

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Former BETD graduate's understanding and implementation of reflective practice
in the Rundu region of Namibia**

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ABSTRACT

The research, investigating how a selected group of former BETD graduates understand and implement the theory of reflective practice, is a qualitative case study carried out in the Kavango region of Namibia. The study was shaped by one of the major policy emphases in Namibia's post independence teacher education reform process - that of developing reflective teachers who actively participate in curriculum planning and take educational decisions based on their own judgment. A basic assumption underlying the study is that effective educational practice is dependent on practitioners thinking about what they are doing and acting on their reflections to improve practice.

The study found that a fundamental problem preventing these teachers from implementing reflective practice in accordance with the Namibian educational reform process, is that the participating teachers neither understand the exact meaning of reflective practice nor do they have a common or shared view of the concept, in spite of their common qualifications. A key contributing factor to their problems with implementing reflective practice is the lack of a deep understanding of the reform epistemology and pedagogy revealed by the three former BETD graduates selected for the research. These are the teachers referred to in the first paragraph: The first teacher is Helena, a teacher at Duduva primary school, the second teacher is Kalishe, also teaching at the same school as Helena and the third teacher is Darius at Ntja Junior secondary school. The qualitative approach employed for the study served to illuminate and highlight specific issues related to the implementation of reflective practice that will be of considerable value for the researcher in her capacity as a teacher educator. These included among others:

- The teacher's need for an understanding of the key principles on which reflection is based and how to translate these into practice.
- The need for teachers to have a clear understanding of the role that learners play in the reflective process.

- The need to revisit the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) education programme, because for teachers to reflect they need a sound subject knowledge on which to base their judgments.

These aspects, as well as the identification of the factors in the school system that contribute to the failure of reflective practice, provide a foundation for finding real solutions to the problems identified.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reflection is seen as a means for rejecting the view of teachers as technicians who narrowly construe and carry the nature of the problems confronting them and merely carry out what others removed from the classroom want them to do (Zeichner (1994: 4).

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the study and the aims and objectives of the research. The focus on reflective practice is explained in the light of the research context. This chapter also provides the research setting and an outline of the thesis.

1.2. Research Site

Two schools in Rundu, the main town in Kavango region, were chosen for the study. The Kavango region is situated in Namibia, a Southern African country in the south west part of the continent of Africa. The Kavango region is in the northeast of Namibia (see the map of Namibia on the next page). This is where I come from, and where I work.



Figure 1. Map of the regions of Namibia

Figure 1. Map of the regions of Namibia, (Sue Abraham. (2006). Graphics Unit, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.)

The people of Kavango are part of the Bantu of Africa. There are seven sub tribes in Kavango namely Mbukushu, Gciriku, Sambyu, Kwangali, San, and Nyembas. Other than the San most of these tribes are closely related to people from Botswana and Angola. Each tribe has its own chief (Hompa) and although they have different chiefs, they have one common culture.

There are seven spoken languages. All the languages other than Khoisan are understood and spoken by the various tribal groups. Kavango is one of the most populous areas in Namibia. The Kavango people live along the banks of the Kavango River where they earn their living through fishing and cultivating the wet and dry lands of this region. The people cultivate different types of crops for example; mahangu, maize, sorghum, beans, pumpkins, and they also keep cattle. The people of Kavango are especially well known for their wood carving.

The Kavango River, one of the few perennial rivers in Namibia, stretches along the region dividing Namibia and Angola and ends in the Okavango delta between Namibia and Botswana.

Like the rest of Namibia, education prior to Namibian independence in the Kavango region did not prepare the majority of the people to become self-reliant and independent. In 1990 when the country became independent the Kavango region had the largest backlog in terms of education with the highest number of unqualified teachers in Namibia. The regional educational office through the Ministry of Basic Education established primary schools, junior secondary schools and senior secondary schools after the independence of the country. There are also centres for adult learning, which accommodate school leavers and adult literacy programmes. This is to fulfill Article 20 of the Namibian constitution, which says: "All persons shall have the right to education." (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, (MBESC), 1993: 3).

In 1993, after independence, the regional office through the Ministry of Higher Education also established a college of education in the region. The college provides a basic teacher education diploma (BETD) allowing graduates to qualify to teach from grade one to grade ten. This is a three-year programme. The ministry of higher education also establishes a vocational training center to train young and adult people in the region to gain skills in various fields, for example plumbing, electronics, carpentry and others.

1.3. The background and context of the study

Namibia gained independence in 1990 and a major education reform process was launched. The reform programme was essentially a shift from the traditional/positivist education to learner-centred education. (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:10). Positivism as practiced in pre-independent Namibia allowed no room for critical questioning of the status quo (Dahlström, L.,1995 & Namibia. (MBESC,1993). Learning in this system was based on the reproduction of information of prescribed texts and the curriculum was “reified.” (Cornbleth, 1987:2).

Education located in democratic notions became an important part of the reform process. (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:120). Associated with democratic ideals, learner-centred education as adopted by Namibia is an approach to teaching and learning that is related to the national goals of equity, access and quality. It puts the learner and learning at the center of education. Learner-centred education (LCE) presupposes that a key tenet underpinning the notion of this approach is that of learning with understanding and will need to focus on what Hinchey (1998:12) referred to as “increasing the learner’s ability to make sense of information rather than transferring information.”

The BETD programme was developed to prepare teachers to teach basic education within the context of reflective practice as an integral dimension of learner-centred education. The Broad Curriculum for the BETD outlines what is expected of teachers in terms of learner-centred education:

Learner-centred education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learners, valuing the learner’s experience as the starting point for their studies. A learner-centred approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production. It is based on a democratic pedagogy, a methodology that promotes learning through understanding, and practice directed towards empowerment to shape the conditions of one’s own life. (Namibia. The Broad Curriculum for the BETD, 1998:1-2).

Dewey (1993:26) sees reflection as a way of helping teachers to use their “artful skills” to help students learn in meaningful ways, thus leading to genuine understanding. Reflective practice is concerned with improving practice rather than collecting knowledge and with fostering the rationality and autonomy of teachers and the taught within a setting of

democratic and liberal values. It involves a willingness to engage in “constant self-appraisal and development, which among other things, implies flexibility, rigorous analysis and social awareness.” (Parker, 1997:31).

Reflective practice is closely allied to the empowerment of teachers, as Fosnot (1989:xi) notes:

An empowered teacher is a reflective decision maker who finds joy in learning and investigating the teaching /learning process - one who views learning as a construction and teaching as a facilitating process to enhance and enrich development

Pomuti, H., Shilamba, P., Dahlström, L., Kasokonya, S. and Nyambe, J. (1998) explain that reflective practice is intended to enable teachers to explore different teaching and learning environments from a learner-centred and contextual perspective. It helps teachers to initiate, innovate and develop practical knowledge and skills conducive to the classroom context as well as educational and social change. Reflective practice is also to sensitize teachers to the view that knowledge is not static, but a process that is informed by critical investigative praxis (ibid:42).

Swart et al., (2003) conducted a study on how reflective practice is implemented in the pre-service Basic Education Teacher Diploma. The result of this study indicated that the view of reflective practice as well as the implementation varied across the colleges although ostensibly their approach is one of action learning. They did not however examine how the BETD graduates understand and implement reflective practice in their classrooms.

The emphasis on reflective practice in the Namibian reform context as a central approach linked to change in teacher practice and empowerment, as well as its central focus in pre-service education programmes suggests that it ought to be far more closely monitored and studied than has in fact been the case. As a teacher educator for Education Theory and Practice, I have a particular interest in how the BETD graduates implement reflective practice when it is no longer a part of a required programme of study. By investigating the implementation of reflective practice in schools seen through the experiences of the BETD graduates I hope to find answers to the following questions:

- How do BETD graduates perceive and implement reflective practice in their current professional contexts?
- Has their pre-service programme influenced their current practice of reflective practice?
- What factors in their professional context contribute to their current views and implementation of reflective practice?

This study focused on a small group of BETD graduates in the Kavango region. The primary reason for doing this study as a small-scale case study was to reach a level of understanding about reflective practice in the real world of the school so that I as a teacher educator could critically examine my practice in preparing prospective teachers. I needed to know how relevant my approach is, given the situation of the teachers in schools. If we are really serious about the role of reflective practice in bringing about change then we as teacher educators have a responsibility to ensure that we prepare future teachers adequately to implement it.

1.4. Research Goals

To investigate how selected BETD graduates understand and implement reflective practice in order to critically revisit the BETD curriculum, pertaining to the theory and strategies developed for teacher education programmes in the area of reflective practice.

1.5. A brief overview of the study

Chapter one deals with an explanation of the background of the study, the context, the setting and the research question.

Chapter two describes the historical background of educational reform in Namibia. It highlights some of the key issues and policy trends associated with this reform and it outlines how education has been conceptualized within the reform process. In particular, I focus on the importance of reflective practice, which is one of the pillars of educational reform in Namibia.

Chapter three describes the design of the study and the methodology employed. The chapter describes how I chose to work within an interpretive design and how I applied the different research techniques such as classroom observations, semi structured interviews and document analysis to develop a case study of how teachers understand and implement reflective practice in the Namibian educational context.

In Chapter four, I present the data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Findings and themes are constructed. In the analysis process, some direct examples from the teachers are provided.

Chapter five consists of the discussion of the results in chapter four. A more in-depth analysis of the data is therefore presented in this chapter. The chapter discusses teachers' perceptions of reflective practice, and reviews how teachers implement it. It also discusses the problems teachers experience with the implementation as well as the strategies teachers use to implement it.

Chapter Six presents the conclusion of the study. The chapter reflects on the aims of the study, summary of the study, the trustworthiness, and the limitations and the suggestions which may guide teachers and teacher educators in the development of reflective practice. While findings do not attempt to generalize, they are presented in such a way that they could be used and interpreted further by both teachers and teacher educators, when involved in the teaching and support of reflective practice.

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a description of the background and context of the study. I have also briefly introduced the setting of the study. This chapter also provided an overview of different chapters of this research report. In the next chapter, I will review literature related to the topic under investigation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter frames and informs my study on reflective practice, and how it is interpreted and implemented by selected BETD pre-service graduates. I begin by presenting the context of reflective practice in Namibia followed by a discussion on the intended development of reflective practice through the Basic Teacher Education Diploma (BETD). I then present a theoretical underpinning of reflective practice in the context of Namibian reform. The challenges of reflective practice and the strategies for developing it are also discussed. Finally, I include a brief discussion of previous investigations conducted on the topic being researched, and the influence of their findings on my research design.

2.2. The context of reflective practice

In this section, I explore how reflective practice in Namibia is closely associated with the reform ideals, in particular those associated with learner-centred education. I argue that reflective practice is a significant approach within the learner-centered philosophy of education in Namibia. One of the primary reasons for the emphasis on reflective practice is that “it allows teachers to be active participants in curriculum planning and development as well as being able to improve the quality of their teaching and learning through continuous research.” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, (MBESC), 1993: 81-82).

According to Zeichner and Liston (1994:4) reflection is seen as a means that leads to the rejection of the view of teachers as “technicians.” These authors suggest reflective practice in turn avoids the views of teachers being seen only as implementers of programs and ideas formulated elsewhere.

Through transformation of the education system in Namibia, learning was intended to become “active, purposeful, and goal-oriented.” (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:67). The emphasis therefore, in teacher education, is on how student teachers think about content, as well as finding meaning in what they have learnt through their own constructs. The focus is on solutions to problems, which are emerging through critical and reflective practice.

Thus, the professional development of teachers in the Namibian context, aims to do something that goes far beyond the passing on of approved methods or just conforming to approved ideas, content and method. In this respect the Development Brief, (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:80) states:

The central focus of Basic Education is on the learners’ needs, potential, and abilities. Learner-centred education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learner, valuing the learner’s life experience as a starting point for their studies. Teachers must therefore have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to interpret syllabi and subject content in terms of the aims and objectives of essential education and to relate these to the learner. Teachers should be able to select content and methods on the basis of a shared analysis of the learner’s needs, use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready-made materials, and thus develop their own and the learner’s creativity

Pollard (1985:4-5) explains that in complex and rapidly changing societies the dilemmas in education are numerous. He gives these among others:

- Lack of clearly stated and relevant aims.
- Lack of consensus among teachers and other educationalists regarding commitments, opinions and priorities.
- General sensitivity of educational issues both socially and politically.
- Poorly defined role of teachers.

Kutz and Roskelly (1991) in Portsmouth describe the situation that teachers generally find themselves in before reform situations. These include, among others, the following:

- Teachers still hold the view of learners as passive
- A focus on right answers.

- A view of knowledge as static and quantifiable and learning is viewed through the banking analogy.
- Emphasis on memorization at the expense of understanding.
- A view of teachers as technicians rather than critical participants in the education process.

The situation above could be used to describe the Namibian education system emerging from the legacy of the apartheid regime. Zeichner & Dahlstrom (1999) however emphasise that the heart of the proposed Namibian school reforms are teaching strategies that are learner-centred and interactive. This requires that teachers should have a holistic view of the learner and use the learner's life experience as a starting point. They further suggest that they should be able to select content and methods on the basis of the learner's needs, use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready made study materials and thus develop their own and the learner's creativity. Thus the policy statement: "A learner-centered approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production." (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:80-81)

Namibia is a multicultural and multilingual society; policy makers realized after independence that if teachers are to become the agents, facilitators and implementers of change, then they should be "prepared for reasoning with multiple points of view, raising questions, questioning their personal beliefs, learning to distinguish between substantiated and unsubstantiated opinion, etc." (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:37-38). On the basis of this theory the transformation of teacher education in Namibia incorporated the development of critical thinking and reflective practice as primary concepts. In this regard the rationale for a new teacher education programme includes the following:

The BETD is based on a democratic pedagogy, a methodology which promotes learning through understanding and practice, directed towards empowerment to shape the conditions of one's own life. As such it relates closely to the curriculum intentions of Basic Education, and the context of the school in society. (Namibia. (MBESC&MHEVTST),1998:2).

The aims of the BETD therefore include the following statement:

Basic Teacher Education will strive to develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical and critical thinking, and develop the ability to create learning

opportunities, which will enable learners to explore different ways of knowing, and develop the whole range of their thinking abilities (ibid: 4-5).

There is a clear indication based on the above statement, that in order for the teachers to enable learners to explore different ways of knowing and to develop the learners' thinking abilities, the teachers themselves must have been able to experience and to explore different ways of knowing and be able themselves to think in different and new ways. These are among the reasons why the Ministry of Education embarked on the policy to develop reflective practice among teachers. In the next section, I discuss the development of reflective practice through the Basic Education teacher Diploma (BETD).

2.3. Reflective practice in the BETD

This section examines reflective practice in the context of the reform policy and examines reflective practice through the epistemology of social constructivism, which underpins learner-centred education.

2.3.1. Reflective practice and the goals in the reform

Teacher development in the pre-independence programs ignored the role of prospective teachers as active participants in the educational process and in change. Consequently Fullan (cited in Zeichner & Dahlstrom, 1999:42) argued that:

The teacher as learner is central to transcending the dependency now faced by teachers as they attempt to cope with streams of innovations and reforms constantly coming at them. Education reform will never amount to anything until teachers become simultaneously and seamlessly inquiry, skilled, reflective and collaborative professionals. This is the core agenda for teacher education, and the key to bringing about meaningful, and effective reform.

As discussed in the previous section, the Namibian educational reform is primarily concerned with achieving the post independence educational goals. In the transformation of teacher education one of the major policy emphases was “to develop reflective teachers who would be able to cope with the new education system.” (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993: 81)

Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture after independence opted for a reflective approach in teacher development that emphasizes the “construction of concepts and principles in learners using the conceptual structures they already have and drawing upon their experiences.” (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:121-122). This approach is supportive of the philosophy of learner-centred education, which became one of the pillars in the transformation of the system. In the context of the transformation of teacher education in Namibia, the model, which focused on instruction in a range of well-defined classroom practices, was deemed to be inadequate for achieving the goals of the reform agenda. A new model aimed at developing teachers as critical enquirers, able to ask questions about themselves as learners, questions about their learners and questions about social factors that affect learning in their classrooms was developed.

Schon (1987) argues that students must be guided to devise new methods of reasoning, construct and test new categories of understanding, strategies of action and ways of framing problems. In this regard the practicum of the BETD (referred to as school based studies) plays a central role as one of the mechanisms for fostering and developing reflective practice.

