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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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PROVISIONAL TITLE:

To investigate how mother tongue instruction influences the learner performance in the acquisition of reading and comprehension skills of Khoekhoegowab speaking learners in Grade 2 in comparison with foreign medium of instruction.

Field of Research

Master of Education (General Education Theory and Practice)

Provisional Title

The purpose of the study is to investigate how mother tongue instruction influences the learner performance in the acquisition of reading and comprehension skills of Khoekhoegowab speaking learners in Grade 2 in comparison with foreign medium of instruction.

Context

The aim of this study is to illuminate the complexity of the choice of medium of instruction in Namibian schools. Kessler and Quinn cited in Harlech-Jones (1988:219) summarizes the consensus of this opinion: “An initially high level of competence in the first language is a determining factor in the development of high levels of proficiency in the second language”. As reading is a major skill that influences what and how much learning takes place in school, it is appropriate for me to focus on this competency to illustrate how English medium instruction to non-native speakers of English might influence their reading ability and comprehension skills, thus having an influence on their overall performance in school. The role of the first language of the learner in the acquisition of reading skills should therefore be viewed in relation to important variables such as teacher competencies.

It is perceived that the use of mother tongue as language of instruction in the early years of schooling has proven advantages where the development of cognitive faculties is concerned. Harlech-Jones (1988:202) quotes Pattanajak (1981) who states that: “It is generally accepted that, on sound pedagogical grounds, the mother tongue is best suited as the medium of instruction”.

The opposite has been demonstrated, that the use of a foreign language, a language that is not already spoken by the child, results in the child experiencing cognitive and

pedagogical difficulties (Bamgbose, 2000; Brown, 1979; Cummins, 1979; 1980; Davids, 2000; Harlech-Jones, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Wolfaardt, 2001).

The Language Policy for schools in Namibia was implemented in 1992 and many schools that previously had mother tongue instruction in the formative years of schooling opted for English medium instruction. According to Davids (2000:45) the influence of English medium instruction on the reading abilities of learners at lower primary level needs further investigation. It is against this background that this study attempts to establish the reading and comprehension competencies of Grade 2 Khoekhoegowab speaking learners by comparing the competencies of those starting with mother tongue (Khoekhoegowab) instruction with those Khoekhoegowab speakers beginning with English medium instruction.

A physician trying to heal a sick patient has an understanding of the healthy human body. In the same way, in order to help a student who has reading problems, a teacher must understand what good readers do. Many studies have been done that examine the reading process. (Farr & Roser, 1979; Harlech-Jones, 1988; National Research Council, 1998; NEPI report, 1992; Oxenham, 1980). The findings of these studies have enabled us to improve our understanding of reading, and thus to improve our ability to teach it. A common difficulty expressed by teachers is that the learner may read fluently but does not comprehend what is read. "He reads fine. It's just that he doesn't comprehend what he reads!" (Farr & Roser, 1979:250).

I have been attracted to this specific topic precisely because of my involvement in monitoring of the implementation of the language policy for Namibian schools. How it started: In September 2002, a committee called Namibian African Languages (NAL)/Namibian European Languages (NEL), established by the then Director of Education, Mr. A. Agapitus, for the previously known Windhoek Education Region, was tasked, to investigate how far the schools in this specific region have gone with the implementation of the Namibian language policy for schools. As an education officer

responsible for Khoekhoegowab, one of the indigenous languages spoken in Namibia, I was and am still directly involved in this ongoing debate of mother tongue instruction.

Research Goal

The specific goal of the study is to:

- investigate the influence of mother tongue instruction on the reading abilities of Khoekhoegowab-speakers in Grade 2 instructed through the medium of Khoekhoegowab with those instructed through the medium of English;
- compare the comprehension competencies of Khoekhoegowab-speakers in Grade 2 instructed through the medium of Khoekhoegowab with those instructed through the medium of English.

The research questions of the study are:

- How does mother tongue instruction in the Lower Primary Phase influence the reading and comprehension competencies of learners in Grade 2?
- How do learner reading and comprehension competencies differ between those Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners instructed through their mother tongue and those Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners instructed through English?

Research Methodology

Sampling

This study is limited to Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners in Khomas Education Region. This region has schools with Khoekhoegowab as medium of instruction and those schools that changed from Khoekhoegowab to English medium instruction. Financial constraints including the cost of travel and accommodation in this vast region limited the study to one school. The selected school is situated 150km east of Windhoek. My reason in selecting this specific school is because the learners display considerable similarities in socio-cultural, linguistic, cultural and historical backgrounds.

Research Instruments

Read Aloud Passages will be prepared for both Khoekhoegowab and English. This includes a Khoekhoegowab and English reading test. They were developed using *Basic Reading Vocabularies* (Harries & Jacobson, 1982).

The IRI (Informal Reading Inventory) will be used as a basis for the construction of the final reading passage and test instruments (Farr & Roser, 1979). According to Richek (1996) this Informal Reading Inventory was developed by DR. Joyce Jennings and field-tested in the Reading Center of Northeastern Illinois and several schools in the Chicago Special Education at Northeastern Illinois University. In IRI the learner ought to read aloud a graded passage followed by questions (Richek 1996). The tests will be used to measure the reading abilities of the learners. The advantage of the informal reading inventory or reading ability test is that it enables the researcher to observe the learner while busy reading. The passages will be based on the basal readers prescribed for the Lower Primary Phase by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. That will be done to minimize the possibility that learners might know some of the text by heart and would not reflect their actual reading ability. As such the typeface and letter type will correspond with those of the readers for the specific grade. According to Austin and Morrison (1963:54), the basal reader is, despite discordant views over its value, unquestionably the predominant tool of instruction in most of the school systems, as shown by the studies done by them.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:167) the test validity is a judgement of the appropriateness of a measure to make specific inferences or decisions from the obtained results. Therefore the validity is dependent on the purpose, population and the situational factors in which the measurement for the research takes place.

I will employ a qualitative research methodology that will be carried out within the interpretative paradigm as it uses multiple systems of data collection such as interviews, questionnaires and observations. The method of the research will be a case study. Most

qualitative research tends to describe and analyse people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:372).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:373) the goal of qualitative research is that it "is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspective." Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (1996:60) remark that qualitative research

tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth'.

Data will be collected through the administering of read aloud tests to individual learners and the administering of questionnaires to teachers of Grade 1-3 as well as through the observation of one class to observe language interaction within the classroom. Data analysis will be done by analysing the scores on the read aloud tests, the information derived from the questionnaires and that collected through the observation of classroom-interaction.

The fundamental reason for choosing questionnaires is because it has the potential to elicit first-hand information from the respondents. The choice of questionnaires is found to be feasible and convenient. Some of the advantages of a questionnaire is that it is relatively economical, has standardised questions, can ensure anonymity, and that the questions can be written for a specific purpose. The questions on a questionnaire can have a closed or open format. In the case of closed questions, the subject gives options between predetermined responses, while in open responses the respondents write in any response they want.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993) further state that research design refers to a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures. Therefore, this section of the study will indicate the learners which will be studied and under which circumstances

they will be studied. Qualitative approaches will also be used to obtain data through questionnaires and observation.

Significance of the study

The results on learner performance in the Khoekhoegowab and English Read Aloud Tests could yield first-hand information from Namibian classrooms on the issue of mother tongue instruction to non-native speakers of English.

Furthermore, the findings of the study will help facilitate decision making on language policy issues in Namibian schools, as informed choices can be made by parents and schools when deciding on the medium of instruction.

The study may also highlight factors that would influence learner performance in school.

The study may also help curriculum developers and implementers in revisiting the language policy to ensure and enhance classroom benefits for the learners as well as instruction efficiency.

Hypothesis

It is expected that:

- Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners whose medium of instruction is Khoekhoegowab will have better reading ability in the mother tongue than the reading ability in English of those Khoekhoegowab speaking learners whose medium of instruction is English.
- Learners instructed through the mother tongue in the first grades of schooling find it easier to comprehend what they have read as they have the basis in their mother tongue in which they can formulate thought.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the literature review is to determine what has already been done that relates to the researcher's problem; studies that have been done will provide rationale for the hypotheses; indication of what needs to be done will form the basis for the justification of the researcher's study.

This literature review has sought to investigate the implementation of the language policy of Namibian schools in regard to mother tongue instruction, and how mother tongue as a medium of instruction is taught in the classroom and to uncover the meaning teachers and parents associate with mother tongue instruction. Noss, as cited in Harlech-Jones (1988) reflecting on the situation in East Asia, states that:

The term medium of instruction is not completely unambiguous. Sometimes it refers to oral instruction, sometimes to written, and sometimes to both... Usually, when the text material exists only in the world language, the medium of instruction is officially that language, although entire lecture periods may be devoted to explaining the text in a native language or a vernacular.
(Harlech-Jones 1988:208)

It is, therefore, essential to explore the current global theories, practices and trends on mother tongue as medium of instruction. Insights gained from such literature review will form part of the conceptual framework of the investigation. However, there is a dearth of literature on this topic in Namibia. Therefore, the researcher was, to a certain extent, forced to review literature from other countries. The literature that was reviewed included both primary and secondary sources.

Some background information as to how the current language policy was planned is part of this research. Furthermore this research will discuss information concerning mother tongue instruction in the primary phase, theories underpinning learning and the Cummins' linguistic interdependence principle as well as the current trends and thinking of the community, parents, learners and teachers.

Lastly, the conclusion and references.

2. LANGUAGE POLICY

2.1 Background to the language policy

In July 1991, a new provisional language policy for Namibian schools was tabled for consideration for implementation in 1992 (Angula 1991). Prior to independence in 1990, Namibia had followed the South African delayed immersion model, which allowed a choice between either English or Afrikaans as medium of instruction. Both English and Afrikaans were taught as subjects from the first year. The results of this policy were similar to those noted in South Africa: burdening African pupils with more demands in terms of language learning than the resources of their context could support. Prior exposure to the target medium of instruction was not sufficient for it to become an effective medium of instruction in the fourth year (Haasbroek & Botha, 1989:23).

At the 1980 conference held in Lusaka at the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN 1981), the focus was on “English as the official language for Namibia”. “The African languages” were recognized as equal in status and development. These languages, the different mother tongues and English, can be seen as the two pivots around which language planning in education has operated in Namibia. A language policy for an Independent Namibia was formulated in SWAPO’s most important policy document in respect of this issue towards a language policy for Namibia (UNIN 1981). Skutnabb-Kangas refer to language policy as an instrument used in achieving more general societal goals (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981).

English was chosen as the official language of liberation for an independent Namibia by SWAPO for various reasons, long before independence. On a number of public occasions, senior spokesmen of the liberation movement reaffirmed the choice of English as the official language. Watson’s (1994) argument is that the retention of an international language as the national language does ensure access and linkages to the international community but there are clearly three dangers. One is that indigenous languages are marginalized; another is that it can lead to cultural or linguistic dependency; a third is that it leads to social and educational inequalities, benefiting only those groups who have access to the national/international language (Watson 1994:329).

Treffgarne, (1981) in her study of post-colonial Africa, highlights the dangers of suppressing indigenous, cultural and linguistic revival. She says that:

So long as English, French or Portuguese continue to serve as the official language, and hence the target language of the education system, concern to revitalize the traditional cultural heritage by improving or introducing the teaching of local languages may be given second priority.

(Treffgarne 1981:200)

According to Wolfaardt (2001), Scotton (1978) justifies the introduction of English as official language in a multilingual, developing community as follows:

- Choosing English as the official language is ‘unfair’ in that it is foreign and must be acquired by every citizen outside his home. But the key point is that choosing English is uniformly unfair; no ethnic group is favored. Therefore, no one ethnic group can feel that it is a more integral part of the nation than another group because of the official language policy.
- Although a mere 0,8% of the population are in fact first language speakers of English, no strong objection about English being the official language was raised by any opposition party.

Since Namibian independence, English has become the official language and primary language of instruction in Namibian schools. According to Rubin (1984) all language policy is a form of social control. Much of the research evidence supports this view (Watson 1984; Paulston 1987; Heath 1972) by highlighting the fact that language policies are conditioned by the perceptions of those in political power and that the two key factors that influence the effectiveness of these policies are economic and political.

The first draft for discussion of the national language policy for Namibian schools was published in November 1991 in the document Education and Culture in Namibia: the Way Forward to 1996 (Ministry of Education and Culture 1991).

In the foreword the then Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Nahas Angula, said that the policy

Embodies the twin goals of establishing English as the official medium of education and promoting the equal development of the main Namibian languages. As we move towards achieving these goals, ideally all learners should become proficient in at least two languages: their Home Language or Mother Tongue, and English. Thus, there can be an appropriate balance between consolidation of the learners' own culture and background, and acquisition of a language offering wider communication... unity in diversity.

(MEC 1991:4)

The goal of the national Language Policy was therefore to promote English as the official language and for African languages to have some status in education in order to serve the multilingual society that is Namibia. This change in language policy has been a cause of concern for educators in Namibia.

Legère (1996) and Harlech-Jones (1993) cited in Legère *et al* (2000) share the view that implementation with respect to national languages is weak, slow and of low quality. A lack of interest, commitment and political will is also observed. Negative attitudes towards national languages which date back to pre-independence years have not been overcome; they persist and have even grown bigger as the result of the emphasis on English in almost all formal domains of communication (Legère *et al* 2000: 10).

2.2 The national language policy for Namibian schools

In many African countries, education policy makers have faced a dilemma in the choice of national language and hence the language of instruction in schools. Should a country teach a language that is very foreign to its people? Should a local language be promoted and developed sufficiently to take over many of the educational, commercial, and technical functions within the country? The question, however, of which African language or languages would be accorded official or national status turned out to be political dynamite in a number of countries (Hoben 1984).

In support of this viewpoint, Fergusson states that:

of the issues involved in the formulation of language education policy, the selection of a medium of instruction is possibly the most critical. The selection of a medium of instruction is not only critical, but also emotional and contentious, because it relates directly to political choice.

(Fergusson 1985:236)

After independence in 1990, the Ministry of Basic Education realized that a new language policy for schools was urgently needed. This policy had to promote the use of the mother tongue and English in schools and in teacher training colleges. As a result, the document, "the language policy for schools: 1992–1996 and beyond" (MEC 1993a) was formulated and implemented.

There were discrepancies in the implementation of the language policy from region to region, as policy implementers, due to misinterpretation and manipulation, mainly preferred teaching through English rather than through the mother tongue. Formerly disadvantaged learners were further marginalized in the process, as non-English speaking teachers were expected to teach through the medium of English. In support of this, Cooper further notes that:

...the formulation of the language policy and the planning are two aspects of its implementation. A third aspect is the evaluation of the effectiveness of language policy.

(Cooper 1979:119)

Before we look into possible problems that could arise from the policy, we first note what criteria and factors were taken into consideration for language policy (Language Policy for schools 1993:3) formulation:

- *The equality of all national languages regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language;*
- *The cost of the implementation of the policy;*
- *The fact that language is a means of transmitting culture, and cultural identity;*
- *The fact that for pedagogical reasons it is ideal for learners to study through their own*

language, particularly in the early years of schooling when basic skills or reading, writing, and concept formation require;

- *The need for learners to be proficient enough in English, the official language, at the end of the 7-year primary cycle either to gain access to further education or to be effective participants in society;*
- *The expectation that a language policy should enhance the development of unity in society.*

According to Harlech-Jones (1988:180) national language policy has become a cause celebre in Namibia; the urgency of the debate is equally encountered on the education level as well, as language decisions are considered to have great impact on the successful attainment of national goals, such as integration, centralization and modernization. Once these language decisions have been taken they normally have immediate implications for education, which tends to be regarded as a major channel for implementing national policies, which have socially regulatory intentions.

Wolfaardt (2001) concurs with Harlech-Jones (1988) that there is some disjuncture between the criteria and the goals of the policy in that the criteria do not spell out that it is not permissible for a school to use the mother tongue as medium of instruction up to Grade 6 or 7. The provision built in regarding the mother tongues, “provided the necessary resources are available”, can in fact provide a reason for not using those languages as media of instruction between Grades 1-3. The policy also does not expand on how education should promote language and cultural identity through the mother tongue (Wolfaardt 2001).

