
Environmental Youth Clubs in Namibia: What role do, could or should they play in environmental education?

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by

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Abstract

Although the existence of wildlife clubs in Africa dates back to the start of the environmental movement in the 1970s, youth involvement through environmental clubs only commenced in Namibia in 1992. I became involved with the clubs in 1995 when I was employed by the Rössing Foundation Environmental Education Project to encourage, support and coordinate environmental clubs in Namibia. During the last three years the number of Namibian clubs has increased from 20 to ±85, and they are now established in most geographical regions of the country.

During my involvement with the clubs I became increasingly interested in the philosophical underpinnings of youth movements like clubs and started questioning what we could expect from the youth and what could be achieved through the clubs. One of my main concerns was whether youth could make a significant improvement to the quality of their lives and their environment through these clubs. The aim of my research was therefore to describe and reflect critically on the role of environmental youth clubs in environmental education in Namibia.

My study was guided by a socially critical orientation which emphasises the construction of meaning through social dialogue and critical reflection. I chose an interpretative research strategy and generated data mainly through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, a focus-group discussion and a workshop. Due to the focus of the research I purposefully selected the sample of existing youth clubs to be included in the study. The iterative strategy of gathering and interpreting data in successive cycles allowed for continuous reflection throughout the research process. It also allowed me to identify key patterns and trends in analysing and interpreting the data.

The study findings suggest that environmental clubs do play a role in learning about environmental issues; in developing personal and social identity, confidence and a sense of purpose in society; in establishing new and supportive relationships between teachers and learners and with other community resource people; in creating opportunities and enabling exposure to diverse learning environments, options and alternatives; and in fostering the orientation and skills needed to effect meaningful changes in the environment. The findings also suggest that environmental clubs could make a significant contribution to environmental education, providing that they incorporate a socially critical orientation, gain greater recognition from significant adults and education officials, collaborate with other projects and organisations, and use guidelines of models such as the action research framework to ensure relevant and effective action projects.

The main challenges to environmental clubs in Namibia include changing perceptions that youth do not have much to contribute; improving relationships between clubs, schools and communities; dealing with the tension between the possible disempowering effect of central control and the need for more formalised structures in order to gain official recognition; and developing strategies to ensure the clubs' sustainability in the future.

Introduction

This research project is directed at a better understanding of the role of environmental youth clubs in environmental education in Namibia. Over the last few years, these clubs have grown in number as well as in the level of involvement of various stakeholders. This process has to a significant degree been encouraged and supported by the Environmental Education Project of the Rössing Foundation.

The Environmental Education Project, funded by USAID, was initiated in 1992 in order to catalyse and facilitate the development and support of environmental education activities in Namibia. The project was managed by the Rössing Foundation (RF), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), and was intended "to educate and assist individuals and groups in rural and urban communities in making sound environmental choices that can result in sustainable improvement of their quality of life" (USAID Grant 1996: 4). The purpose of the project is to support and strengthen both government and NGOs in the provision of effective non-formal environmental education activities and programmes to a diverse cross-section of the Namibian population. One of the activities aimed at providing support and technical assistance to targeted groups in non-formal environmental education was listed as the "development of clubs, including assistance in planning and producing relevant activities" (USAID Grant 1996: 14). This activity was included in my job description.

When I started with the Environmental Education Project, one of my main duties was to support existing youth groups and to initiate new environmental clubs at schools. As the number of clubs increased my role changed to that of a coordinator and my responsibilities came to include the planning of the clubs' programme, the development of appropriate materials and ideas for activities, and the establishment of a network between clubs. At this stage I also relied heavily on colleagues running environmental clubs in South Africa for direction since there was very little pertinent material available in Namibia.

During the course of the last two years the underlying purpose of my visits to different regions changed from promoting the idea of environmental clubs to actively supporting teachers and youth officers in the establishment and running of environmental clubs through training workshops. During this period I also had contact with other projects through international conferences and meetings, including the Pan African Wildlife Club Generator, which I attended in Malawi in 1996. Seventeen African countries attended this workshop and I reviewed the report, to which I will refer as the Pan African document throughout this study. This interaction with other environmental education practitioners broadened my own focus from the exclusive focus on our project aims to the more general aims of environmental education. Through my studies at Rhodes University I was also introduced to my role as a researcher. With more than 80 environmental clubs established throughout most regions of Namibia, organisation and networking has become one of the main focal areas, and over the last six months of 1998 I experienced another emerging role as 'national coordinator' and facilitator of environmental clubs' workshops in several regions.

My involvement with environmental clubs over the last three years prompted some of the initial questions that guided this research process and will be discussed in the next section. However, since the Environmental Education Project ended in December 1998, and the Rössing Foundation is currently in the process of shifting its own focus, I am currently not directly involved with environmental clubs. I hope, however, that this study will

contribute to a better understanding of the role of youth clubs in environmental education in Namibia and provide useful insights for those concerned with the future involvement of the youth in environmental education in Namibia.

Outline of research motivation and aims

Youth clubs concerned with the environment are expanding in Africa and are constituted as environmental, conservation or wildlife clubs. These groups will all, for the purpose of this study, be regarded as environmental clubs. The growth of this movement is evident in many African countries, including Namibia where the number of environmental clubs has increased from 20 to \pm 85 over the last three years. In August 1998, a colleague and I organised a National Environmental Club Leaders' Workshop in Namibia, which sparked an increase in club numbers and necessitated numerous regional workshops aimed at identifying regional representatives for a national environmental club network.

This expansion in the number of the clubs, together with the thousands of learners who have been "informally influenced by clubs over the last three decades in Africa" (Sichilongo 1996a: 44), is a significant reason to critically evaluate the role that these environmental clubs play. Despite the apparent influence of and significant growth in the number of clubs, "no formal evaluation of Wildlife clubs movement has been undertaken, making it difficult to assess the exact impact of the movement and whether it has been successful" (Sichilongo 1996a: 44). Chadri (1996: 5) supports this view and states that:

... the African Wildlife Fund (AWF) is not aware of any form of a comprehensive evaluation of the club's methods and processes of promoting conservation education and the institutional structures developed to support this work.

The need for a formal evaluation of the environmental clubs movement is the motivation behind a research project currently being undertaken by the Wildlife Clubs in Kenya. The final results from a survey, which is one component of a larger study, have not yet been published and thus cannot be cited. However, in personal correspondence the researcher indicated that it is the first formal evaluation after 30 years of operation by Wildlife Clubs in Kenya. In addition South African clubs were reassessed in the 1990s, which resulted in the publication of the 'Club Action Kit' (Holland 1996: 83). Apart from these evaluations, I am not aware of any other attempts to formally investigate the role of environmental youth clubs, despite the fact that they are active in more than 25 countries on the African continent (Boulton & Eddershaw 1996: ii).

The limited research into the role and influence of environmental clubs, especially within the Namibian context, is my primary reason for doing this study. My involvement in environmental youth clubs came about as a result of my job description, the frustration experienced as a teacher with the inappropriate learning opportunities provided by the formal education system and a 'gut feeling' that it is in itself important to do. I had no direct previous experience with environmental clubs and there was very little literature available to turn to. Most of the materials that were available focused on 'how to run a club' and suggestions for practical activities, and largely failed to address questions relating to what we were hoping to achieve, and how these aims could be justified.

The limited research into environmental clubs is also significant because many educators and environmentalist that I have spoken to over the last three years often uncritically assume that environmental clubs are important

and play a positive role, without being able to substantiate this assumption with any research; and also because much time and money has been invested in environmental clubs in Africa over the last 30 years. According to Sichilongo (1996a: 43) there is a "widely accepted notion that clubs have a very definite role to perform in our changing societies". This view was also expressed during the mid-term evaluation of the RF Environmental Education Project:

The support and establishment of environmental clubs in schools is an area of great potential for non-formal environmental education ... and merits considerable attention in future (Van Harmelen & Sguazzin 1996: 15).

My experience over the past three years has indicated that there are different people with different goals involved in the environmental clubs in Namibia for many different reasons. There are expectations from some organisations, from teachers and the youth themselves, about the ways in which children can improve the environment. On the one hand such expectations suggest that the youth can make a significant contribution to environmental education, while some of my work experiences suggested that the efforts of the youth are not taken seriously. If we consider the number of educational projects and school-based programmes in Namibia, there seems to be a perception that environmental education activities are (and should be) primarily aimed at children. Is this perception based on the assumptions and expectations that the youth can make a difference, or that environmental activities are important for children?

Through my involvement with clubs as well as critical reflection on my own practice, I started to question the philosophies underlying environmental clubs. Should environmental youth clubs contribute to the improvement of quality of life (i.e. development work) or only focus on nature/wildlife conservation? What could and should we expect from the youth and environmental youth clubs? How could I evaluate the effectiveness of environmental clubs without knowing what those involved hoped to achieve? In this study I wanted to get a better understanding of these differing motivations, goals and activities and to investigate the various expectations that those involved have about environmental clubs. This is important not only in broadening the understanding of the role of environmental clubs in Namibia, but also in understanding the diversity of activities that are regarded as environmental education.

My experiences over the first two years underlined the importance of critical reflection and researching as an integral part of my own practice. The aims, objectives and activities of the environmental clubs' programme evolved through my discussions with colleagues and existing club leaders and members, and in line with the objectives of the RF Environmental Education Project. As mentioned earlier, this focus shifted in time and I began to question the role that environmental clubs could and should play in contributing to environmental education processes. The importance of interaction with other educators fuelled the need to share some of the rich discussions I had had with others involved in environmental clubs in Namibia. By investigating the role of environmental youth clubs in Namibia I also hoped to challenge and clarify my own understanding of the goals and aims of environmental education.

The aims of my research project are thus to broaden our understanding of the role of environmental youth clubs in Namibia in an attempt to:

- ▶ respond to the lack of research about environmental clubs;

- ▶ challenge and clarify our assumptions, and expectations regarding the contribution of the youth to environmental education; and
- ▶ stimulate future research and discussion and encourage research as an integral part of future environmental club activities.

The structure of this document

I will give a brief outline of the way in which this thesis is structured. I would like to emphasise that all the different aspects that influence the role of environmental youth clubs in environmental education are interlinked and that I therefore found it difficult to separate the chapters into distinct entities. This overlapping between different chapters is consistent with the integrated and complex nature of knowledge.

The first two chapters are the contextual and theoretical framework of the study. In chapter 1 I describe the environmental and educational context of environmental clubs in Namibia, while chapter 2 focuses on international historical developments in environmental education. This contextual and historical background informs the socially critical framework within which I consider the role of youth clubs in environmental education.

In chapter 3 I consider the study itself, focus on the research methodology and reflect on the findings and the research process. The last four chapters are devoted to interpretation and discussion of qualitative data generated during the study. Chapter 4 focuses on the club leaders' and members' views of the 'environment' and the implications of these perspectives for the orientation and activities of environmental youth clubs in Namibia. In chapter 5 I discuss the environmental club members' and leaders' reasons for involvement and what these imply for their role in environmental education.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus and considers the relationships of environmental youth clubs with schools and communities. I also describe aspects of these relationships that may strengthen or limit the contributions of environmental clubs to environmental education. Chapter 7 is devoted to the different views of education that emerged during the study and the implications of these views for the role of youth clubs in environmental education. Finally, since this study aims to research and broaden the understanding of the different roles that environmental clubs do and could play in environmental education, I summarise these roles in the concluding remarks.

Chapter 1

The environmental and educational contexts of environmental youth clubs in Namibia

Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to highlight aspects of the context in which environmental youth clubs in Namibia operate, as well as of the broader context in which this research project was undertaken. I will firstly give a broad overview of the Namibian environment and contextual factors that influence environmental education and environmental youth clubs. In addition I will outline some of the educational contexts and important role-players in Namibia that relate to environmental youth clubs, and furthermore highlight policy issues that could influence the activities of the clubs.

The environmental context

The Namibian Environmental Youth Clubs Network is a nationwide programme which involves clubs from most regions in Namibia. Since the clubs exist within the constraints and opportunities of the Namibian environment, it is necessary to give an overview of the complex biophysical, socio-political, economic and historical factors that shape this environment.

The topic is well covered in the existing literature and it is not my intention to duplicate these comprehensive descriptions, but rather to highlight aspects that are relevant to the activities of environmental youth clubs in the context of this study. The following overview of the biophysical and social features of the context of environmental youth clubs is (unless otherwise stated) based on the Enviroteach series produced by Derick du Toit and Teresa Sguazzin (1995 a, b, c, d). This source was deemed adequate as it gives a well-researched and broad overview of issues, with sufficient depth for this study.

Namibia is a country of physical and cultural contrasts and encompasses sparsely populated desert regions, densely populated flood plains, subsistence rural farms and an increasing number of metropolitan centres. Large parts of Namibia are very arid and the availability of water is often the main limiting factor with respect to sustaining life and the socio-economic well-being and development of the Namibian people. Apart from the five perennial rivers which form the northern and southern boundaries of the country, Namibia's water resources are replenished by unreliable and irregular rainfall. Due to the arid conditions the soil has low fertility and indigenous vegetation is often slow-growing and sparse. The different geographical features offer unique challenges to the environmental club members in different regions. Some of the clubs in the Kavango and parts of the Caprivi are, for example, situated close to the perennial rivers (See Appendix A) and these club members often do not share the concern for water saving of many of the club members in more arid regions.

Since an estimated two-thirds of the population of 1,6 million live in rural areas, the majority of Namibians are directly dependent on the land for their livelihood, often through subsistence farming (Ashley 1997: 179). The majority of environmental clubs in Namibia are also situated in rural/communal areas. The four main sectors of the Namibian economy, namely mining, agriculture, fisheries and the fast-growing tourism industry, are almost

entirely based on natural resources (Brown 1997: 15). Namibia currently has a high unemployment rate, which not only makes the maintenance and growth of the national economy essential but also suggests that concern about the use of natural resources is closely linked to the future of the Namibian youth (Ashley 1997: 182).

Natural resources are not only limited but are also unequally distributed due to cultural, historical, political, geographical and economic factors. Competition and conflict between the eleven different ethnic groups over scarce natural resources has always been part of Namibian history. Colonialism and discriminatory policies contributed to unequal land ownership and almost half of the productive land is owned as commercial farms by a small percentage of the population. These unequal practices are often continued as more politically powerful people in communal areas fence off areas for personal use and contribute to the decrease in natural resources available to the majority of the population (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995a: 193). Conservation of and access to natural resources are thus closely linked to issues of land ownership and the history of political exclusion in Namibia (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995a: 24, 30, 84). Could the fact that conservation is undeniably linked to political issues (that involve processes and development programmes from which youths are often excluded) be one of the reasons why the extent to which environmental club members can contribute to the improvement of the environment is questioned? (These issues are discussed in chapter 6.)

Despite the vastness of the country, the population is unequally distributed. The majority of the population is concentrated in the north and east of the country and here health problems such as infectious diseases (including tuberculosis, malaria and cholera) and problems related to poverty, like malnutrition, are widespread (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995c: 190 -203). Aids is a serious and increasing health problem in Namibia. Problems such as litter and the lack of waste management and clean drinking water are evident in most of the overpopulated regions and especially in areas surrounding growing urban centres (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995a: 136). These environmental pressures are further exacerbated by the annual population increase of approximately 3% (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995a: 24). The role that environmental youth clubs can and should play in environmental education is in my view substantial given that children under 15 constitute 40% of the Namibian population (Ashley 1997: 179, 182).

Many cultural practices and traditional lifestyles are closely linked and dependent on limited natural resources. This not only contributes to pressure on natural resources but may result in enforced changes in lifestyle when these resources are no longer available (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995b: 12-28, 75). Namibia is characterised by cultural and ethnic diversity and is subject to a number of social changes, including trends towards modernisation and the introduction of 'western/foreign' cultures (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995b: 111). The values and needs of the Namibian youth are increasingly motivated by the quest for material wealth and acquisition of luxury items, and the lifestyles portrayed on television. In the context of unemployment and increasing consumer demands, there are pressures on the youth and developing businesses and industries to make decisions on the basis of immediate monetary gain rather than long-term sustainability (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995a: 211).

Increasing urbanisation, influenced by job opportunities, the shortage of basic services in the rural areas and consumer cultures, contribute to the lack of adequate housing and infrastructure, widespread poverty and a significant increase in crime. The development of townships around main economic centres has a direct influence on the surrounding environment and the social lives of people (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995a: 88-93). The

urbanisation of the population has implications for not only the urban-based environmental clubs but also for those club members in rural areas who have high expectations of better futures in the urban areas. Youths who flock to urban centres may become socially disembedded, isolated from traditional cultural and family practices and exposed to diverse factors that contribute to the shaping of social values and needs. Although exposure to different circumstances and social values may also be a constructive learning opportunity, unemployment and poverty can significantly contribute to the isolation, frustration and limited opportunities that many young Namibians are exposed to.

Environmental degradation has serious implications for the social and economic well-being of people in a country where most people are dependent on limited and unequally distributed natural resources. Environmental educators in Namibia are confronted with a wide range of complex issues, including environmental degradation, diverse cultural beliefs and practices and changing lifestyles. It is therefore not surprising that environmental problems and challenges identified by the Namibian youth during the study included: littering, deforestation, desertification, drug and alcohol abuse, overgrazing, exploitation of resources, poverty, endangered species, population growth, political conflict, water wasting, health issues like Aids, and unemployment.

The educational context

The formal education context

The role of the MBEC

The formal education context is relevant to the study since all of the environmental clubs (with the exception of five unemployed youth groups) are currently linked to schools and the majority are coordinated by school teachers. Before independence in 1990 and while Namibia was administered by South Africa (RSA), most Namibian schools, apart from a few private schools, followed the standard syllabus and examination structure of the Cape Province (in RSA) (Olivier 1994: 1-2). The education system was thus driven by the expectations and ideas of these foreign administrators with very little participation from Namibian educators or learners. This syllabus was irrelevant and inappropriate to the Namibian context. I can still recall, for example, the hours I spent teaching all the details of the Pine tree in northern Namibia ten years ago with not a single example of this tree in sight. As teacher I could have substituted another coniferous tree as an example, but the external examinations were not flexible and learners would be evaluated on their knowledge of the Pine tree.

The implications for the former education system were numerous. Since school syllabi were divorced from actual context and relevance to daily life, education was equated with formal schooling and geared towards passing examinations. Local teachers had no control over or input into the subject content or evaluation process, and since their local knowledge and life experiences had little bearing on what was taught, they essentially lectured from their textbooks. Education was focused on the acquisition or memorisation of factual knowledge required to be promoted to the next level in order to receive a certificate at the end of schooling (MBEC 1993: 1-11).

The education system was not only inappropriate in the Namibian context but was also influenced by the racial segregation policies imposed by South Africa (MBEC 1993: 5). There was unequal distribution of qualified teachers, resources and facilities, and just after independence, it was estimated that 65% of Namibians were illiterate, while \pm 80% of teachers were underqualified (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting 1991: 18). Low literacy rates have significant implications for education since literate parents are (according to the MBEC) more likely to support formal education and play an active role in supporting their children at school. Parental support for education is especially important in some Namibian cultural contexts where children are expected to perform significant household tasks (MBEC 1993: 97).

Following independence in 1990, the new Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) initiated an important process of reform, in order to address some of the issues mentioned above. This reform process was guided by a policy document titled *Towards Education for All – A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* and aimed to achieve the major goals of access, equity, quality and democracy (MBEC 1993: 1). The new education policy is committed to making education learner-centred, relevant and practice-oriented, and to designing assessment strategies that emphasise positive achievement and life-long learning (MBEC 1993: 31-44).

Another aspect of the reform process relevant to the study is the commitment of the MBEC to integrating 'environment' as a learning area into the formal curriculum. This reform initiative was interpreted (and implemented) as the inclusion of environmental issues into the formal curriculum through 'carrier-subjects'. These subjects, which are regarded as "environmental in nature", include Natural Science and Health Education, Life Science and Natural Economy, and they "form the foundations for environmental education" in different grades (Tyldesley 1997: 42). In many instances teachers of these subjects are more familiar with some of the environmental concepts than are teachers of other subjects, and they are often involved in clubs as club leaders and coordinators.

Numerous media discussions on education (and the appointment of a presidential commission to address education issues) indicate that, despite the rhetoric of reform, much of the current education system is still oriented towards examinations. The implementation of education reform is hampered by big classes that often involve learners of all ages and teachers who are underqualified and overworked. In my experience, the effectiveness of environmental clubs at schools is often constrained by the rigidly structured education system, as well as by the syllabus-bound (textbook-based) approach to teaching and practical constraints which allow little time for discovery and critical reflection (Olivier 1994: 13). Despite the fact that only 2% of the population was raised with English as a home language, the official language and only medium of instruction from senior primary onwards is English (refer to discussion on policy in this chapter). There is also an expectation that all school-related activities, like environmental clubs, should be conducted in English, which could further complicate the existing communication problems.

Environmental education initiatives of the MET and MYS

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) has been one of the key players in environmental education and is indeed often perceived as being the sole guardian of the environment. According to representatives of the previous Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (MWCT) at the Okaukuejo workshop in 1992, environmental education has been taking place on a very small scale in Namibia over a number of years

through initiatives of the Ministry (Tyldesley 1992: 5). There was, however, a growing realisation at the time of the cited workshop that alternative strategies for environmental education were needed to reach the youth of Namibia.

After independence, conservation strategies were changed to counteract the negative and antagonistic orientation of earlier law-enforcement approaches to conservation among many communities (Olivier 1994: 6). The aim became to involve them in participatory and integrated management systems with shared responsibility for the sustainable utilisation of natural resource management (Tyldesley 1997: 45). Strategies included the establishment and support of environmental education centres in two national parks and community-based conservancy programmes. Environmental education was seen as an integral part of the Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme and "an important component of this strategy, as it will provide access to information, management, problem-solving skills, etc." (Tyldesley 1992: 5-6). Support to environmental clubs is also included in the job descriptions of the extension officers of the MET.

Initially (at the time of first workshop in Okaukuejo) there was little involvement from other ministries, like the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS). In the case of the MYS, the involvement in environmental education has increased significantly and the Ministry employs youth officers who are now actively involved in running environmental clubs for unemployed youth groups and other activities like World Environment Day celebrations.

The non-formal education context

Environmental education and environmental clubs in Namibia encompass both formal and non-formal education. Environmental education initiatives in the non-formal sector have generally been initiated and supported by individuals, NGOs and large businesses, but have operated in a fairly isolated and fragmented fashion.

Joint projects between formal and non-formal sectors

With the increase in foreign interest in and funding for development projects following independence, many of these non-formal educational initiatives and projects expanded and played a major role in environmental education in the country (Tyldesley 1997: 46-47). The US Peace Corps and Voluntary Service Overseas (British) volunteers are very active in Namibia and often send volunteer teachers to schools for periods of one to two years. Part of the volunteers' brief is to get involved in community activities, and some have been involved as environmental club leaders. I will consider some of the implications of their involvement in chapter 7.

Government departments, NGOs and international donors often form partnerships to implement specific programmes related to environmental education, as in the case of programmes like the Rössing Foundation Environmental Education Project, Life Science and Enviroteach (see below).

Other than the RF Environmental Education Project, the Life Science programme has probably been the most influential in supporting environmental clubs, in that it covered a wide range of environmental issues and had a substantial extension programme involving volunteers working in partnership with Namibian teachers. The

extension programme also included many national and regional workshops. Most of the environmental club leaders in Namibia are Life Science teachers. The Life Science Project supported the MBEC and the Namibian Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in developing the curriculum for the subjects Life Science, and more recently, Natural Science and Health Education. The project, which ended in 1998, was funded by Ibis (WUS Denmark) and focused on the development and distribution of textbooks and other resources, in-service and pre-service training and capacity-building (Sguazzin 1998: 6).

Although the Enviroteach programme has not been directly involved with environmental clubs, its focus on cross-curricular implementation of environmental education on a national level in teacher training colleges and development of relevant Namibian material resources could provide valuable support to environmental clubs in the future. The Enviroteach programme is a partnership between the MBEC, the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) (NEEN 1998: 12). The Natural Economy curriculum, another 'carrier-subject' that involves some teachers as club leaders, was developed under the auspices of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) in conjunction with MBEC (Tyldesley 1997: 42).

Large businesses, especially mining and petroleum companies, support non-formal environmental education and, indirectly, environmental clubs, through funding for human and material resource development, and the establishment and support of environmental education centres and environmental competitions (Olivier 1994: 9; Tyldesley 1997: 46-47). The MBEC has organised the Conservo environmental competition for all schools in Namibia since 1988 with sponsorship from Namibian Beverages. The main aim of the competition is to create awareness amongst the Namibian youth of environmental problems in their immediate vicinity, and to encourage them to investigate the problems and search for solutions. For many environmental youth clubs, the Conservo competition serves as the focus of their activities and also provides opportunities through which schools that are interested in environmental activities can be identified.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Except for the non-governmental organisations mentioned above, several other NGOs have also been actively involved with environmental education. These include the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), the AfriCat Foundation and the Save the Rhino Trust (SRT). These organisations have all in their own ways been involved in and supported the activities of environmental youth clubs in Namibia. Both CCF and SRT visit schools and clubs, while some, like the AfriCat Foundation and CCF, also have educational centres which school groups can visit. The Namibian Animal Rehabilitation, Research and Education Centre (NARREC) provides cross-curricular programmes and worksheets for school groups and clubs, while the Northern Namibian Forestry Committee (NNFC) serves as a co-ordinating body which attempts to stop deforestation and cooperate with the Forest and Tree Awareness Project to promote tree planting and environmental awareness in the north-western region. These organisations have supported the environmental clubs through their work with schools and have contributed competitions, articles for club newsletters, resource materials and advice to teachers (NEEN 1998: 5, 9, 20, 35, 52, 61).

The Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN)

One of the ways to promote the long-term sustainability of environmental clubs that is currently being investigated is to link them to the Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN). Although there were several projects and initiatives aimed at encouraging and strengthening environmental education in Namibia, there was a perceived need to develop and implement a national policy on environmental education, as well as to facilitate support and networking between the different role-players, which led to the discussions about an environmental education association for Namibia.

NEEN was officially constituted in 1995. The activities of NEEN included the development of an environmental education policy, biannual conferences and the development of a directory of key role-players in environmental education in Namibia. The establishment of NEEN in itself did not solve all the co-ordinating problems between different organisations and ministries, but is seen by many stakeholders as a major achievement for environmental education in Namibia. Since the Rössing Foundation Environmental Education Project played an important role in the establishment and support of NEEN, this network has also been affected by the closure of the project, and is currently investigating new directions including, as previously mentioned, the incorporation of environmental clubs.

Policy framework for environmental youth clubs in Namibia

Since the environmental clubs programme is guided and influenced by the broader policy framework, it is important to give a brief overview of some of the policies that might have an impact on the environmental clubs. The MET, MBEC and NEEN are important role-players in environmental education in Namibia, and particularly so for the environmental clubs. Their policies have common features, for example the focus on sustainable development with an emphasis on people's responsibility for the management of natural resources and the creation of environmental awareness.

The national framework for environmental education begins with Namibia's Constitution, which recognises the country's reliance on scarce natural resources and the importance of maintaining the environment. Article 95 states:

The State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting, inter alia, policies aimed at ... maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biodiversity of Namibia, and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future ... (Constitution: 52).

The draft Environmental Education Policy of Namibia was developed through participation by members of NEEN, and frames the aims, principles and approaches to environmental education in Namibia. As an overall goal the policy states:

Namibia will actively encourage, support and implement programmes of environmental education as a means of achieving and fulfilling article 95 of the Constitution. Environmental education programmes should empower Namibians, from all sectors, to critically evaluate environmental information and options, to make informed decisions, and to take actions that will contribute to the goal of environmental and economic sustainability. (NEEN 1999: 1)

The national goal of environmental and economic sustainability was essentially captured in the Green Plan, the official policy document of the MET. In Namibia's Green Plan, education is regarded as the "key to ensuring that the country's citizens follow the path of environmental responsibility and sustainable development" (Brown 1993: 100). Here education is seen as "an important vehicle ... a strong instrument of both conservation and change in social thinking and the most organised means for transmission of these social norms and ethics" (Brown 1993: 100). The inherent tension in education to transmit existing norms and effect change is highlighted in this statement and will be further discussed in chapter 7. Although a whole chapter is devoted to education and decision-making in the Green Plan, there is also "recognition that environmental education has not been an area of high priority within the Ministry of Environment and Tourism" (Sguazzin 1998: 4).

Another policy aspect that could have implications for environmental education and clubs is the higher priority accorded CBNRM in the proposed updated version of the Green Plan. This greater emphasis on CBNRM policy can influence the focus areas of other organisations that are closely related to the MET and the orientation of funders. Environmental education can become less of a focus area, especially if environmental education and CBNRM are regarded as two distinct and separate fields. In my view there is a need to discuss the relationship between CBNRM and environmental education on a national level.

The original intention was to attach the Environmental Education Policy to the Namibian Green Plan (Sguazzin 1998: 4). Since many environmental education programmes take place in partnership with the MBEC, recent discussions indicate that this policy might rather be ratified through the new Education Act (currently being drafted). The MBEC is, as mentioned earlier, guided by a policy document, *Towards Education for All*, which recognises the importance of the relationship between education and the environment and specifically aims at the development of environmental awareness (MBEC 1993: 58). Environmental awareness, according to the education policy, involves an holistic understanding of the dynamic interdependence of all living things, a sense of responsibility to restore and maintain ecological balances through sustainable management of natural resources, and the promotion of practical activities to preserve and sustain the natural environment.

The MBEC issued language policy guidelines which give broad directives for choosing the medium of instruction (language). As mentioned earlier, the MBEC policy confirms that, since English is not the lingua franca of Namibia, the teaching of English is a high priority and that it will be phased in as medium of instruction (MBEC 1993: 63).

The Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS) has also indicated the need to review its role and function and to draw up policies and strategies in line with other Namibian policies, leading to its more active role in environmental education. The creation of environmental awareness about the youth's responsibility regarding sustainable utilisation of natural resources has been identified as a priority area for action in the National Youth Policy of Namibia (Pretorius, MYS, correspondence April 1998). The National Youth Council has recently organised two workshops (to which I was invited as a facilitator) for the establishment of environmental youth clubs. These indicated a growing concern about environmental degradation in the country and an important development in the environmental club movement to include unemployed youth groups.

History of environmental youth clubs in Namibia

Starting in 1992, staff at the environmental education centre at Wêreldsend (with sponsorship from NORAD) set up Earthcare clubs as an extracurricular activity for learners in twelve primary schools in the area surrounding the centre. The centre is linked to Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), the NGO that initiated the CBNRM programme in Namibia.

According to Tim and Rosie Holmes at Wêreldsend, their initial programme focused on:

... exposing teachers to environmental issues and creating awareness, but although teachers benefited from the course, they did not implement any of the ideas in schools. Contributions from the teachers indicated that the establishment of clubs for children as an extra-curricular activity might be effective, as it would also provide a source of recreation for these children after school (Tyldesley 1992: 7).

The aims of the Earthcare clubs were (Du Toit & Sguazzin 1995d: 112):

- ▶ to make all people aware of the environment, starting with the Earthcare club members;
- ▶ to promote respect, care and conservation of our environment so as to ensure a healthy life;
- ▶ to help change personal attitudes and practices where applicable;
- ▶ to teach pupils to think critically and creatively in order to use knowledge practically; and
- ▶ to share and promote environmental activities both nationally and internationally.

The Earthcare club programme ran for almost four years and included several workshops, jamborees, newsletters and educational visits before the funding ended and the Holmes couple moved back to England. (I will expand on the implication of some of the Earthcare activities in chapters 5 and 6). When I started with the RF Environmental Education Project there were, aside from the Earthcare clubs, eight other established clubs in Namibia. These clubs had been established through the efforts of individual teachers at schools and operated independently from each other and largely without the support of other organisations. According to a representative of the MET, most of these clubs had been established in schools which had easy access to transport and environmental education facilities like centres because they could afford it (Sibandja 1996: 62). The Earthcare clubs, on the other hand, were established in resource-poor environments. Most of the Earthcare clubs and some of the independent clubs are now listed with the Environmental Club Network of the RF Environmental Education Project, but the 'independent' clubs have remained fairly isolated.

As mentioned before I was employed by this project to support these clubs as well as to establish new environmental clubs. The Club Support Service, also sometimes referred to as the Namibian Environmental Club Network, was established informally to support the existing environmental clubs. The RF Environmental Education Project, through the Club Support Service, assisted with the establishment of networks of clubs and with training workshops aimed at assisting teachers to start and maintain environmental club activities (monthly RF Environmental Education Project reports).