Furthermore, the BETD programme includes the concept of the teacher as researcher. According to Kurtz and Roskelly (1991) new images of the teacher as a researcher had emerged, reflecting a deepening awareness of the importance of teachers’ questions in the making of pedagogical theory. It is therefore necessary for students to learn to see their questions as the beginning of an inquiry that will lead them to new understanding. They need to learn to look at their learners and ask questions about how they learn and then create a theory to guide learning. Elliot (1991a:313) states that:

Learning to be a reflective practitioner is learning to reflect about one’s experience of complex human situations holistically. He also argued (1991b:15) that the institutionalization of ‘action research’ and teachers as researchers as approaches to teacher education within academic institutions raises a number of critical issues for tutors and supervisors to reflect about. If we are to facilitate reflective practice as a form of educational inquiry in schools, then we must treat teacher education as a reflective practice also.

2.3.2. Social constructivism

Educational reform in Namibia is underpinned by social constructivist pedagogy. Learning from this perspective is considered to be an active process on the part of the learner and it also involves the construction of meaning, which often takes place through interpersonal negotiation (Hinchey, 1998:47-48). Piaget believed that knowledge is acquired as the result of a life long constructive process in which we try to organize, structure, and restructure our experiences in the light of existing schemes of thought, and “thereby gradually modify and expand the schemes.” (Bodner, 1996:1). Vygotskian thinking views society and culture as instrumental in the construction of knowledge (Richardson, 1997). Knowledge in this view is constructed as the learner actively interacts with others.

The task of the constructivist teacher is to design experiences that will give students an opportunity to develop their own understanding of the data at hand, while at the same time develop a shared social understanding of the world (Hinchey, 1998). The constructivist teacher does not believe that knowledge is something he or she possesses, which she or he can simply hand-over or deposit into the learners. Effective learning requires that the teacher set meaningful, open-ended and challenging problems for the learners to solve (Fox, 2001). Fox further suggests that the classroom in this model is seen as a “mini-society - a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse and reflection.” (ibid:ix).

Within the Namibian context, a social constructivist approach is largely expressed as a ‘learner-centred approach.’ (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:120). It is understood within the Namibian context that it is desirable to promote learning through understanding, to encourage a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production and to promote learning, which is “an interactive, shared and productive process.” (Namibia. (MEC & MHEVTST), 1993:2). The role of a teacher in a Namibian context is supposed to be one of giving students center stage in the classroom and providing a setting in which the students play an active inquiring role in their own learning.

Reflective practice is a significant approach within the learner-centred philosophy of education in Namibia. After independence, the Namibian educational system was faced with providing access to more learners while at the same time bringing about a total transformation. To meet the aims of transformation through teacher education reform, teachers needed to develop reflective qualities and modes of practice through the theories of critical and analytical thinking skills, and through the development of inquiring minds.

2.4. Features of reflective practice in the BETD

Dewey (as cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:8) defines reflective practice as “that which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the reasons that support it and the further consequences to which it leads.” Furthermore, he sees reflection as a way of helping teachers to use their skills to help students learn in meaningful ways, leading to genuine understanding.

Based on the discussion above, learning is seen as an interactive, shared and productive process where teaching is creating learning opportunities which will enable learners to explore different ways of knowing, and develop the whole range of their thinking abilities. It is by “reflecting over what we have experienced that we internalize the outer world and activity into inner understanding. That understanding will then be added to and modify previous experience.” (Van Harmelen, cited in Namibia, Learner centered education in the Namibian context, 2002:2). Dewey, (as cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:8-9) identified six key characteristics of reflective practice, which are:

- Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency;
- Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously;
- Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of classroom enquiry, to support the development of teaching competence;
- Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness;

- It is based on teacher judgment, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insights from educational discipline; and
- Reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfillment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues.

Dewey also recognized that it is possible to reflect on many things in the sense of ‘merely thinking’ about them; however, logical or analytical reflection can take place only when there is a real problem to be solved (ibid: 8).

According to Van Manen (as cited in, Brubacher et al, 1994:20); “three levels exist in progressing to critical or emancipatory thinking”. The first level is in “the application of skills and technical knowledge for the attainment of specific goals.” This level is associated with the student teacher’s engagement within the classroom and school, during the course of which they are exposed to and begin to build up a repertoire of skills. While engaged at this level, student teachers are required through the BETD programme to observe and record the social and learning process in the school and the classroom. These skills of observation are in preparation for the activities in the next level. The second level involves “reflection about the assumptions underlying specific classroom practice, as well as the consequences of particular strategies and actions.” In this regard they are assisted by their observations and their reflection on the observations through diary writing and journals. The third level, sometimes called “critical reflection” entails the questioning of moral, ethical and normative criteria directly and indirectly related to the classroom. At this level students are required to theorize their experiences and to make judgment and decisions.

Hall (1994:36-37) also proposed the following “three broad levels as a starting point for reflective practice.” The first level is called “every day reflection (fleeting).” According to her this “occurs in its own space and time and often but not always, when one is alone, thinking, remembering or talking about things with one or more others.” The second level is “deliberate reflection (committed).” This level involves “one in reviewing and developing one’s practice in any of a number of deliberate ways which can be solitary or collaborative.” This means “writing in a journal, talking with a critical friend or mentor,

attending a series of seminars or a distributed conference, attending network or special interest group meetings, participating in focus group discussion etc.” The third level is called “deliberate and systematic reflection (programmatic).” This takes place “within deliberate and sustained review and development programs where reflection takes place through action as well as on and about action.”(ibid:37). It takes place in a form of projects and requires considerable input of time and careful designing. Examples are action learning project programs, mentoring projects and collegial writing groups.

There are a range of mechanisms in the BETD programme, which attempt to develop reflective practice including the following:

- Opportunities and situations, which enable students to question and analyze their assumptions about teaching and learning.
- School-based studies, which provide student teachers with opportunities to experience in a safe classroom environment new ideas, insights and strategies.
- Critical inquiry and action research projects.
- Engagement in reflective writing through journals
- Integration of theory and practice. (Namibia. Broad Curriculum BETD, 1998: 2-4)

2.5. Approaches to reflective practice

Over the past decade reflection has come to be widely recognized as an important and even crucial element in the professional development and growth of teachers. Reflective terminology such as ‘reflective teaching’, ‘inquiry-oriented’, ‘teacher as researcher’ and reflective practitioner are being used in various ways and are informed by diverse theoretical frameworks (Calderhead and Gates, 1993). The reflective approach in the Namibian context draws on Schon’s (1983, 1987) and Dewey’s (1933) thinking. Dewey’s distinction between action-based, and action which is impulsive, and his emphasis on the need to have certain attitudes of open-mindedness and skills of thinking and reasoning in order to reflect, have shaped the thinking on reflective teaching.

Schon (1983, 1987) developed the notion of “reflection-in-action” i.e. the idea that professionals engage in reflective conversation with practical situations, where they constantly frame and reframe a problem as they work on it, testing out their interpretations and solutions. Educators therefore need to realize that their actions as teachers take place in a context of meanings in which other participants (e.g. parents, learners and other teachers) have different interpretations, understanding and maybe even different constructions of reality. The reflective educator thus needs to take into account the different interpretations, understanding and constructions of reality in order to embark on “reflective conversations.”

In Grant’s (1984) view reflective teaching occurs when teachers question and clarify why they have chosen their classroom methods, procedures and content. Reflective for him is an on-going process that involves careful re-examination of what has been done to improve practice. It is also thinking analytically about goals, teaching actions and the teaching environment, and using those thoughts to improve future teaching. Zeichner (1994:10-11) holds the view that reflection “signifies a recognition that the generation of knowledge about good teaching is not the exclusive property of colleges, universities, and research and development centers.” It recognizes that teachers can and should play active roles in formulating the “purposes and end of their work,” and that teaching and educational reform needs to be put in the hands of teachers.

From the literature examined, it became evident that teachers engage in reflective teaching when they “can describe what they do, explain the meaning of what they do, understand how they came to be like they are, and identify what they might do differently” (Smyth, as cited in Etheridge, 1989:311).

Since reflective practice for teachers is directed primarily towards the improvement of classroom practice in order to optimise learning and thereby make it possible for every learner to reach her or his potential, reflective practice should contain among others the following elements: (as summarized from the reviews examined)

- Conscious and careful consideration and examination of own beliefs in order to question and evaluate assumptions.
- Attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, dedication and commitment as reflection require looking at alternatives and compromises, and the willingness to do more.
- Awareness of the social context as ideological and institutional forces may impact upon or constrain freedom of action
- Analytical and critical thinking about goals, action, and environment and the best possible way(s) in which to achieve the goals in a specific environment
- Questioning and clarification of choice of methods, procedures and content, which requires competence in understanding of content, and methods.

From the evidence supplied by the literature examined, there is a strong claim that reflective practice, if well understood by teachers, will make implementation possible in the context of all teaching and learning situations and that it can improve the quality of teaching and learning.

In the light of the discussion of reflection and reflective practice in the literature reviewed, I explore the challenges presented by reflective practice as well as strategies identified to develop reflective practice.

2.6. The challenges of reflective practice

While reflective practice is one of the important elements that is theoretically claimed to bring about improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, there are some constraints that hinder the effective implementation of reflective practice, which are discussed in this section.

2.6.1. Ambiguity of the concept

Many of the discussions on inquiry-based pre-service education have not yet reached consensus on the role of reflection in improving classroom practices. LaBoskey (1994:4) pointed out one problem in the use of the term “reflection in teacher education that we

have often not made clear which particular meaning we had in mind.” Following from this, Leat (1995) states that reflection or reflective practice is in danger of just being a popular slogan in both teacher education and professional development. These terms, the authors suggest, disguise a large number of conceptual variations and therefore there are no single adequate definitions, which is comprehensive enough to embrace all the features potentially relevant to reflective teaching.

Moreover, Lampert (1997:85) says, there are “many different conceptions of the teacher-researcher and the arguments about the role of reflection in competent practice.” Day (1993) and Waks (1999) also pointed out that there is a diversity of meanings of reflective practice and confusion regarding the term reflective teaching.

2.6.2. Implementation of reflective practice

A second challenge in implementing reflective practice is the general lack of understanding about the approach as there is a lack of professional development programmes for teacher educators, as well as a lack of structured programmes in teacher education for new educators. Zeichner & Dahlstrom (1999:4) suggests teacher education has done little to foster genuine teacher development and to enhance the teacher’s role in education reform.

Reflection on one’s practice has been documented as being difficult for teachers. First, the skill of looking back and learning from one’s experiences within a classroom environment is seen as extremely complex and difficult to acquire (Pultorack, 1993). Pultorack furthermore suggests that a related issue is systemic in nature and includes: lack of time, insufficient enthusiasm and support from school supervisors (ibid). Without time, enthusiasm and support, active reflection is difficult to sustain over a long period.

Newman highlights practical problems in the implementation of reflective practice. In a school reflective practice would demand greater flexibility in the school timetable to enable each teacher to vary the length of their lessons to follow the logic of reflection-in-action (Newman, 1996). This is rarely possible, for a range of administrative reasons.

Stevenson (1991:290) also highlights the difficulty of engaging in “professional development work associated with action research” She argues that such activity demands conditions that require teachers to “have the time and resources to reflect systematically on their practice and to communicate extensively with each other.” She goes on to suggest that most teacher educators especially at college level are experiencing this difficulty and this limits their modeling reflective teaching during classroom practices with student teachers.

The ministry of Basic Education points to another challenge - that teacher educators from the pre-independence dispensation find the implementation of education reform challenging and are sometimes not willing to conform to it, because their own “professional development has not kept track with new educational development and practice” (Namibia. (MBESC), 1993:21-22). Thus, because of their limited understanding especially about reflection, they cannot be effective with the implementation.

In spite of all the challenges discussed in this section, there are some mechanisms in place to eliminate some of these challenges. In the next section, I present the strategies for reflective practice.

2.7. Strategies for developing reflective practice

According to Falk (1996:28-29) teachers need to develop the skills and capacities that are required to take charge of their own thinking and their own learning. She further argued that:

Just as students learn through active inquiry, social interaction, and personal reflection, teachers learn to teach in a constructivist manner by experiencing constructivists learning themselves. As they apply these learnings with their students, they learn even more about teaching because the very process of constructivist teaching provides numerous opportunities to gain new knowledge...

She goes on to say that new forms of teaching need to be developed that are solidly based on emerging understandings of how human beings engage in learning. These understandings call for changes in the processes, context, and content of teacher education and professional development programmes. Teachers need to become learners

themselves, who continually investigate the learning process, who become more conscious and responsive to the ways in which differences impact on the learning process, and who communicate their methods for learner support and development. This in turn implies that if teachers are to acquire these skills, knowledge and attitudes, they need to experience opportunities, which will enable the acquisition of these attributes. Teacher educators are therefore required, through their own practice, to act as role models for student teachers.

A departure from old norms and models of teacher training to new images of what, when, and how of teachers learn, is necessary for professional development, which will support reflective practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996:203). The new images imply a shift from policies that seek to control directly the work of teachers, and strategies intended to “develop the capacity of schools and teachers to be responsible for student learning.”

According To Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1996:93), what is missing from the knowledge base for teaching “ are the voices of teachers themselves, the questions teachers ask, the ways teachers use writing and intentional talk in their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practices.” Teacher research can provide rich data about classroom life; reveal what teachers regard as important issues about learning and teaching and influence teachers’ decision making.

Szabo (1996:77) express the view that new structures and practices “without mechanisms for building clarity and commitment to the new purposes and goals of reform, will result in little impact on improving learning.” According to her, changing formal structures is not the same as changing norms, habits, skills and beliefs. A process of what she refers to as ‘recapturing’, alongside the process of restructuring, is necessary to ensure deep and lasting change, which will facilitate habits of reflection and inquiry.

Like their learners, teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting, collaborating with other teachers, looking closely at learners and their work, and sharing with others what they discover. This kind of learning, according to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996:204) enables teachers to make the “leap from theory to practice.” However, to

understand deeply, teachers must learn about, see, and experience successful learner-centred teaching practice.

Lieberman and McLaughlin (1996:72) argue that teachers are willing and eager to participate in “activities that challenge them and promote professional development.” Such activities can be initiated through collaborative and collegial networks providing opportunities for professional growth and social interaction. Networks can create discourse communities that encourage exchange amongst members and can provide leadership opportunities. They therefore can provide teacher educators and student teachers with the motivation to challenge existing practices and to grow professionally as a result.

Environment plays an important role in the development and sustaining of reflective practice, as “most teachers would be reflective most of the time in an appropriate and supportive environment.”(Russell, 1993:145).

Hall (1994:32-34) also suggested strategies, which she claims can influence the development of reflective practice. These are among others:

- Action learning: McGill and Beatty (1992:21) suggest that through action learning “individuals learn from each other by working on real problems and reflecting on their own experiences.” These help teachers ‘to take an active stance towards life and help them overcome the tendency to think, feel and be passive towards the pressure of life.’
- Clinical supervision: Within the framework of clinical supervision, Hall has this to say. “Supervisors observe a subordinate at work and provide a feedback and discussion session with the person observed so as to review and enhance the existing practice.”
- Critical Incident Analysis: This involves the “documentation and analysis of a teaching incident in order to learn from it and enhance practice.

- Engaging a Critical Friend: A critical friend (Stenhouse, 1975) ‘is a trusted listener and sounding board enlisted to act as interested outsider in a review and development project.
- Mind mapping: Mind mapping (Buzzing, T., 1983 in Hogan, C., 1994) “is a process by which the connected ideas surrounding a particular concept or problem are drawn in a map fashion so as to enable practitioners to reflect on them and to clarify and or reshape them and move onwards.” This serves as a device to help teachers and students reflect on their learning and teaching.

The next section discusses the studies done by various researchers on reflective practice

2.8. Review of research studies

Most of the research literature on reflective practice I have read, particularly in Namibia, demonstrated a great deal of concern on the lack of understanding of reflective practice by both teacher educators and student teachers and as a result the implementation is not done effectively.

Stevenson (1991) examined the impact of a graduate course in action research that was designed to engage in-service education students as participant inquirers into their own professional practices. The students who participated were enrolled in master’s level, administrator certification programs on part-time basis. Stevenson found that the majority of students could only “reflect at the technical level.” His study revealed that the students were unable to articulate the relationship between educational principles or theory and practice, or to examine the social and institutional conditions that mediate that relationship. His study indicated that students did not have confidence in developing their own theories because academic theory was given more status.