2.3 The goal and value of mother tongue instruction

- The language as a vehicle for Cultural transmission

The education system should validate and maintain the linguistic and cultural ties of the child with the home community. Giroux, as cited in Hutchison (1998) writes:

Education in Freire’s view becomes both an ideal and a referent for change in the service of a new kind of society. As an ideal, education “speaks” to a form of cultural politics that transcends the theoretical boundaries of any one

specific political doctrine, while also linking social theory and practice to the deepest aspects of emancipation ... his cultural politics represent a theoretical struggle against all forms of subjective and objective domination as well as a struggle for forms of knowledge, skills, and social relations that provide the conditions for social and, hence, self-emancipation.

(Hutchison 1998:3)

Pretorius (2001b) cited in Wolfaardt (2001) quoted a former prominent African statesman, President Nyerere, as saying:

I have set up an entirely new ministry: the Ministry of National Culture and Youth. I have done this because I believe that its culture is the essence and spirit of any nation. A country, which lacks its own culture, is no more than a collection of people without the spirit, which makes them a nation. Of all the crimes of colonialism ... I have set up this new Ministry to help us regain our pride in our own culture.

(Wolfaardt 2001:234)

Harris (1990:72), in support of Giroux and Pretorius arguments about the importance of language, says that language and culture are interdependent, having an almost symbiotic relationship. Erosion of one almost invariably weakens the other. This is particularly true for those small indigenous cultures that have no tradition of written language and thus rely exclusively on oral language for the transmission of cultural knowledge. He goes on to point out that the 'crucial matter in language survival is whether the children are both learning the language and using it among themselves'.

This argument in my view encompasses how culture is embodied in the language of any human race.

- The language as a spiritual inheritance

The value of the language of a nation as a spiritual inheritance lies in the fact that it is transmitted from generation to generation as the basis of thought and action. The language helps to shape the intellectual insight, to broaden and deepen the feelings. The mother tongue teacher has a very important calling (vocation). It is their responsibility to clearly bring to the child the possibilities and demands of the language, to help the child through exercises to gain command over the language, be it through the spoken word or the written word (Davids 1998).

- The language as a means of communication

Language is a vehicle or medium of communication in society and its status in a society depends on how widely it is used as a medium of communication in that society. Education on the other hand, is a process of preparing young people for future membership of their society. It has to do with passing ideas and concepts, modern or otherwise, on to the young generation so that they may acquire knowledge that they can use to bring about development in their society (Qorro 1987).

According to Davids (1998), mother tongue is the most important means of human communication. The ability to communicate is of vital importance. It forms the basis for interaction, creativity, and thought. It is through the mother tongue that the mother communicates with her child. The mother tongue is the language the child knows when he or she first enters the school. It is part of the environment the child knows. It is knowledge of a language the children are deprived of when they are instructed in a foreign language when they now enter our classrooms for the first time. The child is deprived of the opportunity to communicate. The child is deprived of the right to express him or herself. What a disgrace for our learner-centered classrooms (David 1998)!

In support of Davids arguments, Barnes (1990) points out that a pupil's understanding of a new topic depends upon bringing what he or she knows already to bear on it, since our ability to understand a message depends on the resources we bring to it.

Barret (1994) agrees:

that allowing students to use their language within the classroom is part of this resource ... seeking to exploit the learner's existing knowledge ... and their capacities to communicate in their first language.

(Barret 1994:10)

Brock-Utne (1993) makes the following observation during her teaching practice supervision:

The first two days I was sitting through lessons in history, chemistry, physics, mathematics and English. The same passivity everywhere. Then on the third day I was supervising, the class had 'Siasa' – social science, a subject which is taught in Kiswahili. ... at once the pupils were participating, were asking questions, were eagerly waving hands. I made the same observation

(Brock-Utne 1993:8)

Trueba (1993) cited in Hutchison (1998) agrees:

Language is one of the most powerful human resources needed to maintain a sense of self-identity and self-fulfillment. Without a full command of one's own language, ethnic identity, the sharing of fundamental common cultural values and norms, the social context of interpersonal communication that guides interactional understandings and the feeling of belonging within a group are not possible. Furthermore, without language and a strong self-identity, the ability to learn other languages and understand other cultures is impaired.

(Hutchison 1998:2)

2.4 The problem of medium of instruction

The first issue to be considered is the medium of instruction that has changed to English. A study by UNCTAD quoted by Pattanayak (1986) revealed that:

...Emphasis on mother tongue or national language dictates an education which relates it to languages of intercommunication at various levels and thus imparts education relevant to the societal needs. Replacement of mother tongue or national languages by another language such as a foreign language deprives many people of their subsistence and makes a few privileged.

(Pattanayak 1986:8)

Some education planners and parents adhered to the assumption that the earlier a child is confronted with a foreign language (English), the sooner that language will be mastered. Amongst other considerations, this completely ignores the fact that the teachers themselves might have a very poor command of English (Wolfaardt 2001). It is against this background that Fergusson (1985) as quoted in Harlech-Jones (1988:205) argues that popular perceptions of the meaning of “medium of instruction”, even within educational circles, are usually rather simplistic and stereotyped. The choice of medium of instruction and “staging or timing” of the introduction of the various languages into the curriculum. The cognitively impoverished curriculum of the early years where the mother tongue was the medium of instruction makes it even more difficult for African language learners to cope with the demands of Grade 5 and beyond.

2.5 Mother tongue as a medium of instruction

Since mother tongue is now generally regarded as essential during the initial school years, we turn first to a number of ways in which it can be defined. There are various definitions of mother tongue, (Dutcher, 1983; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Legère *et al* 2000) and the variety of these definitions has much to do with the fact that people can have more than one mother tongue, and that their mother tongue can also change throughout their lifetime.

The mother tongue, as most people understand it, is the language usually spoken in the individual's home in their early childhood, although not necessarily used by them at present. Thus, mother tongue could be the language one knows best at home, or it could be a language that a child acquires later. Skutnabb-Kangas (1988:14-15) identifies the following popular, concrete criteria to define mother tongue:

The language one thinks in.

The language one dreams in.

The language one counts in.

According to her, the declaration of children's linguistic rights states that every child should have the right to identify positively with her/his original mother tongue and have his/her identification accepted and respected by others. Every child should have the right to learn the mother tongue fully and have the right to choose when s/he wants to use the mother tongue.

Cummins holds that the mother tongue as medium of instruction in the initial school years is extremely important.

According to Cummins (1989a:31) as learners' progress through the different grades, they are increasingly required to manipulate language in cognitively demanding and decontextualised situations that differ significantly, therefore need not only communication skills but also cognitive linguistic competence skills to be able to satisfy the academic demand of school.

In his earlier study Cummins had proposed that:

When the usage of certain functions of a language and the development of L1 vocabulary and concepts are strongly promoted by the child's linguistic environment outside of school... then intensive exposure to L2 is likely to result in high levels of L2 competence at no cost to L1 competence. The initially high level of L1 development makes possible the development of similar levels of competence in L2. However,...
(Cummins 1979:233)

Cummins' findings were supported by Krashen (1985) as follows:

Education in the student's first language can greatly facilitate acquisition of English
Consider the case of two limited English proficient children entering the fourth grade.
(Krashen 1985:80)

Cognitive academic language proficiency should be well established in the L1 before it is demanded in the L2. Learners should be exposed to the L2 in their neighbourhood and home (NEPI 1992).

According to Cummins's interdependence principle, first and second language academic skills are interdependent; in other words there is some underlying cognitive/academic proficiency, which is common across languages.

The mother tongue is the most important medium that the educator has, and it will be very difficult to educate without language. It is through language that the teacher transmits his or her knowledge to the child. If the child cannot understand and comprehend the language through which he or she is instructed, successful and effective instruction or teaching is impossible.

The language is the vehicle through which the teacher tells, explains, disciplines or asks the child to perform one or other function. The language is an irreplaceable means of forming the character of the human being. The mother tongue is important for the different stages and aspects in the development of the child. Through the mother tongue we can express our deepest feelings and impressions.

In support of the abovementioned facts, Olivier (1993) cited in Davids (2000:44) refers to a study for the Human Sciences Research Council by Haasbroek and Botha (1988:97) where they came to the conclusion that in developing multilingual countries

1. pupils taught through the medium of their mother tongue communicate more spontaneously in the classroom and ultimately attain better scholastic results than pupils taught through the medium of a foreign language, and that they also have to repeat a school year less frequently than pupils taught in a foreign language;
 2. pupils taught through the medium of a foreign language often have an insufficient vocabulary in that language for them to understand the subject.
- The influence of the teacher in mother tongue instruction

Kone (1995) stressed his disappointment at the fact that educated Africans have not been more instrumental in effecting change in education. He writes that:

So far in Africa, we have failed to educate our people. Much of this is due to Africans educated in the Western system, and from the Western perspective, who have learned to understand, speak, read and write in languages other than their own. Our being educated in... understandable way to the people who speak my mother tongue?

(Kone 1995:100)

Teachers need to be proficient in a language in order to teach reading and writing skills and contribute to the language development of learners through that language. The teacher needs to read widely in the language, in order to expand his or her knowledge in the language; and that includes knowledge of terminology of other subjects, as well as the orthography of the mother tongue.

Teachers should be able to understand, speak, and use the language of instruction. If the language is a vernacular which they did not use in their own schooling, they must receive special and ongoing training in order to feel comfortable writing and reading in the language, as well as to appreciate that the language is one worthy of a place in formal education. If the language is one they learned as a second language, teachers should be able to have a level of competence in that language which enables them to communicate with adults who are native speakers of that language, as well as to teach the language in a meaningful way to children. Furthermore, teachers should have mastered the subject matter of instruction (Dutcher 1995).

2.6 Motivations for mother tongue as medium of instruction in the primary phase

According to Okonkwo (1979) evidence indicating the benefits of mother tongue instruction is varied. However, arguments in favor of the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction for primary schooling have been used to promote mother tongue instruction since the early sixteenth century.

The learner's development may be negatively affected because ways of going about tasks do not further develop the learner's own culture. If they learn through a language other than their mother tongue, learners also do not develop new patterns and processes of thinking as quickly as people expect. This results in high dropout rates, which are always a clear indication that the kind of education offered does not meet the learner's needs (Wolfaardt 2001:89).

One must also consider what is the real purpose of schools. Tiffen (1975) cited in Wolfaardt (2001) asks what the aims for primary schools are. Do they aim at a general good education for the majority of the learners who will receive no further education, or are they to be seen as preparatory schools for the minority who go on to a secondary and tertiary education? One concern that he has is whether acquiring fluency in English as the key to Western technical culture does not absorb too much of the available teaching time, to the detriment of fluency in an African language and an understanding of the culture of the society into which the children are born.

In the case of Namibia, we have embarked upon the philosophy of learner-centered education, whereby the child will be at the heart of every learning activity. If no proper communication exists in that classroom no imparting and acquiring of knowledge can take place. This view concurs with that of Bamgbose (2000) as cited in Davids (2000) where he states:

“Whatever the outcome of any experiments in this field, the view is now widely accepted that a child who comes to school with a language of his own and is then introduced to literacy and/or learning in other language is bound to have problems which are different from those of a child who is taught in his own tongue”.

(Davids 2000:41)

This view is also supported in an article entitled ‘Educational language planning for Namibia: English for liberation or neocolonialism?’ (Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Africa 1985:13), published by the OAU: Some relevant international experience is analyzed and conclusions drawn. These are summed up as follows:

1. English, as an official language will be assisted if Namibian languages are used maximally inside and outside the education system.
2. Resistance to the use of mother tongues is an expression of a colonized consciousness, which serves the interests of global capitalism and South Africa, and the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie who are most dependent on capitalist interests.
3. Namibia should follow the example of those states which have alternative language programs leading to bilingualism.
4. Educational aid from ‘donors’ should be long-term and explicitly accept Namibian multilingual goals.

(Phillipson 1992:297)

Therefore the choice of medium of instruction other than the mother tongue of the child is one that should be exercised cautiously. Provision is made both in the Namibian Constitution and the Language Policy for Schools for a free choice for mother tongue instruction in the first three years of schooling.

Larson (1981) as cited in Harlech-Jones (1988:212-213) provides a comprehensive list of reasons, which are commonly advanced for the use of vernacular languages in education:

1. Psychological – the mother tongue facilitates adjustment between home and school; it assists the formation of the child’s concepts and categories of thought; people are emotionally attached to the mother tongue.
2. Educational – (this overlaps with psychological factors) – the mother tongue promotes freedom of expression; new concepts are difficult to grasp in an unfamiliar language.

3. Linguistic – learning to read is easier if done in the mother tongue, because of difficulties and interferences caused by different phonemic and orthographic systems, and because most of the phonological system of a language is considered to be the basis for reading skill.
4. Socioeconomic – the prestige language usually offers the promise of advancement and status, but the vernacular should be used as a bridge to promote better adjustment and less alienation.
5. Political – the vernaculars seldom have political importance, but it is claimed that the interests of the state are best served by using the mother tongue as the medium of initial instruction because this enables the educational system to be maximally effective.

Chapman (1981) as cited in Singh (1988) concurs with Larson's arguments that:

Concept development and language development go hand in hand. Various studies in mother tongue teaching indicating that children taught basic skills in their mother tongue in a bilingual education program... taught only English, and that time spent being taught in their own language does not impair their acquisition of English, and may even assist the process. (Singh 1988:74)

Legère (1996:297) furthermore recommended that studies should be carried out to compare the progress of children in mother tongue-medium classes with the progress of children in English-medium classes.

It transpires from the discussion that mother tongue teaching might play an important and significant role in academic success. However, research that was previously carried out supports the claim that it is better for learners to be taught through their mother tongue.

There is, therefore, substantial support in the literature for the mother tongue as medium of instruction, though the practical implementation of this is far from ideal.

3. CURRENT TRENDS AND THINKING

After independence, English was introduced as the official language and was to be the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. Since English was to be the medium of instruction, much time,

money and effort was put into the development of resources and the training of English teachers. This served to confirm further the perception that English was very important, and certainly much more important than the African languages.

Brock-Utne (1995) cited in Wolfaardt (2001:47-48) is not alone in voicing a concern that English has helped to further degrade the status of the African languages. In her report, she quotes what people in the different regions said were their concerns:

The way English is getting all the support and the Namibian languages hardly any, we are heading towards dissolving our own languages and thereby culture. We may become a monolingual society like in Mozambique where the indigenous population now has Portuguese as their mother tongue. Instead of the donors giving us aid in English, they should give us aid to develop our own languages. The national education policy ought to be looked into again. Our children are fighting two enemies at the same time: the subject matter and the language. We must give more attention to African languages. After 20 years we shall all be speaking English.

The Namibian languages are being marginalized. There should be more people fighting for the Namibian languages from official positions. All languages in Namibia should be treated equally. The emphasis has been too much on English towards their languages. The ministry is doing nothing about this. If you know English well, you are considered educated. If you just know Namibian languages, even though you may know several of them and speak them well, you are considered dumb and uneducated.

Our politicians should not speak English to our people. Our languages have no official role any more. We experienced the strange situation that a politician originally from the north and Oshiwambo-speaking goes to the north and delivers his speech in English and it is translated into Oshiwambo! He should have spoken his own language. Then he would have been closer to the people.

The loss of status of Namibian languages is exacerbated by complacency among people in Namibia about the fact that English is taking over, to the detriment of their own language. This inevitably leads to the perception by some African language speakers that English is the language of development and one which will help transform undeveloped, traditional societies into modern, educated, technologically competitive and affluent countries.

Therefore, Namibians are prepared to neglect or forsake their own languages in the belief that English will empower them and their children, steering them towards a better quality of life.