I developed the activities of the Environmental Club Support Service in consultation with existing club leaders and our project manager over a period of time. This task included:

- ▶ developing and distributing appropriate materials and ideas to stimulate learning, discovery and critical thinking on environmental issues, and the search for solutions;

- ▶ developing the knowledge and skills required by teachers to be club leaders;
- ▶ giving financial and technical support to clubs where possible;
- ▶ promoting a regional and national club identity; and
- ▶ ensuring the formation of a national environmental club network.

I developed the goals of the Environmental Club Support Service in cooperation with colleagues from the RF Environmental Education Project, which broadly aimed at:

- ▶ promoting an understanding of the total environment and the interdependence of environmental factors;
- ▶ creating awareness of our impact on the environment;
- ▶ fostering attitudes and values that reinforce environmental responsibility and sustainable living;
- ▶ sharing and developing skills for identifying environmental problems and solutions;
- ▶ evaluating the quality of life in a critical manner; and
- ▶ actively encouraging participation of all sectors of the community.

These goals were never explicitly stated to the environmental clubs but formed the framework for the activities of the environmental clubs programme (monthly RF Environmental Education Project reports).

Implications of the context for Namibian environmental clubs

Environmental clubs in Namibia are influenced by the environmental and educational context and the policy framework sketched above. The environmental context is largely determined by reliance on scarce natural resources that are unequally distributed, and this is reflected in the culture and socio-economic patterns of the Namibian people. The environmental issues and challenges confronting the Namibian youth and environmental clubs are characterised by the complexity of interrelationships of different dimensions of the Namibian environment. In my view it is significant for the role of environmental clubs that the youth constitute such a large percentage of the population and that the national economy (and possibilities for growth to curb high unemployment) relies on a base of scarce and unequally distributed natural resources.

In addition, the youth increasingly have to deal with the pressures of cultural beliefs and modern demands that characterise Namibia as a developing country (also see discussion on current trends in chapter 2). In my view, a diversity of responses is needed to deal with the diversity of challenges because of ethnic differences, unique geographical and environmental challenges and the complexity of environmental problems.

In my work with environmental education in Namibia, I have encountered fairly general perceptions that environmental education is often perceived negatively in terms of 'exclusion', due to earlier conservation strategies. The aims of environmental education programmes often did not explicitly refer to the needs of people, such as their own health and quality of life, and could have strengthened perceptions that conservation of the natural environment and wildlife are the central concerns of environmental education. Earlier strategies of the MET and some other projects supported the perception that environmental education is no more than a strategy to get the message of conservation agencies across and as such focuses on the best skills and techniques to achieve these goals, much like a salesman finding the right approach to sell a product (Tyldesley 1992: 11, 20). Such a narrow understanding of environmental education has been documented in other parts of southern

Africa by O' Donoghue (1993: 29). According to him the key features of these orientations have been "fostering awareness by communicating information (hard facts) about environmental issues and providing experiential learning experiences in the environment".

The educational context involves formal and non-formal organisations and is largely influenced by the former education system, segregation policies and the fragmented efforts of different organisations. Several ministries and organisations have played an active role in promoting environmental education and support of the environmental clubs, amongst which partnerships were some of the most notable efforts. Despite the diversity of activities, many government departments and industries pay only lip-service to the importance of environmental education. Even though environmental education is mentioned as a strategy in policies, many government officials do not regard it as a priority and consequently do not take appropriate steps to integrate it into their activities. NEEN was established in response to the fragmented efforts of different role-players as well as the lack of recognition for environmental education in Namibia. The draft national Environmental Education Policy, which provides a national framework for environmental education describes environmental education as:

... the process of developing an environmentally literate citizenry which is aware of and concerned about the total environment and is empowered through knowledge, attitudes, skills and shared decision-making to individually and collectively achieve an improved quality of life through the sustainable utilisation and appropriate development of Namibia's resources (NEEN 1999).

The history of environmental education (and the clubs) in Namibia indicates a strong reliance on specific individuals, organisations and funding agencies in the development and growth of these movements. Many organisations support the environmental clubs through their activities but there is often a lack of vision regarding the role the clubs can play in environmental education. There is, however, hope that the official recognition of the Environmental Education Policy by the MBEC will aid not only environmental educators but also the activities of the environmental youth clubs in Namibia.

Chapter 2

Towards a socially critical framework for environmental education

Introduction

In chapter 1 I argued that environmental clubs are influenced by the environmental and educational context in Namibia, and the policies of the organisations that support them. The historical overview suggested a strong conservation focus and environmental education was often viewed as a strategy to convey specific conservation messages. Environmental education is, however, not only influenced by the Namibian context but also by the socio-economic and political policies of different countries, the support of different funding agencies and the different perspectives related to academic traditions.

In this chapter I will attempt to illustrate how perceptions of environmental education (and related activities) have changed globally and have been influenced by international developments over the last 25 years. This historical review informs an important foundation of the conceptual framework from which I have been researching the Namibian clubs. I will firstly consider some of the landmark events in the development of environmental education internationally and introduce some of the big organisations that have contributed to these developments. An exploration of recent developments and trends will indicate some of the present challenges facing environmental education in Namibia in general and clubs specifically. Finally, I will conclude with the implication of these developments and trends for environmental youth movements from a socially constructive orientation that frames my perspective of Namibia's environmental club movement and this study.

The international environmental education landscape

A global overview of environmental education can only be taken from one particular position: the perspective from which one views the landscape. Environmental education is, in my view, not a single subject but a wide range of educational processes with an environmental focus in which boundaries are often unclear, and which entails diverse activities and many different perceptions of the landscape.

Over the last 25 years there have been numerous conferences, workshops and discussions contemplating the nature of environmental education and its related activities, including environmental clubs. Large organisations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and other donor agencies have not only played an important role in environmental education through funding but have, due to their influence, philosophy and specific policy orientations, also shaped and defined the expectations and activities that can be viewed as environmental education. For this reason I will commence with my discussions by focusing on landmark events over the last 25 years.

Landmark events in environmental education from 1970 to the 1990s

1970s – Environmental protection

The late 1960s and early '70s were characterised by increasing public awareness of environmental problems, as well as by recognition of the need for environmental protection. An overview of these early conferences suggests that environmental education appeared on international agendas as a strategy to ensure environmental protection.

The emphasis of international conferences was to define environmental education (at the IUCN workshop in 1970) and to agree on actions to protect the environment (United Nations conference, Stockholm, 1972) (Janse van Rensburg 1997a). The actions agreed on at the Stockholm conference included the development of international environmental law and recommendations for an international environmental education programme to increase public awareness (Filho 1995: 81).

It was also during this time of increased public concern for environmental protection that the Wildlife Clubs movement started in Kenya, soon to be followed by several other African countries. Even though there was at this time greater awareness of the importance of environmental protection and environmental education, internationally there was a strong focus on the biophysical environment, and education was mostly viewed as a neutral and scientific response to protect the environment. This led to the strong conservation education roots of environmental education that was reflected during the review of the Pan African Generator document (Boulton & Eddershaw (eds) 1996), as well as in the orientation of many environmental clubs in Namibia (see discussions in chapter 4).

Two international conferences driven by UNESCO and UNEP in Belgrade 1975 and Tbilisi in 1977 attempted to frame the landscape of environmental education and to provide guidelines for the establishment of international and national policies on environmental education (Filho 1995). The outcomes of these two conferences were respectively the Belgrade Charter and the Tbilisi Declaration, which were both very influential documents in environmental education globally (Janse van Rensburg 1997a). The Belgrade Charter (UNESCO 1997) stipulated the broad goals and objectives of environmental education, relating them to knowledge, skills, awareness, attitude and participation, which are still widely used and are evident in the Namibian definition of environmental education (see chapter 1).

The Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO-UNEP 1978) provided a set of principles to guide environmental education activities and also specified comprehensive recommendations to direct the development of environmental education strategies at international, regional and local levels. The Tbilisi principles, which guide the framework of the Namibian Environmental Education Policy, suggested that environmental education should be holistic, a continuous life-long process and interdisciplinary, and should focus on complex and diverse learning experiences (NEEN 1999: 2-3).

1980s – Education and Economics

During the 1980s there was a growing understanding of the fact that that environmental protection cannot be achieved without socio-economic development. The World Conservation Strategy, published by IUCN, UNEP and the WWF, brought socio-economic development to the foreground and coined the idea of 'sustainable development' in an attempt to integrate the goals of environmental protection with economic development. In my view, these developments also assisted in broadening the perceptions of the environment beyond the biophysical to include social and economic dimensions.

The notion of sustainable development was given public acceptance with the publication of *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, which recognised the failure of governments to integrate development and the environment in economic policy and decision-making (Wynberg 1993: xiii). The Brundtland report, as the publication is often referred to, recognised the importance of linking conservation and development but was also criticised for equating development with the idea of economic growth (the linear view of development) and for regarding economic growth as a simplistic solution to global and local environmental problems (Albrecht 1992: 4).

The link between conservation and development was also recognised by W'Okot-Uma and Wereko-Brobby (1985: 142) who suggested that some of the challenges facing Africa are the integration of environment and development, developing alternative technologies that are socio-culturally acceptable, and the impregnation of a sense of social responsibility so as to build a framework that "promotes environmental consciousness within the development process". The extent to which the concept of sustainable development was adopted in Namibia is evident in the Environmental Education Policy, as well as in the policies of various ministries which are key role-players in environmental clubs (see chapter 1).

1990s – Education, politics and ethics

During the 1990s there was increasing awareness of the role of politics and ethics in environmental education. The IUCN, UNEP and WWF published the document *Caring for the Earth – A Strategy for Sustainable Living* in 1991. Their recommendations included recognition of the need to involve communities in participatory planning towards a broader goal of sustainable living. This new strategy was based on an ethic of care for nature and people and defined the principles of a sustainable society in terms of quality of life rather than economic development (IUCN/UNEP/WWF 1991: 3, 19).

The United Nations Conference on Development and Environment (UNCED) in 1992 gave prominence to the notion of education for sustainable living (Janse van Rensburg 1997a). A set of agreements was formulated, including the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, three international conventions, and several NGO treaties (Wynberg 1993: xiii -xiv).

The NGO Forum also reviewed the Tbilisi principles and developed a set of principles which regards education as a right and redefines the goal of environmental education in terms of social transformation (UNCED 1992). Through a socially critical perspective (see later in this chapter), the NGO principles introduced a political stance to the Tbilisi principles which appeared to be more neutral in orientation.

The Rio Declaration played an important role in linking environment and development, and the guidelines from Agenda 21 are still widely used for planning towards sustainable development both nationally and locally, including in recent initiatives by the Windhoek Municipality in Namibia to establish the Windhoek Local Agenda 21 Forum (NEEN 1998: 67). Another important dimension of the conference was that it stimulated several other national, regional and international conferences and workshops on environmental education during that year, including in Namibia where the first national workshop leading to the establishment of NEEN took place (see chapter 1).

The status and problems associated with environmental education were investigated during a workshop in 1993 (Filho 1995: 6) and a follow-up workshop in Bradford in 1995 which reviewed the developments in environmental education since the Belgrade Charter (UNESCO-UNEP 1978). My introduction to international environmental education commenced with an overview of the 'Reviewing Belgrade' conference (which Namibian delegates attended) during a NEEN planning workshop. This overview highlighted the new challenges of environmental education as 'marrying' environment and development, helping to achieve sustainable development, empowering individuals and groups to improve quality of life and increasing the focus on environmental literacy.

The international developments in environmental education influenced the orientation of environmental education locally. This is indicated by the strong conservation history of environmental education, as well as by the emphasis on sustainable development that is evident in the policies of key role-players in environmental education in Namibia. In the study I considered how historical developments such as the conservation origin of environmental clubs could also directly or indirectly influence the activities and orientation of environmental clubs. In the next section I highlight some of the current trends and developments that may influence environmental clubs now or in the future.

Recent developments and future challenges

Education for sustainability

One of the key themes of environmental education in the 1990s is the orientation towards sustainable development. The Thessaloniki Conference in 1997, organised by UNESCO, promoted the idea of reorienting education towards sustainable development as the overall goal by directing countries to the guidelines of Agenda 21. Teacher training is regarded as one of the focus points in an attempt to address the lack of training that constrains the development of "environmentally literate and responsible citizens" (Knapp 1998: 12-13).

The orientation towards sustainable development is also evident as the main focus of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The 1996 SADC policy and strategy for environment and sustainable development, *Towards Equity-Led Growth and Sustainable Development in Southern Africa*, identifies environmental education as "one of the strategies for environmental and sustainable development programmes and provides the basis of implementing Agenda 21 in the regional context" (Sguazzin 1998: 2-3). In an attempt to support environmental education in the SADC region, the regional programme focuses on four main areas: the development of infrastructure, regional networking, training activities and resource material development

with special emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems. From the earlier policy discussion (see chapter 1) and the priorities of, for example, the Green Plan of Namibia, it is evident that Namibia supports the orientation towards sustainable development. In the regional context it is important to consider if (and how) environmental clubs can contribute to the overall goal and main activities of the SADC regional programme.

Fien (1997: 1-17) supports the notion of education for sustainability to counteract the low profile of environmental education in current education systems. According to him, formal schooling systems reproduce patterns of unsustainable development due to their individualised examination-driven assessment systems, hierarchical and authoritarian structures, emphasis on objective scientific knowledge and the tendency to teach the superiority of economic processes and political systems of modernist societies (Fien 1997: 4). This view is supported by the overview of the educational context in Namibia (see chapter 1), as well as by W'Okot-Uma and Wereko-Brobby (1985: 138-139) who suggest that the formal education system in Africa became "discipline-based academic science" and a "perpetuation of an aristocracy of intellectualism" which focused on the "delivering of certification".

Fien (1997: 9) regards education for sustainability as a process of capacity-building for participation in civil society. The focus of teaching and learning in education is thus on the action competence needed for such participation. As with the concept of sustainable development, the idea of education for sustainability is interpreted and used in many ways and has also received widespread criticism (see Jickling 1992: 5-8). I agree with Sguazzin (1998: 2) that education for sustainability should not be taught as a new ideology or goal, but should rather be applied to critically evaluate current environmental education activities.

Education for sustainability could provide guidelines to assess whether environmental clubs are organised and planned in a sustainable manner. In my view, the long-term future of environmental clubs in Namibia depends on the extent to which learning activities are regarded as life-long processes that are oriented towards increasing the capacity and competence of the youth to participate in socially relevant actions. I will consider the notion of education for sustainability again in chapter 7.

Globalisation

Another key theme in current environmental education debates is the impact and influence of globalisation. This trend is evident not only in environmental education literature (see Gough 1997: 40) but also in the orientation of numerous workshops and broader public discourse in Namibia.

The changes associated with globalisation include the pressure of global market forces. These pressures not only shape the formal economy and world of work in Namibia but more importantly, for this study, the job opportunities available to, and skills required by, the Namibian youth. The demands of the modern economy include multi-skilled labour forces, workers that are profit-oriented and competitive, and nation states that are, according to Gough (1997: 43), able to position themselves in the global economy. Globalisation thus contributes to the need for education that can fulfil the demands of the modern economy (Youngman 1998). According to Sichilongo (1996a: 44) club movements, like other organisations, must "conform to the requirements of modern business dynamics of strategic planning to deliberately chart a way forward rather than remaining opportunistic", and should be "managed and co-ordinated by career-oriented professionals".

Although I do not necessarily agree with this deterministic orientation to the youth movement, it does illustrate the pressures to conform to the demands of the global economy.

Another trend associated with globalisation and relevant to the context of this study is the rapid development of information and communication technology that threatens to increase the already existing disparities in the Namibian population in terms of access to information and resources. According to Robottom (1987a: 291-292), the 'information age' creates the opportunity for the "privatisation of knowledge ... [as a] saleable, exploitable commodity and [therefore] conditions for some individuals and groups to gain relatively greater control over knowledge than others".

Namibian youth are confronted by an urgent need to access global information, but their ability to do so is at the same time also constrained by the diverse cultural heritage and historical developments of the Namibian context. Namibia, like the rest of Africa, offers unique challenges in terms of environmental education due to the need to integrate traditional cultural ways of living and local knowledge with the new opportunities presented by information technology and the demands of 'modern' life (Opoku-Mensah 1997: 15-20). The main focus of a conference on Environmental Learning in Kenya, mentioned earlier, was on finding ways of integrating the most useful and relevant aspects of different knowledge systems in an attempt to meet the challenges of everyday life. In my view, the need for integration of the 'old and new' is also the challenge that faces the diverse population of Namibia, especially the youth.

Democratisation and individual rights

A trend in modern society that is related to globalisation and has significant implications for environmental education in Africa is the increasing democratisation of society and the prominence of individual rights movements. Gough (1997: 40) suggests that globalisation involves "contradictory trends towards the integration and differentiation of economic and social processes". These economic and social processes are based on dominant social values. In modern societies the ideology of democratisation (with its related social values of individualisation, authority, independence and freedom) is elevated to a privileged position and has become the modern ideal (Cherryholmes 1998: 32).

The role of education systems of reproducing, perpetuating, sustaining or reinforcing existing social values has been discussed by many writers (Cherryholmes 1998: 33; Fien 1997: 6). According to W'Okot-Uma and Wereko-Brobby (1985: 137), the existing social values in Africa are 'replicas' of the lifestyle and economic imperatives of former colonial countries since education systems of the European powers were often transplanted without recognition of the existing social values of diverse African cultures.

Sichilongo (1996a: 45) suggests that the trends towards decentralising authority and the focus on individual rights should be reflected in the youth club movements. Club activities should therefore be related to the promotion of human and environmental rights, responsibilities and justice and civic education. Lobbying and advocacy against political domination, social injustice and environmental exploitation should also be (as in the example of environmental clubs in Zanzibar (Salim 1996: 93)) an integral part of club activities. There are, however, concerns amongst international educators (King de Jardón 1997: 46, 52) that these trends towards individualisation and democratisation can also be considered as a possible threat to the values and lifestyles of

various cultural groups, especially in a country like Namibia with substantial ethnic and cultural diversity (see chapter 1).

I agree with Robottom (1987a: 292) who says that one of the main aims of critical environmental education is to identify and evaluate (rather than reflect, as Sichilongo suggests above) the social and environmental values which shape our thoughts and actions. These are very important issues from the perspective of education for social change and the expectations regarding the role of environmental clubs, which I will discuss in chapter 6.

Standardisation and formalisation of environmental education

One of the current international debates in environmental education relates to whether activities and practices should be formalised and standardised (Wals 1997: 7). From the United States, in particular, there has been pressure to increase the effectiveness of environmental education activities through the development of a nationally accepted set of standards to guide practice.

Sichilongo (1996a: 44-45) suggests that African environmental clubs should be formalised and become more professional organisations. This debate is at the heart of attempts to increase the effectiveness and recognition of environmental education, but it has also drawn wide criticism from those environmental education practitioners who want to remain flexible and have programmes that are relevant and contextual (Robottom 1996; Wals 1994). According to Wals (1997: 11) the standards debate “reveals essential disagreements on the goals and objectives of environmental education and reflects different worldviews about the role of science and education in society”.

The modernist worldview, according to Joubert (1992: 102) is characterised by the belief that rationality could “restore order and renounce all uncertainties”. In his critical analysis of the social values prevalent in modern societies, Joubert (1992: 107-108) mentions concerns regarding stability, standardisation and uniformity that are proclaimed as ‘traditional’ values. A national set of standards for environmental education can thus, for example, appear to guarantee certainty of knowledge and uniformity of social expectations.

I support the position presented by Wals (1997: 15)-who is not against the idea of standards, but suggests that standards should focus on the quality of the learning process rather than on some kind of deterministic notion of learning outcomes or product. I will discuss the implications of these debates for environmental clubs in Namibia in chapter 6.

A socially critical framework for environmental clubs

In this section I will attempt to illustrate how, from a socially constructive orientation, some of the different trends in environmental education manifest themselves in the different educational orientations to environmental activities involving the youth. The following examples are a simplistic reduction of the landscape of environmental education. It is not my intention to indicate that all the people in the one country or academic tradition have the same views, but rather to highlight the implications of different views and trends for environmental education practice. I will firstly give an overview of my orientation to environmental clubs and

this study. I will then consider different orientations to environmental education and conclude with the implications of these orientations for environmental youth movements and environmental clubs in Namibia.

My own approach to working with environmental clubs, and to this study has been strongly influenced by a socially critical approach to environmental education which has been described internationally (Wals 1992; Robottom 1987b) and in the southern African context (Janse van Rensburg 1995; Lotz 1996). The socially critical orientation to environmental education is informed by social constructivism (Shotter 1993) as well as by critical theories (Popkewitz 1995). While I will not provide a thorough analysis of these orientations, those key features which, from my perspective, have particular relevance for environmental education involving the Namibian youth will be outlined below.

View of knowledge: The socially constructive nature of knowledge is comprehensively described by Robottom. From socially constructive perspectives knowledge is constructed through social interaction in the context of place-space-time and shaped by our socio-cultural and historical situation (Robottom 1996). These orientations focus on the interconnections and interrelationships of our world. In addition, social constructivist theories extend the scope of environmental education beyond the exclusive concern with the transfer of environmental 'facts' to include people's intersubjective understanding and interpretation of knowledge and information.

Contextuality: Because knowledge is constructed in the context of our everyday lives, these orientations promote learning processes that are relevant and meaningful and give recognition to other sources of knowledge as well as to the empirical sciences. The recognition of indigenous knowledge, for example, could enrich current environmental education programmes and complement the strong subject-based orientation of the empirical sciences which characterises our current education system (Masuku 1999).

Critical stance: Education is not politically neutral. Critical orientations (see Giroux 1995) raises awareness about the power relations involved in the construction of knowledge and those who have greater influence over these processes. Learning therefore needs to be part of a process of critical reflection on the influences that shape our understanding, as well as of the power relationships that are inherent in social interactions and all relationships (Robottom 1987a: 292). A critical outlook could allow people to recognise competing ideologies and increase awareness of how educational systems sustain and perpetuate certain social values. This orientation broadens environmental education to include issues of conservation, development and social justice.

Education for change: These orientations recognise change as an inherent part of all aspects of everyday life. Learning can be regarded as continuous processes of personal, social and professional development. Education is often regarded as a means of transmitting existing social values (see MET policy in chapter 1) and, in some instances, maintaining the status quo. Socially critically education, however, recognises the need to challenge existing social values, practices and aims to contribute to social and environmental change. Environmental education can, according to Wals (1997: 17) be viewed as processes of *educational change* which could contribute to environmental change.

Critical and collaborative action: The aim of learning activities is to enable learners to collaborate and participate more fully in planning, implementing and evaluating educational activities. A socially critical orientation to learning aims to develop the capacity and competence of learners to contribute to socially significant tasks which could enable complexity of understanding and contribute to the transformation of the world (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993).

Integrating theory and practice

Conservation education: Education about the environment

The overview of the landscape of environmental education indicates that one of the oldest (and most persistent) roots of environmental education can be traced to the need to protect the environment, hence the historical view of its being conservation education (see chapter 1 and the earlier discussion in this chapter).

Conservation education is often strongly influenced by behaviourist traditions which, according to Wals (1997: 10), view education as an instrument that can modify behaviour in a predetermined manner. The underlying assumption is that increasing knowledge will inevitably lead people to behave in an environmentally responsible manner. Such an orientation is illustrated by the Hines model of Responsible Environmental Behaviour and behaviour flow charts (Hungerford & Volk 1990: 46-48).

Conservation education often manifests itself (e.g. in many African clubs) as education about the natural environment and ecological processes and focuses on 'awareness campaigns' that will increase knowledge about the need to conserve the natural environment. This orientation to environmental education was dominant in the former MET in Namibia and is still prevalent in some of the activities related to environmental education (to be discussed in chapter 4).

One criticism of this orientation is that the strong focus on the distribution of information about the biophysical environment excludes people conceptually and often also physically (as is evident in the fenced-off parks), and that it reduces the goals of environmental education to an understanding of the impact of people on natural systems. According to Fien (1993: 15), education *about* the environment emphasises "knowledge about natural systems and processes", and even though there is recognition of influencing factors other than biophysical ones, the "integration of natural and social systems is often neglected in programmes".

Experiential learning: Education in the environment

Another 'variant' of conservation education shares the focus on conservation of the biophysical environment and the individual learner but emphasises the experiential nature of learning. According to this view of environmental education, which is influenced by hermeneutic philosophies and interpretivism, knowledge is constructed *within individual* learners, and therefore focuses on changing the 'hearts and minds' of young people (O'Donoghue 1993: 29). Environmental education activities focus on nature experiences and strategies to allow children to 'connect with nature'. Experiential education is frequently the philosophy that underpins programmes like Earth Education, Project Wild, Veld School, and various wilderness and conservation trails in Namibia.

Education *through* or *in* the environment is often associated with experiential learning and “uses the student’s experience in the environment as a medium for education” (Fien 1993: 15). The aim is often to foster concern for the environment. There is an underlying assumption that an appreciation of the environment will develop through direct contact with it. O’Donoghue (1993: 29-31) questions the strong focus on the individual learner and whether solitary activities will help learners to develop a greater understanding of differing values or improve the skills they need to take environmentally responsible actions.

Critical education: Education for the environment

In some parts of Europe (e.g. the UK) and Australia there is a strong critical orientation to environmental education. Critical theories (Popkewitz 1995; Huckle 1994; Giroux 1995) see environmental problems as a result of unequal access to natural and economic resources, that are consistent with patterns of consumption in modern life. Critical theories move education outside the realm of the individual learner by focusing on the social structures, power dynamics and patterns of consumption of the modernist world. Learning, according to this cluster of theories, is essentially a process of becoming critically aware of how individuals and groups are shaped by dominant social, political and economic structures and influences of society, and aim to empower people to make structural changes.

Education activities, from this perspective, address some of the criticisms raised earlier by focusing on fostering a critical understanding of the complexity of socio-political interactions and the ‘real’ reasons for environmental problems, and are oriented towards social and economic change. According to Fien (1993: 16), education for the environment has an “overt agenda of values education and social change ... [and] aims to engage students in the exploration and resolution of environmental issues”. This orientation to environmental education is characterised by the development of a critical awareness and skills for participation, and the promotion of social change.

The orientation to environmental education, rooted in critical theories (Giroux 1995), makes a valuable contribution to emphasising the power relationships and values inherent in education, which I will expand on in chapter 6. However, from my perspective, a critical orientation to education is limited since it essentially finds the causes of and solutions to environmental problems located in the global economic and social systems and hence may lead people to regard themselves as powerless victims of the system. This, in my view, places the responsibility for change outside the individual and strengthens existing dichotomies between conservation and development. Despite these limitations, critical theories offer valuable perspectives on power relations, social systems and education for change that are, in my view, relevant in the context of environmental education in Namibia.

Why a socially critical framework for environmental clubs?

I see the socially critical orientation as an appropriate framework for my analysis of findings and my discussion of implications for various reasons.

In the first instance, a socially critical perspective encourages an analysis of trends and patterns within the context of historical and development influences. An overview of the Pan African Generator document, for

example, indicates that the majority of clubs in Africa started with a strong wildlife or conservation focus which reflects the international trends in environmental education (see earlier discussions). In some countries the exclusive focus of the clubs on wildlife preservation has changed over time to include effective management and the valuation of natural resources other than wildlife.

In South African youth clubs there were various shifts in emphasis over the years, which are reflected in changes in name and activities. The initial focus of the Wildlife Club organisers was on the production of simple handbooks for learners aiming, one might assume, at increasing knowledge about the environment. The reassessment of clubs in the 1990s resulted in the production of the Action Kit as a guide for starting and running clubs, but also in a broadening of the scope of club activities (Holland 1996: 83-84). Rather than conservation, the new goal of the clubs was to promote public participation in caring for the earth. The name of the club scheme changed in 1995 to Environment Club Scheme to reflect the broad range of activities beyond exclusively wildlife issues, and to invoke the environment in its totality.

The critical stance and influence of the specific context in which clubs function is a useful framework for identifying the influence of different organisations or stakeholders (with their value systems) in shaping the goals and activities of clubs. While reviewing the Pan African document it became clear that the goals and objectives of environmental clubs are to some extent influenced by the organisation which drives the movement. Most clubs in Africa are linked to the Ministry of Wildlife or wildlife departments, or are independent organisations with funding from conservation agencies (Boulton & Eddershaw 1996). However, in some cases, like Ethiopia, clubs are linked to the Ministry of Education. The influence of the associated organisation, is in my view, illustrated by the fact that the aims of the Ethiopian clubs are overtly related to educational goals, for example creating learning opportunities and curriculum development (Atkins & Tecklie 1996: 50). There is therefore a need to understand and critically evaluate the implications of links with specific organisations, as well as the philosophy and orientation to education of the organisation that may define their aims and expectations, which is possible from a socially critical orientation.

Since critical theories consider issues of power inherent in relationships they create the opportunity to develop a critical stance towards ourselves and the world, thus encouraging a view of learning as a process of self-reflection, clarification of values and critical reflection on how we interact and learn. This orientation is therefore useful to view the level of involvement and control in the education process of both learners and teachers involved in environmental clubs.

According to Robottom (1996: 54), socially critical orientations could provide the framework for:

... a form of environmental education occupying the margins of the school curriculum, being taught by teachers with real environmental commitment ... relating strongly by interest and concern within their own communities and drawing on the conceptual, financial and human resources from that community [that] is more in keeping with the ethos of the critical, community-based environmental education.

It is therefore from the perspective of socially critical theories that I became interested in investigating the extent to which environmental clubs in Namibia reflect a critical understanding of interrelationships and underlying values, learn through social interaction, develop a sense of power, demonstrate political and environmental literacy, take significant and collaborative actions and contribute to environmental and social change.

Chapter 3

Research methodology and reflections on findings and the research process

Introduction

Thus far I have explained that this study is aimed at a description of and critical reflection on the role of youth clubs in environmental education in Namibia and has been guided by a socially constructive orientation which focuses on the processes of making meaning. In this chapter I will give an overview of my orientation to the research process and present a description of and critical reflection on aspects of data generation and the analysis process. I will also consider some ethical issues that are relevant to the study.

Research orientation

The aim of my research was to describe and reflect critically on the role of environmental youth clubs in environmental education in Namibia. Since the goal of the study is directed at a better understanding of a complex and dynamic situation, I chose an interpretative research strategy. Interpretive research draws on roots in the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology that reject scientific realism and empiricism and “insist on careful description of the ordinary conscious experiences of everyday life” (Schwandt 1997: 114). There are two variants of interpretive research, one being hermeneutic, focusing on collective features of socio-political life and being especially concerned with language and communication, and the other being ethnomethodological, drawing on socially constructive theories and being oriented towards describing the experiences of everyday life as it is internalised in the subjective consciousness of individuals. Both of these former variants influenced my research. Phenomenological research is based on individual cases rather than interaction and also has the aim of describing the making of meaning by individuals. It can thus also be regarded as a variant of interpretative research (Schwandt 1997: 11, 115).

One of the limitations of the phenomenological approach to interpretative research strategy is the notion of ‘bracketing’, which essentially implies “setting aside one’s taken-for-granted orientation” and “suspending all ontological judgement about the nature of things and events” during the study, which in my view relates closely to the idea of being a neutral observer (Holstein & Gubrium 1994: 263). There are a few reasons why I find this specific idea problematic, one being related to my personal experience and the other being based on the nature of the process of enquiry. Due to my involvement in the environmental clubs network, I have worked closely with many of the research participants and actively participated in the establishment and support of these clubs. And even though I do not have any vested interest in the continuation of the clubs, it would be unrealistic to assume that I could ‘set aside’ or ‘suspend’ my own understanding, interpretation and experiences of the last three years. On the contrary, I made it quite explicit from the start that the research focus was based on my understanding and experiences during this time, and since I was deeply involved with supporting the activities of the club leaders I could not also assume that neither they nor I would be unaffected and ‘neutral’ to the fact that I was conducting the study.

The notion of 'bracketing' is also problematic in relation to my conceptual framework and view of the research process. My study has been guided by a socially constructive orientation which focuses on the processes of making meaning and the need for a self-reflective orientation. In this sense I was not only trying to form a better understanding of the clubs and their role through my interactions with interviewees, but was also reflecting critically on my involvement in the clubs and the research process. This socially critical orientation is related to the notion of praxis, which emphasises that the practice of research cannot be separated from the theory in which it is embedded, and views social enquiry as "a form of reflective action that itself transforms the theory that guides it" (Schwandt 1997: xviii-xix). As such it was never my intention to give a 'thick description' of the self-emerging data, which many interpretive studies claim to do, but rather to enter into a process of "social dialogue" and the "practice of actively debating and exchanging points of view" with the research participants (Schwandt 1994: 128-132).

