determination and effects (which examines the processes and outcomes of policy), and analysis of policy content, (which examines the values, assumptions and social theories underpinning the policy). In this study the emphasis is on “analysis *of* policy” as opposed to “analysis *for* policy”.

1.5 SUMMARY

Policies for the transformation of education in Namibia place the focus on the eradication of racial discrimination and the promotion of four major goals: access, equity, quality and democracy. This Chapter provided a short historical background as well as describing the prevailing situation in the country. In addition, it has provided evidence of the need for education transformation and the purpose of change. The attention was focused on what will be explored, why it will be explored and the product (result) of such exploration. The boundaries within which the study will be conducted were indicated.

1.6 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

In order to explore educational policy transformation in Namibia during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, the following research plan has been adopted.

As chapter 1 provides the background to the need for transformation in education as well as the forces for change, in **Chapter 2** I shall discuss the research method and methodological framework of inquiry which I shall employ in this thesis. I shall attempt to give a description of the distinction between method and methodology. I shall also analyse the positivist, interpretive and critical theories in order to clarify their meanings in terms of their use in this thesis. I shall clarify my position on why I am attracted to critical theory as the appropriate methodology for this study. I shall clarify or give my own view for not employing positivist educational theory, which I do not consider adequate or appropriate as a methodology for this study.

Chapter 3 provides a conceptual analysis of the notion of educational transformation. I shall attempt to construct meanings of educational transformation. I explore constitutive meanings of educational transformation with reference to curriculum change, teacher education change, democratic participation and quality education. I conclude the chapter by describing the notions of parents, community and the private sector in order to clarify their role in the concept of participation.

In **Chapter 4** I argue that the educational problems did not start after independence. Rather, the root of these problems should be sought in the system that preceded independence. In order to understand the Namibian educational problems, I deem it necessary to first explore and analyse the educational background in Namibia during the colonial and apartheid administration. Namibia has, however, had to deal with problems in the implementation of her educational programmes. I argue that some of these problems were inherited from the colonial and apartheid system; others have arisen in the process of educational development in the post-apartheid period. I shall explore the educational problems that the current government is facing, and show why they are problems.

In **Chapter 5** I argue that the education system was and still is characterised by factors which hindered education, such as the incompetent teachers, ineffectiveness of teacher training programmes, lack of teaching and learning resources, language barriers, and the ambiguous policies. I shall discuss the notion of democratic education and make some recommendations on how to solve educational problems in Namibia. My analysis shall mainly focus on how democratic education has the potential to eliminate the identified problems.

In **Chapter 6** I shall discuss my “journey” through this thesis. In reflecting on my journey through this thesis, I shall highlight issues such as academic writing, attending conferences, presentations and reflective inquiry. I conclude the chapter by suggesting possible pathways for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

2.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this study my understanding of research methodologies and methods was limited. I knew very little about the distinction between the terms research methodology and research method. Extensive readings and talking to other researchers helped me begin to develop my understanding.

I contend that knowledge of different research methodologies assists us (researchers) to locate our own research theoretically, helps us to read the research work of others, and to exercise the use of methods appropriately. Cantrell (1993: 84) claims that learning about methodologies informed by the different research traditions (positivism, interpretive, critical and post-critical science) is not intended for researchers to “cement our own philosophical entrenchments” or parochially make our research fit a particular theoretical orientation. Instead, she argues that an understanding of research traditions provides us (researchers) with “philosophical goggles which enlighten our view, and, in turn, lead to an acceptance of the array of methodologies” along with the appropriateness of method (Cantrell, 1993: 84).

Research is an endeavour to discover new knowledge or to collate old and new knowledge. The question is: how will I be able to discover or collate the information or knowledge? I contend that whatever a person intends to do, there should be an appropriate way or an approach for a specific activity. Mouton (1996: 24) finds it useful to compare scientific research to a journey. He posits that a person undertakes a journey with a specific purpose in mind to reach a specific destination. McMillan and Schumacher (in Fourie, 1996: 7) define research as “a process of systematically constructing and logically analysing information for a particular purpose”.

I shall begin this chapter by exploring and analysing the notions of research methodology and research method. I shall further discuss the specific methodology and method to be used in this study. In preparing this study I shall use conceptual analysis as an approach or method and critical educational theory as methodology in

constructing and discovering the information. The aim is to clarify the underlying meanings which constitute these terms and their use in this thesis. I shall justify why positivist educational theory is not an appropriate research methodology to be used in this study.

2.2 DISTINCTION BETWEEN METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

In research conversations the notions of methodology and method often are used interchangeably. Harding (1987: 2) posits that distinguishing between method and methodology is necessary. According to her, method refers to techniques for gathering empirical evidence (the way of proceeding), while methodology is the theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework guiding a particular research project. Put differently, methodology frames or guides one's practices. On the one hand, methods which can be used to do educational research include: literature review, observation, surveys, interviews or other quantitative and qualitative ways of doing research. Harvey (1990: 1) refers to method as the way empirical data are collected and ranges from asking questions, through reading documents, to observation of both controlled and uncontrolled situations. While some methods lend themselves more readily to certain epistemological perspectives, no method of data collection is inherently positivist, phenomenological or critical. Bennett de Marrais (1998: 10) relates educational research to different types of "quantitative" methods as follow:

- Observational knowing, which tends to privilege ethnography and action research through participant observation, and the writing of detailed field notes to capture the words and behaviour of people;
- Archival knowing, which provides the framework for historical research, reliant primarily on archival data (newspaper, journal, diaries, photographs, and films) and might also include interviews and oral histories; and
- Narrative knowing, which usually takes the form of in-depth interviews, oral histories, autobiography, narratology and phenomenology, but extends top privilege to participant observations.

Marcinkowski (1993: 52) also associates educational research with different types of methods:

- Descriptive studies, such as surveys, longitudinal and cross-sectional developmental studies, and correlation studies;
- Predictive studies such correlation and multi-correctional statistical analysis; and
- Explanatory and controlling studies such as experimental type designs.

Methodology, on the other hand, is viewed as the interface between methodic practice, substantive theory and epistemological underpinnings. Epistemology at this point refers to the presumptions about the nature of knowledge and of science that inform practical inquiry. Moreover, it involves the consideration of research design, data analysis, and theorising together with the social, ethical and political concerns of the social researcher. In this study I shall use conceptual analysis as a research method and critical educational theory as research methodology to explore the notion of educational transformation. The purpose of doing this is because educational transformation has at its foundation a deliberate movement towards the establishment of democratic practice. This brings me to a discussion of the specific method I shall use in this study.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Conceptual analysis is concerned with the analysis of concepts and with questions about the grounds of knowledge, beliefs, actions and activities. Conceptual analysis is an analytical and theoretical tool used in philosophy of education whereby concepts are understood in relation to other concepts. The point of conceptual analysis is to get clarity about the types of distinctions that words have been developed to designate. The point is to see through the words, to get a better grasp of the similarities and differences that it is possible to pick out. I contend that these are important in the context of other questions I cannot answer without such preliminary analysis. Moreover, conceptual analysis helps us to pinpoint more precisely what is implicit in our moral consciousness (Hirst & Peters, 1998: 34). It enables us to reflect on the status of the demand to which the word bears witness. Conceptual analysis frees us to ask a fundamental question in

ethics, which is that of whether this demand is justified. Moreover, it attempts to establish logically necessary conditions for the use of a word. Conditions should prevail that make a concept necessary. If one was not analysing concepts, one was thought not to be engaging in philosophy. An analysis refers to an activity which involves seeking to understand meanings which make concepts what they are. If one examines the underlying meanings which constitute concepts, one searches to gain more clarity or insight as to what makes concepts what they are. To know the principle of a concept requires an understanding of its meaning in order to gain clarity as to how its practices are organised. For instance, if one wants to know what quality education means, one has to search for the meanings which constitute quality education. In other words, one needs to uncover the meaning which gives quality education its distinct character. Quality education can be interpreted as that type of education whereby the curriculum, teaching and learning materials, and the learning environment are of high standard. In this case, the meanings which constitute quality education involve: a relevant curriculum, useful teaching and learning materials, and an agreeable learning environment. These are called the constitutive meanings of quality education for they make quality education what it is. In short, these constitutive meanings give quality education its distinctive character.

It is my contention that conceptual analysis will in the long run be the most effective way of coming to know what is happening in the world and of responding to the social problems that arise. In this sense, my analysis in this study embraces not only exploring and analysing the situation, but also reading what others have written about the issue at hand. In each case it is a matter of trying to make sense of something that seems problematic, which ultimately means trying to frame ideas within some form of theoretical understanding. In essence, conceptual analysis does not only mean that one has to know the logically necessary conditions or constitutive features which make concepts what they are, but also the historical and social contexts which have given rise to the formation and existence of the concept (Taylor, 1985: 87).

It is with such an understanding of conceptual analysis that I shall explore the constitutive meanings which make up, as well as the historical context which shaped and guided a perspective of educational transformation in Namibia. This is necessary because if I want to find out the potential of democratic education to resolve

educational problems in Namibian schools, then I need to know what notions of educational transformation would influence my use of democratic education. With this in mind I shall undertake an extensive review of the literature to analyse the four dimensions of the relevant periods, namely the pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid periods, which resulted in educational transformation. The purpose of reviewing the literature is to overcome my naïve understanding of what educational transformation means. Put differently, I aim to uncover the reason why the new government proposed transformation. In other words, it is to seek an understanding of the need for transformation, and to understand what makes the current education system what it is.

According to Hirst and Peters (1998: 33), searching for logical conditions that constitute concepts involves reflecting on their relation to other words and their use in different types of sentences. Moreover, trying to uncover the constitutive meanings of concepts such as educational transformation demands that one searches for those meanings which one thinks might best explain what the concept is about. Mouton (1996: 81) argues that concepts are “carriers” of the meanings and words: “concepts may be defined as the most elementary symbolic constructions by means of which people classify or categorise reality; a concept is, therefore, a symbol of meaning”. This means that conceptual analysis forms the basis of creating new understanding and new meaning (Mouton & Marais, 1990: 59). Moreover, Hirst and Peters (1998) specifically refer to searching for the underlying meanings of a concept as a practice of looking for logically necessary conditions which give a concept its meaning, style and appearance. In essence, when one analyses a concept one would research the logically necessary conditions which make up a concept. If these logically necessary conditions were not there, then one would not understand the meaning of the concept. It is in this sense that Hirst and Peters (1998: 33) claim:

If, therefore, we are trying to analyse a concept it is important to realise that this cannot be done adequately by just examining the use of words in a self-contained way. We have to study carefully their relation to other concepts and their use in different types of sentences or context. An understanding of their use in sentences does not come just by the study of grammar; it is also necessary to understand the different sorts of purpose that lie behind the use of sentences.

And that requires reflection on different purpose, both linguistic and non-linguistic, that human beings share in social life (Hirst & Peters, 1998: 33).

However, if a person wants to know what constitutes educational transformation, then one has to search for the logically necessary conditions which frame such an understanding. In my own understanding educational transformation is constituted by curriculum change, democratic participation, teacher education, democratic classroom practices, access to education, and quality education. When one chooses these meanings as constitutive of the concept educational transformation, then one has good reason to refer to them as logically necessary conditions which explain the existence of the concept. By so doing, one engages in conceptual analyses. I believe that uncovering the constitutive meanings of the notion of educational transformation demands that one not only understands the relational concepts which give meaning to educational transformation, but also understanding the way in which the concept is used in relation to other concepts in the sentences.

As I have clarified the notions of conceptual analysis, I shall now discuss the research methodology which I shall employ in this study. I shall attempt to clarify why some approaches are not appropriately useful for the kind of conceptual analysis I shall perform in this thesis. So far I have identified methodologies which can guide forms of educational research: positivist educational theory, interpretive educational theory, and critical educational theory. I argue that not all three methodologies are appropriate for my conceptual analysis and therefore my study. I shall attempt to discuss each methodology and through the discussion I shall provide reasons as to which methodology is appropriate for my conceptual analysis of educational transformation.

2.4 METHODOLOGY

Research methodology can be understood as the reasoning that informs particular ways of doing research or it can be understood as the principles that inform the organisation of research activity (Gough, 2000: 3). According to Hopkins and Antes (1990: 21), methodology is a part of the overall plan that structures the specific procedures about what or who will supply the data, how the data will be obtained, and how they will be analysed. Methodology refers to the metatheoretical narratives such as positivism,

interpretivism and critical theory, which frame educational research. In this thesis I shall use critical educational theory as methodology. Later in this study I shall clarify my position on why I am attracted to critical educational theory. I shall again attempt to show the advantages of critical educational theory. But before I expound on the notion of critical educational theory, I shall attempt to give a brief description of positivist educational theory and interpretive educational theory. By so doing, I shall attempt to show why these two theories (positivist and interpretive educational theories) are not suitable as approaches to this study.

2.4.1 Positivist educational theory

Positivist educational theory is based on the assumption that all knowledge in the world is objective, with no scope or space for any kind of value judgements. Positivism advocates rationality, objectivity and truth as limited and partial. According to Kemmis (1991: 61-62), the theory embodies the following ideas: firstly, the positivist idea is that knowledge has purely instrumental value in solving educational problems and the consequent tendency to see all educational issues as technical in character. Secondly, the idea that social reality can be objective in the sense that it can be described, understood, or explained solely with reference to some foundational categories of knowledge and without reference both to the social processes and historical processes by which knowledge is constructed. Thirdly, the theory claims that knowledge can be value-free or value-neutral in the sense that it can be used to describe without reference to the worldviews, concerns, values and interests of researchers and those whose lives they research. According to positivism, everything that needs to be explained about social events is independent from the metaphysical dispositions of human beings. There are no rational arguments about values.

According to Waghid (2002: 43), positivist inquiry insists that there is only one proper form of explanation, that is the deductive nomological (D-N) model of explanation. This implies that, for instance, whenever E happens then F occurs – E happens, therefore F occurred. This in turn implies that in the absence of E, F cannot occur. Simply because E can be referred as to the independent variable, the occurrence of F is dependent. This implies that E is a necessary condition of F. The D-N analysis of causality and its emphasis on verification leads to the understanding that the given

situation is under control, because the outcome is predictable. This leads to an understanding of manipulation. In other words, E can be controlled, and F could be manipulated. Put differently, positivists would argue, for instance, that learners' absenteeism from class could be attributed to poor teaching without wanting to know what contributes to the ineffectiveness of teaching which can possibly result in the learners' absenteeism. Positivists would argue that the learning by learners depends on the teacher. This means that in the absence of the teacher, learners cannot learn. In this case, teachers are independent variables and learners dependent variables, because their learning depends on the teachers. Also, positivists would argue that observing and verifying learners' performance depend on the teachers who can make predictions as to how learners can act.

It is my contention that for education to be transformed democratically, there should be room for many explanations. The education system should ensure or create room for different opinions and ideas or ways of doing things. According to Kemmis (1991: 61-64), positivist educational theory leaves no room for metaphysical value judgements and, therefore, removes itself from the domain of ethical and political commitment. Furthermore, the theory does not take human values into consideration and therefore leaves no scope for intersubjective human action to occur. The theory sees human action as something to be determined and guided by specific events. I argue that educational problems are not only problems about the means to particular ends, but also moral and practical problems about how to do what is right. They are problems of human and social action, historically shaped and structured by the intentions, beliefs and worldviews of people interacting within a culturally given framework.

Moreover, educational knowledge is framed in relation to historically and culturally located values about the nature and worth of education itself, and knowledge about education is produced in and for action guided by the potentially competing values and interests of particular groups (Kemmis, 1991: 62). I regard the positivist paradigm as not providing an adequate framework of thinking to explore and analyse education policy transformation in terms of democratic change. It is not an adequate framework because educational transformation involves metaphysical human presuppositions that require explanations, interpretation, analysis and exploration. Positivist thought seems to undermine human explanation because its primary interest is to manipulate and

control events. One can only manipulate and control events once one accepts that actions should merely be observed and verified according to their natural occurrences. We cannot just assume that the poor performances of the learners can be attributed to the teachers without exploring other factors which influence the learners' poor performance. I believe there are many factors that can contribute to the poor performance of the learners, if the situation is to be analysed as a whole. Factors such as lack of teaching and learning resources can contribute to the poor performance of the learners. Unfortunately in the absence of analysis teachers are given the blame, while the real causes are left unattended and can cause the whole education system to remain ineffective. My emphasis is on interpretation, analysis and exploring, for which do not have space within a positivistic framework of thinking. This means that a positivist educational theory is not adequate to analyse human behaviour particularly that involved in educational transformation. Educational transformation involves human action which requires exploration, analysis and explanation. The view of research which I take in this thesis is emphatically not positivist. Now that I have explained positivist educational theory and why I am not attracted to it, I shall briefly analyse the interpretive educational theory.

2.4.2 Interpretive educational theory

Interpretive educational theory is primarily concerned with understanding what is going on in the actor's mind within the context in which the actor lives. According to Waghid (2002: 46-47), the two pivotal issues within the interpretive framework are the self-understanding of the individual as the basis for all social interpretations and that human consciousness remains transparent. This means that human explanations, as they appear, do not conceal any deeper understanding of events. The theory emphasises that analysis involves more than observation. According to Fay (1975: 74), the critical point of analysis is to reach the self-understanding of the person acting in the situation, and analysing and understanding his/her reasons for the actions. This implies that actions should not just be observed, but they have to be explained. In other words, we should know the reasons for performing the action. Fay (1975: 71) maintains that the actions should not only be observed, but also interpreted. Taylor (1985: 25) adequately explains interpretive theory as the rational articulation of meaning in a clear, lucid and coherent manner. Thus the theory involves giving reasons as to why things are happening the

way they are. But these reasons are not just haphazard without any form of consistency in their articulation. Reasons are justified according to logical and systematic explanations. The point about such understanding of human action is that events and human actions are explained according to what is observed. Instead, events and human actions are explained according to rationality, that is, informed opinion, insight and understanding. Put differently, human actions do not just occur without some sort of rational justification as to why they are what they are without giving reasons. Furthermore, according to Fay (1975: 79),

An interpretive theory is one which attempts to uncover the sense of a given action, practice or constitutive meaning; it does this by discovering the intentions and desires of particular actors, by uncovering the set of rules which give point to these sets of rules or practices, and by elucidating the basic conceptual scheme which orders experiences in ways that the practices, actions, and experiences which the social scientist observes are made intelligible, by seeing how they fit into a whole structure which defines the nature and purpose of human life.

Hence interpretive theory is more appropriate to explain and analyse educational transformation. In this situation it is all about understanding what is going on in the education system. For instance, the current education system has been criticised for creating numerous problems. The learners' performance is very poor year in and year out. Teachers are said to be incompetent and there is a serious lack of teaching and learning resources (Meyer, 1998: 103; MEC, 1993: 75-76; Uugwanga, 1998: 70). As a result people complain that the new education system does not seem to bring the positive changes that people expected. People fail to understand why schools should have shortages of competent teachers and inadequate material for teaching and learning, since education is no longer in the hands of the "White people". People believe the country is not supposed to experience such problems now that Namibia is an independent democratic country. It is only by employing interpretive educational theory that people will get to understand why all these things are happening. Interpretive theory enables a person to develop some understanding of a situation before a person can act. For example, an interpretive understanding of educational transformation involves getting to know what is going on in the minds of the educators and policy

makers, and the community at large, and then to find the reasons why and how they can interact in transforming education in schools. I argue that any adequate approach to educational theory and research should accept the need to employ the interpretive categories of teachers. It should be rooted in the self-understandings of educational practices. The shortcomings of this theory for this study is that it fails to come up with ways as to how educational problems be improved.

Any adequate approach to educational theory should provide ways of distinguishing ideologically distorted interpretations from those that are not. It should provide some indication of how any distorted self-understanding is to be overcome. Also, interpretive theory fails to recognise that many of the aims and purposes that teachers pursue are not the result of conscious choices so much as a result of the constraints contained in a social structure over which they have little if any direct control (Kemmis, 1991: 62). Thus, it should be concerned to identify and expose those aspects of the existing social order which frustrate the pursuit of rational goals and should be able to offer theoretical accounts which make educators aware of how these constraints may be eliminated or overcome. But offering explanations would not be sufficient to resolve educational problems. Therefore, interpretive educational theory is not adequate for this thesis.

My conceptual analysis of educational transformation as explained cannot just be limited to an interpretation of human actions without showing how human actions can be used to enable transformation. It is my contention that educational transformation in the Namibian context aims to eliminate the dysfunctionality of schools, teachers, learners and the community. In other words, it is aimed at empowering school communities. Interpretation and observation by themselves are not sufficient to empower others. Educational transformation should also lead to more empowering and enabling practices. It is my contention that critical educational theory moves beyond the interpretation of events of human behaviours. As I have analysed interpretive educational theory in the preceding section, I shall now move on to a discussion of critical educational theory as an adequate methodology for this thesis.

2.4.3 Critical educational theory

In this section I shall discuss and show why critical educational theory is an appropriate methodology for this thesis. The term “critical theory” can be interpreted in various ways. To some critical theory is primarily an attempt to overcome some of the weaknesses of orthodox scientific methods (Kemmis, 1991: 61).⁸ To others, it is a new set of debates within a long sequence of debates about the nature of the philosophy of science and epistemology.⁹ I wish to give primary emphasis to the aspect of critical theory which has generated what Habermas (in Kemmis, 1991: 61) referred to as “critical social science”. A critical social science addresses the relationship of theory and practice in education in a way very different from that suggested by positivist and interpretivist social sciences. Among other things, critical social science concerns itself with forms of educational theory and research aimed at changing the work of schools and educational systems. According to Fay (1975: 93-94), critical theory is characterised by three main features. Firstly, it accepts the necessity of interpretive categories. This implies that it supports the arguments as presented in the interpretive theory, that is, explanations and justifications. Secondly, it recognises that the actions people perform, are caused by social conditions, some of which are not under their control, and that a great deal of what people do to one another is not the result of conscious knowledge and choice. The theory, therefore, aims to expose conditions which determine the actions, as well as clarifying the consequences of such action. Thirdly, it recognises that there is an inextricable connection between theory and practice.

Moreover, whereas positivist and interpretivist theories are at best concerned about objective – that is empirically verified – facts and subjective human experiences, respectively, critical theory is concerned with the detailed analysis of ideas and their influences on a society to enlighten and to emancipate people in their lives in their societies (Fay, 1975: 103). The theory has a central task of emancipating people, through their own understandings and actions, from the positivist “domination of

⁸ Reject the positivist idea that knowledge has a purely instrumental value in solving educational problems and the consequent tendency to see all educational issues as technical in character, and the idea that knowledge can be value-free or value-neutral in the sense that it can be used to describe without references to the worldview, concerns, values and interests of researchers and those whose lives they research.

⁹ The philosophical study of the nature of knowledge and of science that inform practical inquiry.

thought". Critical theory is more about freeing the attitudes of human beings to adopt practices which are more emancipatory.

Writers such as Bredo and Feinberg (1982) note that critical theory is able to transcend the distance between the dominant positivist theory and its challenger, the interpretivist paradigm. However, the conception of interests is most important, since it is the cornerstone of critical theory. It aims at a re-examination of the connection between knowledge and human interests in general. Critical theory claims three spheres of interest: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. According to Habermas (in Lakomski, 1988: 56), the technical interests guide work, the practical sphere guides interaction and enables the grasping of reality through understanding in different historical contexts, and the emancipatory sphere guides power and aims at the pursuit of reflection. Moreover, according to Cox (in Johnston, 2003: 105) critical theory:

Is critical in the sense that it stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about. Critical theory does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing. It is directed towards an appraisal of the very framework for action, or problematic, which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters. Critical theory is directed to the social and political complex as a whole rather than to the separate parts. As a matter of practice, critical theory, like problem-solving theory, takes as its starting point some aspect or particular sphere of human activity; the critical approach leads towards the construction of a large picture of the whole of which the initially contemplated part is just one component, and seeks to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved.

Furthermore, critical educational theory cultivates the capacity and appetite for self-expression, for exchanging of and debating ideas for life-long learning, and for dealing with problems for which there are not easy answers. The theory, according to McLaren and Giarelli (in Waghid, 2002: 50), has at its centre an attempt to join empirical investigation, the task of interpretation and a critique of this reality in order to improve human existence by viewing knowledge for its emancipatory or repressive potential.

Fay (1975: 92) posits that critical theory involves analysis of a social situation in terms of those its features that can be altered in order to eliminate certain frustrations which members in that situation are experiencing.

Critical theory holds the promise to solve educational problems of schools in a high-order synthesis which allocates the empirical analytic and the historical hermeneutic sciences to their own, mutually exclusive, object domains, complete with their respective methodologies (Lakomski: 1998: 54). In addition to relegating the sciences to their respective spheres of influences and thus deflating any claims for the superiority of one or the other methodology, critical theory has a distinctive political orientation. The theory suggests that the current dominance of science and the rise of technology and bureaucracy are developmental tendencies of late capitalism which increasingly encroach on the domain of social life. As a result of such imperialism, which is accompanied by the decline and erosion of traditional institutions and legitimations, the vacuum of legitimacy thus created is filled by the new belief in science. The advantages of critical theory as seen by those who adopt its central concepts are, as Foster (1980: 499) notes, that “it is possible to have a social science which is neither purely empirical nor purely interpretative”, on the assumption that critical theory escapes the criticism levelled at positivism and interpretivist theory (Foster, 1980: 499).