Lampert (1997) examined the effect of a professional project for teachers, whose design was based on a constructivist model. The project intended to result in a change in classroom instructional practices, whereby teachers were required to do inquiries into their student’s ways of thinking about subjects such as science, mathematics and music. Teachers were also expected to construct learning theories by reflecting on how they

generate knowledge while they were doing activities with their students as well as to develop appropriate action strategies. The study revealed that teachers seemed to find difficulty in moving from being teachers to being teacher-researchers. Teachers had difficulty in understanding the significance of learning about their practice as a useful and way of knowing, and which could potentially serve as a base on which teaching strategies could be built. Lampert concluded that teachers did not and perhaps could not develop the realization or insight necessary for making connections between their inquiry activities and their actual classroom teaching.

Walker (1991) examined her role in facilitating a reflective practice teacher development project of 34 teachers from four African primary schools in Cape Town between 1987 and 1989. In this project, teachers were regarded as active producers of pedagogical knowledge, shaping the curricula through engagement in a process of reflection-on-practice. The study indicated that although teachers “could articulate their theories about effective teaching, their ability to develop an understanding of why one method is better than another and thus moving beyond a fossilized situation of using specific techniques is a slow and continuing process.” Walker also found that critical analysis without practical skills is not sufficient to transform classrooms.

Flanagan (1991) examined the impact of the Primary education project, designed to foster reflective practice among primary teachers in ex-Department of Education and Training (ex-DET) schools. She indicated that reflective teaching could not operate effectively without a library and a minimum of resources.

The National Institute for Education Development Research Unit (NIED, 2004) of Namibia investigated the outcomes of reflective practice and critical practitioner inquiry in the BETD preset. The research questions investigated in this study include:

- To what extent do teacher educators and student teachers understand the philosophy of critical practitioner inquiry?

- To what extent does the BETD Preset programme prepare student teachers to conduct Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) during school-based studies and afterwards during their careers?
- On what level do student teachers reflect when they are completing their action research project?

(NIED 2004)

The focus groups were 13 teacher educators from Ongwediva College of Education, and 10 from Rundu College of Education, which were selected from various departments. Issues discussed were: Understanding of Critical Practitioner Inquiry, strengths and weaknesses of integrating Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) into the BETD Preset, institutional support on different levels to implement and sustain CPI in the BETD Preset and afterwards in their teaching careers, and the support that students receive to complete their action research projects. An action research workshop was conducted with final year BETD student teachers. They also conducted a group discussion with six BETD graduates who completed their courses two to three years ago.

The NIED Research Unit arrived at the findings that many teacher educators at both colleges have a narrow and limited understanding of critical practitioner inquiry and its underlying assumptions. At one of the colleges in the sample, not one of the teacher educators attempted to explain their understanding of CPI during the discussion. A number of the teacher educators at one college admitted that they don't know the 'how' of teaching CPI and action research. The research indicated that because of a limited understanding of teacher educators on CPI, teacher educators are not effective action research tutors to student teachers and this might be one of the reasons why some of the BETD graduates experienced difficulties in implementing it during classroom practice. However, this study did not explore either the contributing factors leading to the so-called limited understanding, nor did this study attempt to identify precisely what it meant in educational terms to have a limited understanding of reflective practice.

2.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined literature that guided my research project. I presented reflective practice within the Namibian context as well as how it is translated in the BETD Broad Curriculum. Also in this chapter, I examined the challenges of reflective practice with the strategies to develop it. Other researcher's work was also presented. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed outline of the methodologies used for my research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter the research design and methodology are discussed. The methods and instruments used were guided by the purpose of the study, which is to investigate the understanding and implementation of reflective practice by former Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) graduates in selected schools. It explains how the participants were selected. It also discusses how validity and ethical issues were dealt with and how I approached the data analysis.

3.2. Research design

The research design is guided by an interpretive orientation. Erickson (1998:115) contends that an interpretive design is concerned with “human social actions and opinions that are locally distinct and situationally contingent.” Also Janse van Rensburg (2001:17) claims that interpretivist researchers are often not that interested in taking action through or even after their research; their focus being on “unraveling the complexities of social life as they and the participants experience it.”

Cantrell (1993:83) describes the purpose of an interpretive orientation to research. She notes that an interpretive orientation aims to “understand and interpret daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meaning people give to the phenomena.”

Applying an interpretivist methodology in this study indicates that this research is based on “contextual meaning making” (Janse van Rensburg, 2001:16-17). I have selected to observe a small number of teachers in their classroom settings. I collected detailed information through interviews, observations and document analysis. Because I was

interested in the meaning the selected teachers make of reflective practice I felt that interpretive orientation was the best orientation for my study.

Qualitative research was chosen, as the study aims to elicit the views, beliefs and experiences of the participants in the process, and to explore to what extent the theory of reflective practice has been implemented (Cohen, Manion and Morris, 2000).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:25) state that a qualitative research orientation “places individual actors at its center, it will focus upon context, meaning, culture, history and biography.” Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:26) further state:

Applied to educational contexts qualitative or naturalist research recognizes that what goes on in our schools (and colleges) and classrooms is made up of complex layers of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes. Schools, classrooms and their participants have histories and careers, teachers and pupils have their own educational and life histories, departmental members engage in interpersonal relations, conflicts and alliances emerge, responses to innovations and institutionalization ensures that schools and classrooms have cultures and ethos. A firm understanding of these variations and the ways in which they interact to create the politics and dynamics of educational change requires a qualitative appreciation of these factors.

The case study method was utilized consistent with what Ashcroft (1997:19) describes as an attempt to establish “what is going on in a particular situation or with a particular group of people.” She goes on to say that case studies are especially useful with the kind of insider research that is trying to get to complex issues, as they enable the researcher to use a variety of data collection techniques to look at a variety of viewpoints. Creswell (1994:12) describes a case study as a technique through which a researcher examines or explores

a single entity or phenomenon “(‘the case’) bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time.

Anderson et al, (1991) have outlined amongst the characteristics of case studies, that it is possible to focus on one or two issues or processes that are fundamental to understand the system being studied; and that they can facilitate the possibility of capturing and analyzing events and happenings, interactions, relationships, groups and institutions as they emerge and evolve across time. These were among the reasons why the case study approach was chosen for the study.

A key technique employed for the case study was the use of semi-structured interviews with the three selected teachers. Different methods for data collection were utilized for the case study, e.g. classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis for “triangulation purposes and to provide multiple sources of evidence.” (Yin, 1994:34)

3.3. The research setting

This study was conducted in the Kavango Educational Region (where the town of Rundu is located). I selected two schools in the town of Rundu: A primary school (grade one to grade seven) and a junior secondary school (grade eight to grade ten). The two schools were selected because most of the teachers are BETD graduates. The two schools are government-controlled schools. Both use English as the language for teaching and learning. The predominant language spoken in this area is Rukwangali.

3.4. Sampling

The investigation was conducted with three selected former BETD teachers who are teaching different phases, one is teaching at the lower primary phase (grade 2), one at senior primary phase (grade 6) and the third teacher is teaching the junior secondary phase (grade 9). As a teacher educator for Education Theory and Practice, I selected these teachers to find out how they understand and implement reflective practice as presented in pre-service education programme in their particular context.

Cohen and Manion (1985:98) define a sample as “a smaller group or subset of the population selected in such a way that the knowledge gained is a representative of the total population under study.” Also, Bieger and Gerlach (1996:67) claim that sampling

refers to “choosing a portion of the target population for research, rather than studying the entire population.” (as is my case).

I used purposive sampling to choose my participants. The purpose of purposive sampling “lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth.” Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.” Therefore as BETD graduates I expected these teachers to provide me with information rich cases as their programme of study is designed to develop prospective teachers as reflective practitioners.

I also selected my participants through convenience sampling. Cohen, Manion and Morris (2000:102) argued that convenience sampling “involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents.” I used convenience sampling because I had easy access to the selected participants.

In the next session, I present a table, which gives a summary of my selected schools and selected teacher’s profiles

Table: 1- A summary of schools and the selected teacher's profiles

School	Teacher	Subject teaching and observed	Grade teaching and observed	Teaching experience of the teacher	Further studies after BETD
School: 1 Duduva P.S	Ms Helena (Lower Pr.)	Class teaching (All subjects)	Two	Five years and six months	None
	Mr. Kalishe (Upper Pr.)	Natural Sc.	Six	Three years and six months	None
School: 2 Ntja J. S. S.	Mr. Darius	English	Nine	Six months	None

Formatted: Dutch (Netherlands)

Table 1 shows a summary of the schools and the teachers' profiles. As part of ethical protocol, each teacher and school was given a pseudonym. Teacher one is Helena from Duduva primary school, teacher two is Kalishe also from Duduva Primary School, and teacher three is Darius from Ntja Junior Secondary School. As the names indicate on the table, there were two male and one female teacher. Helena is teaching all subjects in grade two, Kalishe is teaching natural science in Grade six while Darius is teaching English in Grade nine. The two schools are from Rundu town. The teaching experience of Helena is five years and six months, that of Kalishe three years and six months, and Darius at the time of this study had only been teaching for six months. None of the three teachers had any other qualifications apart from their BETD.

3.5. Ethical considerations

In order to address ethical issues in the research, I wrote a letter to seek permission from the principal of the two schools. (Appendix A). I also found it important to inform the research participants and give them clear information about the purpose of the research. (Appendix B). Informed consent has been defined by Diener and Crandall (cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994:350) as "the process in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions." A consent form (Appendix C) was given to the participants to

sign so as to formally indicate that they were volunteers in the study. At the same time I also gave the participants the assurance that no person would be identified. I used pseudonyms to reference individuals, schools and their discussions in order to protect them and the information they had provided.

3.6. Validity

Cohen, Manion and Morris (2000:105) argued, “if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless.” Furthermore, they argued that “validity might be addressed through depth, richness and scope of data achieved, the participants approached and the extent of triangulation.” To ensure validity and trustworthiness, I employed the following strategies in my study:

- Triangulation by using multiple sources of data collection such as classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis to confirm the emerging findings (Lather, 1986)
- Member checking by sharing interpretations of the study with the selected teachers to verify my reporting (Lather, 1986)
- I reflected on and clarified my intentions throughout, in order to address researcher’s bias (Merriam, 1988:204-206)
- Stimulated recall interviews to clarify issues that arose during classroom observations.

I recorded data accurately by writing detailed notes and using electronic recording.

3.7. Research methods

I used the following methods to collect data:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Classroom observation
- Document analysis

In this section, I discuss the selected methods to show how they were used to collect the data for this case study.

3.7.1. Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews. O’Leary (2004:162) defines the semi-structured interview as a “method of data collection that involves researchers asking respondents basically open-ended questions.” Semi structured interviews start with a “few defined questions” but allow an interviewer to pursue any interesting issue that may evolve. I used semi-structured interviews to ensure free and rich conversations during which participants could openly explore their thoughts without the fear of being intimidated or limited by closed questions.

The interview was piloted (Appendix D). This was done to develop my confidence as an interviewer as well as to see if it was necessary to make some amendments to the instruments in order to capture needed information. The pilot interviewee asked for some clarification as some of the questions were not clear and could not provide the needed information. The questions were rephrased and with the help of the interviewee, questions were adjusted and became more clear and understandable (Appendix E).

I conducted three semi-structured interviews with the three selected teachers (Helena, Kalishe and Darius). The teachers were individually interviewed at their schools. I believe this gave the teachers courage to talk freely without reservation. The individual interviews also provided the opportunity to find out more about the teacher: How she or he thinks and what he or she thinks. Cohen and Manion (1994) and Spradley (1980) indicate that the interview makes it possible to measure what a person knows, what he or

she likes and dislikes, and what his or her attitudes and beliefs are. Also Fontana and Frey (1994: 665) contend that the most common type of interview is individual, face-to-face verbal interchange, which I employed. Individual interviews were conducted with former Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) pre-service graduates that are currently teaching in the selected schools.

The interview questions were classified in two sections: Section one contained contextual questions and Section two included questions on perceptions and implementation of reflective practice. (Appendix E). The questions were asked in English as the three teachers preferred to be interviewed in English.

The interviews were tape recorded, and this provided an opportunity to concentrate on the discussions rather than having to concentrate on trying to write every response down. Tape-recorded data was transcribed as soon as possible after the interview session when the responses were still fresh in my mind. Field note taking and tape recorders were used to supplement and complement each other, and served to increase the validity through maintaining a high degree of accuracy and detail.

Although the method seemed to work well and provided needed information, there were some limitations to it: First- there were some inconveniences relating to the time and sites selected by the teachers. Some sites were noisy and disturbing, in one case the teacher decided to change the venue that was arranged for the interview. Secondly, two of my teachers were not available at the times scheduled for interviews. One was sick and the other one attended a workshop. I had to re-schedule other appointments.

3.7.2. Classroom observations

I also used observation as one of the methods for collecting data. According to Cantrell (1993:93) the purpose of observation is to give the researcher “direct, first hand experiences with the phenomenon under study.” Also, Bell (1995:156) argued that “observation often reveals characteristics of groups and individuals which would not have been possible to discover by other means.” It is meant to discover whether people do what they say they do, or behave in the way they claim to behave. I will also argue

that the observation data is interesting as it afforded me the opportunity to gather 'live' data from 'live' situations. I was also afforded the opportunity to look at what happens in situ rather than second hand (Patton, 1990:203-205). The idea behind the classroom observation was to observe the teacher's performances and demonstrations of understanding of the unit investigated. My focus was on the implementation of reflective practice. As indicated in Chapter two where the six characteristics of reflective practice were identified, Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:8-9) I reiterate them here as they provide the indicators I used, and these guided me through the whole process of classroom observation and analysis.

They are:

- Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency.
- Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously.
- Reflective teaching requires competencies in methods of classrooms inquiry, to support the development of teaching competencies.
- Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness.
- It is based on teacher judgment, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insight from education discipline.
- Reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfillment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues.

I observed each of the three teachers individually. Each teacher was observed three times over three lessons (Appendix F). I designed observation sheets, which I used to collect the data on the lessons observed (Appendix G). I also designed another form, which contained the indicators (Appendix H). The observations were tape-recorded. This was very useful, because it allowed me to record even the most minor details of classroom interactions. Secondly, it provided an opportunity to concentrate on the discussion rather than having to concentrate on trying to write every response down. The comments on the

lesson observation sheets and tape recorder were used to supplement and complement each other. This helped me to get all the needed or required information.

I also conducted stimulated recall interviews, after the lesson observations. This was done to clarify issues that arose during observations.

During the observations, I acted as a non-participant observer. According to Bless & Smith-Higson (1995:105) non-participant observation is the “recording of events as observed by an outsider.” In this role, researchers do not become or aim to become, an integral part of the system or community they are observing.” (O’Leary, 2004:172). Observers are physically present but attempt to be unobtrusive (ibid). My role was to observe and record in as objective a manner as possible and then to interpret the data.

3.7.3. Document analysis

I intended to analyze documents such as diaries, journals, portfolios and lesson plans of both teachers and learners, but as these were not used I was unable to look at anything but the lesson plans and I decided to make this part of the classroom observation report.

3.8. Data analysis

Freeman (1996:91) defines data analysis as “the process of drawing responses out of the data or finding them in the data.” This means that to analyze is to find ways to sort out what one considers as essential meaning in the raw data in order to reduce, reorganize and combine so that the readers share the researcher’s findings, in the most economical, interesting way. Ely et al., (1991:140) claim that the process of analysis guides the researcher to “focus and refocus observational and or interview lenses, to phrase and rephrase research questions, to establish and check emergent hunches, trends, insights, ideas to face oneself as research instrument.”

During this process, I went through various stages to analyze my data. The first stage was that I read my interview transcripts, and my classroom observation notes together with the indicators and my documents. As I read through each source, for example through interviews, I noted down key areas such as my selected teachers understanding and how

they implement reflective practice. I used colour coding to separate the views of my three teachers. Blaxter et al., (1996:183) argued that coding is the process by which items or groups of data are assigned codes. This is a procedure that breaks the data down into manageable segments and identifies or names those segments.

The second stage was to do what Patton refers to as ‘a case analysis’ of each teacher. I started grouping the responses under the guiding questions. I was able to make a summary of what each teacher said under each question. At this stage, I was able to give findings from the interview.

After I had read my observation notes, I designed forms for each teacher. The forms had three columns. The first column showed a list of indicators, and the other three columns indicated lessons (lesson 1 up to lesson three) (Appendix H). These forms helped me to see what was going on in each lesson regarding my research questions.

3.9. Challenges and Limitations

The major challenges were to make sense of the enormous amount of data, to distill the information, to identify significant patterns and to construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed.