Mutumba (1999) cited in Legère et al (2000) is rather critical in his view of the current situation, which he describes as follows:

Some countries, such as Namibia, exhibit clear discrepancies... between. Policy statements and their actual implementation process... Although the language policy ideally supports mother tongue education, because of inadequate resources, such as teachers and textbooks, it is difficult... to implement mother tongue instruction in Grades 1-3. This is coupled with... 'the reluctance of the elite group' to promote indigenous languages... The shortage of qualified teachers is a serious threat towards the successful realization of the language goals. (Legère et al 2000:19)

It is thus not surprising that parents opt for English for their children as medium of instruction from the first year of schooling. Parents and other stakeholders have cited numerous 'advantages' for the 'straight for English' model (NEPI 1992). Some of the arguments raised for English to be used as medium of instruction from grade 1 are:

All children should learn English at school.

Having English as the medium of instruction would be beneficial, as it would vastly increase children's exposure to the language in terms of both time and domains of use.

Children should start as young as possible because they learn languages better when they are young.

English would also help in unifying people, as it would promote an understanding of other cultures.

English does not have the negative image that Afrikaans has in some circles as 'the language of the oppressor'.

People perceive that without English, their prospects in many fields are limited.

English is the language of access to a vast range of resources nationally and internationally, to higher education, to technology, to economic opportunities. English has to be studied because, apart from being the associate official language, it is also an international language through which several instrumental needs can be satisfied.

Many people with an African language medium of instruction at primary school do not go beyond primary school and do not gain adequate proficiency in English while they are at school. These arguments are important, since as long as people believe that being proficient in English relates to

having power, English will be thoroughly promoted and in demand in Namibia.

After having discussed aspects of language policy implementation in schools Harlech-Jones, cited in Legère et al (2000) argues that time is ripe for revision as the current situation ‘frustrates the attainment of educational aims... ‘ He continues by saying “... that the focus should in future be on drafting a language policy in education that assists students to learn better... “ (Legère *et al* 2000:19).

4. LEARNING THEORIES

Vygotsky (1962) was one of the first of recent researchers to point out that language plays an essential role in cognitive development at least from the time the child has attained a certain level of language competence. Language first develops as a means of social communication and is later internalized. It then becomes a crucial tool in the shaping of cognitive processes relevant for the elaboration of the abstract symbolic system, which will enable the learner to organize thought. He further stresses that being able to express the same thought in different languages will enable the learner to see language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories. This leads to awareness of linguistic operations.

Cummins’ theory thus provides the rationale for the kind of bilingual education that advocates the use of the learner’s mother tongue during the early stages of education, adding the second language only when s/he has developed higher-order cognitive and linguistic skills in the first. He reports that second language learners may acquire a good level of fluency in conversational English within two years of starting to learn the language, but that five to seven years’ exposure is generally required in order to develop verbal cognitive skills to the same level as native speakers. (Cline and Fredericson, as cited in Wolfaardt (2001).

5. CONCLUSION

The issue of mother tongue as medium of instruction is not unique to Namibia. Important lessons can be learned from other countries. Based on the overwhelming evidence in support of mother tongue as medium of instruction in and outside Africa, the consensus among linguists is that

- Cognitive gains can be derived from using the child's home language as the medium of instruction in early education (Cummins 1979); and
- Where the home language is different from the medium of instruction used in the classroom, the medium of instruction may create pedagogical and cognitive problems (Klein 1994).

This research shows that certain language problems have persisted throughout the history of Namibian Education. Significant attitudes towards languages and certain patterns as found in the enduring conflicts with regard to medium of instruction and mother tongue instruction, as well as development of African languages, have their origins in events and decisions of the past (Harlech-Jones 1990a).

All education takes place in a political context. It is the result of what parents, community members, and government authorities have decided they want children to learn. All effective programs need that political support. The current language policy clearly states that mother tongue instruction will be in the best interests of the learner, especially in the first three grades of school. However, the policy leaves room for misinterpretation by stating that: "Grade 1-3 be taught either through the home language, a local language or English" (MEC 1991) The choice of the medium of instruction is therefore decentralized, and some schools in urban areas are opting for English as medium of instruction from grade 1. This poses a further problem, since not all teachers are competent in English (Wolfaard 2001).

The amendments to the Language Policy and in particular – *"Nothing in the policy will prevent schools from teaching a foreign language to help promote international understanding."* (Language Policy 1993:7, 11) This in itself is a contradiction to *"it will be ideal for learners to study through their own language particularly in the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing, and concept formation are acquired"* (Language Policy 1993:3).

One of the most important lessons learned from the Namibian case is the need for clear objectives in a policy statement. The Namibian policy was vague, and it gave room for loose interpretations during the implementation phase. The same vagueness can be found in Kenya's policy to make Kiswahili its national language. Bamgbose (1991) pointed out that:

the vagueness of the decision can be judged by the implementation step recommended. This included the requirements that all Kenyans were to speak Swahili at all times with fellow Kenyans (a practical impossibility since language choice depends on several factors, particularly topic, situation, and role relationship between the interlocutors), that government business was to be conducted in Swahili, that all civil servants were... Swahili would be given greater prominence than English in the schools. Not only are details of how these prescriptions are to be achieved not given, the opposite of what is recommended has been going on, without any notice of the contradiction involved...

(Bamgbose 1991:113)

I would like to quote Vygotsky (1934) as cited in Davids (2000) that:

Success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language. The child can transfer to the new language the system of meanings he/she already possesses in his or her own language.

(Davids 2000:109)

This view of Vygotsky is also supported by Bamgbose as quoted in ADEA Newsletter (Oct.-Dec. 1996) as he writes:

Language is without doubt the most important factor in the learning process for the transfer of knowledge or skills... is mediated through the spoken or written word. The paradox is that educational plans and programs are often designed to pay more attention to the structure of the educational system and curricula than to language policy.

(ADEA Newsletter Oct.-Dec. 1996)

For a young child, the language of the home is part and parcel of his or her own cultural and social identity. From studies that have been done elsewhere in the world (Hutchison 1998; Yates 1995; Williams 1996; Bamgbose 1991; Okombo 1996; Luckett 1994) on studying the language and learning patterns of young children in school who do not speak English as a first language, an overwhelming case emerges to show that they are seriously disadvantaged educationally and will be slower to progress with school work if their use of their mother tongue is not accepted and catered for in school (Brown 1975).

Concept development and language development go hand in hand. There is sound research evidence (Bamgbose 2000; Cummins 1979, 1980; Davids 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas 1988; Wolfaardt 2001;

Harlech-Jones 1988) that basic concepts and initial literacy and numeracy are more easily learned in the home language. There is less danger of a challenge to or loss of the child's sense of identity if the home language continuous to be used at school and the culture of the speakers will be drawn on and recognized in the school setting.

Mother tongue teaching will give children the basic confidence and self-discipline. When one is master of one language, it is much easier to learn other languages. Kessler and Quinn (1982) cited in Harlech-Jones (1988) summarize the consensus of this opinion: "An initially high level of competence in the first language is a determining factor in the development of high levels of proficiency in the second language" (Harlech-Jones 1988:219). Lack of mother tongue knowledge can lead to frustration and failure as the child progresses through school phases.

Finally, I believe that the issue of mother tongue instruction is important because it speaks not only to the situation in Namibia, but to the broader issue of a need to balance a local, cultural, language-based identity, against integration into global cultural and linguistic communities.

In conclusion, may I end this with the message of Chingo (1990:5) to the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia: "Behind every successful innovation there is a long story of trial and error, of planning, of participation by many people of administrative structures which had to be organized/reorganized, of imaginative materials which had to be prepared, of commitment and will."

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the tremendous efforts made by African countries to develop their educational systems for socioeconomic and cultural development, the target is far from being achieved (Machungo 1998).

It is against this background that this chapter is going to offer a critical analysis of the BETD Namibian Languages curriculum and the school curriculum for Namibian African Languages with regard to: a socio-historic and economic analysis of the context in which the curriculum has been designed; how the curriculum is designed and the learning environment in which the curriculum is presented.

1.1 The meaning of curriculum

Tanner and Tanner (1975:xv) claimed that the main thrust in curriculum development and reform over the years has been directed at micro curricular problems to the neglect of macro curricular problems. Innovations and reforms have been adopted without sufficient consideration of the necessary organic interaction of the elements that comprise the curriculum in its totality.

Skinner and other behaviorists not only view the curriculum as a component of a technological production process but also see the pupil as a kind of mechanical learning unit in the production process (Tanner & Tanner 1975:26). According to Gagné (1967:23) “curriculum is a sequence of content units arranged in such a way that the learning of each unit may be accomplished as a single act, provided the capabilities described by the learner.” This specific definition offered by Gagné assumes that learning is mechanical and linear, and that the learner is a mere mechanism to be conditioned towards making the right automatic responses.

Stenhouse as cited in Hawes (1979) observed:

We appear to be confronted by two different views of curriculum. On the one hand the curriculum is seen as an intention, plan or prescription, an idea about what one would like to happen in schools. On the other it is seen as the existing state of affairs in schools, what does, in fact, happen?

(Hawes 1979:3)

It is in this context that the teacher should help learners express thoughts and feelings through language to develop communication.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The school syllabi for Khoekhoegowab stresses that language should not be taught in isolation as before, but rather in context. It is in this context that I shall critically look at the school syllabi for Grades 5-7 and 8-10 Khoekhoegowab to analyze the content taught and the reasoning behind this.

1.3 Goals of teaching First Language

To mention only a few, the goals of teaching First Language are to:

- Enable learners to communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in speech and writing;
- Enable learners to understand and respond appropriately to what they hear, read and exercise;
- Encourage learners to enjoy and appreciate the variety of languages;
- Promote creativity among learners and encourage the creative use of language.

There is a general agreement among teachers and parents that children should be taught to read well, listen attentively, speak clearly, write legibly, and spell accurately. However, teachers and parents do not always understand what is involved in reading well or spelling accurately.

1.4 Rationale

The importance of the languages indigenous to Namibia, both as medium of instruction and for legislative, administrative and judicial purposes, is recognized by our Constitution in Terms of Article 3 and the use of these languages should therefore be promoted. As all Namibian languages enjoy equal rights, the African languages should be upgraded to the same standard as the European languages used in Namibia. While English as an official language serves the role of wider communication on a national basis, the Namibian languages as first or local languages (L1) in school provide the most significant instrument for the development of the individual's

personality. L1 or local language should serve to integrate the learner into society by equipping him/her with the means to unequivocally express his/her needs as well as perceive those of others.

(Syllabus for Namibian Language Education 2001:1-2)

1.5 The socio- historical and economic situational analysis

1.5.1 Pre-independence Language Policy and Education Programmes

During the colonial era the different education authorities were also responsible for the training of teachers under their authority. The following five teacher training colleges were in existence. These were the Windhoek College of Education (for whites only), the Khomasdal Training College (for Coloureds), the Ongwediva Training College (for the Ovambos), the Rundu Training College (for Kavangos) and the Caprivi Training College (for Caprivians). The teacher training colleges could therefore be said to have provided different teacher programmes. As a result, less professional or teacher professional content was being taught to prepare these teachers effectively for the classroom (Wainaina and Kasanda 2000:140).

In Namibia much of education before independence was driven by a deliberate policy of language indoctrination, notably the Afrikaans language. Prior to independence, Afrikaans and English were the official languages in South-West Africa. Lemmer (1996), cited in Ockhuizen (1998:5), has pointed out that since 1970 the medium of instruction was Afrikaans for the majority of schools. English as a medium of instruction was only for the White English Speaking community. In the schools where Afrikaans was the medium of instruction, English language was taught as a Second Language and was a compulsory subject. The mother tongue was the language of instruction up to standard five for all the different education Administrations.

The Odendaal Plan of 1964, which divided Namibia according to ethnic groups, entrenched this into a deliberate policy of promoting Afrikaans while giving scant attention to the indigenous languages. It was also responsible for the implementation of “Bantu Education” in Namibia. One of the results of this was teachers with lesser qualifications than most teachers in white schools at the time, being given work amongst the indigenous people: The Odendaal commission recommended that:

- the education of the whites should continue to be the responsibility of the South West African administration;
- the education of the black and coloured population should be transferred to the South African Department of Bantu Education and to the Department of Coloured Affairs respectively; and
- African Education should be developed integrally with various homelands.

(UNIN: 1981)

Namibia has experienced regular and dramatic changes in its educational structure since the mission schools were established largely to promote trade within the region. The German rule from the late nineteenth century to the First Great War was replaced by a series of South African administrations, up until the final Nationalist party rule, which was finally replaced at independence in 1990 by Namibia's own independent administration. The language policy has seen similar changes, with first German and then Afrikaans receiving preferential treatment, and finally, under the present government, English was made the language of instruction.

Before independence only two of the language groups enjoyed full official status, namely, Afrikaans and English. This was in line with education policy in South Africa. The local languages were largely neglected, and little was published in these languages, making their implementation at school level very difficult.

Before independence a form of Classical Humanism, namely, Bantu Education, was used. Education for the white elite was based on the culture of previous western generations. The maintenance of standards was achieved by the appointment of inspectors and external examinations. Black people were educated to be workers. Today, after independence, many policy changes have been proposed and even implemented regarding languages at school. i.e. all national languages to enjoy equal status. The present education system has a little of both reconstructionism and progressivism. Reconstructionists argue that human beings must be seen as persons to be valued as equals, irrespective of their level of ability or achievement. They also emphasize the practical aspects of education (Wolfaardt and Goodwin 1995).

1.5.2 Post- Independence Language Policy and Education Programmes

In order to streamline the teacher training programmes in Namibia, a common teacher training programme, the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), was introduced in 1992 in the four teacher training colleges. While BETD teachers are given the role of contributing to the transformation of teaching from a teacher centered approach to a learner-centered one, their life-world experiences reflect their time as pupils in rural schools before independence where knowledge was considered as an objective reality that was transmitted to them, a reality that was not to be questioned (Storeng 2001).

After Independence, English was adopted as the sole official language of Namibia. As early as 1984, Chamberlain *et al.* (1984) as cited in Ockhuizen (1998) had already indicated that the main purpose of choosing English language as a medium of instruction was to unify all Namibians, irrespective of race. This was also the aim of the Government of Namibia in adopting English as the sole official language.

The Ministry of Education, Sport, Culture and Youth (1991:10-11) in response to the above in an education reform directive has the following:

Firstly, English shall be the medium of communication in official correspondence, reports and communication. At the lower primary level the home language should be the medium of instruction and a subject, and English should be a subject. At the Junior and Senior Secondary levels, English will be a medium of instruction and a subject. The home language or any other language may be a subject. For 1991, English will be the medium of instruction for Grade 8.

The Language Policy for Schools (MEC 1993a) and Towards a Language Policy in Education (MEC 1995) state very clearly that all national languages are equal regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of the language. However, there is still concern amongst Namibians today that the growth of English has happened to the detriment of Namibian languages.

The role of language is mainly seen in

- Promoting national unity and international commitment, for example in the SADC region, at Organisation for African Unity (OAU) level and world-wide facilitated by competence in English, and
- Reflecting the vast cultural heritage of Namibia's population as preserved in the national languages (Legère *et al.* 2000:4).

Legère *et al.* (2000) further notes that all those Namibian languages which have been confirmed after independence as media of instruction and learning as well as subjects from Grade four upwards are developed in a way which guarantees an equal use in each case. Previously neglected languages have been elevated to the same status with others. However, there are some linguistic varieties, which are not included in the curriculum, although, in the case of the speakers of one of the San languages, this is being corrected. Since 1990, the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) has done tremendous work to develop the national languages. However, there are doubts whether the equality of status sought for each of the national languages has yet been achieved.

Some problems were and are still experienced in the implementation of the language policy such as:

- the absence of terminology in scientific and technological fields;
- the lack of proper guidance and positive intervention when communities choose a language as a medium of instruction;
- the negative self-perception of African language speakers with regard to their languages due to the historical past where the African Languages were deliberately neglected in favor of European Languages by the then officialdom;
- the perceived "low status" of African languages compared to European languages which is a fallacy based on the previous and present educational output.

Davids (2001) claimed that the absence of Namibian Khoekhoegowab linguists is a matter of great concern and calls for support. Teachers now support Khoekhoegowab as a subject in schools, but demand in-service training as well as pre-service training on the same level as that of the European languages.

Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (1975) cited in Harlech-Jones (1988:41) claimed that if curriculum development is to bear fruit, its impact on the teacher's situation, self-image and sense of professional security and confidence needs to be a prime consideration.

The concerns raised are also addressed in the Language Plan of Action for Africa set up by Heads of State and Government Of the Organization of African Unity (22nd Session, Addis Ababa, 28 to 30 July 1986),

That language is at the heart of a people's culture and further convinced that, in accordance with the provisions of the Cultural Charter for Africa, the cultural advancement of the African peoples and the acceleration of their economic and social development will not be possible without harnessing in a practical manner indigenous African languages in that advancement and development.

The intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policies in Africa (Harare, 20 to 21 March 1997) states in its Vision for Africa:

... a democratic Africa where development is not construed in narrow economic goals but instead in terms of a culturally valued way of living together; and within a broader context of justice, fairness and equity for all; respect for linguistic rights as human rights, including those of minorities.

1.6 Learners for whom the curriculum is designed

When I started at the Windhoek College of Education in the year 1998, I realized that there were certain obstacles to the teaching and learning of Khoekhoegowab as a language, especially in the areas of reading and writing. I was mostly concerned with the following:

- Student teachers were unable to compose meaningful passages for language teaching;
- Their directed writing and creative writing reflected a generally poor standard of language competence;
- Students lacked confidence in reading and writing Khoekhoegowab which is their mother tongue;
- Student teachers showed negative attitudes towards Khoekhoegowab as a subject from the early days of colonization, a general lack of interest in the language.

It also happened occasionally that students entered for specialization in Khoekhoegowab without even formal subject qualifications from secondary education.

Craig *et al.* (1998) cited in Legère *et al.* (2000:21) proposed that beginner teachers ideally need initial preparation and teaching strategies in the subject matter they will teach, verbal competency in the medium of instruction, some instructional materials, knowledge of how to use these materials and basic classroom management skills in managing both learners and the learning environment.

1.7 Learning Environment

1.7.1 The Learner-Centred Approach

Toward Education for All (MEC 1993a) prescribes that methodology should be applied that “promotes learning through understanding”. It further promotes the ideas of going “beyond relying on what they have read or been told” and the need to learn “to think independently and critically” (ibid. 1993: 119-120).

Nowadays, the discourse around learning theories in Namibia seems to be dominated by constructivist viewpoints. What can be hoped for on terms of learning in the Namibian classroom is that learning takes place in a specific cultural context and that learners’ knowledge of reality is constructed through new experiences and interaction which are linked to learners’ existing knowledge. This only becomes knowledge when learners understand the nature of this reality (Legère *et al.* 2000:20).

The learner-centred approach to education has been so much in the news, ministry documents, workshop- and conference agendas that I am convinced that teachers have all heard of it or been exposed to it in one way or another. However, from some of the comments I have heard, I am also convinced that in a number of areas misunderstanding has been fostered. For example, some people, teachers included, are of the opinion that this method ‘encourages teachers to be lazy’ because the burden of learning has been put wholly on the learners. Others say the reason there are many failures in schools is because ‘teachers no longer teach’.

A learner-centred education encourages the determination of the context of each subject through a collective effort. The teachers, community and the ministries all contribute.

Swarts (2000:vii) states that at Independence, the rationale, purpose and goals of education had of necessity to be re-examined in order to encompass the new philosophy of education that was in line with the new philosophy of Namibia as a new nation. The Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), a program specifically aimed at basic education level, is based on the above philosophy of education in Namibia.

In order for Namibian learner-centred education to be effective, practical teacher education should include the stakeholders, so that the education system will be ‘whole’ and ‘holistic’. Parents send their children to school to be educated, and all parents want their children to be taught in the right way. In addition, parents want their children to learn skills that will help them in their adult life.

Although theory is important to make teachers understand the philosophy of learner-centred education, they need practical examples in actual classroom settings to enhance the teaching skills and do justice to this approach.

1.7.2 A lack of materials

The availability of suitable books is one of the factors that affect the implementation of all language in education policies. Teaching materials were inadequate at many schools, even at Tertiary level. Because of shortage of financial assistance, only a few books were ordered. African languages books were not a priority. Teachers also did not make any effort to use other available materials such as local newspapers or information posters as texts for their language lessons. They believed that the “textbook” is the ‘Alfa and Omega’. Few reading and writing activities formed part of the lesson, and no analytical exercises were given to the learners.

1.7.3 The position on subject advisory services

- Windhoek Region: Since rationalization in 1995 no subject advisory teacher to date;
- Khorixas Region: Since the retirement of the then subject advisor in December 1996 no subject advisory teacher was appointed till 2000;
- Keetmanshoop Region: From about May 1999 no subject advisory teacher till 2000.

It is against this background, that Khoekhoegowab has suffered in the different education regions without subject advisory teachers. Only through the appointment of subject advisory services can the intended goals of the equality of all languages be realized.

1.7.4. Schools offering Khoekhoegowab in the Windhoek Education Region

Schools have been identified already to cater for this envisaged introduction of Namibian African Languages. The general excuse used by schools for the introduction of African languages is that it does not constitute an economically viable class. On the contrary, it was found that at some schools the following were accommodated: seven (7) learners in grade 10 taking French, six (6) learners taking Afrikaans, eight (8) taking German Foreign language, to cite a few examples.

It can thus be concluded that languages are not accorded equal status as stated in the Language Policy for schools. It is however my opinion that a principle of positive relaxation needs to be applied in terms of an economical class size, when Namibian African Languages are to be introduced in schools.

Student teachers who opt for Khoekhoegowab at the Windhoek College of Education experience problems during School Based Studies, which cannot be conducted smoothly in Windhoek because only one Primary school offers Khoekhoegowab as a subject.

I am concerned that despite the fact that a lot of teachers completed the Diploma in Education African Languages (DEAL) a critical shortage of teachers to teach at Secondary level is experienced when it comes to the introduction of Khoekhoegowab as a subject at that level. DEAL is a distance Diploma course, offered at University of Namibia's Centre for External Studies.

According to Auala (1997:3) the drive to have properly trained teachers is a very commendable one since haphazardly recruited teachers would destroy the profession. Professionals have to be properly initiated in their field of work. In Namibia, we should investigate the training of teachers for entrepreneurship as well as educating them for self-reliance. The teacher-training curriculum should be revisited in order to reflect the present and future demands for teachers in our society.

1.7.5. Workshops

The members of the Khoekhoegowab Curriculum Committee, in co-operation with the NIED officials, annually conduct Workshops for Khoekhoegowab subject teachers for all phases. The aspects dealt with inter alia covered the following areas:

- Scrutinizing of the syllabi;
- handling of the new textbooks;
- issues on how to improve reading and writing problems.

2. LITERATURE INFORMING THE CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

According to Legère *et al.* (2000) there are several substantial publications, which deal with language policy from a general point of view by summarizing theoretical positions and practical steps. More specific are region- or country –oriented publications where African issues are covered, shedding light on a wide range of problems, solutions and unfulfilled promises in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1993), cited in Wainaina and Kasanda (2000:143), claimed that in its quest to reform the education system for the purpose of improving quality, the government not only made changes in the school curriculum (content), but also had the intention of making profound changes in the way the new curriculum has to be taught. This intention is aptly underscored in the *Toward Education for All* document where it is stated that, ‘as we make the transition from educating an elite to education for all, we are also making another shift, from the teacher centred to learner-centred education’.

The teacher-centred methods used in teaching school subjects before independence were considered inappropriate for the new curriculum because they tended to foster memorization and rote learning and dependence on the teacher. Since learning is more than rote learning and memorization, it was therefore seen fit that learner-centred teaching would assist students to think independently and critically, aspects which are essential in mastering the strategies for identifying, analyzing, solving problems and developing self confidence.

According to Dalin and Rust (1996) cited in Swarts (2000:100) the world is at a turning point or engaged in a paradigm shift in terms of knowledge production. Swarts further quotes McLaughlin and Oberman (1996) in this regard: The new classroom practices that reformers imagine, often described as “teaching and learning for understanding”, assume fundamental change in the way teachers interact with students... At root the problem of reform is a problem of teachers’ learning.

3. METHODOLOGY

I obtained data by studying available documents, official and unofficial reports, records and government publications on curriculum evaluation. In order to minimize the possible bias in these documents, and to validate the facts, it was also necessary to consult the experts responsible for the compiling of the syllabi. I found it necessary to use face-to-face interviews with my colleagues at the Windhoek College of Education responsible for teaching Namibian Languages Education in the Department of Languages, partly because it would be faster to obtain the information I needed and I would be present at the interviews to eradicate any misinterpretation of questions that might arise. It would also be possible for me to ask more probing questions to gather valuable information for my analysis. The interviews were mostly open-ended.

I used questionnaires as my other data collection tool to collect data from my BETD students majoring in languages for the option Grades 5-7 and 8-10, namely, in Khoekhoegowab and English at the college. I included the students because our Syllabus for Namibian Language Education has been drafted in line with the school syllabus for Khoekhoegowab Grades 5-7 and 8-10.

I used questionnaires because it’s a common practice to collect expert judgments. These questionnaires were of the short-answer or multiple-choice type. The advantage of using such questionnaires is that they require relatively little time and effort on the part of the respondent. They can also be summarized easily, either manually or with the aid of a computer.

I handed out questionnaires at the two schools when I had an information meeting as supervisor with the support teachers for the school-based studies, which will start after the school holidays. So, it was very easy for me to explain everything to them about the questionnaire and collect them again on Friday. I haven’t encountered any difficulties.

For my students at the College, I made use of the opportunity when I prepared them for the Action Research, dealing with the data collection tools, and questionnaires were part of them. I used this opportunity for them to complete the questionnaires. I also faxed the questionnaires to the language expert at NIED, Okahandja, who is the education officer for Khoekhoegowab. Also the copy was faxed to the education officer for Khoekhoegowab for the Khorixas education region, as they were part of the revision-and translation team for the Khoekhoegowab syllabi for Grades 5-7. A time period of two weeks was given to them to ensure maximum allocation of time for quality feedback.

4. THE ANALYSIS

4.1 Evaluation of Curriculum

As stated in the 'Toward Education for All', the new educational system of Namibia is guided by four great goals; access, equity, quality and democracy. All children and young people will experience that they have access to education, that the education they receive is equitable, and that it is an education in and through democracy (MHEVTST 1998).

Who should decide what should be taught in school? This has been a hotly debated question for as long as schools have existed. It raises all sorts of other questions about the purpose of schooling, the kind of society we want, whether some knowledge is more important than other knowledge, whether all children should learn the same things and at what ages and so on.

At the 1991 Conference on Democratic Approaches to Language Planning and the Standardization, held in Cape Town, Agnihotri advised that the modernization and standardization of African languages should start from below through actual use in different domains, rather than be imposed from above by language planners (NEPI 1992:59).

The government stated that 'to provide education for all, we must expand access to our education system. For that we need not just more schools but school and other education programs where learning is truly accessible to all Namibians. Equity and equality were and still are issues which must be addressed systematically. The government recognized this as one of the difficult tasks. It stated, 'Achieving equity in result is far more complex and difficult than achieving equity of access. But we shall have failed if we aimed at anything else. The government committed itself to

the following principle: 'We are all learners'. Learning is a life long activity. Improving the quality of our schools is a responsibility we share. We all have a vital stake in the success of our efforts.

In order to develop education for democracy and democratic education, the government adopted the following principle: 'Just as education is a foundation for development, so it is a foundation for democracy. Building those foundations must be a conscious process in which learners are engaged' (MEC 1993: 25-31).

4.2 Results of the questionnaire and discussions

The results of the questionnaire clearly indicated that student teachers opting for Khoekhoegowab as their mother tongue have very limited academic background in the language. From the results it is very clear that about 80% of the student teachers have no academic background. Only 32% of them, as native speakers of Khoekhoegowab rate their language competency as good.

It would be logical to assume that a higher number of them should have rated their competency as good, as they are student teachers. All the student teachers have a good oral command of Khoekhoegowab but experience tremendous problems in reading and writing. This might be attributed to two factors, namely, the low level of school training and the change of the orthography to the present standard version.

During our discussions, the participants mentioned the following factors as contributing to this:

- teaching of Khoekhoegowab was neglected and learners were not encouraged to value and study their language;
- Khoekhoegowab teaching and learning materials were inadequate in many schools and in the community itself;
- Shortage of teachers qualified in Khoekhoegowab.

4.3 Changes that took place

- Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers helps a lot with development of Khoekhoegowab as a developing language in the following areas; giving financial assistance in conducting writer's workshops, printing books at low costs;
- More textbooks for Textbook catalogues;
- Establishment of Khoekhoegowab Curriculum Committee by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture as the custodians of language matters, who are responsible, not only for approval and facilitation of school textbooks for Khoekhoegowab, but also for standardizing the written language in general and for coining terminology. The name "Khoekhoegowab" and purported affiliation of this language is a sensitive issue among the speakers concerned;
- The Khoekhoegowab language is gradually making progress as a developing language. Over the years, especially from 1984, many students completed at least the four-year Khoekhoegowab course at tertiary level. A considerable number of students graduated in the BETD programme majoring and minoring in Khoekhoegowab since its inception at the Windhoek College of Education. Many more completed the DEAL specializing in Khoekhoegowab;
- In 1998 the first candidates sat for Khoekhoegowab of the syllabi and at IGCSE level. Materials development is ongoing to meet the challenges of the rapid expansion of the language.

However, the lack of support services, such as the absence of advisory teachers for Khoekhoegowab in some of the Educational regions concerned, is negatively influencing the efficiency of classroom instruction and quality of final expected educational output.

There is a lack of progress in this field with regard to the implementation in schools, as well as the performance of learners when compared to the other Namibian African Languages taught in the Windhoek Education region. Through the assistance of the subject advisory services the intended goals of the equality of all languages and the ideal of mother tongue instruction for pedagogical advantages will be realized.

5. SYNTHESIS

Without adequately trained teachers and sufficient teaching materials, the technical terms remain inaccessible. Efforts at developing terminology, readers and dictionaries do not, however, stop at the primary level. There have been considerable efforts to produce textbooks for this level.

According to NEPI (1992) one aspect of teacher training that could be more strongly developed is a focus on the role of language in cognition, in the construction of knowledge and in the development of the sense of identity held by an individual or a group. Another neglected aspect is the training of all teachers to see themselves as teachers not only of their subjects but also of language.

According to the feedback from the questionnaires it was found that Khoekhoegowab syllabi for Grades 5-7 and 8-10 still have deficits in terms of both the quality of the instruction offered and the available facilities. A number of projects have led to improvements and the commitment of the Namibian government to improve access to and the quality of education is undoubtedly positive.

Government expenditure on basic school education and its potential for promoting the country's socio-economic development are therefore not being fully optimized. In view of this situation the following central problem was formulated: the teachers are not sufficiently trained to provide appropriate and relevant instruction, and to transmit the curricula in a suitable way. There are many teachers who have a problem interpreting the curriculum.

I also found that the language is taught in isolation as before instead of being integrated to give the learners a whole experience rather than fragments of knowledge. It is also clear from the participants, and through my observations that many teachers are not fully qualified in teaching Khoekhoegowab.

It is found that many students entering the college are not fully literate in their mother tongue. Student teachers should be given opportunities to strengthen their productive command of the language that they have to use as medium of instruction or as a subject in their classroom. Due to time constraints within the BETD program, in almost all the colleges except one, no mechanisms are in place to bring speakers of the language to the required level of literacy.

6.1 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that Namibia has carried out a number of education reform developments aimed at righting the imbalances of the colonial era. In some instances the quality of the reform developments have been affected by the speed of implementation of these reforms without prior preparation of those who are expected to carry out these implementations, such as classroom teachers (Legère *et al.* 2000).

Certain language problems have persisted throughout the history of Namibian education. Significant attitudes towards languages and certain patterns as found in the enduring conflicts with regard to medium of instruction and mother tongue instruction, as well as development of African languages, have their origins in events and decisions of the past (Harlech-Jones 1990a: 70).