By employing critical theory, Huebner (1975: 223) describes contemporary approaches to curriculum making as reflecting, almost completely, a technical value system. Curricular ideology has a means-end rationality that approaches that of an economic model. End states, end product, or objectives are specified as accurately as possible, hopefully in behavioural terms. Activities are then designed which become the means to these ends of objectives (Huebner, 1975: 223). I contend that to change the work of schools and the educational system, it is important to change the whole curriculum structure, since the curriculum is at the heart of education. Thus, the curriculum should be designed in such a way that it accommodates learners so that they may participate in the classrooms effectively. Since the new education system is striving to empower educators and learners, teachers should be involved in curriculum development throughout all its stages.

My emphasis on this point is that learners will be empowered as they actively participate in classroom discussions and other activities. They will be empowered if they are allowed to make a contribution towards their own learning and discover things on their own. Learners will become empowered when they are allowed to make judgements, evaluate their own learning, explaining and interpreting things differently, according to their own understanding.

My contention is that the reason why the Ministry of Education in Namibia has introduced democratic education is that it is attempting to eliminate educational problems. Thus, the new education system allows participation and it creates opportunities for people to criticise, make comments and offer arguments on how to run the education sector successfully. It allows people to make changes to educational policy which they feel might not be suitable for the nation (MEC, 1993: 41-42). But I am not entirely convinced that this is actually the case with the current Namibian education system. In other words, these ideals have not been fully realised. I am not alone in claiming that the above-mentioned features of the education system features have not been fully implemented. The World Bank (2003) reported that in Namibia a new, relevant, nationally unified education system is not fully implemented, because management and teachers are insufficiently prepared to impart knowledge to the community. This leads to problems.

Furthermore, the theory is more oriented towards actuating a change or transformation in the lives of people. Through critical educational theory it is possible for educators, learners, administrators and the community to transform. People will become transformed because, through the lens of critical theory, educational transformation aims at improving the dysfunction nature of school administration, schools' environments, teachers, learners, parents and administrators. The new education system requires all individual citizens to contribute towards achieving democracy. Thus, the system might change by employing critical educational theory. The system also encourages all people to participate in education and it encourages (formerly excluded) parents to make a full contribution towards their children's education. As a result the whole education system will improve.

Moreover, the theory develops an understanding of the particular historical situations with which it is concerned; it develops an understanding and an explanation that have a practical purpose, such as helping people to change an unsatisfactory situation (Waghid, 2002: 49). Critical theory again is concerned about actually transforming distorted practices to make them less distorted (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 197). In the past the education system discriminated against teachers and learners on the grounds of colour, race, ethnicity and social standing. According to critical theory, such practices should become transformative in such a way that teachers should treat learners equitably and respect diverse learners from various socio-economic backgrounds. If teachers accept all learners and respect the views of individual learners in their respective classrooms, then distorted and discriminatory practices can become transformed. Thus, I believe that it was to counter past discriminatory practices that the Namibian government introduced “Education for all”. This means that all learners or prospective educators – irrespective of their colour, race, or ethnicity – should enjoy the same opportunity or should be treated equally. The transformation of education in the Namibian context means that all negative practices such as racial discrimination and segregation, and unequal resources allocation should no longer be tolerated in schools. In addition, the institutions which in the past could best be characterised as producing job seekers, should become transformed in such a way that they should produce job creators; educators should impart knowledge to learners and prospective educators so that Namibia can have more competent educators and powerful human resources for the sake of the country’s economic progress. In other words, the institutions should produce educators who possess knowledge which can compete globally in order to eliminate foreign domination and to sustain our own economy.

According to Fay (1987: 29), the theory empowers, motivates and enables people to understand and be able to analyse the problem. It enables one to understand the situation and be able to analyse and sometimes attempt to offer a solution to problems. For instance, in this study I shall explore education in Namibia during the colonial and apartheid administration. The reason why I explore the historical past is because I am seeking to understand educational problems – where and how they started. Why is the current education system facing numerous problems? Since I am becoming a critical reasoner, I do not believe in predictions and assumptions. Critical theory focuses on

careful questioning and systematic appraisal, with no special respect given to the sources of the opinion examined.

Moreover, critical theory treats knowledge as tentative. By using this theory I might accept something as true for practical purposes, yet later change my mind if the evidence warrants this. Furthermore, the theory does not encourage people to “become followers”, or “believers”; rather it emancipates people who are required to think for themselves. The point I want to make here is that educators are free to make judgements and they might accept ideas or they can reject them. For instance, it is not compulsory for learners to accept uncritically what the teachers are teaching them. They might come up with their own constructions of knowledge according to their own understanding. Since teachers are not the owners of knowledge, individual learners have the freedom to analyse, explain or interpret the subject knowledge.

Even though the current government claims to be changing the education system into a democratic one, this does not prevent or limit people from questioning or criticising. The transformation process creates opportunities for people to criticise, make a contribution and participate in achieving the ideals of educational transformation. Thus, the transformation process should be transparent. In other words, the process invites all individual citizens to make a contribution to achieve what the government terms democracy. This system does not compel people to believe or follow whatever the government has come up with; rather it opens doors for people to question and challenge. I contend that the new education system sounds impressive, but changes of this kind are superficial. The point I am making is that this does not happen in Namibia. The government seems to ignore critical contributions despite encouraging responses from stakeholders. I am therefore inclined to support Hargreaves’s argument which states that changes can look impressive when represented in boxes, but they achieve little more than trivial changes in practice (Hargreaves, 1994: 10).

Furthermore, critical educational theory discourages indoctrination, memorisation, rote learning and domination. Therefore, it creates room for learners to understand their learning and be able to express their own ideas and producing knowledge according to their understandings. In other words, it encourages learners to become creative and to undertake a journey of self-discovery. Collins (2003: 79) notes that the principles of the

theory are based on the recognition that ordinary men and women have the capacity to name, analyse, explore and evaluate their own reality, and to become co-investigators in seeking solutions to the problems that beset them in their everyday lives. The investigative process is viewed as collective, dialogical, educative and emancipatory.

I argue that critical educational theory is the lens through which we can uncover and understand what we did not know and see before. The theory provides room for people to realise the ideology of self-governance. It liberates people's minds to accept or contest the notion of democratic education. With this in mind, my thesis is located within a philosophy of empowerment. Walker (in Johnston, 2003: 105) posits that research should not be merely a "happy hunting ground" for academics; rather it should empower those groups who have previously been marginalised, oppressed and disempowered. Lather (1991: 3-4) refers to this as the politics of empowerment, which she describes as:

The development of research approaches which empower those involved to change as well as understand the world. My usage of empowerment opposes the reduction of the term as it is used in the current fashion of individual self-assertion, upward mobility and the psychological experience of feeling powerful ... I use empowerment to mean analysing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognising systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives.

I believe that employing critical educational theory enables people to take control of their own circumstances, to create understanding and possibilities for optimism and change, and ultimately to take greater control of their destinies. Such a theory will generate practices designed to transform social relations, to overcome domination and subordination. I argue that if Namibian institutions employ critical theory in their institutions, this will enable learners to discover their lifeworld. However, it does not make sense to talk about changing the world through social improvement if first of all we do not understand it better. This is what Ingram (in Collins & Swann, 2003: 144) has to say about this matter: "... every successful understanding applies new meaning to the current situation thereby revealing new possibilities for action". In critical theory the lifeworld refers to the totality of experiences of an individual, circumscribed by the

objects, persons, and events encountered in the pursuit of the pragmatic objectives of living. It is a “world” in which a person is “wide awake”, and it asserts itself as the paramount reality (Pratt & Swann, 2003: 205).

I contend that the introduction of democratic education in Namibia is a striving to create conditions for people whereby they can empower themselves to be able to compete globally. As stated in Chapter I, the apartheid education system severed the Namibian people from the world. Therefore, even though the colonial and apartheid education system cut the Namibian people off from the rest of the world, educational transformation gives hope and courage to the Namibian people to uncover the ideals of their lifeworld. On the notion of lifeworld, Collins (1998: 168) emphasises that there is a sphere of human experiences where continuity of custom and tradition is sustained, where respect and loyalty for community is privileged, and from where a sense of belonging and security is derived. With this in mind, I shall use critical educational theory to explore and analyse education policy transformation in Namibia in terms of democratic change. Employing critical theory will hopefully emancipate me and enable me to identify and analyse the educational problems the current Ministry of Education is facing and how one can best deal with them. Moreover, by employing critical educational theory I shall explore and analyse the potential of democratic education to solve educational problems and indicate how democratic education can be a possible solution in eliminating these problems (which include lack of qualified or competent teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, poor physical facilities, higher learner-teacher ratios, and inequalities in resource allocation). I argue that the principal purpose of doing research is not to try to confirm existing theory, nor to create ideas for others to adopt uncritically; it is to challenge existing assumptions and expectations, and to develop new ideas and better ways of doing things.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, firstly, I discussed the distinction between method and methodology. I expound on the method for this thesis, which is conceptual analysis. In short, conceptual analysis involves three things: first, searching for logically necessary conditions which constitute concepts; secondly, knowing the historical development according to which concepts became manifested in practices; and thirdly, knowing the

relational meanings of concepts. Three different methodologies were also discussed: positivist educational theory, interpretive educational theory and critical educational theory. I indicated that the methodology appropriate for this thesis is critical educational theory. Much of the work in educational transformation involves critical inquiry. In the next chapter I shall first attempt to explore and analyse the key concept of this study, namely educational transformation. I highlight the understanding of the notion of consensus, because it has a particular bearing on democratic education. I further explore constitutive meanings of educational transformation, with specific reference to the curriculum change, teacher education change, democratic participation and quality education.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLORING CONSTITUTIVE MEANINGS OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

3.1 Introduction

Educational transformation in an independent Namibia was introduced for the first time in 1991. During this period the education system (in the independent Namibia) was still characterised by factors which hindered education such as irrelevance of the curriculum and the inadequate teacher education programme which I alluded to earlier. There was a lack of democratic participation within the education and training system. Teachers, parents, administrators and the other stakeholders were largely excluded from the decision-making processes in education (Avenstrup, 1998; MEC, 1993; Tjitendero, 1984). Moreover, the teaching method was mainly teacher-centred, which was ineffective and frustrating for most learners. Schools were essentially authoritarian institutions, with learners having little say in their learning and with little in the way of explicit attempts to educate for democracy. Indeed, some writers such as Handy (1984) have gone as far as to describe traditional schools as prisons, given the lack of participation afforded to learners. Others emphasised the mass production and certification role of schools and described them as factories (Harber, 1998: 2). In terms of educating democratic citizens these are not flattering analogies, especially when we bear in mind that the teacher's role of prison warden or factory supervisor has often been backed up with the physical violence of corporal punishment as stated in Chapter 1. Learners certainly did not have any say in school matters. Participation, power sharing and consultation in decision-making were non-existent. Apartheid led to a breakdown in relations between learners, parents, educators and education management authorities, particularly in disadvantaged Black school communities. In most disadvantaged schools, education and the development of skills suffered. There was a culture of violence, destruction and resistance instead of a culture of teaching and learning. Against this background the challenge for Namibia at independence was to transform education into a democratic system with a reasonable degree of consensus about what democracy is (Avenstrup, 1998: 7).

Therefore, educational transformation was seen as a key to developing a democratic society and moving towards promoting the human rights enshrined in the Namibian Constitution. Education was to reach all people in the nation for the first time and it was to be a main vehicle for promoting democratic knowledge and practice (MEC, 1993: 67).

Educational transformation and democratic education are key concepts for this study. It is only logical that the concept should be explored to establish a clearer understanding of what it means. This chapter, therefore, provides an analysis of the concept within the context of Namibia. I shall now proceed with an analysis of the concept of transformation. I shall later on explore constitutive meanings of educational transformation, for the reason that these meanings frame a particular understanding of democratic education, which in turn can address educational problems identified in Chapter 1 and 4.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF TRANSFORMATION

When I analyse the notion of educational transformation in the Namibian context it might not necessarily be the same as in other contexts, or my understanding of educational transformation can mean different things from that of other people. Waghid (2003: 8) states that educational transformation can mean different things to different people, depending on where they are and how they perceive the concept. In my analysis in Chapter 1, I referred to the need for educational transformation and not merely reformed education. Reform can be understood to mean that the existing education system remains essentially unchanged in its underlying theory, policy and practices. Only certain improvements are made to satisfy the most urgent demands for change. But transformation is a far more radical concept.

The *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following meanings, amongst others, for the word “transformation”: “The action of changing in form, shape or appearance; and a complete change in character, condition, and nature”. Thus, literally transformation can be said to mean “to change from one form into another”. The key word “change” has to do with “making different”, and “form” has to do with “shape”, thus transformation has to do with taking one shape and making it into a different one.

In other words, in this context transformation implies a complete change from one type of education system to another. For example, the education system in Namibia was completely changed from education for the elite to what is known as “Education for All” (MEC, 1993: 2). Similarly the MEC (1993) states that educational transformation means “education for all”, meaning that it is aimed at improving the dysfunctional conditions of educational institutions, the curriculum, administrators, policy makers, teachers, learners, parents, communities and resources. In the words of Harvey and Knight (1996: 10), transformation means “a form of change of one change into another”. In the educational realm this refers, in part, to changes in the knowledge and abilities of learners, the development of domain expertise. But it also refers to the process of coming to understand something. For instance, the idea of educational transformation sees quality education in terms of the extent to which the education system transforms the conceptual ability and self-awareness of learners (Harvey & Knight, 1996: 11).

Transformation is embedded in a political, social, cultural and economic context. Political change, from apartheid to democracy, is the primary vehicle for social, cultural and economic transformation. Attempts to transform have to fulfil the conditions outlined in the policy document. The vision for the transformation of the education system in Namibia is articulated in “Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture, and Training” of 1993. Central to this vision is the establishment of a single, national co-ordinated system, which should meet the learning needs of citizens and the reconstruction and development needs of society and the economy. The policy document “Toward Education for All” (1993: 32-37) addresses four key policy goals and strategic objectives central to achieving the overall goal of educational transformation:

- To provide universal basic education to all irrespective of race, gender, age, creed, class or disability, and to increase the number of schools and classrooms to be sure there are sufficient places for all Namibian children, and to be sure that those schools are adequately staffed;

- To promote equity and access, and to redress past inequalities through ensuring that some children are not assigned to smaller classes, or receive more and better resources because of their race or the region they come from;
- To improve quality education system, to ensure that teachers are well prepared for the major responsibility they carry, and help them develop the expertise and skill that will enable them to stimulate learning and provide learners with an environment that is conducive to learning; and
- To develop democratic education, learners should study how democratic societies operate and the obligations and rights of their citizens. It (policy) insists that the community at large should share the responsibility for enabling learners to be successful.

This policy document covers important facets of educational transformation in Namibia. The Development Brief (MEC, 1993) states that education is both an investment in our future and our right as citizens. Unless we make this investment, we will not enjoy the right to function adequately as citizens. Holly and McLoughlin (1989) state that education is not only a social activity, but also a profoundly political one. It is in the political arena that the decisions and policies concerning educational transformation are made. Similarly Snyder (1991: 83) states that education assumes an important function in any society, not only because of its perceived role in national development, and the demands placed on it by learners and parents, but also because of its political nature. In almost all instances, colonialists have maintained the political nature of education, which raises the questions of equity, equal access, equal opportunity, and the distribution of both human and material resources among various groups and classes in society. I agree with Fullan (1993: 5), who states that having to deal with change is endemic to postmodern society because of the constant and ever-expanding presence of educational innovation and transformation. He further states that productive educational change at its core is not the capacity to implement the latest policy, but rather the ability to survive the vicissitudes of planned and unplanned change, while growing and developing.

However, from 1992-1996 plans were made and actions related to the implementation of policies took place geared towards ensuring access to education, redress of apartheid inequalities, equality in education, and an ongoing enhancement of the quality in education across the country. "Education for All" means (among other things) increasing the number of children in schools. Moreover, it means replacing the philosophy and practices of education which were only suitable for educating the elite with a new philosophy and practices appropriate for providing education which should be suitable for all Namibian citizens. According to Avenstrup (1998: 9), the Namibian transformation of education consists of changing the ethnically based administration into seven non-ethnic regional offices. Structures are set up throughout the democratic system, including national and regional councils, school boards, communities, and the student representative councils within each school. Therefore, it is my view that transformation is an attempt to correct those wrongs of the past; it tries to redress the apartheid legacy by a massive education and training programme for the Namibian people, because education is considered as a right that all should enjoy. Educational transformation means that the educators and teachers should be prepared to deal with all children who reach school age, regardless of their origin and experiences. The point here is that teachers should be willing to accept teaching learners from different background. For instance, White schools need to accommodate Black children without looking at the background of the children parents. The aim is to address the legacy of discrimination and segregation. The goal of educational transformation is that all children should remain in school throughout their basic education; that is why the Namibian government is concerned about children reaching Grade 5, and beyond (MEC, 1993: 6).

My view of educational transformation is that it implies fundamental change. The task of transformation is greater than reconstructing the systems and structures which sustain any society. It requires a fundamental shift in attitudes, in the way people relate to each other and their environment, and in the way resources are deployed to achieve society's goals. The entire Namibian education system had to be transformed to meet the demands, challenges and needs of the newly independent nation and to reflect the new philosophy and approaches to education. Transformation of the education system thus had to influence and make a contribution to societal reform at the classroom, regional, district and national levels. Educational transformation was

embarked upon to completely overhaul the system and to move away from the apartheid legacy. The transformation of education requires that educational practices should be guided and influenced by new theoretical developments and incorporating innovative educational concepts. According to the MEC (1993: 2-5), educational practices should then provide an education for living in a rapidly changing society. Therefore, the primary aim of education should be to prepare learners for survival in a continuously and rapidly changing society, where the ability to think and act independently had never been important before. The MEC (1993: 119-120) further maintains that if a democratic system of education is to achieve its aim, a radical change in curriculum, teacher education and teaching practices needs to take place. The point I want to make is that the education system in Namibia was changed in order to promote democratic education in schools. The irrelevant curriculum had to be changed and a curriculum developed which could meet the needs of Namibian society - a curriculum whereby learners have a say in their learning and that allows them to participate in classrooms.

Moreover, according to the Ministry of Education (1993: 2-10), the transformation of education system requires the following:

Increased participation. This refers to an increase in access for Blacks, especially women from the disadvantaged communities, into the education sector;

Responsiveness to societal interests and needs. The needs of an increasingly technologically-oriented economy should be met by providing reasonable facilities, highly trained teachers and administrators, and the knowledge to equip a disadvantaged society; and

Co-operation and partnerships in governance. This relates to an amicable relationship between educational institutions and the state, civil society, stakeholders, and other institutions.

My view is that at present the transformation process is fraught with difficulties, inconsistencies and contradictions. It is very complex because of the way in which Namibian society was structured and divided. The process of transformation is a dialectical, conflict-ridden and ambiguous one. This is because of the immense pressure for quick and comprehensive change, and hence the Ministry had to plan and

implement change quickly. It also had to establish a culture of democratic collaboration and flexibility in the face of an “ever-changing mosaic” (Hargreaves, 1994: 62). The rationale of the Ministry was to have the process of transformation fully worked out. Fullan (1993: 21-2) points out the importance of keeping in mind the following ideas of change when attempting to effect transformation at the systemic and macro levels:

- Change is a journey, not a blueprint, i.e. transformations are so multifaceted and complex that solutions for particular settings cannot be known in advance;
- In the process of transformation problems are to be expected, and in fact to be regarded as friends, as in such a process problems are inevitable and provide opportunities for learning to take place, provided there is a capacity for inquiry to learn the right lessons;
- Vision and strategic planning come later, as a shared vision should evolve through the dynamic interaction of the players;
- Neither centralisation nor decentralisation works, as the centre and local units need to complement and support each other for the change to have any substantive effect;
- Connection with the wider environment is critical, since expectations and tensions in the environment contain the seeds of future development; and
- Every person is a change agent, and individual change agents can form the critical mass to bring about the desired transformation.

Transformation in Namibia ought to be seen as a process committed to the democratisation of the whole of education system. To this end the newly elected government has transformed the education system and put policies in place, such as the one making provision for parents and community participation in school and education governance, and to facilitate the democratisation of educational

transformation process. As I have clarified the notion of transformation, now I shall proceed to an analysis of the constitutive meanings of educational transformation. The purpose is that these meanings entail a particular perspective of the potential of democratic education to eliminate educational problems in Namibian schools.

3.2.1 Constitutive meanings of educational transformation

My argument is that transformation came into being because of certain problems and difficulties within the previous education system. In order for educational transformation to be meaningful it is important that the dysfunctionality of educational activities should be rectified. I shall attempt to explore the concepts of curriculum change, teacher education change, democratic participation, and quality education as constitutive meanings of educational transformation. In other words, the above features embed meanings which can be associated with educational transformation. Conversely, a negation of these constitutive meanings would be equal to undermining the concept of democratic education, which could possibly lead to undemocratic practices. In exploring educational transformation, I shall refer to other relational meanings such as access, apartheid, equity and responsibility. The purpose of doing this is directly related to pointing out why the new education system should enact democratic transformation in Namibian schools.

The MEC considered the curriculum to be the heart of the education system, which lies at the heart of the educational transformation. It is the purpose of the next section to analyse curriculum change as a constitutive meaning of educational transformation.

3.2.1.1 Curriculum change

The Ministry of Education (1993: 120) states that the curriculum which the current government inherited from the previous administration was very distant from the lives and experiences of the learners. During the educational transformation process it was important to change the curriculum in such a way that it can benefit the nation. The MEC (1993: 121) maintains that in order for learning institutions to be effective, the curriculum should not treat knowledge as a burden. It should not treat concepts as ideas that are developed by people far away and imported into Namibia, like

television sets. It should not treat learners as empty buckets into which teachers pour knowledge. The current administration realises the importance of education. It persuades educators and learners to take their responsibilities seriously in order that the educational problems can be addressed. It values education as more important than anything else. The government is committed to educating people in meaningful ways so that they can become self-reliant. The government maintains that education has a positive normative quality. The claim that education has a positive quality has been stated well by Peters (in Heslep, 1989: 101): “Education” does not imply, like “reform” that a man/woman should be brought back from a state of turpitude into which he has lapsed; but it does have normative implications, if along a slightly different dimension. It implies that something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner.

The role of education in a democratic country such as Namibia is to prepare the members of the society to carry their responsibilities and to help them to learn to participate in morally acceptable activities lying beyond their responsibilities (MEC, 1993: 41). These roles cannot be performed without the benefit of a curriculum. The question can be asked: what is a curriculum? Writers on this subject agree that the field of curriculum studies is very wide and often vaguely defined, which makes it difficult sometimes to describe it. The concept of “curriculum” can mean several things and the way people use it contributes to further confusion (Barrow, 1984: 3). A clear grasp of this concept may thus also help to understand the process of curriculum development better. Walters (1985: 6) described this as something of a thorny issue, precisely because of the wide range of meanings of the term and the accompanying debate on what should be included. Smith (1984) writes in his article “Taking Humpty Dumpty out of the curriculum” that educationalists should be clear about what they mean when they use the concept. The context in which the concept is used also indicates that there are various ways of interpreting it. In the Namibian context the curriculum defines the scope and sequences of the learning programme at each level of the education system (MEC, 1993: 120). Van der Westhuysen (in Steyn, 1997: 71) supports the above definition when he states that “curriculum is all about the fundamental reasons why learners learn what”. He further states that it is all about “the planning of learning content and subjects, and the pragmatic reflection on all these matters”. Marks, Stoops and King-Stoops (1978: 457) see the curriculum as ...

the sum total of the means by which a learner is guided in attaining the intellectual and moral discipline requisite to the role of an intelligent citizen in a free society. It is not merely a course of study, nor is it a listing of goals and objectives; rather, it encompasses all of the learning experiences that learners have under the direction of the school. Tunmer (1981a: 1; 1981b: 30) describes the curriculum as the whole spectrum of compulsory and optional activities that are formally planned for learners. This view that it is always planned is not supported by everyone. The attitudes and inclinations of learners are not always consciously built into the original planning (Kelly, 1977: 2). An important contribution is that of Tanner and Tanner (1975: 48-49), who see the curriculum as "... the planned and guided learning experiences, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuous and wilful growth in personal-social competence". Green (1974: 16) supports this view, but includes co-curricular activities.