A heavy workload was another challenge especially at the time when I collected the data. The distance between my work place and the schools where I undertook my study was also another challenge. Sometimes transport to take me to the schools was not always on time. I had to re-schedule some of the appointments that I missed.

Teachers in schools also had some other school commitments e.g. workshops. In one case, I was supposed to observe one teacher during the second period, according to the time agreed and she was unable to make it.

Comment [J1]: This needs to be explained a bit more clearly. I'm not sure of what you mean

The key limitation however is in the nature of a small-scale study and this meant that it was not possible to use the data to generalize and I had constantly to be on my guard in the way that I reached conclusions and in the way I expressed myself.

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the main tenets of the research in which the inquiry was conducted. I have illuminated the research design, and methods of data collection. Data analysis, ethics and validity and some of the limiting factors of this study are also discussed. In my opinion, conducting a credible and trustworthy research greatly depends on understanding theoretical framework, the various components and the interrelated nature of the components of the research. Data analysis and findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I report on the findings from an analysis of the semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and documents. I identified patterns from all my data, which I developed into categories. These were guided by my research question: How do the selected former Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) graduates understand and implement the theory of reflective practice? My framework is as follows:

- An overview of the two selected schools and profiles of the participating teachers.
- The teachers' understanding and the rationale for reflective practice
- Teachers' implementation of reflective practice
- Problems teachers experienced with the implementation of reflective practice
- Strategies teachers identified to develop and enhance reflective practice

In the presentation of the findings, the data obtained from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations have been utilized to explore and illuminate the research question

4.2. Presentation of semi-structured interviews data

This section focuses on the responses to the initial interviews and follows the line of questioning.

4.2.1. An overview of the two selected schools and profile of the participating teachers

This section presents an overview of the two schools and the three teachers who participated in my study. As indicated in chapter three, for the sake of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy, each school and teacher was given a pseudonym. The first teacher is Helena, a teacher at Duduva primary school. This is one of the newly

established schools, which was built in the year 1998. The school starts from Grade 1 and goes as far as Grade 7. It is an urban school situated in the town of Rundu in the Kavango region. Helena has been teaching at this school for five years and six months. She has taught Grade 2 for five years. There are five Grade 2 classes and she is only teaching one of the groups, Grade (2a). As a generalist she teaches all the Lower Primary subjects and each period is forty minutes long. Helena completed her studies in 2001. She obtained a Basic Education Teacher Diploma and specialized in the Lower Primary phase (Grades 1-3).

The second teacher is Kalishe, also teaching at the same school as Helena. Kalishe has been teaching at this school for three years and six months. He is teaching Mathematics Grade 4 and Natural science Grade 6. I only observed him teaching Natural science Grade 6. Kalishe has been teaching Natural science Grade 6 since his arrival at the school. There are four Grade 6 classes for Natural science and he teaches all four groups in Grade 6. Natural science is taught 5 times a week and each period is forty minutes long. Kalishe graduated in the year 2002 and obtained a Basic Education Teacher Diploma. He is specializing in Mathematics and Natural science Upper Primary Phase (Grade 4-7).

The third teacher is Darius at Ntja Junior Secondary School. The school starts from Grade 8 and goes as far as Grade 10. Ntja Junior Secondary school is also an urban school situated in Rundu. The school was established in the year 2000 and is also one of the new schools in the town. Darius is one of the new teachers at this school. He started teaching this year and has only had six months teaching experience. He teaches English for all six Grade 9 classes. I only observed him in one class (Grade 9a). Each period is forty minutes long. Darius is also BETD graduate, who completed his studies in the year 2005. He specialized in languages, which are English and Thimbukushu, for junior secondary phase (Grade 8-10).

4.2.2. The teachers' understanding of reflective practice

As indicated in chapter two the policy to develop reflective practitioners has been built around the notion that in order to promote the goals of education, teacher education reform should develop teachers who are independent thinkers, who are active, creative improvisers and who are able to make their own decisions based on their own analysis and judgment. The following are the responses from the teachers on the question of what reflective practice means:

Ideas that you learn from other colleagues and you try to implement them.

(Helena).

Thinking about what you taught in order to do something. (Kalishe)

Thinking about my teaching in order to improve. (Darius)

The above responses reveal that in spite of their succinctness the general idea expressed was that reflective practice is linked to some or other action, i.e. implementing, doing and improving.

4.2.3. Views about the rationale for reflective practice

All three teachers indicated that reflective practice plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process. They made the following statements in this regard:

It is something useful; it helps me improve my teaching. It also helps my learners to understand what I am teaching. Furthermore, it helps me realize whether I have achieved my objectives or not. (Helena)

It is helping me in my teaching and it is used to assess the progress of my learners. It also directs me on the teaching strategies as well as ways of assessing my learners. (Kalishe)

I believe that reflective practice direct and guide the teachers towards improving the teaching and learning process. Without reflective practice, a teacher might not realize the difficulties the learners are experiencing. (Darius)

From the responses, there is an indication that all three teachers see reflective practice as something that can direct and guide their teaching and learning situations. All three teachers believe that through reflection a teacher is able to think of different teaching strategies, ways of assessing the learners, and the types of activities the learners have to do in class in order for them to improve their learning. The latter was an interesting comment as reflective practice in this regard was seen not only as an approach that is of value to the teacher and his practice, but also with direct application to the learner.

4.2.4. Strategies the teachers are using to implement reflective practice

Findings from the interviews revealed that teachers use a number of strategies to implement reflective practice indirectly. These include: departmental meetings, staff meetings, cluster meetings and class visits. The teachers made the following remarks in regard to these dimensions

4.2.4.1. Departmental meetings

All three teachers interviewed regard departmental meetings as a platform for teachers to think and talk about classroom practices. What the teachers are saying is that during these meetings the teachers in a particular department, for example the department of Mathematics and Sciences that include subjects such as Mathematics, Life science, Agriculture and Physical science gather together in one place. During these meetings, matters such as learners' performance and progress, problems experienced by both teachers and learners, suggestions for improvements, and any other matters that affect the teaching and learning situations are discussed.

All three teachers commented that during these meetings teachers are directed and guided by fellow colleagues towards ways of improving the teaching and learning situations. Darius mentioned in the interview discussions “ *as an inexperienced teacher, the discussion with colleagues is helping me in my teaching.*” Furthermore, he said, “*my learner's performance has improved because I am applying the ideas that I receive from my colleagues.*”

4.2.4.2. Staff meetings

The three teachers commented that the purposes of staff meetings are to share departmental findings with colleagues from other departments. During these meetings all teachers from different departments, for example the department of Languages, Social science, Mathematics and Sciences and Commercial subjects gather. Issues regarding the teaching and learning process are discussed during this meeting. All three teachers commented that they learn a lot from these meetings. Helena commented that...*“there are teachers in other departments who give good advice and guidance on teaching strategies, teaching materials, how to help the learners that experienced problems in their learning and so on.”*

4.2.4.3. Cluster meetings

Responses from the interviewees indicated that schools are divided into clusters. One principal is elected to be the co-ordinator of a particular cluster. All three teachers interviewed belong to the same cluster that consists of ten schools. The teachers indicated that all the teachers from different schools in the cluster gather together. Issues regarding the teaching and learning are discussed. All three teachers commented that these are fruitful meetings because they learn a lot from colleagues from other schools. Helena commented that, *“there are schools that are performing well and during these meetings they share their experiences with other colleagues.”*

4.2.4.4. Class visits

The three teachers noted that principals, heads of departments and fellow colleagues do class visits, which are sometimes planned and sometimes unexpected. Findings from class visits are discussed. All three teachers noted that they also learn a lot from this exercise especially when colleagues teaching the same grade and subject observe one another's lessons. Darius stated, *“I am not much experienced in my subject, my fellow colleagues give advice and guidance that I am using in my teaching.”* Helena also noted...*“as a lower primary teacher I am required to teach all the subjects and I am not good in all these subjects.”* When I am sharing my experiences with fellow colleagues, I

am gaining understanding on how to teach some of the subjects, particularly the ones that I experience difficulties in.”

In the interview the teachers did not say anything about classroom practice in connection with reflective practice and I decided not to probe further as I observed them in their classrooms and will report on this dimension under the relevant section.

4.2.5. Problems teachers experienced with the implementation of reflective practice

I wanted to find out what problems teachers experienced with the implementation of reflective practice. All three teachers when interviewed identified problems, which makes the implementation of reflective practice difficult. These include:

- Lack of understanding
- Lack of support
- Lack of development programmes
- Rigid and overladen time table
- Pressure to cover the required curriculum
- Large class sizes
- Educational managers who do not share the same model of reflection
- Slow adaptation of teachers to new practices
- The discrepancy between how the concept of reflective practice is understood and practiced in the academic community and how it is understood and practiced in the professional community.

The teachers’ responses in this regard are as follows:

4.2.5.1. Lack of understanding about reflective practice

All three teachers interviewed indicated that most of the teachers do not have a clear understanding about what reflective practice means. Helena noted, *“it is difficult for me to clearly explain the meaning of reflective practice.”* In the same light, Darius noted, *“people have different ways of explaining reflective practice, I do not know which one is*

the right explanation.” Kalishe also said, “it is difficult to explain because I am not sure what reflective practice means.”

4.2.5.2. Lack of knowledge by teacher educators

All three teachers noted that some of the student teachers are not properly guided during their course of studies. Darius noted that, *“most of us after completing our studies is not able to apply the theories of reflective practice.”* Furthermore, he noted that *“it is difficult to apply a certain theory if you are not well informed or taught.”* They all noted that most of the student teachers leave the college without having a clear understanding of the theories and as a result the implementation cannot be effective. They all noted that teacher educators do not have sufficient knowledge themselves, particularly in the context of reflective practice. Thus, students leave the college with little knowledge, which makes the implementation impossible.

4.2.5.3. Lack of support

What the teachers are indicating here is that the environment plays an important role in the development and sustaining of reflective practice. Teachers would be reflective in an appropriate and supportive environment. Helena noted that, *“teachers are not supported to achieve new understanding that result from making changes in their teaching.”* Darius also noted that, *“I believe that new and improved knowledge, skills and attitudes can be obtained through doings or actions not only through listening.”* Kalishe further noted that, *“even during school based studies teacher educators do not work together with the support teachers in schools.”* *“We are not guided and well informed about the whole programme of school-based studies and as a result we tend not to support student teachers properly”* (Kalishe). Darius also noted *“as graduates our activities and progress are supposed to be monitored by teacher educators, in order to make sure that we are doing what we are supposed to do.”* All three teachers commented that schools do not encourage the implementation of reflective practice and as a result teachers tend not to bother about it.

4.2.5.4. Staff development programmes

Findings from the interviews indicated that there is a lack of staff development programmes. These include the following programmes: formal workshops, part time and full time studies. The sections below examine teacher's comments in these areas:

4.2.5.4.1. Formal workshops

All the three teachers noted that there are fellow colleagues who were trained through the old system. These colleagues lack knowledge about the new theories of teaching and learning, which includes new concepts and new modes of teaching and learning. What the teachers need is formal workshops that require teachers to spend time and resources on reflecting systematically, and on communicating extensively with each other. It was indicated in the previous sections that teachers do reflections indirectly through meetings and they learn a lot from these meetings. All three teachers noted that during meetings much theorization is done, and the practical part is not done due to the time limit during meetings. Darius noted, "*most of the colleagues for example are not aware of documents used to do reflections, no knowledge about the what and how to reflect on.*" Furthermore, "*he said that through workshops teachers listen and do activities on reflective practice to give a better understanding not the case with meetings where they only listen and discuss.*"

4.2.5.4.2. Part time and full time studies

It was noted by all three teachers that teachers are not motivated to take up their studies further. Darius noted that "*after the completion of BETD programmes, most of the teachers do not want to do some upgrading courses.*" He further noted, "*teachers could gain more knowledge, skills and insights on reflective practice through part time and full time studies.*"

4.2.5.5. Rigid and overladen time table

Darius noted, *“teachers in some of the department are overloaded with periods. As a result they lack time to do reflections”* He further noted that *“some times one teacher would love to observe another colleague, and at some times it is not possible because there is no time provided to do so.”*

4.2.5.6. Pressure to cover the required curriculum

All three teachers commented that they devote most of their time in teaching subject content, as they are required to complete this in a given period of time. Darius noted that *“teachers are pressurized by supervisor to finish teaching their syllabus within a given time and as a result teachers do not have time for reflections during the teaching and learning process.”* Helena also noted that, *“some of the schools do provide timetables for teachers to cover up their topics in syllabuses and you are told for example that by this term you should cover this and that.”*

4.2.5.7. Large class sizes

The teachers indicated that their classes are big and it is difficult to attend to individual learners. Darius noted that *“reflection is about listening and taking actions and it is difficult to attend to all the learners in your class. You might attend to some but not all”*.

4.2.5.8. Educational managers who do not share the same model of reflections

What the teachers are indicating here is that there are school managers and educational officers who do not want or like to work with teachers who are very active, who ask questions, challenge their view points if not clear to them or suggest something to them or decide what is good for both of them. They prefer working with teachers who are passive and believe whatever they say. Darius commented that for them, *“reflections means listening and following especially when they conduct meetings.”*

4.2.5.9. Slow adaptation of teachers to new practices

The three teachers noted that there are teachers among them who really do not want to adapt to the new practice. Helena noted that, *“in most cases there are teachers that receive training during the colonial era; still want to carry on with the old ways of teaching and learning.”* Darius also noted *“teachers have negative attitudes towards new practices even though they know what to do but still want to cling to the old norms.”*

4.2.5.10. The discrepancy between how the concept of reflective practice is understood and practiced in the academic community and how it is understood and practiced in the professional community.

The teachers indicated that there are differences between what they were taught during training and what they are applying during classroom practice. Darius noted for example, *“I was taught to reflect on each lesson taught, but the school is saying no it is not necessary.”* Also, Helena noted *“I was taught to plan my lesson by following certain structures, but coming to the schools, we were told not to use some of the structures even though the structures are very important and need to be included.”*

4.2.6. Strategies the teachers identified to develop reflective practice

The data obtained through interviews also indicated the strategies to develop and enhance reflective practice, which include staff development programs; college liaisons with schools and afternoon classes. Teachers expressed themselves in the following manners on these issues:

- Professional development programmes

All the three teachers noted that it is crucial for teachers to gain knowledge, skills and capacities that are required’ in order to take charge of their own thinking and their own learning. Darius noted, *“when teachers are engaged in professional development programmes, new skills and forms of teaching and learning would be learnt.”* Furthermore, he said, *“teachers with negative attitudes towards new practices might also gain some insights towards the need for change.* Helena also

noted that, *“teacher educators should also be encouraged to do some upgrading courses in order to guide the student teachers correctly.”* She further noted, *“the confusion between the practice and theory is caused by people who are not sure about what they are doing, because they do not know what to do and how to do it.”* They all suggested that the only opportunity for the teachers to learn new knowledge, skills, and new forms of teaching and learning is through extensive formal workshops, and part-time and full-time studies.

- College liaisons with schools

All the three teachers commented that it is very important for the colleges to liaise with schools to monitor the effectiveness of the training programmes. Helena noted that for example, *“during school-based studies colleges are supposed to work together with teachers in schools (especially the support teachers) in order for the teachers to know exactly what they are required to do and how they should support the student teachers when they are at schools.”* Darius also noted *“some of the teachers are not well informed about what reflective practice is and how they should support the student teachers in doing some reflections on their teaching and learning.”* He said, *“student teachers could be guided properly when the two bodies liaise.”*

- Afternoon classes

Darius commented *“teachers could arrange to observe fellow colleagues during afternoon classes, if the morning sessions cannot offer such opportunities.”* He further stated, *“it is important to share classroom experiences with a fellow colleague because it helps you improve your teaching and learning situation.”*

In the following section data from the classroom observations is presented.

4.3. Presentation of classroom observation data

Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:8-9) identified six principles I will present the five, which I selected as pertinent for classroom observation. These include:

- Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency;
- Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously;
- Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of classroom enquiry, to support the development of teaching competence;
- Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibilities and wholeheartedness;
- It is based on teacher judgment, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insights from educational discipline.

I will first provide an overview of the lessons and then present the findings of the lessons observed

4.3. 1. The description of the teacher's lessons

Helena's lessons at Duduva Primary School

Helena had lesson plans in all the lessons she taught. She used the lesson plans to teach the content of her lessons. The lesson plans had the following main structures: the lesson objectives, introduction, content and methodology, conclusion and evaluation (Appendix L). In lesson one the topic was Keep your body clean, Lessons Two and Three were Reading.