Dialogue is one of the key features of participatory action research (PAR) (Reason 1994: 328). Although this study was not designed as a PAR project, some of the guiding principles of such an approach were present in my orientation to research. These principles include an understanding that people co-construct their 'reality' through their participation, experiences and actions. As such the lived experiences and views of research participants are respected and valued. My orientation to this study was therefore framed by the assumption that it is important to create a dialogue between academic knowledge and the experiential knowledge of those involved in the study.

Research methodology

Data generation

The data generation process involved the following strategies: semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation and relevant document analysis (Fontana & Frey 1994: 362-374). In addition I also conducted one focus-group discussion and a national workshop which formed part of the study, even though this was not initially planned. Due to the focus of the study on the role of environmental youth clubs, I included as research participants club leaders and members, and extension officers of different ministries involved in clubs. I used purposeful sampling (Schwandt 1997: 28) which was based on the environmental clubs listed with the Environmental Club Support Service, as well as on the level of involvement of the various stakeholders in environmental clubs over the last three years. My aim was to ascertain what role the clubs could be and were playing, and consequently I wanted to speak to those involved in active clubs. I realised during the study that it is very difficult to define an 'active' club since their activities and levels of involvement fluctuate and are influenced by many factors in their immediate contexts. I nevertheless deemed the periods for which clubs had existed and their long-term sustainability, despite the fluctuations, to be reliable indicators of their relative levels of 'activity'.

In most cases I tried to interview at least two participants from the same club and/or observed club activities in an attempt to allow for data triangulation and the verification of authenticity of the data. It was not always necessary to verify all the data collected during the interviews since I had already visited some of the clubs during the preceding year and knew the activities of the club as well as the participants. Due to time constraints

and for logistical reasons it was not possible to conduct interviews with all the clubs in the different regions. In some cases where I met with participants outside their school or community, I could not observe club activities. In those cases, where I could not interview more than one participant or visit a particular club, I also relied on letters, funding requests and photographs that I had collected over the last three years of working with them.

The funders did not have much information to add since the initial (1992) project document of the RF Environmental Education Project did not include environmental clubs. Consequently they did not have any historical view on the aims, objectives and intentions of environmental clubs. I reviewed the 1995 project grant proposal, which mentioned environmental clubs but still did not include any specific information regarding their objectives or activities. From informal discussions with the project manager (Horwitz, October 1998) it emerged that the decision to establish more clubs was generally taken by a few individuals based on the success of the Earthcare clubs in the Kunene region, and because such clubs could support the aims of the RF Environmental Education Project. There are no records of these discussions other than the recollections of those involved.

I conducted 18 interactive semi-structured interviews with club leaders, club members and other participants over a period of six months in five of the seven official education regions in Namibia (see Appendix A for a map). In addition I visited 27 other schools with listed clubs. In these cases the club leaders were either absent or other factors did not allow me to interview them. In some cases there was time for informal discussions with some of the participants, teachers who knew about the clubs or the principal. I recorded the outcomes of these discussions in my research journal. The educational regions that I visited during the research study were Windhoek, Khorixas, Ondangwa East, Ondangwa West and Rundu. The regions that I did not visit during the data-gathering interviews were Keetmanshoop and Katima Mulilo. These regions were excluded because in the case of the former, there was only one listed club and in the case of the latter, because time and financial constraints did not allow for a visit. I also made this decision in view of the fact that we were planning a National Club Leaders Workshop later in the year which would allow me to meet with club representatives from all over Namibia.

The interview schedule was initially structured around the categories listed in my research proposal and was based on the research focus. During the first interviews the schedule included a list of questions related to the various areas that I wanted to explore. The most difficult part of the research was to get going and I recorded the day I started with the interviews in my research journal as follows:

I started with my research today. Actually I know I started a long time ago during many informal discussion with the same people and when I framed the focus of the research, but something was different and I know it had to do with the fact that it was now somehow official. There is something strange and artificial about the interview situation with the tape recorder.

The immediate challenge at that stage was to get comfortable with the process that I regarded as a 'social dialogue' but that somehow felt so strange and contrived. Reflecting on those feelings now I realise that it had something to do with a basic orientation to research – as something objective and scientific that only experienced researchers do in a specific empirical way. After the initial anxiety and a few interviews later I realised that the interview schedule was too long and unstructured. I was reluctant to respond to and explore some of the issues/ideas that the interviewees were raising because I wanted to get through my long interview schedule. I also realised that I was trying to control the whole process and was not giving enough opportunity

for participants to raise what they regarded as important aspects. In the light of these reflections I reviewed, grouped and shortened the interview schedule (even though areas remained the same) and attempted to make it more flexible and responsive. I also added an open question that invited participants to talk about anything of concern to them. One of the interesting observations during the study was that some of the issues raised as a response to that question gave me deeper insights into crucial aspects for interviewees, and some of the most valuable data for exploration emerged in subsequent interviews. Another advantage of the shorter, more open-ended interviews was that it felt more like a natural conversation to me and as a result I was more responsive and listened better to what interviewees were saying rather than concentrating on what I wanted to ask next.

After the first round of interviews I listened to the tapes and reworked the interview schedule for the next round of visits. At this stage I focused on specific issues that were raised during the last interviews, as well as areas that I wanted to explore in more depth. While listening to the interviews I also realised that I was still talking too much. In an attempt to make sure that interviewees understood the questions, I often explained them from so many angles that I asked three questions at the same time or asked double-barrel questions which confused the interviewees. With this new awareness of my own style, increasing confidence and more specific focus areas, the interviews became more fluent and conversational and much more like the dialogue I had initially intended them to be. (Copies of all three interview schedules are included in Appendix B.) In a few instances I conducted unstructured interviews. This was mostly done to explore interesting dimensions from previous interviews in more depth or to clarify vague information, and in cases where I wanted to verify data with another member from the same club.

I also conducted one focus-group discussion with eight teachers in the Kunene region. Due to time constraints I could not visit the clubs individually at the schools and arranged to meet them all together. I was excited about this new development and thought it could be the ideal opportunity to discuss some of the rich data from the interviews in more depth. Unfortunately the discussion did not go the way it was intended as a result of a combination of many factors, some being as unrelated to the study as the terrible flu I had picked up during my long journey and the soccer World Cup. I also had problems making contact with all the club leaders in that area and had asked one teacher to contact them all and arrange the meeting. She could not get hold of the existing club leaders and invited a group of other teachers who were under the impression that I was going to tell them more about environmental clubs. During the meeting all the teachers first pretended to go along with the explanation that they were all new representatives for the clubs and had been involved in their activities, but it soon became apparent that they knew nothing about the existing clubs. It made no sense to follow the interview schedule and I quickly had to adapt the questions to make the best possible use of the opportunity that presented itself. We focused in the end on some of their perceptions of clubs and possible roles that they thought clubs could play in future. Although I felt at the time that the discussion did not go where I had intended it to, it was a valuable data-generating activity. I also realised the value of focus groups as a data-generation strategy for more in-depth discussions (Kitzinger 1994) and now think that it would be valuable to employ it as a strategy in future research projects.

In my view, workshops present the ideal opportunity for data-gathering if they are structured well and there is a good reporting structure. The National Club Leaders Workshop took place in August 1998 and involved 65 club representative from most regions in Namibia. The workshop was initially organised in response to requests from

club leaders to create an opportunity where they could meet club leaders from different regions and discuss future directions for environmental clubs in Namibia. I realised that the workshop presented an interesting opportunity to have more in-depth discussions about some of the issues that were, in my view, important to the study, including, for example, club leaders' and members' perceptions of the nature of environment and environmental clubs, as well as some of the problems, possibilities and future directions for environmental clubs in Namibia. My colleague and I also used cardboard boxes into which workshop participants could place suggested topics and problems for discussion. This was valuable in raising sensitive issues and elicited some success stories from those involved. The workshop was attended by learners, teachers, unemployed youths and extension officers, who had amongst them a range of perspectives and diverse orientations. The discussions were rich and reflective, with a critical orientation that reaffirmed the value of 'making meaning together'. My only frustration with the workshop was that I lost some of the valuable discussion that took place in the group-work sessions as a result of poor recording and time constraints.

Participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994: 248-261) was useful as a data-generation strategy but was not without its own problems. As mentioned earlier, it was often not possible to visit all the clubs at schools. There were also instances where I set up meetings with the club only to arrive and establish that there was another event taking place or that the participants had not kept the appointment. Unfortunately I did not succeed in arranging meetings with unemployed youth clubs, although I had the opportunity to meet with individual members and part of a group during a MET survey of central-northern communities. In those cases where I could participate in club activities it was useful to observe the type and structure of activities, the relationships between the club leaders and members and the teaching methods used. The visits also allowed me the opportunity to see the school and community environment and the physical activities the clubs were busy with, and to get a better grasp of the lack of resources and other problems they experience. Being with the clubs also allowed me to form a better understanding of the interest and support the clubs received from other teachers, and the principal and gave me the opportunity to talk to some of the learners.

I also enjoyed participating in some of the club activities, but there were some instances where my involvement with the clubs complicated rather than supported my research project. This derived from the fact that club leaders wanted me to take control of the activities rather than only participate or observe. In some cases this was manifested as an attitude of "you are the expert on clubs – show us how", while in others I was treated like a very special guest coming to deliver an important message for the whole school. Even though I thought that the purpose and intention of the visit was clear, I often got cast into the role of 'delivering a speech' or leading activities. I did not want to interfere with club activities, not because I regarded myself as a neutral observer but simply because I wanted to observe the sort of activities that clubs were involved in, as well as the interactions between the club leaders and members of the clubs.

Furthermore I often experienced a conflict of roles in that I wanted to support and assist the clubs, give them some 'public' recognition and promote the idea of an environmental club, but also wanted to do this in a specific way for research purposes. There was thus a conflict between my role as 'national club coordinator' and that of researcher that I needed to balance throughout my visits. In view of this dilemma I think it would have been better to have chosen fewer clubs that I could visit on a more regular basis so as to allow club members to get used to my presence.

Although there is very little literature available on clubs, especially Namibian clubs, the Pan African workshop report on clubs in Africa was an extremely useful document to analyse. Not only did it give different perspectives on environmental clubs based on years of experience of other club coordinators, but it also allowed me to compare specific details of the Namibian situation with other relevant examples from Africa. I also used club letters, motivations for funding requests, photographs and the newsletter to generate and verify data.

A research journal is essential (Denzin 1994: 357), and my thoughts and reflections collected during the research process were not only crucial in the drafting of the thesis but, more importantly, also guided my thinking, self-reflection and planning for the next stage of the process. Diaries and journals are often utilised in developing the kind of "self-reflective critical awareness-in-action" that research demands (Reason 1994: 325). I was therefore at a loss when my research journal was stolen during a burglary. Fortunately I have the habit of writing in rough and editing later, which allowed me to retrieve most of the lost information from my rough notes. The importance of the research journal is emphasised by one entry I made a few months later:

A big part of research is also learning to discipline yourself to keep writing and to keep reflecting on your own writings.

Data analysis and interpretation of findings

I regarded the process of data analysis and interpretation as an iterative procedure and therefore chose iterative research as a strategy, this entailing "a succession of question and answer cycles" (Huberman & Miles 1994: 433). I used different data-generation strategies for what I regarded as a 'round of visits' and spent time transcribing the interviews, organising and identifying themes and general categories and building these into the interview schedule for the next round of visits. As mentioned earlier, I also used data generated through interviews, focus groups and observation to stimulate discussions and clarify my understanding during the National Club Leaders Workshop.

The interactive process was a valuable procedure that allowed for continuous reflection on the research process, as well as identification of specific areas of interest and progressive focusing of the study. It also allowed me to organise, reduce and identify patterns in the bulk of data. The difficulty with the iterative strategy arose from visits to new clubs or club leaders, or in areas that I had not visited for a long time. In those circumstances the clubs often expected me to address some of the issues, problems or concerns that they had, which meant that they were not always prepared to enter into the depth of discussion that I envisaged. Consequently I could not always place myself in their situation quickly enough to 'get to the real issues'. This often meant that I had to spend a longer time with the club, but because of time constraints this was not always possible. The notion of social dialogue implies that one enters into a relationship with the research participant, but my experience during this research project is that it is very difficult to accomplish this in a national study, especially if one has different departure points for the discussions.

One of the most difficult aspects of the analysis and interpretation of the data was choosing categories or separating the data into themes. Not only is the nature of environmental issues complex, but the biophysical, social, cultural, economic and political aspects of the context in which the clubs operate are closely interlinked which made dividing them into separate and distinct 'chapters' a very difficult task. Another dimension of the complexity is related to the socially constructed nature of knowledge: even if we, as researchers, manage to

individually distinguish different aspects of the complex issues being studied, we still need to understand the diverse ways in which research participants make meaning of this complexity. This view of the nature of knowledge underlies the need for a research strategy that enables us to form a better understanding of the subjective interpretation of experiences, which is the aim of ethnomethodology. I experienced difficulty in conducting interviews that afforded me the opportunity to grapple with the subjective experiences of individuals. This was due to the nature and scope of the project in that I did not have enough time and opportunity to conduct the kind of in-depth interviewing required for ethnomethodological work. In retrospect I think I would now approach the project differently: I would still conduct semi-structured interviews with a range of participants in iterative cycles but would combine this with a few selected in-depth case studies.

The analysis of data generated during interviews, workshops and participant observations and from my journal and document analysis was an inherent part of the data-generation process. As mentioned earlier, these interpretations were necessary to develop the interview schedules for the next round of visits. All the data gathered were organised around the main categories that related to the main areas of interest that I identified in my research proposal. These categories included the activities of clubs, reasons for involvement, perceptions of the environment, perceptions of education and contextual factors. Within these categories I identified common themes. I used margin notes to code contrasts and comparisons and eventually clustered the themes in more specific groups.

During the interpretation of data I also highlighted emerging themes, for example 'involvement of Science teachers'. I often used my journal to reflect on more abstract patterns, for example issues related to power or relationships that could be linked to different categories. My interpretations of the data are presented in chapters 4-7, in which I introduce the data and discuss the implications of the findings.

In instances where I use quotations from interview transcriptions I have included these mostly without translation or correction of grammar to capture the authentic views of interviewees. These quotations may seem incoherent at times since English is not the first language of the majority of interviewees,³ but it is in my view useful to include them since they also indicate the difficulties associated with conducting research⁴ and clarifying perceptions in education.

Even though I was interested in patterns and trends in analysing and interpreting the data, I became increasingly concerned about the apparent lack of variation in response to some of the topics under discussion. For example, all the interviewees indicated that they want to go on educational tours and raise awareness in the community, and that they experience similar problems, and even though there were diverse reasons for involvement in the clubs, the observed activities of environmental clubs remained fairly similar. This concern about a seeming lack of variation was related to my intention to get an in-depth understanding of the diverse roles that environmental clubs could play in environmental education in Namibia. I do not know whether this was the result of the lack of depth of the study or my inexperience as a researcher. In my view the lack of variation in the responses of research participants could also be related to the fact that the Namibian clubs have only been in existence for the last six years (and many of those with which I have been actively involved only for about three years). However, the overview of the Pan African Generator document also indicated quite similar trends to the ones that I discuss in this thesis. Another dimension of the lack of variation could be related to educational history

(see chapter 1) and the reliance on club coordinators for information on clubs. This might to some degree explain the 'similarity' in views and activities.

Even though I analysed, interpreted and presented the data in terms of trends/patterns, my discussions and the reported quotations draw on all the data (pertaining to the focus of the research) generated during the study. The only workshop discussions and interview data that were omitted include the detailed descriptions of activities, or discussions which were more directly related to my work as coordinator.

I was interested in the 'why' (underlying assumptions) in this study and the role that environmental clubs could play in environmental education. Although I do include some of the contextual factors that might affect these roles, I did not include detailed discussions on, for example, how many trees were planted, which areas in town club members cleaned and who they asked for transport or other specific difficulties experienced by clubs (e.g. the plants they collected and pressed were destroyed by fire).

The research process

In my reflection on the research process itself I often had a sense of uncertainty about conducting research, inadequacy about my own abilities or the sense that the research was never actually complete. Entries from my research journal illustrate some of these aspects:

In marketing you are taught that there is one decisive moment where a deal can go either way and with this research project I sometimes felt a bit like that. During conversations and discussions I often got the feeling that you are getting close to something new and exciting and really important. You can even feel the tension and thrill in the air and then the next moment it is gone and you flutter around again. Sometimes you or the participants get tired, lose interest or get interrupted or simply close up. I am so agitated when I feel I lose the moment – a moment of new insight or clarification of thought. It is frustrating, disappointing and sometimes has left me with a feeling of inadequacy and a sense of 'I am not doing this right'. And every time I had to remind myself and find strength and patience in the thought that it isn't like marketing at all. It is a learning experience for me and those involved because social enquiry is a process and there is no one right way to do it.

In many ways the research process was to me like viewing a seemingly familiar field through a new pair of binoculars. You choose the field of view and that choice determines the depth of your vision. If you choose a broad field like the focus of this study, it does not allow for as much depth. The zoom allows you to go closer and further away and see the complexity either in more detail or with broader vision. And the clarity and sharpness of your perceptions are a result of the prism – the critical reflections of your own understanding of what you see, share and experience.

Ethical considerations

The specific orientation and conceptual framework of my study assume that research is essentially a process of social enquiry that carries with it a social and ethical responsibility towards the people who participate. This responsibility requires me to share my interpretation and understanding with the participants while allowing them the opportunity to respond to my interpretation. In designing the research project I therefore attempted to include this dimension in the project through different strategies, including semi-structured interviews, data triangulation and the viewing of the process as a social dialogue. But, as I mentioned earlier, this implies a relationship and inherent in this relationship are power dynamics that result from the research process itself, as

well as from my position as club coordinator with access to funding, resources and decision-making powers. Even though I attempted to assure participants that the project was not undertaken to evaluate their performance but rather to reach a better understanding, I often felt that some experienced it differently. Some of the interviewees seemed intimidated by the perceived inequality in our positions and possible negative consequences for future decisions, for example access to future funding for the club. I will highlight this aspect further during the ensuing discussion.

Time constraints, distances between clubs and communication problems related to the scope of the project did not always allow me to share my interpretations of the data with interviewees or give them the opportunity to respond to and change any possible misrepresentations or quotations out of context that I might have made. I regard this essentially as a weakness of the study flowing from the fact that, as it was a national study, it was virtually impossible to give each participant the opportunity to respond to my preliminary analysis. In a smaller study it would have been possible to give research participants their interview transcriptions and my interpretations for them to review. On the basis of my ethical responsibility not to misrepresent those involved or expose views that might be sensitive or have negative consequences without their consultation, I decided not to include any names or personal references in the study. I will, however, attempt to give a copy of the research project to each participant and make the document available to those involved in environmental clubs in the hope that it may contribute to a shared understanding of the nature and role of environmental clubs in Namibia. Club leaders and members who wish to do so are welcome to contact me personally.

The need for further research

There are many aspects related to environmental clubs that I would have liked to have investigated further. I will attempt to highlight some of these issues in my concluding remarks. In many instances I feel that I have only touched on the surface of the complexity, but the time and scope of the project – a mini-thesis as part of a coursework Masters degree – did not allow me to do more than that. But even if I had had years to work on this study, I would probably still feel that my understanding was incomplete, since that is the nature of knowledge and learning. I hope that I have raised some important issues and that the people involved in environmental clubs in Namibia will find it a useful departure point from which to initiate further explorations of the topic. In my view, critical reflection on our work and activities should be an integral part of practice, and strategies should be developed for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the activities of environmental clubs.

More importantly, however, I hope that this study will stimulate rich social dialogue regarding the nature of environmental education and the contribution that the youth can make towards the improvement of their quality of life.

Chapter 4

Views of 'environment' and implications for the orientation and activities of the clubs

Introduction

The many ways in which the word 'environment' is used by different people in different situations often makes it a very difficult concept to discuss or even define. Given the name of the youth clubs it is in my view important to clarify how club members and leaders view the concept 'environment' since their views have implications for the kinds of activities that they may perceive as being relevant. Their definition of environment will also guide the goals and objectives of the youth clubs and thus influence the role that environmental clubs play in environmental education. In this chapter I will attempt to highlight some of the perceptions of research participants regarding the terms 'environment' and 'environmental club'.

The basic philosophy of youth clubs in Africa "was based originally on the need for conservation awareness, especially wildlife and its diverse values ... which is why so many clubs have ties with wildlife conservation societies or organisations responsible for management of wildlife in Africa" (Sichilongo 1996a: 43). According to Sichilongo (1996a: 44), this orientation has changed and there is now a trend towards a more holistic approach with a "clear shift from the earlier focus on wildlife locked away in national parks to one which identifies community participation, sustainable development and indigenous knowledge". These trends were also noted in the discussions on the historical development of environmental education in chapter 2.

Although Sichilongo reported a shift in orientation, I was not convinced of the extent to which the activities of clubs in Africa reflected a more holistic view of environment in their activities. At a recent environmental learning workshop in Nairobi (referred to in chapter 2), I visited an environmental club at a school and spoke to some of the people involved in the establishment of clubs in Africa. Although it has been part of an active organisation for ±30 years, this club had a strong conservation focus. Even though the club members were busy building a bird-feeding table at the school, their school grounds and immediate vicinity were degraded and, more importantly, a health risk. In my view there was little relevance between the activities of the club and the immediate environmental problems. My discussion with the club members at this school also indicated little understanding of the way in which the conspicuous health problems affected them in their environment. The reported shift towards a broader view of environmental education was therefore not substantiated in the documentation on African clubs (see discussions in chapter 2) or by my observations of one of the well-established clubs.

These experiences compelled me to question the sort of activities that I promote through the Namibian clubs programme and the relevance of these activities in a broader context. I also questioned to what extent club members' and leaders' views and activities reflected a more holistic view of environment or understanding of the complexities of the environmental challenges indicated in chapter 1. In order to understand the role of environmental clubs in environmental education in Namibia, it is important to investigate the views of youth club members and leaders and the focus of their activities. I firstly consider how research participants define

environmental clubs, but since these perceptions are linked to how they view 'environment' I discuss these views in the remaining part of the chapter.

Defining environmental clubs

With regard to the question 'what is a club?', or how club members and leaders see clubs in Namibia, many research participants related the existence of the clubs to nature, environment or environmental problems, as one might expect given the names of the clubs. From the interview transcriptions it is obvious that most of the interviewees regard environmental clubs as a committee or interested group of people or members that:

... make the people aware of nature resources in the environment and how to take care of natural resources. We give information about the environment. We have to look at the environment as a whole with plants, trees, animals and teach people not to pollute water and air.

... make people aware of any environmental problems and teach them how to address particular problems. The club is a group of people, learners or community that come together to eradicate environmental problems.

... [share] the idea to care for the environment. The club has to teach others so that in future they care for the environment. We just also tell parents and community members how they can save resources.

The above interview extracts reflect the view of the majority of research participants who see their relationship with the environment as one in which the environment is something that people should take care of, protect or save. They felt that it is the responsibility of the club to instil this commitment.

During the National Club Leaders' Workshop there was a group activity related to the topic 'what is an environmental club?' (A copy of the composite results from this debate is included in Appendix C.) I combined the findings from the small-group discussions to create a 'club profile' for further discussion with the whole group. The profile of a club suggested that an environmental club: is about nature; should change the way people behave; should foster a caring attitude; should use all subjects; should focus on alternatives rather than environmental problems; and should use local knowledge.

The club profile suggested a view of environmental clubs that is not reflected in their activities. For example, the groups presented the ideas that clubs should focus on a caring attitude rather than knowledge, and focus on alternatives rather than problems. Most of their activities, however, showed that these environmental clubs aimed to address environmental problems through awareness creation and information dissemination. Most groups also agreed that they could utilise their own knowledge and local environment and learn from each other. Despite these views presented at the workshop, the majority of club leaders with whom I have worked for the last three years, and the data from interviews (which I will discuss in chapters 6 and 7), indicated a strong reliance on outside experts and material resources, and a constantly perceived need to visit national parks.

There could be many reasons for the differences of views and seeming contradictions between these and the actual activities, including the fact that group interactions at the workshop gave participants the opportunity to debate these issues and produced richer responses. It is also possible that the anonymity of the group situation allowed them to express views other than those expressed in the individual interviews, where they might have

been more inclined to convince me of the need for continued funding, for their club (e.g. to attend workshops and get material resources and financial assistance for exchange visits.) Another reason could be that we often assume consistent views/perceptions among research respondents but forget that they hold different views at different times and in different circumstances (Janse van Rensburg 1997b).

The discussions at the National Club Leaders' Workshop confirmed some of the descriptions of environmental clubs by interviewees. One teacher said that the idea of what a club is differs from group to group, but what they all have in common is that they conduct activities related to the environment and aim to create awareness. All the interviewees explained that the environmental clubs focus on the environment. However, regardless of how research participants defined the environment or environmental clubs, most activities suggest that research participants saw the role of environment club as protecting or learning about the biophysical environment. Most of the club activities (see Appendix D for a complete list of activities encountered during the study) can be summarised by the following statement:

We plant trees, celebrate environmental days like water day and talk about animals like endangered species. We do clean-ups and also going around community telling them to keep clean. We also take tours to Etosha [National Park].

The above may reflect a fairly homogenous set of views of what an environmental club is about. The amount of discussion and disagreement on specific aspects of the debate was, however, an indication of the differences in opinion amongst those involved regarding environmental clubs. We had, for example, a long discussion on the political nature of environmental clubs during which there were clear disagreements and conflicting views. The disagreements were essentially related to different interpretations of the concept 'political', which many workshop participants equated with party politics. In the workshop evaluation one participant questioned whether "a sensitive topic like politics really belonged in a workshop about environmental clubs". These discussions, in the context of the strong relationship between environmental problems and issues like land ownership (mentioned in chapter 1), illustrated to me the importance of clarifying concepts and assumptions.

Views of 'environment'

According to Wals (1992: 45), there have been many attempts to understand why environmental education programmes do not reach their ambitious goals but very few attempts to understand 'students' perceptions of the environment and environmental issues and the theories to which they lead" Hart (1997: 4) emphasises that the first step in any environmental programme is to consider how the term 'environment' is being used. In this section I report on some of the research participants' views of 'environment', including the link between environment and nature, views associated with nature and the social constructivist notion of reading environment as text.

Environment as nature

Club leaders and members often used the terms 'nature' and 'environment' as synonyms, and reported that environmental clubs travel to wildlife parks and other natural environments to learn about 'the environment'. This emphasis on the natural environment reflects the rather conventional view of environmental education that

is articulated by Hart (1997: 4) as the “task of educating the public about nature conservation or how to protect the natural environment from damaging human actions”.

The activities of environmental clubs and discussions during interviews also revealed a strong focus on the natural environment. From interviews, a few extracts of which are included below, it seems that for many participants ‘environment’ is equated with nature:

The club and nature go together. We have a club to teach for helping people to learn about the importance of nature. We are a group of people that care about the environment.

We should teach people to take nature seriously, if they are not involved then they would destroy. They have to be involved to preserve. We should sensitise the community about nature.

When I started to look critically at the word ‘nature’, used so frequently by interviewees, I realised how often and in how many ways we use this word. Except for the conventional use as referring to animals and plants, we also talk about human nature, the nature of problems and even the nature of environmental education. What do we imply or assume in talking about the nature of environmental education?

I regard nature as the biophysical dimension of the environment, which also includes social, economic and political spheres. I thus consider an exclusive focus of environmental clubs on nature as limiting or narrow. My view is supported by Clacherty (1992: 25) who referred to the common perspective of environment as nature, saying that it could lead to “a limited approach to environmental education ... [and a lack of understanding] of the complexities of environmental issues”.

Botkin (1990: 4) suggests that the ways we view ‘environment’ and environmental issues are essentially based on our “basic assumptions about nature – how nature works, how people might change nature and how the world in future might be different from the world [we] had known in the past.” According to Botkin (1990: 12), “Three images of nature – the machine, the creature and the divine – dominate our thoughts about the environment, although we are usually not aware of them.” In the next section I will explore some of the views about nature that were raised during the interviews and workshop discussions.

Environment as ‘nature beyond human control’

During the National Club Leaders’ Workshop we had a discussion about the words ‘nature’ and ‘environment’. One black man suggested that the perception of ‘nature separate from people’ was a “white man’s concept” since there is no such distinction in some African cultures. An ensuing discussion highlighted the fact that this view of nature excludes the built environment, where nature would be regarded as “everything created by God” and ‘environment’ would include those things that are “created by people”.

The separation of people from nature is, according to Williamo (1993: 77-89), another manifestation of the fact that all aspects of the western modern society are based on fragmentation and specialisation. This segmentation, in his view, is visible not only in the various disciplines but also in the dualistic thinking evident in the separation between man (people) and nature. It seems that in some Namibian cultures humans are not separated from

nature in the sense that Williamo suggests, but rather that 'nature' is located in the realm of cultural beliefs, religion and the supernatural.

A principal in the Kavango region ascribed the negative perceptions of the community to the traditional approaches of "policing of resources" (see MET strategy in chapter 1) and suggested that this strategy was never really understood by the people since "they are saying that we have always used trees as wood and it was never used up". The principal went on to say that "they [the community] have the feeling that you [the educator] are not God saying that it won't rain (or trees won't grow) anymore". During the visit to other regions this view was a recurring theme which I then included in my discussions with other interviewees. The idea of nature as "everything created by God" was reflected in many statements of different participants across ethnic and geographical divides:

[A Caprivian club leader now working in Kavango suggested that] *old people are understanding but not so much. In my society in Caprivi people believe that nature is just nature, nature balances itself. As humans there is nothing we can do. God has his own programme. He will do it, get it from him, in that sense nature will replace itself. If it is destructed totally they will say that it is God's will and [they]do not understand that they also have a role to play.*

[A Damara-speaking club leader in the Kunene region, which is very arid except for a few natural springs, said] *water is not a problem and the wasting of water is not seen as a problem. The water tanks are also damaged and leaking but people here are just thinking that the mountain is full of water.*

[One club member, a Damara-speaking boy from the Khorixas region said that] *people are thinking sometimes that nature is there to produce itself. We are experiencing perception like that nature is reproducing itself. If we do not involve people they can think that natural resources cannot be used up. We have to teach learners that nature is like a cycle. But if we cannot care for it, how can this cycle continue?*

A club leader in the Erongo region, a Herero-speaking woman, explaining that 'natural resources' imply that which comes from nature, continued on the theme of nature reproducing itself. In her own words: "*Natuurlike hulpbronne is van die natuur self, dit lyk of dit die natuur is wat uitbroei* (which loosely translated means that 'nature hatches resources')." A colleague who works at Wêreldsend environmental education centre confirmed that such views exist and commented that the words "natural resources in Herero language can be translated as 'that which has been created by God'".

One implication of the view of nature as being 'in the hands of God' seems to be that it places nature outside the control or responsibility of people. This view is, according to Botkin (1990: 75), based on the worldview of "nature as Divine Order". Botkin (1990: 83-84) suggests that the explanation of nature linked to the "universal purposes of the many gods" or, for some, the Christian God, dates back across centuries but, significantly, has also been the basis for the scientific explanations of many scientists, conservationists and wildlife managers. Evidence to support the idea of order and purpose in nature is taken from the anatomy and morphology of organisms, their food habits and the interactions among species, but scientific evidence also exists that challenges this view (Evernden 1989; Worster 1990).

I support the sentiments of Botkin (1990: 89) who suggests that the issues raised here are not intended to "critique religious interpretations of nature", but rather to highlight the links between the assumptions we make

about nature, traditional beliefs and the modern scientific arguments to substantiate these beliefs. According to Botkin, the idea of a divinely ordered universe that is perfectly structured for life has persisted, if often beneath the surface, and is still influencing our interpretations of the environment, nature and the role of human beings in nature. The following quotations from club members suggest that views regarding the 'divine control' of nature guide some participants' traditional beliefs and cultural practices:

People's traditional belief is the fish will be there – it was there since grandmothers time. But there were different practices and only the big fish were caught. Now they changed the methods and use mosquito nets. We have to try to convince them to leave some for tomorrow. Today we do not have those fish because we take eggs with the mosquito nets.