The curriculum could be seen as a broad concept encompassing all planned activities, including also the subjects presented during the course of a normal school day. It also includes after-school planned activities such as societies and sports. This all takes place within a particular system, which is continuously subject to evaluation, and envisages providing the learner with optimal learning situations for the realisation of their potential. Particular approaches may be derived from the above description. It is clear that these approaches as well as their definitions will differ. When writers attempt to explore the concept of "curriculum" they express divergent views and the same writers also use the concepts in different contexts. Schubert (1986: 26-34) gives a critical evaluation of the possible definitions he found in the literature of the curriculum:

- The curriculum is content;
- The curriculum is a programme of planned activities;
- The curriculum consists of particular learning outcomes;
- The curriculum is the cultural reproduction of a society that reflects its particular culture;

- The curriculum is experiences; in other words, particular activities and experiences that leads to learning;
- The curriculum determines the tasks and concepts that have to be covered, or a predetermined aim that could, for example, involve the learning of a new task or an improvement of a previous task;
- The curriculum is an instrument for social reconstruction in which values and skills are learned that can help to improve society; and
- The curriculum is “currere”. The focus is on the individual so that self-discovery may take place through individual activities and individuals can learn more about themselves-who they are, how and why they have developed in the way that they have. Greater self-understanding is a key aspect in this instance.

Now that I have explored the notion of the concept of curriculum, I shall now analyse the concept of curriculum change as a constitutive meaning of educational transformation. I argue that during the apartheid administration learners were passive and could not contribute to their learning. The curriculum was content-based and broken down into subjects. The method of teaching was teacher-centred and teachers were responsible for learning. This implies that the teacher in the classroom exercises unquestioned authority in such matters as seating arrangement and movement. The teacher not only initiated the activities to be pursued by learners, but also controls communication channels within the group. Learners were perceived as passive recipients of vast amounts of information to be memorised and as apprentices in the acquisition of elementary skills required for the production of specific products. In this case, learning is perceived to occur through repetition and drill, the effectiveness of which is assessed through the use of test questions requiring little more than simple recall. Moreover, motivation was dependent on the personality of teachers. Learners spent a lot of time memorising facts. During the examination learners were required to reproduce what they had been taught in classrooms. I do not know the extent to which this kind of classroom environment determines the political orientation of learners, but it enforced conformity to an authoritarian system throughout childhood and early adolescence. If supplemented by other factors, it is likely to encourage passive acceptance of authority. If, however, schools in Namibia are to educate for democracy

in terms of peaceful debate, mutual respect and the protection of human rights and against ethnic prejudice and intolerance, then the organisation of both classrooms and schools should be more congruent with these aims. In terms of classrooms this means that teaching methods across that curriculum will need to become more active, participative, cooperative, investigative and critical in order to develop democratic citizens. The curriculum will also need to allow time for a direct and explicit examination of political issues and structures. This is necessary because democratic education is based on a notion of choice, but choice based on political ignorance is no choice at all.

One of the purposes of the educational transformation into democratic education is to train learners to be active agents in bringing about social change. During the transformation process the government designs a developmental curriculum that begins on the level of learners' everyday lives and those things in their environment that they either already experienced or can readily perceive (MEC, 1993: 120). The curriculum should treat learning as an active process that works best when learners participate in developing, organising, implementing and managing their own learning. In this sense the curriculum is a strategy for cooperation in which both learners and teachers have important roles to play. The cooperation will surely be the most fruitful when it is based on mutual respect and understanding rather than on suspicion and punishment. A curriculum in a democratic education suggests that the members of a democratic state should be encouraged to study the concepts and principles associated with rational agency. Learners should be active to participate in the classrooms. My argument is that many teachers lack the pedagogical skills to promote and coordinate debates in class. Many perceive these activities as a threat to their control of the learning process. As a result, only some teachers volunteer to do it, and there is a great diversity in the ways they implement this approach. I want to suggest that teachers do not understand why they should allow learners to participate in the classroom. In other words, they do not value participation as important.

It is encouraging that there is evidence that more open, democratic classrooms making greater use of discussion and other participatory methods can foster a range of democratic political orientations such as greater political interest, less authoritarianism, greater political knowledge and a greater sense of political efficacy.

Research has demonstrated that different forms of classroom relationship facilitate or impede the development of learners' political efficacy and orientation to public forms of political involvement. Democratic and cooperative teaching methods have been shown to reduce inter-ethnic conflict and promote cross-cultural friendship (Lynch, 1992: 22). In support with this view, for instance, a recent study of ethnically mixed schools in the south-eastern United State compared two schools that stressed cooperative learning, the development of interpersonal relationships, values clarification and the heterogeneous grouping of learners with three traditional schools where learners were streamed by achievement and taught in a lecture-recitation style in predominantly same-race classes. The study found that cross-race interaction and friendships and a positive evaluation of different-race learners were significantly higher in the former than in the latter (Conway & Damico in Harber, 1998: 215).

Moreover, learners should be assessed on an on-going basis in order for the teacher to realise which learners are coping or which are not. The curriculum should discourage memorisation as an exclusive part of the learning process, while at the same time encourage learners to be critical thinkers, able to reason, reflect and act (Harber, 1998: 22). In other words, the curriculum should encourage learners to become creative and self-reliant, meaning that they should be able to discover things on their own. So, one important objective of the curriculum for teaching self-reliance was to promote a sense of belonging together and enhance a spirit of cooperation by making learners value work, practise their democratic rights, but also be accountable in their responsibilities (Mosha, 1990: 60). It is my contention that the transformation of the curriculum was a clear aim of democratic education. This is because there was a determination to change the authoritarian type of schools inherited from apartheid and to produce learners and teachers with the ability to talk and discuss with self-confidence as a way of strengthening unity between ethnic groups.

Moreover, a curriculum in a democratic education system proposes learner-centredness as a teaching technique in schools. An essential requirement for a learner-centred approach is an open and flexible curriculum. Such a curriculum indicates what should be learned in a general way, without going into specific details. These details ought to be left to the teacher and learners as part of the negotiation process. This is necessary because learners have a share in the ownership of the learning process. This

does not imply that learners become all powerful. Rather, it means that their spirit is respected as part of a negotiation process. A curriculum encourages learners' classroom participation. I am therefore inclined to support Lucas, Henze, and Donato's argument when they state that learners who are unable to contribute to classroom conversations by having to sit in the classroom in silence are divorced from the collective intellectual activity. Disconnected from such activity, these learners are in danger of learning habits of passivity and helplessness that are poison to the participatory ideals of democracy (Lucas *et al.*, 1990: 316). Therefore, teachers should be facilitators, constantly using groupwork and teamwork to consolidate the new approach.

I want to clarify the notion of the teacher being a facilitator. I have observed this for six years as a teacher. In most cases some teachers give class activities to their learners without their being involved in them. I was surprised when I paid a class visit to the teachers. I found few learners were busy working on their activities, while teachers sat outside enjoying the sunshine. When I approached them, I was told that learners are given activities that they can do on their own. Our duty, they replied, is to facilitate. My understanding of the notion of a facilitator means that teachers should be there for the learners at all times, because learners might need to ask for some clarity or any assistance from the teachers. It is a matter of not spoon-feeding them. Therefore, teachers being facilitators does not mean that they leave the learners unattended. Learners are extremely critical observers; they react spontaneously to what they see and experience and they expect their teachers to be able to help them find answers to questions which arise from their activities. They would like to listen to what their teachers think and they hope that it will help them construct their own opinion. However, the curriculum in a democratic education encourages teachers to create an environment for learning that has multiple entry points for learning and multiple pathways to success. That environment should be abundant with opportunities to practice social justice, to display, foster, embody, allow, model, and enact inquiry toward change (Hunt, 1998: xxv). The Namibian curriculum was changed in the hope that it would empower citizens and serve as means of emancipation from apartheid rule to self-government. This is because in the absence of these features, educational transformation is bound to fail. I shall move on to

analysing changes in teacher education as a constitutive meaning of educational transformation.

3.2.1.2 Change in teacher education

The purpose of this section is to analyse what makes the concept of change in teacher education a constitutive meaning of educational transformation. To begin with, when the country became independent, there were several different system for training teachers. According to the MEC (1993: 75), teacher education in the country was inadequate in both quality and quantity. There were few educators to meet the needs of the government intention to expand the education system. The MEC confirms that the majority of the teachers are not adequately prepared for the tasks assigned to them. The Ministry of Education also admits that the country has very few qualified teacher educators. As a result, the entire education system had to be transformed in line with the major goals of access, equity, pedagogical effectiveness, and democratic participation (MEC, 1993: 75). These goals necessitated a paradigm shift from a content-based education system for a few to a learner-centred system for all, which required fundamental changes in teachers' attitudes and teacher competence. This in return required fundamental changes in the content and process of teacher education. I contend that change in teacher education was regarded as a matter of urgency during the educational transformation process. This was necessary in order to address the problem of unqualified and under-qualified teachers. Neglecting teacher education would result in the problem of incompetent teachers remaining a problem.

At independence the then Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (1990a: 28) reported on the state of teacher education: "The state of teacher education in the country is similar to education in general uncoordinated, fragmented, ill organised and non-uniform". As stated in the last section the paradigm shift required fundamental changes in teacher attitudes and teacher competence and, thus, required fundamental changes in the content and process of teacher education.

The purpose of educational transformation was that the country should have a well-coordinated and uniform teacher education programme, which in turn could result in

solving the problem of inadequate teachers. To address the problem of unqualified and underqualified teachers it is necessary to train teachers to develop skills and knowledge. Calderhead and Shorrock (1997: 18) state that

... teaching, and the process of learning to teach, are highly complex and place heavy demands, of a cognitive, affective and performance nature, upon the student teacher ... learning to teach involves the development of technical skills as well as an appreciation of moral issues involved in education, an ability to negotiate and develop one's practice within the culture of the school, the development of personal qualities and an ability to reflect and evaluate both in and on one's actions. Each of these areas may make quite different demands upon the learner and entail different forms of professional growth ... learning to be a teacher requires multiple forms of learning ... not only does learning to teach involve different forms of learning but since prospective teachers start out with many different abilities, types of expertise and background experience, their routes in the process of learning are inevitably quite varied. Just as children come to the classroom with different background experiences that influence their learning, prospective teachers approach initial training with different pasts on which to draw, different aspirations and expectations, and different repertoires of relevant skills, abilities and knowledge.

Teacher education change was considered one of the most important areas of transformation at independence. It had a very important role to play in the transformation of the education system, because of teachers' strategic role in the transformation efforts. Fullan (1991: 117) holds the view that educational change depends on what teachers do and think. In its policy document "Toward Education for All" (MEC, 1993: 37), the Ministry makes the following claim on teacher education in relation to educational transformation:

Perhaps the most important challenge in improving the equity of our education system is to ensure that our teachers are well prepared for the major responsibility they carry. More than anything else, it is the teacher who structures the learning environment. It is they who keep learning exciting and

satisfying or alternatively who make schooling a pain to be endured. It is essential, therefore, that we help our teachers develop the expertise and skills that will enable them to stimulate learning. Their professional education should begin before they enter the classroom and continue during the course of their professional careers.

Therefore, during the transformation of education, improving teacher education was seen as a matter of urgency. Teachers should be empowered to engage at a grassroots level for the purpose of improving their teaching and facilitating their professional growth. Teachers have now generally become the key agents in implementing change. The question can be asked: why does the government consider teacher education as important? To answer this question Fullan (1991: 117) states that educational change depends on what teachers do and think; it is as simple and complex as that. Hargreaves (1994: ix), in support of this view, states that “we have come to realise in recent years that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. The restructuring of schools, the composition of national and provincial curricula, the development of benchmark assessments are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account. Teachers do not merely deliver the curriculum. They develop it, define it and reinterpret it too. It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get” (Hargreaves, 1994: iv). I contend that teachers have an important role to play in educational activities. For instance, Namibia is preparing its youth to compete globally. And, if teachers are not well equipped, then we should forget talking about competing globally. When we look at all educational activities, I agree with the above statement that teachers are important to bringing about educational change. According to Fullan (1991: 326), the teacher as learner is central to transcending the dependency now faced by teachers as they attempt to cope with streams of innovations and transformative processes constantly coming at them. Educational transformation will never amount to anything until teachers become inquiry oriented, skilled, reflective and collaborative professionals (Fullan, 1991: 326).

A person cannot conceive of a programme of teacher preparation for a society of any sort unless he/she has some understanding of what it means to be a teacher. A teacher

is the agent of a voluntary action, which means that the teacher performs an action or acts freely and knows what he/she is doing. Teachers should be capable of using a means-end schema in their thinking and be cognisant of the principles of deliberation (Heslep, 1989: 139-140). This implies that teachers have to be well versed in the subject matter being taught. This is because teachers should know what aspects of the subject matter serve their purpose. They also need to know the purposes that are suggested by their subject matter. The Namibian government acknowledges the importance of changing teacher education during the educational transformation. This was necessary because the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the schools depend to a large extent on the nature and success of the teacher education programmes (MEC, 1993: 75). I agree with the government idea in transforming teacher education. The country envisages having skilful and knowledgeable educators. The purpose of teacher education change was to empower teachers so that they can be able to manage in the classrooms and be productive in delivering quality work. Moreover, teachers should have the information, skills and disposition to undertake effective communication. This is because any teaching act is a communicative act. It is an act whose point is to get something across to somebody. The communicativeness of teaching helps to explain why the theoretical disciplines and pedagogical methods are highly important for teachers; they are devices for communicating. However, for "Education for All" to become a reality, teachers should develop new visions, new understanding and new commitments. The MEC (1993: 76) maintains that effective learning requires teachers who are not only competent in their subjects, but also have the ability to respond creatively to new situations.

Nowadays teachers should not limit themselves to knowing subject matter only, but also to be creative in order to be able to connect with learners. I contend that the teachers should not only concentrate on the subject matter only, but they should also have some knowledge beyond their subjects. Put differently, teachers should teach beyond the curriculum, meaning that the teaching should cover some general aspects as long as it make sense in the learners learning and it can contribute or enhance the learners' understanding of what the country expects them to be or to do. Teachers should have the information, skills, disposition and appreciation that can enable them to perform and exercise other duties and rights as well as those integral to teaching.

It is my contention that it is necessary for teachers to know how to teach and perform and exercise the duties and rights associated with other areas of their life. Heslep (1989: 141) suggests that teacher training programmes should include the study of the principles, ideals, laws and existential conditions of the state. He further posits that teachers perhaps should familiarise themselves with the roles in both governmental and non-governmental institutions; exploration and developments of personal interests, and grounding in the theoretical disciplines. He further maintains that none of these subject areas should be presented in isolation from others. Each should be offered in conjunction with the others so as to enhance the likelihood of prospective teachers acquiring a cognitive perspective (Heslep, 1989: 141). I tend to agree with Heslep because teachers cannot limit themselves in acquiring knowledge. The point here is that they should be broadening their understanding or should be exposed to many aspects. Moreover, teachers should be able to make independent and critical judgements, express dissent, not just consent, and develop a reformist spirit and civic courage. The purpose for transforming teacher education was to produce democratic and active citizen teachers. This may have been the major achievement of the educational transformation.

Furthermore, Anderson *et al.* (1991: 5) are of the opinion that the problem of teacher education in Namibia and the often stated necessity to transform teacher education do not only stem from the fact that Namibia has gained independence. We hold that the earlier system of teacher education was highly ineffective, also in relation to the school system. A high number of teachers were and are not formally qualified in terms of the earlier requirement, the rates of failure in teacher education were abysmally high, the quality of teacher training varied very much within the country and the need to transform is to a large extent due to the failures of the earlier system to meet even its own standards. The aim of educational transformation was to address the dysfunctioning of the education system, including teachers. In my view, teachers are the heart of the education system. The successes of all educational activities depend on the teachers. It was for this reason that teacher education was necessary to be transformed, hoping to improve the problem of unqualified and underqualified teachers. To help develop a relevant curriculum and revise courses to improve teaching of critical and analytical thinking about democratic education, it is essential to have well-educated and analytical teachers.

The Ministry of Education has democratic participation as one of its major goals; this is one of the “root changes” which lie at the heart of the educational transformation. It is the purpose of the next section to analyse democratic participation as a constitutive meaning of educational transformation.

3.2.1.3 Democratic participation

Namibia is a young country emerging from almost a century of colonialism and decades of apartheid rule. Under apartheid, parents were discouraged from getting involved in their children’s education. Their relationship with teachers and administrators was expected to be subservient. Put differently, parents, teachers, unions, learners and communities were largely excluded from the educational activities. Their input and voices were not valued as important enough. The apartheid administration expected them to accept whatever they decided. In other words, parents and communities were undermined and their voices were not recognised. They were regarded as outsiders in the education system.

At independence the Ministry of Education realised that in order for educational transformation to become a reality, it should recognise the collective participation of the parents, teachers, administrators and community (including businesses). It is my contention that the government realises that without community participation in the system, the intended objectives of educational transformation might not be achieved. According to the Ministry of Education the education system should be structured so that the organisation and its participants can choose to form, for instance, teachers’ and student unions, which can play active roles alongside communities in shaping, guiding and assessing the education system. In other words, the transformation should mean that there should be healthy, strong, good relationships between educators, learners, parents and the communities at large. There should be participation, power sharing and consultation in decision making. This is necessary because democratic participation helps to improve certain aspects of school management. Apart from improving school management, it helps to develop responsibility, confidence, problem solving through discussion and a friendlier and more cooperative

environment. It also helps to avoid the violence that has erupted in schools from time to time in Namibia and which has been caused primarily by authoritarianism and poor communications leading to suspicion and resentment (Harber, 1993). Therefore, during the transformation the structures were set up throughout the system, including national and regional councils, schools boards for each school, and a student representative council in each school (MECYS, 1990). The teachers' unions were recognised for negotiation purposes and were represented on every committee. In the words of Minister Angula, transformation includes "participation by the people in policy formulation, programme implementation and monitoring of the educational activities as they affect the nation as a whole or particularly community" (Angula, 1992: 2). I tend to agree with the Ministry structures, because it is necessary for each school to have board members who should take part in decision making. In fact, these members represent the community. This is important, because community participation in the education system holds much promise for the democratic process. Nyerere (1967: 28-9), in support of this view, states that each school should have a school council which would be part of the decision-making structures of the school as "only then can the participants practise – and learn to value – direct democracy the learners should be able to participate in decisions and learn by mistakes". From my own experience and observation I can say that, although learners claim to feel a sense of citizen responsibility and want to participate in making the community better, they lamented that they did not know how, commenting: we do not see what it is that we can do and how. The point I am making is that the educators should teach these learners how to be involved. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education transformed the education system into the one that is organised around broad participation in decision-making and the clear accountability of those who are the leaders (MEC, 1993: 41). It further maintains that schools that are responsive to their communities should not regard parents as unwelcome outsiders. Instead, schools should create conditions whereby they become active participants in school governance, contribute to discussions of school management and administration.

While the government realised the importance of democratic participation, Brynard (1996: 143) states that participation provides a mechanism to ensure the democratisation of the process of educational transformation. The point of participation in the Namibian context is to encourage possible social cooperation and

trust among educators, administrators and communities to work together towards improving learners' performance. The Ministry of Education encourages the community to become more actively involved in their children's education. In other words, it seeks to empower parents through greater involvement. Communities are also being encouraged to contribute towards improving the quality of schools. As part of the programme, school boards are elected and parents collaborate with teachers and administrators in the development of school-improvement plans. I believe that when parents are involved in their children's education, the children do better in school. The question can be asked: why does the government encourage communities to participate in education? As I stated earlier, the government cannot on its own achieve whatever it plans to do without community involvement. The government does not pursue its educational goals independently from the communities it serves. It is my contention that a pluralist system is essentially democratic, in the sense that individuals can influence decisions. Pluralists see interest groups as the key to the Namibian democratic education system. A single person may not be able to make his/her views heard, but an organised group can, in a number of ways such as community meetings. I argue that educational transformation might become difficult during the transformation process without the community being involved. This implies that, for the sake of fairness and transparency in the running of the educational activities, the government should encourage communities to participate fully in education. The communities will be in a position to identify and correct whatever problems arise in the education system. As governors, they could critically evaluate school policy. This is necessary for educational transformation to be successful.

Moreover, in the past communities expected that the main burden of the moral and intellectual part of bringing up their children will be taken up by schools. I think that in a large number of families there is not a habit of finding time for discussing their children's education. Most parents are tired and struggling with financial difficulties, and the time spent with their children is drastically limited. It is obvious that the school cannot be a substitute for the family, but in some cases the school is the only place where young people can unburden themselves of their doubts and hesitations. At independence the MEC (1993: i) stated that it is the duty and responsibility of the parents and the communities to ensure that their children attend school. I contend that the entire burden could not be left in the hands of the schools and its teachers. If the

entire burden to be left in their hands, it might cause them to ignore their duties and responsibilities. It is my view that teachers are not social workers, who have to deal with a lot of problems, for instance, the social problems that learners are experiencing. Instead they are there in schools to facilitate the communication of knowledge to learners. Thus, the government realises the need of communities' participation in education. In my view, as in other social relationships teachers and community should work on developing their mutual relationships. The relationship should not be imposed, but it should be built up gradually and constantly and they have to be maintained. Schools and their teachers should not see themselves as a closed institution, but on the contrary as an open one which is part of a wider social environment in which they are supposed to communicate and cooperate. Communities should be understood as an integral part of a school's educational process; without their cooperation its aims cannot be achieved properly. I argue that schools should avoid seeking out parents only when there are educational problems (the learner's poor performance, problems with his/her morale) or when the school needs something from them. This may result in the school being perceived as an annoying or demanding institution. Parents should always be welcome in schools. Bringing communities together in educational activities allows the whole community to be better informed about the activities of their children and schools. Fritz *et al.* (2002: 16) are of the opinion that once the community are better informed about the schools day-to-day running activities, they will be more interested in education, have a greater grasp of educational issues and can make better recommendations on how to run the schools effectively. They are the school governors, therefore they should participate. As the members work closely together with the principal, they can respond more actively to issues, for instance, teachers' and learners' absenteeism and poor performances of learners.

However, as parents become informed about what goes on in schools, they can play a more active role in school activities and encourage their children to attend school, complete their homework and be involved in extra-mural activities. They may be able to encourage teachers to work hard at improving the devastatingly poor results. This implies that the schools should regularly and consistently invite parents to the school's activities, such as appointments and transfers of teachers, prize-giving ceremonies and fundraising activities. As I stated earlier, the more schools involve

community members in the school activities, the more effectively the school can operate. Moreover, schools should organise parents evenings where talks on various topics would be presented, concerning such as matters as the dangers of drinking, smoking and using drugs, planning a career and effective learning. I contend that through such activities the responsibility of teaching learners is shared among teachers and the parents. In addition, parents should be given opportunities to address learners on any important issue concerning their academic work. By doing so, I believe parents and the community develop greater competence as they learn to make decisions and take responsibility within their school communities. The delegation of authority empowers the community at large. It makes community members gain confidence in participating in the educational activities. This encourages the community members to visit schools more frequently to share ideas with teachers and to identify the problems and find solutions to the problems (Fritz *et al.*, 2002: 13). I shall now briefly describe the role of the private sector in education in order to clarify its position in relation to democratic participation.

At independence it was reported that there was an indication that school leavers' skills were poorly matched to the job market. At the same time opportunities for school leavers to gain the skills required by the market were limited by the lack of tertiary and vocational training opportunities as well as inadequacies in their school backgrounds to enable them to gain these skills (Hoveka, 2002: 3). I contend that this is a major concern for the whole nation. I believe it was not the private sector alone that experienced such problem, but the government sectors too. This cannot be left in the hands of the government only. Now the question can be asked: Why does the government encourage private sector participation in education? Hoveka (2002: 4) states that one should look at private sectors' involvement in the Namibian education system on a graduating scale from length donations to partnerships with educational institutions right through to active participation on about the provision of educational services for profit. All this can improve the quality and access to education and skills development opportunities. The business sector should focus its support on the inputs rather than just the outputs. Their contributions require greater accountability on educational achievement. For instance, donations should be focused on providing equipment and materials for improving science and technology in line with the needs of the labour market. Moreover, in the area of partnerships, the private sector should

work with educational institutions to ensure the relevance of curricular development to private sectors needs. In this regard, a number of partnership initiatives which have been effective elsewhere should be considered. Firstly, corporate executives work with educators to develop a curriculum that reflects private sector technology, standards and practice. Secondly, there should be a mentorship programme, where professionals have links with schools. Capitalising on business expertise whereby institutions that run a business should set up programmes focused on various specific aspects of business education, for instance, finance, may be another approach. Partnerships among private sector institutions should set up training bodies for a particular industry. So there is potential to set up an institution to give school leavers the necessary skills to work in the industry and the provision of management expertise. Moreover, the active participation of the business sector could potentially have the greatest impact on the expansion of opportunities, improving cost effectiveness of educational delivery as well as improving the quality of education. There seems to be an aversion to profiting from education and skills development. However, the profit motive has been highly effective in stimulating growth, access, quality improvements and investment in other sectors of the economy. Therefore, there is no reason why the country cannot expect the same effect in the education sector. If the Namibian business sectors should think about education differently, for instance, as an opportunity for entrepreneurship, innovation, competition and compensation-based productivity, it can bring to the education sector the skills and help to address the problems in this sector.