In all the three lessons observed Helena introduced her lessons through questions on the previous work. For example in Lesson One, she asked the learners to tell her about what they had learnt in English the previous day. Helena used key words such as 'why', 'how', 'what', 'explain' and so on as questioning techniques. For example in Lesson One, she taught about cleaning the body. The questions that she posed to the learners were: 'Why

do we need to clean our bodies?’ and ‘Explain what you meant by Mr. Germ?’ Helena planned different activities which she gave to the learners to work in groups, pairs and individually. She assessed her learners throughout the lessons through questions and activities. She evaluated her lesson at the end by giving the learners an activity to do on the content taught.

Kalishe’s lessons at Duduva Primary School

In all the three lessons observed, Kalishe did not have lesson plans, which he could use to teach the content of his lessons. His first lesson was about the parts of the fish; in his second lesson, he taught about wild animals in Namibia and the third lesson was about endangered animals.

All his lessons started with an introduction through questions on previous work. For example in lesson one and two he introduced his lessons as follows: What did we talk about in Natural Science the previous day? What did we do yesterday in Life Science? Kalishe used question and answer techniques to assess the learners. The key words used in most of his questions were: ‘what’, ‘name’, ‘mention’, ‘give’, ‘identify’ and fewer ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. For example in Lesson One in which he taught about the parts of a fish, his questions for the class were primarily questions: ‘identify the parts of the fish labeled from A-B’, and in Lesson Two where he taught about wild animals in Namibia the questions were: ‘Are animals important to us?’ and ‘How many game reserves do we have in Kavango?’ The learners were also given activities to do in groups and individually. Kalishe concluded all the three lessons with activities that were based on the content taught.

Darius’ lessons at Ntja Secondary School

Darius also did not have lesson plans in any of his three lessons, which he could use to teach the content of his lessons. In the absence of the lesson plans Darius explained the lesson objectives to the learners. For example in Lesson Three he said: Today we are going to look at Past Simple Tense. We are going to identify Past Simple Tenses in the passage that you are going to read as well as learn to use them.

The first lesson was about subject verb agreement, in the second lesson he taught Past Simple Tense, and he repeated Lesson Two in the third lesson. He started all his lessons with an introduction through questions on previous work. In Lesson One, for example, the question was 'What does the subject verb tell us?' in Lesson Two, 'What did we say yesterday about adverbs?' Darius used key words such as 'what', 'why,' 'how', 'explain', 'construct' and so on to assess the learners. For example in Lesson One he asked the learners to reconstruct a sentence which was wrongly constructed, in Lesson Two he asked the learners to explain what they understood by Past Simple Tense, and in Lesson Three he asked the learners to choose two words from the passage and construct sentences in Past Simple Tense.

The learners were given different activities to do in groups, pairs and individually. Darius assessed his learners throughout the lessons. He concluded his lessons with activities and in one of the lessons he asked the learners whether they had questions to ask about things that they did not understand. None of the learners asked a question.

4.3.2. Findings of the observed lessons

When I observed these lessons, my intention was to find out whether the three teachers had incorporated the above indicators in their lessons or not. The findings are discussed below.

The first indicator I focused on was how the teachers applied their lesson plans to the lesson and to what extent their teaching according to the lesson plans provided opportunities for reflection. Also in this section I looked at the lesson structure and how it was linked to particular strategies that provide teachers with an understanding of how and what learning was taking place.

Helena had lesson plans, which included the following structures: lesson objective, lesson introduction, content, methodology, conclusion and evaluations, as any lesson plan could have. What I observed during teaching is that Helena did not really use these for the purposes of reflective teaching, but she used these to guide her in teaching the content of

the topic. For example in one of her lessons the objective was 'learning about cleaning our bodies.' She did not clarify her objectives in the lesson plan, and neither did she explain to the learners the reasons why they should clean their bodies. I feel that this is important because the learners would have understood the reasons why they need to learn that particular topic.

Darius did not have lesson plans during teaching, but he indicated the objectives of his lessons to the learners. In one lesson he said: "*We look at past simple tense today, we will identify tenses in the passage that you are going to read and learn how to use it.*" He also did not clearly explain to the learners why they should learn these tenses. For example he could further explain to them the situations where these tenses could be used. Kalishe's lessons had the same format.

Observing these lessons revealed that the three teachers' lesson plans did not reflect reflective teaching. The lesson objectives were not clarified, methodologies used were not stated and clarified (the teachers explain why they have to use that method), lesson introductions did not have reflections on previous lessons (all the introductions were based on questions about the content taught previously), and the teachers did not write reflections at the end of their lesson plans. A space for lesson evaluation is provided at the end of each lesson plan, but none of the teachers wrote anything in the spaces. They all concluded their lessons with questions or an activity based on the content taught.

The lesson outlines below indicate the way in which these lesson plans were set out by the three teachers.

Topics: Subject verb agreement, Grade 9a (Darius)

Endangered Animals, Grade 6a (Kalishe)

Healthy, safety and nutrients, Grade 2 (Helena)

Lesson objectives: Learners should be able to make subject and verb agreement correctly (Darius)

By the end of the lesson learners should be able to mention or list the the endangered animals. (Kalishe)

Learn and understand rhymes and songs. Learn to read aloud in class.
Learn to write English words in short sentences in correct letters.
(Helena)

Basic competencies: No competencies for this topic (Darius)

Describe what is meant by 'endangered animals' (Kalishe)
Respond appropriately to questions and instructions, read with ease
short pre-texts. Write 6-10 word sentences legibly, prepared and
unprepared, with correct spelling and punctuation (Helena).

A closer analysis of these lesson outlines in the context of the first indicator reveals that these lesson plans in spite of following the general format given to teachers, are extremely sketchy. If lesson plans are constructed in this manner they will not provide teachers with material that enhances or encourages reflection. The superficiality of the design means that teachers are not alerted to dimensions that might or might not have value in the future development of the topic. The real opportunities leading to reflection should be in the section related to the competencies that each topic is intended to achieve.

It would appear from these examples that these teachers have a poorly developed understanding of how competencies are part of a developmental process, that reaches over the course of either a unit in the case of conceptual understanding or over many units in the case of particular skills and values. This aspect will be considered in greater detail in chapter five.

Under the second indicator I was looking at how often the teachers evaluate, and revise their teaching. At the end of each lesson I expected the teachers to ask themselves questions such as: what went well in my lesson, what did not go well in the lesson by looking at the way the lesson was introduced, the activities given to the learners, the teaching strategies, the teaching and learning support materials used, assessment strategies used and so on; and then think of alternatives to improve. The teachers were also expected to have documents such as diaries, journals and portfolios where they could

reflect on these issues. The teachers during teaching could also pose the same thoughts or questions to the learners and reflect on it after teaching.

What I found during classroom observation is that the teachers only evaluated their lessons through questions on the content taught, just to see whether the learners could recall the information or not. The teachers at no time in the course of the lessons observed had the learners do any form of evaluation. Learner evaluation of lessons serves two purposes. The first is to allow the learner to reflect on what they have learnt, its significance, and also what enhanced their learning. These reflections are of value to the teachers as they in turn serve to provide insights into their teaching seen through the eyes of the learner. The second purpose served by learner evaluations is for teachers to get direct feedback on their teaching. The learners should get used to this type of activity because it is part of developing their reflective capacity through encouraging critical thinking. Therefore these lessons revealed that teachers neither recorded any form of self-reflection nor did they have any tangible evidence from their learners about their teaching other than at a very superficial level.

The focus on the third indicator was to look at the questioning techniques, the activities the teachers were giving and the assessment strategies. On the questioning techniques I was looking at the types of questions the teachers were asking and whether they were based on content information or questions that allow learners to think critically, give their own opinions, and solve problems. I also looked at the activities the learners were doing to see whether the activities allowed the learners to think critically and provide their own answers. Finally, I was looking at the answers the learners were giving and how the teachers responded to their answers. What I found was that most of the questions were content-based, because the teachers only concentrated on how well the learners could recall the information taught. All three teachers started the lessons with questions such as 'What did you learn yesterday?' (the focus being on content information), and they all ended their lessons by asking the learners the same questions. Activities also contained the same questions. Helena and Darius in their teaching asked a few questions, which allowed the learners to provide their own answers but they did not focus much on these types of questions.

In looking at examples of the learners' work, the feedback provided to learners was mainly in the form of a single mark or a single word or general comment. This feedback in the formal assessment tasks was not developed and designed to either encourage reflection on the part of the learner, nor was it framed to provide the teacher with material on which to reflect on anything other than on the norm referencing.

Teachers are required to continuously to have "conversations with self" (Prawat,1991) about what is happening in their classrooms, asking themselves questions about why they are doing what they are doing, and searching for patterns or alternatives to improve classroom practice. This was my focus with the fourth and fifth indicators since they all talk about a teacher having a conversation with himself or herself about classroom experiences. I expected the teachers to have some written records about what they are thinking through the use of diaries, portfolios, journals as well as the lesson plans. (Cook, 1998) argued, "we probably think more clearly when we write things down." Furthermore, he said "people do not know what they think until they have written it down." The teachers could use diaries, portfolios and journals to write down their thoughts about classroom experiences. What I found is that none of the teachers have journals, portfolios or diaries. The three teachers had some or other form of lesson plan, and as noted only one teacher actually wrote these out, which was used as a guide to teach subject content and not for reflection purposes.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings obtained from classroom observations and interviews. I provided an overview of the two selected schools and the three teachers' profiles. The implementation of reflective practice was also presented. The views and opinions expressed by the selected teachers were also presented with my summary. Also in this chapter, I presented the problems teachers experienced with implementation as well as the strategies to enhance the implementation of reflective practice. From the discussion during interviews it shows that teachers need absolute attention for the understanding and implementation of reflective practice.

In the next chapter I discuss the findings in the light of the literature review (chapter 2).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The discussion in this chapter pertains to the categories identified in the previous chapter. My research question as well as the theoretical framework underpinning this study influenced these and will shape and inform the discussion of the results in this chapter.

The themes are:

- Teacher's understandings of reflective practice
- The strategies used by teachers to implement reflective practice
- Problems teachers experience with the implementation of reflective practice
- Strategies to develop reflective practice
- Contributing factors that have led to the teachers' lack of understanding.

5.2. Teacher's understanding of reflective practice

The three teachers, through their initial responses during the interviews seemed to understand reflective practice as a guide to direct teaching and learning. Yet at the outset from the classroom observations it became evident that the structuring of questions - the most frequently used approach - were based on factual recall, and they did not call for elaboration nor did they encourage reflection at all. This immediately reduces the teacher's opportunity for meaningful reflection as she has little if any evidence to assess how well her learners understand what is being taught. This view of reflective practice has been referred to as the "technical approach" by Van Manen (cited in Brubacher, et al., 1994), which concerns itself with the technical application of knowledge for the attainment of given ends.

Findings from classroom observation also revealed that activities the learners did were primarily related to content-based information. The teachers wanted to find out whether

the learners could still recall the information given or not. This in itself does not reflect reflective teaching. The view presented by Dewey and others who promote reflective practice in what today is seen as a constructivist perspective, must include the questioning and clarification of choices of teaching methods, activities, content and procedures, all of which require teacher capacity in terms of a deep subject understanding as well as a thorough pedagogical knowledge.

The classroom practice confirmed the teacher's confusion about reflective practice, which they identified in the latter part of the interview, and affirmed that the teachers do not seem to understand the exact meaning of reflective practice. From their responses and from what I have observed in the classroom this further indicates that they have no shared understanding about what reflective practice means.

5.3. Strategies used by teachers to implement reflective practice

This section presents a discussion of the findings obtained through interviews and classroom observation. It commences with a discussion of interview data, then links this to the classroom observation data.

Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:8-9) identified six principles to guide reflective teaching. My discussion of the findings on strategies teachers used to implement reflective practice is guided by these principles. I do this by examining the strategies the teachers used vis-à-vis the principles.

5.3.1. Collaboration and dialogue with colleagues

Findings from the interviews revealed that the teachers reflect about teaching and learning when they conduct meetings such as departmental, staff or cluster meetings and when they observe lessons of fellow colleagues. The three teachers indicated that they gain knowledge about teaching strategies, teaching materials and how to assist the learners with problems when they interact with colleagues

The teachers' views seem to match the intention of reflective teaching; viz, that professional learning and professional fulfillment are enhanced through collaboration and

dialogue with colleagues. Dewey (cited in Zeichner and Liston, 1996: 8-9) (chapter 2). It is also further argued that reflective teaching is a “social practice” where a group of teachers can support and sustain each other’s growth. Finally the challenge and support gained through social interaction is important in “helping teachers clarify what they believe and in gaining the courage to pursue their beliefs.”(ibid:76)

But one might ask the question of how effective these meetings are in making the teachers reflective practitioners. I tend to agree with Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:1) who argued that:

Not all thinking about teaching constitutes reflective teaching. If a teacher never questions the goals and the values that guide his or her work, the context in which he or she teaches, or never examines his or her assumptions, then it is belief that this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching.

This study appeared to affirm the issue raised in the above statement. Despite the interactions with other teachers the selected teachers did not demonstrate that what they had learnt was actually applied in the context of ongoing reflection about what they were teaching or why they were teaching what they did in their particular professional context. These interactions appear to operate at the level of ‘tips for teachers’ and further exacerbates a technisist approach to teaching.

5.3.2. Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences

I was looking at how the teachers applied their lesson plans to the lessons and to what extent their teaching according to the lesson plans provided opportunities for reflections. My findings revealed that none of the teacher’s lesson plans provided opportunities for reflections. Grant (1984) argued that reflective teaching occurs when teachers question and clarify why they have chosen their classroom methods, procedures and content. Smith (cited in Etheridge, 1989:311) also argued that the teachers engage in reflective teaching when they “can describe what they do, explain the meaning of what they do, understand how they came to be like they are, and identify what they might do

differently”. I expected these teachers to give reasons or to clarify the objectives, content of the lessons, methodologies used etc.

5.3.3. Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously

Findings revealed that the three teachers did not apply this principle during the teaching and learning process. These teachers did not reflect on their teaching at any time. The lesson introduction of all the three teachers started with questions on previous content taught and conclusions were also based on the content taught, but this represented a narrow view of the nature and purpose of the content. There were no reflections done on the activities given to the learners. The teachers for example, could have asked the learners to talk of difficulties experienced in completing the activities. Findings also revealed that none of the teachers had documents such as diaries, journals and portfolios where they could continually write reflections on their teaching and learning.

Reflective teaching is an ongoing process that involves careful re-examination of what has been done to improve practice. (Grant,1984). Furthermore, it is also thinking critically about goals, teaching actions and the teaching environment, and using those thoughts to improve future teaching. (ibid). As Falk (1996) suggested, teachers need to become learners themselves, who continually investigate the learning process, who become more conscious and responsive to the ways in which differences impact on the learning process, and who communicate their methods for learner support and development.

What I found particularly concerning in regard to this principle is the lack of feedback given to the learners and the lack of their involvement in the reflective process. As indicated in Chapter Four, learner evaluation is a key factor in reflective practice. Thus these teachers not only had no documented evidence other than the norm referenced marks, neither did they have evidence from learner feedback to reflect on how their teaching had changed and developed over a period of time.

5.3.4. Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of classroom enquiry, to support the development of teaching competencies

On this issue, Fox (2001) argued that effective learning requires that the teacher sets meaningful, open-ended and challenging problems for the learners to solve. Fox further suggests that the classroom in this model is seen as “a mini-society a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse and reflections.”(ibid:ix). The role of the teacher in a Namibian context is supposed to provide a setting in which the students play an active inquiring role in their own learning.

My findings revealed that Helena and Darius used key words such as why, explain construct etc. as questioning techniques. These are open-ended questions that allow learners to give their own opinions and views. What I was missing from all three teachers’ classrooms was firstly that these views and opinions were not expected to be informed views in any rigorous sense. Secondly, learners were not given opportunities or situations where they could try to solve a problem either individually or in groups. They were not also given opportunities to reflect on, for example, activities that they did, or even to reflect on teaching strategies. Learners were not encouraged to challenge or reflect on the work of the teachers. For example Darius in one of his lessons asked the learners whether they had questions to ask at end of the teaching. There was no response from the learners. I also saw that the learners are used to the situation where the teachers ask questions and then they respond. They did not see their own questions as important and that they help the teachers to improve on their own work.