Some people are telling them to plant trees in their mahango fields but they have a belief that planting trees in fields will invite bats to come and feed on their mahango. They only know one side. We need to give them the other side by telling them of the importance of trees. They only know the negative side but clubs could give different views.

I found the first comment especially interesting since it suggested that the notion that 'nature will provide' still exists, despite the fact that the fishing methods and practices have changed. These club members also illustrate the importance of understanding those cultural beliefs related to nature. Even though some participants view 'environment' as 'beyond human control', other interviewees (see quotation above) suggested that these views need to change. The comments above reminded me that I can never assume that everyone in one community has the same views.

The perceptions related earlier could serve to indicate that nature is in 'God's hands' and therefore out of people's control, or they could imply that nature 'without people' is the ideal. The notion of an 'ideal' place to learn about the environment (or nature) was, as mentioned earlier, frequently reflected. According to Botkin (1990: 28), primeval wilderness or nature undisturbed is "an ideal that has played a central and important role in the thoughts of human beings since the origin of Western civilisation". Many of the excursions or tours are organised to national parks or some of the more remote areas in Namibia where there is an abundance of wildlife and little human influence or disturbance. This is, of course, also a result of the fact that environmental education centres have been situated in national parks (see chapter 1).

When I questioned the interviewees about why visits to the national parks and other 'wilderness areas' were favourite activities, I realised that there were many and diverse reasons. I will discuss some of these reasons in the following chapters. In my view, however, some of the reasons could relate to the traditional conservation philosophy of environmental clubs (see chapter 2) and an underlying assumption that the environment could be equated with nature.

This view that we can learn more from the environment in national parks could be disputed by the earlier comment from the workshop participant who suggested that in some cultural understandings of 'nature', people and their activities have always been seen as part of nature. The view that man has a negative impact on a 'pristine' environment does not make much sense from this cultural perspective. The views presented above indicate that the concepts 'environment' and 'nature', and of people's role within the environment differ considerably and should be clarified for the purposes of environmental education programmes. According to

Hannigan (1995: 110-112), nature should not be viewed as some ultimate truth that was discovered through the scientific process, but rather as a social concept which changes over time:

Nature was regarded by the first colonial people as the wild land that needed to be tamed, but later as the precious natural resources that should be preserved.

Environment as 'problems'

Both kinds of activities that clubs undertake and the kinds of issues that they are concerned with indicate a strong focus on the biophysical environment. The environmental problems that interviewees reported were frequently related to pollution, deforestation and overgrazing, and their explanations of these problems referred mostly to the impact of people on the environment. Many clubs see their role as raising awareness about solving environmental problems:

[We must build] more brick houses and not wooden houses because the sticks come from cutting down of tree. Other problems are wasting water, littering and deforestation.

The most important activities are cleaning campaigns. Deforestation and overgrazing were identified by the students in our club as the issues. We identify problems and get guidance from the teacher how we can address this.

We want to clean up the hot springs. People from the location wash with soap and make a mess with papers all the time.

Throughout my visits to different areas it was obvious that the activities most often undertaken by clubs were planting trees and clean-up campaigns. All the clubs reported their involvement in such activities and for some it was the only activity. Some clubs did mention that they had started with a programme to combat desertification or focused on other topics such as water-saving and overpopulation. The review of the Pan African Generator document reflected that tree-planting and litter campaigns were also the most common activities of other African clubs.

These activities of the Namibian clubs have to be seen in the context of their often limited resources as well as the limited capacity of the Club Support Service to assist each club with activities that are relevant to their own area and situation. Very often club activities are structured around environmental day celebrations and might be further restricted by club newsletters that focus on a few selected events (e.g. World Water Day, World Environment Day and Arbour Day) and might perpetuate perceptions that club activities should only be geared towards saving water and planting trees.

A predominant focus on the biophysical environment is, in my view, problematic for a number of reasons. One of these is related to the expectations that we as educators, and often the learners themselves, have about what it is we are trying to achieve. In my view, it is important for club members to understand that deforestation, for example, is not only a biophysical problem, but rather a complex interplay of biophysical, social, economic and political issues. Club members who set out with expectations of solving all problems and want to 'help to save the planet' might not understand why clean-up campaigns are not effective means of attaining their goals.

Another reason for my concern regarding the preference for 'traditional' club activities such as tree planting and clean-up campaigns relates to expectations that clubs can function as practical extensions of the classroom (see

discussions in chapter 5). The classroom is often assumed to be a place in which there is more critical discussion of issues and broadening of the understanding of 'environment' in the curriculum. However, many club members associated classrooms with boring lectures (see chapter 5) and club members could be left with a limited view of the possibilities for activities and involvement. The implications of these perceptions are that social issues or the social dimension and complexity of issues can be overlooked, which, as a result, could also limit the view of the potential range of activities within the scope of the club, as illustrated by the following statement:

Other problems in the area include alcohol, drug misuse [abuse], teenage pregnancy, health and Aids problems. Yes, the club can do something. Maybe we can do something with people with Aids like help them to make a garden.

One possible consequence of most of the club leaders' and members' emphasis on the biophysical dimension of the environment, and another source of my concern, is related to Botkin's view (see earlier discussion) that environmental problems are often reduced to assessing the impact of people on nature. The associated solutions are awareness campaigns aimed at changing attitudes or finding ways of restoring the 'natural harmony' without people. In essence, a perspective which places people outside the environment could fail to recognise the interrelationships and socio-historical context of environmental problems. The exclusive focus on the biophysical environment could also disregard the strong cultural orientation of many club members and the diverse assumptions about nature discussed earlier.

The third and most important reason why the exclusive focus on the natural environment is limited relates to my concern regarding the social significance of environmental club activities. In Namibia the focus of environmental clubs is mostly on specific activities related to natural resources, for example tree-planting, while there are other problems (as is the case in Kenya) associated with health and poverty that are more obvious and pressing. This was confirmed through my observations while visiting some schools. Only two of the clubs interviewed indicated that at the time of the interview they were involved in activities directly related to the social dimensions of the environment. One club conducted a survey on alcohol abuse while the other was investigating the health risk of a local factory.

These 'social' problems were mentioned but were often separated from the 'environmental' issues and frequently raised only after I had prompted with questions like, "Are these (biophysical problems) the only problems you experience here at school?" Although most participants expressed an understanding of the interaction with other environmental problems, this connection was expressed in terms of the impact on the natural environment. In the following quotations club leaders indicated some of the 'other' problems that are experienced in schools:

Social problems include alcohol abuse, use of dagga and health issues. Poverty is an environmental problem because it will depend on the garden and the harvest. If the harvest is no good then it [poverty] will affect people. We can see it in the condition of the land and the learners. The hostel conditions are bad and overcrowded. Learners are ill with sores on their bodies.

Social problems like alcohol abuse, poverty and health [see comments above] can be addressed through the club because people are part of the environment.

The club could address problems like [social problems] but with the help of health workers or clinic. If the club is strong we can get together and put ideas together. Maybe we can get information about diarrhoea and go to all the houses. We wanted to assist with inoculation campaign but was limited to activities outside the school hours.

The fact that most clubs focus specifically on problems related to the biophysical environment is often seemingly uncritically accepted by many people with whom I work. A deeper analysis could reveal certain basic assumptions with implications for the environmental clubs. One of these assumptions is that we (or some people) know exactly what the environmental problems are and that these problems can be clearly defined and solved. There is also an assumption that we either all agree on these problems and their solutions, or that we can convince others to see them in the right way. I realised during my discussions with a club member in the Windhoek region that she seemed quite convinced that environmental problems with their causes are clearly defined and that she could convince others to see that too:

The most important reason for having a club is that I want to make the community aware of the environment. I want to make them aware of the list of things that cause environmental problems.

Environmental problems are often presented as 'things' (objectifiable entities) with certain symptoms, and that there are criteria that can be used as a checklist to determine the presence or extent of a problem. The socially constructive orientation to the environment and environmental problems implies that a simple statement like the interview extract below could be 'unpacked' – what problems; what do we mean by awareness and environment; what and how to teach; and why the focus on children? – and that this statement would be interpreted very differently even by members of the same community:

We want to create awareness about environmental problems we are facing. To protect it for future generations and to teach children to take care of their environment.

If we want to move beyond a limited view of 'environment' (see also chapters 1 and 2) and the associated narrow range of activities, we need to question what the club members regard as environmental problems and how they see the relationship between themselves and these problems. This view is supported by Wals (1992: 46-47) who suggests that "in order to move beyond the symptoms of environmental problems, we need a better insight into how students perceive their environment" and what their "notions, ideas and experiences" of the environment are. These are only some of the questions that need to be asked in relation to the role of environmental clubs in environmental education. I hope that further discussions of environmental clubs will also consider different perceptions of 'environment' and the implications of these perceptions.

Environment as text

I suggested above that our views of 'nature' and 'environment' will influence how we define environmental clubs, their activities and their role in the community. Social constructivists view 'environment' as a construct and environmental problems as "the outcomes of social processes ... a consequence of political and economic decision-making" (Clacherty 1992: 26). Our assumptions and ideological positions which underlie these views are often clearly visible in the general statements we make about environmental problems, and yet, as

previously mentioned, they often remain unchallenged. Consider these few examples from discussions with interviewees about environmental problems:

Farmers keep a lot of cows. It had to change now because of ignorance, they do not know.

When I worked at Namdeb [Namibia Diamond Mining Corporation] I saw how people are exploiting resources on continual basis.

People are poor. They do not have an option but to cut trees. Overpopulation must be stopped if we want to solve environmental problems.

It came out in the last drama that people blame it [environmental problems] on the war. It is important because it affects their perceptions of responsibilities.

In each of these examples there are certain assumptions made about the causes of environmental problems, whether they be ignorant farmers, profit-seeking companies, political conflict and colonialism or uncontrolled population increase. I am not suggesting that any of these assumptions are right or wrong, or the only truth, but rather that these views are rooted in our different experiences and views of the world in which we live and are also shaped by social discourses such as those in the media (Huckle 1994: 6-11). The notion that people have different views about the environment and environmental problems is often acknowledged and then brushed aside as we continue to concentrate on what it is we want to tell others, as illustrated in the following response by an MET extension officer:

People's views will differ. It is part of an environmental club to take part in subtle discussions [referring to conflict of interests or political discussions] and then to convince others what the problems is.

But if we are to view problems as the outcome of social processes, we need to do more than just acknowledge differences: we need to challenge our own assumptions and interpretations, reflect on the implications of our own views and debate them with others in an attempt to broaden our understanding of the complex environment in which we live.

According to Wals (1992: 47), knowledge can also be regarded as "the story of our lives, experiences and problems". Our environment can be read, interpreted or understood as text, which invites us to consider the history, complexity and contextuality of environmental issues. The importance of understanding the 'history of our ideas' was emphasised by another extension officer of the MET in the following statement:

We also have to see how history is related to the environmental issue. To understand the conservation aspect we have to understand how people are making a living. We need to know the history and trends like how they used to harvest and an understanding of where we are going. More than conservation we need a vision. We have to look at broader issues and new issues that are coming up, like crime and the ignoring of people's rights. There is too much information. We need to include history and socio-political studies to get more people with a clear vision.

This interviewee suggested that we need to understand 'the bigger picture', which includes the fact that our context has changed over time and is still changing, as well as the numerous other factors that impact on our

understanding of the environment and environmental problems. Staples (1996: 193-194) argues that the importance of the idea of 'environment as text' demands:

... the acknowledgement of the human, value-laden nature of our experiences of the environment ... that both thought and feeling inform our response to the environment, our understanding of the environment and our actions in relation to the environment ... will as a consequence form part of a process of cultural, rather than mere physical, change.

Implications for environmental clubs in Namibia

Even though there are many reasons for the involvement of club members (see chapter 5), I have argued in this chapter that the focus of environmental club activities are influenced by members' and leaders' views of the environment and environmental problems. Our views of the environment are closely related to the assumptions that we make about the causes of and solutions to environmental problems, and the activities that environmental clubs plan in order to address these problems.

Jim Taylor from Share-Net once commented on the fact that learners use water kits to test the quality of water in a river and subsequently educators are disappointed that this did not solve the environmental problems in the area (Taylor 1997: 3). We, as educators, need to make the link between what we set out to do, how we do it and what we hope to achieve, and plan activities and projects accordingly. Club activities need to be critically reviewed within a specific context and understanding of our own assumptions in order to move to a more complex understanding of the environment and congruent actions. These are also the reasons why we need to reflect critically on our actions and why we should encourage social dialogue as an integral part of all club activities.

One of the challenges facing environmental educators is to critically reflect on the different views of 'nature' and the implications of these views for our programmes. The different views of 'nature' and 'environment' imply different roles and responsibilities for people which need to be carefully considered.

1. The view of nature being in the 'hands of God' essentially removes all the responsibility from people for managing and caring for the environment. It also implies that some people hold beliefs regardless of the context or observed changes within that context.
2. The view that nature is a natural balance or harmony could place humans outside their environment and imply that when they are involved it is either as a destructive force or as custodian. This assumption of nature in perfect balance also implies that management for conservation and management for utilisation are different and, in the main, incompatible goals. These perspectives are the underlying motivation for maintaining 'undisturbed wilderness areas' where people can enjoy and learn from nature without being part of it.
3. Botkin (1990), on the other hand, suggests that we accept the need to manage the environment for uncertainty, change, risk and complexity within a specific context. These principles could be applied not only to the management of ecological processes but also to a vision of the involvement of the youth through environmental clubs. Nature cannot be separated from the social meaning and cultural significance ascribed to it by people. We therefore have to move the orientation of learning beyond the

exclusive focus on the certainty of factual knowledge, and consider diverse interpretations of environmental issues in order to understand people's complex interactions with nature within a specific context. If we accept (with Botkin) that change is natural and even desirable, we can take responsibility for understanding and directing change in terms of social justice and ecological sustainability. The view of change as an integral part of complex natural processes challenges us better to understand changes that are natural in kind and frequency, to identify what changes are problematic and to take responsibility for the management of these processes.

In my view, those involved in environmental clubs in Namibia need to discuss and debate (with educators as guides) the different interpretations of the environment and environmental clubs, and the assumptions underlying them, since this will assist club leaders and members in framing the guidelines for their activities. If club activities are to be sustained, those involved in clubs will also have to align these activities with the needs and reasons for involvement of the participants. These issues will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Club members' and leaders' reasons for being involved in environmental clubs in Namibia and their implications

Introduction

From my earlier discussions with club leaders and members before this study started I got the impression that there are many and diverse reasons for their involvement in environmental youth clubs. These reasons have implications for their motivation to stay involved and therefore for the sustainability of environmental clubs. Since their reasons for involvement also affect the types of activities members will want embark on, these need to be explored in more depth.

In this chapter I will report on some of the reasons that motivated research participants to be involved in environmental youth clubs in Namibia. The initial reason for the establishment of the Earthcare clubs (refer to discussions in chapter 1) was to support teachers and involve learners in environmental education, and to encourage such participation as a form of recreational activity. In this study I wanted to explore these three aspects and to consider to what extent environmental clubs in Namibia have achieved these aims. In addition I wanted to investigate other reasons that might be relevant for the involvement of young people in environmental clubs, and which might guide planning to support or manage clubs in future.

The research participants who were interviewed about the reasons for their involvement included teachers, learners, unemployed youths and extension officers. In Namibian environmental clubs, teachers and extension officers are club leaders or advisors, and learners or unemployed youths are club members. In cases where it seems appropriate I distinguish between these different groups, but where this distinction is not evident it may be assumed that there was no significant difference between the responses from the various groups of interviewees. I will summarise factors that motivated members or leaders to participate in environmental clubs in this chapter.

The implications of these findings for environmental clubs in Namibia will be discussed in the final section. Some research participants suggested that their reasons for involvement in the club were mostly educational, for example to learn more about the environment. Although I cannot draw a clear distinction between these reasons and more implicit learning experiences related to social interaction, I will discuss issues related to education and aspects of personal growth of club members and leaders in chapter 7 (which deals specifically with clubs and education).

Reasons for being involved in environmental clubs

Several themes emerged in the analysis of data with regard to reasons for involvement of the interviewees. I later grouped these into seven main categories, namely: care or concern; sense of identity; influence of others;

recreational motivations; links with employment; support for syllabi; and a combination of reasons where participants were unsure of the main motivating factor.

Care or concern

Many club members said that they are involved in clubs because they care about the environment or are concerned about their future in terms of the environment. The following quotations from research participants, both club leaders and members, indicate that for some the main motivation for involvement is that they care about the environment, other people or the future:

When I was growing up my father is a person that care. I grow up in an environment where I learn to care for nature and those in need so now I am involved because I care.

I like my environment and are trying to do something. Maybe I saw and experienced a lot of things and would like things to be better.

Because I like nature and appreciate having an environment and trying to preserve what is there. Growing up on a farm in Omaruru, I stayed a lot in the veld and liked it and maybe that is why I am interested. I love my environment and want to learn more so I can teach my learners. I want to help us to create sort of atmosphere were we can get involved in helping them.

I grow up in rural areas and close to the environment and have to find own entertainment. The club was my choice because it is my interest.

I like beautiful things. Drawing is what I like and the only way to express yourself. It is the freedom to express yourself as you are. My interest started with art and my teacher encouraged me, it was inside me to draw those plants, animals and cultural way of living and old times. So my interest was in wild areas and outside and linked to my art.

Even though I grouped these reasons together under the heading 'Caring', there are various complex relationships involved that I would like to highlight. In the first quotation the link with a caring attitude ensued from the example of a caring father, where in other instances concern seemed to be related to contact with the veld or rural areas that the interviewees liked or enjoyed.

There have been many attempts in environmental education to identify those factors that contribute to children being environmentally sensitive or caring. According to Hungerford and Volk (1990: 54), environmental sensitivity is "a function of an individual's contact with the outdoors in relatively pristine environments either alone or with close personal friends or relatives over a long period of time". None of the areas mentioned above seemed to be the 'pristine' environments that Hungerford and Volk mention, but some interviewees suggested a connection between their reasons for involvement and previous experiences of the veld. These previous experiences that motivated concern were not always or necessarily enjoyable ones. Discussions with one participant (the second quotation) suggested that it was rather because of painful experiences from war that he would like something better now.

Caring could be related to concern about nature and/or people and their future but was motivated by the desire to improve themselves, others or the world around them. One of the comments that struck me was that of the

young man who said that he “learned to care”. This club member suggested that he became involved in the clubs because he cared but I immediately wondered how and why one learns to care and whether club members could learn to care through their involvement with environmental clubs. My experiences of vandalism committed by the many visitors on the Namibian coast during the summer holiday are in stark contrast to the comments of the young club members and suggest that many people simply do not care about the environment. Although I realise that there are many complex processes involved in people’s perceptions and actions, these experiences brought to consciousness the question that other environmental educators have frequently raised, as Hart (1997: 18) phrases it: “How do people develop a deep and lasting concern for the natural environment?” In other words, how do we learn to care?

According to Hart (1997: 17-18), children are “innately curious about the natural world and struggle to understand their relationship to it as part of their desire to understand the meaning of life”. He views this as an “existential kind of urge, an empathy and sense of wonder”. Although Hart attempts to describe typical characteristics of children that could facilitate such concern, he argues that “contact with nature is not sufficient ... we cannot rely on analytic environmental education or a single field trip to represent and reconstruct the beautiful complexity” (Hart 1997: 18). He sees the role of significant adults, and their orientation to nature, as crucial and says that educators should provide “opportunity for a rich diversity of direct experiences with nature alongside adults who are informed and caring”. Hart (1997: 19) suggests that these experiences relate to any environment, preferably in the child’s local environment rather than the relatively pristine/natural environments mentioned by Hungerford and Volk. Several interviewees (including those whose comments are reported above) mentioned the importance of adult educators and local learning opportunities as motivations for caring.

Personal and social identity

Goals related to the development of personal and social identity were often not explicitly noted as objectives of programmes designed to solve environmental problems or ‘to save the world’, and yet they emerged as a very important dimension when I spoke to people involved in clubs throughout the country. Personal recognition was especially important for young people, as the following quotation from a club member illustrates:

If you do something other people will say this guy is doing something to clean up school. Last week we had a clean-up day at school. The principal announced this in front of the whole school. He said that it is because of the environmental club that the whole school is so clean. Everyone clapped hands. It was great for us and I was proud.

The eight stages of development that are associated with different emotional concerns of children are well documented in childhood psychology (Santrock 1986: 44-47) and, although not immune to critique, they stress the importance of different emotional concerns/tasks at different times during the life experience of a person. Erikson views the middle childhood years as a time during which the child is often “drawn into the social culture of peers ... [and] evaluates accomplishments by comparing him/herself with others” (Santrock 1986: 45). These years are thus also regarded as an important time for learning roles in society. The adolescent time, when the growing child might try out different roles, centres around the development of personal identity and, according to Erikson, this identity is closely linked to an acknowledged occupational role in society which gives a sense of ‘purposefulness’ (Santrock 1986: 46, 379). Hart (1997: 28) issues a caution regarding the possible cultural

(western) bias of these development theories and emphasises the need to investigate these developments in our own local contexts.

Comments from many (11 out of 18) interviewees suggested that a sense of belonging and recognition, and of being part of a group that was seen as performing a positive role in society, was amongst the key factors for involvement in environmental clubs. The extent to which recognition was related to members' and leaders' abilities to run and manage club activities effectively will be discussed in chapter 6. The important point here is that recognition of their club activities gave club members a sense of personal achievement and pride, and may contribute to the development of personal self-esteem and 'purposefulness'.

Three interviewees mentioned that as members of a club they could conduct surveys and interviews, and advocate and take action, which was often not possible on their own:

The club gives me the opportunity to do things that I could not do as single person. I could not talk to the manager at the cement factory on my own but I could do it with the club. I am also getting information not only for myself but for everyone. As a club member I could do that.

During my visit to the Erongo region I encountered the frustrations of club members who were trying to convince a factory to show them the company's health policy, and later, in my journal, I reflected on the collective power that a strong environmental club network could have. Experiences from other countries in Africa (Boulton & Eddershaw (eds.) 1996: 26, 53, 98) have indicated that clubs, especially in partnership with other organisations, can be powerful allies in contributing to environmental change. Club developers and members in Zanzibar (Salim 1996: 93) also regard the possible contribution that clubs can make in the form of advocacy as one of the aims of the club movement. The trends discussed in chapter 2 indicate that this is an increasingly important dimension of environmental activities.

In my view, we often take too neutral a stance on the idea of networking as a sort of social activity in which everyone can participate, and do not always recognise the collective capacity of a strong organisation to influence and shape change in society. In my view, a strong and recognised national club movement could give clubs in different regions greater confidence and more opportunities, as learners come to feel more confident and make use of opportunities to 'do things' as a club member.

Club leaders and members can become despondent, demotivated and discouraged by what they regard as failures, as indicated by the following interview extracts:

Certain things needs to be there in order to have a club. It is no good having dreams if it never materialises. It does something to the learners. [The interviewee suggested that they become demotivated; see also chapter 5.]

We have tried to invite the MET person, we have tried to contact other clubs. Everything that we want to do does not work. Who can we contact for donations? The members are losing hope.

The benefits and effects of communicating and recognising success stories are emphasised by Wals (1992: 53-54) when he questions environmental education that leaves learners feeling overwhelmed and burdened with global and national disasters. In his view the focus should be on providing learners with opportunities and

mechanisms to deal with “manageable local issues” that can be addressed with cooperation from community resources and will provide learners with the successes needed to counteract “feelings of hopelessness or helplessness” (Wals 1992: 55). This notion is supported by Hart (1997: 28-30) who advocates activities that “give a strong sense of industry” to counteract feelings of frustration and hopelessness. He recommends the creation of opportunities that are likely to maximise the child’s ability to demonstrate competence.

From a socially critical orientation to environmental education we consider the effects of discrimination and historical inequalities in the social, political and economic spheres of life, but fail to recognise the personal and psychological effects of poverty and negative socialisation or the feelings of inadequacy and frustration that could be associated with the sense of being disadvantaged (see also Hart 1997: 30, on poverty and self-esteem). Although I could not explore this dimension in depth, I feel that it is an area that could be investigated in future, and that the pride and recognition that the members feel through their positive involvement should be an explicit consideration of future planning of youth activities.

Influence of others

Environmental clubs, like sport and recreational groups, create an opportunity to work together, to change, share views and interact, and they provide something that joins young people together in a common goal. It was obvious from the discussions with some research participants that these were significant reasons for their involvement in the clubs. The fun and benefit of doing something in a group is also related to the earlier discussions on the development of a social identity. In some instances the interviewees mentioned that they became involved through a personal contact and then enjoyed it or became interested. Another dimension of the influence of others was explicit in the motivation of role models like teachers, extension officers and friends, and for some this was even the sole reason for becoming a club member, as these quotations suggest:

On national arbour day, someone donated trees. Stacy [a volunteer who started the club at the primary school] suggested that people are doing great things for us. I asked why not me. They motivated me.

A group of club members from Windhoek entertained the workshop and give us some examples. We were told to go back and establish a club at the school. [This club was still active during my visit.]

The research also indicates that the influence of friends and other peers is particularly important for the youth. This is hardly surprising considering the importance of friends during childhood development, as reflected in Erikson’s development theory, referred to earlier, and the experiences of many parents and teachers who warn about the ‘influence of friends’. According to Hart (1997: 33), these relationships are important because of the relative equality in status, compared with their relationships with adults. In my view, the following comments suggest that interaction with peers can be an important motivational factor for environmental clubs and a positive influence:

People are so negative when it comes to environment. Some learn from me, some of my classmates are in the club because of me. I encouraged them to join.

The club leader is also member of the SRC [Student Representative Council]. He join willingly but are campaigning and influencing friends and agricultural students.

Fun is always there. We can build a kind of nature in club to build a group – to work together. [His explanation suggests that they could develop a culture of cooperation.] In the club everyone is attending and cooperating as a group. Youth have to talk to each other; when they [young people] are not meeting then nothing happens.

In several cases I observed, learners were introduced to the idea of environmental clubs and then either joined a club in secondary school or in some instances even proposed the establishment of a new club. The first quotation below is from a girl in the Windhoek region who explained that she was a club member in primary school and wanted to join a club when she went to secondary school. Since there was no existing club, she was involved in initiating a meeting with her old club leader and the new teacher, which led to the establishment of a new club. This club initially functioned with the support of the club leader at the primary school, but later became independent and has been active for four years.

When I started secondary school I thought I would like to do things for the environment. The teacher also wanted to start a new club at [secondary] school. I met with the teacher at primary school with the club and decided that we could just continue. Now I spend a whole afternoon typing club stuff. I like to spend time on things that are really going to educate others and me.

I was Earthcare club member and then I became a member first at this school and for last 3 years I am the chairperson.

[According to my observations and comments from the club leader, this informant is also the main motivation and key role model for involvement in the club.]

These data indicated that even though others may have introduced or motivated members to join, they wanted to continue with the activities and involvement. In some instances they mentioned the fun and kinship of being part of a group. Another important aspect for me was that many of the existing chairpersons of secondary school clubs had been members since primary school.

In the case of the teachers who are club leaders, the 'others' who influenced them were often colleagues, extension officers or staff at the environmental education centres. Most of the club leaders who were introduced to the idea of establishing environmental clubs by other people were still involved as leaders or coordinators of clubs during the study:

As grade 12 learner I went for workshop at the centre [Wêreldsend] after finishing school they [Tim and Rosie] contacted me and asked whether I want to work there. They introduced me to clubs.

I started with the club in 1996 after attending a workshop in Namutoni with a group of learners that chose a problem in their area which they would like to address. The MET officer told me about clubs, now I support them [learners].

I got invited to Namutoni. I do not know how they got my name but it has much to do with Life Science. Together with others we mentioned different problems and how we can deal with problems. They [education officers at the centre] give us some materials, did drama and assignments. After that they introduced the clubs.

In my view, these findings (and the earlier discussion of the development theory and the influence of friends) suggest that environmental club leaders and organisers have to consider issues of capacity-building and leadership as part of their efforts to strengthen the clubs.

Recreational

We need to consider the context (see chapter 1) in which clubs exist if we want to understand the many and diverse reasons why learners are involved in clubs. Many of the environmental clubs are situated in rural areas with very little entertainment or sport facilities. Rural communities are often isolated because of distances and the lack of transport, and might be even more socially isolated because of poverty. Even in towns there is often a lack of stimulation and recreation, which could be the result of many factors such as the lack of facilities (e.g. libraries, cinemas and theatres) and the lack of resources (sports equipment, books, videos, etc.).

One club member suggested that he preferred living in a rural community. During an informal discussion he told me that he moved back to the rural areas because the young people in the town are a bad influence since they were only drinking and 'hanging out' at pubs. He suggested that the lack of stimulating activities was not due to the isolation of communities, but rather to the lack of positive role models and the negative influence of the lifestyle in towns. According to him, the environmental club provided him with the opportunity to play a constructive role at school.

In some cases it was not the lack of opportunity but the importance attached to specific activities, like sport, that alienated learners. One learner explained that he was not the 'sporty' type but enjoyed books and often felt left out because he did not play soccer. The environmental youth club gave him the opportunity to do something that he enjoyed and a sense of belonging and purpose. The contribution of environmental clubs to the creation of varied opportunities was confirmed by a club leader in the Ondangwa West region in the first interview extract below:

Some of them [learners] does not have anything to do. Some of them are not involved with sport like soccer. Some of them like to work more with books. Some of them that is really interested in the club itself and really assisting me but others just want to pass time. If we encourage the planting of fruit trees that they could benefit by it then they are interested. We are also very far away from town and it is very boring.

For the youth something to do is the most important reason. Some are interested but for the majority because it is something to do. There is so little happening to do. I observed that they [youth] like to be together, have fun and enjoyment and use leisure time. One way to get them away and busy. The main aim is to learn, fun and to keep busy.

The club makes this [having fun] possible because if I do not joined the club I would not get a chance to visit such places. Here is a good time to learn.

The comments from interviewees suggest that if an environmental activity is associated with fun, recreation or something interesting to do in a resource-poor environment, it should be maximised to the full.

Link with employment, income or funding

Although our club programme at the RF Environmental Education Project initially focused on schools, the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS) expressed interest in the establishment of environmental clubs and, as mentioned earlier, there are now five clubs that have been established by unemployed youths. Most are run by extension officers of the MYS, with our assistance. The involvement of the MYS is, in my view, a very important

development since unemployment is an increasing concern in Namibia. According to a youth officer who was interviewed for this study, unemployed club members have motivations for involvement in the environmental clubs which differ from those of school-going youths. This youth officer suggested that the out-of-school youth members did have some environmental knowledge (from school subjects like Natural Economy and Life Science), and were also not so interested in just having fun since their most pressing needs were an income and/or employment opportunities.

When I interviewed the leader and two members of these clubs involving unemployed youths, they expressed the following reasons for being involved in the clubs:

I hope to give them something to do so they are not walking up and down. Through clubs we can give them skills to organise meetings and to plan and to expose them to new ideas. Some might not know that they can do sort of jobs like extension officer. The aim is to get them income wherever possible and to expose them to their own country [i.e. to learn about possibilities].

Some can get jobs and collect money through environmental club, we [unemployed youths] can also teach learners [who are still at school].

The community give us money. Previously we do not have any money but it is important to create income generating projects and job opportunities. We are investigating the possibility of planting vegetables.

Environmental club activities could address concerns related to income and/or employment in a number of ways. In the same way that clubs gave individuals the courage to approach strangers with a questionnaire (referred to earlier), a club could give unemployed youths (and learners) the opportunity to get involved in fundraising activities. As an 'official' club they could approach businesses and community members and request support for their initiatives, which they might get scolded for if they were to act as individuals. These opportunities also related to the earlier discussions about the collective power of clubs to motivate change. Through their clubs, members could also be exposed to different directions and job opportunities of which they were not aware before. This could be through guest speakers, visits from other educational organisations or interaction with the broader community.

Fundraising activities were often (not only for unemployed youth clubs) one of the most important items on the club agenda. Research participants mentioned that they show videos, perform dramas, hold competitions and sell goods to raise funds:

I donated money to buy stuff and then sold cakes. With this money raised we bought seeds [they wanted to start a tree nursery]. We also have different types of membership with different fees to raise money. Learners should pay N\$5.00 for membership if they are interested. [These fees are an internal arrangement and are not paid to the Club Support Service.]

We would like to do recycling to generate income. We can use the money for materials and tours.