At independence, one of the most worrying problems in education was the high number of school repeaters and dropouts. At present the opportunities for these school leavers to acquire vocational skills are very limited. Contracting private teachers to conduct education programmes for school drop-outs might be one possible way to address this problem. These include the easing of overcrowding by having fewer repeaters in the classrooms. The private sector could provide specialised programmes with high-quality instruction in a narrow area for which schools cannot justify hiring a full-time teacher or when qualified teachers are in short supply. It is clear that the involvement of the private sector in education in Namibia as elsewhere in the world can make a significant contribution to education and skills development in terms of the quality of educational output, the relevance of educational programmes to the

needs of the economy as well as expanding the education system. However, there is a need for a supportive framework in the education sector that will encourage private sector participation in improving the standards of education such as setting up and monitoring standards of education and quality education. I contend that this should be the role of the government. On the part of the private sector, there is a need for a co-ordinated and focused response, particularly as regards donations and partnerships. With regard to its active participation in the provision of education, the private sector needs to learn from successful experiences in other parts of the world, notably countries such as Brazil and South Africa. Through such exposure, the companies could adapt appropriate models to the Namibian situation (Hoveka, 2002: 5). As I mentioned earlier, the government realises that by involving more partners in the education system it could facilitate the transformation. Many partners will bring their heads together and plan effectively on how to run the education system successfully in independent Namibia. Democratic participation is the key to making democratic education more effective and education is the principal avenue for developing a competent citizenry.

The government's third major commitment was to set up good schools and to offer high-quality education. I shall move on to discussing the concept quality education.

3.2.1.4 Quality education

Quality is a subjective concept that is problematic to define. Defining the quality of education depends on what one thinks are the priority issues that deserve attention to make it quality education. According to Angula (2000), quality will reflect issues such as ideas on child development; the nature of knowledge and what knowledge is worth; the role of the teacher and the type of teachers one would like to cultivate; and the relationship between school and society. In other words, quality should be measured in relation to the context and environment in which education is located. De Klerk (2001: 40) defines quality as the texture of something; an institution, for instance, should be measured against certain criteria to judge the quality of education it provides. The values underlying quality are excellence, diligence, punctuality, self-control, independence, critical thinking, creativity and discipline. De Klerk further

posits that quality and standards are different concepts, which may overlap. Standards are specified and usually measurable outcome indicators used for comparative purposes. According to Steyn (2001: 22), quality is an entity that cannot be separated from equality; these two entities are features of democratic education. He advocates quality education as an education that has to be linked to the improvement of processes of positive change to enhance transformation processes and outcomes that fit the goals valued by participants in the educational processes. Quality as understood by liberal democrats has to provide for opportunities to enable learners to develop their potential and has to make sense to all the relevant stakeholders. Moreover, to some people quality only means raising the standards and that means, according to this view, increasing the amount of materials learners are supposed to be capable of reciting on command. Others may view quality education as education conducted by educators of higher quality and for another group it may simply mean a process of the ongoing continuous improvement of education. It should be stated that quality is not a definitive phenomenon, but rather an evaluation relative to arbitrary or international trends. Consequently, most discussions on the quality of education system concentrate on quality indicators such as inputs. There is a broad consensus that motivated teachers, a relevant curriculum, useful teaching and materials, an agreeable learning environment and the efficient organisation and management of fixed amounts of material inputs that raise learners achievement constitute a quality education system (Watkins, 2000 & Fuller, 1986).

For the purpose of this study the quality of education is linked to the improvement of positive change. It provides teaching and learning resources that are needed for the education of Namibian children; empowers its teachers by training principals and teachers; recruits, deploys and trains unqualified and underqualified teachers for quality assurance (MEC, 1993: 37-38). Democratic education, in a young democracy such as Namibia, should clearly be able to accommodate quality as part of our educational transformation process to build a culture of democracy.

Quality education is important. The question is: Who in this world can ever have anything against quality? And who in the world can be satisfied if the quality of education is dropping? Quality education is in the best interest of the nation. Bearing in mind how poorly learners perform, the lack of quality education remains a major

concern to all responsible citizens. We should improve on the quality of our educational performance if we wish to survive in a competitive world. Poor-quality education is the result of, among other things, poor educational leadership. Schools should be the breeding ground for quality education until “learning how to do things better becomes a way of life” (Brand, 2000: 81). It does not rest only with the government to tackle the problems, but the government should set the example. When the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture drafted Guidelines for Early Childhood Education in 1993, the main goal was to provide quality education while learners are at a young age. The guidelines maintain that:

We must look at children as whole human beings and our concern should be facilitate their all round growth physical, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and cognitively. We should also be sure that we look at them in the context of their homes, families and communities.

Moreover, Harvey suggests five perspectives to be considered when measuring quality of education. These perspectives are: quality as excellence, as perfection, as fitness for purpose, as value for money and as transformation. I now provide a brief account of these notions in order to clarify their role in the concept of quality education.

- Quality as excellence approach

Harvey posits that the quality as excellence approach emphasises the maintenance of academic standards, the assessment of knowledge and some “higher level” skills. It presumes an implicit, normative “good standards” or “golden standards” for learning and it advocates merit/elitism even within a mass education system. He further points out that quality of teaching is associated with instruction of the “the best” teachers and their teaching practice. I argue that only a certain number of teachers are able to function in this manner. These teachers count amongst the “top” or “exceptional” teachers.

- Quality as perfection (consistency) approach

This approach of consistency emphasises consistency in external quality monitoring of academic and competence standards. The aim of producing a defect-free output is, however, not consistent with the nature of pupils, because learners are not perfect or consistent. Teachers also not perfect, because they are human beings and therefore they make mistakes.

- Quality as fitness for purpose

This approach relates standards to specific purpose-related objectives. It tends towards explicit specification of skills and abilities and requires clear evidence by which to identify threshold standards. In my view, teaching only gives evidence of quality where learning outcomes can be measurable and demonstrated. Theoretically this kind of quality is within everybody's reach.

- Quality as value for money

This approach places emphasis on a “good deal” for the customer, usually the government, employer, learners or parents. It prioritises efficiency and accountability to the ‘clients/customers’. In an education context the notion of accountability is at the heart of the value for money approach. Teaching is valuable if it gives measurable returns on investments. This can be in terms of per capita spending, pass rates or low dropout rates. All these are indicators of quality teaching. In this regards, learning objectives should be reached with the minimal cost.

- Quality as transformation approach

For the purpose of this study quality education should bring positive changes that emphasise academic knowledge through a broader set of transformative skills such as analysis, critical thinking, innovation and communication. This approach enhances the ability of learners and empowers them so that they may be able to make a meaningful contribution to the processes of transformation (Harvey, 1996: 205). My own view of

quality education is that it is not merely about achieving levels of standards. Rather it is a matter of empowering teachers, learners, parents, and other stakeholders.

Quality education should be interpreted within the context of its objectives. It should meet the expectation of the parties that benefit by this education and therefore there should at least be some form of “customer satisfaction”. It envisages learning institutions that can provide for the best development of each learner. The question can be asked: How do the above features of quality education relate to the educational transformation in Namibia?

Educational transformation in the Namibian context associates quality education to the improvement of teaching, learning, adequate teaching and learning resources, and democratic classroom practices. The Ministry of Education intended to achieve these by introducing “Education for All”. The purpose was to address the inherited educational problems. The most important challenge in improving the quality of Namibian education was to ensure that educators are well trained. The MEC intends to achieve quality education by addressing the following aspects: unqualified and underqualified teachers; overcrowded classrooms; inadequate teaching and learning resources.

To address the problem of teachers’ incompetence it is necessary that teachers develop expertise and skills that enable them to stimulate learning. As a result, the MEC attempts to train teachers through in-service training in a period of four years and pre-service teacher training in a period of three years (MEC, 1993: 77-79). The other possibility the Ministry is looking at to address educational problems are the training of principals, inspectors and subject advisors. The aim is that they should see their role as using their expertise to improve what happens in the schools and classrooms. They should be imaginative in helping teachers to overcome the obstacles they encounter. Where they find that particular teachers lack expertise or skill, they should be creative in helping those teachers see the additional work they need not as a sanction but as an opportunity to improve their own abilities. Furthermore, another task in improving the quality of education is to improve the physical facilities. This implies that the Namibian government should build enough classrooms to accommodate all learners inside the classroom in order to, among other things, protect

learners from wind and rain. The government does in fact attempt to do so, but it still remain a problem, especially in rural areas. To improve quality education the learners should be provided with an environment that is conducive to learning. The MEC should ensure that learners have sufficient textbooks and instructional materials. Teachers and learners should be creative and innovative in producing their own materials. In my view, teachers and learners who rely on their own imagination and experience to design, construct and collect the materials they need find learning exciting, empowering and relevant to their lives. Improving the quality of education is a responsibility all citizens should share. In this case, the community can participate in building and repairing schools or donating some materials to schools. By so doing, the problem of lack of resources can be alleviated.

Moreover, we should understand quality even more broadly. Access and equity are also measures of quality. For instance, there are schools whose learners come from all parts of our society. If it turns out that learners from only one racial group do well in their examinations, or that only boys focus on mathematics and science, or that children from only one ethnic group are chosen to represent the school, then something is very wrong. Even if some of its learners do well in their examination, that school is not providing quality education. The point is that, if discrimination and segregation are still inevitable in schools, then quality education has not been provided. Quality education means that all children should have access to schooling. Both girls and boys should be encouraged to do mathematics. To ensure quality education the schools need competent teachers, a relevant curriculum, democratic classrooms, and sufficient teaching and learning materials. I believe that learning, knowing, understanding and thinking “civilise”; that quality education - the cultivation of human minds and spirits - is the foundation of a good and economically productive democratic society; and that the improvement of education is a means to a better society.

3.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter I analysed the concept of transformation. I analysed the meaning of the concept in the Namibian context. I explained why the current system of education encourages educational transformation in independent Namibia. I concluded the

chapter with a clarification of the constitutive meanings of educational transformation (curriculum change, change in teacher education, democratic participation, and quality education). Before I explore whether the current education system functions according to these constitutive meanings of educational transformation, I shall first explore the historical background of the Namibian education system.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDENTIFYING SOME “PROBLEMS” WITHIN THE NAMIBIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

4.1 Introduction

When Namibia became independent on 21 March 1990, education in the country could best be characterised by the following features: fragmentation of education along racial and ethnic lines; unequal access to education and training at all levels of the education system; inefficiency in terms of low progression and achievement rates, irrelevance of the curriculum and teacher education programmes in relation to the needs and aspirations of individuals and the nation, and a lack of democratic participation within the education and training system (MEC, 1993: 2-3). There was also unequal allocation of financial resources in education based on the eleven ethnic authority systems that were operational before independence (Tjitendero, 1984: 1). As a result the current government continuously experiences a number of educational problems such as lack of skilled or competent educators, overcrowded classrooms, lack of English proficiency, and lack of resources such as textbooks, laboratories, libraries, water, electricity and photocopy machines. These problems did not start after independence. Rather, the root of these educational problems should be sought in the system that preceded independence. In order to have an understanding of the Namibian educational problems I deem it necessary first to explore and analyse the educational background in Namibia during the colonial and apartheid administrations. In the words of Taylor (in Waghid, 1993: 9) to grasp a principle means having an understanding of what makes a concept what it is, that is, identifying its constitutive meaning. I shall base my argument on this interpretation of a concept. This implies that it is important to understand what has made Namibian education what it is. In doing this, I shall base my analyses on four historical periods.

Waghid (2003: 15) suggests that a person could understand the concept of education if they could relate the word “education” appropriately to the use of concepts such as “teaching” and “learning”. In this case, in order to understand the problems of teaching and learning in the Namibian context, I shall investigate the educational problems in relation to their historical background. Therefore, my understanding of

the concept of educational problems will be based on analysing what happened in Namibia in four periods: pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid. It is the aim of this chapter to explore what the educational problems are, how they originated and, more importantly, why they should be regarded as problems.

4.2 Pre-colonial education

Formal education was introduced to the people of Namibia by Wesleyan missionaries as a strategy for their evangelical work (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 2 & Geingob, 1968: 219). The missionaries dominated the provision and administration of education throughout the colonial period (Eshiwani, 1990: 1). Colonial education in Namibia was determined by a variety of factors, including race and social status. It was argued that the different races had attained different levels of social, political and economic development and that each needed the kind of education that would preserve its culture and prepare its people for their appropriate role in society. This meant that there were different education curricula for each race, and in effect different education systems within the country. The missionaries wanted education that would produce “enlightened” workers who would be capable of taking instructions so as to be useful on the farms (Tjitendero, 1984: 7). However, they were opposed to any attempt to make Blacks aspire to equality with the white man, nor did they pursue education that would make Blacks self-sufficient in their rural areas, as this would have threatened the supply of cheaper labour for the missionaries’ farms (Eshiwani, 1990: 1-2 & Tjitendero, 1984: 7). In addition, national cohesion was never a concern of the colonialists, since in a colonial setting there could be no sense of nationhood.

Education was tailored to set races apart in a complex of relationships that ensured the domination of one group over others. Even among Africans ethnic differences were manipulated to keep the various communities apart under the principle of “Divide and Rule” (Eshiwani, 1990: 3). The education system did not enable Black people to acquire certain skills that could enable them to be competent administrators or to qualify them in different fields in the working environment, nor to develop skills that would enable them to become self-reliant, self-determined or independent. The

missions often considered education as important in relation to their main task of spreading the Gospel. For the missionaries, literacy required nothing more than the ability to read the Bible, the hymn book and other evangelical literature (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 108). The training of the missionaries did not help people to perform tasks other than reading the Bible. Black teachers lacked appropriate training and this, together with a heavily prescriptive curriculum, often left them (teachers) ill prepared to teach effectively in a multiracial context. In 1866 the Rhenish Mission society established its first school for elementary (primary) teacher training at Otjimbingwe that catered for Damara- and Herero-speaking people. In about 1876 the same mission society opened a school at Otjimbingwe for learners. Segregation of the races by the colonial government resulted in a severe neglect of Black education. This is evidenced by the fact that more resources and facilities were devoted to the education of Whites, who represented three percent of the population, than were used to educate Blacks, who represented ninety-seven percent (Eshiwani, 1990: 2 & MEC, 1993: 5). This resulted in the critical shortage of educated and trained local manpower, which was urgently needed for the economic and social development of the nation.

4.3 The period of German rule 1884-1915

German missionary societies arrived after other missionaries, such as the Wesleyans, the Rhenish and the Catholic missionaries had occupied the territory. Upon their arrival the Germans had an opportunity to establish the German Realschule in 1909 in Windhoek to cater for White children only. This marked the significant beginning of organised education by the state, while education for Blacks during the 1910s remained in the hands of the various missionary societies. During that time the state managed and subsidised educational activities by R900 per annum per school. This amount was not adequate to finance schools, especially for Black children. The policy of uneven allocation of funds was inevitable during German rule. The state made sure that the funding of educational activities was based on racial grounds. The White children benefited more than the Black children. The schools for White learners were well equipped with adequate teaching materials, learning materials, including proper building facilities and human resources (well-qualified teachers), while schools for

Blacks experienced a lack of teaching and learning materials, inadequate building facilities and a lack of trained teaching staff (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 109).

Moreover, the amount of subsidies the state allocated to Black schools was not adequate. The funds could not finance the training of Black teachers nor could it cater for intensive teaching and learning resources. The uneven allocation of funds meant that the majority of White teachers were well qualified, while the poorer Black teachers were ill prepared for their jobs. Geingob (1967: 219) expresses a similar view when he states that “teachers were inadequately qualified for their work”. Black teachers had often progressed little beyond the stage of being able to read and write. The inadequate funding resulted in Black schools having weak, untrained teachers. In addition, teachers and learners in Black schools operated in a poorly resourced environment (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 109). Colonial education was inadequate in quantity and scope. Its objectives were narrow and restrictive. The restrictive effect of colonial policy on Black education meant that, at the time of independence, a large majority of Black children were not going to school and only a small number passed through the system (Eshiwani, 1990: 2). Quality education was not the missionaries’ interest. Geingob (1967: 219) posits that in many cases both mission societies did not offer classes above Standard 2 (Grade 4). Amukugo (1993; 45) expresses the same opinion when she states that during the German colonial period Black education never progressed beyond simple literacy and Bible study, while generous government grants were provided to White parents to encourage them to send their children to boarding schools. Halls (1990: 260) is of the opinion that mission schools actually educated the “African away from his culture”. When D’Oyley (1994: 10) was studying schooling in developing countries, including Namibia, he found that in the colonial era schools were viewed as an instrument for the inculcation of skills, knowledge and beliefs necessary for the functioning of a Western nation-state form of government and economic system, with little thought given to the implications of the traditional knowledge, beliefs and skills of the colonised societies. By the end of the German rule there were 115 mission schools in Namibia with a total enrolment of 5,490 pupils. Mbuende (1987:32-33) describes the end of the German rule in Namibia as follows:

The once economically self-sustaining Africans were reduced to the status of labourers who had to enter the service of the settlers to meet their subsistence requirements. Indeed, the only condition on which the Africans were given the privilege to live was that they had to supply labour. Africans could not advance beyond the status of labourers (Mbuende, 1987: 32-33).

4.4 The period of South African administration

When Namibia was colonised by South Africa, some organisation of educational services took place in 1920 (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 109). During that time expenditure on education had risen to R70 000 compared to R900 per annum during the German rule. Even though the amount had risen, it was still inadequate for financing educational activities. Proclamation No. 58 of 1921 brought education under South African control. A White department of education under a director of education was set up. The department of education did not control Black education; rather it concentrated on controlling White schools only. The education of Blacks was still in the hands of the missionaries (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 109). The South African regime set out to organise the hitherto unorganised education system for Blacks, which they had inherited from the German colonial regime (Amukugo, 1993: 46). However, like the Germans, the South African administration wished to control, but not improve, education for Blacks. It imposed a restricted curriculum, spanning not more than four years, consisting of reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and singing in the vernacular (Ellis, 1984: 18). In 1948 the Afrikaner National Party came into power after elections in South Africa. The National Party refused to recognise the United Nations rights as the legal successor of the League of Nations to supervise South Africa's administration in Namibia. The National Party set about entrenching its policy of apartheid, reinforcing racial separation and domination by the White minority over the Black majority in all spheres of life. Christian National Education became the official policy for Whites as a means to protect their cultural and economic interests, while for the Blacks the government introduced what they called "Bantu education". Tjitendero (1984: 4) expresses a similar opinion when he states that the Nationalists came to power in South Africa with a clearly defined policy of apartheid. Tjitendero further points out that a commission on native education was appointed in South Africa and part of its mandate included, firstly, the

formulation of the principles and aims of education for natives as an independent race, in which their inherent racial qualities, and their distinctive characteristics and aptitude, and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration; and secondly, the extent to which the existing primary, secondary and vocational education system for native teachers should be modified in respect of the content and form of the syllabus in order to conform to the proposed principles and aims and to prepare natives more effectively for their occupations (Tjitendero, 1984: 4).

In 1951 the Eiselen Commission was appointed to investigate the state of Bantu education in Namibian society. The Eiselen Commission in 1951 reported on its findings that “Bantu education was broadly conceived and it was organised in such a way to provide schools with a definite Christian character”. Moreover, it was based on the three principles of guardianship, no levelling and segregation as it was defined in the policy statement of the Institute of Christian National Education. The Nationalist government in South Africa adopted the Eiselen Commission’s recommendations and these were applied to Namibia after the recommendations of the Van Zyl Commission in 1958. After the Eiselen Commission, Van Zyl Commission 1958 was appointed to further investigate the Namibian education system. The Commission’s findings were that Black schools were still in the hands of the missionaries; Afrikaans was the medium of instruction; and the syllabus was constructed by the missionaries themselves. After the compilation of the findings, the Commission made the following recommendations: “Mission schools to be replaced by the community and state, administration for Blacks to be separated under the South West Africa department of education, Bantu education syllabus to be introduced” (Cohen, 1994: 96 and Tjitendero, 1984: 5). The adoption of Bantu education meant that the curriculum for Black learners was as rudimentary as before, ensuring that they would be able only to read and write in their mother tongue, and have little knowledge of English. They would therefore only be equipped to perform unskilled work, consistent with Verwoerd’s policy that there was no place for the native (Black) in the European (White) community above the level of certain forms of labour: “When I have control of native education I will reform it so that the native will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them. People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for natives” (quoted in Ellis, 1984: 23 and Tjitendero, 1984:

7). As a result the provision of pre-primary, primary and secondary teacher training, according to Tjitendero, was the responsibility of the representative authority of various ethnic groups such as Kavango, Caprivi, Herero, Vambos, Nama, Damara, Baster, Coloureds and Whites as recommended by the Van Zyl Commission.

The legislature placed this responsibility in the hands of the black representatives intentionally. However, these representative authorities were not in a better position to handle these tasks. They did not possess the skills and knowledge to run their own administrations, because they had not been trained. The Commission recommended separate education within Namibia in order to bring Namibian education in line with the apartheid policies of South Africa. The commission emphasised that as “most of the coloureds have to earn their living by manual labour, the development of their manual skills should be emphasised” (Cohen, 1994: 102). The teachers in White schools were better trained than those for the Black schools, and the majority of them had post-matriculation training in South Africa. White teachers had access to tertiary and vocational education, albeit in South Africa, and financial assistance from the government was available. Cohen (1994: 104) states that the greater government financial backing they enjoyed meant high-quality facilities, and the admittedly superior education they were exposed to, inculcated leadership and elitist values, and prepared them for dominant roles in the society. The White privileged position was entrenched and reinforced by the apartheid system. Great inequalities and disparities in terms of educational provision and provision of resources were created between the different population groups. The South African apartheid educational ideology was sophisticated and complex, and therefore better able to legitimate the interests of the colonial power and the White minority group. The economic structure was clearly unjust, with very few jobs, gross inequalities in earnings and ownership, and power reserved almost entirely for local Whites. This inevitably had an effect on the provision of education for Blacks and therefore on educational opportunities for Whites. The overall thrust of the ideology was to keep Black Namibians in subordinate positions in order for Whites to retain their position of privilege.

4.4.1 Differentiation in education

Just as the situation demanded diversity in economics, so it did in the educational field. As far as the White group was concerned, parents insisted that their children should receive a suitable education of the nature and standards to which European communities everywhere were accustomed (South West Africa Survey, 1967: 44). In these circumstances, differentiation in education was inevitable and led to a marked difference between educational facilities for the White and Black groups. Since South African education was segregated, so was Namibian education because the policy adopted was the same. Education was managed differently in terms of curriculum and syllabi, medium of instruction, financial resources and teacher training as well as salaries.

4.4.2 Financial provisions for educating the different groups

The extent of personnel and financial capacity was reflected in the overall effectiveness of the advantaged White school: efficient school organisation and administration, a wide range of quality curricula and extra-curricular programmes, a strong culture of teaching and learning within a disciplined environment, and outstanding pass rates. Disadvantaged schools (for Black) could not compare. Expenditure on Black education consisted of the actual cost of the state schools, including subsidies paid to missions and communities. These subsidies had risen from R70, 000 per annum to R1,333,897 in 1966/67. Relatively more was spent per pupil in the White group than in the Black schools. As a result, the inequality of funding translated into poor performances in Black schools and created a negative relationship between Blacks and Whites. In addition, the uneven allocation of resources ensured that a larger percentage of White children benefited than Black children (MEC, 1993: 5). The inequality was accentuated by the fact that at lower primary level the Black schools had two-teacher schools (by implication one teacher had to take two classes of 120 learners in Sub A and B) with morning and afternoon sessions. By contrast, White classes at primary and secondary level were closer to small-group ideals of 16 to 20 children (Tjitendero 1984: 5). Even though the White group made up a very small fraction of the total population, they had the same number of schools as the much larger Black population (Chamberlain *et al.*, 1981: 15). Moreover, according to

the study done by the United Nations Institute for Namibia, the teacher/pupil ratio in Black schools was higher than in White schools.

Furthermore, the sheer size of the beginners' classes at primary level acted as a powerful demotivator for Black children. Similarly, large classes at secondary level seriously affected both learning and motivation. There were many reasons that contributed negatively to the delivery of adequate Black education in Namibia. The reasons include the lack of job opportunities, poorly resourced classrooms, the contract labour system that reduces parental control and increased children's domestic burden, and most importantly, the lack of any form of compulsory education at both primary and secondary level for Black learners. In my view, children perhaps saw that, even if education did not provide access to teaching, it would at least provide an opportunity of escaping from the burden of rural work and prepare them for urban job opportunities. One should remember that education was not seen as a right, but rather as a privilege. The Black children were not attracted to schools, and those who were in schools were dropping out before they completed their schooling. Ellis (in Chamberlain *et al.*, 1981: 17) posits that children dropped out of school for the following reasons: they had to walk long distances to go to school, the cost of school fees, insufficient qualified teachers and suitable textbooks, and the contradictory and offensive content of Bantu education. This transformed into learners becoming demotivated, and when coupled with the lack of (education) opportunities often meant the absence of a real incentive towards acquiring an education. It is against this background that the Namibian education system has to be reviewed.