The activities that I observed over this period were essentially not linked to any form of enquiry and were primarily linked to information recall activities of one sort or another. I was unable in the short time I spent with these teachers to ascertain if or how they used inquiry-based work with their learners. The policy states that to meet the aims of transformation, teachers need to develop reflective qualities and modes of practice through the theories of critical and analytical skills and the development of inquiring minds. (Namibia. (MBESC & MHEVTST), 1998:4-5).

It is understood within the Namibian context that to promote learning through understanding, is to encourage a high degree of learner participation, contribution, and to promote learning which is “an interactive shared and productive process.” (Namibia. (MBESC & MHEVTST), 1993:2). What these results have done is to affirm that reflective practice is not only about change and improvement but in fact it is linked to good teaching and sound learning practices.

Teacher’s lack of understanding about the strategies to bring about reflection or to encourage reflection raised questions about their understanding not only of reflective practice but also of the learner-centered approach adopted by the reform process.

5.3.5. Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibilities and wholeheartedness.

Reflections emancipate us from merely impulsive and routine activity.... enables us to direct our actions with foresight and to plan according to ends in view of purposes of which we are aware. It enables us to know what we are about when we act. (Dewey, 1933:17)

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1996) also argued that what is missing from the knowledge base for teaching “are the voices of teachers themselves, the questions teachers ask, the ways teachers use writing and intentional talk in their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practices.”

The findings revealed that none of the three teachers asked themselves questions about the strengths and weaknesses in their lessons or indicated some recommendations for improvement. Yet I believe it would be unfair of me to judge them on the basis of their open-mindedness and commitment. There was nothing in the interviews or in the lessons observed to indicate that these teachers were not open to new ideas. In fact the support they gave to those aspects such as cluster and other meetings that have a modicum of professional development leads one to believe that in fact they are open to new ideas. Rather I feel these teachers’ understanding and implementation of reflective practice is the result of a lack of real knowledge about learner-centered education, and consequently of reflective practice in the context of this approach to teaching and learning.

5.3.6. It is based on teacher judgment, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insights from educational discipline.

This principle is directly linked to that of the former. Zeichner & Liston (1996:4) argued that teachers have been considered as “consumers of curriculum knowledge. They are not assumed to have requisite skills to create or critique that knowledge.”(ibid). They further argued that viewing teachers as reflective practitioners assumes that “teachers can both pose and solve problems related to their educational practice.” Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:7) argued that ideas are not much real use until they are digested to the point where they are subjected to the teacher’s own judgment.

In so far as the former principle focused on the need for teachers to have a sound pedagogical knowledge, this principle focuses on teachers’ subject knowledge and their knowledge of their discipline. Dewey, (1993) & Prawat, (1991) and other authors have emphasized the importance of teachers having a deep understanding of the essential conceptual frameworks of the disciplines they teach. Having this sort of understanding means that teachers will have a sense of the coherence and relatedness between the key concepts, the underlying principles, the skills and the values that underpin each discipline and make it unique.

While again it would not be fair of me to make any absolute judgments on these teachers’ subject knowledge, the evidence supplied by the lesson plans and the lesson implementation are an indication of a relatively shallow subject knowledge. In addition to the evidence supplied by the study, Van Harmelen’s evaluation of the BETD syllabus (1999) and the report of 2004 analyzing the potential of the BETD curriculum for the development of cross curricular themes revealed that one of the basic weaknesses of the BETD subject syllabi, was that they failed to develop the necessary conceptual frameworks for the various disciplines.

The problem is that without this subject knowledge, as has been shown in other research and affirmed in this study, teachers do not have the necessary substance to think creatively and critically about their work and thus the notion of reflective practice is limited.

5.4. Problems experienced with the implementation of reflective practice

The three teachers through their responses acknowledged the problems that make the implementation difficult. These as indicated in chapter four include:

- 5.4.1. Lack of understanding about the concept of reflective practice
- 5.4.2. Lack of staff development programmes
- 5.4.3. Rigid and overladen time table
- 5.4.4. Educational managers who do not share the same model of reflection
- 5.4.5. Slow adaptation of teachers to new changes

5.4.1. Lack of understanding about the concept of reflective practice

Findings from the interviews revealed that teachers have a view of reflective practice that differs from the theory and as indicated have no shared or common understanding of the concept. Darius noted that reflective practice has got different meanings and he does not know which one is the right meaning. Helena and Kalishe also expressed the same feelings. LaBoskey (1994) and Day (1993) argued that if the term is not used consistently, it brings confusion or misinterpretation.

From the above statements one can say that the inconsistent use of the term causes difficulties with the implementation. For example, if as indicated in the interviews, teacher educators do not use the term consistently, the student teachers may interpret the term differently and as a result they may not implement it effectively.

5.4.2. Lack of staff development programs

The teachers' responses during the interviews indicated a lack of staff development programs. The three teachers note that teachers need to upgrade their knowledge and skills particularly on reflective practice. They further note that there is a need for in-service training, or teachers to be encouraged to do full-time studies to enable them to acquire necessary knowledge and skills; but this, according to the teachers is not possible due to lack of time and resources. Finally, the teachers note that there are fellow

colleagues that received training during the old era and they lack knowledge about the new theories of teaching and learning.

Steven (1991) also highlights the difficulty of engaging in professional development. He argued that such activity demands conditions that require teachers to have the time and resources to reflect systematically on their practice and to communicate extensively with one another. She further goes on to suggest that most of the teacher educators, especially at college level, are experiencing these difficulties and this limits their modeling reflective teaching during classroom practices with teachers. As indicated in Chapter Four the teachers identified teacher educators as themselves having a poorly developed understanding of reflective practice.

From the above findings one can extrapolate that, despite their qualifications, the three teachers in my study need professional development programs to upgrade their knowledge and skills, not only of reflective practice but also of teaching practice and their subject area that will enable them to better understand how to implement reflective practice.

5.4.3. Rigid and overladen time table

One of the teachers noted during the interview that the time table does not offer enough time for teachers to incorporate reflective practice in their teaching. Helena further note that it is very important for teachers to share classroom experiences with fellow colleagues, but time is not provided to do so.

Newman (1996) highlights practical problems in the implementation of reflective practice. He argued that in a school a reflective practice would demand greater flexibility in the school timetable to enable each teacher to vary the length of their lesson to follow the logic of reflection-in-action; but this is not possible for a range of administrative reasons. Pultorack (1993) further argued that because of a lack of time, enthusiasm and support, active reflection is difficult to sustain over a long period.

5.4.4. Educational managers who do not share the same model of reflections

The responses from the interviews revealed that school managers prefer to work with teachers who do not question and challenge their view points. Darius pointed out that they prefer to work with teachers who are passive and believe whatever they are told. He further notes that these teachers are regarded as good and obedient teachers.

This is in contrast with the views of Zeichner & Liston (1996:13) about good teachers. According to them:

Good teachers are necessarily autonomous in professional judgment. They do not need to be told what to do. They are not professionally the dependents of researchers or superintendent, of innovators or supervisors. This does not mean that they do not welcome access to ideas created by other people at other places or in other times. Nor do they reject advice, consultancy or support. But they do know that ideas and people are not much real use until they are digested to the point where they are subjected to the teacher's own judgment.

Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:9) also argued that "unreflective teachers often lose sight of the purposes and ends towards which they are working and become merely the agents of others."

5.4.5. Slow adaptation of teachers to new changes

What the teachers are saying is that there are fellow colleagues that still want to cling to the old way of teaching, particularly the ones who received training during the colonial era. This is in line with the situation described by Kurtz and Roswell (1991) that teachers find themselves in before a reform situation. This includes:

- The teachers viewing knowledge as static and quantifiable and learning viewed through the banking analogy
- Emphasis on memorization at the expense of understanding
- Teachers as technicians rather than critical participants in the education process

This is in contrast with the Namibian educational reform ideals, which argue that in order for the teachers to enable the learners to explore different ways of knowing and developing thinking abilities, the teachers themselves must be able to experience and to

explore different ways of knowing and be able themselves to think in different and new ways. (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, (MBESC), 1993)

5.5. Strategies teachers identified to develop reflective practice

The interview responses also indicated strategies to develop and sustain reflective practice. These include: staff development programs, a supportive environment and afternoon classes.

- Staff development programs

Darius noted that through staff development programs teachers are able to gain knowledge and skills on various aspects of teaching and learning. He further indicated that teachers should be encouraged to do in-service training courses or to further their studies on a full-time basis. Helena supported his views and indicated that teachers can master some knowledge when they read and take action, not through listening as the case with the meetings. Findings further revealed that teacher educators should also upgrade their knowledge and skills particularly on reflective practice, in order to guide and support the student teachers properly.

Darling-Hammond, Aness and Falk (1995) argued that professional development takes teachers out of the role of passive receivers of information and places them instead in the position of collaboratively and actively constructing knowledge about teaching. Lieberman (1996) also argued that it is of crucial importance that professional development be seen as an integral part of school life and school development.

The Namibian educational reform demands teachers to be critical inquirers, independent thinkers, problem solvers and so on. This can be real when teachers have got new knowledge, skills and attitudes, which they obtain through staff development programs.

- A supportive environment

Russell (1993), as described in Chapter 2, holds the view that the environment plays an important role in the development of reflective practice. From their responses it is evident that the teachers acknowledged the importance of a supportive environment in the development of reflective practice. Darius indicated that knowledge and skills could be obtained through interaction with external experts and not only by own experiences. He further stated that teachers, particularly the inexperienced ones, could become reflective practitioners when they are working in a supportive environment. Helena also contributed and said that the teachers could continuously reflect on their work when they are supported.

- Afternoon classes

The evidence gathered also seems to indicate that the teachers need some extra time to allow them to incorporate reflective practice in their teaching. Helena pointed out that time allocated per subject is not sufficient for someone to do reflection. She further stated that afternoon classes could provide teachers with ample time to incorporate reflective practice in their teaching. Darius supported this view and said that most of the teachers might not be overloaded with periods in the afternoon, and they could use the time to observe fellow colleagues' lessons and reflect on their lessons. Pultorack (1993) argued that without time, active reflection is difficult to sustain over a long period.

- Collaborative and collegial network

Findings from the interview revealed that the teachers collaborate when they have meetings and observe fellow colleagues' lessons. It was indicated that the teachers learn much from these activities, particularly during class visits. Helena noted that some of the colleagues provide constructive feedback, which helps improve classroom practices. Darius also noted that inexperienced teachers benefit from this exercise, because they gain skills by interacting with fellow colleagues.

Zeichner & Liston (1996:76) argued that reflective practice is “a social practice where group of teachers can support and sustain each other’s growth.” Furthermore they argued, “the challenge and support gained through social interaction is important in helping the teachers clarify what they believe and in gaining the courage to pursue their beliefs.”(ibid:76)

Hall (1994:32-34) also suggested some strategies that support collaborative and collegial networks. This include among others:

- Action learning: She argued that through action learning, individuals learn from each other by working on real problems.
- Clinical supervision. This, according to her is when supervisors observe a subordinate at work and provide feedback to review and enhance the existing practice.
- Engaging a critical friend: A critical friend is a trusted listener and sounding board enlisted to act as an interested outsider in a review and development project.

5.6. Contributing factors that led to the teacher’s lack of understanding

Findings indicated some of the obvious contributing factors that have led to teachers’ lack of understanding. First is the lack of comprehensive professional development programs, for example, providing workshops particularly on reflective practice. One of the teachers indicated that since he had joined the school, he had never attended a workshop on reflective practice, so apart from the meetings that they normally have, there are no opportunities to develop the sort of understanding that is needed.

Second is the lack of supportive environment. Findings from the interviews revealed that the schools do not provide enough opportunities for the teachers to exercise reflective practice. For example issues such as overladen timetables and pressure to cover the required curriculum were raised.

Third is the guidance and support provided to the teachers by heads of department and advisory teachers. Are these people equipped with appropriate knowledge about reflective practice in order to support and give guidance to the teachers?

Finally, the nature and the role of the BETD pre-service preparation of teachers need to be revisited as part of the problem. All three teachers are BETD pre-service graduates. The question thus is, to what extent did their training empower teachers with the appropriate knowledge of reflective practice?

From the above findings, it seems that the teachers in my study need professional development programs to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes about reflective practice. Falk (1996) argues that teachers need to develop those skills and capacities that are required to take charge of their own thinking and their own learning. Therefore, it was suggested that schools should arrange for focused workshops where teachers can be trained at one area, for example on reflective practice. Meetings should not only address issues that are based on subject knowledge, but on issues in the context of reflective practice. I feel that it is very important for the teachers to understand the difference between teaching that is “reflective and teaching that is technically focused.” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996:1).

The findings also pointed to the need for heads of departments in schools and advisory teachers to give guidance and direct the teachers on how to reflect on their teaching, and to guide the teachers on how to incorporate reflective practice in their teaching. (Pultorack, (1993) argued that without support by supervisors active reflection is difficult to sustain over a longer period. Thus it would seem that schools should also offer opportunities for the teachers to exercise reflective practice on a continuous basis. Russell (1993) also argued that most teachers would be reflective most of the time in an appropriate and supportive environment.

The study also pointed to problems in terms of the teachers’ initial development. Teacher training programs should, therefore, be re-looked at to assess how well student teachers are inducted into the concept and practice of reflective practice. Elliot, (1991b) argued that if we are to facilitate reflective practice as a form of educational inquiry in schools, then we must treat teacher education as a reflective practice also. Teacher educators are therefore required to have sufficient knowledge, to model reflective practice to student teachers in their teaching

At the heart of all reflection about the pre- and in-service development of teachers are questions about teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the desired pedagogy. As has been indicated earlier, for teachers to reflect they need sound subject knowledge on which to base their judgments, and in order to bring about meaningful change, they need a thorough grounding in educational practice.

Thus far the results of this study would seem to have affirmed the results of earlier studies. However, while it is evident that the participating teachers do indeed have a shallow view of reflective practice I believe that what this study has done is to reveal some of the contributing factors that have resulted in the views and implementation of reflective practice.. These are further illuminated by the problems that the teachers identified in implementing reflective practice. Further to this I believe that this study has helped to provide insights that help to identify key issues related to developing the desired understanding of reflective practice. Thus if teachers are to be fully prepared for the implementation of reflective practice they also need to:

- Understand the key principles on which reflection is based and how to translate these into practice, as I have indicated that this study needs more than simply being able to narrate the theory of reflective practice. Teachers for example need to know how to relate all the dimensions of classroom practice to reflection and to know which tools are appropriate for reflection as well as how to use them.
- Have a clear understanding of the role that learners play in the reflective process. Included in this context is the need for teachers to have a far better grasp of the nature and role of feedback as an integral part of the reflective process.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the findings in chapter four in the light of my research question and the literature review. I have discussed the ways in which teachers appear to be interpreting reflective practice. The findings of the study do however show that teachers have little understanding of reflective practice even though some elements of reflective practice are used.

I have also discussed the role of reflective practice in teaching and learning. Teachers indicate that reflective practice plays a crucial role in developing teachers and learners to be active participants, problem solvers and agents of change. Also in this chapter I have discussed the strategies used to implement reflective practice. Findings from classroom observations and interviews show that some elements of reflective practice are being implemented. For example, reflective teaching requires competence in methods of classroom enquiry, to support the development of teaching competence.

Furthermore, I have discussed the problems that make the implementation of reflective practice difficult. Responses from classroom observation and interviews indicated a lack of staff development programmes, a lack of supportive environment etc., as problems that hinder the implementation of reflective practice.

Lastly, I have discussed the strategies to develop and enhance reflective practice, and these among others are: staff development programmes, supportive environment, afternoon classes, etc. Responses from interviews indicated that if strategies are put in place, the teachers could have better understanding, which could make the implementation possible

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This final chapter presents a critical overview and reflection of the study that includes firstly a reflection on the aims of the study and the research process; secondly, it presents an overview of the key findings of the study; thirdly, the lessons learnt from the research process and finally, the limitations and the trustworthiness of the study are considered.

6.2. Aims of the study

This study was shaped and informed by the educational reform policy set in place in 1990, and the expectations of that policy, given the emphasis placed on reflective practice as a central means to bring about meaningful change.

My reading and analysis of the Namibian teacher educational reform ideology is that its fundamental focus is that of teachers being reflective practitioners who are independent thinkers and critical inquirers able to make decisions based on their own analysis and judgment. This differs radically from the pre-independence ideology where teachers were seen as ‘technicians’ who only implement ideas formulated elsewhere. (See chapter 2. p.10)

The literature examined points to reflective practice as a process where teachers understand, explain and find meaning of what they are doing in order to make changes and improve teaching. (See chapter 2. p.19). Yet, current research points to teachers’ lack of understanding of the pedagogy of reflective practice.