The new staffing norms for secondary schools are detrimental to the development of minority and marginalized languages. It so happens that, due to limited numbers in many cases, these languages will not be able to constitute what is called “economical classes.” This measure is contradictory to the fundamental principles on which the Language Policy for Schools in Namibia is based.

It is important to emphasize that language planning must be seen as a continuous process. All the decisions of the planners need to be reviewed regularly because the goals of the decision-makers are in a state of continuous change. The criteria of assessment also change constantly, because the environment and attitudes are constantly changing (Rubin 1971:220).

At present, the energy fuelling the promotion of Khoekhoegowab as an African language in Namibia is mainly generated by the formal education sector. However, this is not the only way in which public bodies can make an impact in regard to the empowerment of African languages: the politicians themselves would go a long way towards elevating the status of local languages if they used them to communicate with their supporters and the public in general (Davids 2001:141).

The consolidation of Namibia’s democracy, through true democratic participation by the people, cannot happen without being able to communicate with each other effectively. When interpreters are used to aid such communication for example, important information can be lost since there are very few who are professionally equipped to render an effective service.

Other critical issues concern financial support for the development of materials in Khoekhoegowab, for the training of linguists, and for the training of Secondary school teachers equipped to teach this language. Resources and finance are closely linked. Where there is not enough income through school development funds, poor schools struggle more than more well to do ones.

Participants agree that teachers should not use a lack of teaching aids and good textbooks as an excuse, as they can use their own initiative to create materials to aid them in their teaching. But they all agree that, if you have poorly qualified or uncommitted teachers, this can be a major obstacle. Assistance in this regard is either slow to come or non-existent. It is a well-known fact that money dictates development.

There is no enforcement of the language policy when it concerns Namibian African Languages. The non-compliance with the policy calls for positive intervention from the side of the education authorities, as communities fail to understand the pedagogical advantages of studying their own mother tongues.

Writing on language policy, Kennedy correctly emphasizes the crucial role of the teacher:

At the focal point in educational language planning is the teacher. It is the successful application of curriculum and syllabus plans in the classroom, themselves instruments of higher levels of language planning, that will affect the realization of national level planning.

(Kennedy 1983: ix)

Many communities are opting for a different medium of instruction and the implementers of the policy are not assisting them in understanding the implications of such a decision. They opt for English as the perceived future guarantee for employment in the job market. Literacy in the mother tongue can ease the way for literacy in the official language. Töttemeyer (1978) records the imperfections of the system but states that education was largely instrumental in transforming social order and values:

... education became the most important instrument for change within the old order, altering outlooks and helping to create new economic and political structures.

(Töttemeyer 1978:172)

The absence of Namibian African linguists in our country is a matter of great concern and therefore their training calls for urgent support. Education officers are needed to render professional subject advisory services, and to support such schools where the subject has been introduced for the very first time, to be available whenever called upon. Negligence might result in schools dropping the subject again (Davids 2001).

Generalization of the curriculum because of the cost-factor is hampering the introduction of the Namibian African Languages.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Questionnaire

1. How many years have you taught Khoekhoegowab?
.....
2. Do you have any professional qualifications?
.....
3. How do you find Khoekhoegowab materials and are they in line with the Learner-Centred approach?
.....
.....
.....
4. How familiar are you with the content of the syllabus?
.....
.....
5. How confident are you in using the syllabus?
.....
.....
6. Mention any strengths and weaknesses in the syllabus.
.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR KHOEKHOEGOWAB TEACHERS

Interviewer: Type of interview: Structured

Date of interview: Interviewee:

Venue: Present post:

1. What do you do if you find that your learners are not yet ready for certain activities that you have planned?
2. In what ways can you use cooperative learning in reading and writing?
3. Why do you think subject integration is necessary in schools?
4. Which ideological approach was used in the Namibian pre-independence education system?
5. Which ideological approach is used now in the post independence system and which approach do you prefer and why?
6. Do you think the languages are treated fairly in the Pilot Broad Curriculum of the schools?

APPENDIX C

Language proficiency of Khoekhoegowab student-teachers

1. How proficient are you with Khoekhoegowab language skills which are:

- Usage

.....

- Reading and Directed Writing

.....

- Continuous Writing

.....

- Oral/Aural

.....

2. Mention three factors, which have lead to the fact that you are/are not proficient in Khoekhoegowab.

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3. Did you enjoy reading Khoekhoegowab Storybooks?

.....

4. How confident are you in teaching Khoekhoegowab during School Based Studies?

.....

.....

5. How do you rate your own knowledge of Khoekhoegowab Syllabus for Grades 5-7?

Topic	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Usage					
Reading					
Con. writing					
Oral					
Aural					

6. Do you find Khoekhoegowab materials too easy or too difficult? Why?

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7. Do you find the materials interesting? Which parts are most interesting or least interesting?

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8. Are the explanations and illustrations clear to you? If yes, where are they least clear and where are they most clear?

.....

.....

9. How do these materials relate to your further educational plans and inspirations?

.....

.....

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how the language use as medium of instruction affects learners' reading and comprehension ability. An English language reading test and Khoekhoegowab language reading test were administered to the Grade 2 Khoekhoegowab-speaking learner's. Using a case study analysis, the paper analyses the reading competencies of the selected learner' and reveals key issues pertaining to literacy in the context of mother tongue. The importance of this paper is to revisit the language policy in Namibia.

1. Introduction

This study investigates the reading performance and comprehension skills in English and Khoekhoegowab language of lower primary children in Grade 2. Data analysis for this study was based on learners' results from reading passages, learners' results from comprehension tests and teachers responses to questionnaires. Some of the results are presented in frequency tables.

The paper further describes the methodology employed to compare the reading abilities of the Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners who started school in their mother tongue with those Khoekhoegowab speakers who are instructed through the medium of English. It also discusses the findings of the questionnaire question by question, and attempts to articulate trends that may emerge in these.

The sample comprised of a total of 26 Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners and 7 teachers. The teachers were all lower primary teachers. Anonymity was ensured, and for this reason no distinction was made between age and sex. It is based on the information obtained by using a quantitative approach and methodology. The aspects that were focused on were the reading skill and teacher competencies with regard to training and perceptions about the medium of instruction.

2. The research context

In an emerging, developing country such as Namibia, it is natural that our concerns with how

learners learn are also genuinely related to broader national development goals (Wolfaardt 2001:1). As an Education Officer at the Division: Educational Programme Implementation and Monitoring within the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, my work is concerned daily with the implementation of the Education policies and the professional development of teachers in Namibia.

As reading is a major skill that influences what and how much learning takes place in school, it is appropriate for me to focus on this competency to illustrate how English medium instruction to non-native speakers of English might influence their reading ability and comprehension skills, thus having an influence on their overall performance in school.

It is in this context – the implementation of the national language policy for schools in Namibia that would be fair and equitable – that the problems that learners have with language, and specifically with the language of learning, first began to attract me.

3. Site of the study and selection of the respondents

This small-scale study is limited to Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners in the Khomas Education Region. Financial constraints including the cost of travel and accommodation in this vast region limited the study to one school with both the English and the Khoekhoegowab streams. My reason in selecting this specific school is because of the learners displaying considerable similarities in socio-cultural, linguistic, cultural and historical backgrounds.

4. Description of the data gathering instruments

The instruments used to collect data for this study were read aloud passages with comprehension questions for learners and questionnaires for teachers. Read aloud passages were constructed for both English and Khoekhoegowab. This included an English language reading test and Khoekhoegowab language reading test for Grade 2 Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners. There are no standard reading tests in any language currently available for Namibia. It was therefore necessary to devise tests that had *prima facie* claims to be valid, in terms of a construct of reading, language content, and socio-cultural appropriateness.

The IRI (Informal Reading Inventory) was used as a basis for the construction of the reading passage and test instruments. This technique of evaluating a child's performance is an inventory in the sense that it is a detailed study of his whole performance in the reading area. The technique is an informal one in that specific methods are not standardised (Farr and Roser 1979:42).

Two sets of reading ability tests that consisted of graded passages with comprehension questions were constructed for both English and Khoekhoegowab Grade 2. The tests were used to determine the learner's percentage of correct word recognition and comprehension for each of the passages read. The passages were based on the basal readers prescribed for the lower primary phase to minimise the possibility that learners might know some of the text by heart and would not reflect their actual reading ability.

Before administering the reading tests, I first talked easily to the learners to make the atmosphere pleasant and relaxed.

The reading tests were administered to 26 Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners, 13 average to best performers selected by the teachers themselves for each of the two languages. The English test was administered on the first day and the Khoekhoegowab test the next day. Up to 25 minutes were allowed for test completion per learner, with some learners completing within half that time. Most appeared to enjoy the tests, with many looks frustrated by a drop in reading fluency, by many word-recognition and comprehension errors. Physical signs of frustration were visible; including lip movement without altering a word, finger pointing on wrong words, rhythmic body motion- kicking, tapping and other manifestations of anxiety.

As the learner reads aloud, the researcher marks the learners' reading errors. After reading, the learner demonstrated his or her comprehension of the passage by answering questions.

Questionnaires were administered to 7 Grade 1-3 teachers, teaching Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners through the mediums of English and Khoekhoegowab. Oppenheim (1992) says that we should think of the questionnaire as an important instrument of research, a tool for data collection. The questionnaire has a job to do: its function is measurement.

The fundamental reason for choosing questionnaires was because they have the potential to elicit first-hand information from the respondents. Wallace (1998:124) says that this technique is usually classified as 'introspective' since it involves respondents reporting on themselves, their views, their beliefs, their interactions, and so on. It can be used to elicit factual data. Wallace also warns us that we must keep in mind that the only data we then have is what the respondents choose to tell us.

The choice of questionnaires was found to be feasible and convenient. Some of the advantages of a questionnaire is that it is relatively economical, has standardised questions, can ensure anonymity, and that the questions can be written for a specific purpose. In support of the above statements, Oppenheim (1992:103) says the following: "All survey data must be treated as confidential, in the sense that only the researcher(s) will have access to them, and steps must be taken to ensure that no information will be published about identifiable persons..." He further claims "...no data from individual children should be made available to any one outside the research team, not even to their parents or class teachers."

The questionnaire can have a closed or open format. In the case of closed questions, the subject gives options between predetermined responses, while in open responses the respondents write in any way they want. Open responses place a minimum restraint on the answers and their expression, but are much more difficult to analyse. According to Oppenheim (1992:114) closed questions can be attitudinal as well as factual. The disadvantage of closed questions is the loss of spontaneity and expressiveness – we shall never know what the respondents said or thought of their own accord... Closed questions are often cruder and less subtle than open ones.

Two sets of open question questionnaires (English and Khoekhoegowab) were designed for the following teachers: Grade 1 to 3 teachers teaching through the English medium of instruction and Grade 1 to 3 teachers teaching through the Khoekhoegowab medium of instruction. Eventually, the items were stated in a simple language. This was not only for the sake of better understanding but also to ensure validity of the instruments. Moreover, ambiguous words and unfamiliar terminologies were avoided.

Both questionnaires were distributed to the teachers while the researcher was busy testing the learners. The manner in which to answer the questionnaire was first explained. At the beginning of the session, I briefed the teachers as on the nature and purpose of the session, thanked them for their presence, and tried to put them at ease by assuring them of the anonymity of their participation. I stressed that teachers had to give their own opinion and not what is expected of them, or what the schools or ministerial policy describes, and explained the importance of them being honest in answering the questionnaire and airing their views. Teachers could choose whether they wanted to answer the questionnaire in English or Afrikaans.

The session went smoothly, and the teachers were forthcoming in their answers. Seven questionnaires were handed out and all have been received back.

Before I went to collect the data, I ran a pilot session with four teachers in the Khomas educational region. According to Wolfaardt (2001) the primary purpose of administering a pilot test is often to detect whether the instruments are biased or can be misinterpreted as well as to identify ambiguous terms or any other defects that need to be rectified in advance. It was found that there were only two of the questionnaire items that were misunderstood. They were reformulated. I have discovered that my presence was needed in order to explain the purpose of the study and also the meaning of items that may not be clear to the respondents.

My initial point of departure was to ask permission from the Regional Education Director of Omaheke, but as it is one of the schools where I give subject advice it was not a problem for me to finish my research during my week of subject visit at the school.

Although I did my utmost in planning this component of the investigation, there were issues beyond my control that brought some limitations to it. The first limitation is the relatively small sample of teachers that was used for the research. Another factor that could be seen as a limitation is that teachers may in some cases have said what they thought I would like to hear, and therefore not given their real opinions. This makes it problematic to determine the validity of the responses, and should be kept in mind.

5. Data analysis and discussion of results

5.1 Analysis of the results

5.1.1 Read Aloud Tests

The reading test for Grade 2 was administered to 26 learners.

Each individual learner's performance was judged on the accuracy, the fluency and the comprehension according to the responses given on the questions at the end of the passage. Learners who were unable to sound out words and continued to read them were also regarded as average to good readers as they had started to master the basic skill of reading by recognising sounds and joining them together to read a word. Learners were not penalised for accent. It is acknowledge that it was problematic to judge reading as some learners did not read fluently, but responded well to the answers. Others read fluently, but did not answer all the questions correctly. If the learner was not able to read the text, he or she was judged as a poor reader. Poor readers were those learners who "read" text that was not on the text provided for the test, as well as those who could not progress beyond the first two or three words.

Poor readers also had a significantly higher frequency of errors in mispronunciation, re-reads, pauses, insertions and deletions. They were totally unable to answer the comprehension questions, as they could not read at all. In most cases I did not attempt to ask them any comprehension questions. Those learners who were able to read the passage with some difficulty and also managed to answer correctly some of the questions were regarded as average readers. Furthermore, a learner who was able to read fluently with accuracy and answered most or all of the questions correctly was regarded as a good reader.

Table 1: Reading performance of Grade 2 learners instructed through the medium of Khoekhoegowab on the Khoekhoegowab reading test N = 13

Reading Performance	Number of learners	Percentage
Good	5	38.5%
Average	6	46.1%
Poor	2	15.4%
Total	13	100%

The results above show that of the 13 learners who completed the reading tests 5 were judged to be good readers, 6 were average and 2 were poor readers.

Table 2: Frequency of errors committed by the Grade 2 learners instructed through the medium of Khoekhoegowab when taking the Khoekhoegowab reading test
N = 13

Learner	Mispronunciation	Substitutions	Word told	Insertions	Omissions	Wrong answers
1	1	0	1	1	1	0
2	0	1	0	1	2	0
3	0	0	1	2	2	0
4	0	0	0	1	0	0
5	0	0	0	1	0	0
6	0	5	2	0	1	0
7	2	1	0	2	3	0
8	1	3	3	2	5	0
9	2	2	2	0	1	0
10	1	1	0	2	2	1
11	1	3	0	3	3	0
12	1	3	6	4	7	1
13	1	7	7	6	3	0
Total	9	26	22	25	30	2
Mean	0.7	2.0	1.7	1.9	2.3	0.2

The most common error was the number of omissions made especially by the weak learners. Overall the learners used good pronunciation. The second highest error was that of substitutions, scoring a mean of 2.0%, followed by insertions with a mean of 1.9%.

Table 3: Reading performance of Grade 2 Khoekhoegowab speakers instructed through the medium of English on the English reading test N = 6

Reading performance	Number of learners	Percentage
Good	0	0%
Average	1	16.7%
Poor	5	83.3%
Total	6	100%

The participants tested for the English reading test were 13, but only 6 of them completed the test and could be judged for reading performance. Those who could not be judged were unable to progress after the first three words or a sentence. Three that completed the reading test were all poor readers.

Table 4: Frequency of errors committed by the Grade 2 Khoekhoegowab speakers instructed through the medium of English when taking the English reading test
N= 6

Learner	Mispronunciation	Substitution	Word told	Insertions	Omissions	Wrong answers
1	7	5	0	4	24	2
2	22	2	7	8	5	3
3	9	6	8	2	17	2
4	14	2	10	2	20	3
5	23	3	10	4	9	0
6	10	2	0	1	5	1
Total	87	20	35	21	80	14
Mean	14.5	3.3	5.8	7.0	13.3	2.3

Thirteen learners took the English Reading Test. Only six of them could complete the reading passage. The highest average score (14.5%) was for mispronunciations, followed by omissions (13.3%) and insertions (7.0%).

