

**THE PERCEPTIONS THAT MENTORS AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS
IN THE BASIC EDUCATION TEACHER DIPLOMA HAVE OF THE
NATURE AND ROLE OF THE MENTORING SYSTEM**

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PERSONAL PROFILE



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Current professional position and responsibilities:

Since 1993 when I assumed duties as the Regional Teacher Resource Centre Manager, I have been responsible for the establishment and running of my own centre as well as that of the three other district Teacher Resource Centres. This ranges from menial cleaning tasks to participation in policy statements. This variety is sometimes exhausting, but adds variety and interest in the work.

An important aspect of my work lies in the involvement with the BETD Inset Programme for which this TRC is the host centre in the Karas and Hardap regions. Not only are we responsible for the delivery, but I am also serving on the National BETD Inset Administrator's Committee as well as the National Assessment and Promotion Committee. Both these committees are housed at NIED under whose auspices the programme falls.

I have also been a tutor for English Communication Skills and Educational Theory and Practice, two subjects in the BETD inset. This has afforded me the opportunity to link the philosophy with the practice.

Academic background:

I attended the former Roman Catholic Coloured Primary School in Keetmanshoop. I obtained the Junior Certificate at the former St Aquinas Junior Secondary School now the Suiderlig High School. I matriculated at the Dr Lemmer High School in Rehoboth in 1973. In 1975 I successfully completed the Primary Teacher's Certificate and in 1976 the Primary Teacher's Diploma at the former Hewat Teacher's College in Athlone, Cape Town. I specialized in Fine Arts. In 1980 I enrolled at Unisa for the BA degree. In 1990 I completed the Higher Diploma, also at Unisa. In 2000 I obtained a B. Ed degree from Rhodes University.

I taught from 1977 at the Suiderlig High School where I was responsible for the teaching of English and History. I also taught adults in the evening for 3 years.

My interest in the education field is very wide and integrated. Fortunately my current work affords me to do so.

Research interests:

I have done my research in the field I am currently working in. I chose an aspect of School-based Activities of the BETD Inset programme. The specific area dealt with the perceptions that teachers and mentors have of the SBA system. I wanted to find out to what extent the SBA helps teachers and mentors to develop pedagogically.

I have benefited so much from this research because I have made it part of my work. It gave me the opportunity to learn as I was working. I am grateful that I could do it this way as it would not have made sense to research a topic which is not relevant to my work.

I would, however, if I have the opportunity do another masters degree, research the impact that English has on the language development of learners in my environment. It is a topic that I wanted to research all through my career as language teacher.

Community and outreach interests:

I grew up in a household with parents who were very diverse. My parents were involved in practically anything which ranged from business to sport, politics and education. I have naturally followed and likewise have adopted diverse interests in the community. I am married to a lady who since childhood had also been extremely active in community and church activities. For this reason we were involved in different movements that were sensitive towards the marginalized people. This especially included several positions in the church. Nowadays I am not so much involved and concentrate more on my children and studies.

Leisure pursuits:

My best “off-time” is at home. If I could afford it, I would have spent more time camping in the desert which has a special lure. Otherwise I am occupied with anything that has to do with Arts and Culture.

My Achievements:

Being a private and modest person by nature, it is not easy to speak of personal achievements. I am of course, in the first place proud of being the person I am. I love to work with people, but at the same time I would like to preserve own boundaries. I continually subject myself to rigorous self-analysis.

My first major achievement is that I married an outstandingly talented and considerate wife whom I consider as my life-long traveler on my spiritual and academic journey. This fulfillment is itself an achievement.

Other achievements:

- Success in my work and the professional respect I enjoy
- Being chosen to represent our parish in Switzerland in 1984
- Chosen for the SETI programme at the Ohio University in 1997
- Cum Laude results in the B.Ed course
- Admission to the M.Ed course
- The manifold “little” pedagogical discoveries through my studies that have changed my perceptions and have given meaning to my work and studies.