As a lecturer responsible for the pre-service preparation of future teachers, my initial concern was to ask whether I am perhaps part of the problem because I do not have an understanding of the issues that contribute to the reported state of affairs. This study was therefore prompted by this and therefore resulted in my desire to investigate how the

selected former BETD graduates understand and implement the theory of reflective practice.

By focusing specifically on reflective practice I was able to ground my research within a tangible area. So too, by concentrating my investigation on a small sample using a case study approach I hoped to illuminate not just what these teachers could not do and what they thought and said, but to research an understanding of why they do and say what they do. I hoped to reach an understanding of the situation in the context of my case study that not only sought to identify if indeed the situation is really as bad as it is painted by current research, but hopefully to identify what the contributing factors might be, and to see if I was able to reach an understanding of the actual problems, rather than the symptoms. Thus my research question was aimed at ultimately finding answers that could inform my own practice.

6.3. Reflection on the research process

As I indicated in the previous section, and particularly in Chapter Three, a case study method was utilized to explore the teachers' understanding and implementation of reflective practice. The literature examined indicated that case study methods enable the researcher to use a variety of data collection and techniques to look at a variety of viewpoints.

In order to understand how the selected teachers in the study understand and implement reflective practice, a number of instruments were employed to collect data at various stages during the study. (See Chapter Three, 34-38). This was necessary to get a holistic view of the processes and to provide a "thick description" of the teachers, places and conversation. I also used various instruments for triangulation purposes in order to verify findings and thus to enhance validity and reliability.

Through the process of data collection, I encountered some difficulties. These will be discussed in the next section (Limitations: point 6.7). Despite the difficulties experienced, there are things that went well during the process. First of all, I was granted permission to

carry out a study in the selected schools. The three teachers were available when they were needed and they were ready to provide the needed information. I had a workable schedule which indicated what I needed to do and this helped me to do my work, even though there were sometimes changes that were made on the schedule in the case of a participant having unforeseen problems. I managed to collect the information that I needed.

6.4. An overview of the key findings

The results presented in chapter four and the analysis of these results in the light of the shaping literature have revealed that while these teachers indeed may be seen to have a 'shallow' understanding of the situation as revealed, a number of factors were indicated that might contribute to these problems. These are:

- Understanding first of all is related to the way in which teachers were prepared to be reflective practitioners. Findings revealed a lack of sufficient knowledge on the part of teacher educators, particularly on reflective practice. (See Chapter Four, p.47). The literature examined has also indicated that there is a lack of understanding about the approach due to a lack of professional development in teacher educators. (See chapter 2, p.21)
- Secondly, these teachers' understanding is fundamentally related to their own understanding of the key ideas of reflective practice. Findings revealed that because of a 'shallow understanding' teachers have not reached the point where they can explicitly explain what reflective practice is, how it occurs and the role it plays in the teaching and learning process. To them, reflective practice is mainly focused on subject knowledge, i.e. how well they can teach it and how well the learners can respond to this knowledge.
- Thirdly, the results point to a fundamental lack of understanding about the documents used to continuously evaluate and revise teaching. Findings revealed that none of the three teachers included reflective writing in their lesson plans and nor were there any other documents used for this purpose.

- Fourth, the result also points to a lack of support and guidance from heads of departments and advisory teachers. A question was raised about whether they (advisory teachers and heads of departments) have sufficient knowledge about reflective practice to enable them to give support and guidance to the teachers.
- Lastly, findings revealed that the three teachers lack knowledge about the concept of reflective practice. There was a concern raised about the nature and role the BETD programme plays in preparing student teachers for the concept and practice of reflective practice.

6.5. The lessons learnt from the research

The research has provided me with useful insights into:

- The ways the selected teachers understand reflective practice. I have come to understand that there are a number of factors that contribute to teachers' lack of understanding, and not that they have a 'shallow' understanding only. Findings revealed some of the attributes which are: inconsistent use of the term 'reflective practice', lack of staff development programmes, rigid and overlaid time table, and educational managers who do not share the same model of reflection. There was an issue of teacher educators not having sufficient knowledge to deliver proper training to student teachers. The literature suggested that if we are to facilitate reflective practice as a form of inquiry in schools, then we must treat teacher education as a reflective practice also (see chapter 2, p.14). This means that teacher educators should model reflective practice in their teaching, because this is one of the ways student teachers will have an understanding of the concept of reflective practice in order to apply it effectively.
- The problems that hinder the development of reflective practice: One is a lack of a supportive environment. I have learnt that teachers are not offered enough opportunities to exercise reflective practice specifically during the teaching and learning process. This, according to the findings, is caused by an overlaid timetable and pressure to cover the required curriculum (Chapter four, p.49). The findings revealed that none of the three teachers had information in their lesson

plans about reflective practice. To me this might be one of the causes, because there is an indication of lack of time and support for teachers to implement reflective practice continuously. The literature has indicated that without time and support, active reflection is difficult to sustain over a long period. (See Chapter 2, p.21).

- The strategies teachers use to implement reflective practice. Here I have learnt that reflective practice is not only done directly during the teaching and learning process. Teachers can reflect on the teaching and learning process when they conduct meetings, i.e. staff meetings and cluster meetings. (Chapter 4, p. 44-46). The literature has shown that collaborative dialogue with colleagues enhances reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfillment. Findings revealed that teachers are not much guided particularly on reflective practice during meetings. According to them this is due to the limited time.
- Professional development programs is one of the other important strategies to develop and enhance reflective practice. Teachers need to acquire knowledge and skills particularly on reflective practice by participating in constructive workshops, in-service training and full time studies. I believe expansion and upgrading of knowledge and skills can be obtained through these programs. The literature examined indicates that it is of critical importance that professional development be seen as an integral part of school life and school development. (Chapter 5, p. 73). Findings indicate a lack of resources for teachers to engage themselves in these programs. What I have learnt is that most of the teachers are willing and eager to participate, but what is hindering their participation is that resources are not available.

6.6 Suggestions to strengthen the implementation of reflective practice

6.6.1 The teacher's understanding of reflective practice

Teachers' understanding of reflective practice is one of the important findings of this study. It would seem that reflective practice is being interpreted by some teachers as something that guides only the teaching and learning of subject knowledge and some did

not have a clue of what it is. There are also factors in the system (such as lack of knowledge, timetabling, resources and so on) that affects the implementation of reflective practice. This study suggests that teacher educators should provide student teachers with knowledge and techniques to help them:

- Understand reflective practice better (this would include understanding the theory of reflective practice of the reform process),
- To model reflective practice in their teaching because this will enable student teachers to understand and use it effectively when they are in the field of teaching.
- Teacher educators themselves should have knowledge and understanding on reflective practice, in order to transfer this knowledge to student teachers.

School managers should be aware of the important role reflective practice plays in teaching and learning process and encourage teachers to:

- Attend upgrading courses through in-service training and full time studies if possible
- Continuously practice reflective practice during the teaching and learning process
- Monitor and evaluate the performances of teachers in the context of reflective practice and give guidance if necessary.
- Have knowledge and understanding which will enable them to guide teachers particularly on the implementation of reflective practice.
- Help teachers to understand how the methods used reflect /do not reflect reflective practice when they do class visits.

Subject advisory teachers should not only concentrate on advising and guiding teachers on subject knowledge but rather to:

- Guide and advise the teachers on how they can incorporate reflective practice in their teaching especially when they do class visits.
- Arrange workshops that only focus on reflective practice with the teachers.

Teacher educators will be required to liaise with schools and give support to teachers with the implementation of reflective practice. This will provide opportunities for monitoring and evaluating the progress made by BETD graduates when they are in the field, particularly on the implementation of reflective practice.

6.6.2. How strategies used by the teachers reflect reflective practice

Since this was a small-scale research, only some strategies could be observed. These strategies reflected that teachers implement the theory of reflective practice in a narrowly technical manner. From the data gathered it would seem that more attention is needed to develop ways of implementing reflective practice during teaching and learning. This includes among others a critical engagement with learners' views and an emphasis on problem-based approaches.

6.6.3. Problems, which make the implementation of reflective practice difficult

These findings indicated that a number of factors such as lack of staff development programmes, ambiguity of concepts, lack of supportive environment, slow adaptation of new changes, managers who do not share the same model of reflective practice, and time-tabling impede the implementation of reflective practice. This study also suggests that colleges should liaise with schools to help the teachers understand the role of reflective practice in teaching and learning.

6.7. Trustworthiness of the study

In this research, a degree of bias could have been brought about by the subjectivity of the teachers, their opinions, attitudes, perspective, conceptual development and understanding. This study's trustworthiness and credibility, however, I believe lies in the clarity and rich description of how data was collected, managed and processed, and the various strategies employed throughout the inquiry.

In addition, validation tactics employed included the use of different data sources as a means to enhance the understanding of reality in the context of this study. Against this

background, data collected from various sources were synthesized so as to present credible and trustworthy findings.

6.8. Limitations of the study

The major challenges were to make sense of the enormous amount of data, to distill the information, to identify significant patterns and to construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed. Some of these were met through coding and the categorization of primary patterns and themes.

The major limitation of the study is the lack of generalization that is possible in the context of a small-scale study such as this. Other limitations included the constraints of time and the scope of the half thesis.

6.9. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a critical overview and reflection on the aims of the study that includes what prompted the study, and why it was considered worthwhile doing the research. Secondly, a critical reflection of the research process, why I selected the research design and then how it worked, what worked and what did not work well. Thirdly I have provided a critical overview of the key findings as well as the lessons I have learnt from the research process. Finally, suggestions to strengthen the implementation of reflective practice and further research on the study have been presented.

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APPENDIX A

Letter informing the principal about the study

The Principal

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am registered as a part time student at the University of Rhodes (student number 603M4403). I have been studying for a Master's degree in General Education Theory and Practice since February 2005. I would be most grateful if you would allow me to use your school as one of my research sites for the research report, which I am required to write.

The aim of my research is to investigate how selected BETD graduates understand and implement reflexive practices in order to critically revisit the BETD curriculum pertaining to theory and strategies developed for teacher education programmes in the area of reflexive practice. Should you agree to allow me to use your school as a research site, teachers who are willing to participate in this project will be interviewed giving for example their background information on qualifications and experiences as BETD graduates. They will be asked for permission to audiotape records these interviews. I will also request permission to look at examples of documents such as lesson plan preparation journal books, portfolios etc.

The school and teachers are assured of anonymity in the final research report and will be invited to proofread drafts of the report to ensure that details are accurately recorded and reported.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this request, you can contact me at (066) 265300 during business hours or (066) 255227/0812066025 after hours.

Yours sincerely

Mwala Maria Elizabeth

APPENDIX B

Letter informing the three teachers about the study

Dear teacher

I am registered for a Master's degree with Education Department at the University of Rhodes. To qualify for my Master's degree I am required to write a research report on a topic that is linked to an aspect of the work undertaken in the coursework component of the Master's programme. The aim of this research project is to investigate teacher's understanding and implementation of reflective practice in classroom practices. I will attempt to answer the following question:

How do selected BETD graduates understand and implement the theory of reflective practice?

Please complete the attached consent forms if you are willing to assist me with this research.:

- a) by participating in an interview with me at a time that is convenient to you and
- b) by allowing the interview to be tape recorded for latter transcription and use in the research report.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this request, you can contact me at (066)- 265300 during business hours or (066) 255227 after hours.

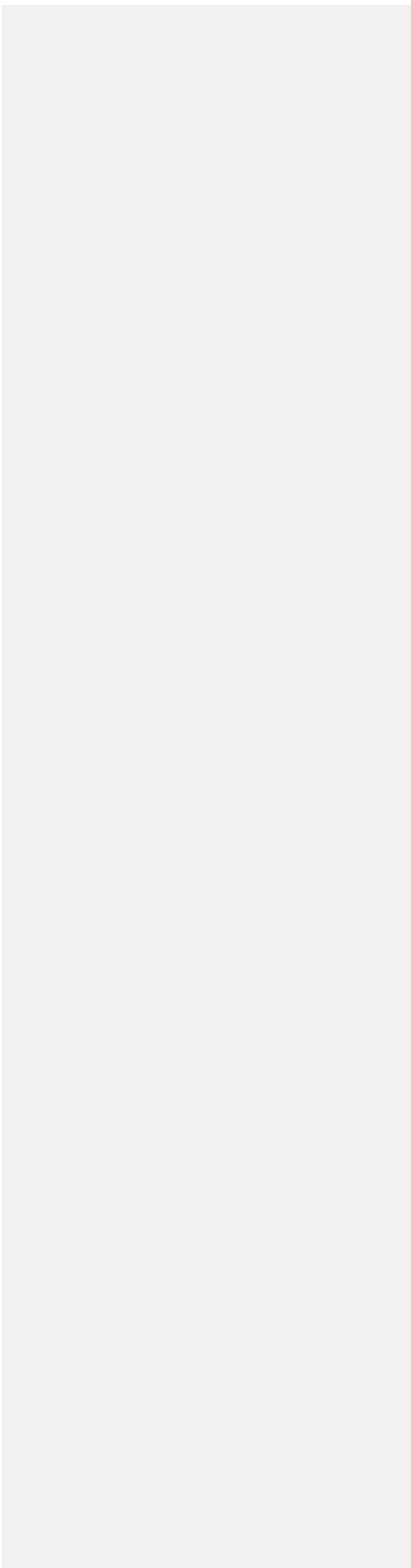
Yours sincerely

Mwala Maria Elizabeth

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in an interview with Maria Mwala. I understand that she will be enquiring about my understanding and implementation of reflective practice in my classroom.

Signed.....Date.....



APPENDIX: D

Pilot interview questions

Interview Questions:

Background details

1. What is your name
2. Are you female or male teacher?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What is the name of the college where you study?
5. When did you enroll at the college?
6. When did you complete the college/
7. Name the skills you have mastered during your three years as a student teacher at the college? e.g. listening, teaching, inquiry, thinking, problem solving, synthesizing, communicating, and others.
8. Which teaching methods were used to help you master this/these skill/s? e.g. lecturing, experiment, project, problem based, group work, and others.
9. In what ways have your understanding of teaching and learning changed over the three years at college? Acquisition of skills, development of attitudes, acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of methodology and techniques.

Understanding of theory/understanding of practice

11. In ETP you have explored certain topics and have done a number of projects.
Which of these did you find most useful in relation to your role as a future teacher?
12. Why did you find these most useful?
13. Which of the methods and approaches you acquired at the college could you use in your teaching?
14. Do you feel uncertain in applying these approaches?
15. How do you overcome this uncertainty?
16. If you could plan the ETP syllabus, what would you give more emphasize to?
17. Why would you give more emphasis?
18. Any other comments concerning what we have discussed.

Classroom Practices

19. (a). Which aspects of teaching do you find most difficult?
(b). Why?
20. (a). Which aspects of teaching do you find easy?
(b). Why?
21. What opportunity or time have you had during the course for thinking about your teaching?
22. Have you ever gathered data on your class and discussed your findings with another college? If so explain?

23. Do you ever write about your teaching in a diary or other means?

24. Do you ask your learners to tell you what they have learnt in your class?

APPENDIX: E

Final set of interview questions

Section A:

Background/ Biographical Questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What kind of training did you do
3. At which college did you do your training?
4. What subject and grade do you teach?