4.5 NAMIBIAN EDUCATION DURING THE POST-APARTHEID ERA

When looking at the development of education in Namibia during the last fourteen years, one sees great strides that might paint a rosy picture of what the country has done and continues to do in the field of education. Namibia has, however, had to deal with problems in the implementation of her educational programmes. Some of these problems were inherited from the colonial system; others have arisen in the process of educational development in the post-apartheid period. When Namibia became independent in 1990, education in the country was best characterised by a number of

features, as stated in the introduction. The newly elected government of Namibia inherited an education system based on apartheid from South Africa, which was characterised by inequalities in terms of the distribution of resources, where access to learning was a priority for a few Whites, and where the quality of education offered was not taken into account. In repairing an education system characterised by some of the above features, as well as raising it to an international level, the new government rightly declared in Article 20 of the country's constitution that all people should have access to education and the state shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective education (MEC, 1993: 3-5).

In order to meet these new challenges education required a new content and a co-ordinated national programme. It could no longer be left in the hands of the missionaries or South Africa; therefore the new state had to assume responsibility for a secular educational system that also respected the faiths of all communities and individuals, while continuing to welcome the participation of missions and other voluntary agencies. Since independence the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government has placed education at the top of the national priorities. Along with the expansion, there has been the government's commitment to democratise education by extending opportunities to areas which had been disadvantaged during the colonial period. Despite the government's intention to redistribute resources in support of the holistic educational background, I argue that it is not doing enough to uplift formerly disadvantaged schools. The implementation of democratic education failed to differentiate between disadvantaged and better resourced schools. The materials essential to teaching and learning are unavailable at many rural schools. Despite the sound endeavours by the government to provide quality education, there are numerous problems that hamper the delivery of urgently needed quality education. These problems include lack of teaching and learning materials, poor physical facilities, higher learner-teacher ratios, inequalities in resource allocation and lack of qualified teachers. I shall now discuss the problems in detail.

4.5.1 Lack of competent teachers

Despite efforts to train more teachers, the shortage of competent teachers remains a problem. It is aggravated by another problem, namely the introduction of the new teachers training programme. As a result one still finds a large number of untrained and under-qualified teachers in Namibian schools (MEC, 1993: 75-76). To begin with, teacher education in Namibia had undergone various changes in the period prior to and immediately after independence. Before independence the unevenness of the teacher training programmes caused concern. At independence the then Ministry of Education and Culture (1990a: 28) reported on the state of teachers' training in the country, which is similar to that of education in general: uncoordinated, fragmented, poorly organised and non-uniform. Thus, an in-depth investigation of the pre-service teacher-training programme was called for. Holly and McLoughlin (1989: 22) state that since teacher education, whether pre-service or in-service, is the deliberate and conscious effort to intervene in the personal and professional development of an individual or groups of individuals, both ethical and practical considerations require some policy statement to guide practice. Indeed, it is a fundamental professional assumption that effective education programmes rest upon a teaching-learning process that is rooted in a consciously developed plan, and that effective education programmes in turn rest upon well-developed educational policies. The Namibian government commits itself to providing basic education for all Namibians. In consultation with the stakeholders, the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) was developed.

The main aim of the programme is to develop professional expertise and competencies for educators and to enable them to be fully involved in promoting changes in educational reform in Namibia (MBEC, 1993; Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) & Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology (MHVTST, 1998). The Ministry of Education implemented the programme in January 1993, with its first intake of BETD students. The ministry phased out the previous teacher education programmes, as stated in Chapter 1, hoping to alleviate the problem of the high number of unskilled and unqualified teachers who were predominantly in Black schools. The government states that the former teacher education programmes did not in fact help the teachers to meet the needs of the learners. With the new programme the teachers would learn and be able to master the skills and knowledge in their various fields (MEC, 1993: 78-81).

Hargreaves (1994: 10) states that changes can be proclaimed in official policy; change can look impressive when represented in the boxes and arrows of administrations' overheads, or enumerated as stages in evolutionary profiles of school growth. But changes of this kind are superficial. They do not strike at the heart of how children learn and how teachers teach. They achieve little more than trivial changes in practice. Neither do changes of buildings, textbooks, materials, computers, nor even learner groupings, unless profound attention is paid to the process of teacher development that accompanies these innovations. The involvement of educators in educational change is vital to its success, especially if the change is complex and is to affect many settings over long periods of time. The point I want to make is that, before the new teaching programme was implemented, it was said to be an excellent and effective programme which could change teachers' lifestyles in the teaching profession. Unfortunately, the changes of the new programme did not seem to bring positive changes into the teaching profession. The training was rushed and the trainers themselves are unqualified. The BETD thus fails to equip educators with the necessary skills to cope with classroom practice. The majority of educators (lecturers) are ordinary teachers whom the Ministry had selected to train the prospective teachers. I am not sure about the criteria that the government used for choosing the educators (lecturers).

Teachers experience problems with their work because their educators failed to demonstrate how this should be done. Those responsible for training the educators have themselves not been adequately trained and are therefore unable to communicate most of the issues to the prospective teachers. Educators seem to know as little as the learners. This leaves the majority of teachers in the BETD programme confused. The government introduced the new programme without paying enough attention to training or preparing educators, who were not accustomed to the new programme and its concepts. This shows that planning as well as training and the dissemination of information did not take account of the concrete conditions in which implementation of the new training programme should proceed.

I do not want to suggest that the programme is not relevant. I am just not convinced that the BETD can be a possible solution for alleviating the existing problem. My

main concern is with the content and scope of the programme. It fails to show how the prospective teachers can become self-reliant and it fails to demonstrate how it can impart teachers with adequate skills and knowledge. The programme in fact does not concentrate on subject content rather on teaching methodology only. I argue that teachers will be in a better position to be able to teach provided the person knows what to teach, how to teach and what learners should learn. The most important aspect in teaching is both subject matter and teaching techniques. For example, if I teach geography, I might be able to demonstrate the knowledge of how to teach, but I will fail to demonstrate what learners should learn, simply because I lack the subject knowledge. In other words, I will fail to impart the subject knowledge to learners. In my view, the former programmes were better in terms of imparting knowledge to students. With the BETD, students are more passive than ever before. This reminds me of the words of Biesta (1994a, 1994b), who states that apart from the obvious fact that the conditions of being a student are quite different from those of being a patient, being a student is not an illness just as teaching is not a cure. The most important argument against the idea that education is a causal process is that it is not a process of physical interaction but a process of symbolic interaction. If teaching is to have any effect on learning, it is because of the fact that students interpret and try to make sense of what they are being taught. It is only through a process of (mutual) interpretation that education is possible. My own observation and experience is that most of the teachers who pass through the BETD programme are unable to teach the specific grade level which they claim to qualify for. I argue that no adequate study was carried out on the implementation of this programme. It has been criticised a lot by the majority of people right from the beginning. I contend that it survives at the expense of the disadvantaged people who in the past were denied quality education.

Meyer (1998: 103) states that Namibia has rapidly raised its standard of teacher training and certification in the nine years since independence. But, according to Meyer, this rise in the standard of teacher training has added to a pool of teachers, especially in the northern regions, who are defined as unqualified and under-qualified. This shows that the standard of the new programme is lower than that of the former programmes, otherwise the standard of the teachers in terms of their being under-qualified and unqualified would have improved. This implies that the change has been ineffective, if not a total failure. The training does not equip educators with classroom

skills on how to teach subjects differently, the way they did in the old system. Moreover, some of the teachers involved can improve their training and qualifications, but thousands of them are not eligible for entry into training at this level. These teachers lack the appropriate certificate, the appropriate knowledge base and the necessary competence in English (Meyer, 1998: 103). The majority of these teachers do not have Grade 10. Even though it is claimed that the standard of teacher training has been raised by the new programme, the majority of teachers are still incompetent. Meyer (1998: 106) states that about thirty percent of primary school teachers in the central and southern regions of Namibia are reported as lacking a Grade 12 education. The figures for the four main northern regions (Ondangwa East and West, Kavango and Caprivi) are even worse compared to those for the south of Namibia. The figures for the four northern regions run from fifty-five to seventy-five percent. In the centre and the south about twenty percent of primary school teachers are reported as lacking any specialised teacher training. For the same four northern regions these figures run from thirty to sixty-four percent (Meyer, 1998: 106). These educators without any specialised teacher training are the same educators who are busy teaching the new Namibian generation. In many cases learners sometimes stage demonstrations against the teachers who are unable to teach. The question arises: if learners can identify the weaknesses of educators, what type of educators are the Namibian institutions busy training? The incompetence of the majority of teachers in most government schools hampers the development of these schools and poses a dilemma to the Namibian education system. In addition, because educators are incompetent, the schools produce poor examination results. I shall indicate below why this is a major problem.

Before discussing why unqualified and under-qualified educators are a problem, I first want to explore the notion of incompetence. I contend that if a person is not adequately or properly trained by the higher learning institution, then this person would not be able to render effective service as required. In this case the person would lack knowledge of how to render the service. The same applies to educators in Namibia, where institutions of higher learning face the problem of producing poorly trained educators. Because these teachers are under-qualified and unskilled, they end up being incompetent in the sense of failing to deliver what they are supposed to. Competence is a concept without a precise technical meaning. Moreover, there are no

clear-cut standards or cut-off points which enable an administrator to say with precision that a teacher is incompetent. This ambiguity poses a serious problem for principals, because the burden of proof falls on them to demonstrate that a teacher is incompetent (Rosenberger & Plimpton in Bridges, 1986: 4).

Incompetence appears to mean persistent failure in one or more of the following respects: failure to maintain discipline; failure to impart subject matter effectively; failure to demonstrate mastery of the subject matter being taught; failure to produce the intended or desired results in the classroom; and failure to treat learners properly (Bridges, 1986: 5). This seems to be a relevant description of the status of the majority of teachers in Namibia. The number of learners who are being taught by such teachers is substantial. If we assume that sixty-four percent of the teachers in public primary and secondary schools are incompetent (Meyer 1998: 106), the number of learners who are being taught by these teachers exceeds the total combined in public school enrolments of thirteen regions. The large number of learners who are being disadvantaged each year by incompetent teachers underscores the importance and the seriousness of this problem. Not surprisingly, parents are unhappy about the presence of such educators in the teaching profession (Bridges, 1986: 2). For fourteen consecutive years, parents have expressed their reservations about the quality of teaching in public schools. On one occasion nearly half of the public schools' parents indicated that there were teachers in the local schools who should be fired. The most frequently cited reason for this drastic action was incompetence (Meyer 1998: 106). Recently, parents in regions with declining performance have begun to question lay-off policies (if there is any such policy in place), which ignores the problem of teacher incompetence. Meanwhile, incompetent teachers are left to teach the future Namibian generation, which means that schools are left with mediocre teachers who appear to have precious little creative inspiration for teaching and very little interest in children. As a result, this will severely hamper the delivery of quality and better education.

I do not mean to paint all teachers with the same brush. There are many excellent teachers in the public schools in all the regions. Learners and parents are not the only ones who are being disadvantaged by incompetent teachers. These poor performers tarnish the image of those Namibian teachers who are competent and conscientious professionals. It is for this reason that these teachers cast a dark shadow on the

hundreds of competent teachers who are overworked and underappreciated for their efforts and accomplishments. More crucially, the poor performance of educators is contributing to the poor academic performance of learners. The learners who have been taught by these educators may also create difficulties for subsequent teachers, if the learners have not mastered the concepts, skills and material to which they have been exposed. In addition, incompetent teachers may become a source of frustration for their colleagues, if they have worked together as members of a teaching team. Any of these problems may prompt other teachers to complain.

Educating teachers is thus of critical importance to the nation. Indeed, the government spends about thirty percent of its budget on education, including the training of teachers (MEC, 1993: ii). As result of its efforts since independence, the government has made commendable progress, particularly with regard to improving access to primary education, achieving an enrolment rate of close to ninety percent. However, the sheer numbers involved, coupled with the disparities of the past, mean that there are still enormous challenges, particularly as regards the quality of educational output. This is a matter of serious concern, not only to the public but also the private sector. If Namibia is to achieve the goals articulated in its vision for 2030, against the background of globalisation, then the development of human resources for increased productivity and the growth of enterprise will be critical. In addition, the process of continually up-grading skills ensures sustained improvements in productivity in all sectors. The question is whether the education system currently in place can produce a school leaver who is both educated and educatable to meet these challenges, if the status of the teaching profession in Namibia is so inadequate.

The indications are that the education system's capacity to produce such an effective school leaver is severely constrained. There is growing unemployment among school leavers – among those who complete their secondary school education and those who complete their tertiary education, as well as those who leave before completing. Paradoxically, there are shortages of skills in certain areas of the Namibian economy. Hoveka (2002: 1) argues that in Namibia there is an indication that school leavers' skills are poorly matched to the job market at the time; opportunities for school leavers to gain the skills required by the market are limited by the lack of tertiary and vocational training opportunities as well as inadequacies in their school backgrounds

to enable them to gain these skills. The implication is that at least one quarter of school leavers automatically join the ranks of the unemployed. This is not only a waste of human resources, but also a potential social time bomb (Hoveka, 2002: 3). There is a tendency in Namibian institutions, including schools and higher education institutions, to producing job seekers instead of job creators. Namibians in general are excellent at identifying problems. I agree with the MEC (1993: 19) when it states that “as we become better at identifying and solving problems, we also become better at creating jobs and increasing our income”. It is my view that as long as education is in its current condition, the prevailing inequalities in access to education are not likely to be eliminated.

Moreover, cognitive achievement among Namibian learners is low by world standards and there has recently been some suggestion of a further decline. In the few studies that have been conducted, academic achievement in Namibia has been found to be sufficiently poor to be a cause for serious concern. Addressing these issues of stagnation in the profession and its low quality will require additional resources. Equally important, it requires profound changes in educational policy for Namibia. Indeed, for Namibia as a developing country, the first will not be obtainable without the second. The Namibian education system has put more emphasis on the production of qualified teachers, but there are many contradictions in the objectives in this context. For instance, while the endeavour to fulfil the nation’s manpower requirements continues, the very system employed to do so send thousands of learners into the cold, making them redundant and superfluous in the production system. The educational system has not produced high-level competent educators in the field of English, science and technology. To a large extent Namibia is still dependent on outside assistance in these fields (MEC, 1993: 75). In spite of the BETD programme being geared to produce large numbers of competent educators, there is a chronic shortage of educators, which is worse in the field of the sciences.

I argue that the training for teachers is usually insufficient and ad hoc. The point I am making is that an awareness of good teaching and learning is not sufficient. This causes great wasted potential in the system. Welch (in Waghid, 2002: 21) posits that teacher education programmes should be structured in ways that assist prospective teachers to grasp the disciplinary bases of content knowledge, methodology, and

relevant and critical pedagogic theory, which is often reduced to “classroom tips for teachers”. This implies that educational activity should be linked to the actualisation of good teaching and learning. At this point I am not convinced that this is actually the case in Namibian higher learning institutions. I argue that the situation in Namibia is totally different. In support of my claim, Bregman (2003: 15), in his report during the World Bank Conference 2003, states that in Namibia, for example, a new, relevant, nationally unified and standardised curriculum complete with subject curricula for core and elective subjects, complementary curricular materials and an instructional system based on progressive approaches such learner-centredness, differentiated teaching and learning, multi-grade teaching and cross-curricular teaching is not being fully utilised because school management and teachers are insufficiently prepared to impart targeted knowledge. Similarly, MacIntyre (in Waghid, 2003: 22) posits that some higher learning institutions lose sight of the end purpose of education, for instance, the development of learners’ intellectual powers, and they substitute for this end merely the task of passing examinations. Learners might have passed examinations, but this does not mean that they have actually become critical thinkers who have acquired “outcomes of scientific inquiry for their own sake”. With the BETD programme students do not sit for examinations. If, for instance, the intake for the 2004 academic year is 150 students, all these students will manage to pass at the end of the course. Put differently, none of these students will fail; as long as they attend classes all of them will graduate. This is the requirement of the programme. Now my concern is: how do they determine the success or capabilities of the students? It seems that degrees, diplomas and certificates have replaced learning as the objective of education and that higher learning institutions have become anti-educational as a result. I maintain that this is a step in the wrong direction.

It is my contention that the effectiveness of teacher education training, as it is now practised in the country, in promoting student achievement may be a myth. Preparation of teachers is meant to qualify educators for successful task performance in education. Since effective teaching implies much more than mastery of a specific subject, a scientific approach to teacher training should be adopted. It is generally accepted today that teaching courses for teachers should include academic, professional and practical components, but the question is whether these components are integrated in such a way that courses are balanced units aimed at mastering

specific knowledge, skills and techniques which make a teacher a unique person, occupying an exceptional position in society. The co-ordination of courses and standards of training merit close attention because the quality of the service rendered is directly related to the quality of training. It is my contention that, if we are to prepare teachers to work in the schools of tomorrow, we should do so in tomorrow's schools of education. We envision nothing less than the simultaneous transformation of elementary, secondary and higher education. It is simply not possible to change only one part of the education system in isolation from the others. I argue that we can no longer prepare teachers who follow blindly whatever standards or curricula are handed down from the state. Instead, Namibia need professionals who can take on leadership roles and make decisions about assessment and instruction, educators who will critique current models and generate models of their own, which in turn can be fed back to the university and colleges for testing and refinement, elaboration and discussion.

By way of concluding this section on incompetent teachers, I wish to underscore how complex the origins of this problem appears to be. Rarely is a teacher's poor performance due to a single cause such as lack of effort, skill or ability. More commonly, unsatisfactory performance stems from other sources as well, such as lower admission requirements, intellectually sterile training, personal disorder and inadequate supervision. Under these conditions, efforts to improve the performance of such educators represent a formidable challenge and undertaking. It is unlikely that a solution akin to a miracle drug or an organ transplant will emerge as a cure for the problem of incompetent teaching. The extent of the teachers' difficulties in the classroom and the causes which underlie these difficulties are simply too far-reaching. In addition, if the teacher is a veteran with many years of experience, the problem is indeed formidable and perhaps untreatable. Conceivably, remediation is effective, but only at the early stage of a person's teaching career when his/her teaching style is still malleable (Bridges, 1986: 14). Lastly, teaching is an art as well as a profession and requires a large amount of preparation in order to qualify one in that profession. The ordinary layman is not well versed in that art; neither is he in a position to measure the necessary qualifications required for the teacher of today. Now that I have clarified my position on the educational problem of the lack of competent educators (teachers),

I shall move on to discussing a chronic problem which hampers the delivery of quality education, namely insufficient resources.

4.5.2 Insufficient resources

The quality and availability of suitable resources is one of the factors that might improve the quality of learning. Since independence the country has invested heavily in education (MEC, 1993: ii), but the achievement in the sector has been not impressive, both absolutely and in relation to other sectors and other countries. The uneven allocation of resources ensured that a larger percentage of White than of Black children would be selected for further education. The segregation of society meant that, with very few exceptions, the Black elite remained inferior to the White elite in terms of education, jobs, authority, influence and income (MEC, 1993: 5). The education system inherited by Namibia at the time of independence was thus quite inadequate to meet the needs of the country for self-governance and rapid economic growth. From this low starting point, the progress achieved in Namibian education has been spectacular. The Namibian education system is characterised by acute disparities, inequalities and tensions. Policies of racial discrimination have left a legacy of differential allocation of resources to different racial groups. Some schools have well-trained teachers, extensive equipment and relatively small classes. At the same time, other schools have teachers who have limited training and classrooms that are overcrowded and poorly equipped (MEC, 1993: 19). Since independence, this dichotomy between well-resourced and under-resourced schools has remained in place. The Ministry of Education is increasingly being confronted with the problems of the scarcity of resources. The question arises: with these enormous problems, how do schools cope with such a situation and how will the Ministry of Education be able to achieve quality education in Namibian schools? I contend that at this point Namibian schools are far from achieving quality education, because most of the former Black schools lack support and efficient learning and teaching materials. The government does not seem able to alleviate this problem effectively. It fails to equip schools with the necessary teaching and learning materials. The MEC (1993: 19) confirms that classrooms and infrastructure at many schools are inadequate. This results in poor conditions for teaching and learning, including overcrowded classrooms and disciplinary and other related problems. Indeed, the physical

environment of many schools is not conducive to quality teaching and learning, especially in rural and informal-settlement schools. “Today some of the Namibian schools are as solidly built and as well equipped as schools anywhere in the world. At the same time, other schools are too small for their enrolment. Even the learners who manage to find places inside are not protected from the wind and the rain. Not only do they lack laboratories and libraries, but they also do not have books and basic materials” (MEC, 1993: 40). Sometimes learners have to share textbooks (seven learners sharing one textbook). Moreover, although books are provided, their quality and content is questionable. When the books are provided, they reach schools very late. Uugwanga (1998: 70) notes that in the northern regions the scarcity of resources is even worse compared to other regions, for instance, the central and the southern region of the country. Many schools face the problem of lack of textbooks, toilet facilities, laboratories, libraries, water, electricity, photocopy machines, teaching aids, charts, video machines, TV sets and storerooms. This is further compounded by the problem of unqualified and under-qualified teachers (Uugwanga, 1998: 70). The situation in schools within the town can be described as slightly better, but the conditions of the schools outside town are becoming worse and even indescribably bad. It is a well-known fact that schools in the northern part of the country are poorly equipped in terms of the facilities mentioned above. The Education Management Information System (EMIS, 1998) pointed out that only thirty-one percent of schools in Rundu (Kavango) region have toilet facilities, twenty-nine percent of schools in Ohangwena have a water supply, eight percent of Ondangwa east and Ondangwa West schools have access to telephones, and only about seventeen percent of Ondangwa West schools are provided with electricity. However, most, if not all, schools in the southern educational regions such as Windhoek and Keetmanshoop have access to such facilities and amenities. Uugwanga (1998) described the situation in the north with reference to lack of classrooms, facilities and amenities. She found that in many schools, lessons are still given in makeshift classrooms built out of traditional sticks and mud, exposing children to the rain, wind and heat. (Uugwanga, 1998: 70). I contend that it is a norm in Namibia to have such problems. These problems hamper the achievement of the desired quality of education. If Namibia is already spending more of its national budget on education, when and how will the situation improve?

Moreover, the Ministry of Education unnecessarily increased the number of Grade 10 schools, while it cannot provide the necessary materials to those schools. Grade 10 learners are doing compulsory science subjects. The syllabus requires learners to do practical work, but the problem is a lack of laboratories. Science teachers are unable to conduct experiments as the subject syllabus requires. Learners are unable to do practical examinations at the end of the year. As a result, the results are still poor. In most cases (especially in Biology) ninety-five percent of Grade 12 results are ungraded; the same applies to other practical subjects such as Physics. In addition, a lack of electricity hampers the use of resources such as a video, TV or radio. Lack of toilet facilities and cleaning running water is a serious problem, especially for female learners and educators during their menstruation periods; learner absenteeism during that time of the month is very high. The government is fast-tracking development without putting in place the necessary mechanism to support these changes.

I am not against the idea of upgrading the Grade 10 schools. My concern is the quality and the effectiveness of learners' education. In most cases the upgraded schools are facing problems such as a lack of qualified teachers and learning resources. From my own experience none of the learners in these upgraded schools qualified (pass) final or end of year examinations. But the reasons given for this are lack of teaching and learning materials. Now the big question remains: where do these learners go? I argue that traditionally in Namibia, repetition and failure have been regarded as a "proof of quality" since only the highest-quality learners can survive to the final grades. In my view this is a problem; many learners are being sent on to the streets, since the system does not allow them to repeat. As a result, these learners' opportunities to join formal schools or to obtain a better education are limited. The more the Ministry of Education increases the number of Grade 10 schools, the wider the problems of unqualified teachers and scarcity of resources becomes. This leads to most of learners not being able to pass the grade. As a result, children join the ranks of drug users and alcoholics. Teachers, however, should be responsible for bringing their learners to the finishing line, and not be satisfied with the large numbers of learners whom they have not supported to achieve success. Similarly, the government should be responsible for providing reasonable facilities to render effective education, as stated in Article 20 of the constitution (MEC, 1993: 3) and not be proud of the large numbers of Grade 10 schools it has not adequately equipped with resources. My contention is that

increasing Grade 10 again creates a problem. Minimising the problems requires effective and thorough planning.