It was found that when learners who experienced reading problems were asked to read basic words such as numbers and body parts they could not read them.

Table 5: Frequency of wrong answers by the Grade 2 learners instructed through the medium of English when taking the English reading test N= 6

Answers	Number of learners	Percentage
No wrong answers	1	16.7%
One wrong answer	1	16.7%
Two wrong answers	2	33.2%
Did not answer at all	2	33.2%
Total	6	100%

A learner who answered all questions correctly scored 16.7%. Higher percentage of 33.2 did not answer at all.

Table 6: Frequency of wrong answers by the Grade 2 learners instructed through the medium of Khoekhoegowab when taking the Khoekhoegowab reading test
N= 13

Answers	Number of learners	Percentage
No wrong answers	11	84.6%
One wrong answer	2	15.4%
Total	13	100%

After reading the passage each learner was asked three questions. Eleven learners answered all comprehension questions correctly. Two of them had only one answer wrong.

5.1.2 Teacher questionnaires

The teacher questionnaire was aimed at obtaining information on the role and qualifications of teachers in the lower primary phase with particular reference to their perceptions on mother tongue instruction. In addition, the questionnaire included questions about their competency both in Khoekhoegowab and English. As teachers are the implementers of a language as a medium of instruction, they should try to improve their standard of English as well as the mother tongue. In addition, they should feel comfortable and confident in using a medium of instruction.

It was aimed at finding out from teachers what their perceptions are about mother tongue instruction in the formative years of schooling or why they would opt for English medium of instruction in the lower primary phase.

As teachers in the lower primary phase employ class teaching, total subject and teaching experience were taken as general. Grade 1 teachers had an overall teaching experience that ranged from 6 months to 10 years. The experience of Grade 2 teachers ranged from 7 months to 9 years. Grade 3 teachers experience ranged from 1 year to 23 years.

Furthermore, from the 7 teachers, 3 were female and four were male and all were Khoekhoegowab speakers.

The lowest academic qualification was that of two Khoekhoegowab teachers at Grade 10. It was also indicated that 71.4% of them had Grade 12. All seven teachers indicated that they had formal teacher training. From the seven teachers who completed the questionnaire, a fairly large percentage (71.4%) had the BETD qualification.

In the case of Khoekhoegowab, the results show that none of the teachers of Grade 1 to 3 teaching through the medium of Khoekhoegowab had it as a subject beyond Grade 7. As English was a compulsory subject taken as a second language in all schools before independence, all 4 teachers of Grade 1 to 3 teaching through the medium of English learned it as a subject up to Grade 12.

It was found that 3 of the Khoekhoegowab teachers and all of the English medium teachers felt that there are suitable materials for the lower primary phase.

Three of the English medium teachers, and one of Khoekhoegowab, indicated that the materials contribute satisfactorily to the development. Two of the Khoekhoegowab teachers and one of the English teachers stated that the materials ensure development to some extent.

Table 7: In favour of use as medium of instruction

	Khoekhoegowab			English		
Level	Grade 1 (N = 1)	Grade 2 (N = 1)	Grade 3 (N = 1)	Grade 1 (N = 2)	Grade 2 (N = 1)	Grade 3 (N = 1)
Yes	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)		1 (100%)	
No				2 (100%)		1 (100%)
Total	1	1	1	2	1	1

All Khoekhoegowab teachers of Grade 1 to 3 support Khoekhoegowab as the medium of instruction in the lower primary phase. Their main argument was that most of the learners are Khoekhoegowab-speaking and come from that language environment. They further argued that the foundation for learning must be laid in the mother tongue. The child is able to communicate better in the mother tongue than in a foreign language. The learner can express him/herself better in the mother tongue and also learn concepts better than in a foreign language.

It is also much easier for the teacher to communicate with the learners, as they understand the subject content and instructions clearly in their mother tongue. One respondent also acknowledges the potential difficulties that might be experienced with the changeover to English medium instruction in the fourth grade, given the difference in phonics. Furthermore, it is a constitutional right to be taught through the mother tongue. The 'no response' did not provide any reasons in support.

According to Heugh (1995) as cited in Wolfaardt (2001:7-8), it is generally concluded today that, in the pre-independence era, the target languages of learning, Afrikaans and English, undermined the self-concept and cognitive growth of African-language speaking pupils after the initial years of mother tongue instruction.

Three of the Khoekhoegowab-speaking teachers using English as medium of instruction were not in favour of the use of English. One respondent was in favour of the use of English as the medium of instruction. The most common reason for supporting the choice of English as medium of instruction was that it is the language of wider communication. English was not only valued for its more instrumental function, but also had a symbolic value in giving status to those who could use it to interact and understands things better. Most parents also want their learners to be taught through the medium of English.

Bull (1964:524) argues that "what is best for the child psychologically and pedagogically may not be what is best for the adult socially, economically or politically and, what is even more significant, what is best for both the child and the adult may not be best or even possible for the society that through its collective efforts, provides the individual with the

advantages he cannot personally attain”. One interesting case was where the respondent supported English medium instruction but gave a contradictory reason that learners cannot cope with the textbooks as they are at a first language level and too advanced for the learners.

The teachers, who are using English as the medium of instruction, however, expressed reservations of doing so, stating the following problems themselves:

- that the teachers couldn’t express themselves clearly in English,
- lack of fluency in English,
- spelling and vocabulary difficulties,
- poor English background,
- using the vernacular to explain things,
- failure to understand scientific concepts.

For the learners the teachers has the following to say:

- learners do not understand instructions at all,
- some learners are lost when a teacher explains something because they do not understand English,
- learners understand better and are eager to speak when lessons are presented in their mother tongue,
- learners receive no help in connection with homework from the parents since they cannot understand English,
- learners face a strange environment that includes the school, the teacher and peers,
- learners use Khoekhoegowab at all times in everyday conversations.

Therefore, it would be most appropriate to use the mother tongue to teach new concepts.

The question on who favours Khoekhoegowab as a subject throughout the school system was applied to all teachers answering the questionnaire as English is a compulsory subject throughout the school system. All the teachers want to see Khoekhoegowab as a subject throughout the school system. They saw it as a way to ensure the survival of Khoekhoegowab and to instill pride, love and dignity into the speakers for their language.

Khoekhoegowab as a subject will help learners to develop language skills and it is assumed that they will do better in examinations than in English and Afrikaans. It will also help the learners, as they are able to express themselves better in the mother tongue, as they possess the necessary vocabulary. The ability to read and write their mother tongue will boost their confidence and self-esteem. It will also give them better jobs and learning opportunities.

Two of the Khoekhoegowab teachers did not attend workshops, while, the other 2 did attend workshops and found them helpful as that enhanced their teaching skills for reading, writing and sentence construction. They could also acquire the skills for the proper use and understanding of the syllabus.

The teachers using English as medium of instruction (50%) attended workshops and found them very useful as they helped to improve their pronunciation, vocabulary and communicative skills. Some expressed the desire for workshops in the teaching of reading skills.

5.2 Discussion of the results

5.2.1 Khoekhoegowab Reading Test

The most striking feature of these results is the vastly superior performance of the Khoekhoegowab learners instructed through Khoekhoegowab. The learners did well in the Khoekhoegowab reading test, and more than 90% percent of them completed the passage and answered the questions for comprehension. The results indicate that there is a normal curve where the largest group of learners achieved an average score and can be regarded as average readers. The smallest group is of those who can be seen as poor readers. The fairly high number of words told to the learner can be attributed to the number of times some learners paused to try and sound a word before pronouncing it, especially in the case of good and average readers. Poor readers did not make an attempt to sound, but remained silent for a while and they skipped or omitted the word with which difficulty was experienced.

There was a significant difference in the reading ability of the Khoekhoegowab speakers instructed through the mother tongue when compared with those Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners instructed through the medium of English. The average and good readers numbered more than the poor readers. The learners were also able to deal with the vocabulary within the text as it was in their mother tongue. When answering questions they were able to construct thoughts and could express themselves well.

5.2.2 English Reading Test

The reading performance of the learners through the medium of English was very poor. Thirteen learners were tested and only six completed the test and could be rated for reading. Reading proficiency is not only a product of the amount of literature available to the pupil, but also of the methods employed. This leads on to the issue of teacher training and the quality of educators, a factor which Engle (1975) has identified as being of general importance in the success of bilingual education programmes. Ladefoged, Glick and Criper (1972) further support this as well as to the influential work by Beeby (1966).

The high percentage of learners who could not complete the test raised serious questions as far as effective teaching of reading is concerned. The mother tongue is supposed to be used as medium of instruction during the first three years of school, and subsequently as a subject. According to Wolfaardt (2001) the rationale is that the learners' skills in reading and writing in the mother tongue are being developed while they are becoming proficient enough in English, which is taught as a subject.

Those learners who could not complete the passage had great difficulty in recognising basic words, such as and, up, down, was and, so on. Some of the learners could not progress beyond the first two words. Some of them read beyond the first two words. Some of them read non-existent text by recalling what they might have learned from other readers or reverting to passages they most probably know by heart. Furthermore, it may be a reflection on the choice of the language of instruction.

Why were learners not doing as well as they should? The answer seemed to be obvious: the learners were struggling with the brand new language that was, by way of policy, their new language of learning. In support of the above answer, Wurm (1991) has the following to say:

There are close parallels in the circumstances surrounding the decimation and eventual extinction of animal or plant species, and in those of languages in this respect... this can be readily translated into comparable circumstances surrounding languages: changes in environment would mean that the cultural and social settings in which a given language had been functioning, usually for a very long time, have been replaced by new and quite different ones...
(Wurm 1991:2)

It underlines the fact, as argued elsewhere by Williams (1991), cited by Davids (2000) that an effective reader knows the language of the text and what the words mean. The knowledge of English of the Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners, taught through the medium of English in the formative years of schooling, is non-existent or very limited when entering school. That may be the reason for the inability to recognise basic English words. A further concern is the level at which English is taught in schools that opt for English medium of instruction for learners who are not native speakers of English or have it as first language from home.

The lack of basic language skills and vocabulary were more apparent when the test was administered to Grade 2 learners taught through English. The only question that was responded to with ease was: *How old are you?*

Basic commands such as “Please, read this sentence”, could not be understood or comprehended. The absence of a medium of communication is clearly reflected by this. The question arises of how effective teaching and learning participation can take place if the learners cannot understand the language through which they are instructed.

5.2.3 Comprehension Questions

The results of the Grade 2 Khoekhoegowab and English tests show that the learners instructed through their mother tongue, Khoekhoegowab, had a higher comprehension level when compared to those Khoekhoegowab speakers instructed through English.

More than 90% of learners answered the questions to test their comprehension after completing the reading passage. The Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners instructed through the foreign medium of English generally performed weaker. From thirteen learners, six failed to complete reading the passage.

The results discussed above are indicative of the advantage the mother tongue has for the child when entering school. Although there were also slow and poor readers amongst those instructed through Khoekhoegowab, they had the vocabulary to cope with the content of the passage. That was absent in the case of the Khoekhoegowab speakers instructed through the medium of English. Their reading was mechanical verbalising of the words, without establishing understanding of the meaning of the text. They displayed little knowledge of the vocabulary used in the passage.

The results are indicative of the fact that the learners are not benefiting much from English medium instruction. Furthermore, it also reflects on the professional and academic abilities of teachers. Teachers do not hold suitable qualifications for such a major challenge. Teachers rated their own language competencies. Although subjective, it is a matter of concern as they are entrusted to teach through the medium of English. Their weaker performance in this regard can also be attributed to a lack of sufficient vocabulary. This finding concurs with what was stated by Williams (1991) cited by Davids (2000) and also quoted elsewhere, that their knowledge of English is incomplete and that they do not know the words used in the text.

Based on these results, I would suggest that the issue of choosing a medium other than the mother tongue of the learner should be done with circumspection. The absence of a conducive environment to support foreign medium instruction further militates against it. Furthermore, the results call for closer scrutiny of classroom practice in schools that have a medium other than the language of the catchment area of that school. In that way the education authorities will ensure that learners will benefit from quality education.

5.3 Discussion of the results of teacher questionnaire

Through the questionnaire the results show that Khoekhoegowab teachers have very limited qualification, if any, in the language. This is the result of the historical imbalances and neglect towards African languages in Namibia in the education system.

From the results it can be seen that all Khoekhoegowab teachers have a professional teacher qualification. Only 33.3% of them, as native speakers of Khoekhoegowab, rate their language competency as good. It would be logical to assume that a higher number of them should have rated their competency as good, as they are teachers. All the teachers have a good oral command of Khoekhoegowab but experience problems with writing and reading. This might be attributed to two factors, namely, the low level of school training and the change of the orthography to the present standard version since the time they attended school. The teachers were trained in the old version of the orthography, and important literature such as the Bible and the hymnals of some churches are still in that version of the orthography. This creates confusion amongst teachers and learners as the official version of the standardised orthography is used in schools.

The statistics for English are much more a matter of concern as only 25% of the teachers entrusted to teach through the medium of English rate themselves as having a good command of English. This factor is usually overlooked and can only be to the detriment of the learners instructed through a foreign medium in which the teacher is not sufficiently proficient. It can be argued that one of the requirements, as set out by the directive on the change of medium of instruction, of the language competency of teachers before a school can change over to English medium instruction, should be applied more stringently.

The main factor that should be considered is the pedagogical advantage the child might gain from such a decision. From the results, it can be concluded that the available materials are barely suitable and only just satisfy the current needs. It also indicates that there is a need for further improvement in the future provision of instructional materials in languages. The results show that the instructional materials only satisfactorily ensure the development of reading and concept formation. An average of teachers regard Khoekhoegowab and English

materials as achieving their intention only to some extent.

The overwhelming majority of Khoekhoegowab and English teachers supported the use of Khoekhoegowab as the medium of instruction in the lower primary phase. The strongest argument for this was that the first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading and comprehension of subject matter. It is the necessary foundation for the cognitive development upon which acquisition of the second language is based. Parents can be directly involved with the education of their children. Those in support of using English as the medium of instruction said “what’s the use of sending our children to school to learn a language they already know?”

Humphreys (1989:228) claimed that when a language is abandoned...the first reaction is one of guilt. This is followed in due course by an identifiable phenomenon called ‘culture shame’. Children become ashamed of their parents and begin to display towards the old language attitudes inculcated by the education of the conqueror. Hard on this phase develops a kind of ‘cultural hatred’ in which the victims of the process happily operate the apparatus of the extinction on behalf of a distant and invisible authority. It is only after these painful phases that a population can reach the numb but comfortable condition of indifference. Indifference is fundamentally uncreative.

6. Lessons learned from the data

In this study the first expectation was that the learners taught through the medium of Khoekhoegowab would have better reading ability than those Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners instructed through the medium of English. It was found that the learners instructed through the mother tongue perform much better in reading and comprehension than the Khoekhoegowab speakers instructed through English. The weaker performance of the learners instructed through English cannot be attributed only to the lack of vocabulary, but also the double load of learning a foreign language as well as learning its basic skills. Teaching through a medium other than the mother tongue or first language of the learner is not consistent with the philosophy of learner-centred education.

MEC stated as follows (1993:60):

the starting point should be the learners' existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school; ... Our teaching methods must allow for the active involvement and participation of learners in the learning process.
(MEC 1993:60)

According to Brown (1980) cited in Wolfaardt (2001:1) a non-English speaking child will be unable to comprehend the teacher and will equally be unable to make himself or herself understood. Such a child will be unable to communicate with other children, cannot ask questions, or understand stories and rhymes, no matter how closely these topics might be linked to his or her environment and experiences. Learners who are unable to understand and to express themselves in a language cannot be active participants in the classroom. Equally, a teacher who is not comfortable or proficient in the medium of instruction will not facilitate such an enabling learning environment.