One of the activities most often mentioned regarding fundraising possibilities was recycling and many did attempt this. It is, however, very difficult to make this activity viable as a source of income with the relatively small population, long distances and the lack of infrastructure, and for many clubs outside Windhoek or main centres recycling remained an idea that was never successfully implemented.

For some research participants the main reason for their involvement in environmental clubs is related to their job description or is linked to their work. These interviewees included teachers who see clubs as a practical part of teaching (which I will expand on in the next section), or extension workers from the MET whose responsibility it is to involve communities in environmental education or CBNRM (refer to chapter 1).

I have been involved since 1995 and after my transfer to Namutoni EE Centres, started telling other teachers about club activities. I got involved through Meryn and Graeme [former education officers at the centre] and stayed involved because it is part of my job description to help different groups.

Links to the syllabus – “a sort of after-school science activity”

As mentioned in chapter 1, the majority of club leaders are teachers of subjects that are regarded as ‘carrier’ subjects such as Life Science or Natural Science and Health Education. Some of the Life Science and Natural Science teachers viewed environmental clubs as a practical extension of the school curriculum. My analysis of the interviews with these club leaders suggests that the link between club activities and the syllabus could be valuable in that ‘abstract’ themes in the textbooks can be turned into practical activities. They also felt that they had access to information and club activities that support the syllabus, as these interviewees indicated:

The most important part of the club is the practical or experiential part of it because if you are talking in classroom they cannot comprehend what it is to conserve. It is too abstract in books. The club can be seen as practical Life Science exercise – a sort of after-school science activity.

In the Life Science book there is something about environmental problems. For example there is something on animal farming that fits with the syllabus. The link [with the club] is putting things in practical.

For Life Science teachers it [the club] is a means of getting practical information and activities.

One dimension of the value of practical extension of the curriculum relates to the philosophy of the education policy in Namibia, which emphasises the importance of relevant and appropriate learning experiences that allow learners to deal with the everyday challenges of life (MBEC 1993: 14). The importance of the ‘practical’ aspect that is implied here was also related to the more informal learning atmosphere of clubs and will be expanded on in chapters 6 and 7.

Even though there might be many good reasons for linking clubs with the syllabi through the ‘carrier subjects’, it became obvious to me that there were other teachers for whom the environmental clubs became a burden. For some of the Natural Science and Health Education teachers, the club had become a compulsory activity rather than a pleasure, as indicated by the following interview extracts:

The workshop for teachers first arose interest in that club and made teachers aware of these clubs but teachers do not know how to do this. Now the club leader is assigned by the principal even if not interested your name could be written next to the Earthcare club and you have to do it.

The worksheets from Tim and Rosie did help and support the syllabus; now it [the club] is just extra work.

I think here people do it because they have to – had to do it – it is part of the school curriculum. Some people including the learners [in Grade 7] do not want to do this anymore. It is good if you do it because that's what you want to do. There are different children [in other classes] that is interested and can do the activities that they want to do rather than having the club only to the syllabus.

The club leader from an Earthcare club that was one of the first 12 clubs to be established by the staff from IRDNC (see chapter 1) suggested that these clubs were now part of the tradition of the school and operated in set ways and not necessarily because learners or teachers are interested in the activities. The other staff at Wêreldsend still visit some of these schools, not with the intention of strengthening the Earthcare clubs, but rather to assist the Natural Science and Health Education teachers with practical activities that could support the syllabus, with specific focus on the Grade 7 learners. Even though the intention and focus of the staff at Wêreldsend had changed, there was such a strong association between the Wêreldsend centre and the Earthcare clubs in the mind of many teachers and learners that this changing focus had contributed to a change in the structure of the Earthcare clubs, as suggested by some teachers during the interviews:

At the beginning Earthcare club tackled many subjects. At that stage any teacher could have done that [Earthcare club activities]. Now it has changed; now it [Earthcare club leader] is only natural science teacher.

The learners involved [in this club] are all grade 7's. They are involved because it is part of the subject [Natural Science and Health Education]. It is not a separate group that get together. We have no activities except classroom things.

We have a club because it goes together with the school visits of the people from the [Wêreldsend] centre. We want to involve other learners than grade 7's because they leave every year and then we have to start all over.

These changes included the fact that most of the Earthcare clubs consisted of the Grade 7 class with the Natural Science and Health Education teacher as the club leader, and they met (often with IRDNC staff) once a month for a practical activity which was often regarded by the teachers, learners and principals as the Earthcare club activity. Another change was the fact that the Earthcare club was often a compulsory activity of these teachers and Grade 7 learners, and there was no continuation of activities because Grade 7 is the final year for primary school and learners leave the school to go to junior secondary schools.

The interviews and my observations suggested that some teachers are less enthusiastic when they regard the club as a compulsory activity. Hart (1997: 33) also comments on the value of mixing different age groups during activities. In my view, there seemed to be fewer learning opportunities for environmental clubs that are viewed simply as an extension of the classroom, especially in the context of current education practice. However, these impressions are linked to my own views of the possible contribution of the youth and are related to many of the other benefits of involvement in environmental clubs that emerged during the study, but they should nevertheless be carefully considered in the light of current constraints and the need for more formalised recognition (see chapter 6).

A combination of reasons

For many research participants it was very difficult to give a specific reason for becoming involved in clubs since a combination of factors were at play. These reasons included previous experiences, influence from others and

caring about the environment. Whereas in the previous examples the interviewees were able to identify the most important reason for their involvement, in the examples below research participants indicated that there was no single overriding reason, but rather a combination of reasons. In the first example, a nature conservation officer describes his involvement in clubs as a result of a combination of previous experiences, a change of career, a sincere wish to help others and the fact that it is now part of his job:

When I worked at the mine I saw how people are exploiting resources on continual basis and thought how long this can continue. When I change direction – from my heart I wanted to help my people as far as I can. In nature conservation I am working in the right division because I am directly involved with people. I can share my view to help the environment. Clubs is part of the ministry's brief but I enjoy it.

A club member in the Kavango region saw the club as being important in addressing environmental problems, but at the same time recognised that he was involved not only for this reason but also because of his interactions with other people and the opportunity to visit places and to raise funds to achieve all the things that he want to:

I am involved not only to solve environmental problems but also to strengthen the relationship between people, to visit interesting places and to come up with ideas to raise funds.

The quotations below are from a club leader who was exposed to many different influences including previous experiences, the influence of others and the anticipated benefits of working together in a group. One club member suggested that in addition to her interest and concern, her involvement with clubs has opened other possibilities and she can now also consider a future in an 'environmental' career:

I want to do something because I like nature. When I compare the past with present I must do something as a teacher and a person that is involved. I was a girl guide, a brownie – and were exposed to many environmental things. At college my lecturer interested me.

I have interest and love – I want to do something but do not know what to do. When I joined a club you come together as children and exchange ideas. With ideas you can go further. You can build a career for yourself because what I was thinking is when I finish school I like a career like travelling or tourism, to be a guide or nature conservation. I would like to work in an open environment.

The possibility of a future career was also envisaged by a club member from an unemployed youth group. He saw an opportunity to gain experience through his involvement with the club. At the time when I was interviewing him his club was assisting the MET with a survey during which they performed a drama for various communities. He had written all the scripts for the dramas and the club had given him the opportunity to express his natural talent for writing and interacting with people as a 'comedian':

Some [unemployed youths] are still at their homes doing nothing. We may have some better jobs in the future. If they need people with experience for future projects there is a difference if you in club for 2-3 years and those that have nothing. I enjoy it too. I would like to write dramas forever. I like the way I am with people in the community. I am a traditional carrier [hereditary trait] to make people laugh.

The quotations above illustrate some of the complex combination of experiences and influences that motivate leaders and members to participate in environmental clubs. Robottom's (1996: 51-52) research indicated that successful environmental educators were often involved in environmental education "because of personal commitment rather than perceived obligation" and that such commitment is an essential element of their orientation to their practice and the theories that guide that practice. According to him, we cannot identify one factor as the reason behind, for example, a caring attitude, since that search is a behaviourist attempt to identify one variable that can be isolated and controlled. The diverse and complex reasons for involvement that I considered in this chapter support the notion that we cannot identify any single factor underlying involvement in clubs.

Issues of motivation and reward

In an attempt to achieve a better understanding of how participation in club activities could be increased, I also considered how research participants viewed motivation. These were some of the comments related to motivation made by club leaders and other members in interviews:

Attitude play a very important role. We need a positive attitude towards environment. The involvement with other teachers and the head of the school [the principal] is very important. The clubs visiting EE centre or having fun also have to do with motivation.

In our situation not much to see around here. In bigger towns more options what to do and where to go. Our location makes outings more important to motivate participation. Any activity will still create interest but sometimes to come up with a worthwhile activity is difficult and maybe also why interest is falling. If we call a meeting to discuss a tour they all turn up.

But to encourage teachers involved in clubs we need some recognition and rewards like certificates. We have to motivate them to get involved like extra money because they are spending time after classes and staying behind.

Motivation is important aspect. In practical part they ask themselves why am I doing this? Is it for a better job, or bursary to study? How is it going to benefit me? School leavers are particularly interested because they are looking for the future. Many people are interested but we lose them because there are no opportunities.

There are lots of reasons why learners are involved. Some of the kids only join for fun. ... We cannot accommodate everyone and look at the ones that are serious. We can have time for fun like games but when it comes to cleaning up they stay away. Maybe a learner is really interested in the club and have all this motivation. Then the fact that they are not doing anything does not matter to that individual as long as they are coming together they are sitting discussing issues, for example, the Green Peace response was like this and why did they take this particular action. We compare how is this similar in Namibia. That is the problem with the club, different members have different interest.

From these responses we could identify the following as factors that could raise motivation or increase participation:

- ▶ Involvement on the part of others, especially the principal.
- ▶ Something that is interesting that members can look forward to.
- ▶ Something that is inspiring and fun like a tour.

- ▶ Activities that are successful and give a sense of achievement.
- ▶ Something that is regarded as worthwhile and for which there is encouragement, recognition and reward.
- ▶ Something that affords opportunities and options and develops an understanding of why or how members are going to benefit.
- ▶ An activity from which members can learn.
- ▶ An organisation that can accommodate everyone with different interests which allows them to come together and communicate, creating a social identity.

Rewards and identity

Many participants, club leaders and members also mentioned the importance of membership cards, T-shirts and certificates as motivating factors. Club leaders and members often expected to get such things and also related them to the establishment of an identity for environmental clubs. Club members and leaders who were interviewed regarded certificates and membership cards as being important for encouragement, motivation and involvement, as indicated by the following interview extracts:

It is important that learners and teachers need to be rewarded in the form of certificates, stickers, t-shirts and tours, then things will go on. It serves as encouragement and also makes others aware.

Other reasons [for involvement] are privileges and opportunities. Give some t-shirts – this creates identity and there is bigger reason for learners to get involved and motivated.

According to Hart (1997: 28-30), identity is a concept that is constructed through reciprocal interaction and is therefore not peculiar to specific individuals but is rather part of complex social processes. He emphasises the importance of establishing a strong sense of identity within a specific culture and recommends group-oriented rewards that can increase social cooperation.

The issue of identity and rewards is another dimension of the study that I would have liked to have explored further since we can ask if these tokens serve as 'empty' external rewards that are important only to those who lack personal commitment or interest, or if they are in fact symbols (Hart 1997: 29) that satisfy the need for an identity and establish a sense of belonging and recognition. Another possibility to consider is that club members might have become accustomed to small rewards and tokens during the establishment of the club movement (see expectations in chapter 6).

The idea of certificates and membership cards as symbols could be investigated by exploring the claims of symbolic interactionism, namely that "humans act towards objects and other beings on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them" (Schwandt 1994: 123-124). According to him (1997: 148-149) the meanings of symbols are "derived from social interaction and guide the individual through experiences and actions". This suggests that we can only understand the potential value of membership cards and T-shirts by understanding the meaning that they have for the individual club members and leaders.

Implications of these findings for environmental clubs in Namibia

This chapter highlighted some of the many and diverse reasons why teachers, learners, unemployed youths and extension officers are involved in clubs. Some interviewees' reasons were educational, while for others a sense of recognition, fun, belonging or just finding something to do was paramount. The fact that there are very few recreational activities in the rural areas emerged as an important reason for members to get involved in clubs, but club leaders also often regarded clubs as an important mechanism to keep the youth occupied with something constructive and positive. Club activities were frequently linked not only to keeping busy but also to the hope that there might be a job or better future involved. Some club leaders and members saw clubs as an opportunity to share ideas or to come up with alternatives, and to establish a social identity amongst members.

The club members involved in the study recognised aspects related to recognition and identity as being amongst the most important dimensions for the youth and suggested that environmental clubs can make an important contribution to learning social roles and developing social and personal identity. Despite this view of club members, aspects related to personal identity and social development are often ignored in the design and planning of environmental programmes for the youth. Clubs could, in my view, play an important role in providing stimulating social interactions, positive activities and opportunities to which members might not otherwise be exposed in their settings.

Involvement in environmental clubs is not only important for belonging and recognition, but can also give learners the confidence that they cannot acquire as individuals. Environmental club leaders and educators have to consider and develop skills for capacity-building and leadership as part of their efforts to strengthen the clubs. Environmental club planners and organisers should also take cognisance of the opportunities created by the clubs for greater exposure to job opportunities and fundraising possibilities, and plan accordingly. In Namibia we also need to consider the establishment of a strong club network, not only for social benefits but also for strengthening collective power to access information, support the actions of other clubs and cooperate to contribute to environmental change.

Discussions in this chapter also indicate that support from other role-players and from adult educators is a very important dimension of involvement in clubs. It was also evident, however, that the influence and motivation obtaining from organisations can achieve contradictory results if they increase dependency and encourage expectations that are not sustainable. Although there are no easy answers to this dilemma of support versus dependency, we need to remain critical of factors that might contribute to greater dependency. I will continue this discussion in chapters 6 and 7, but suffice it to say here that education for sustainability is an aspect that should be considered in every aspect of the support and planning of environmental club activities in Namibia.

During the interviews some of the club leaders indicated that the structure of the Earthcare clubs has not changed and that even though some felt that it was inappropriate and would have liked to have made some changes, they felt stuck with these arrangements. In my view, the most important implication arising from this analysis is the need to encourage open discussions between the various people involved in the administration and organisation of environmental clubs, and to remain flexible enough to respond to different situations and needs and remain open to suggestions from those involved.

Chapter 6

Relationships between environmental clubs, schools and communities that strengthen or limit contributions to environmental education

Introduction

This chapter explores the relationships between environmental clubs, schools and the broader community. I regard these relationships as being important for three main reasons that are based on my socially critical orientation to the study (see chapter 2). Firstly, since knowledge is constructed through social interaction, we need to consider the nature of the interactions between club members and leaders, and their broader community. These interactions and relationships are the focus of the first part of this chapter.

Secondly, environmental clubs do not function in isolation: club members and leaders are integral parts of the school and broader communities to which they belong. In chapters 1 and 2 I indicated that the orientation of environmental club members and leaders to environmental education is influenced by interactions with and trends within society, both nationally and internationally. The interactions of club members and leaders with their communities are thus embedded in broader social structures and the assumptions we make about these systems. In the second part of this chapter I will explore the effects and implications of these systems and the underlying assumptions that strengthen or limit the contribution of environmental clubs to environmental and social change.

Thirdly, socially critical orientations (see chapter 2) to environmental education indicate that environmental change is only possible within the context of broader processes of social transformation. I was therefore interested in the extent to which youths could facilitate change and the factors which constrain the capacity of club members and leaders to contribute to social transformation. In the third part of this chapter I will consider the role of the youth and environmental clubs in relation to change and social transformation.

Interactions and relationships between environmental clubs, schools and communities

Fostering and strengthening relationships

In response to my questions on this topic, research participants suggested that environmental club members have interactions with schools and broader communities through their activities. In some cases the clubs performed a drama or role-play for the school, or planned activities that the whole school took part in. Some club members suggested that their activities seemed to have sparked off some positive reactions in other learners, for example in the case of a school where some learners responded positively to the club members' request to close the taps:

During environmental days we performed a drama about water in the school hall: Everyone had fun, laughed and enjoyed. Now we tell them to close taps and some are responding.

We just planted some trees at the school and made the classroom beautiful with nice pictures on the wall. Some learners share the responsibility and are impressed by the way the trees look. Club members are also part of the [Conservo] competition. The principal announced this during assembly to the whole school.

According to the research participants quoted above, the relationship between schools and environmental clubs can be strengthened in a reciprocal way. Recognition by the whole school of the efforts and activities of club members strengthens the environmental clubs (see chapter 5), while their activities also stimulate interest in other (environmental) activities at school. In some cases (almost half of the interviewees) the interactions of club members extended beyond the school to involve members of the broader community. The following club members interacted with the community around the school through surveys and information-gathering visits to houses or through guest speakers:

We had own activities working with the community – we divide learners in groups and did a survey and collected information on the use of alcohol. We discussed how to solve the problems that they experienced. We are also working with other people in the community. We are bringing in people from the community like speakers.

For World Water Day we had questions. Two members together had to go to 3 houses and ask questions about water use. Afterwards we give some awareness about World Water Day and the importance of water.

Other community members are involved in environmental day celebrations and clean-up campaigns, and sometimes as invited speakers. Community members are also often involved directly or indirectly through clean-up campaigns in towns or through other organised activities, although the long-term effect of this involvement is not always clear, as suggested by the following club member:

We had a cleaning campaign in the nearby suburbs. The community was positive and just after the clean-up they followed the good example. Although it is not like that at the moment; now they went back to normal.

Club activities can also create the opportunity to meet or learn about other organisations outside the school or local community. One example is the involvement of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in the Khomas region. This NGO, which aims to ensure the long-term survival of cheetahs and their ecosystems, has an Educational Centre which is open for school visits. As noted in chapter 1, they also have an outreach programme and in one instance club members contacted the CCF:

We asked the CCF to come up for a lecture and the whole school attended. We [the club] also wanted to go for a visit to the forestry project but could not figure out who should go. It did not work [for the club] and the whole school attended.

We worked together with volunteer group from America to build the campsite at the CCF. I made lots of friends. It was the activity I enjoyed most. Now I want to go to America.

Even in those instances in which the environmental clubs members were not directly involved in communities, their objectives (see chapters 4 and 7) indicated that they regarded such involvement as one of the important dimensions of their activities. The positive aspect of this club involvement is that the whole school is exposed to

different organisations and to resources in communities. In one of the examples above, however, the club member indicated that it could also be problematic since there is then no 'special' benefit attached to being an environmental club member (see also rewards and recognition in chapter 5). I noticed such tensions during my visits to the environmental clubs (see chapter 3).

One club leader suggested that the relationship between environmental clubs and schools could also be improved through partnerships. In this example the agricultural students needed trees for their practical examination. These were supplied by the environmental club in return for the favour of watering them regularly (which they must, of course, do if they want good marks).

In our school [in the Kavango region] agriculture teachers are also very much involved. Some of the trees we bought are chosen for agroforestry for marks. We made a deal to give them trees but they are responsible to look after them; that is how they got involved.

The quotation above illustrates an agreement that was made between a club leader and an agricultural science teacher, and shows cooperation and planning in the distribution of responsibilities. It exemplifies the sort of partnership that is possible if club activities are viewed as an integral part of school activities. This partnership also indicates ways in which activities can be integrated with other subjects, thereby creating time for club members to complete other projects. Partnerships can thus also enhance team work and cooperation between club leaders, other subject teachers and learners to achieve set goals.

Partnerships are not limited to the relationship between the environmental club and the school, but sometimes also extend to the broader community. One club, for example, was invited by the Municipality to paint the hospital in the town. The Municipality arranged everything and contacted the school to find out whether the club could assist, and this was easy to organise since there was an interested and organised group at the school. Another club was able to support the efforts of their Municipality by responding to a new initiative:

I have seen a lot of changes in town. The municipality started putting up drums by themselves. We send notices to every town member to keep the town clean.

Being a member of an environmental club can create different opportunities for learners to interact with communities, and not all activities and projects need to be initiated by the clubs. The example above illustrates that environmental club members can collaborate with and support other initiatives and projects in their communities. One possibility could be to link club activities to the Agenda 21 initiative in Windhoek (see chapter 2) and a few other regions. Considering the number of organisations involved in environmental education in Namibia (see chapter 1), I would argue that there are many opportunities for environmental clubs to collaborate with other organisations. Other people in and external to a community can be involved in environmental activities as resource persons (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 312). The benefit of interaction with people in the community was also indicated by the following interviewees:

We have good relationship with extension officers. They come in and talk and assist with planning. I see that as improving relationships and networking. It strengthens working together. They [club members] sometimes call the extension officer without me [club leader] knowing about it. It exposes them to resources and avenues they did not know about and can use it in future.

Local agencies have been crucial in keeping the club alive. They are really important for example the MET assistance to take them [club members] to places. This also links with the community as working together with the extension officers.

The views expressed above indicate that environmental clubs, through interaction between members and the broader community, can establish new relationships or strengthen existing ones and, more importantly, that this collaboration and support is essential for keeping the clubs active and sustainable.

Links with schools and the learner-centred approach

A learner-centred approach to education is an important dimension of educational reform in Namibia, and many organisations have been involved in partnership with the MBEC in implementing changes in the formal curricula (see chapter 1). According to the education policy in Namibia (MBEC 1993: 60), a learner-centred approach implies recognition of learners' existing knowledge, interests and understanding; encouragement of young people's natural curiosity and eagerness to learn through meaningful tasks; appreciation of learners' perspectives; enabling of learners to think and take responsibility for learning; and the involvement of learners as partners in (rather than recipients of) educational growth.

At a workshop for club leaders about a year ago in Swakopmund, one teacher mentioned that clubs could play an important role in promoting a learner-centred approach to education and help to foster new kinds of relationships between learners and teachers. In response to questions on the topic, interviewees suggested the following:

The relationship [between teachers and students in the club] is different. Our teacher only welcomes us at meetings and discuss points that she have on the agenda. Then the chairperson [a student] could take over the meeting. We just interact and work through the chairperson. It is an open discussion – not the teacher talking and students sitting. I like to do things and do not want to sit and listen the whole day. The sharing is between the teacher and students but also from student to student. Through the chairperson we can all talk with respect.

The club is not like the classroom because someone is not teaching someone, everyone has ideas and sharing between. The difference in the club is that everyone has a chance to say what you want to say. We also play games. The club is also different because we got to know her [their teacher].

The club is very much different to the classroom. Learners are free and the ones to come up with suggestions. They [club members] came up with the suggestion that we should only speak English in club meetings. The atmosphere is different everyone is free to say what they want.

During the school hours they [learners] have to obey all their rules. During Arbour days they plan activities by themselves for the school. Education does not only take place in the class – we can also learn outside.

The discussions during the interviews supported the notion that classrooms are still very 'lecture-oriented' and involve formalised relationships between learners and teachers. Some club members experience a different sort of relationship with their teachers during club activities. I agree with Clacherty (1992: 26) who suggests that the best learning environments are ones in which "students gained confidence to express themselves openly and, in the process, were able to clarify their thinking, learn from others and experience personal growth", and it was

obvious that for some club members this was possible in environmental club meetings. Wals (1992: 53) considers the sort of environment that is conducive to learning and conceptual change as one that is “non-threatening, non-condescending and non-judgmental ... that will allow students to arrive at a new position through exploration and investigation, in cooperation with their peers”. This sort of learning environment allows learners to express themselves without fear of judgement and with confidence. Some interviewees indicated that they do experience the benefit of such learning environments through environmental clubs.

For many club members the experience of being able to relate to their teacher in a different way in addition to simply being listened to with respect was a very rewarding one. Club members particularly enjoyed the opportunity to openly share and exchange views and to interact with each other. From some it was obvious that club meetings and activities also provided a forum where they felt that they were heard and their ideas were respected. It seems that a club environment gave them the freedom to talk and listen to others, a sense of control over planning activities and an opportunity to interact in different ways with teachers.

Even though there are numerous constraints on educational reform (some of which I will consider in the remainder of this chapter), there is an indication that environmental clubs can create an opportunity for new learning experiences and different relationships between teachers and learners which can support initiatives aimed at a more learner-centred approach to education.

Communication, language and power

Although the discussions above indicate that environmental clubs can foster and strengthen relationships, I also realised during the study that only a few club members experience the open learning atmosphere, free exchange of information and interactive relationships just mentioned. Lack of open and free communication between learners, teachers and other community members emerged as one of the constraining factors that limits the role that clubs can play in schools and the broader community.

Discussions about communication problems during the interviews and at the National Club Leaders' workshop indicated that research participants had many different interpretations of and perspectives on these problems. For some interviewees the lack of communication meant not having access to telephones or other communication channels or resources which would enable contact and cooperative planning with other clubs:

We would like to have the club active and have good ideas but to stay in contact is a problem. Communication is a problem because we have no radio or phone.

We wanted contact with other clubs. We tried with one club near Windhoek to establish some sort of cooperation but they never responded. They never came back to us – it was a cul-de-sac. If we write letters we do not get response. We have communication problems because we are not on automatic service.

In some cases the perceived communication problems were not the result of a lack of access to resources, but rather they related to language and cultural differences:

What we can do here [at school] is not much 'cause we could not ask the people [in the community]. We want to meet with the headmen and ask the old people about plants but there are language problems. Many of the club members are not from this area. This is a boarding school.

There are limitations [of club activities] because we cannot speak their [the community's] home language. The older people cannot communicate with them [the learners]. The children are from different areas and those that are from here are not in the hostel. [At this school only the learners at the hostel are club members due to the difficulties associated with arranging extramural activities.]

The statements above indicate that the interaction of environmental club members with their surrounding communities were complicated by the fact that many learners go to schools in areas away from their families or communities. Although I realised that there must be ways to overcome the communication problems mentioned above, I had the feeling from discussions that these problems were also related to the cultural differences between ethnic groups. The extent to which club members perceived the town where they go to school as their community is questionable and needs to be investigated in future research since it influences the nature of the relationships and interactions with communities.

During the course of the study I was approached 'privately' by many club leaders and members who suggested that it is impossible for them to communicate openly and freely because some principals and senior teachers intercept letters and resources sent from the RF Environmental Education Project. Club members complained that some club leaders do not pass on important information to them and I could verify this by the fact that they did not know about letters I sent to the clubs regarding funding and competitions. In one instance even a personal invitation to a workshop was not passed on. Some club leaders also mentioned that other teachers appropriate (and never return) resources sent to the clubs for private use or as teaching aids in their classrooms.

One of the first things that entered my mind on hearing these complaints is that they could be a reflection of the growing commodification of information and the increasing competitiveness in modern societies to access information (these aspects are addressed in chapter 2). In the discussions mentioned above, the club members and leaders felt that they could not challenge principals and senior staff about these incidents and, in my view, this supports the notion that communication problems are essentially related to the free flow of information and the power dynamics that occur in relationships (see discussions related to critical theories in chapter 2). These discussions and the effects of the perceived power imbalances during the interview situation in the study (chapter 3) support the view of Cherryholmes (1998: 9) who suggests that "in a social world that is unequal, you do not get a democratic or open conversation simply by saying that everyone is free to talk". According to Greenall Gough and Robottom (1993: 312), the locus of control of different forms of communication varies and project participants should therefore consider the extent to which communication channels "reinforce external control over the project". Language is often only perceived as the 'medium of communication'. According to socially critical theories, language cannot be regarded as 'value-neutral' since discourses are shaped by social interactions and "thus to presume that meaning is independent of power is to misconstrue the nature of language" (Cherryholmes 1998: 50). Meanings are inherent in language.

Relationships and their inherent power dynamics can affect the activities of clubs in many ways. In this study the relationship dynamics were not only evident between teachers or parents and learners, but also between the

learners themselves. In the following extract, a club leader in Kavango region gives his impressions about relationships affecting members in the environmental club:

The relationship is a bit the same as in the classroom but there is also some difference. The members of the executive committee have greater involvement than some teachers. In the club the young ones [learners] sometimes feel inferior and unimportant. The big ones take advantage of them give them responsibilities for watering trees. In relationships imbalances always occur.

There is an indication that the senior learners who form part of the executive committee of the clubs regard themselves as 'top management' and that the younger members are the ones who have to do most of the work. I cannot help wondering if these relationships are modelled on the authoritarian approach of some teachers in the education setting (since the situation was being compared to the classroom), but whatever the reasons I think it is important that club leaders are sensitive to 'power imbalances' and challenge and address them as they occur in relationships through effective leadership skills and team-building.

The existence and effectiveness of environmental clubs depends on many different relationships, including those between principals and teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers and learners, learners and learners, and between all participants and the broader community. It is not my intention to denounce either the traditional or the 'pedagogical' authority (Shalem 1997: 3) of teachers and parents, but rather to indicate that the lack of communication so many research participants complained about can be related to the power inequalities inherent in different relationships. From a socially constructive framework the issues related to communication are concerned with several questions (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 313): "Communication between what parties? Through communication channels designed by whom? Who controls the messages that form the communicated discourse?" The challenge for environmental club leaders and members would be to consider ways in which they can create or use alternative communication channels that allow "enabling interactive discourse" (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 313).

In my view, such alternative communication channels are possible within the structure of environmental clubs, for example through participatory newsletters, pen pals, pairing clubs (the 'buddy system'), workshops and regional coordinators. Another possibility is the involvement of the media, especially local radio. According to Sichilongo, (1996b: 92), in Zambia, "The Chongololo Club of the Air (CCoA) has been broadcasting for every week in the last 16 years [and] is also linked to interactive circulating of books and leaflets."

Another strategy to improve the effectiveness of communication could be the involvement of traditional leaders. Many (12 out of 18) interviewees mentioned the importance of involving headmen and traditional authorities:

In environmental education we are mostly excluding the group that play an important role. Groups of headmen they are respected in their area. They are very important and will do a good job if we involve them. They are the heads of houses and villages and what we 'exposed' them will be exposed over a whole area.

Even though many interviewees supported the idea of involving traditional authorities, some club leaders and members suggested that there should be ways of involving the youth in decision-making. Club members expressed their wish to take greater control of environmental club organisation, as the comments below indicate:

At this stage the survival of the club is more dependent on the teachers in planning the activities and excursions but the existence of the club should actually depend on the learners.

The issue of control over planning and decision-making in environmental clubs was also raised at the Pan African Wildlife Club Generator (Pan African Generator, March 1996). Chadri (1996: 3) questioned the extent to which the environmental club movement can be regarded as “truly youth movements”. At the time of the cited workshop I supported the sentiment that clubs should be planned and controlled by the youth. During the study I reflected on this assumption and questioned whether they should be exclusively youth movements. My socially critical orientation emphasises the importance of learning together and highlights the extent to which clubs are influenced by their broader environment. Other writers emphasise the value of relationships between adults and children (Hart 1997; see also chapter 5) and the importance of resource people in collaborative projects (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 307) which question the assumption that activities should be exclusively youth-oriented.

In view of the findings of this study and the literature I have reviewed, I suggest that club projects and organisation should recognise their dependence on the cooperation of both members and leaders, and on the support of senior authorities (also see the discussion of structural support in this chapter). I support the view of other educators (Fien 1997: 15; Wals 1994: 166; Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 301, 307) that the youth should be involved in decision-making. Such involvement could be enhanced through, for example, leadership courses, capacity-building exercises, negotiation in planning, partnerships and the preference of all those for collaboration. The findings of this study indicate that environmental clubs could strengthen the social interactions between learners and community members through collaborative projects and, in my view, this is especially important in the context of the rich ethnic diversity of Namibia.

“... and then the clubs” – School and community support for environmental clubs

The relationships between clubs and other communities are complex and diverse. During the study I found it difficult to assess the nature of interactions between environmental clubs and their schools and communities. In response to questions regarding such interactions, all the interviewees could recall at least one incident in which their club was involved with the school and/or the community. However, the majority of interviewees had contradictory views about these relationships with regard to a lack of communication (see earlier discussions in this chapter) and the level of involvement, influence or support. In those cases where the club leaders were absent (see chapter 3) and where I asked other teachers and/or community members about the club, they had often never heard of it. My observations of different clubs (although sometimes too brief to confirm such complex relationships) tended to substantiate my general impression that the majority of environmental clubs did not have very effective cooperative relationships with their schools or communities. In my view, the activities of the environmental clubs were limited by the nature of the facilities, opportunities and structural support available from the school and the community.