I believe the country has inherited numerous problems, therefore we cannot afford to generate further problems. However, educators and planners should come up with effective strategies of how to eliminate the problems. The question can be asked: Why should Namibian youths be less able to learn than their other African counterparts? It is a problem of misinformed, poor administration and insufficiently trained teachers. Consequently, this system creates significant inefficiency and therefore it prevents the system from expanding. I contend that we cannot continue to “pump up” the volume of primary graduates in Namibia without opening the education and training path much wider for further improvement. The rapid technological and economic development in the global market place needs to translate itself into visible change and better chances for Africa’s youth, including Namibia’s. Investment in the education and training of current and future generations is the only way to break a cycle of poverty, conflict and intolerance. Similarly, Lewin (2003: 4) posits that access to and successful completion of secondary education shapes the skills mix of the labour force, influencing international competitiveness, foreign investment and prospects for sustained growth. The government should ask itself what its intended purpose of secondary education and training is. It is my contention that traditionally in Namibia, Grade 10 is becoming a borderline for most learners not proceeding into their secondary levels. However, largely ignoring the need to simultaneously increase quality and capacity at the secondary level has created serious problems in the country; for example, the “pool” of unemployment is expanding, crime rates are on its increase, alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS among the youth are on the increase, teenage pregnancies are increasing, and there is a growing shortage of competent human power in the country. In my view, it cannot serve the purpose for the country to be proud of achieving its access goal by having thousands of primary schools learners, while the majority of these learners cannot complete their Grade 10 and Grade 12 levels. I regard this to be a serious concern which the government might need to address again.

4.5.3 The problem of high learner-teacher ratios

The MEC (1993: 34) states that the government's second commitment was to provide equitable access to schooling. To achieve that the government should overcome a legacy of discrimination and segregation that was built into the school system. In this respect, the government promised to ensure that there are enough schools and classrooms for all children, as these facilities are the foundation for constructing an equitable education system. Indeed the government promises significant improvement in the construction of classrooms. However, the problem of lack of classrooms is still a big concern. Some learners still cannot find space in the schools. Moreover, learner-teacher ratios in previously disadvantaged regions are still characterised by very high numbers of learners per teacher, which makes it extremely difficult to provide quality education. About forty-two percent of schools in Ondangwa East have forty or more learners to each teacher. In Ondangwa West about fifteen percent of schools have more than forty learners per teacher, and about one percent of schools have more than sixty learners per teacher, while not one school in the Keetmanshoop and Khorixas regions has more than thirty learners per teacher (EMIS, 1998: 82). The needs of each individual learner in overcrowded classrooms are hard to meet. As a result the quality of education is being lowered and the learning environment is negatively affected (Amukugo, 1993). Similarly, Uugwanga (1998: 53) argues that large classes could impede the quality of the education that learners receive.

From my own experience as a teacher, it is rare for a teacher to be able to cope with a large number of learners in the classrooms. It is impossible for teachers to give their full attention to all learners. As a result, slow learners always suffer because teachers have no time to spend with them. And sometimes the teacher will not be able to identify the slow learners. Although slow learners can be stimulated by fast learners, it is difficult to assess this because teachers are failing to cope. In most cases teachers limit the number of activities given to the learners because they use the number of learners as an excuse to cut down on work. Sometimes the activities are not marked. Ultimately, learners will not learn as much as they need to, with the result that the quality of education always suffers. Consequently, the performance of the learners will be affected. Moreover, overcrowding in classes is one element that negatively affects assessment. This is difficult because of the number of learners they should

assess. The learner-teacher ratio for Namibian public schools means that, on average, each educator has to cater for more than thirty-five learners; cutting down on this number would go a long way towards reducing pressure on teachers and learners. The higher learner-teacher ratios combined with inadequate conditions of teaching and learning, and the lack of adequate instructional support materials is seriously obstructing the delivery of a better quality education. The bigger the class, the more difficult individual assessment becomes. Crowded classrooms together with disciplinary and other related problems have resulted in poor conditions for teaching and learning.

4.5.4 Lack of English proficiency in Namibian schools

After Namibia became independent from South Africa in 1990, the ruling party, SWAPO, chose English as the official language. This decision was outlined in Article 3 in the Constitution (MIB, 1990: 3). The new Ministry of Education realised that a new language policy for schools was urgently needed. This policy had to promote English together with the use of mother-tongue instruction in schools. As a result, a document on the language policy for schools (1992-1996 and beyond) was formulated and implemented (MEC, 1993: 65-66). The new education policy on medium of instruction introduced English as a medium of instruction in all schools. This was announced in November 1991 and the implementation was discussed at a National Conference in June 1992. The question can be asked: How effective is English usage in Namibian schools?

To begin with, the problem of teaching English, beginning at primary school, means that learners continue to lag behind their required level of language proficiency and the majority never really reach the language proficiency in English which their age and school level demand (Jones, 1996: 285). In a recent investigation at one of the schools in Windhoek, where 204 Grade 8 learners' literacy and numeracy skills were tested, shocking figures came to light. It was found that twenty-two percent of those learners were not functionally literate in English and only marginally skilled to a Grade 6 level. Furthermore, forty-nine percent of learners' numeracy skills were lower than Grade 7 level. An interesting fact is that these learners, who did not achieve the required literacy or numeracy level for Grade 8, come from schools where

English was taught (Wolfaardt, 2004: 367-368). The question is how can these learners possibly lack English skills, when they are from an English school with English as official language and medium of instruction? In this regard it becomes necessary to analyse the teachers' English language proficiency, since most teachers in Namibia were not skilled through the old system prior to independence, when the medium of instruction was Afrikaans. Before independence Afrikaans was the official language and therefore Namibians did not have to use English in their everyday lives (as is still the case today, especially in urban centres such as Windhoek). The English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP 1999) conducted a survey on the English language proficiency of Namibian teachers in the three phases (junior primary, senior primary and junior secondary). The results across the three phases show that the junior secondary teachers performed better than their upper primary counterparts, who in turn performed better than their lower primary colleagues. This illustrates that the learners' lack of English skills can be attributed to the poor performance of the teachers. Meyer (1998: 103) states that teachers lack an appropriate knowledge base and the necessary competence in English.

The point that I am making here is that the skills of the learners cannot improve if teachers' English proficiency is so inadequate. With regard to the general language proficiency of Namibia's teachers, it appears that reading and grammar are the two weakest areas. Many of the teachers do not have a sufficient proficiency in reading skills. When learners are taught through the medium of English in which the use of grammar is incorrect, it is potentially detrimental to the learners' development (Wolfaardt, 2004: 369). In addition, many teachers, especially those teaching in the rural areas, hardly ever hear or use English in their communities. Therefore, it is not uncommon (but more general in practice) that teachers revert to their mother tongue as medium of instruction when explaining new concepts to the learners. One should remember that teachers in the lower primary phase, whose English language proficiency is believed to be the worst, have to prepare learners for English as medium of instruction for a higher level. Language proficiency appears to affect examination results too. Again, as is the case with other problematic components of the system, language proficiency shows up as the factor bedevilling the achievement of satisfactory outcomes. These are facts. Who suffers the most? That answer is obvious. The reason? A subtractive or early exit language policy can only be

implemented successfully if all the necessary resources, manpower (teachers with good English language proficiency), support structures and enough funds are available and utilised effectively. The big question remains: will the Namibian government accept that its policy is not successful and make the necessary changes?

4.5.5 Ambiguous policy

Education policies in Namibia appear to be adversely influenced by an inherent dichotomy in the country's ideological orientation. On the one hand, the politicians are bent on introducing a Marxist-Leninist ideology, which is unfamiliar to most of the Namibian nation, and on the other hand, there is a more entrenched capitalist infrastructure bequeathed by the colonial administration. This structure is more familiar and people are prepared to take a chance with it, as they see others around them who have succeeded through it. The majority of Blacks appear to be interested in the kind of education they had been denied rather than in something new and unfamiliar (Psacharopoulos, 1990: 13). Since independence a number of education policies have been drawn up. Some of these policies have never been implemented, while some of those that were implemented have failed. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) Circular No. 13/98 reported that, despite the increase in enrolment figures that have already occurred since independence, the number of learners in the junior secondary phase is expected to increase significantly in the coming years. This tendency could mainly be attributed to the non-repetition policy as well as an increase at primary level because of the constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory primary education up to the age of sixteen. The Ministry of Education introduced a policy regarding Grade 10 repeaters. The policy stated that Grade 10 repeaters should not be readmitted to the schools (Circular No. 13/98). This means that learners who failed Grade 10 are not allowed to repeat the grade in formal schools. The Ministry of Education argues that the readmission of Grade 10 repeaters would undoubtedly lead to a denial of places for the learners coming from Grade 9, placing a burden on already overcrowded classes and simultaneously hampering the progress of learners who are in Grade 10 for the first time.

I contend that the Ministry of Education contradicted itself and did not act in line with the country's Constitution. Article 20 of the Namibian constitution provides that all

persons shall have the right to education (MEC, 1993: 3). The same Ministry states that every Namibian is to have ten years of general comprehensive education and no learner will be denied access to education (MEC, 1993: 32). I argue that the policy denies learners access to schools. The government failed to build sufficient schools to accommodate all learners who wish to pursue their education. This policy raised an outcry among the Namibian nation. Some of these learners are younger than fourteen years of age. As a result, many young children resort to alcohol and drugs abuse. In addition, a number of these children tend to engage in criminal activities and thus increase the crime rate in the country. I argue that the government should have delayed implementation until sufficient schools and classrooms had been constructed. Insufficient preparation in policy implementation leads to problems.

On 24 January 2001 the Ministry of Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU) on staffing norms for schools. The objective of the policy is to reduce inequalities between regions. The norm provides for the staffing of mainstream schools as follows: one teacher for every thirty-five primary school learners and one teacher for every thirty secondary learners. In other words, the Ministry's intention was to redeploy teachers to various disadvantaged schools. The government hoped to alleviate the lack of qualified teachers in disadvantaged schools through the redeployment strategy, but it has failed to transfer qualified teachers to those schools. Only in very rare cases have White teachers moved to Black schools. One reason why qualified teachers are said not to move to remote disadvantaged schools is that they are not paid an allowance and the majority of learners in those schools are ill-disciplined.

In my view, redeployment can be a good system if teachers were to be allocated according to their subject specialisations. But at present the system is in a mess, for reasons that I shall explain. I contend that our administrators fail to understand how the system should operate. For instance, what happened in the Kavango region is similar to that of a teacher who does not qualify to teach at secondary school level but is nevertheless transferred to a secondary school. At the same time competent teachers who are able to teach at secondary schools were placed at lower and upper primary school levels, while lower and upper primary teachers were placed at junior and senior secondary schools. As a result, the problem of competent teachers remains,

since the regional office fails to allocate teachers appropriately. The redeployment system confronts the regions with a dilemma in terms of not placing teachers at the level of their qualifications. I argue that the administrators interpret the system wrongly. The system will function better, provided those who want to implement it fully understand how the system is supposed to operate.

My contention is that educational problems will be overcome provided educators know how to utilise the few available resources (teachers, in this instance) appropriately. If we are really striving for better changes, then we should explore the opportunities of how to alleviate the problems. Unfortunately, the current ineffectiveness of some administrators, inspectors and advisory teachers is making the educational problems chronic and perhaps even beyond cure. In this regard, we as educators are failing in our duties to fulfil the good intentions of our government, which is striving to promote democratic education. Therefore, we should seek possibilities on how to eliminate or minimise the problems. I argue that changing policies year after year and duplicating millions of circular documents will not necessarily change the situation. In my view, this seems to be a waste of resources. The situation will change only when people come to understand and realise what those policies and circulars are all about (contents). In other words, having piles of circulars and policy documents in our offices cannot bring changes, only people's action can bring changes. We will start seeing changes when we as educators put the content of policies and circulars in practice or in action.

Moreover, the problem of the redeployment of teachers from well- to under-resourced schools is that the teachers may lose morale and consequently productivity will decline. In addition, this may cause the majority of those who are well qualified to resign from the teaching profession and join other professions. Producing more qualified teachers seems the more viable response. This reveals an important theme in policy implementation: an inability to see that people are not inanimate objects and that they do not conform to what policy makers want because they are told to do so. Furthermore, this shows that there is a lack of consultation and transparency in the running of educational affairs. Namibia still has schools that are seriously understaffed, despite the redeployment strategy. In some schools it is possible to find teachers taking responsibility for more than three subjects. Sometimes it has been

difficult for a teacher to teach classes in a learner-centred way, while others are not. While the learner-centred approach is intended to improve the quality of education, there is a need for a support system for educators.

Moreover, the government introduced a policy of automatic promotion. This policy states that Grade 1-7 and Grade 11-12 should automatically be promoted to the next grade. Learners from the lower grades should not be allowed to repeat a grade. This created problems in schools, because learners are aware of this policy and they seem very reluctant to pursue their academic work. Secondly, the policy contributed to the higher number of learner failures, especially in Grades 10 and 12. This is because these learners had not mastered the subject content in their previous grades. I contend that this policy functions in Black schools only. In the formerly advantaged schools the policy is not implemented. The government prevents this policy from being implemented in the formerly advantaged schools and the so-called “private” schools, because most of the elite children are at those schools. They protect them so that their children might have a better education, while the poorer learners have to suffer. I argue that when economic resources are limited, instructional provision begins to reflect not what is desirable and advantageous, but what is affordable.

Furthermore, as funds become increasingly limited, a large portion of the educational budget tends to be subsidised by foreign donors. But since the government too must function under some sort of rationale, government policies cannot help but be influenced by what funding agencies favour. Government bureaucracy generally attempt to allow room for on-site autonomy, but their convictions and aspirations are hardly unknown. The point I am making is that, because of limited resources in the country and most of the major projects are funded by the foreign donors, the result is that government has to implement the policies which suit the needs of the donors, and leave the needs and aspirations of the nation unattended.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the educational problems that hamper the delivery of an urgently needed quality education system. I began my analysis of the educational

problems by exploring the education system during the pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid periods. Education in the country was best characterised by a number of features, including fragmentation of education along racial and ethnic lines; unequal access to education and training at all levels of the education system; inefficiency in terms of low progression and achievement rates, and high attrition rates; irrelevance of the curriculum and teacher education programmes to the needs and aspirations of the individuals and the nation and a lack of democratic participation within the education and training system. In addition, there was unequal allocation of financial resources. In 1990 the newly elected government of Namibia inherited an education system from South Africa based on apartheid, which was characterised by inequalities in terms of the distribution of resources, and where the quality of education offered was not taken into account. Despite the sound attempts by the government to provide quality education, there are many problems that hamper the delivery of an urgently needed quality education. These problems I have already alluded to. I then argued that the incompetent teachers, who constitute sixty-four per cent of the teaching force, tarnish the reputation of the entire profession, disadvantage thousands of learners, and engender parental dissatisfaction with the public school system. Despite the importance of the problem, little is known about how government officials (administrators) are handling the substandard teachers in their regions. Associated educational problems were also discussed. I now move onto an exploration of the notion of “democratic education” with the intention of making recommendations on how the problems which I highlighted might potentially be minimised or even solved.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION – A POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR NAMIBIA’S PROBLEMS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I attempted to identify some of the educational problems which hinder the delivery of quality education in Namibian schools, despite the sound endeavour by the government to provide quality education. To begin with, learning and teaching materials are often outdated and in many cases unavailable. In many rural schools three to four learners are forced to use one book in classroom sessions. Due to a lack of resources, the teacher is often the only resource for learning. Teaching tends to be transmission-based and there is often limited learner involvement, aside from echoing what teachers say and copying what is on the chalkboard. When no textbooks are available, learners often spend large amounts of school time copying information from the chalkboard into their notebooks, not allowing coverage of more subjects. Moreover, most of the learners are usually unable to continue formal education at university or college level. Instead of acquiring useful skills, they are usually taught by unqualified and underqualified teachers (Meyer, 1998: 103). In short the central educational problems can be stated as follows: lack of teaching and learning resources, poor physical facilities, classroom overcrowding, inequalities in resources distribution, lack of qualified or competent teachers, English language problem, and ambiguous policies. Predictably, the scarcity of teaching and learning resources continues to be a source of frustration.

My analysis in previous chapters provides me with an understanding as to why the majority of learners do not succeed. This is an understanding that includes an awareness of what Dewey (1916/1985; 1927/1988) describes as the “interactive relationship between the individual and society, and of the importance of teachers acting distinctively to promote democracy within the communities they live”. Dewey (1916) further maintains that “... a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated.

Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it should find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest". These can be created only by democratic education. Since independence the Namibian government has been emphasising that education should be democratised. Democratic education sounds as if it is the best possible solution, alternative, hope and means to eliminate problems. With this in mind, the aim of this chapter is an attempt to show how democratic education has the potential to address educational problems.

My way of thinking and talking about educational problems the Namibian government is facing introduced in this thesis is the result of my attempts to connect the day-to-day work of educators to the broader social contexts within which that work takes place. This way of understanding schools represents an effort to shift points of view from the general to the specific and back again, and see how particular instances of teaching and learning either promote or resist priorities. Like the observation and reflection of all educators, this approach is also shaped by the values that educators bring to their work. These ideals provide the outline of a vision by which educators may assess whether or not schools are contributing to a progression towards the kind of society people desire. In short, I am talking about a conceptualisation of teaching as part of a larger sociopolitical and ethical project. For my part, the concept to which I am committed at present is democratic education. Why democratic? A partial answer to this question lies in a question posed by Dewey (1938/1963: 34): "Can we find any reason that does not ultimately come down to the belief that democratic social arrangements promotes a better quality of human experience, one which is more widely accessible and enjoyed, than do non-democratic and anti-democratic forms of social life?" Through more specific reasons for this commitment, my understanding of democratic education, shall, I hope, become clear throughout this chapter.

5.2 DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

I understand democratic education to be a process of associated living in which individuals participate in deciding what their world should be like, in acting to pursue these aims, and in sharing equitably in the consequences of that action. It refers to a

way of interacting with others by which people have the desire, ability and opportunity to participate in shaping their individual and collective lives (Dewey, 1916/1985: 89; 1927/1988: 354). According to the MEC (1993: 41), a democratic education is one organised around broad participation in decision-making and the clear accountability of those who are the leaders. Democratic education is based on the notion that learning democratic and humanistic values is the main goal in the field of education. This approach regards human dignity and liberty as the fundamentals of human society. Democratic education nurtures applying the principles of democracy and of human rights for achieving its goals. Moreover, democratic education is a form of education that views learners as active participants in their educative activities.

In Dewey's assessment, an educated people secures the necessary freedoms upon which a democratic society is built (Dewey, 1916/1985: 107). By Dewey's definition, a democratic society should be measured, firstly, by the extent to which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and secondly, by the extent to which groups may freely interact with each other (Dewey, 1916/1985: 93). Since democracy cannot admit the domination of single interest, or privileged perspectives, members of a democracy should be capable of using the open forums of exchange afforded by democracies to present alternative perspectives. The antithesis of a free and open society is one in which there are internal and external barriers to free exchange, and the absence of information and communication about the experiences of other groups besides one's own. Moreover, an uneducated people cannot, obviously, offer the challenges to thought or the novelty which are the basis of any society's regeneration. In Dewey's estimation:

Diversity of stimulation means novelty, and novelty means challenge to thought. The more activity is restricted to a few definite lines – as it is when there are rigid class lines preventing adequate interplay of experiences, the more action tends to become routine on the part of the class at a disadvantage, and capricious, aimless and explosive on the part of the class having the materially fortunate position (Dewey, 1916/1985: 112).

Plato (in Dewey, 1916/1985: 137) defines a slave as one who accepts from another the purpose which controls his conduct. But this condition obtains even where there is no

slavery in the legal sense. It is found wherever people are engaged in activity which is socially serviceable, but whose service they do not understand and have no personal interest in. On the other hand, a society which ensures and provides for the participation of all its members equally, that is, through the preparatory processes of education, may be considered to be democratic. The kind of education that democracies offer thus gives the individual personal interests in the societal processes which organise his/her life, as well as control over his/her own dignity. To do so, democratic societies need to equip the individual with the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. Moreover, a conception of democratic education rooted in commitments to improve society through collective action achieves widespread support among educators. Known as “social reconstructionists,” these reformers emphasised teaching learners to be active participants in a democratic civic community, able to envision, articulate and act on conceptions of a better world (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998: 2). Teaching for social justice is at the core of democratic education. It serves as a reminder not only of the inequities and biases that continue to wear at the foundation of democratic values, but of the powerful stories which inspire us to work toward change, to make the world a better place. A focus on teaching remind us that children need not only a firm grounding in academic knowledge, but also practice in how to use such knowledge to promote a democratic society in which all get to participate fully. Moreover, Gutmann (1999: 14) has described democratic education as that which preserves the “intellectual and social foundations of democratic deliberation”; the educators are interested not only in how the opportunities to participate in such deliberations depend on rational discourse and the influences of power and authority, but also in how the equitable distribution of such authority relies in part on dialogical relations among diverse people. I contend that schools should provide a place where young people can learn about the world beyond their immediate experience. Where they can discover and develop their gifts and interests guided by committed and creative educators. Also, learners in schools should acquire the skills, knowledge and credentials necessary for certain types of higher education and careers, as well as foster enriching relationships with peers and adult mentors. Educators are also compelled to think hard about the fate of those learners whose needs are often attended to less successfully. As West (1999: 9) reminds us, such considerations are among the obligations of living in a democratic society:

Democracy always raises a fundamental question: what is the role of the most disadvantaged in relation to the public interest? It is similar in some ways to the Biblical question: what are you to do with the least of these?

If we do not live in a democracy, we are not obliged to raise that question.

To explore possible answers to educational problems, educators should discover new ways of understanding what goes on in their classrooms. They should observe their learners and themselves closely. From observations arise insights according to which they may assess their own and others' assumptions and theories about teaching and learning.

As I have analysed the concept "democratic education", I shall move on to a discussion of how democratic education can eliminate educational problems. The hope of democratic education makes us to reflect on the most disadvantaged, the most despised and the most oppressed. It is the purpose of this chapter to show that teachers' joining together can lead to revitalising of public life and laying claim to a wide public space. I shall argue that kindness and care, tenderness and imagination leading toward social movements to redress the problems of inequality and poor quality, and hence create a community of compassion and concern. As such, it improves the curriculum in such away by making it more relevant and responsive. My contention is that democratic education will be a solution provided that educators, administrators and all stakeholders are practising its ideals. My reading suggests that deliberation is a necessary condition to ensure democratic practices in schools.

5.2.1 Minimising teacher incompetence through democratic participation - a movement towards deliberation

It is the aim of this section to show how deliberation can enhance dialogical relations among teachers and the possibility for improving participation. The Namibian education system has been confronted with numerous educational problems, as I have already alluded to in Chapters 1 and 4. My argument is that the government is aware of the problems, but it seems that the solutions for this unfortunate situation are still

far from being implemented. For the past fourteen years the Namibian people have been complaining about the incompetence of teachers and the poor performances of learners. The government seems to ignore the critical criticism from the stakeholders. Thus, the problem remains unsolved and the situation has been said to become worse. The question can be asked: how can democratic education help to resolve the problem?

Before considering the question in more detail, I am inclined to support Dewey's argument which states: democracy is not a blissful state or condition to be achieved once and for all. But it is an arduous process, a struggle that should be continually revised and defended in ways responsive to present circumstances (Dewey, 1916/1985). The point I am making is that people should not just assume that Namibia is a democratic state, therefore, we might not experience difficulties. We will continuously be confronted with problems as long as people are not committed and there is unnecessary resistance to change and towards promoting the ideals of democratic education. This implies that it requires Namibians to be hardworking and support the government towards democratic change.

I shall now return to the question of democratic education. Lakoff (1996: 30) states that "We are social beings. We are what we are because of our interactions with others. We achieve what we do because we benefit from their work. Thus, if we all have to flourish then we should recognise that we share many common interests", We commit ourselves to consider those interests and hence the needs of others when we look to our own. We should actively engage with, and seek to strengthen, those situations and movements that embody democratic values and which draw people together. This implies that teachers should work closely with one another. Democratic education proposes that educators should work as a group in order for them to be able to share ideas. Sharing ideas in the process will benefit other educators who will learn from their colleagues' experiences. The sharing of ideas can take the form of, for instance, teachers in specific fields of study (Life Science and Biology) coming together and sharing ideas which can improve learners' poor performance. In this regard Waghid's idea of democracy as reflective discourse is useful (Waghid, 2003: 83). He states that democracy liberates thoughts and practices in a way that offers more choice, freedom and possibilities for emancipatory education. This is useful,

because many teachers throughout the participation process will be able to learn more, and discover and experience many things which will in turn enable them to improve on their methods of teaching. Furthermore, through the process of sharing ideas they can learn meaningful teaching and learning techniques which can enhance their understanding of their subject content. Some educators are well equipped with skills and knowledge of the subject matter. In the case of newly recruited teachers, even though they may have a sound understanding of the subject content, they need experienced educators to guide them. Sometimes they may not be sure whether they are doing the right things. Therefore, democratic education proposes that they should not operate in isolation. Educators also need advice; in this case one possibility to avoid working in isolation and eliminating the incompetence is to engage them in group work, participating in workshops and sharing advice. I do not wish to suggest that the effective teachers cannot benefit from those whom we perceive to be less experienced or incompetent; rather the sharing and participation should benefit everyone in the group.