During the pre-independence era Khoekhoegowab speakers tended to be Afrikaans oriented, and now after independence pro-English. The status of English and other European languages is very strong. People still do not realise the importance and advantages of mother tongue instruction, and the mother tongue as a subject throughout school. Teachers seem to be the weak link as they discourage parents to allow their children to take Khoekhoegowab.

I believe that this study has yielded significant results for the choice of the medium of instruction in schools offering mother tongue as a medium of instruction. In support of this allow me to quote Kone (1995) as cited in Hutchison (1998), "In Namibia, the level at which English medium of instruction is taking place in schools opting for a different medium than the mother tongue is a matter of concern. The children are deprived of the opportunity to learn their mother tongue and also do not benefit from the foreign medium that might leave them semi-literate in both languages."

A common trend in the literature, which advocates the use of vernacular languages as mediums of instruction, is the assertion that this practise will improve academic

achievement (Harlech-Jones 1988:238). Thus, by implication, the hypothesis is advanced that language is a prime causal factor in academic success or failure. This claim is quite common in educational circles in Namibia (Davids 2000, Harlech-Jones 1988, Wolfaardt 2001).

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APPENDIX A

Grade 2: English Read Aloud Test

Marking Key

Word mispronounced: bone

Word inserted: a bone

Word told: a big bone

Word omitted: a bone

Word substituted: a bone

In the morning sun

Bing and Sandy were in the morning sun. Bing and Sandy sat in the grass. A little rabbit jumped in the grass. Sandy jumped up and went after the rabbit. The rabbit ran away and hid. The rabbit was lost in the grass. Bing ran to Sandy. Bing and Sandy ran up and down the hill. Bing and Sandy ran to the pond and sat in the morning sun.

Comprehension Questions

1. Where were Bing and Sandy?
2. Choose the right answer.
(a) little rabbit jumped in the grass.
(b) little dog
3. Rabbit wasin the grass.

Mispronunciations:..... Words told:..... Substitutions:.....

Insertions:Omissions:.....Wrong answers:.....

APPENDIX B

Grade 2: Khoekhoegowab Read Aloud Test

Marking Key

Word mispronounced: sores

Word inserted: sores !nâ

Word told: sores

Word omitted: sores !nâ

Word substituted: sores

|| Goa sores !nâ

Kaib tsî ≠Kharib tsîkha ge || goa sores !nâ ge ≠nôa i. Kaib tsî ≠Kharib tsîkha ge | gân ai ge ≠nôa i. ≠Khari !ôaros ge | gân !nâ ge uri≠gâ. Kaib ge urikhâi tsî !ôarosa ge nao. !Ôaros ge !khoebē tsî si ge gau. !Ôaros ge | gân !nâ ge gā. Kaib ge ≠Kharib || ga ge !khoe-oa. Kaib tsî ≠Kharib tsîkha ge !nâub ai gere !khoe≠oa ka || gôa. Kaib tsî ≠Kharib tsîkha ge oa tsî || goa sores !nâ si ge ≠nû.

Comprehension questions

1. Kaib tsî ≠Kharib tsîkha mapa ge ≠nôa i?
2. Tari-e | gân !nâ ge uri≠gâ? ≠Hanu !ereamsa || hûi re.
 - (a) ≠khari !ôaros
 - (b) ≠khari arirob
3. !Ôaros ge | gân !nâ ge

Mispronunciations:..... Words told:.....

Substitutions:.....

Insertions:Omissions:.....

Wrong answers:.....

APPENDIX C

Teacher questionnaire for English/Khoekhoegowab Grade 1-3

1. School:
2. How long have you been teaching at this school?.....years
3. Which Grade are you teaching?
4. How long have you been teaching the English/Khoekhoegowab language to Grade 2?
.....years
5. Sex: Male [] Female []
6. From the list below, please tick (✓) your highest academic qualification.
 - Grade 8 (Std 6) []
 - Grade 10 (Std 8) []
 - Grade 12 (Std 10) []
 - Bachelor's Degree []
7. From the list below, please tick(✓) all the teaching qualifications which you currently have.
 - Education Diploma Primary (E.D. Primary Academy) []
 - Education Diploma Primary (E.D. Primary) []
 - Higher Education Diploma Post Diploma (H.E.D. Post Diploma) []
 - Higher Education Diploma Post Diploma (H.E.D. Technical) []
 - Higher Education Diploma Post Diploma (H.E.D. Post Graduate) []
 - Higher Education Diploma Post Diploma (H.E.D. Secondary) []
 - Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) []
 - Master of Education (M.Ed.) []
 - Any other..... []

8. Up to what grade, as a learner (student), did you study English/Khoekhoegowab?

- Grade 3 (Standard 1) []
- Grade 4 (Standard 2) []
- Grade 7 (Standard 5) []
- Teacher's College []
- University []

9. How would you rate your language proficiency in English/Khoekhoegowab to use it as a medium of instruction?

Good []

Average []

Poor []

10. Do you have suitable materials in English/Khoekhoegowab?

Yes []

No []

11. Do the materials used ensure the development of reading and concept formation?

To a large extent []

To some extent []

Satisfactorily []

Scarcely []

Not at all []

12. Are you in favour of the use of English/Khoekhoegowab as the medium of instruction in the Lower Primary grades?

Yes []

No []

Why?

.....

.....

.....

13. Are you in favour of the use of Khoekhoegowab as a subject throughout school?

Yes []

No []

Why?

.....

.....

.....

14. Did you attend any in-service workshop for the teaching of English/Khoekhoegowab?

Yes []

No []

How did it help you, if yes?

.....

.....

.....

If it were not helpful, what training would you like to have?

.....

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ABSTRACT

The history of thought can be studied in a variety of ways. One does not have to be a philosopher to be intrigued by what people have believed and to be interested in the question why they should have believed what they did. To know what people have thought is as much part of understanding the past as to know what they have done or how they have lived. In contrast, belief does not become of philosophical interest just because it has been influential politically or culturally. There is perhaps a special incentive to look back to different philosophical traditions when, as in the case of contemporary epistemology, there has been a break-down in the consensus about what methods and starting points are most useful and appropriate (Everson 1990:2-3).

1. Introduction

The education reform of Namibia represents a strong ambition to transform teaching away from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. According to Storeng (2001), by assuming a learner-centred teaching approach, it may, however, be argued that Namibia “borrows” approaches to teaching from elsewhere and follows the world trend in the sense that education policies all over the world seem to be based on similar philosophies.

In this assignment I will look at the epistemological bases of constructivism and behaviourism, the two approaches to the study of learning, and how teachers construct knowledge, to understand this knowledge growth within a constructivist theoretical perspective. The constructivists believe that instruction depends on learners and learning environments, and stress the interaction between these influences more than other views do. My attempt is also to document how teachers construct knowledge, to understand this knowledge growth within a constructivist theoretical perspective. Further in this assignment I will also discuss the different types of constructivism and behaviourism while looking in depth at the similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses amongst them.

2. Behaviourism and early behaviourist theories: perspectives on knowledge and theory of learning

2.1 What is behaviourism?

According to Ozman and Craver (1986:1) behaviourism is related to realism in terms of the realist thesis of independent reality that is similar to the behaviourist belief that behaviour is caused by environmental conditions. At the same time, behaviourism has been given increasing attention and acceptance in the field of education.

2.2 Early behaviourist theories: perspectives on knowledge and theory of learning

According to Gredler (1997:13) learning is a complex set of processes that may vary according to the developmental level of the learner, the nature of the task, and the context in which the learning is to occur. No one theory can capture all the variables involved in all learning. Each theory, therefore, begins with an assumption or set of assumptions about the nature of learning and then proceeds to develop a set of principles consistent with the assumptions.

Out of these views another psychology of learning theories has developed, which is more of a behaviourist approach to development and behaviour, of which John Watson is regarded as the father (Möller 1993: 117). He made an investigation into observable behaviour, focused specifically on the stimulus-response relationship and used *classical conditioning* to teach infants. “Since the underlying assumption is that S-R connections occur through learning, this approach is often termed the learning theory” (Louw 1991: 64). In Craig *et al.* (1975:123) these theories are also called S-R association theories.

Skinner was another psychologist who did experiments and went further than Watson to use *operant conditioning*, which happens when “a response is followed by some change in the environment that alters the probability that the same response will occur again” (Steuer 1994: 65). It needs to be critically commented, however, that the individual’s

interest surely also plays an important role in learning and that innate characteristics can also co-determine the learning that takes place.

As Schunk (2000:12) puts it: “behavioural and cognitive theories agree that differences both among learners and in the environment affect learning, but they diverge in the relative emphasis given to these two groups of variables”. Behavioural theorists stress the role of the environment: but assign less importance to learner differences than do cognitive theories.

Young children usually accept that rules are absolute and should be obeyed if punishment is to be avoided. As they grow up, however, they come into contact with more people and discover that other people have other rules to live by. As Woolfolk (1994:79) puts it: “this promotes their thinking about matters and leads to a gradual shift to a ‘morality of cooperation’ and acceptances that people are the makers and breakers of rules”.

Slavin (1994) as quoted in Olivier (2000:11) concurs with Woolfolk that “children are not miniature adults”, they think, behave and see the world differently. It is crucial for the successful teacher to be able to understand how children think and behave, because most teaching cannot be considered common sense or something that ‘everyone knows’ (Woolfolk 1994:12).

Unlike the psycho-analysis approaches of Freud and Erikson, the humanistic model of Maslow and the educational perspective of Dreyer, some theorists support cognitive theories which focus on intellectual development and learning. This is the first category of learning which is founded on the assumption that most behaviour is learnt (Louw 1991: 63, 70). In the case of cognitive theories the focus is not on the totality of the individual’s development, but on cognitive development as such, under the umbrella of “information processing approaches” (p. 71).

Researchers accept that learning brings about change in behaviour. According to Schaffer (1994:76) the following criteria are used by theorists to assess the change: Was the child

compelled to think, perceive or react to appeals from his environment? Did the change take place because of observation, repetition or study? Is the change relatively permanent? According to some researchers learning occurs through repetition, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, observation, and collaboration with someone more experienced (p. 43).

Schunk (2000) identifies the focusing of behavioural theories on changing the environment in order to influence learning (e.g. by providing reinforcement when the appropriate response is made).

Pavlov and Watson are two well-known theorists. Pavlov's theory was called conditioning while Watson, who based his theory on that of Pavlov, called his theory behaviourism. Where Pavlov experimented with animals, Watson applied his experiments to humans.

In effect, according to Hohn (1995:18), Watson was attempting to finally disassociate psychology from the philosophical tradition of examining the nature of knowledge. He believed psychology could become a science in its own right only by concentrating on phenomena that could be observed directly, such as movements and utterances and their relation to environmental stimuli. We can see the empirical tradition in Watson's emphasis on the role of sensory experience. His rejection of any consideration of the mind and unobservable mental processes, however, clearly marked a break with introspection.

2.3 Ideas informing behaviourism

Empiricism is the name for a family of theories of epistemology that generally accept the premise that knowledge begins with sense experience. Empiricists are deeply concerned with the activity of how to construct concepts and theories. The empiricists believe in the possibility of particular kinds of observations comprising the bedrock of all knowledge claims.

If the aim of positivism is to collect and assemble data on the social world from which we can generalize and explain human behaviour through the use of our theories, then it shares with empiricism the belief that there are 'facts' which we can gather on the social world, independently of how people interpret them. Empiricism, on the other hand, is a method of research, which lacks, or more usually has not referred explicitly to, the theory guiding its data collection procedures.

Realism is the tradition that shares with positivism the aim of explanation; beyond that the similarity ends. This tradition also has a long history and is associated with the works of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. The researchers aim with this tradition is to uncover the structures of social relations in order to understand why we then have the policies and practices that we do. Similarly, Sigmund Freud argued that our consciousness was determined by our sub consciousness.

Realism further argues that the knowledge people have of their social world affects their behaviour and, unlike the propositions of positivism and empiricism, the social world does not simply 'exist' independently of this knowledge. However, people's knowledge may be partial or incomplete. Therefore, the task of social research is not simply to collect observations on the social world, but to explain these within theoretical frameworks, which examine the underlying mechanisms which structure people's actions and prevent their choices from reaching fruition.

Differences of perspective appear to many to be problematic. If there is no consensus within a discipline then surely that is because its methods and theories simply don't work. However, perhaps we should challenge the idea that science is an all-embracing explanation of the social or natural world beyond our criticism.

3. Constructivism

3.1 Roots and characteristics of constructivism

Constructivist ideas have a long history, emphasizing the active and subjective processes

involved in understanding. They owe a great deal to the writings of Piaget, Dewey, Bruner and Vygotsky. Constructivism has become a major orienting framework in curriculum reform projects around the world. Yet, there remain great contradictions and confusions (Mackinnon *et al.* 1997) when, for example, teachers and researchers are heard speaking of 'the constructivist method of teaching'. During the early twentieth century several reform movements surfaced in American education.

Two competing views of child development and the purpose of education have framed the teaching of pedagogy in teacher education and schools which provide a historical context for the current debate among Piagetian constructivists and the various Vygotskian constructivist interpretations (Vadeboncoeur 1997:15).

Richardson (1997) says that one cannot think of constructivist teaching as a monolithic agreed upon concept. The extent of the agreement among the various constructivist approaches is that constructivism is learning or meaning-making theory. It further suggests that individuals create their own new understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact. Therefore, constructivism is the way people learn or develop; it is the way people should learn.

Most constructivists would also agree that the traditional approach to teaching promotes neither the interaction prior to new knowledge that is necessary for internalization nor deep understanding (Richardson 1997).

Piaget, one of the most important theorists on early childhood education sees the meaning-making process as individualistic with the purpose of constructivist teaching being lead toward higher levels of understanding and analytic capabilities (p.5). In order to reach these higher levels, Schifter *et al.* (1992:187) say that students must be actively engaged in reconstructing their existing understandings by restructuring their cognitive maps. Piaget's theory on cognitive development made educationists aware of the value of cognitive development, which forms the basis of modern constructivism.

According to Vadeboncoeur (1997), Piagetian constructivism originates within the developmental framework established by Piaget. For Piaget (1972), the study of development follows from a biological analysis of the laws of nature. Piagetian constructivists focus on individual cognitive development through co-constructed learning environments with rational, decontextualized thinking as the goal of development (Vadeboncoeur 1997:23).

The constructivist perspectives are based on the premise that knowledge is not a part of an objective, external reality that is separate from the individual. Instead, human knowledge, whether the bodies of content in public disciplines (such as mathematics or sociology) or the knowledge of the individual learner, is a human construction. Interpreting constructivism is complicated by the fact that various discussions address different levels of knowledge development. Some constructivists focus on the growth of public domains of knowledge, such as mathematics and sociology. Others in contrast, focus on individual learners (Phillips 1995:6).

In contrast to the learning-process theories, the cognitive- development theories developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky do not address the ways that specific items are learned. Instead, each theorist defines the nature of human thinking in a particular way and then describes the essential requirements for developing the highest levels of human thought.

In Piagetian constructivism the subject of study is the child and his or her cognitive forms as he or she actively builds systems of meaning and understanding about reality through experiences (von Glasersfeld 1989). Vygotsky (1986:51) notes that Piaget's fundamental problem is that 'reality and the relations between a child and reality' are missed in his theory. Indeed, Murray (1983) as cited in Vadeboncoeur (1997:23) notes further that Piaget's 'epistemic subject has no social class, sex, nationality, culture, or personality'.

Vygotsky (1986) argued that individual development couldn't be understood without reference to the interpersonal and institutional surrounds which situate the child. While

Piaget talked about the active construction of knowledge through action on the world of objects, for Vygotsky the construction of knowledge occurs through interaction in the social world. Thus, for Vygotsky (1978) cited in Vadeboncoeur (1997:27), the development of cognitive forms occurs by means of the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social context.

Vygotsky (1986) describes children as active in their own development and as creating knowledge of the world through activity. But, for Piaget, 'the structure of the mind is the source of our understanding of the world' (Venn *et al.* 1977:73).