The clubs that were supported by their schools were at an advantage. According to one interviewee, the benefit of the school setting is the access to resources, funds and the administrative structure of the school:

Look at the youth that do not have a teacher or structure. For them [unemployed-youth clubs] it is so much harder to get youth together and to organise events. We need to reach them in creative ways. At school they have access to more facilities and resources.

Others [at school] realise that we [club members] are doing something and achieving something. Now even school teachers give us funds. People start to care. We have litter bins around the school now.

Schools can support environmental clubs through their structures. The interviewees verified that it is easier for clubs thus supported to organise meetings, contact other organisations or speakers and use school material resources and facilities for meetings than it is, for example, for unemployed youth clubs. There are, however, also many often complex reasons why it is difficult to have a club at a school.

The study indicated that the broader education framework (see chapter 1) contributes to the administrative problems that most clubs experience. Since many schools are understaffed and crowded, it is often difficult to involve teachers in extramural activities. Some schools, especially primary schools in rural areas, have double shifts, which means that teachers, learners and classrooms are not available at all during the day for club activities. I do not know exactly how many clubs in Namibia are affected by double shifts, but this situation warrants future investigation since it affects the planning of club activities.

In addition to the organisational difficulties, many teachers and senior administrative staff place (despite the rhetoric of reform) a distinct emphasis on the production of good examination results (see discussion on recent trends in chapter 2). In my work with schools over the last three years it was my general perception (supported by public discourse) that teachers are evaluated on the basis of their 'pass rates' at the end of the year rather than, for example, on the contribution education makes to lifelong learning (see chapter 1). This view is supported by Vulliamy (1987: 13) who claims that "[A teacher's] progress is usually judged by the inspectorate purely in terms of their classroom and school performance [and the inspectors are] unlikely to value their wider contribution to the community." Even if this view is in conflict with the philosophical orientation of the MBEC, it was certainly widely held by teachers who participated in the study:

We are part time club leaders but as teachers our main responsibility is our work done as teachers. We have problems sometimes if the Ministry of Youth and Sport would like us to take part in their activities but in our own Ministry certain things needs to be done. We have to produce good results, then also sport and then the clubs.

Other teachers are involved sometimes but teachers are also involved in other leisure activities like soccer. That's why they are not involved in clubs.

For the first time we have seen recycling addresses. We would like to recycle to raise funds. There's money for other travel for example sport but we [the environmental club] have problems.

These comments are good indicators of the hierarchy of school priorities, namely good results, sport, and then (as suggested by the interviewee during the discussion) if there is sufficient time, environmental clubs. In my view, these priorities need to be questioned in the light of the major goals of the education policy (see chapter 1) and the focus on the "relationship between education and the environment" (MBEC 1993: 58), as well as the orientation of the SADC policy to education for sustainability (see chapter 2). The Namibian education policy

aims at the development of environmental awareness and specifically enjoins educators “to promote involvement in practical activities to preserve and sustain the natural environment” (MBEC 1993: 58). In view of these policies, the lack of priority given to environmental clubs by MBEC officials needs serious reconsideration.

Other factors which influence the activities of clubs at schools include the impermanence of staff and the fact that all activities have to fit in with the school year plan. All the clubs that I visited mentioned the lack of transport as one of the main constraints to their activities. Another complaint from club leaders was that most of the things that club members tried to do or build up during the school year, like planting trees, operating nurseries, organising clean-ups and fixing water taps are neglected during the school holidays. My observations confirmed that a large number of trees do not survive after tree-planting campaigns. Club leaders and members complained that they effectively start activities from scratch after every school holiday:

It is hard for the club at the school, because it takes so long to get going in school year and then the learners are good [involved and active] and year is over. It is a frustration.

Club members sometimes leave and club will die, but if interesting to the school other learners will continue.

We get plants to plant in the school garden but we have a problem that the plants do not survive the school holiday . They get no water or are destroyed or eaten by goats.

Other interviewees verified that environmental clubs were influenced by the type of administration and existing power arrangements within the school (see section on communication, language and power in this chapter). One club leader reflected on the responsibility taken on by teachers for extramural activities like clubs:

Only a small group of teachers are involved in everything. Others go home after school. There should be some way we can change this at schools because this [clubs] also help to strengthen the relationship between learners and teachers. Maybe learners have problems and are able to talk informally to teacher during club meeting. They do not like to talk in the office.

This comment indicated that some schools have an unequal distribution of jobs and responsibilities and, as I can confirm from my own teaching experience, some teachers end up doing many more (extra) activities than others. This is, of course, true of many other occupations and is, in my view, related to a number of factors, including the effectiveness of management and levels of personal commitment. Nevertheless, enthusiastic club leaders suffer particularly due to a combination of the uneven workload and the low priority given to environmental clubs.

Fortunately I also visited schools where management staff were addressing these administrative problems. One school, for example, had an Extramural Committee (EMC) which functioned effectively to integrate environmental club activities into the school year plan. The leader of the club at this school explained:

The environmental society is part of the EMC and also part of the school budget – although very small. Each extra-mural activity is listed and given 3 weekends on the school programme. The club weekends are put in the programme on the year plan. It helps to have club as part of the planning.

In my view, this arrangement presents a number of interesting possibilities for addressing some of the structural and administrative problems associated with the management of environmental clubs. The advantages include

the fact that more teachers will be informed about clubs and that there could be better distribution of responsibilities, and, especially if these committees are supported by senior officials of the MBEC, environmental clubs could gain greater recognition.

One club leader suggested that the problems they experience were the result of the lack of support from their community. He explained that he could not get the club involved in clean-up campaigns (which was perceived by these club members as a big problem since the rubbish was polluting their main water source) because there were no waste management facilities in the village:

We do not have a community dumping site and there is a problem with the rubbish removal. Maybe they come to collect rubbish once a year and now we pick up rubbish at the school but have to dump it in the field again. It does not make sense.

The interviewee expressed his frustration that clean-ups were really senseless activities since they were not supported by the rest of the community through the establishment of a communal dumping site. This club leader was troubled by the fact that they could not fence off the water source (due to the location and the lack of resources) and that the club's awareness campaign seemed to have little effect in the community. The tree-planting efforts of another club in the Kavango were derailed by community members who came to fetch water at the school taps and took plants home or destroyed them. He could not explain why there was such destruction by the community members:

Forestry donated some trees but most died in the holiday. Nobody remained behind to water them, nobody took care. People [from the community] here do not fetch water from the river but from the taps at school. They take the plants home. I do not know why they are so destructive.

Some problems suggested above are related to the fact that there are no caretakers or guards at many of the schools, but they could also be related to the notion that schools are not the responsibility of the community. In my view, this apparent lack of involvement on the part of the community in school activities could be related to the education history (see education context in chapter 1) as well as to the extent to which the school-community relationships are – or are not – characterised by 'reciprocal interaction' (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 306).

The initiatives of the MBEC to promote the concept of lifelong learning and community learning centres are to some extent motivated by the lack of interaction between schools and communities and the traditional view of schooling that limits the notion of education to formal education (Workshop on Adult Learning in Namibia, 1998). Writers like Vulliamy (1987: 12) caution that environmental educators should not ignore the socio-political context that contributes to "deep-seated attitudes concerning the role of schooling".

During this study I often questioned why there was not more involvement from the community in the schools. For example, children from the community could continue with the upkeep of plants during the holidays. Learners and teachers are an integral part of communities, and schools are affected by different internal and external circumstances. I also asked if the lack of continuity was in some way related to the notion that the school is a separate and distinct entity that is not related to the community, and if so, why? According to Vulliamy (1987: 12), "Schools tend to reflect the structures of the society of which they are part." He suggests that the focus on academic performance could be a reflection of the desire for 'upward' social mobility in

response to the inequalities of societies. These are only a few of my journal reflections, but I feel that they point to an aspect that could be explored in greater depth.

Formalisation of clubs: Issues of support and recognition

During my work with environmental clubs as well as my visits to some schools that had clubs listed with the RF Environmental Education Project, it was evident that not everybody is equally involved and interested in environmental clubs. One club member confirmed the point made earlier in this chapter that the environmental club is not taken as seriously as other activities at their school:

Now we mostly do planning. Other projects are not running. It is a very slow process and problems are out of our control. The soccer team practice every week. When we only go out every two years members lose touch with the environment and they are not taking it as that important. They [the club members] say if we only do environment club once in two years then it must not be that important.

In many interviews club leaders and members indicated that they felt that the environmental clubs were not really taken seriously by other teachers, many principals and the MBEC. The participants at the National Club Leaders' Workshop identified the lack of recognition and support of environmental clubs by the government, principals, the majority of staff members at schools and some learners as one of the main problems (the lack of resources and training being one of the other problems). The participants also attempted to give some reasons for the lack of recognition from the different groups and suggested, for example, that since principals did not know enough about environmental clubs, a workshop should be organised specifically for them.

One of the important reasons for the involvement of club members and leaders (as mentioned in chapter 5) is recognition. Recognition for environmental clubs is (in my view and those of other writers) related to the extent to which the activities are "perceived as socially significant by the community as well as by the school participants" (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 309). The activities of environmental clubs therefore need to be seen as initiatives in and on behalf of communities which, according to the interviewees quoted below, is not the case in many of the environmental clubs in Namibia:

Environmental clubs are being pushed to the background. The teacher involved is having to do all the work. Even with the school top management or top structure or principal, people in the department are not taking it seriously.

We do not get much encouragement from them [school staff and community members]. This is also the reason why not more learners are interested because if the whole school is involved they are there to see what we are doing. After the filming [our RF project team organised with the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) to involve one club for a youth series on environmental awareness] the whole school was interested. The problems is that the schools themselves may be thinking that it [the environmental club] is only passing time.

If there is general perception (as suggested by these club members and reinforced by some of my experiences) that the youth are only "passing time" and not making a significant contribution to the improvement of the environment, one can expect that their efforts are not 'taken seriously' but are rather 'being pushed into the background'. Since recognition by schools and communities is an important motivating factor (see chapter 5), it needs to be addressed in future planning of environmental club activities.

The National Club Leaders' Workshop participants suggested that the lack of support for environmental clubs is a result of 'bigger' issues which include the lack of recognition and credibility for environmental education in Namibia. The workshop participants, for example, supported the claim that the environmental education policy was not yet formally recognised and that in cases where there are references to environmental education in policies, these were not implemented or were given low priority. The important point that was evident at the workshop was that many of those involved in clubs regard recognition from senior government officials as one of the key factors required to stimulate support from other groups. During the interviews these club leaders expressed similar views regarding the 'credibility' of environmental education (and clubs):

Environmental clubs at school are not taken seriously because some of them are not having teachers involved. Teachers are not taking it [the club] serious. Sometimes other teachers do not attend the meetings. Maybe they think it [environmental education] is not worthwhile.

Some teachers are not involved in the clubs. We have to look much broader to see why they are not involved. We also have to see the history. The development of environmental education itself started very much narrow. [He explained that environmental education started as conservation education which focused to a large extent on the preservation of animals; and that because of this focus there is little reason for teachers to be involved.] There is a lack of credibility for them [teachers].

According to Katoma (1995: 117-118), "The success of environmental education in Namibia relies to a large extent on the various key citizens, such as decision-makers, if it is to receive national status and recognition. These decision-makers include the policy-formulators, policy-implementers and Regional Councillors."

When I embarked on this study my orientation to environmental education (see chapter 2) provided a framework that indicated that environmental clubs could function "as a form of environmental education occupying the margins of the school curricula" (Robottom 1996: 54). This peripheral orientation would allow committed teachers and club members to plan and conduct activities that are non-prescriptive and non-restrictive, and create the opportunity for control over and spontaneous involvement in environmental education programmes. The findings of the study, however, indicate that this orientation ignores practical realities and the perceptions of those involved in environmental clubs as well as their socio-political context.

The current attempts to standardise environmental education and formalise the environmental club movement (see chapter 2) are related to the need for recognition of environmental education. The formalisation of environmental clubs will, however, affect their organisation, structure and activities. If clubs are formal and official (e.g. compulsory), those with authority (who seemed to be very important from the perspective of those involved in the clubs) may give greater recognition to club members and leaders. At the same time the formalisation of clubs may diminish personal commitment (see chapter 5), flexibility and the ability of club leaders to respond to unique and diverse challenges. According to Greenall Gough and Robottom (1993: 305), the significance of action projects is "located in the specific historical, political and economic contexts". In my view, there is thus inherent tension between the need to formalise (and gain official recognition for) environmental clubs in Namibia and the need to participate in club activities and projects which are socially relevant and can contribute to educational change. This tension (and its implications) needs to be highlighted in discussions and debated within the socio-political context of environmental clubs in Namibia.

“If they are paid more it would be cleaner” – Expectations of club members and leaders and their implications for club activities

During the course of this study I realised that the history of the development of environmental clubs, the basic philosophy of their members and the previous experiences of those involved in clubs need to be considered carefully in order to understand the role that clubs play or could play in environmental education in Namibia. The historical context and the guiding beliefs and expectations of club members and leaders influence their perceptions about the roles and responsibilities of environmental clubs in contributing to environmental and educational change.

Some of my observations and discussions with club leaders regarding their expectations are illustrated in the following interview extracts:

We have less members this year because they are just sitting around and did not have a tour last year. The previous year we went to Etosha and few times to Brandberg. We do many outings, The main reason for few members this year is that we only have meetings with no action.

I promised them a trip but it never materialised, then they lost interest. Some of the members have lost interest because of that talking [meeting and planning] but stopping short of implementation. Transport is the most serious problem we are facing. We also tried to plan trips to other places but transport is always a problem.

The connections between the expectations of the club members, the types of activity that were planned and the problems that they experienced are evident from these examples. The findings of the study indicated that all the clubs want to go on educational tours and visits (see chapter 3), but the availability of transport is an undeniable problem in Namibia. As a result, many club leaders and members suffer the frustration of not being able to implement their planned visits.

In addition the earlier activities of the Earthcare clubs (see chapter 5) and the financial support from the RF Environmental Education Project created the expectation that environmental clubs are entitled to go on educational tours. Even though my intention (and that of the previous Earthcare club organisers – see chapter 1) is to create the opportunity for diverse learning opportunities and exposure and to strengthen the capacity of teachers to continue with environmental club activities on their own, the nature of these activities and the fickle nature of donor support do not allow such expensive activities to continue on a sustainable basis.

The funding requests for tours and visits that I received from most environmental clubs during the course of my involvement indicate that these expectations have been firmly entrenched. In addition some Earthcare club leaders indicated (see chapter 5) that clubs have become associated with the types of activity that they started with, as illustrated by the following quotations:

We think of how things starts right from the beginning. They [Earthcare club organisers] just give learners stickers and badges as motivation and maybe that idea is still in their minds of the learners and teachers.

When we started [with the clubs] at Wêreldsend they gave the name and constitution and after that they [the organisers] got sponsorship and the truck. The learners knew that the truck is the thing we use to care for our earth. Maybe they [learners] now want any reward and want to organise tours. Can the centre assist?

Learners and teachers have formed a picture of what Earthcare club is from the way that it was started. Now if they think Earthcare club they think if all the things are not the same it is not Earthcare club. I think it created a picture. I know Earthcare club as a specific idea [which according to his description is equated with all the activities and types of support that I have described in chapter 5].

The workshops, materials, activity sheets and visits provided in the initial stages by Wêreldsend and later also by the RF Environmental Education Project seem to have created expectations amongst the club leaders and members of what sorts of activity to engage in, the extent of support to be expected and the various responsibilities of those involved. These expectations are still evident and have indeed become entrenched in the minds of environmental club members and leaders.

These abiding perceptions about clubs have several implications for their sustainability. One of these is that club leaders feel that they cannot continue without resources, access to transport and sponsorship or the 'expertise' of the organisers. Most of the clubs that I have been working with (as evinced by their letters) and all of the club leaders who were interviewed complained about the lack of resources like books, videos, money and transport, and this was usually given as the main cause where clubs ceased to be active:

The most important thing was that they [the organisers] designed materials and got sponsorship from Enviroteach and Action magazine. The activities were included within the magazine. Learners were mostly interested in colouring in and they enjoyed it. The teachers do not get those magazines [any longer]. Maybe if we have sponsors that teachers can still get magazines, then we can continue.

The activities stopped because of lack of money. Teachers have to start contributing out of their own pockets. If we take learners out for a day we have to provide food, the parents expect it. The shops sometimes give us sweets but the older learners are not satisfied with that. The main problem is sponsorship and money. Some activities cannot take place without money.

It is not my intention to question the lack of educational resources at many schools in Namibia, as this is a very real problem. I would like, however, to indicate that in some cases the perception of a 'lack of resources' is also related to the expectations and perceptions of what environmental clubs are and what they should be doing (see chapter 4). The extent to which the perceived lack of resources and the non-sustainability of environmental clubs are influenced by the expectations of club leaders and members is illustrated by the following extracts from interviews with club leaders:

For them [teachers] clubs is an extra-curricular thing and they are not getting anything from it like recognition and money.

We planning a clean-up and only few of learners turned up. They asked but after the clean-up 'what are we going to get.' They say there should be something like a cool drink. They enjoy that to get them involved. There is not much for them to do around here. If they know that something like a braai [barbecue] is planned after clean up then they will do.

Our club [unemployed youths] did a drama at the trade fair. Afterwards they picked up all the cans. They only got N\$ 5.00 for a whole morning's work. That turned them off. It is not a decent income and they are not interested. If they are paid more it would be cleaner.

Whenever we [teachers] have a workshop, the travel, accommodation and everything is paid for us. If we travel away from our houses there will be something given to us for the time that we are away from our houses, something like money. If we go away we are used to getting something. We are used to it because it happened in the past.

The views expressed above supported a fairly general perception (which other colleagues confirmed during workshops) that rewards are sometimes an important (or even dominant reason) for getting involved in environmental clubs. These discussions about rewards are also related to aspects of motivation and identity which I mentioned in chapter 5. The role of international donors and aid agencies and their relationships with environmental education, specifically with regard to the sustainability of environmental clubs, also need to be investigated in future research (especially in view of the last quotation above regarding per diems at workshops).

In my view these comments raise critical issues regarding the role of youth clubs in environmental education. In some ways the need for rewards is reflected in the basic principles of the CBNRM approach (which states that people do not manage their environments sustainably unless they perceive and experience the direct benefit of such actions.) However, the focus on benefits and rewards contradicts or ignores many of the other reasons for involvement (see chapter 5), as well as the diverse roles that environmental clubs could play which emerged during the study. In my view, the perceived need for external benefits or rewards could be a cycle of self-validating reduction (see the discussion on the contribution of the youth later in this chapter). We, as educators, would indeed have cause for concern if club members and leaders expressed little or no understanding of environmental clubs' value and benefit in the long term.

“That’s not how we do things!” – Can club members contribute to social change through environmental clubs?

Expectations are not only related to the type of activities club leaders and members want to undertake, but also more broadly to what they expect or are expected to achieve. If we view environmental problems as being complex, interrelated and linked to broader social, economic and political factors, would it not be, as Hart (1997: 8) suggests, “naive and irresponsible to suggest to children and youth that they can help make a difference”? The following comments of research participants suggest that they might share the concerns expressed by Hart:

The influence of school kids are very limited compared to adults. Messages from adults are more important than a kid telling father what to do. Adults have more power to enforce views. Traditionally speaking adult do the teaching in the house and views are imposed by adults. Clubs alone are not effective, we also need adults to cover a broader base.

It is difficult for school children to convince business people. They should try and go with adults if they want to change things and they should start with the tribal chiefs.

We are not a challenging tradition. Change have to take place within the limit or capacity of learners who are still young. It is hard to believe what young people say. Old people have experience of life. They witness lots of things in life. The young only bring western ideas and that is not how we do things.

These comments suggest that the perception exists that the contributions of children and the youth are limited by their lack of influence and experience and by cultural norms. Hart (1997: 8) also mentions that “The power struggles involved in processes towards greater social and economic equality and redistribution of resources [could mean] that some of the local [and national] power structures are too well established for any local empowerment programme [like clubs] to modify.” (See discussion on problems related to land issues in chapter 1.) Club members expressed similar views from their perspectives regarding the ‘older generation’, as illustrated by the following interview extracts:

It is difficult to change beliefs. There was no communication between nature conservation and community because they see them as police. The youth can play a role to improve communication and relationships. We can create a better understanding of each other.

Parents would listen if they see the examples from learners and see that they are trying to help. It is against the culture to challenge parents but maybe we can tell our uncle, “do not throw plastic bag there” and maybe he can tell others. But we have to show respect for the elders.

All interviewees indicated that they saw a need for change, whether it be social, cultural or environmental. The club members (although often very respectful of elders, authorities and traditions) presented the viewpoint that they see it as their role to contribute to change. These club members thus perceived it as their responsibility to challenge a range of issues but often viewed their role quite realistically as assisting, showing the other side, improving relationships and finding appropriate ways to share their concerns.

Many club leaders also emphasised that it was important for the youth to work towards change. These interviewees felt confident that the youth could make a difference and believed that they should challenge the views and actions of others. A club leader from an unemployed youth group suggested that it is not only important but essential that the youth are involved and regarded them as the “pivotal generation”:

There are changes in culture and youth have a responsibility to challenge. We are living in a dynamic world. There are many alternatives and we should try to help the situation. Changes should involve things like recycling and to do away with things that cannot be recycled.

I think the youth can make an important contribution, they can take a stand. Everyone is saying that the youth do not care, that they are apathetic. It is a logical choice to use the youth to see a future in it again. It involves them in focusing on their region – rather than just wanting to move to Windhoek. Instead of running away from their problems, we need to inspire them otherwise we lose them. They are a pivotal generation.

She related the importance of the active involvement of the youth not only to solving problems but also to a response to the context of unemployment, urbanisation and the feelings of apathy that many of the out-of-school youth experience (see also environmental context in chapter 1).

As the earlier quotations indicate, some of the research participants regard the age-related abilities of and cultural restriction on the youth as realities that limit club activities and initiatives. Another angle, according to Weston (1996: 115-117), is that "Certain expectations are of such character that they induce the kind of behaviour that will cause the expectations to be fulfilled." This notion is related to what Weston regards as a "cycle of self-validating reduction". For the clubs this could imply that the youth could be 'disvalued' (by the perception that they are too young, inexperienced, apathetic, full of 'western' ideas) and as a result that their contribution becomes 'devalued' (in the sense that it does not really make any difference). This could in turn reinforce the original idea and perpetuate the cycle.

Are there limitations to what the youth can do, and if so, what are these limitations? Or are we 'reducing' the contributions that they can make? These are critical questions at the heart of the 'limitations' discussion. They are also related to the notion that environmental education is more than a message; that from a socially critical perspective it should also involve critical reflection and action (see chapters 1 and 2). The perception that the youth have limited ability to contribute to real change could also be the underlying reason for the lack of credibility that many of the environmental club members and leaders have experienced (see earlier discussions).

In view of the contradictory understandings of the roles that the youth might perform in relation to change, I questioned other research participants about whether we should regard the efforts of the youth as being limited. One club leader at the National Club Leaders' workshop suggested that the youth are not limited but have boundaries of experience, and that these boundaries can be overcome or extended with support and cooperation. Hart (1997: 8) supports this view and argues that adults should not attempt to convince the youth that there are no barriers or boundaries obstructing their efforts, but should rather help them to understand what these boundaries are and how they function. In Hart's view, "The key to dealing with children's involvement is honesty and transparency."

According to Hart (1997: 8, 38-43), children's participation should be regarded as a "democratising experience", which suggests that children should be increasingly involved in decision-making and that participation as a process should be based on negotiation. Hart distinguishes 'true' participation from social mobilising, the latter being "carrying a message from adults to children". Since the mobilisation of children could take place without their understanding the issues involved, Hart advocates that programmes be oriented towards "participation rather than social mobilising". The clubs movement and the activities of the youth should thus not be seen as product-driven actions, but rather as a process of conscientisation. As mentioned earlier, Wals (1992: 55) suggests that we should focus on "manageable local issues of the students' interest" and give "opportunities where they can create solutions by themselves in cooperation with community resources".

Implications of the findings for the role of youth clubs in environmental education

From the discussion above it seems obvious that there are many different aspects to the contribution of the youth to change through their involvement in environmental clubs.

There are expectations that the youth (in environmental clubs) could contribute to environmental education, but the fact that they are also often viewed as being limited by their age and experience and by cultural

traditions has very important implications for how we view their contributions. These views and the assumptions on which they are based need to be clarified. In my view, the money and time spent on environmental education (and specifically on clubs) is essentially wasted if those involved in clubs (and those who support them) do not believe that the youth can contribute to environmental change.

Some views expressed in the study (and the literature) hold that it is possible to create opportunities through which the capacity of the youth to participate could be maximised. This should be considered in planning and structuring movements like clubs. Hart (1997: 29) suggests that an enabling organisational structure should allow for "complexity, ... the opportunity to play a range of roles, ... not hav[ing] an overdetermined culture, ... creating a sense of responsibility and identity, ... providing structural support and positive role-modelling and ... increasing the participants' sense of competence". He also recommends participation in one project that allows for a wide diversity of roles rather than many disparate and isolated activities.

Youths who are involved in environmental clubs should understand the complexity of the issues involved and the limitations within which they operate, as well as the contributions that they can make. Children and the adults who work with them should therefore be clear about the 'boundaries of their own experience' and the actions that are within their reach. In my view, this also suggests that it is the responsibility of educators not to create 'impossible dreams' but to stimulate social dialogue and to negotiate the goals of environmental club members in terms of the context of the specific environmental club. At the same time adult educators should work with them to extend the range, field and depth of their experiences (to be discussed in chapter 7).

Change is often associated with young people while preservation is related to the older generation and 'traditional' culture. In my view, these perspectives suggest that we often needlessly position change and preservation in opposition to each other, in much the way that development has often been regarded as the opposite of conservation (see chapter 2). In many instances this may be true, but I do not find the idea a very useful one as a point of departure for environmental club activities.

There should be preservation and changes. We cannot only preserve because things will go in their natural way. We have to change something, some things should change and some should be preserved.

In my view, interactions should be seen from a socially constructive orientation which assumes that all people, regardless of age, have something to contribute to the learning process (see chapter 7). This would allow environmental clubs to use community (human) resources more effectively and to involve the whole community in the process of shaping changes that are required to meet multiple social and environmental challenges.

The findings from the study indicate that youth clubs can contribute to educational change through more open and sharing interactions and new relationships, especially with the broader community. If community members were to feel that their contributions and experiences are valued, cooperation would, in my view (supported in Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993), only be enhanced. This study has, however, also indicated that clubs are significantly influenced by the structure, orientation to education and administration of schools, and that they therefore need to be incorporated into the overall planning of school (and, where possible, community) activities.

New processes should be set up to allow the youth to participate in change, for example to negotiate time for club activities with teachers and principals, or to take increasing responsibility for planning and implementing projects. The findings indicate that spontaneity and internal reorganisation of environmental clubs is not possible without clarification of the assumptions regarding environment and education, and without some sort of structural support (e.g. regional coordinators). Most club leaders reported the need for capacity-building and skills training to allow for greater participation on the part of the youth.

Club leaders and members noted some factors which constrained their involvement and others which could contribute to more active and successful environmental clubs in Namibia. One of the most important was that their activities were not supported or were regarded as unimportant or 'not worthwhile' by some teachers, principals and senior officials of different ministries. This lack of recognition and support needs to be addressed with firm strategies, one of which could be the implementation of school environmental policies (Le Roux 1998) or collaboration with other existing projects and initiatives. The debate regarding the extent to which clubs should be formalised will have to be negotiated between the different role-players involved in clubs. The importance of support and recognition from principals and policy-makers suggests that those involved in environmental clubs will have to find ways of balancing a more formal structuring of clubs with the flexibility and responsiveness of the peripheral orientation suggested earlier.

Chapter 7

Views of education and their implications for the role of clubs in environmental education

Introduction

Although I introduced aspects related to education and the school environment in chapter 6 (and elsewhere), the emphasis of the preceding chapter was mostly on the structural support and type of relationship that characterise the interactions between clubs and schools. In this chapter it is my intention to extend the notion of education beyond 'schooling' and consider the perceptions (and underlying assumptions) of club members and leaders regarding education, and the implications of these perceptions for the role of youth clubs in environmental education. According to Greenall Gough and Robottom (1993: 308), the general emphasis given to environmental education in schools has been on 'environment' rather than 'education'. In this chapter I hope to address this often neglected aspect of environmental education.

Within the socially critical framework outlined in chapter 2, environmental education is taken to encompass a socially constructivist view of knowledge and a critical understanding of the complexity of environmental interrelationships and learning processes aimed at increasing the capacity and competence of learners to participate collectively in socially relevant actions. My framework for this study also suggests that environmental education is oriented towards educational change and should consider the quality of the learning processes in which club members and leaders are involved.

In this chapter I will discuss some of the orientations to education that were evident during the interviews, as well as the ways in which these manifest themselves in actual club activities. These views include education as awareness, deficit views of knowledge and experiential learning. Finally I will discuss the implication of these views for the role of environmental youth clubs in environmental education.

Education as 'raising awareness'

All the interviewees in the study either mentioned raising environmental awareness as a goal or referred to it at least once during the interviews. Increasing environmental awareness was also mentioned during the National Club Leaders' Workshop as one of the key activities of environmental clubs. The following quotations of club members describe the goals of their environmental clubs:

In the club we get ideas what can be done to promote environmental awareness. We are going out and try to convince and influence others, for example the headmen – those with power. We want to educate the community about issues and the best way to create awareness is through drama.

The reasons for having our club is to give people more environmental awareness. People are so negative when it comes to the environment.

One of the most prevalent views of the role of environmental clubs (and environmental education, if one consider public discourse) is that they should create or raise awareness, and some club leaders and members regarded this as a core activity. Awareness creation as a broad aim for environmental education has been discussed and debated by many writers (e.g. see Clacherty 1992). It is, as mentioned in chapter 1, one of the aims outlined in policy documents of the MBEC. Despite being noted as a priority activity or goal of environmental clubs, I often got the impression during interviews that club leaders and members were not very clear about this concept. It was often difficult to establish what participants meant when they talked about raising awareness or even how and why they believed this should be done.

One club member from Kavango explained his understanding and interpretation of the concept 'awareness' thus:

I think you are going to create more interest in club and they [club members] would understand it better. If they are throwing papers around we can say you are also going to have a place like that. They can compare because they know what it looks like. We are going to create more environmental consciousness within members.

This quotation suggests that some interviewees regarded raising awareness as 'convincing or influencing others', 'educating about', 'increasing understanding' or 'creating consciousness'. Typical dictionary definitions relate 'awareness' to 'having knowledge', or 'being well-informed' or 'interested' or 'having a sense of' (Blackburn 1994: 32, 130). There are, however, many interpretations, the range including 'wisdom', 'understanding' and Paulo Freire's notion of 'consciousness':

Being conscious ... is a radical form of being human. It pertains to beings that not only know, but know that they know. The act of learning is a creative act that involves critical comprehension of reality. The reading of a text now demands a reading within the social context to which it refers (Freire 1978: 24).

If we compare the interview extracts above with these interpretations of 'awareness', it is clear that there are not only different interpretations of the concept, but also variations in focus. In the first example, people who should be 'targeted' include the headmen and (fairly vaguely) 'the community'. The statement from the club member from Kavango, and the discussion related to it, suggest that the aim of the club is to educate club members.

From a socially critical orientation (see chapter 2), 'awareness' entails not only teaching other people what they should know or should not be doing, but is also about developing a sense of consciousness as we discover what we already know or re-think what we have always known. According to Von Sandan and Eviã (1993: 99), the Latin origins of the word 'education' are twofold – to guide or transmit, and to draw out – and these imply that we are trying to discover or again look at what is already there. Robertson (1993: 9), drawing on a constructivist framework, suggests that learning takes place when people integrate new information and meaning into what they already know and understand about their environment. This view challenges the deficit views of knowledge that claims that we need to raise awareness because some people do not know or are ignorant.

Deficit views of knowledge

My research findings and personal observations of the activities of environmental clubs in this study indicate that the most prevalent understanding of 'awareness' in the context of environmental clubs is associated with the positivistic idea of receiving knowledge that can be observed and verified through the senses (see chapter 2).

One of the implications for this orientation is that people either have or do not have knowledge. Some (7 out of 18) research participants felt that communities are not aware of environmental problems, to the extent that this is one of the main reasons for having a club:

We have problems of overgrazing. People have many cattle and if it carry on it is going to have a big problem on the environment. Farmers keep a lot of cows. It had to change now. It [the problem] is because of ignorance, they do not know.