My argument is that some teachers refused to attend workshops or seminars simply because they claim to know better. On one occasion I was tasked by the school headmaster to delegate two teachers to attend the workshop. The workshop started at 9h00. Surprisingly, at around 11h00 the two colleagues came back to school. When I approached them they responded, "We know better than the facilitators and therefore we cannot waste our time sitting there all day long". I was not convinced that for them to attend the workshop would be a waste of time. There were many teachers from different schools from whom they could learn something new or different. The point I am making here is that such great opportunities should not be neglected. I contend that such negative attitudes among educators hinders the improvement. The question is: What should be done to overcome this scenario? Benhabib (1996: 69) states:

The basis of legitimacy in democratic institutions is to be traced back to the presumption that the instances which claim obligatory power for themselves do so because their decisions represent an impartial standpoint said to be equally in the interest of all. This presumption can be fulfilled, only if such decisions are in principle open to appropriate public processes of deliberation by free and equal citizens.

Benhabib argues that obligatory power can only be legitimate under specific conditions. She mentions a principle of open deliberation by free and equal citizens. My interest is in the concept of equality among the teachers. It is essential for teachers to get beyond the notion of “I know better”. My argument is simple: those who know better should empower those who know less in such a way that they become equal. Benhabib posits that an agreement should follow the general rules and can only be morally binding if such agreement was achieved through the process of deliberation (Benhabib, 1996: 70). To analyse whether deliberation had occurred, such agreement should, according to Benhabib, conform to the following characteristics:

Firstly, participation in such deliberation is governed by norms of equality and symmetry (all have the same chances to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate);

Secondly, all have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; and

Thirdly, all have the right to initiate reflective arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied or carried out (Benhabib, 1996: 70).

In conforming to the rules, every teacher operates within the school on the same level as every other teacher. Put another way, they are equal in terms of their ability to influence decisions. As several writers have noted (Waghid, 2003: 83; Dewey, 1916/1985: 105), the two criteria characterising a democratic society are “the extent to which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups”. Dewey’s definition further explains democratic education as being dependent upon circumstances that allow all people to participate on equal terms in identifying and working towards a “shared common interest” within a localised community, while at the same time allowing for what he calls the “flexible readjustment of institutions within groups through productive interaction with other communities” (Dewey, 1916/1985: 92). Similarly, Destiger (1961: 323) notes that in order for democratic education to be useful,

educators should rely on a disposition, meaning a way of participating in a dialogical relationship with others in which educators somehow struggle together to identify and overcome problems that hinder learners' performances. I contend that once educators base their understanding of what they should do in the classroom not solely on their own social perspective, but on those of the learners whom they teach, then they open the possibility that they may contribute to their learners acquiring greater social and political freedom in the form of increased opportunities to participate in their worlds on their own terms. This freedom, as Greene (1988: 7) argues, should not be understood as the "negative freedom" of deregulation, self-dependence and unreflective consumerism. Rather, it is a freedom that should be an achievement within the concreteness of a lived social situation, "a purposeful activity in which learners are able to name the causes of their oppression, imagine a better state of things, and share with others a project of change" (Greene, 1988: 9).

Moreover, democratic education requires that educators should promote social and political change on a scale that extends beyond classroom walls (Destiger, 1961: 303). I view this with a sense of urgency which may serve as a prompt for teachers to adopt an expanded notion of their work, especially when the teaching takes place in the context where learners represent a diversity of cultures and languages. Thus, educators should cultivate an identity not just as instructors of academic content but also incorporate activities dedicated to promoting democratic education. Destiger (1961: 302) posits that educators should think of themselves as scientists striving to be more attuned to the way that their learners view the world and how their culturally situated values shape the way they think and live.

Furthermore, a crucial step towards creating conditions that improve the learners' success through democratic education is for the educators to accept their own responsibility for these learners' learning. Nieto (1994: 395) echoes this sentiment, arguing that transforming school structures alone will not lead to substantive differences in learners' achievement, unless such changes are accompanied by revisions in the way that individual educators think about what learners deserve, what they are capable of achieving, and who is responsible for helping them to realise their potential. Lucas *et al.* (1990: 330) have asserted that the most crucial element in learners' success in school is that the personal commitment of educators,

administrators and all stakeholders should come together in a shared belief that all learners are able to learn and that all educators play an important role in this process. Moreover, in a democratic education system, geared towards the development of a democratic society, educators should be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its masters or caretakers (MEC, 1993: 41-42). It proposes that educators should accept the learners entrusted to them for what they are; learners need the educator's assistance, hence they are eager to discover many things in the world. Thus educators should give a helping hand to their learners and properly guide them in order to become what they are capable of becoming (Du Plessis, 1997: 62). This implies that educators should not leave learners unattended or they should not leave learners in isolation.

Moreover, learners constitute a great diversity in the classroom. They present a wide variety of divergent conditions with respect to physical, mental and cultural features. The knowledge of learners should be established by taking into account the learner's point of view and collecting information about the learners' individual circumstances. The democratic teacher tries to arrive at a total impression of learners' living conditions. Such knowledge always paves the way to an understanding of learners' behaviour. In addition, such an understanding generates compassion for the learners. The educators can convert this compassion into positive assistance. However, for an educator to play a part in promoting democratic education thus defined, I believe it is crucial that she/he regards the contexts of school and society as overlapping, interactive and mutually influential. This kind of analytical perspective, when infused with a desire to advance the ideals of democratic education, comes together in a disposition which I shall call the "citizen teacher." My conception of a teacher reflects the priorities and analytical methods of educators and theorists who advocate what is commonly called "critical pedagogy." As McLaren (1995: 29) posits, proponents of critical pedagogy "are united in their attempts to empower the powerless to transform social inequalities and injustices. While teachers share these overall goals, their specific way of pursuing them is by expanding and strengthening human relations that support participatory democracy."

In other words, teachers communicating with one another in a deliberative way is also a possible approach to addressing the educational problem. Through communication

the incompetent teachers can learn more and improve on their teaching abilities. The point I am making is that if training fails to equip teachers with the necessary skills of how to handle the subject content in their classrooms, and if it fails to empower educators with the skills of how to deal with learners in the classroom, how to present their lesson, how to empower learners through classroom participation they need to engage deliberatively with others.

My argument is that some schools or teachers might allow learners to participate in decision making, while their voices are rarely been heard. This implies that they participate without having the opportunity to influence decisions. In other words, they are excluded from the process. Also, some educators are being selective in the process of participation. They favour or give preference to certain individual learners to participate, while some are being excluded. For instance, I happened to attend a workshop for commercial subjects. During the process the facilitator gave preferences to certain individual teachers to make contributions or ask questions. Although some wanted to contribute they were not given the chance to do so. It was clearly evident that the facilitator ignored them. My main concern is that not all teachers nor learners are getting the opportunities to express their views and opinions. This is because of favouritism which prevails in the learning institutions. This implies that the incompetent teachers do not have any chance to participate in discussions. As a result, they are hardly likely to improve. I turn to Rawls (1971: 518), who claims that inequality in any given society should be arranged so as to benefit the least advantaged (incompetent teachers in this instance). Everyone should be treated equally and be guaranteed equal rights of citizenship. Each teacher or learner should be encouraged in the development of a life plan and pursuit of his/her self-development. According to Benhabib (1996: 67), modern democratic societies face the task of securing legitimacy with reference to collective identity. She further posits that:

... in a well-functioning democratic society the demand of legitimacy and collective identity ideally exists in some form of equilibrium. That legitimacy in democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all matters of common concern. Thus a

public sphere of deliberation about matters of mutual concern is essential to the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Benhabib, 1996: 68).

My understanding is that if teachers and learners are not free to engage actively in the decision-making process, than the decisions cannot stand the test of legitimacy. In fact, if this is the case, then it implies that such decisions are illegitimate and, thus, less democratic. Benhabib further claims that:

Democratic education is best understood as a model for organising the collective and public exercise of power in the major institutions of a society on the basis of the principle that decisions affecting the well being of a collectivity can be viewed as the outcome of a procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals.

In my view, during their teacher training some students failed to gain skills related to deliberation. Deliberation occurs whenever the plans of actions are co-ordinated not through egocentric calculations of success, but through acts of reaching understanding, through reasoning and consensus (Habermas, 1998: 118). Gutmann (1999: 14) describes democratic education as that which preserves “the intellectual and social foundations of democratic education deliberation”, the educator is interested not only in how the opportunities to participate in such deliberations depend on rational discourse and the influences of power and authority, but also in how an equitable distribution of such authority relies in part on local, affective relations among diverse people. On the notion of “rationality”, Habermas defines it with reference to the employment of descriptive knowledge. He identifies two different directions. Rationality can be predicated of both human beings and their symbolic expressions, and of both speech and action (Roderick, 1986: 112). The reason embodied in speech and action Habermas calls cognitive-instrumental rationality. He considers two paradigmatic cases of rationality from this perspective, firstly, an assertion with which a speaker expresses a belief, meaning the speaker claims truth for his assertion, and secondly, a goal-directed action with which a social actor pursues an end, meaning that the social actor claims prospects of success. The second paradigm is communicative rationality. Communicative rationality is expressed in the unifying force of speech oriented towards securing understanding. The

communicative use of linguistic expressions serves not only to give expression to the intentions of the speaker, but also to represent states of affairs and to establish interpersonal relations with a second person. A three-fold relation exists between the meaning of a linguistic expression and (1) what is intended by it, (2) what is said in it, and (3) the way in which it is said in the speech act. With his speech act, the speaker aims to reach understanding with a hearer about something. The speaker has an illocutionary aim which is that the speech act is first of all supposed to be understood by the hearer and then, as far as possible, to be accepted (Habermas, 1998: 315). Moreover, according to Roderick (1986: 114), the concept of communicative rationality may be explicated formally in terms of the three dimensions of communicative action such as external nature, society and internal nature. In communication directed at external nature, which is the (cognitive-instrumental sphere), rationality consists in expressing grounded views and acting efficiently and includes the ability to learn from mistakes. My view at this point is that through communication the incompetent teachers should learn from their mistakes. I believe that a person will become competent in his/her specialised field through reflecting on his/her mistakes. Being incompetent does not mean a person will remain incompetent forever, unless the person is not willing to learn. As long as a teacher is enthusiastic to gain knowledge and eager to communicate with others, the level of participation will improve. It is my wish that the same thing should happen to most Namibian teachers. In order for them to improve they should be keen to participate deliberatively in educational discourse.

Moreover, teachers should prepare themselves to create worthwhile learning environments, to develop purposeful curricula and to devise deliberative methods of teaching. Such practices Freire (1990) calls “praxis” – critical reflection and action that changes the conditions of being in the social world. In this sense, praxis can be viewed as the broader picture in which action is embedded. Deliberative action can therefore be seen as part of praxis. Furthermore, rationality is what Habermas (in Waghid, 2003: 27) referred to as deliberation. It can be considered as “unhindered communicative freedom which involves rational opinion and will formation”, which always leads to a transformation in people’s preferences. In my view, Habermas’s notion of “unhindered communicative freedom” can be viewed “as a constitutive feature of deliberative democracy. Put differently, if an exchange of arguments in a

Habermasian sense should be unconstrained, it follows that no individual or group of people could legitimately exclude others from deliberating on educational matters that interest them. The right of people to participate in deliberation is legally institutionalised without any individual being excluded from the educational process. The point here is that all teachers should have the freedom to participate in educational matters. Also, all are equally allowed to be part of the educational process. Doing this creates opportunities for the least competent teachers to express their ideas and opinions on subject matters. Also, it opens doors for them to share their problems with others. Being incompetent does not mean that they cannot be given chances to say something or they should just sit quietly and listen from others. Through the process of interacting with others, they should feel encouraged and motivated to speak.

The processes of deliberation takes place in argumentative form, that is, through the regulated exchange of information and reasons among teachers who introduce and critically test proposals. Each teacher has an equal opportunity to be heard, each should be given an equal opportunity to introduce topics, make contributions, and to suggest and criticise proposals. In my view, positive criticism empowers educators and it enhances understanding. Teachers should be motivated and encouraged to take part in the discussions. I contend that, if the current teacher programme fails to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, the possibility of resolving the problem might be reduced. Similarly, Young (1993: 123) posits that in a just society, at the very least, every person should have an opportunity to develop and exercise his/her intellectual, social, emotional and expressive capacities. This points directly at a potential role for democratic education in enabling people to pursue social justice. It also raises questions, nagging questions, about the connection between the satisfaction of basic needs and the free use of opportunities to develop the capacities described. Teaching for social justice, we should remember, is teaching what we believe ought to be, not merely where moral frameworks are concerned, but in material arrangements for people in all spheres of society. Moreover, teaching for social justice is teaching for the sake of arousing the kinds of vivid, reflective, experiential responses that might move learners to come together in a serious effort to understand what social justice actually means and what it might demand. This means teaching to the end of arousing a consciousness of membership, active and participant membership in a

society of unfulfilled promises -teaching for what Freire (1970) used to call “conscientisation”, heightened social consciousness, a wide-awakeness that might make injustice unendurable. We speak often of generating a sense of agency in learners, and it seems evident that this mode of teaching is at least likely to communicate a sense of agency, if learners feel themselves engaged with those around them. Once awakened (as a group, a small community) to concrete examples of injustice (racial discrimination, the deterioration of certain classrooms and not others, the lack of teaching and learning facilities in some schools, whilst others have more than enough) they might, together, invent a project of remediation, palliation and repair. To invent is to move from an imagined state of things to a mode of action by which, as Dewey states, “ideas and aspirations can be used to reorganise the environment” (Dewey, 1916: 405). An aversion to existing conditions may well stimulate imagination. Harbermas (1979) offers a possible solution for teaching for justice in what he describes as a theory of “communicative democracy”. The idea is for teachers to come together without coercion and of their own free will to discuss issues of significance for them. He speaks about participants taking their lived situations and their cultural vantage points into account, and committing themselves to the kind of communication aimed at some mutually binding outcome. He stresses that all proposals made in the context of such discussion should be held open to question, and participants are to be influenced by arguments, explanations, different modes of persuasive and (on occasion) varied ways of expression deriving from lived social experiences. Young makes the point that one function of discussion is to transform people’s preferences, and this may be extremely relevant to the speech situation that can be created in classrooms. The discussion Harbermas has in mind may indeed alter people’s preferences, as they may (to turn to Young again) “refine ... their perception of the needs and interests of others, their relations to those others, and their perception of collective problems, goals and solutions. Communicative democracy aims to arrive at decisions through persuasive, not merely through the identification and aggregation of preexisting preferences. By having to speak and justify his/her preferences to others who may be sceptical, a person becomes more reflective about these preferences, accommodates them to the preferences of others, or sometimes becomes more convinced of the legitimacy of his /her claims. By listening to others and trying to understand their experience and claims, persons or groups gain broader knowledge of the social relations in which they are embedded and of the

implications of their proposals. These circumstances of a mutual requirement of openness to persuasion often transform the motives, opinions, and preferences of the participants. The transformation often takes the form of moving from being motivated by self-interest to being concerned with justice” (Young, 1993: 129-130). Even as we grant that the model of such discussion may still be academic, oriented to a wholly rational atmosphere, the connection between conversation or discussion or dialogue should be taken seriously. Teaching demands openings all sides: to that of people desirous of telling their stories or picturing them in some fashion; to that of newcomers striving to make sense of the notion of consensus or mutuality; to that of learners, familiar with the languages used at home or with the languages of the street.

Furthermore, teachers should work to enable learners to overcome what Freire (1970) describes as “internalised oppression”. This implies learning to reflect on experiences in the culture and the social world. To discover how much of the stuff of actually lived experience has been shaped by an oppressor somewhere - a landlord, an inspector, a principal, a physician - and how much has been freely chosen by the individual empowered to create him/herself as he/she lives a life. Moreover, the image of teachers coming together into what turns out to be a struggle against injustice summons up Rorty’s idea of solidarity and, at once, his rejection of the claim that solidarity refers to something essential, something at the core of all human beings. He claims that our sense of solidarity is strongest in relation to those who are close to us and refusing a notion of a “core self”. He defines solidarity as “the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, custom) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation ... the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of us” (Rorty, 1989: 192). Teachers can learn how to communicate that a commitment to it as significant norm brings people into the deepest kind of contact with others, diverse though some of the values they bring with them may be. Moreover, to teach for social justice is to teach for enhanced perception and imaginative explorations, for the recognition of social wrongs, of sufferings, of pestilences wherever and whenever they arise. It is to find models in literature and in history of the indignant ones, the ones forever ill at ease, and the loving ones who have taken the side of the victims of pestilences, whatever their names or places of origin. It is to teach so that the learners may be

awakened to the joy of working for transformation in the smallest places, so that they may become healers and change their worlds.

Before I conclude this section I wish to suggest the following points to teachers. Some are pedagogical and some personal. First of all, do not teach against your conscience or align yourself with texts, people and rules that hurt learners. Resist in as creative a way as you can, through humour, developing and using alternatives, and organising for social and educational change with others who feel as you do. Do not become isolated or alone in your efforts. Reach out to other teachers, to community leaders, church people and parents. Try to survive, but do not make your survival in a particular job the overriding determinant of what you will or will not do. As educators we need to root our struggles for social justice in the work we do on an everyday level in a particular community with a particular group of learners. I believe there is no single way to teach well, no single technique or curriculum that leads to success. Consequently, a third piece of advice I would give teachers is to look around at everything other people say is effective with learners. Pick and choose, retool and restructure the best of what you find, and make it your own, and most of all watch your learners and see what works. Listen to them, observe how they learn, and then, based on your experience and their responses, figure out how to practice social justice in your classroom as you discuss and analyse it. Teaching is fundamentally a moral craft and makes the same demands on our sensibilities, values and energies that any moral calling does. This implies that in a society where there is too much institutionalised inequity and daily suffering, teachers should understand the importance of being part of larger struggles. It is not enough to teach well and create a social justice classroom separate from the larger community. You have to be a community activist as well, a good parent, a decent citizen, an active community member. The question can be asked: Is all of these possible? Probably not - certainly it is not easy and often demands sacrifices. This brings me to the discussion of citizenship.

Citizenship education is a subject which has been marginalised in the school curriculum for more than a hundred decades i.e. a thousand years. Citizenship education assumed its focal position in the public forum at exactly the time when the Swapo government took over. Its introduction in the schools was advocated by local

educators in the early 1990s in the hope that it would empower citizens and serve as means for emancipation from colonial rule to self-government. The colonial government responded half-heartedly to this initiative by producing a document advocating the inculcation of responsible citizenship.

5.2.2 Citizenship

In this section I shall locate changes in the conception of citizenship education within the context of citizenship and illustrate how the two nurture each other. I shall argue that citizenship and citizenship education are empowering practices. As such, they help citizens stand against the political constraints imposed upon them in the form of patronage by the former colonial government.

A cornerstone of Namibian democracy is citizenship, with the well being and survival of the country's institutions and traditions largely dependent on the successful education and integration of each new generation of children and youths. Citizenship involves the rights and duties of individuals and the constitutional state. Rooted in the enlightenment and social contract, membership status in the democratic state confers certain rights and privileges upon its citizens, who, in return, are expected to exercise both personal control and collective responsibility for the common good (Dahrendorf, 1994). While these are the basic tenets of citizenship, the way citizenship should be practiced should be strongly influenced by political culture - the shared values, beliefs, traditions and knowledge that affect the political order (Almond & Verba, 1965). After independence the political culture in Namibia was changing, concerns have moved to the forefront of public discourse, generating considerable criticism and optimism about the country's future education.

Citizenship is, after all, a complex and multidimensional concept. It consists of legal, cultural and political elements, which provide citizens with defined rights and obligations, a sense of identity and social bonds. Being a citizen is considered the one among the many identities of an individual that helps to tame the divisive passions of other identities. It does so by conveying to each individual citizen a society's collective memory, cultural togetherness and nationality, and the collaborative sense

of purpose in fraternity (Heater, 1990: 184). These elements bind people together with a common identity of citizenship.

Moreover, citizenship has been closely associated with the ideas of liberal democracy, nationalism and nation-states (Ichilov, 1998: 11). It focuses upon individuals' relations with the social realm, rather than on their affinity with the political arena. It is related to the ideas of participatory democracy and aims at raising the level of participation by trying to reveal the political dimensions of everyday life. It is about empowering people (Lewis, 1987: 2). Citizenship education is also closely linked to moral education, character education or education for virtue, and education for critical thinking. The concept of moral education is probably most closely associated with the work of Durkheim, who articulated a cognitive developmental theory of moralisation. He considered discipline, attachments to social groups and autonomy as key elements of morality that should be inculcated through education (Durkheim, 1961). Kohlberg advocates the "just community approach" to moral education in schools, focusing on the "moral issues arising in day-to-day concerns of teachers and learners, governed by democracy, and motivated by an altruistic commitment to community (Power *et al.*, 1989: 2). Education for critical thinking is a generation-old movement of philosophers and educators who seek to transform education in general, and turn educational institutions into "smart schools" which inculcate critical thinking in their learners. It is linked, however, with citizenship education and current educational traditions.

Character education or education for virtue is important. It is intended to withstand moral decline in an era of deteriorating morality by teaching moral behaviour to schools children who are without such teaching in local communities or in the home (Lo & Si-wai, 1996: xx). By addressing radical democracy as political, social and ethical referent for rethinking how learners can be educated to deal with a world made up of different, multiple and fractured public cultures, teachers can begin to confront the necessity for constructing a new ethical and political language to map the problems and challenges facing Namibia. We need a new language to make learners in all their diversity a central focus for addressing how they take up the relationship between social justice and democracy. The point here is that learners should be involved in the discussions of democracy, rights, justice and compassion. Teachers need to create spaces for learners to speak, represent themselves and organise. This

implies that teachers need to become more sufficiently attentive to connecting the concerns of learners with the language of ethics, power and identity as part of a wider revitalisation of democratic public life. Moreover, teachers need to become more alert to developing new theoretical frameworks challenging the way they think about the dynamic and effects of cultural and institutional power. Teachers need to study both texts and institutions. This suggests addressing the issue of radical democratic education as part of a wider discourse of rights, political economy and social policy. In addition, teachers should ground their work in social relationships tempered by humility, a moral focus on suffering, and the need to produce alternative visions and policies that go beyond a language of critique. Social justice in the curriculum should be rooted in a sense of hope, connected to the future, solidarity with others and a willingness to fight for what one believes in. Social justice can frame the work of teachers to the degree that it connects with the experiences and histories of the learners they teach and work with.

Moreover, citizenship education is a clear notion of the civic virtues which are regarded as necessary for the function of a democracy. Citizenship education is expected to inculcate in the learners citizenship competences which embrace a profusion of qualities of intellect. These enable the individual to collaborate fully in the enterprise of creating and sustaining a viable and healthy democracy. Moreover, citizenship also entails the protection of citizens against the arbitrary exercise of state power. Therefore, citizenship should be emancipated from the constraints imposed on them by various societal forces. They should be able to make independent and critical judgements. Citizenship should also become aware that in principle the rights of citizenship are not conditional but categorical. What citizenship offers does not depend on the readiness of people to pay the price in the private domain. Citizenship cannot be marketed (Dahrendorf, 1996: 33). Social rights are not merely an “entitlement” which can be revoked as a result of changing social policies. They are as essential for democratic citizenship as political rights and civil liberties are. Social rights promote human dignity, equality, justice and solidarity. The extent to which these various traditions will penetrate the mainstream of the school curriculum and educational practices remains to be seen. Citizenship is needed to provide a sense of purpose, solidarity and guidance in a fragmented and a rapidly changing world. It is my contention that a neglect of the community, of the national public place as well of

the international public space results in the loss of the sense of trust, efficacy and neighbourliness. There are rising levels of crime and violence, homeless people, racism, social inequality, violation of human rights, all of which pose problems, nationally and internationally. Citizenship education should help to redefine the public place and to create conscientious, efficacious, interested, caring and active citizens. Learners should be made aware that the “public place is not only physical space ... it is social space ... [it] is action space, where we can tend to the arrangements that enhance our mutual well being as society” (Boulding, 1988). Citizenship education should also promote global awareness, and the realisation that circumstances that affect our immediate moral and physical well-being are located in the transitional arena as well. Many objectives which should affect the quality of life of each citizen on the planet cannot be accomplished without global awareness and cooperation.

I contend that if democratic participation is to survive, the citizenry should overcome the passive spectator mentality, the fascination with image, the steady diet of violence, and the overall mesmerising effects of politics and instead demand better quality education. Educators at every level can assist. Citizenship education and public discourses can play a pivotal role in motivating citizens to deal more intelligently with current social issues and prepare for greater changes in the future. The issue of citizenship is at once public and personal. It is a topic that has the potential for honing skills beyond conventional patriotic themes to develop a broader sense of democratic expression. If we apply the analytical framework (1993) to defining the purpose for citizenship, we can hope to educate for evaluative, practical, world-minded participation. It is a logical and necessary part of democratic education to scrutinise the characteristics of citizenship and analyse how it influences the perceptions and behaviour of the society. This is a task for citizenship educators and the other communities that strive for democratic participation.