Section B:

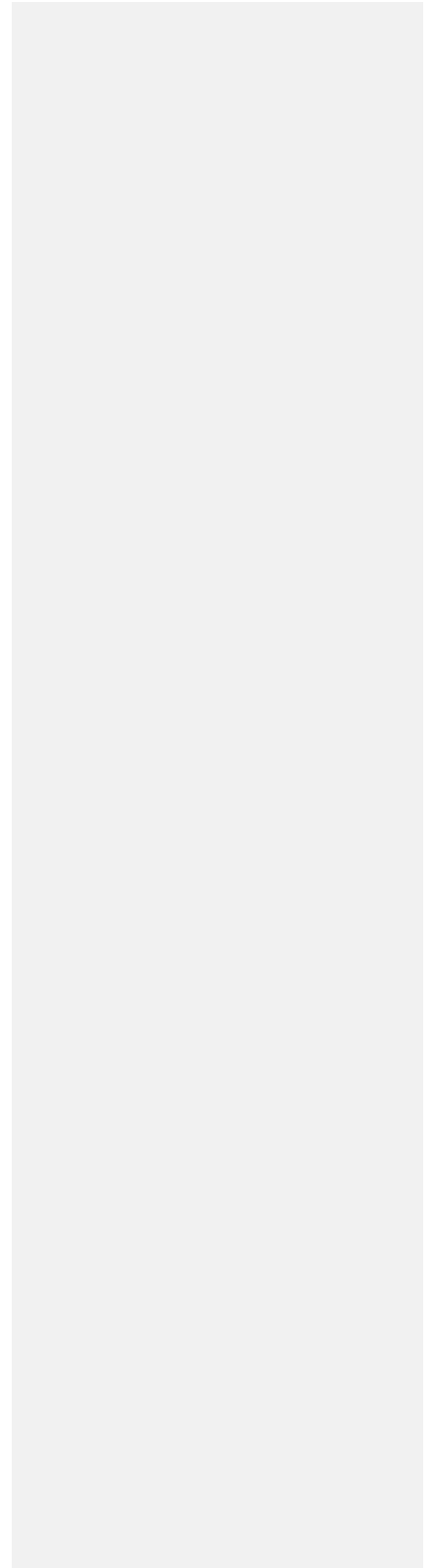
Focused questions:

1. Briefly explain your understanding of reflective practice
2. What are your experiences of reflective practice?
3. How do you implement reflective practice?
4. Do your learners do some evaluation writings? If so explain.
5. Do you invite colleague/colleagues to observe your lesson?
6. Does the school offer opportunities for reflections?
7. What documents do you use for reflections?
8. What problems do you experience with the implementation of reflective practice?
9. What strategies could you suggest to solve these problems?

APPENDIX: F

The teacher's lesson preparation plans

To be attached on report



APPENDIX: G

Lesson Observation Sheet

Lesson observation Sheet May 22.05.06-9.06.06

Teacher:	School:	Date:
Class	Number of learners	Length of lesson:
Lesson Topic	Subjects	

Time	Teacher activity	Learner activity	Comments	Questions/stimulated recall

APPENDIX: H

Forms of Indicators/ Principles of reflective practice

Indicators of reflective practice

Name of the teacher:

Classroom observation

Indicators	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Comments
1. Reflective teaching implies an active concerns with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency (e.g. check lessons plans)				
2. Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice (e.g. lesson evaluations)				
3. Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of classroom enquiry, to support the development of teaching competence (e.g. check activities, assessment strategies)				
4. Reflective practice requires attitude of open-mindedness, responsibilities and wholeheartedness				
5. It is based on teacher judgment, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insights from educational discipline				

APPENDIX: I

Interview Transcripts of the three teachers

Transcribed interview

The interview was conducted on the 12th of June and 13th of June 2006. There were nine focus questions with follow up questions depending on the responses from the interviewee. The interview started 14h00 and ended at 17h00.

The focus questions were:

1. Briefly explain your understanding of reflective practice
2. What are your experiences in reflective practice?
3. How do you implement reflective practice?
4. Do your learners do some evaluation writings? If so explain.
5. Do you invite colleague/colleagues to observe your lesson?
6. Does the school offer opportunities for reflections?
7. What documents do you use for reflections
8. What problems do you experience with the implementation of reflective practice?
9. What strategies could you suggest to solve these problems?

The interview however started with biographical questions, which include:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What kind of training did you do?
3. At which college did you do your training?
4. What subject and grade do you teach?

Below I present samples of the interview session

Interview with Darius

- I: Good afternoon Sir, welcome to the session
- Darius: Good afternoon madam – the pleasure is yours
- I: How long have you been teaching?
- Darius: 6 months
- I: What kind of teacher training did you do?
- Darius: Basic Education Teacher Diploma specialized in Languages (English and Thimbukushu)
- I: Which college did you do your training?
- Darius: Rundu College of Education
- I: What subject/s and grade/s do you teach?
- Darius: English grade 9
- I: When did you start teaching?
- Darius: I started teaching January 2006
- I: Could you explain your understanding of reflective practice?
- Darius: (Long pause). At this point and time, I will not pretend by saying this is the definition. Many people take it in different ways. They are those that might give the correct definitions, but myself I might not- I will give part of it. The way I understand reflective practice is that it is more on what the teacher do after presenting his or her lesson, whatever activities he or she is giving to look at, the way he or she did present it, what I have received after presentation, do my learners understood what I have presented.
- I: You said that reflective practice is thinking about what you have taught, do you have some other thoughts to add on what you said about what reflective practice is?
- Darius: mmmm... no.
- I: What are your experiences of reflective practice?
- Darius: It is something that is helping me in my teaching. Because when I look back on when I started and the way I am presenting my lessons this days, if one could sit and observe when I started and now, there is a change. When I

Started I was speaking very fast and the learners could not get what I was saying. What they have given me back was always wrong information and this and this indicated that I am not presenting information well. This directed me to change my way of teaching, i.e. not to speak fast. And looking at the performances of my learners this days and compare it to those days there are improvements

I: How do you implement reflective practice in your teaching?

Darius: After presenting my lesson I go through and also I look at the activities given to the learners than will realize either to repeat the lesson or to continue with other topics.

I: Very interesting, tell me why should you repeat the lesson?

Darius: Mrs., Mwala, If the learners cannot give correct answer especially on the activity given, this means that they did not understand what I have taught and that will make me to repeat the lesson, because I want them to understand.

I: Mr. Darius, you said previously that reflective practice is when you think about what you taught. Do you also think about your teaching before you present your lesson?

Darius: Yes, I do- I prepare what I am going to teach, plan the activities as well as the materials that I will use in my teaching. If this is not done before I enter a class, I will not be able to present a good lesson.

I: Do you give opportunities to your learners to ask questions on the lesson taught?

Darius: Yes, and this is something good, because when the learners tell me that they did not understand, this will direct me on how I will help them, but not all my learners are asking questions, some are very shy and they will not say anything in my class.

I: Very interesting, could you give me example of question you learners normally ask?

Darius: The learners normally ask questions about the content taught, for example if the topic is about past simple test, if they did not understand the way I explained the word, they might ask me at the end to re-explain it again.

- I: What documents do you use to write your reflections?
- Darius: I normally write my evaluations in my lesson plans.
- I: Any other documents apart of lesson plans?
- Darius: None
- I: Do your learners have documents, which they use to write something for telling you about problems experienced during teaching and learning ?
- Darius: None
- I: Do you feel that this might be useful to you and your learners in future?
- Darius: (pause), I think it is especially the learners who are shy in my class.
- I: Do you share problems that you experienced in class with fellow colleagues
- Darius: Exactly I am not much experience in the subject that I teach I am always asking my colleagues those that are teaching English. They use to comment sometimes they acknowledge work done; some times they critique and give give advices or guidance.
- I: Does the school offer opportunities for teachers to share classroom experiences with fellow colleagues?
- Darius: Yes, Heads of departments together with the principals have a schedule for visiting teachers in their departments. After the class visits they discuss their findings with the teacher observed and give some advices if they discover some problems. Fellow colleagues are also invited to observe other colleague's lesson.
- I: What types of activities do the Heads of department and principal look at when they observe the lessons of teachers?
- Darius: First of all they look at you lesson plan to see whether you have prepared your lesson. Secondly they look at whether you have presented your lesson well by looking at the way you teach the content of your lesson, whether you have used teaching aids. They also check at learners work to see whether you are giving activities, they look at the time management, learner participation and so on.
- I: Does the school, apart from class visits, offer opportunities where teachers gather and talk about teaching and learning?

Darius: Yes, we have departmental meetings. All teachers in a specific department come and talk about difficulties experiencing during teaching, how learners are progressing and performing. We use to direct one another and give advises. We also have staff meetings. Here all the teachers in the various department come together and share classroom experiences. The are also cluster meetings. All teachers that belong in that cluster gather at one place. They also share classroom experiences with fellow colleagues.

I: Are you benefiting in this types of gatherings?

Darius: Yes, I am learning a lot from other colleagues. For example when they talk of methods of teaching that are working well in their teaching. I normally take the advices and try it in my teaching and this is really helping me improve my teaching.

I: What problems do you experience with the implementation of reflective practice?

Darius: (Long pause) the teachers that in teaching English are overloaded with teaching periods. We do not have off periods that we could use to visit our Fellow colleagues classes. Another problem is that the concept of reflective practice is not clear to us. It was not explicitly explained. Finally some of the teacher educators do not also understand what reflective practice is, and they do not give appropriate guidance to the student teachers.

I: What strategies could you suggest that you think could help solve the problems?

Darius: (Pause) I think that the teachers should be given some in-service training or if possible, to take up the studies further. Schools should initiate workshops particularly on reflective practice. Teacher educators should also receive some trainings on reflective practice to guide student teachers properly. On the problem of teachers not having enough time during morning session, I think that schools could arrange afternoon classes to allow teachers to observe fellow colleague's lessons. Because not all teachers will be on in the afternoon.

I: Any comments you would like to make?

Darius: (Pause) I just want to say that there is nowhere a teacher will present a lesson without any reflections and this apply to all subject.
I: Thanks very much. You have been very helpful.
Darius: Thank you.

Interview with Helena

I: Good afternoon madam
Helena: Good afternoon madam
I: How long have you been teaching?
Helena: I have been working for five years and six months
I: What kind of teachers training did you do?
Helena: Basic Education Teacher Diploma
I: What grade and subject do you teach?
Helena: inferior primary – Class teaching-all seven subjects in grade 2.
I: Could you briefly explain your understanding of reflective practice?
Helena: (Long pause) to my understanding, it is ideas that you have learnt and the implementation of those ideas.
I: What are those ideas that you are referring too?
Helena: For example ideas about how to teach the content of your subject, how to assess the learners and so on.
I: What are your experiences in reflective practice?
Helena: Hm----I will say that it is something good. When I reflect on my teaching, I will ask myself questions such as, did I achieve my objectives? If I did not than I will decide to do something about it.
I: When do you reflect on your teaching and learning?
Helena: After I have presented a lesson.
I: What thoughts do you have after you have presented your lesson?
Helena: I normally ask myself whether the learners have understood the

content of the lesson taught and whether I presented the lesson well.

I: Do you normally give your learners opportunities to ask questions about the lesson taught or to tell how they enjoy or not enjoy your lesson or talk of the problem they experienced during that lesson?

Helena: I normally ask them questions about the content taught at the end of the lesson. I also give them chance to ask me about things that they did not understand.

I: Do you feel that it is a good idea for learners to tell you how well you have presented the lesson as well as telling you about the the problems they are experiencing in the class?

Helena: Yes it is, because it will give me some ideas to think about changing my teaching strategies and so on.

I: What other time do you have to think about teaching and learning?

Helena: When I am preparing my lessons.

I: What type of thoughts do you have during this time?

Helena: I think about what I am going to teaching, how I am going to present my topic, the teaching materials I will use and so on.

I: Do you ask fellow colleagues to observe you lessons? If so explain?

Helena: Yes, especially the ones that are teaching the same phase and grade. When a colleague is off, he or she will observe your lesson and after the observation he or she gives feedback on what she has observed.

I: What type of feedback do you receive from the colleagues?

Helena: The colleagues normally give positive and negative points of the lesson observed. They also give recommendations for improvements.

I: How are you benefiting from this exercise?

Helena: It is helping me improve on the way I am planning my lesson, my teaching strategies, designing of suitable teaching aids and the way of assessing my learners.

- I: Are there other opportunities offered by the school for teachers to share classroom experiences with one another? If so explain?
- Helena: Yes, there is class visit done by head of departments and the principal, we have departmental meetings for teachers in a specific department, staff meetings for all the teachers in all the various department and cluster meetings for all the teachers that belong in a particular cluster.
- I: What type of thoughts do you normally have during this meetings?
- Helena: We talk about the learners performances, problems teachers and learners experience during teaching and learning and how to overcome these problems.
- I: What documents do you use to write reflections?
- Helena: I normally write my lesson evaluation in the lesson plans.
- I: Do you have any other documents, apart from lesson plans/
- Helena: No.
- I: You mentioned previously that reflective practice is helping you in your teaching. What problems do you experience with the implementation of reflective practice?
- Helena: I do not have a clear understanding about what reflective practice means. Secondly, I am not sure whether what I am doing in class is reflective practice or not. Thirdly not much is been said about reflective practice especially during meetings and class visits.
- I: What do you think could be done to develop and strengthen reflective practice?
- Helena: We need training, particularly on reflective practice. Teachers must do in-service training. Workshops should be conducted. I also feel that teacher educators in the college should also have knowledge about what reflective practice is.

What I have realized is that some of the teacher educators do not have proper understanding about what reflective practice means and as a result they do not guide student teachers properly.

I: Any comments that you would like to make?

Helena: No comments

I: Thanks very much: It is a pleasure talking with you.

Interview with Kalishe

I: Good afternoon Sir, I am very happy to meet you

Kalishe: Good afternoon Madam and thank you very much

I: How long have you been teaching?

Kalishe: I have been teaching for three years and six months (from 2003 and presently

I: What kind of teaching training did you do?

Kalishe: Basic Education Teacher Diploma specialized in Mathematics and Science Upper primary phase (grade 4-7).

I: What subject and grade do you teach?

Kalishe: I am teaching Mathematics and Natural Science grade 4 to 6

I: Could you briefly explain what reflective practice means?

Kalishe: (Long pause) when you think about the content you taught, whether the learners have understood or not and if not you might think of repeating the lesson again.

I: Apart from thinking about the lesson taught, any other ideas you feel might be linked to reflective practice?

Kalishe: Hm.....nothing else

I: What are your experiences in reflective practice

Kalishe: It is helping me in my teaching. It makes me to see whether my learners are progressing or not.

I: Let me take you back, you said that reflective practice is

when you think about the content taught. Do you have other time to think about teaching and learning?

Kalishe:

When I am preparing my lessons.

I:

What thoughts do you have about teaching when you are preparing your lessons?

Kalishe:

I think of what I am going to teach, the activities my learners will do, the teaching aids I am going to use etc.

I:

Do you offer opportunities to your learners to ask questions on the lesson presented? For example to tell you that they have enjoyed the lesson or to talk of the problems they might have experienced when you presented the lesson?

Kalishe:

Yes, I am always encouraging them to ask questions, especially at the end of the lesson. Some of my learners are shy and they do not want to ask questions.

I:

Do you think of any mechanics that you can use to make the learners that are shy to communicate to you?

Kalishe:

(Long pause) the only way is to keep encouraging them.

I:

Does the school offer opportunities for teachers to share classroom experiences with one another?

Kalishe:

Yes, heads of departments and the principal do class visits. After they have visited a teacher they sit with that particular teacher and give feedback. We also talk about classroom experiences during departmental meetings, staff meetings and cluster meetings

I:

What classroom experiences do you normally discuss during these meetings?

Kalishe: We discuss the learner's performances, problems experienced with the learners during teaching and learning. We also talk about the teaching methods etc.

I: Are fellow colleagues also allowed to visit one another's classes? If so explain

Kalishe: Yes, when he or she is off, he or she could be invited in you class, especially the ones that are teaching the same subjects and grades.

I: How do you benefit from this exercise?

Kalishe: We are learning much from the experienced teachers. Because we share ideas about how to plan our lessons, teaching methodologies, teaching aids etc.

I: What document do you use to write your reflections?

Kalishe: I do write my lesson evaluations in the lesson plans.

I: Are there any other documents that you use to reflect on your lesson?

Kalishe: No other documents.

I: Do the learners have some documents which they use to reflect on their learning?

Kalishe: No.

I: Do you feel that it is a good idea for the learners to share their experiences by writing to the teachers?

Kalishe: Yes, because all the learners will have the opportunities to talk to their teacher.

I: What problems do you experienced with the implementation of reflective

practice?

Kalishe:

I do not have a clear understanding about what reflective practice means and I am not sure whether what I am implementing reflective practice or not. Some of the teacher educators are not guiding us properly. If I was guided properly especially on reflective practice

I do not think I could struggle with the concept by this time. There is also a lack of workshop, particularly on reflective practice

I:

What suggestions could you make to enhance and develop reflective practice?

Kalishe:

First and foremost, teacher educators should have sufficient knowledge on reflective practice. Secondly, schools should initiate workshops. Could make use of experienced teachers to train other teachers on reflective practice. Could also invite experts outside the school to conduct workshops.

I:

Any comments that you would like to make ?

Kalishe:

No comments.

I:

Thanks very much for your contributions.