We [the community] do not know anything, I [a club leader] only knew what was around my mother's house but did not know other places and trees which grow in those areas.

We need a positive attitude. It [littering] is more than a problem of not caring. For them [the community] it is nothing wrong, for them it is normal. Everyone needs to realise that it is clean and must like to live where it is clean.

Some people are doing bad without knowing or thinking, just because it's habit. If we as club members take a positive attitude others will realise their bad habits.

Some of the comments above suggest that other people (and the informants themselves in the past) are in a state of ignorance and therefore have negative attitudes. If one looks at the way that activities and programmes are structured there is an implicit assumption that once people receive the knowledge they lack there will be a change in their attitude, which in turn will lead to more responsible actions (Kavara 1999: 9). The behaviourist tradition on which these assumptions are based (see chapter 2) is limited since there no evidence that increased knowledge leads to changes in behaviour. According to Jensen and Schnack (1997: 168), the notion of behavioural change does not imply increased understanding or conscious actions since it could, for example, be the result of nothing more than peer pressure. In some cases attitudes were also, in the view of research participants, related to habits which are by definition uncritical actions.

In some instances the research participants suggested that they knew about environmental issues but not about environmental clubs. During the focus-group discussion a teacher (who is interested in clubs) suggested that she could not start an environmental club without knowing what to do. Some club leaders also indicated that they do not know enough to be active in environmental clubs.

I [the interested teacher] cannot be in the club without knowing, so first I must be taught by someone what to do. Then I can continue.

We [club leaders] need to get information about clubs. We have questions related to how to do things. We need a recipe, an idea of what is right and what is wrong or we will feel that we cannot do it.

I [a club leader in Ondangwa East] had this idea to start a project to write stories about the old people in the village, but I did not know whether it was the right thing to do.

I [a new club leader] do not know much about these clubs. It is a foreign idea. The volunteer teacher started with the club and now I have to continue. But I do not know how.

Many teachers show an interest in the idea of environmental clubs but hesitate to start them because they do not have the necessary knowledge and experience. This could, in my view, indicate that their traditional knowledge of their area, or their social-cultural heritage and experience gained from their 'life-world', is not recognised or valued as a source of knowledge (Schwandt 1997: 114). According to Schwandt (1997: 82, 114), the 'life-world' (Lebenswelt) is the everyday intersubjective world of human experience and social action and is "constituted by the thoughts and actions of individuals". These experiences include perceptions, beliefs and feelings, and all form part of human actions and learning processes. Since these learning experiences are not valued by the behaviourist orientation of our education system (see chapter 1), they are not regarded as constituting enabling knowledge.

Another dimension of the perceived lack of knowledge about clubs is that environmental clubs are sometimes perceived as a 'foreign (non-African) thing'. At the National Club Leaders' Workshop I was surprised at how few of the participants realised that the environmental club movement started in Kenya. In my view, the perception that clubs are foreign could be related to the conspicuous involvement of volunteer teachers and donor agencies. Although the efforts and enthusiasm of volunteer teachers are valued, my experience was that it was very difficult to involve Namibian teachers in the clubs once the volunteers had left. As suggested in chapter 6, the dimension of donor support should be further researched in relation to the sustainability of clubs.

In some instances, the lack of continuity of environmental club activities was related to the availability of resource materials. One club leader made the following suggestions:

The magazines and club activities were so nicely designed in the beginning and not so compact like text books. The teachers find it easy to work with. The teachers guide for each parcel came with the answers. We would be interested to continue if we can get the magazines with the teachers guide [and by implication the right answers].

The lack of continuity and spontaneity in environmental clubs could well indicate that club leaders are dependent on the information and ideas 'given' to them from other sources, for example the Environmental Clubs Support Service. The prevailing orientation to education, as indicated in chapters 1 and 2, is often dependent on textbook information which is seen as 'neutral facts' about different issues. The statement that club leaders do not know about clubs could also be related to the notion that they do not have any 'facts' about environmental clubs. Associated with this reliance on factual information is the orientation that there is one right answer or only one correct way to do something, hence the demand for 'a recipe' or clear instructions and a workshop:

A workshop is needed when teachers join the clubs as they do not really have a clue what is going on in the club.

There must be a programme sent out to the schools with themes and dates so that teachers and learners know and can prepare for it. It must be organised and not just an informal get together then maybe [as a result] the teacher do not show up.

The hesitation of some club leaders and the constant demand for training workshops or structured activities and programmes (expressed in this study and also during my involvement with clubs) might show that knowledge about the environment is viewed as something that has to be acquired from another source and not as (from a socially constructivist orientation) a process of making meaning. As club coordinator I experienced continuous tension between the need expressed by club leaders (to be taught ways to run clubs and what activities to undertake) and my orientation towards learning (see chapter 2).

It is important to mention at this point that there is nothing inherently wrong with workshops or the need to learn from others. I indicated at the start of this document that I valued the support of other colleagues during my involvement with clubs. The importance of such support was also expressed by a club leader:

We need a workshop in which we share ideas, taking what people know here and sharing it with what we know about running clubs. We want to look for more ideas but alone is difficult.

In my view, and in the view expressed above, we learn through experiences and our own reflections on those experiences, and through sharing ideas with others. Because of my socially critical orientation I find the notion of 'teach me first and then I will do' or 'a recipe of how' to be problematic. The call for a national action plan, prepared worksheets and more resources (mentioned in chapter 6 and above) could be related to this need for factual certainty. The demand for a more structured approach to environmental clubs could also be related to the need for recognition and credibility (see discussions in chapter 6). In the context of socially critical education, environmental clubs could contribute to different orientations to learning through the provision of a more constructive leaning environment and the encouragement of critical thinking. The dilemma, however, is that some teachers' approach to environmental clubs is shaped by the previous education system (and current practices) from which stems the demand for specific, structured activities and information about the 'how and what' of clubs.

Educational change: Integrating local and 'school' knowledge

Not all the research participants supported the idea that they or others knew nothing about the environment or environmental clubs. During the discussions at the National Club Leaders' Workshop (which I referred to in chapter 4) and in some interviews there was a recognition of the value of local and indigenous knowledge and the fact that people do have an awareness and understanding of their own environments. These views are expressed in the following interview extracts:

Most of them [people in the community] are environmentally conscious. They can tell how people used to hunt. It was seasonal and only certain animals could be hunted. According to the king one animal is enough and there were rules. Now there are changes including that overpopulation and that people are losing their power.

Even they [rural communities] use some trees as indicator of good and bad seasons. This method was suitable for that area in that time but should be modified from time to time. It is not appropriate in new context. These methods and rules are not applicable anymore.

These comments raise some key points about socially critical education, one being that everyone has something to contribute to the learning process (see chapter 6). The assumption that 'other' people know nothing ignores

or devalues (see Weston in chapter 6) the experiential learning of their life-world. The interviewees indicated that people who grow up in an area must have some knowledge about their environment.

With the focus of schools on factual information from textbooks (see chapter 1), local knowledge and experiences are often only related to the 'old ways' expressed above, and are not regarded as useful or valued. Moreover, since 'school' knowledge is often shared by people with different cultural traditions it can also conflict with local knowledge (Vulliamy 1987: 14). From the perspective of socially critical education, the emphasis could be placed on the sharing of knowledge and experiences, thus providing recognition, so often lacking, of other ways of knowing, including indigenous knowledge systems (Masuku 1999).

The second important aspect (discussed in chapters 1 and 2) is the fact that we are all confronted by local and global changes. These interviewees suggested that population growth, political changes and new technology might be some of the immediate challenges and that there is consequently a need to review our existing understandings and practices. A socially critical orientation embraces change and focuses on the processes of personal, social and professional development (see chapter 2). Since change is inherent in all dimensions of our lives (see chapter 4), an orientation towards education for change can only enhance our capacity to deal with these challenges.

Writers of the Namibian education reform policy comment on the fact that schools should address new challenges, such as Aids, and suggests that education need to go beyond providing information. In addition, they feel that many of the certificates or diplomas provided by formal schooling bear little resemblance to the knowledge and skills required for jobs in changing global markets (MBEC 1993: 11, 14).

Thirdly, the interviewees argued that some knowledge, rules and methods might no longer be relevant. These comments suggest a critical stance regarding the understandings, values and beliefs on which people's actions are based. The need for a critical orientation to learning is especially relevant considering the wide gap between local and 'school' knowledge, and in the context of changes in societies.

Olivier (1994: 2) suggests that the learner centred orientation to education reform in Namibia often confront teachers with knowledge for which there are no textbooks and which could also be beyond the scope of the learning experiences of teachers. Teachers are continuously challenged by the need to integrate 'school' knowledge with the socio-economic, political and cultural activities of local communities. These demands are not only evident in the lack of integration between schools and communities (see chapter 6) but also in the activities of environmental clubs.

Recent developments and trends (see chapter 2) highlight the need for change towards education for sustainability. In my work with environmental clubs and teachers I have repeatedly encountered the perception that education are oriented towards formal qualifications rather than sustainability. Through our education system we often imprint the message the nothing else (including the environment) is important during examination time, which seriously hamper the implementation of education reform.

As suggested in chapter 2, the notion of education for sustainability could also be considered as a guiding framework for activities and programmes. I once received a letter from a club leader asking for a large sum of money to visit a mine 600 km away, since their club members were discussing the environmental impact of

mining, and yet, there was a mining town less than 70 km away. I realise that this is still far for a club without transport, but it would be a much more attainable aim in terms of planning and the long-term future of environmental clubs.

Learning about the environment

Education based on the deficit view of knowledge often manifests itself in practice as learning 'about' the environment. This empiricist orientation to learning is that which was outlined in chapter 2 and is the focus of some of the activities that I discussed in chapter 4. The emphasis of this approach (see chapter 2) to environmental clubs is on learning factual/scientific information about the natural environment, as illustrated by the following quotation:

The importance of the tour is seeing it physically. You have to work out for yourself how big plants are. You cannot see in books the size or how it grows. Most of them do not know what animals are anymore, they do not know the names. [I do not necessarily agree with this statement since many club members at different schools could mention and describe some of the animals that still occurred in their areas.] During the visit to Etosha learners get firsthand information about their own environment, and the names of animals and plants.

This statement not only exhibits an emphasis on factual information but also claims that learners will learn more about their environment in the national park. This understanding of environmental education as 'awareness that we get from going to Etosha' is also perpetuated by much of the correspondence from clubs, by activities listed in club materials and by the expectations of club members. It is also perpetuated through the newsletters: for a long time, the only news I received from clubs were the reports that club members wrote to the project after receiving funding for tours. There were always many examples in the newsletter of clubs visiting environmental education centres and this may have contributed to the perception that tours and visits are a desirable or essential educational activity for clubs.

The examples given below reflect club members' perceptions of the educational role of clubs. These interviewees strengthen the arguments that 'the environment' is perceived as being 'out there' and that education is the 'giving' of information that is often removed from the context of everyday life. One girl, a club member from the Erongo region, explained that they only give information about environmental issues which includes facts on deforestation (e.g. how many trees are cut down) and that they do not have discussions on the social, cultural and historical contexts of the issues. Their club also states the advantages of establishing an environmental club for other learners in the school and their community. The last comment is from a club member who suggested during the interview that they cannot learn about the environment at their at their school because there was "nothing" there:

We [the club members] should tell people what environmental days are. We are going around the community and tell them to keep clean. We tell society at large what environmental problems are and give education to the community.

We discuss only issues [environmental problems] not the broader situation [context]. We only give the advantages of the whole thing [clubs] and not go into details.

The best way to learn about the environment is at a centre. [Namutoni Centre is used as an example in this case.] There we can really see the environment. At our school there is nothing.

I do not wish to suggest that it is not important to learn (empirical facts) about the environment. The value of learning more about the environment was evident in the enthusiasm with which some club members shared their understanding of environmental issues and their involvement in the clubs throughout the study. I support the claim of Clacherty (1992: 27) that environmental awareness is “not dependent on formal knowledge but enhanced by it”. I wish to emphasise that learning factual information about the environment is important and necessary, but is problematic from a socially constructivist orientation if it is not open to critical reflection and discussion within the relevant context, particularly if this understanding is not oriented towards action.

Environmental education as an instrument

Another manifestation of the deficit views of knowledge is the view that environmental education is an instrument. One of the extension officers suggested that he regarded the youth, and specifically clubs, as an instrument through which he could achieve his objectives:

I want to create awareness and to do that I have get my message through different people. I use a combination of people, for example, governors and school drama. I regard the club as a lobbying force, as an instrument to achieve my goals. You must make something interesting to them to reach your goal.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) continues to play an important role in shaping the view of environment education as an instrument for achieving international and local environmental and development goals (Goldstein 1995: 6-7). This instrumental orientation to environmental education is reflected in the Namibian Green Plan (see chapter 1), as well as in the views of those who see the clubs as a tool or mechanism for solving environmental problems. This view of (environmental) education is associated with behaviourism, which I discussed in chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter. I mentioned previously (see chapter 1) that there was an inherent tension between the need to maintain and transmit the existing norms and the need to educate for change. This tension is a reflection of different orientations to education. According to Fien (1993: 20-21), the desired outcome of the vocational orientation to education is that students should learn the values and skills necessary to fit into society, while according to critical theories (Giroux 1995: 120, 130), education either serves to maintain the status quo or to transform society. They would question the notion that environmental education can be regarded as a tool to transmit and change existing norms.

One of the implications of the instrumental orientation to environmental education (Robottom 1991: 20 -22) is that the environmental educators have predetermined goals and utilise clubs as a tool to reach these goals, which are not necessarily negotiated with club members. The quotation above illustrates that the interviewee realised the potential power of the youth to reach the community, but essentially viewed them as the carriers of his message. Another implication of this view can be related to the idea of seeing education as ‘a message’, with the educator functioning as the one who ‘delivers’ the message to club or community members who ‘receive’ the message. According to O’Donoghue (1993: 30), “The idea of message communication to cause behaviour change is questionable as a strategy of education.” In my view, those involved in Namibian environmental clubs should also consider carefully why ‘education and awareness’ are so often regarded as processes where ‘we’,

the knowledgeable, teach 'them', the ignorant (see below in this chapter). This orientation can create the perception, mentioned earlier, that there is only one right message or that only one opinion or interpretation is valued. The instrumental orientation to environmental education is therefore problematic from the social constructivist position that frames my orientation to learning, as described in chapter 2.

Learning through experience

I highlighted the importance of learning through experience in outlining my orientation to environmental clubs and this study in chapter 2, as well as throughout the discussions. According to Jensen and Schnack (1997: 166), experiences "form very deep-lying structures in our understanding of the world, and in our practice".

Learning through experiences was seen by all the interviewees to be one of the best ways to learn (other ways being increasing knowledge, sharing, critical thinking and practical activities, which I will also discuss in this chapter.) Interviewees mentioned the seeing and being in the situation, or the experiential aspects of learning:

It is important to see, touch, smell, the seminal experience to see. How do you explain the sea to someone that does not know it? We have seen the jackal at Cape Cross that we have never seen before. Some of the friends have never seen the sea. Some things you cannot learn from books. They see animals in undisturbed environment they will question it themselves – maybe our village was like this but because of the pressure has changed.

We talk about an environmental club based on concerned with environmental issues and we are sitting here with not much air pollution it is difficult. But we are talking about it in meetings then they haven't seen or experienced it. Maybe then they would like to go to a place like Windhoek where they can see it ... They can see where pollution is taking place and discuss what pollution is.

There are, however, important differences between the views expressed in these quotations, and these differences reflect one of the main criticisms of the experiential approach to learning. The first quotation above suggests that the focus is on the individual, but more importantly it makes the assumption that the learners will see and 'question themselves'. This club leader assumed that the experience will necessarily force learners to ask questions, and, by implication, that these will also be the 'right questions' and that learners themselves will come up with the 'answer' that the teacher wanted. The statement of the club leader in Erongo indicated that club members worked through certain factual information and debated several issues, and that they wanted to enhance the learning process with experiential learning through a visit. Shalem (1997: 6, 28), in a very candid criticism of the learner-centred approach, forces educators to question their role in the learning process and suggests that they cannot just assume that learners will make the connections (see chapter 4), but rather that they have to take responsibility for the learning process.

Most often the notion of learning through experience is manifest in the need to go on tours or visits to other areas, and as I mentioned earlier, this is not regarded by club members and leaders only as the most popular and fun activity, but also as an important educational activity that is very significant in motivating the participation of club members.

Learning through visits and tours is valued as an opportunity to broaden the horizons of learners and expose them to different environments. One club leader argued that you cannot explain the national water saving

campaign to a group of learners who live next to the Kavango river and who have never seen the arid regions of Namibia. The perceived need for exposure to broaden the views of learners is reflected in the following statements of club leaders:

Learners are not exposed to other areas except their own surroundings. A tour could be a practical experience of different areas.

I have a strong belief that if you are only in one environment that your way of thinking is only focused on that one environment. Once you are exposed to more environments you will have a broader view.

According to the interviewees who support the notion of experiential learning, part of the value of exposure to different areas is the opportunity it affords to make comparisons with your own area and exchange views. The following quotation captured the experiences of a girl from the Windhoek region after her first visit to arid Damaraland:

After a trip to Waterberg we went to Damaraland. We saw different places. I was surprised how they give condition to livestock with such little grazing. I did not think that goats can survive with so little vegetation. I really wondered why people complain so much in our region. By visiting different environments then you can compare it with your own. If you see what it look like you can exchange views.

Her comments indicated to me that visits can be valuable learning experiences and that the activities of environmental clubs can be educational. It is thus not my intention to question the value or potential benefit of visits or educational tours since these are an important (and popular) part of current environmental club activities. I am, however, concerned about the perception that just 'being there' is coterminous with learning and that knowledge is transmitted through experience.

My orientation to environmental education suggests that the activities of environmental clubs need to be experiential learning opportunities that consider how the learning process can be made more meaningful to learners, for example through debates, discussions, critical reflections and action projects that apply the learning experience in the local environment. I support the view of Wals (1997: 18) that "The world of environmental education focuses too much on the formulating of the content and outcomes of environmental education and too little on the quality of the learning process." In my view, the quality of the learning process can be enhanced through a socially constructive approach to environmental clubs that emphasises a view of knowledge as a social construct, through critical reflection as an integral part of practice and through relevant action projects.

Practical classroom experience: Environmental education and science

Experiential learning can also be linked with the syllabus and practical experiences discussed in chapter 5, as illustrated by the following interview extracts:

We are teaching certain subjects about regional dams. This could give us the opportunity to visit places of interest. The classes are boring for learners thinking about other things. They really understand if they are seeing the real thing. What learners see is the things they remember.

At Wêreldsend they learn all about this environment and the different species of grass. They also learn about this in the text books but the club is more practical. Outdoor classroom activities is just a reinforcement of the textbook.

The potential value that these research participants saw was that learners would remember things better because they were not as bored as they are in the classroom, and that practical experiences could serve as a reinforcement for what was learned in textbooks.

Another aspect that emerged during the study was the strong relationship between science and environmental education. The connection between the environmental clubs and science teachers was evident in all the regions that I visited, and the majority of club leaders are in fact Life Science teachers (see chapter 2 and 5):

Most of the club leaders [in the Ondangwa area] are Life Science teachers or the contact person for the club. If there is talk about an environmental club the principal immediately calls the Life Science teacher. The Life Science teacher is seen as the contact person for environmental issues.

I am involved because I am a science teacher. The principal feels that only science teachers should be club leaders.

During the initial stages of the establishment of clubs throughout Namibia I often used Life Science workshops to introduce clubs. This was for practical reasons since the Life Science Project to which I referred in chapter 1 organised large national workshops which provided an easy and convenient way to speak to a large number of teachers at the same time. It did, however, seem that this cooperation could have encouraged and perpetuated the perception that environmental clubs are the responsibility of science teachers, and even the perception of environmental education as a branch of the natural sciences.

The connection between environmental education and science is especially evident in the United States (see Wals 1997: 7 and chapter 2) where it is accompanied by a strong behavioural orientation that values factual scientific knowledge as the foundation of any education system. A strong link between environmental education and science was also evident in the orientation and activities of clubs in Uganda. Kajubiri-Froelich (1996: 89) describes one objective of these clubs as "promoting an appreciation and scientific study of the country's wildlife and environment" and "identifying the causes, analysing their consequences and proposing cures or solutions".

Sanera (1998: 20) suggests that we should narrow the definition of environmental education by focusing on the knowledge component, particularly the scientific content, and provide students with materials which present an "objective coverage of the science of environmental issues". Robottom (1991: 20) challenges this perspective as a technocratic orientation and believes that one of the myths of environmental education is that its origins lie exclusively in the field of science education. The concerns about the environment are, in his view, political in nature. Hart (1997: 4) also questions the separation of focus between natural and urban environments, as well as between different subjects and disciplines of social and natural science. This division compartmentalises academic fields and refutes the complex and integrated nature of life experiences.

Whether the notion of 'carrier subjects' for environmental topics perpetuates a segmented and compartmentalised view of environmental education is open to debate. However, before we can regard the strong involvement of Life Science teachers in environmental clubs as another example of fragmentation of fields, we also need to consider the aims and philosophy of the Life Science Project (referred to in chapter 1).

The subject Life Science integrated different subject fields (e.g. Agriculture and Social Studies), was developed to counteract the strong positivist orientation to education and is based on a constructivist orientation to learning (Olivier 1994: 17).

I am, however, despite the orientation and nature of the Life Science subject, still concerned that the strong association between the Life Science teachers and the environmental clubs could perpetuate a discipline-based orientation to education. I am also concerned (see discussions in chapter 5) that all the environmental club activities become associated with Life Science and Natural Science and Health Education to the extent that all other interested teachers are excluded from environmental education and youth clubs.

Learning to participate: Action competence

Much criticism of environmental education mentioned earlier (see Sanera 1998: 9; Wals 1992: 1; Jensen & Schnack 1997: 171) relates to a failure to implement ideas, knowledge and theories. The problems related to the 'theory-practice gap' (Robottom 1987a: 295) are driving the attempts to standardise environmental education (see chapter 2), as well as the emphasis placed on practical (environmental) education activities that are central to many programmes and the education policy in Namibia. Frustration with the lack of implementation was also expressed by an extension officer of the MET during the interviews:

There is too much information. We spend too much time talking, writing and reading research papers but do not have enough time for the actual practice and linking ideas to the practice.

This concern was echoed by a club leader from Seychelles (see Martin 1996: 80), who remarked that "despite the long list of activities, it is evident that Seychelles' environmental problems, even as basic as the problem of littering, have barely diminished at all. We still have a long way to go before we can claim to have a real and successful environmental education programme."

Due to the perceived lack of application of environmental knowledge I was interested in investigating the extent to which environmental clubs in Namibia are involved in practical activities. In the following interview extract, a club member from Windhoek discussed the practical activities of his environmental club:

In class you discuss the theory but in the club you focus on practical projects, such as making posters. The teacher tell us what to do. It [the relationship between teachers and learners] is more or less the same.

The statement of this member illustrated that the 'practical' activity of the club was essentially an extension of the classroom, to the extent that the learners did what they were told. My general observation of educational activities in Namibia suggests that group work and practical activities are often equated with a learner-centred approach to education. Even though the focus of the activities mentioned above was on practical application, the activities were still controlled by the teachers, which in my view is inconsistent with a learner-centred or socially critical approach. According to Jensen and Snack (1997: 167-169), "The characteristic feature of an action is not that one performs a physical activity, but that there is an intention in the actor ... [that is based] on a conscious decision by the actor ... [and] aims to effect change."

Other club members in the study indicated that they are involved in practical activities:

We do research like names of plants and what you can do with plant and put the information on card boards. I like to go out and find out about the thing that you want to do research about. You can touch and feel and know everything.

Learning through activities and action is important. We want to make our own garden. We are practically involved in doing things and see. The best way to learn is to do it yourself and to observe.

We do dramas and survey, because we see and do it. The survey is useful because parents were involved and we communicate with them.

These discussion indicated that club members valued the opportunity to get involved in 'doing things', especially where they had some choice about the 'research topic'. Other research participants also commented on the importance of learning through doing and involving others (see chapters 4 and 5). These opinions are supported by O'Donoghue (1993: 33), who views meaningful learning as a process in which "there is a common purpose, an action orientation ... that has the potential to foster change [and involves] a sense of community".

All of the clubs planned or were involved in practical activities and small projects. From a socially critical point of view it is important to differentiate between behavioural change, and activities and actions (Jensen & Schnack 1997: 169). An action refers to an activity where in addition to the agent having conscious intent, the intention to affect change is also involved, together with a critical understanding of and participation in a concrete task (Jensen & Schnack 1997: 167-173). The importance of action in socially critical environmental education was also recognised by Wals (1994: 164) who suggested an action research and community problem-solving (AR & CPS) approach to learning. Action research involves:

[participants working] to come to understand the problem, recognise the possibilities for resolving it, to explore the opportunities for taking action, and to identify the potential constraints that may impede their efforts. Throughout the process the participants reflect upon their learning and the evolution of the project. By doing this, they can incorporate new information into their action strategy so as to better address their problem or to adjust their plan to a changing situation (Wals 1994: 164).

Wals (1994: 164) suggests that this approach differs from standard problem-solving approaches, which first attempt to understand the problem and then consider the actions required to solve the problem. With action research, understanding, planning, implementing and evaluating are integral to the ongoing process of learning.

According to Reason (1994: 329) participatory action research (PAR) is a methodology for an "alternate system of knowledge production" and may employ diverse methods. Bennet (1997?: 8) suggests that this methodology can be modelled on an "Action Research Spiral". Some writers (Robottom & Hart 1993: 63) warns, however, that such a way of thinking about action research could result in a "preoccupation with the method" to the extent that "... action research ... has been de-problematized and reified. 'The' action research method become a routine which other are to perform."

Since learning processes are more interactive, action research should not be regarded as a tool with specific steps to follow but rather an orientation to learning, which allows learner to engage with "a sort of consciousness in the midst of action" (Reason 1994: 331).

O'Donoghue (1991: 396) supports an action orientation to environmental education and suggests that evaluation can be regarded as a reflective critical process aimed at solving problems and reconstructing the way

learners see the world. In my view, such an orientation is vital for environmental club members to make sense of information, to reflect on the progress of projects, and to assess the contribution of their actions to environmental change.

Action-orientated approaches to environmental education draw on processes of group decision-making, a commitment to the improvement of processes within real settings, participatory methods and collective action (Robottom & Hart 1993: 55-80). A collaborative action approach involves people outside the school (or club) as resource people and contributes to better cooperation with the broader community (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993: 306). In addition, the resource people do not come with their own messages (see chapters 2, 6 and 7), but rather they come to perform specific supporting roles as part of the project.

According to Robottom (1987a: 297), the rationale for collaborative action is twofold: “[Firstly], institutional pressures often require assistance from colleagues working in similar circumstance; and [secondly, since] many forces against the improvement of environmental education are political in nature [see chapter 6], collective action is more productive.” I would include the socially constructive understanding of knowledge as another motivation for collective action.

During the study there was, in my view, little indication that the projects of environmental clubs in Namibia were informed by a socially critical approach to learning through action research (Wals 1994) or other examples of collaborative research projects (Greenall Gough & Robottom 1993). A club member for Khorixas explained the need for action and the frustration resulting from the lack of implementation of planned activities thus:

But how do we go about planning the club if the learners believe that they should be doing something to take some action and say that we are just talking. Certain things that needs to be there in order to have a club. All we do is planning but the actions stop short of implementing. It is no good having dreams if it never materialises. It does something to the learners.

During the study it was my impression that most environmental club members and leaders experienced the frustration expressed by the club member above. In my view, the ‘lack of implementation’ that many club members and leaders experience can be attributed not only to the types of activities that are planned (chapter 4) and the lack of resources (chapter 6), but, more importantly, to the lack of an appropriate orientation to learning such as participatory action research. I believe that such an orientation can enhance the ability of those involved in clubs to regard discussions, planning implementation and evaluation not as different activities but as an inherent part of the learning process.

Iterative cycles of action and reflection could enhance the effectiveness of environmental clubs activities and encourage the development of qualities such as critical independent thinking about environmental issues, as well as action competence. According to Jensen and Schnack (1997: 173-174), important components of action competence include coherent critical knowledge and insight, commitment, visions which incorporate learners’ ideas, dreams and perceptions, and actual action experience. These writers suggest that the concept of action competence should incorporate the capacity to act, in the present and in the future, in such a way as to be responsible for one’s actions and to participate in decision-making and collective action (Jensen & Schnack 1997: 175-177).

Comments from research participants regarding the educational value of club activities suggest that some club members developed an orientation to learning that could be enhanced and supported by action-orientated environmental education. These interviewees, quoted below, mentioned that they are developing independence, critical thinking, decision-making, cooperation, the freedom to express themselves and to challenge others, and an increased understanding of environmental issues through their involvement with clubs:

It is an educational club. We educate ourselves and society to cooperate with each other as a entire whole. We understand better how the world works. Through the club we learn some responsibility, we learn to do something on our own.

It is important and also sort of educational. We learn something out of it. After leaving school we will be involved in some or other way. If someone driving is throwing a bottle out and you are not member of environmental club you would not know what the consequences are going to be.

Clubs are useful because they direct learners towards [a better understanding of] their own environment. Clubs contribute to the creation of self [personal growth]. Learners become more mature away from home. They have to do things for themselves and decide what is good or bad. The club encourages learners to be independent and to think for themselves and to decide whether they are really interested.

Clubs is good for participation and interacting in groups. Some of the teachers are not doing group work in class or give learners chance to think and sit and listen because the teacher knows everything. So in clubs learners have chance to express, to challenge and have to think and decide, whether they are wrong or not.

The club members suggested aspects of learning that are, in my view, important for future engagement in collaborative action projects. These include cooperation, responsibility, independence, critical thinking and moral judgement. Some interviewees indicated that their involvement with clubs had changed aspects of their personal or professional life. This is illustrated in the extracts below, although other experiences that may have contributed to these changes cannot be excluded. In one incident an unemployed youth mentioned that there is a general sense of apathy about the future and, according to him, it is a feeling that many youths experience. His involvement with the environmental club has, however, given him the sense that he is involved in his own future and has broadened his thinking to encompass other possibilities:

If [I am] in the house with parents and they do not come up with any new or different ideas, do you think that will improve their house or the lives? Not at all. What happens to all the great ideas that people have? Some youth say no money [if I am not paid], then I am not interested, I tell them it [the drama group] is not only for yourself but also for the people in the area. Why don't you do something good for others. Get involved in your own future.

This statement suggests that changes have taken place not only in the way this club member feels and thinks, but also in the way he acts and influences others. In another example, a girl took ideas from the club and started her own initiatives at home with the involvement of her family. A club member in the Khorixas region commented on the changes he saw in friends who had been involved with the club:

I also have a small recycling centre at home. I do the same thing at home that we are doing in the club. My brothers and sisters, even small sister, pick it [the rubbish] up. The cans we sell to the German school and my parents are happy cause the yard is clean.

Some of the previous members of the club are still involved somehow in environmental matters. Some have become guides and some are involved in other tourist projects. One girl is working for MET and one is doing volunteer work for an NGO. Two of my friends from the club are also studying nature conservation.

Some of the examples above illustrate that environmental clubs provide opportunities and the sort of learning environments that are conducive to personal and professional growth and the development of action competence. According to Robottom (1987a: 297), "Professional development in environmental education should be enquiry-based, participatory and practice-based, critical, community-based and collaborative." In my view, this orientation could frame the action projects of environmental clubs in the future.

Implications of the findings for the role of environmental clubs in environmental education

We need to focus on the quality of the learning process. In education we cannot assume that learners will learn simply through visiting a different area or seeing something that they discussed in class. They need guidance and assistance from educators to make a visit, project or activity an educational experience. Experiences and understandings should form part of a process of critical reflection that is discussed, debated and shared to assist learners to make the links and comparisons with textbooks, and to become aware of underlying assumptions and the implications of what they have seen and experienced in their own environment. In my view, changes in plans, 'failures' and 'unsuccessful' activities should also be seen as part of the learning experience, and should be contextualised and discussed in the socio-historical and cultural environments to which learners are exposed.

Social dialogue and sharing of information and ideas are important aspects of my orientation to learning and the findings of this study indicate that environmental clubs can and do create diverse opportunities for social interaction. According to Schwandt (1997: 20), the socially constructivist orientation is shaped by a cluster of theories that "seek to understand how social actors recognise, produce and reproduce social actions and how they come to share an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances", which is also suggested by the following interview extract:

Everyone have different views and we need to view problems from different sides. It is very hard but there is not only one answer. The best way to learn is to be in contact with some other societies, to look at history and cultural background. We have to get in touch with others when we emphasise change, we need to know this. Students from this area understand problems here better, they know what does nature do for them and we can understand it better by talking to them.