Clark (1989) also argues that beliefs about 'individualism' that are assumed to be 'true' obfuscate and promote highly gendered attitudes. She notes that

The belief that children should be treated as individuals might seem at first glance to be more sophisticated than the natural difference belief. It is after all one of the cornerstones of child-centred education and could be seen as a framework for a liberating education by not straitjacketing children into fixed sex-role stereotypes.

(Clark 1989:249).

Vygotsky's is not a complete theory of intellectual development but a continuing stimulus or source of inspiration. He placed teaching at the core of human development, defining intelligence as the capacity to learn through instruction. His influence is broad and spreading: for example, the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, according to Watson (1996) introduced the new emphasis like a breath of fresh air in a discussion paper:

'... learning involves going beyond simply acquiring new information and adding it to our existing knowledge. It involves us in making sense of new information by using our existing knowledge and modifying, updating, and rethinking our ideas in the light of this new information' (Watson 1996:8).

Learners' current states of mind and previous experience will affect their perceptions and

understanding. This is very different from simpler empiricist and behaviourist notions, and the notion that teaching involves the straightforward transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner, assumed in much practice (Gredler 1997:61).

Piaget and Vygotsky focus on the development of thinking skills. Learning in their view, is related to, but is not the same as, cognitive development. Piaget describes the stages from birth through adolescence that lead to the development of conceptual thinking, logical memory, and self-regulated attention. In his view, the signs and symbols are essential in developing these higher mental functions.

There are a number of different forms of constructivism, and it is important to separate them, as they tend to vary greatly in terms of practical significance. One way of distinguishing different forms of constructivism is to search out the underlying or assumed metaphors for the mind and world (Ernest 1993:2-4).

3.2 Types of constructivism

Constructivism is not a unified perspective, but is expressed in many forms or approaches, which can be organized into types.

According to von Glasersfeld (1989:6) radical constructivism is based on two basic principles, “knowledge is not passively received but actively built up by the cognizing subject” and “the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organization of the experiential world, not the discovery of ontological reality”. The principles (Vadeboncoeur 1997:15) which guide this educational prescription are based on a theory of cognitive development that identifies the individual as the subject of the study.

According to Schunk (2000:230) radical constructivism assumes that new knowledge is abstracted from old knowledge. Knowledge is not shaped by accurately mapping the outside world. Knowledge structures are created out of earlier structures, not directly from environmental information; therefore, knowledge is not a mirror of the external

world acquired through experiences, teaching, or social interactions. Knowledge develops through the cognitive activity of abstraction and follows a generally predictable sequence.

Radical constructivists hold that we live in a relativistic world that can only be understood from individually unique perspectives, which are constructed through experimental activity in the social-physical world. According to Ernest (1993) radical constructivism is said to be a rich theory that is giving rise to a body of fruitful and innovative research in the work of von Glasersfeld and many other researchers. However, a danger for radical constructivism is that it can lead to an overly child-centred, romantic progressivism.

Social constructivists have a very different view of the process of the construction of knowledge from Piagetians. First, it is worth commenting that we do not see the two approaches, namely, individual and social as incompatible. Bereiter (1994) comments as follows:

...constructivism tells us to pay close attention to the mental activities of the learner, and socioculturalism tells us to pay close attention to cultural practices in the learner's milieu. Except for the practical difficulty of doing both at once, there is nothing incompatible in these proposals. Neither one implies rejection of the other.

(Bereiter 1994:21).

They do not focus primarily on the individual, but they focus more on social process and interaction in both the construction and appropriation of knowledge. In support of the above statements Richardson (1997:8) says that knowledge is socially constructed, because meaning can only be constructed through the use of language in a social context.

Dewey (1916) as quoted in Bredo (1994:30) suggested that:

...the use of language to convey and acquire ideas is an extension and refinement of the principle that things gain meaning by being used in a shared experience or joint action... When words do not enter as factors into a shared situation, whether overtly or imaginatively, they operate as

pure physical stimuli, not as having a meaning or intellectual value.
(Bredo 1994:30)

In this constructivist view, one comes to the conclusion that learning cannot be separated from action and that they are working together. Within this framework it is also clear that the development of an individual relies on social interactions where the cultural meanings also are shared within the group whereby the individual then internalizes it.

Vykotsky's approach is describes by Davydov (1995) as follows:

Developmental upbringing and teaching deals with the whole child's entire activity, which reproduces in the individual socially, created needs, capabilities, knowledge, and ways of behaviour. This activity, if we see it as a special object of study, includes social, logical, pedagogical, and physiological aspects in its unity.

(Davydov 1995:19)

According to Richardson (1997), formal knowledge, as understood in signs and symbols, enters the learning situation as tools within the social interaction, and affects development or learning through activity engaged in by the learner. Moll (1992:21) suggests that school learning or development is coming "to use essential 'cultural tools', such as reading, writing, mathematics, or certain modes of discourse, within the activities that constitute classroom life". As a result, if theories are not situated within the history and culture of the society that gives rise to them, they function to obscure our understandings of the development rather than to foster it.

Ernest (1993) notes that knowledge reflects the outside world as filtered through and influenced by culture, language, beliefs, and interactions with others, direct teaching, and modelling. Finally the metaphor of mind of social constructivism is that of persons in conversation, according the mind human status, and recognizing that social and linguistic contexts are essential to the human nature of mind.

French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that social differentiation and stratification was a function of the different experiences shaping a child's development and was not determined at birth (Vadeboncoeur 1997:16). Therefore, I believe that the

most appropriate learning theory for enabling such kinds of breakthrough is social constructivism. The chances of this happening and being satisfying to pupils depended on their teachers' interactive style, and ultimately, on their expectations of their learners. Radical constructivism has, on the face of it, an exclusively individualistic focus, whilst social constructivism sees individuals as irreducibly implicated and constituted by the social.

Social constructivism has the following advantages which can be seen as the promotion of learning experiences in which the learner is active, confidence and self-esteem are raised, challenging tasks indicate that teacher expectations are high and pupils' awareness of their own learning is assisted. A great deal of learning takes place directly through language or other symbolic systems, and even learning through touch or movement occurs in a social context and is often mediated by language.

Critical constructivism as a post-modern theory of knowledge that is based on an epistemology is rooted in the work of Vykotsky. The development of cognitive forms follows the process of internalization from the social to the individual.

According to O'Loughlin (1992) this process invites not only the transformation of knowledge but, in addition, recognition of the effects of social discourses of power and privilege. For Vykotsky, based on the work of Marx and Engels (1846/1970) cited in Vadeboncoeur (1997:30), productive activities such as labour, speech and other forms of communication allow the human species to free itself from biological determination; culture supplants nature. I personally think that we, in a way, produce social discourses and can, therefore, change and transform them to reflect a more just distribution of resources.

Cohen and Manion (2000:29) agreed that critical theory wants to emancipate the individual. In the process, critical theorists want to make transparent the hidden agendas and influences. They further claimed that the purpose is not just the understanding of situations, but to change them to bring about social justice. Somehow constructivists must

work to ensure that the epistemology upon which their pedagogical approaches are based interrupts and challenges the status quo and facilitates a critical analysis of inequality.

O'Loughlin (1993) notes that the purpose of critical knowledge construction is a commitment to social change, justice and responsibility, the reduction of inequality and oppression. O'Loughlin makes clear that the pedagogical approaches derived foster the development of critical thinkers who are able to recognize their position in relation to others in a way that also makes them aware of their participation in discourses contributing to inequality and privilege.

Critical theory with the aim to emancipate the individual (Vadeboncoeur 1997) permits students to deconstruct and reconstruct cultural assumptions that have been taken for granted. She further stressed that for theorists today who are concerned with critical issues in teaching and learning, critical constructivism is the only form which addresses the macro level analysis of a sociohistorical critique.

4. Conclusion

The debate between advocates of education for individuals and advocates of education for social transformation has a long history. Our position in the twentieth century allows us much clarity when looking back on theories that were taken to be 'true' and representative of 'nature'. However, we struggle with the same issues today when we disregard the social and historical context within which ideas about development are promulgated (Vadeboncoeur 1997:17)

While constructivism has received tremendous fanfare in the educational community through the 1980s and early 1990s (Mackinnon *et al.* 1997), recent criticisms question its foundation (Millar 1989; Ormell 1993; Solomon 1994). Richardson (1997) comments on how constructivism may appear differently in various subject areas and within different psychological traditions.

While we are generally supportive of a constructivist perspective on teaching and learning, we find that some rhetoric associated with constructivism unfortunately masks – if not distorts – the pedagogical issues at hand (Mackinnon *et al.* 1997:38).

Therefore, to answer the question whether behaviourism or constructivism is more valid as a current theory of knowledge I think in Namibia further dialogue requires that we first define the epistemological interpretation we are employing in order to make inferences about pedagogical approaches, because there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach.

While constructivism may offer relatively new and exciting ideas about epistemology and pedagogical approaches, it is based on socially constructed and biased assumptions about development and education. This does not mean that we should disregard the work of constructivists, but its limitations need to be recognised.

I should say that many behaviourist learning experiences have been described as lacking interest, challenge, relevance and coherence: learners/students have become relatively passive, dependent, unconfident and socially isolated in their learning. Constructivism has brought about a shift in the approach of teaching methods at schools.

Certainly, teachers rely on various strategies to overcome such problems of perception and cognition in their classrooms. It is almost a moot point nowadays to suggest that students' ideas must be taken into consideration in order to provide a foundation for extending concepts and the meanings derived from them (Mackinnon *et al.* 1997).

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CONCLUDING STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Background

This portfolio is not simply a collection of a variety of static end products of the research process, but is the result of a deliberate process of involvement, engagement and thinking about teaching and learning through the research process from which papers are constructed that might convey the reflection of that process to others. The portfolio comprises a variety of papers that teachers/educators can employ as stimuli for articulating their understanding of what it means to be a teacher/educator.

This portfolio helped me to look at things done through the research process. I will touch on the following in my concluding statement:

- what I have learnt from the process;
- indication of what I have done;
- what I have achieved;
- what it meant to me; and
- how it will impact on me as I continue in the field of academics in the future.

I will concentrate on the strengths, weaknesses and research methodology of the research process as follows:

Strengths

I had preconceived ideas about what teaching and learning are but through this process my views have been reshaped. As I come to better understand how I approach my own learning and accept responsibility for it, I think I have been offered opportunities to relate that understanding to my teachers' approaches about learning. Therefore, I am challenged to ask whether I also attempt to meet my teachers on their own terms.

The research process creates an opportunity to plant new seeds as an educational leader in Namibia. I also realized that there is an urgent need to build a bank of local knowledge, arising from the grassroots. We cannot forever impose knowledge on the Namibian situation that has been developed elsewhere.

Tutors created opportunities that encouraged and challenged us to reconsider our own

developing practice. The research process was a good learning experience and it challenged some of my assumptions about education. This means that I now take an active approach to meeting my fellow students and colleagues in the academic field on my own terms, by seeking recognition and response to my particular needs and concerns for my professional growth.

The whole process from the beginning to the end was a wake-up call to better understand the instructions I am working with, to be able to render my services as an educational leader within the educational reform in Namibia. Furthermore, the research process was a change in which intelligible, plausible and fruitful approaches to teach, combined with opportunities and experiences that reinforce and support the views being presented through the process, can foster the development of me as an educator, who has a practical foundation. This will enhance my understanding of my own teaching and of my teachers' and their students' learning.

Being in this course challenged me to think again about teaching, learning and formal education. In many instances, I am able to accept more responsibility for my own learning as I actively reflect on my progress. I am happy with the way I have been taught to be a reflective practitioner or critical thinker. I also learned to train my teachers in this new constructivist approach. I hope it will influence our education system positively.

Through a lot of work I have done, I gained knowledge and insight into the various sub-processes of the research process and each one has contributed towards my personal, professional and academic growth. The research process gave me a good basis to work from. I developed an understanding that the ideas teachers construct may not match what I intend and vice versa. These research processes have fostered change and improvement and a holistic perspective on teaching and learning from a constructivist point of view.

I have also developed skills, and I have been able to broaden my attitudes and change some where necessary. I have also been able to apply some of the skills, knowledge and understanding I gained in my own institution as an education officer and enable my

teachers to use these as a means of creating improved learning situations back home.

The major thing that influenced me was how to be a reflective practitioner in my own institution and to try to bring about a change. I think that everything we did in the course was built around that and it set the framework for me in terms of what I did at my own institution. Some of my friends and colleagues were interested in the issues which come up in some of the topics and I could critically discuss and debate with them from time to time. I didn't try to dominate my colleagues with everything I had learned or practised. I rather used the knowledge and skills they had and tried to build on that.

Weaknesses

Although the research process was worth doing, made sense and I could understand it, it also caused some frustration and struggling. I realized that my previous qualifications were superficial in comparison to what was expected from me on this Master's course. Academically, I experienced problems with poor background and unfamiliar areas of study like epistemologies. The "abstract" assignment of the epistemologies was a headache, because it was my very first time to critically engage with them.

I personally gained nothing from the lectures at that stage because I didn't understand the epistemologies as previously I just heard about them. I felt lost and confused. I struggled in doing this assignment although I was able to discuss issues pertaining to learning and teaching in more general terms. But through the various readings I tackled on my own and by sharing of knowledge, experience and opinions with fellow students and UNAM lecturers, slowly but surely I was able to develop my own ideas and opinions about the whole reform process and the theories underpinning it.

I struggled a lot with the reading and analyzing of the academic papers as I was not in the habit of serious reading. Pressure of work and other responsibilities meant that I did not get enough uninterrupted study time. The time factor was of utmost importance, because every time, due to the extensions I made, I struggled. So my aim was in the beginning just to cover the amount of work or an assignment. I was not happy with my assignment

mark and started budgeting my time by estimating how much I would need for a certain task or reading. Through this I have become a self-reliant and a self disciplined student.

Research Methodology

Doing research enabled me to identify problems which affect educational processes and to find the causes of these problems and seek solutions to them. This also enhanced my curiosity to research on different topics and also to develop my own research rather than just looking at others' research.

I selected specific ideas and some findings from the research process and used these to support my views during training workshops, support services and during our visits to schools for the implementation of the language policy for schools in Namibia. I demonstrated some familiarity with and comprehension of aspects of teaching for conceptual change. I constructed my own understanding of what the tutors were attempting to communicate through the coursework and the various assignments.

I enjoyed and understand the research proposal better than before, after a lot of background reading. I developed an interest in this part of the course, especially because it is the issue of the day in our Education Regions. I was interested in my research topic and was always curious to find new information. That is why I ended up reading so much, what an advantage for me!

Thinking of a research question was the most difficult. I hoped I could learn a lot from the Research Methodology Course in Grahamstown, but the period was too short and it was also very late in the year. I found that sharing skills and ideas with my fellow students, helped me to improve research skills and to make them more interesting.

My topic has arisen from my professional interest. I started to read current research in this specific area. I ended up with too many resources and could not make a proper start, until I came to an understanding of selecting the most useful sources for my research topic.

My weakest areas in this research process were referencing and the linking of authors' ideas. Every time I tried to incorporate the ideas I ended up just copying them down, without even acknowledging the references. Rhodes University's 'blue book' of referencing, which I called the 'Bible,' changed my way of citing and quoting. My performance changed as can be seen from the comments of my tutors.

Immediately, I realized that my deepened understanding of learning, teaching and education in general would challenge the current practices in my own institution and in Namibian education generally.

Through the process of completing this portfolio I realized that it is not an easy task to do research. I have learned that doing research presents particular challenges, ranging from self-management, independent research, and extended writing, to working with supervisors. In addition to this was the complexity of a new culture and the difficulties of a second language.

Through this process I have learned that collaborative transcribing and editing of the data and the papers can encourage students to focus on form in their output in a relatively natural way. This also brought forward the role of the teacher in this sort of post-task intervention, especially in the area of vocabulary. These data sources frame my phenomenological study of changes in my beliefs and practices.

I hope and believe that having completed this research process, my own experience as a student with Rhodes University will not only make me a better Namibian educator but that my experience will also be an incentive to develop and deepen my knowledge, skills and attitudes further.