It was the aim of the Ministry of Education to change the “curriculum not as a set of separate subjects but as a series of educational experiences that help learners see the world as a connected whole. In so doing, it aims to develop a curriculum tool that could be a powerful instrument for learning to make coherent sense of the world around learners and their places within. A strategy for collaborative storymaking to be

used as teaching and learning techniques is necessary. It is the purpose of the proceeding section to analyse how storytelling or imagination can improve the equity and quality education and how it can make the curricula more relevant and responsive.

5.2.3 Storytelling/Imagination

To begin with, we make our world significant by the courage of our questions and by the depth of our answers. Teachers who are concerned about teaching for social justice are seeking to create the kind of educative experiences that draw out courageous questions and open a space for responsive answers. The commitment to teach for social justice is not a commitment to a particular ideology, but a commitment to assist learners as they grapple with the demands of daily moral living. It is a commitment not to shy away from incorporating the whole lives of learners into teachers' teaching, nor to avoid the difficult social issues teachers and learners face in any given society. Herein lies a significant but subtle pedagogical problem. As teachers concern themselves with teaching for understanding, their rhetoric commits their pedagogy to begin with the natural instincts, interests and life experiences of the learner. Yet one of the great problems of the educators is how to meet the learner at this personal and unique place, and from there to teach and expand the learner's world. In other words, how do teachers foster growth and educative experiences? Dewey describes this process as follows:

The learner's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education. Save as the efforts of the educator connect with some activity which the child is carrying on of his own initiative independent of the educator, education becomes reduced to a pressure from without. It may, indeed, give certain external results, but cannot truly be called educative (Dewey, 1992: 363).

Teaching for social justice should avoid teaching that is "reduced to a pressure from without" because, without connecting to a child's life, teaching loses its moral dimension. Teaching can be conceptualised in two different ways. One way to understand teaching is to employ a teaching strategy that fosters and gives learners an

opportunity to experience and gain practice exercising those attributes and traits that help social justice to flourish. For instance, to prepare for democratic living, learners need opportunities to learn how to be tolerant, handle conflict, trust one another and build community, to name a few. A second way to view teaching for social justice is to address specific topics by having learners analyse their curriculum critically and uncover its intersections with social justice concerns. To illustrate how this might be implemented teachers can use examples focusing on Namibian situation. One strategy teachers can employ is storytelling. For instance, imagine for a moment that you are a teacher teaching at Windhoek High School. From the time the school starts every morning your learners are bringing in stories of people who sleep in a nearby park and of whom the learners seem fearful. These homeless people are being teased by your learners, some of whom are throwing stones and sticks at the sleeping homeless people. Some go to the extent of taunting them with funny name-calling or screaming to wake them up. Learners frequently come into class steaming hot and dishevelled from running away from those people in the park. To confront the learners' behaviour the teacher should need first to help them become aware of the reasons for their reactions. This implies that he/she has to find a way for them to express their beliefs about homeless people without a sense of being judged by an adult. In my view this is a problem which is rich in potential for discussion, conflict and understanding. It is a problem with larger implications, given the increase in homeless people in Windhoek city and in towns. The question can be asked: How to promote open discussion in a safe environment in order that learners can critically analyse their ways of behaving and their beliefs? To do this teachers can choose the storytelling method.

Storytelling is a structured approach to curriculum organisation that addresses the need for language and conceptual content development. Academic skills such as reading, writing, and research should be taught and woven throughout this integrated approach. In this way, these skills should not be taught as contextless skills, but should be learned by necessity as a means to an end. The question can be asked: What are the primary features of this strategy? First, a teacher chooses a topic for study (homelessness, in this instance) by explaining to the class that they will make a story together. The teacher should create the place or setting, while the collaborative work of the learners is to conceptualise the story onto an artistic frieze or wall mural. Characters are developed and placed. Each learner creates an individual character for

him/herself. Each individually developed character has personality traits, family and other relationalities, a role in the story and dreams. As the story develops, the learner's characters interact with other learner created characters in order to respond to key turning-point questions that the teacher poses. This is collaborative story making that will lead the learners through a number of episodes in an unfolding narrative determined in large part by their responses to the questions framed by the teacher as the story progresses. Storytelling is a strategy that by its nature draws on how we make sense of the world through stories. In *Acts of Meaning*, Bruner (1990: 89) posits that human beings are "fuelled by a need to construct meaning". In other words, human beings are born meaning makers. This meaning is created within the context of cultural constructs that are couched within a narrative form. To be meaningful, learning should be incorporated into the narrative of a learner's life, rather than being held at bay in a predetermined set of school learning. The storytelling method, drawing as it does on narrative and context, is a match for meaning-based learning. Issues of social justice begin with a sense of urgency. They are cloaked by a significance that much of traditional education avoids. Greene (1995: 50) aptly describes this ambiance as a "weightedness". She states:

There is always a certain weight in the lived situation - a weight due to the environment, to traumas from the past, or to experience with exclusion or poverty or the impacts of ideology. We achieve freedom through confrontation with and partial surpassing of such weight or determinacy. We seek this freedom, however, only when what presses down (or conditions or limits) is perceived as an obstacle. Where oppression or exploitation or pollution or even pestilence is perceived as natural, as a given, there can be no freedom. Where people cannot name alternatives or imagine a better state of things, they are likely to remain anchored or submerged.

A fundamental step in addressing educational problems is to learn to name obstacles, see their contingent nature and imagine alternatives. Storytelling facilitates this through constructing a story with the learners. Storytelling invites learners to bring forward their assumptions about the world. It is from this vantage point that the class starts its journey.

Because storytelling is *conceptual* in nature, the children should draw on their preconceived ideas about the topic being studied through activities. Both the learner and his/her character are involved in figuring out solutions to the problems they encounter as the story progresses. Such contextualised experiences promote socially constructed knowledge and understanding of the world. Such collaboration contributes to the learners' motivation for learning. Each question that is posed propels them toward deeper thinking, that, in turn, raises more questions. Their original conceptions of the topic are challenged in a way that fosters their own questioning. Learners negotiate with one another and with one another's character in order to make sense of new ideas. Storytelling takes these intrinsically motivated questions and asks learners to seek out new knowledge.

Moreover, *problem solving* is a cornerstone of storytelling as it encourages diverse ways of dealing with the problems the learners confront in their story, either through their own exploration of connections between characters and unfolding events or through the facilitation of teacher-guided questions. Finding the right answer fades in importance as the learners explore the problems inherent in storytelling. They bring to their story both what they already know from their own lives as well as what they can imagine as possible outcomes. Storytelling offers learners the experience of being collaborative story makers as they work together to address the teacher's guiding questions. Throughout the classroom learners can be concentrating and talking about each other's characters. As the children create their characters, each one imbues his/her character with a distinct biography, the story of a human being who happens to be homeless. And the collaboration of storytelling begins. The collaborative nature of storytelling is crucial and pinpoints an important insight into teaching about social justice. We are intricately connected to one another. Hoffman (1989: 279) states that "human beings do not only search for meanings, they are themselves units of meaning, but we can mean something only within the fabric of larger significations". As the learners create and interact with their characters, the lesson of homelessness is not lost on them. Moreover, storytelling draws on the learners' field of experience and knowledge by engaging them in creative problem solving about their characters. A community forms by such small stories shared with each other. Over time, these homeless characters form associations with one another and weave each other into their own stories as they meet the challenges of living on the street. This is not simply

a grouping of learners, but once characters in the storytelling have been created and introduced, they act in character and others should respond to the actions each take. One does not act in isolation. This is a powerful lesson related to social justice that at best is only abstractly addressed in traditional education. In this regard, storytelling is *communal*. The story is created and developed together. A guiding principle of storytelling should be that no character either dies or is alone. Therefore, to work in a classroom where storytelling is going on means more than just being in a cooperative group.

Storytelling involves *critical thoughts*, which includes critical listening and critical questioning. Teachers should pose critical questions that will spur critical thoughts and dialogue of the learners. Moreover, conflict, both explicit and implicit, occurs throughout storytelling. This becomes evident as learners discuss dimensions of a character and their decisions, the accuracy of information about a place or idea, the logic of a possession or contradictions within a character's biography. Conflict should be expected, acknowledged and used by teachers to help learners learn to share their ideas in such a way that others can hear and understand them. In this context conflict is not the polarising event that a teacher avoids bringing into the classroom. Instead, conflict provides an opportunity to forge connections in the classroom community. Negotiation is the norm, as are respect and civility; this is the way to entertain such multiple, diverse viewpoints. Storytelling actively facilitates and uses conflict to create critical teaching moments. Dealing with conflict is a preeminent, but most often overlooked aspect of democratic living. My argument is that we (people in general) like to avoid conflict because it makes us feel uncomfortable. At our best, we hide conflict in our efforts to respect others. In this regard, we mistakenly have not been willing to engage with difference for fear of offending. At our worst, we harbor attitudes that actively dismiss the other and that are the antithesis of democratic living. Either way, avoiding conflict prevents people from engaging with issues of social justice. Storytelling provides a constructive opportunity to engage with difference and learn how to negotiate conflict constructively.

Moreover, storytelling is *contextual*. It requires that all participants build and thereby understand the context of their story prior to any action. And because the participants are the ones solely responsible for the direction of the story (through their responses),

everyone knows what is happening and everyone belongs with his/her characters. The building of context through story making is the glue of creating a community of learners by fostering and deepening ties of connection between all in the classroom. Storytelling is *imaginative*. It fosters a sense of wondering that draws on the imagination in a way little else does in school. Imagination is critical to social justice. This is because, before we can be part of making the world a more just place, we have to be able to imagine the world as if it could be different. Greene (1988: 124) explains how education that names the world and sparks the imagination can engage learners:

Without being “onto something,” learners feel little pressure, little challenge. There are no mountains they particularly want to climb, so there are few obstacles with which they feel they need to engage. They may take no heed of neighbourhood shapes and events once they have become used to them - even the figures of homelessness, the wanderers who are mentally ill, the garbage-strewn lots, the burned-out buildings. It may be that no one communicates the importance of thinking about them or suggests the need to play with hypothetical alternatives. There may be no sense of identification with people sitting on the benches, with children hanging around the street corners after dark. There may be no ability to take it seriously, to take it personally. Visible or invisible, the world may not be problematised; no one aches to break through a horizon, aches in the presence of the question itself.

Teachers should constantly search for ways to weave connections with learners’ experiences and with the curriculum teachers should teach to them. How to engage learners in meaning making is a never-ending task. When teachers find these teachable moments, these moments when learners connect with an idea, teachers do not soon forget it, and they seek the next teachable moment in all they do. Storytelling cultivates teachable moments, without imposing ideas and concepts from without. Rather, learners are pedagogically nurtured so when they are ready, the seed of a new idea or realisation is planted. Creating these teachable moments is to reach to the core of learners’ understandings. Storytelling facilitates this as it invites the learner to bring the whole of him/herself to the table of learning; feelings, minds, artistic expressions, bodily movements, all are incorporated. Learners not only are given a chance to explore topics of social justice, but most foundationally, they are exercising those

aspects of character that will allow them to create and re-create a more just and humane world.

5.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter I analyse the notion of the concept “democratic education”. I emphasised that teaching for social justice is at the core of democratic education. I then discussed the aspect of democratic education, including deliberation, citizenship and imagination. I emphasised that the notion that learning and persuasion should be rooted in eliminating social justice as well as in creating pedagogical practices that help learners to imagine a different and better world has motivated a wide range of social movements. I argue that the relevance of making social justice a necessary part of education depends on the nature of the contexts, content and the problems that educators address. In the next chapter I shall reflect on my journey through this thesis. I then shall suggest possible pathways for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION ON MY JOURNEY THROUGH THIS THESIS

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I reflect on my journey through this thesis and offer possible pathways for future research. I highlight some aspects that profoundly affected my study, such as personal narrative, methodological issues, the area of academic writing, seminars I attended and various challenges. In bringing closure to this study I am very well aware that it starts another phase of intellectual growth. I finally identify possible pathways for future research.

6.2 Personal narrative

After I completed my second degree (BEd Honours) I had no intention of pursuing my studies any further. As a teacher I was concerned about and disturbed by the state of the education system in Namibia. Most of the schools, especially the formerly disadvantaged schools, were not functioning effectively. Even some schools that used to function extremely well in the past could not maintain the same reputation; the final-year high school results were really shocking. Many policies have been drawn up, but they did not seem to resolve the crisis. As I noted in Chapter Four, most of the policies may have contributed towards the chaotic education system prevailing in the country. While I argue that the current education system is going from bad to worse, I acknowledge the fact that the current government has partly achieved its goal of providing wider access. Apart from that, there seem to have been hardly more than superficial changes. In my view, this lack of change is a major concern. Having observed this situation for more than four years, I was disturbed because I wanted to know why the education system was in such a bad state. Also, I wanted to know how the government would deal with these problems. I became more distressed as I could not see an appropriate response to this unfortunate situation after four years. These concerns convinced me to further my studies in education, hoping to contribute towards resolving the crisis.

Fortunately, during the 2002 August holiday the school came to visit South Africa. During our visit we had an opportunity to speak to Professor Joseph Diescho, a Namibian novelist. His message to us was very motivating and credible. I committed to memory his quiet comment that “young people should consider taking their studies seriously, because Namibia needs educated people”. This statement stirred my interest in furthering my studies. Upon my arrival back home from South Africa, I started to reflect on what Professor Diescho had said, and approached my former lecturer for advice. The latter convinced me that I had the potential to succeed with further studies. It took me some time to decide whether to give up my job or not. It was not an easy decision, but the desire to acquire more knowledge persuaded me to leave my teaching position. I also did it out of love for my country, and I wanted to contribute to resolving the crisis in Namibian education.

The first day I arrived in South Africa I met my supervisor, Professor Yusef Waghid, for the first time. He explained to me that I would be doing a research Masters. I had no choice, otherwise I would have to return to Namibia and come back to South Africa the following year. I did not hesitate to tell him that I would take up the challenge. He realised that I was becoming worried and scared, and encouraged me not to be fearful and to take it easy. My concern was that I would not manage without coursework, as I lacked the necessary theoretical insights. He subsequently introduced me to the literature, which guided me in the formulation of a proposal. I submitted the proposal after two weeks, and the feedback was very encouraging. I was told to continue with the proposal and consult more reading materials, and submitted the proposal after having reworked it on no less than three occasions. Up until the fourth time my work was not up to the required academic standard, and I was really not happy with the comments. I took a day to read and reflect on my work and realised that my supervisor was telling me the truth. From that time on I decided to spend more time and put more effort into finalising the proposal.

Before I considered submitting the proposal for the fourth time, I fortunately attended a graduation ceremony during April. During the ceremony the keynote speaker made an extremely helpful statement. I was encouraged by his suggestion that one should “never be afraid of making mistakes”. A person who is afraid of making mistakes can hardly succeed in his/her life. He also said that students should learn from their own

mistakes; if a person is not making mistakes then there is something wrong with the person. When I heard these words, I realised that I am not the only person making mistakes and it is common for a person to make mistakes. Immediately after the ceremony I went straight to the library to search for reading materials. It took me a month to rework the proposal; since that day I have built up confidence that I should not be afraid of making mistakes and I told myself to continue writing. Now I believe in myself and accept that one can grow and learn from mistakes. I worked on the proposal until June 2004, when I was told that my work was acceptable and up to academic standard. The proposal presented me with major challenges, because I had to search for relevant literature. My lack of research skills were evident, and I was compelled to explore and discover many things which I never knew before. I was relieved when the proposal was approved, it filled me with confidence and a sense of enthusiasm.

6.3 Methodological issues

It was a challenge to find an appropriate methodology for this study. My reflection on the Namibian situation prompted me to try and find a solution to the problem, and as a result I decided that “critical theory” would be an appropriate methodology. When I started Chapter Two, I knew very little about research methodology. In fact I did not know the distinction between research methodology and research method, and had an extended discussion with Dr Berte van Wyk on this issue. He took his time to explain to me the distinction between research methodology and research method. He subsequently introduced me to reading materials which could assist me to understand the distinction. He advised me to go and read and come back the next day to tell him what I have read. His advice helped me to finally understand the distinction. Subsequently my contact with my supervisor, other researchers, and with the ideas and views of Bennett de Marrais (1998), Marcinkowski (1993), Harvey (1990), Cantrell (1993), Harding (1987), Gough (2000), and Hopkins and Antes (1990) clarified this distinction for me. I now realise that methodology refers to a broad framework of thinking.

Further reading brought me into contact with the ideas of Walker (in Johnston 2003), which prompted me to use critical theory. Walker posits that research should not

merely be a “happy hunting ground” for academics; rather it should empower those groups who have previously been marginalised, oppressed and disempowered. These few words encouraged me to think that my thesis should be located within a philosophy of empowerment. Since educational transformation is aimed at improving the dysfunction of schools, teachers, learners and the community at large, I decided to use critical theory to attempt to empower the above-mentioned groups. First I sought to understand what critical theory is all about and how it can solve the problem. Further reading brought me into contact with the ideas of Waghid (2002: 48), who elaborates on critical theory. He interprets the theory by stating that “by far the most important dimension of critical theory is the fact that it is driven by the emancipatory interest...its purpose is to contribute to change in people’s understanding of themselves and their practices and thus free them from constraints of society”. Fay (1975: 92) claims that critical theory analyses “a social situation in terms of those features of it which can be altered in order to eliminate certain frustrations which members in it are experiencing.” I decided to use critical theory because the theory promises to solve educational problems of schools in a high-order synthesis which allocates the empirical analytical and the historical hermeneutic sciences to their own, mutually exclusive, object domain, complete with their respective methodologies (Lakomski, 1998). The theory attempts to show people how they have been deceived, given their experiences, aims and desire, and in the process it seeks to reveal to them the rational way of going about getting what they really want (Fay, 1975: 98-99). Furthermore, I wanted to offer solutions for the alarming situation within the education system in Namibia. I would not feel contented if I could not offer alternative solutions for existing problems.

Even though I decided to use critical theory as an adequate methodology for this study, I also investigated positivist and interpretive educational theories. Subsequently I attempted to show why positivist educational theory was not appropriate for my thesis.

6.4 Academic writing

Academic writing is very challenging, and I sought for advice to improve my writing skills. I did not hesitate to contact a person who could assist me in acquiring writing skills. I had a word with Dr Hees in the Department of English, and he advised me on how to improve my academic writing. His advice was remarkable and it helped me to write better than I could before I started with this thesis. As the study progressed I stumbled upon a lot of other challenges in the writing process. I would write four to five pages making a lot of claims without putting forward any single argument. I did not know where and how to express my own voice. My supervisor consistently encouraged me to continue working on my thesis. I remember he said that “I am not interested in the language but in the ideas and the logic of your work”. His words really comforted me and boosted my morale. I now understand that writing style has a lot to do with one’s own voice. Here inventiveness is very important, and one has to formulate sound arguments. I had to explain, for instance, why I claimed that the majority of teachers in Namibia are incompetent. This was difficult for me and I told myself that I needed books that dealt with the issue of argumentation. A useful book I consulted was *Completing your thesis: a practical guide* (2004) by Nelleke Bak. What I found particularly helpful in this book was Chapter 5, “Developing academic discernment”. The chapter deals with critical reading, thinking and writing.

As the study developed I also continued searching for materials in order to improve my arguments. I spent nights in the computer lab downloading a lot of useful articles from the Internet. As I employed extensive reading, I realised how important critical writing skills are for research. As the study became more demanding, I was left with no other alternative than to buy books that could help me to develop my writing skills. I now realise that writing is not that simple because, apart from the other skills involved, quoting correctly is another skill that needs to be developed.

6.5 Interactions with visiting scholars

I greatly value the opportunity I had to interact with visiting scholars to our department, because I never had such an opportunity before. Just a month after I arrived I attended several presentations; during that time I was still working on my

proposal. Professor Gert Biesta presented a paper on educational research, evidence-based practice and professional judgement in education. He emphasised dealing with educational problems. Since my Chapter Four was about educational problems, his presentations opened my mind to an understanding of what educational problems are all about. The presentation was so constructive and I picked up information which was useful for my thesis. When I started my Chapter Four my supervisor advised me to read Biesta's article. I read the article in an attempt to understand educational problems. At first I found the article very frustrating, because I could not find a precise meaning of what constituted an educational problem. I disciplined myself to read the article over and over until I realised that Biesta was making the point that an educational problem is not a disease which cannot be cured. In fact, the point is educational problems can be solved. He pointed out something interesting, namely that being a student is not an illness, just as teaching is not a cure. The most important argument against the idea is that education is a causal process lies in the fact that education is not a process of physical interaction but a process of symbolic interaction. This article was useful in completing my fourth chapter.

What I appreciated was that the visiting scholar was so willing to offer advice. Biesta spend a lot of his time chatting with students. He was very open and helpful during his stay in the department. I think it is good for a student to attend presentations. I learned something very important from that day, namely that it is good to listen attentively to others, taking notes and, more important, participating in the discussion. This has helped me in my work.

6.6 Various challenges

Various challenges presented themselves during the course of this study. I had to submit chapters and I had to rework them, submitted chapters for language editing and so on. I promised myself to produce quality work and to do extremely well in my studies, but as I progressed I started to experience some discomfort. There were some times when I could enjoy working on my thesis. I would spend solitary nights just sitting in front of my screen and working or sometimes just doing the readings. But there were also moments when I experienced a variety of stressful and uncomfortable emotions. During such times I did not feel like going near any reading materials. Then

there was a time when I simply wanted to complete the thesis and graduate. These were dreadful moments, when I felt humiliated and demotivated. All my chapters were sent back for reworking and I had to construct another chapter on constitutive meanings. That was an unforgettable moment during my academic career, but nevertheless I managed to accomplish a great deal within the short period of time. It was not easy especially when I reached the middle of my study, but when I reached the conclusion I was more relaxed and happy.

6.7 Possible pathways for future research

A pathway for future research for me, especially after the implementation of the policies on equity, redress and quality education, would be to undertake teacher training in Namibia. It is my considered view that, although the education system has changed a lot at school level, teacher education and training did not really change. In Chapter Four I touched a bit on the state of teacher education training and the teaching profession in the country. There is a huge challenge, and researchers need to conduct more extensive research about teacher training. As I have already indicated, the current teacher-training programme (BETD) does not give a good impression that it might possibly be a solution for the existing problem. I contend that the troops are far ahead of their generals, if one considers that schools are implementing an education system that teacher-training institutions do not have. Most “qualified” teachers are really struggling to keep their heads above water when employed at schools; it is a matter of swim or sink.

This can be attributed to the type and quality of education that teachers are getting. Environmental education is needed in the sense that teachers should be taught programmes embedded in existential situations, meaning that education is responding to the problems facing the country or the society. Teachers should be empowered to engage at grassroots level for the purpose of improving their teaching and facilitating their professional growth. In my view teacher education and training is the key for transformation to be effective. Rogers and Freiberg (1994: 249) caution that change will not endure if “we focus on changing actions without providing opportunities for individual teachers to reflect on their values, beliefs and attitudes”. If individual teacher’s values, beliefs and attitudes are negated in the change process, we run the

risk of building our learning habitat on shifting sands. Therefore, I regard teacher training to be extremely important if we envisage an effective educational transformation. Fullan (1991b: 117) states that “educational transformation depends on what teachers do and think; it is as simple and complex as that” (Fullan, 1991b: 117). Similarly, Hargreaves (1994: ix) states “we have come to realise in recent years that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational transformation and school improvement. All the educational changes are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account”. Moreover, educational transformation will never amount to anything until teachers become simultaneously and seamlessly inquiry oriented, skilled, reflective professional” (Fullan, 1991b: 326). With this in mind, I recommend that more research on teacher education and training be carried out.

6.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is essential that I state the following. At first it seemed rather difficult to start looking critically at my work, yet I sustained this, grudgingly at first, trying to identify the fragile moments. Nevertheless, my attempts at self-critique might be limited as I must admit that there is limitations in my aptitude for this. In terms of the difficulties of this journey, reflecting on my work and critiquing myself stands out as one of the most complex aspects of my mission to complete this thesis. To give effect to this and to explain my struggle, I turn to Alcoff (in Le Grange, 2001: 203), who clearly states:

The desire to find an absolute means to avoid making errors comes perhaps not from a desire to advance collective goals but a desire for personal mastery, to establish a privileged discursive position wherein one cannot be undermined or challenged and thus is a master of the situation. From such a position one’s own location and positionality would not require constant interrogation and critical reflection; one would not have to constantly engage in this emotionally troublesome endeavour and would be immune from the interrogation of others. Such a desire for mastery and immunity must be resisted.

I hope that my attempts at being reflexive in this thesis might have opened spaces for new research opportunities and practices. This thesis, in conjunction with the literature review, could be a pathway for further critical theory studies.

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