This extension officer exhibits a socially critical orientation to learning which emphasises the importance of sharing with others in the socio-cultural and historical context, and which recognises the value of people's existing experiential knowledge of their area. Robertson (1993: 9) supports this view and emphasises the importance of "acknowledgement of the learner's existing knowledge and diverse cultural realities rather than promoting particular pre-defined behavioural goals", while Hart (1996: 35) regards education as a process of making meaning "from personal experiences via a process of reflection".

The process of constructing meaning is continuous and complex. According to Janse van Rensburg (1997b), people can hold incompatible views simultaneously. This implies that the views of participants presented here

may vary according to the context of questioning, and that the views on environmental clubs that members express when speaking to their friends may differ from the views that they express in an interview. It might also imply that on an educational tour in Etosha they could regard the cheetah as a rare animal needing protection, while at home they view it as a threat to their livestock which has to be killed (Janse van Rensburg 1997b and pers. comm.).

Olivier (1998: 1-3) suggests that the challenge in such a conglomeration of different meanings, perceptions and constructs is essentially to apply basic principles when evaluating our own actions. He suggests that the first principle is that knowledge, attitudes and thoughts are rooted in assumptions (“the way we act is the way we see things”), and that therefore as people we cannot maintain integrity and authenticity if we “walk and talk differently to what we see”. Another principle identified by Olivier relates to the notion that “to change the situation we first have to change ourselves”.

By implication this suggests that the more aware club members and leaders are of their own assumptions and the way in which these influence their experiences, the more responsibility they can take for their actions. It also suggests a critical awareness of the disparate motivations for our own actions in different situations. In my view, as suggested earlier (see chapter 6), one path to local manageable projects is to get more environmental club members to start focusing on their own learning, together with others, rather than have them focus most of their efforts on teaching the community or ‘them’ – the undefined ‘others’.

Education should, I feel, be a dynamic and active process leading to change. I support the view of Wals that environmental education is essentially aimed at educational change. Through such change it may be possible to overcome the cycle of self-validating reduction (see chapter 6) and recover the potential inherent in cultural and biological diversity, as opposed to attempting to make everyone see the world in the same way.

Changes that contribute to educational change could include improving the relationships between people, and between people and their environment (Wals 1997: 10). As suggested earlier, participatory action research could provide a valuable orientation to guide environmental club leaders to implement projects aimed at change. It is up to environmental club organisers, leaders and members to develop the potential for educational and environmental change. A club leader for Ondangwa East suggested that environmental education should emphasise the contribution that the youth can make by letting them “know what they can do [my emphasis]”.

Concluding remarks

As I mentioned in the research proposal and introductory chapters of this thesis, the intention of the study was not to evaluate environmental clubs in Namibia per se, but rather to investigate their role in environmental education. Having said this, it is important to note that such an investigation is not possible without an understanding of what environmental education entails. I therefore made it clear (in chapter 2) that my analysis of environmental education is framed by a socially critical orientation. Educators with different orientations to learning and environmental education might arrive at different conclusions, but my findings are the following:

The activities of environmental clubs indicate that they do play a role in educating people about the environment, raising awareness about environmental issues and increasing understanding of the biophysical environment. Numerous examples cited throughout this study indicate that club members feel that their knowledge and understanding of environmental issues has been enhanced through club activities. This is clearly important in the context of Namibia's heavy reliance on scarce natural resources. The lack of effective application of such knowledge and understanding (see chapter 7) indicates, however, that the sharing of important information and environmental knowledge is not sufficient to bring about environmental and social change. I therefore suggest that the key enabling features of an action research approach could assist club members to develop the reflective critical orientation to learning that is needed to foster change.

In addition, environmental club activities can engender a more holistic understanding of the environment and all its complex interrelationships, while recognising the particular socio-cultural and historical context of different environmental issues. Club members need to understand the complex nature of environmental issues to gain insight into the role that they could play. Although the majority of clubs focus mostly on activities related to the biophysical environment (see chapter 4), a few include activities related to other dimensions of the environment. Amongst these are clubs which focus on health issues and substance abuse, and even involve themselves in critical discussions of the activities of organisations like Greenpeace. Club members whose perspective of environment is demonstrably broader seem to be those who participated in many workshops during the last four years. Even though I did not set out to investigate the effectiveness of workshops, this could indicate that older club members have benefited from the numerous discussions and information-sharing events that have taken place. This could be one reason for making an extensive education programme an integral part of club support.

Some club leaders and Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) extension officers acting as advisors to clubs have indicated the importance of understanding the historical events, economic context and different beliefs that inform environment-related activities (see chapters 4 and 6). These views are important if we are to attain a critical understanding of the various perceptions, assumptions and theories to which these understandings lead. In my view, such critical understanding is important since it influences the activities undertaken in the context of environmental education. The recognition of different perceptions within (supposedly homogenous) communities and the understanding that perceptions change over time and in different contexts could also broaden the understanding of club members and allow them to embrace diverse social meanings and cultural interpretations of 'environment'.

Environmental clubs do (and, in my view, should increasingly) contribute to the learning of social roles through developing in their members a sense of belonging to a group that is seen as performing a positive role in society. Evidence of such positive roles includes examples of club members who had the courage and initiative to conduct interviews or start recycling projects at their homes, and unemployed youths who earned an income from drama performances for their communities (see chapter 5). The activities of environmental clubs may contribute to members developing and strengthening personal self-esteem, social identity and a sense of purpose in society. As mentioned in chapter 5, it is my opinion that these motivations have not featured strongly enough in the planning of environmental club activities and that they should be seriously considered in the future. In my view, this is especially significant considering the high rate of unemployment, the growing youthful population and the effects of urbanisation in Namibia (see chapter 1). I indicated earlier that the personal and psychological effects of poverty and negative socialisation, and the associated feelings of inadequacy and frustration with being or feeling disadvantaged are aspects that could constitute an important and relevant topic for future research.

Identity and purposefulness are also related to the extent to which club activities are recognised (chapter 5) and valued (chapter 6) by the broader community as significant and likely to contribute to environmental change (chapter 7). Many issues related to identity, motivation and rewards need further investigation. Most club members regarded T-shirts and certificates as necessary motivating accoutrements, while I have often felt that these tokens could be external rewards that increase dependency on central support agencies/organisations. Future research could explore whether the perceived benefit of external rewards is the rationale for people taking constructive action or whether this perception only perpetuates the cycle of self-validating reduction (see chapters 5 and 6).

Even though club members can learn positive roles and increase their sense of purposefulness, the constraints identified in chapter 6 indicate that the youth need support from significant adults (chapter 5) and collaboration with resource people and organisations (chapter 7). I regard the need for collaboration between adults and youths as one of the main reasons why environmental clubs will never become the exclusive domain of youths. However, in order to facilitate effective cooperation between adults and youths, we need to address the devaluing of the capacity and knowledge of different groups or generations. (In chapter 6 I explained that young and old people are often equally negative in reducing the contribution of the other.)

In my view, a strong national club network could assist individuals and groups to strengthen their individual and collective power, thus enabling them to become partners in effecting environmental change. Environmental clubs do provide this opportunity, not only by increasing the confidence of individual members (chapter 5 and 7), but also by creating the opportunity to collaborate with others, share and exchange views and interact with the broader community (chapter 6). In addition to interacting with the broader community, club members (like most other youths) are susceptible to the influence of peers and role models (see chapter 5). Greater emphasis on these aspects, together with leadership development and contact with resource people, could maximise club members' ability to demonstrate competence and play a constructive role at school or in the community.

At this stage the understanding of the concept of power in relationships seems to be couched in terms of communication problems and/or the frustration of not being able to gain support from principals or other community leaders (chapter 6). In my view, environmental clubs could not only enhance the collective power

of individual members and groups, but could and should also contribute to an explicit understanding of power relationships and power imbalances that might constrain activities. If club members become critically engaged with issues of power (imbalances), strategies might develop that enable them to use other communication channels, for example interactive newsletters, pairing of clubs, radio and other media or, where possible, e-mail. An increased understanding of their perceived limitations (see chapter 6) might encourage club members to regard networking not only as an interesting and fun activity, but also as necessary for enabling themselves to attain their goals. Through environmental clubs the youth could access and evaluate information, support the actions of other clubs and cooperate to maximise their own collective power.

The discussion in chapter 6 indicated that environmental club members do benefit from stimulating social interactions, positive activities and collaboration with other community members. Throughout the study club members and leaders commented on new opportunities to which they had been exposed and to which they may not otherwise be exposed in their immediate setting. In this regard they mentioned exposure to new places and ideas (chapters 4 and 7), different job and career opportunities (chapter 7), income-generating projects (chapter 5) and a range of competencies and skills. For some club members the benefit of exposure was the experience of seeing the sea for the first time, while for a few others it was a change in lifestyle, modes of thinking or career path (chapter 7).

Environmental clubs do give learners the opportunity to gain experience, for example through the exchange of information, visiting different places and alternative activities for those who are not interested in sport or find little stimulation in their own environment (chapter 5). The fun and recreational opportunities presented by some club activities could be maximised to create relevant and appropriate learning experiences, practical extensions of school curricula and the potential to involve the youth in processes geared towards improving their environment (chapter 7). In an attempt to increase the sustainability of club activities it is also important to consider the needs and motivations of those involved in environmental clubs.

In the context of the proposed education reform in Namibia, it is quite significant that club members find in environmental clubs the forum to establish new and more open relationships with teachers (chapter 6). In some instances environmental clubs do and should increasingly create learning environments that enable free expression, the sharing of ideas, critical reflection and practical experiences. Since I support the notion that environmental education can be regarded as educational change (see chapters 2 and 7) and believe in the importance of focusing on the quality of learning processes, I regard such learning opportunities and different relationships between teachers and learners as valuable contributions to education reform. The few examples of cooperation between clubs and other teachers, such as those involving agricultural students and extramural committees (chapter 6), create interesting possibilities for better communication within the school setting and even for cross-curricular teaching.

The relationships between clubs, schools and communities are complex and need to be considered carefully in planning the environmental club programme. The implications of the school setting for environmental activities (see chapter 6), for example the influence of double shifts and the lack of effective administration of extramural activities needs further investigation in order to minimise the negative effects on club activities. Another future research study that could make a valuable contribution to understanding the relationships between schools and communities could focus on the extent to which learners (and teachers) in hostels regard themselves as part of

the community in which their school is located. In my view it will also be very interesting to compare the different philosophies and implementation strategies of the examination-driven school system with the orientation needed to encourage education for sustainability.

Although the study indicated that relationships between clubs and schools and broader communities are problematic and warrant further research, some clubs indicated that they have benefited from interactions with the community and others at school. Collaboration and better cooperation should be possible through interaction and partnerships with external resource people and organisations, and through supporting external initiatives and projects. I have noted the instances where club members collaborated with their local municipality to paint the hospital or wrote letters to local residents about the use of new dustbins (chapter 6). Collaboration with other organisations not only created the opportunity for interaction, but also showed that clubs need not be dependent on just one organisation or a few individuals (such as Wêreldsend or RF Environmental Education Project staff whom I mentioned in chapter 5). Club members should increasingly foster relationships with existing organisations, projects and community resource centres in the local environment to support and participate in environmental education processes. This would enable clubs to become less dependent on donors and more sustainable in the future.

Partnerships between the clubs, local communities and those further afield may assist in breaking down the barriers that divide clubs, schools and communities, and in engendering an understanding of the nature and effects of such barriers, particularly in relation to environmental change and the youths' own experiences. An increased awareness of 'perceived limitations' on the part of the youth (see chapter 6) could motivate cooperation with other community members and strengthen social interactions that negate the positioning of the younger against the older generations. Although many club members and leaders hold the view that the youth have an important role to play in challenging others so as to contribute to change, it is my view that they can best be regarded as partners in environmental change who can contribute to improving relationships between segments of society previously perceived as being opposed to one another. Conservationists, for example, might cooperate with cultural authorities and developers. Many educational or development programmes target 'schools/children' (on the assumption that they can influence their parents) or the community/adults (believing that information given to parents will trickle down to children.) In my view, the findings point to the need for more integrated environmental education programmes that do not 'target' specific isolated audiences, but rather aim at fostering cooperation and collaboration between different groups in pursuit of better relationships between people and between people and their environment.

In chapter 7 I indicated that despite the apparent lack of 'action' projects, some club members reported individual growth due to their involvement in clubs. These members mentioned that environmental club activities created the opportunity to exchange views, make comparisons, gain practical experience and broaden their base of experience. In my view, a different orientation to learning in environmental clubs could contribute to engendering more constructive learning environments and encourage critical thinking. Learning experiences that emphasise the dimensions of personal involvement and experiences that are personally and socially relevant will allow for personal growth, as members are confronted with a variety of beliefs and assumptions and different ethical viewpoints. This will encourage exploration and investigation of environmental issues in cooperation with peers and other community members. Focusing on own learning environments and processes

and on an understanding of the socially constructed nature of knowledge will create the space for club members to draw on their own experiences and interpretations and enhance social dialogue about significant issues pertaining to the environment. As mentioned in chapter 7, I believe that action-orientated projects undertaken by environmental clubs could allow for a wide diversity of roles, develop responsibility and a sense of social identity and increase youths' awareness of their own action competence.

Environmental club projects could create the opportunity to learn through doing and to develop action competence. An action research orientation draw on group decision-making, improvement of existing processes, participatory methods and collaborative projects, all of which are essential for the improvement of complex environments. Increasing understanding, cooperation, critical thinking and a sense of independence and personal accountability are some of the benefits of club involvement which could be utilised for future action projects (see chapter 7). In addition the focus on critical understanding of subjective and social interpretations of experience and knowledge could encourage club members to reconsider and reconstruct their conceptual frameworks. A critical orientation can assist club members to develop a view of research as an integral part of activities and environmental education practices, and of continuous monitoring and evaluation of environmental clubs as necessary and integral to the learning process.

Although it was not the purpose of this research, future studies could investigate the large body of literature around group dynamics and the formation of groups. This could help to access why some clubs succeed, how they become independent and how to increase their sustainability.

I experienced incredible joy and satisfaction as a result of working with environmental clubs over the last three years. However, I would not be honest if I did not admit that there were also many frustrations and disappointments. I realised during the study that many of these frustrations were related to the fact that clubs did not do or achieve what I wanted them to. My attitude was not only very deterministic but also quite unfair considering that my expectations and goals were never made explicit to those involved. Although it was not a direct aim of this study to evaluate the Club Support Service as such, the study did help me to reflect on some of its weaknesses, one being that there was (as with many clubs) little correlation between the goals and the activities. Despite my impatience, I was delighted that the study revealed numerous and diverse ways in which the clubs do and could make a significant contribution to environmental education.

Whenever we seek to find constancy we discover change. The old idea of a static landscape must be abandoned, for such a landscape never existed except in our imagination (Botkin 1990: 62).

Afterword

When the RF Environmental Education Project was completed, the Rössing Foundation management felt it was important to continue supporting the environmental clubs. Although there is no specific budget for activities, it was clear that many initiatives (e.g. the regional workshops) would not continue. It was also clear that the environmental club members and leaders were not ready to continue on their own without some support and encouragement. Although I had already started working on new projects, the Foundation asked me to continue devoting some time to correspondence with club members, as well as developing and distributing the club newsletter and (funding permitting) organising one national event annually.

Having completed this study I believe that environmental clubs could play a significant role in environmental education providing that certain changes, such as official recognition and relevant training programmes for the clubs, are imminent. One option for greater recognition might be to elect and involve a significant community leader as adult mentor of the club. Another could be a grading system to evaluate club activities. Such changes would affect the structure of clubs and reduce their flexibility, but they might ensure greater recognition for existing environmental clubs.

Notwithstanding the role that environmental clubs do and could play in environmental education, it is my perception that donor support and interest in funding environmental clubs are fading. The reasons why international organisations are increasingly regarding 'clubs' with suspicion constitute a research topic for the future. In my view, these reasons could be related to the fact that so much money and time was invested in wildlife clubs over the last 30 years in Africa without giving enough attention to planning and developing individual and institutional capacity. The role, influence and implications of donor-funded projects for environmental education, with particular reference to the sustainability of environmental clubs, should be considered critically in the near future. For the sake of those club members and leaders who are enthusiastic about and committed to making a contribution to our environment, I hope that new pathways to ensuring the sustainability of clubs will soon be found.

To quote Field (1993: 114) who so aptly expresses the notion, "Finding more sustainable ways to live is not a matter of following a known recipe, but undertaking a collective search." It is my hope that environmental clubs in Namibia will embrace this challenge with vigour and determination.

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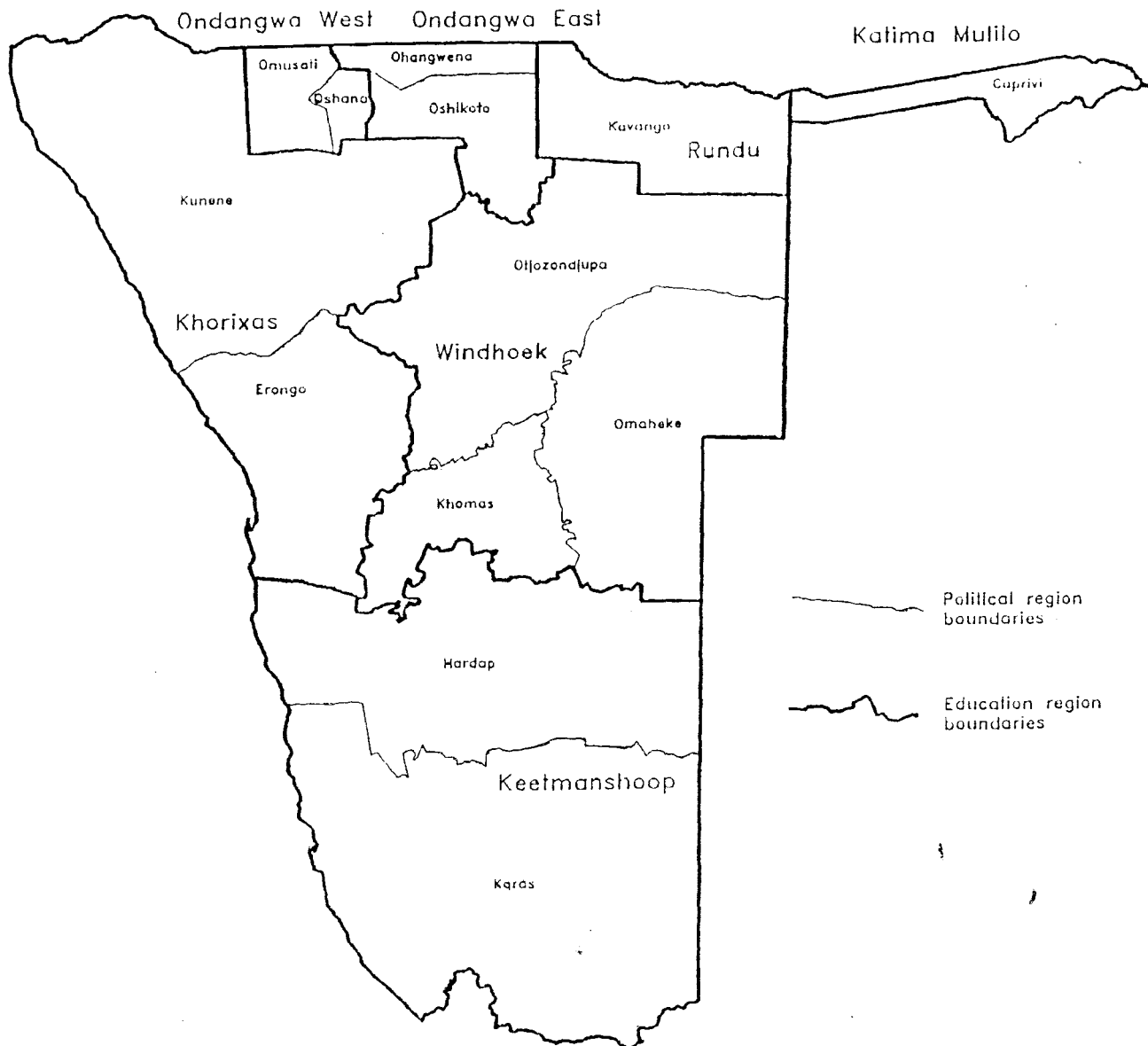
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Appendix A

Map of education regions of Namibia and areas where environmental clubs occur



Environmental clubs in Namibia

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of Club
Caprivi Region	
Batubaja Combined School	Environmental Club
Caprivi College of Education	Environmental Society
Kizito College	Keep Katima Town Clean Enviro Club
Kongola Combined School	Environmental Club
Lizauli Combined School	Environmental Club
Malengalenga Combined School	Environmental Club
Mbambazi Primary School	Nature Club
Mbilajwe Primary School	Environmental Club
Ngweze Secondary School	Save the Nature club
Sachona Combined School	Environmental Club
Sangwali Primary School	Environmental Club
Sauzuo Combined School	Tusano club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Keetmanshoop region	
P.K. de Villiers Senior Secondary School	Kokerboom Club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Khorixas region/Kunene	
Braunfels Agricultural High	Street and Rural Youth Development Programme (S.R.Y.D.P)
Cornelius Goreseb H.S. Khorixas	Earth Care Club
D.F. Uirab P. S. Kamanjab	Earthcare
Eddie Bowe P.S. Khorixas	Earthcare
Edward Garoeb P.S. Anker	Earthcare
Elias Amxab P.S. Sesfonttein	Earthcare
Frans Frederick P.S. Fransfontein	Earthcare
Grootberg P.S. Erwee	Grade 7 1997 Environmental Club
Jakob Basson P.S. Bergsig	Earthcare
Kamanjab P.S. Kamanjab	Fantasy Club
Mureti S School Opuwo	Mureti Future Conservation Club
Ruacana Senior Secondary School	Curiosity Environmental Club
Th. F. Gaeb P.S. Khorixas	Gaeb Environmental club
Unemployed youth	Eco-sensitive group
Versteende Woud P.S. Khorixas	Earthcare
Warmquelle S.P.S. Warmquelle	Warmquelle Earth Care Club
Welwitschia P.S. Khorixas	Earthcare

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Khorixas region/Erongo	
Atlantic Primary School	Fish Bones
Dibasen Junior Secondary School	DibasenEnviro Club
Martin Luther High School	MLH Environmental Club
Otjiparongo J.S. School	Otjiperongo Nature Club
Petrus Ganeb S.S. Uis	Petrus !Ganeb Enviro Club
Simson !Gobs Senior Secondary School	Environmental Conservers Club of S.I. !Gobs
W. Borchard J.S. School	W. Borchard Enviromental Club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Ondangwa East	
Ekulo Senior Secondary School	Ekulo Environmental Club/ EEC
Etosha Secondary School	Enviro Club
Iipundi Combined School	Environmental Club
Nehale Senior Secondary School	Conserve Nature Beauty
Onampadhi Combined School	Let's Unite Environmental Club
Onayena Senior Primary	Make Onayena J.S.S. Green
Ondobe Combined School	Save the Environmental Club
Ondobe Senior Primary School	Environmental Club
Ontananga Combined School	Global Care Environmental club
Oshigambo High School	Take Care Enviro Club
Oshikango Combined School	Oshikango Earth Club
Otjikoto S.S.Tsumeb	Flora and Fauna Club
St. Francis Primary School	Environmental Club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Ondangwa West	
Elim Youth Branch	Save the global environmental club
Iipandayamiti Combined School	The Zebras
Keendawala Combined School	Kalekapo Uushitwe Environmental club
Okasheshete Combined School	Okasheshete EarthCare club
Okatana Combined School	Save the Planet Club
Oshakati Youth Centre	Water Shortage Environmental Club
Oshikuyu Combined School	Environmental Club
Othika Youth Branch	Save the Plant environmental club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Rundu Region	
Bunya Combined School	Survival of the Fittest
Kaisosi School Rundu	Pilot Enviro Club
Kapako Constituency Community	Pirura Nsitwe Club
Karangana J P School	Tukureni Karangana Club
Kasote Combined School	Termites Club
Levi Hakusembe Senior Secondary School	Environmental club
Nkurenkuru Combined School	Unicorns
Nyangana Combined School	Environmental Club
Rundu College of Education	Environmental Club
Rundu Secondary School	Environmental Club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Windhoek Region/Otjozondjupa & Omaheke	
Deutsche Schule	Science club- Think Global
Karundu P.S. Otjiwarongo	Earthwise
Ministry of Youth and Sport	Otjinene Fauna and Flora Youth Club
Mokganedi Tihabanello High School	Helping Hands for Our Environment
Okakarara S.S. Okakarara	Okakarara Nature Club
Paresis Secondary School	Earthwise Environmental Club
Refugee camp c/o Oshire Primary School	Impala Environmental club

Name of School, College or Organisation.	Name of club
Windhoek Region/ Khomas	
Convent of the Holy Cross Windhoek	KEA
Cosmos High School	Cosmos Environmental Club
Emma Hoogenhout Primary School	Save Our World Club
Khomasdal Youth Group	Rescue Rangers
St Georges School	Environmental club
St Josephs Döbra	Döbra Environmental club (DEC)
Windhoek International School	Wildlife Club

Appendix B

Interview schedules used in different iterative cycles

Interview schedule 1

Name

Address

Tel.

How long have you been involved with clubs?

How old are the club members?

How many members in your environmental club?

Describe what you mean by an environmental club?

What sort of activities do the club do?

Who decides on the topic or type of activities of the club?

What are you hoping to achieve in the club (as club member/club leader?)

Why did you get involved with the environmental club?

What do you believe the most important reasons for having environmental clubs?

Can clubs do this (relate to activities)?

How?

Why are other teachers interested/involved in clubs?

Why are other learners interested/involved in clubs?

What do you regard as the role of the club leader?

Has any of the club activities helped you in any way in developing different skills/knowledge/abilities?

Can the clubs contribute to personal growth?

(If so) how?

What is the relationship between teachers and learners in the clubs?

Do the club activities promote dialogue and sharing?

If so, how?

What is the relationship of the club with the school

Do the club contribute to or fit into other school activities or school structure in any way?

(If so) how?

Do the club activities relate to the lives of the learners outside the classroom?

What is the relationship of the club with the community?

Do clubs contribute to community activities?

(If so) how?

Do you regard the role of clubs to protect the environment as it is?

Do you regard the main role of clubs to work towards change?

(If any) What sort of changes?

Have you every seen change like you mentioned taking place?

What are the best ways to learn about environmental problems?

Observations:

Interview schedule 2

Name

Position

Address

Tel.

1. Tell me about your club (including your involvement with clubs):

(probe: how long involved; how many members; how old; what do you mean by; sort of activities; who decides)

2. What are the aims or goals of (your) club?

(probe: what are you hoping to achieve (as club member/club leader/volunteer/donor); can clubs do this (relate to activities); how?)

3. What are the reasons for involvement with clubs?

(probe: Why did you get involved; has being involved with club changed you in any way; why are other teachers interested/involved; why are learners interested/involved; what is the relationship between learners and teachers; do you see clubs as reaction to environmental problems or raising awareness; what about: a sense of pride, involvement, off the street, leadership, fun, opportunities or other reasons you can think of?)

4. Do (your) club contribute to or fit into other school activities?

(probe: how; has anything changed at school through/because of club; do the club activities relate to the lives of learners outside the classroom; how?)

5. Do (your) club contribute to the community?

(probe: how; initiate or motivate any activities in community; how do community respond; should learners challenge the views/actions of parents, teachers or community at large (relate to views on EE, change and activities); what sort of change should club promote)

6. What is the role of the club in response to environmental problems?

(probe: best why to learn about environmental problems; what about different views, books, teachers, traditional knowledge; should clubs consider historical and political background to problems)

7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

8. Observations

Interview schedule 3

Name

Position

Address

Tel.

1. Describe what you understand/mean by environmental club?

2. Tell me about the history of the clubs.

3. What are the reasons for your involvement with club?

4. Tell me about the activities of the club?

(probe: what, why, successful, why, what sort of activities would you like to do? why, what are your reasons for doing them/ not doing them; what are the best ways to learn and teach?)

5. **What is the relationship of the club with the school and/or community?**

(probe: issues of power; who decides, who has most influence)

6. **What is your perception of the 'environment' of environmental clubs?**

(probe: how do you view environment and nature, is nature in the hands of God, what about people's responsibility)

7. **Is there anything else you would like to mention?**

8. **Other observations?**

Appendix C

**Composite results of debate at National Club Leaders'
Workshop**

COMPARE THE TWO STATEMENTS AND CHOOSE ONE IN YOUR GROUP:

1. Environmental clubs are more about people than nature (1)	1. Environmental clubs are more about nature than people (5)
2. Environmental clubs should change the way people behave towards the environment (4)	2. Environmental clubs should change the way people think about the environment (15)
3. It is more important that students develop a caring attitude towards the environment (5)	3. It is more important that students know more about the environment (1)
4. Environmental clubs are unavoidably political (3)	4. Environmental clubs should avoid being political (3)
5. Science subjects offer the most valuable opportunities for environmental clubs (1)	5. All subject provide valuable opportunities for environmental clubs (5)
6. Environmental clubs should focus on environmental problems like littering and deforestation (2)	6. Environmental clubs should focus on possibilities and alternatives like the use of solar energy and recycling (4)
7. Environmental clubs should focus on global environmental issues (2)	7. Environmental clubs should focus on local environmental issues (1)
8. Students should challenge and change beliefs and practices of older generations (6)	8. Students should protect and conserve the natural environment (5)
9. People cannot really manage natural resources since this is the creation and gift from God (10)	9. People are responsible for management of natural resources (6)
10. We do not know about environmental issues and should be taught by experts and books (1)	10. We have our own knowledge and understanding about environmental issues and could teach each other (5)
11. Environmental clubs have to visit national parks to learn about the environment (0)	11. Environmental clubs can learn about environment in their own area (6)
12. Students learn best by seeing and hearing (6)	12. Students learn best thinking (10)

* Number in circle indicate the number of groups (± 10 people per group) who agreed with statement.

Appendix D

Environmental club activities encountered or mentioned during the study

- ▶ Providing information about the environment.
- ▶ Planting trees or a school garden; tending to a tree nursery or vegetable garden.
- ▶ Running clean-up campaigns at school and in the community; picking up cans at a trade fair.
- ▶ Raising awareness about environmental issues through posters and drama.
- ▶ Discussion of issues such as deforestation and overgrazing.
- ▶ Cleaning water sources such as rivers and springs.
- ▶ Collecting seeds and leaves (and trying to press them).
- ▶ Conducting research on plants and animals in the area.
- ▶ Making posters.
- ▶ Investigating the health risks to workers at a cement factory.
- ▶ Performing drama, singing songs and telling stories to other clubs, the school, the community or at a workshop.
- ▶ Organising fundraising activities (e.g. car washes, a Miss Environment competition, video or slide shows and cake sales).
- ▶ Undertaking practical activities related to the syllabus (e.g. building different types of shelters or learning about different grasses).
- ▶ Educational visits or tours, mostly to Etosha National Park or an environmental education centre.
- ▶ Educational outings, mostly local (e.g. to the water works, the sewerage treatment plant and a factory).
- ▶ Acting as guides for tourists at a local attraction (i.e. the Brandberg).
- ▶ Critically discussing the responses of other organisations (e.g. Greenpeace).
- ▶ Celebrating environmental days, mostly Arbour Day and World Water Day, through drama, song, posters or a rally.
- ▶ Decorating the classroom (e.g. with pictures and flowers).
- ▶ Taking part in a Conservo competition.
- ▶ Conducting a survey on the use of alcohol in the community.
- ▶ Conducting a survey and providing information on water consumption rates and uses in the community.
- ▶ Inviting guest speakers (e.g. staff of the MET, CCF and Africat).
- ▶ Building a campsite at CCF (in collaboration with an American volunteer organisation).
- ▶ Sending letters to local residents regarding the use of new litter bins.
- ▶ Painting drums to use as litter bins in the school grounds.
- ▶ Recycling (only for those in the big towns or Windhoek).
- ▶ Acting in an informative film about the area.
- ▶ Helping to paint the local hospital.
- ▶ Participating in a local radio broadcast on environmental days.
- ▶ Making nature journals from card board, recycled paper and cans.