Hopes and Expectations:

- To “master” this M.Ed course
- To continually use these studies as premise for making sense of my work and relating it to my work
- To be able to help other professionals in their studies
- Continue with studies

A Contextual Analysis and Curriculum Analysis:

The Basic Education Teacher's Diploma (BETD)
With a main focus on the In-service Programme.

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Introduction:

This contextual analysis is concerned with the study of the Basic Education Teacher's Diploma In-service Curriculum.

It is based on the following assumptions: firstly, that the BETD (Inset and Preset) represents the Namibian Educational Reform in the realm of Teacher Education. Secondly, it is assumed that the BETD as a vehicle for reform in Teacher Education should yield teachers who are capable of change and development.

Based on the above-mentioned assumptions, this analysis examines this Teacher Education course/programme against some criteria pertinent to its philosophy. A critical analysis of its curriculum in terms of some core subjects, as well as its practical implementation, will form the basis of this scrutiny.

Secondary to the above, this analysis also intends to reflect this socio-historic and economic context in which the BETD has been designed. An underlying motive in this analysis is to study the dynamics between the philosophy, which represents the heart and intention of the Namibian educational reform on the one hand and implementation which in turn delivers the end product or final outcome of the course on the other hand. This analysis should also fit into the current debate between conservatives who claim that the BETD lacks content and is therefore inferior, and those who claim that the course adequately prepares teachers for the needs of Basic Education.

2. Contextual Analysis

The methodology focused on the participants and graduates as well as their environment, reflecting on what is experienced with the Inset teachers and programme in the Keetmanshoop Educational Region.

Though different instruments as, listed below, have been used to inform this contextual analysis, some received more emphasis than others in the analysis. Some of the instruments were not specifically developed for this analysis but were adapted. These include for example the interviews that some officials, all of whom were involved in teacher education, used for their research purposes and could be added to the list of people with whom oral communications were held. They are all directly involved in Teacher Education. The methods used include the following: questionnaires, interviews, document and statistical analyses, contact course evaluations of Inset teachers, classroom observations, panel discussions and self-study group meetings.

Discussions with officials include conversations with officials at NIED BETD Inset Unit. Other officials are Advisory Teachers who are tutors in the BETD Inset Programme. Specific questionnaires were drafted for BETD Inset teachers who included those who have graduated in 1999 and 2001. Three interviews were held with: (i) a 1999 graduate; (ii) a current trainee who entered the programme with recognition of prior learning and (iii) a current trainee without any prior qualification.

The inset teachers didn't respond satisfactorily in both the questionnaires and interviews. It might be due to the type of questions and the elicitation techniques used. It was also difficult to collect all questionnaires and some of them were not complete. In some cases teachers were requested to

reconsider some responses. During a self-study group meeting, when the nature of questionnaire questions were discussed many of the respondents stated that they have perhaps not paid enough time to questions.

What was most helpful was the series of discussions and interactions with local final year in-service teachers in the local self-study group and the specific assistance given to these teachers with their Practice-based Inquiry.

3. Socio- Historic and Economic Analysis:

As a former German colony, from the later part of the 19th century until the First World War, and then a mandate under South Africa, Namibia's education reflected the social stratification advocated by the Apartheid philosophy. All education was based on racial discrimination which in its turn provided for a select few and excluded the majority. Different Teacher Education curricula were used: The Higher Education Diploma was intended for whites who had in most cases qualifications higher than was necessary for the levels they taught. Other racial groups followed the Primary Teacher's Diploma or National Education Certificate which were done merely for certification and for salary purposes. In many cases these teachers were qualified lower for the level they taught. What all teacher programmes had in common, was their focus on a teacher-centered system with emphasis on control, rigid discipline, rote learning and negative assessment principles (Du Plessis 1998:33).

Educational reform in Namibia intended to undo all these practices and seek for a system in teacher education that would complement and sustain the basic education of all. It needed to transform from a legacy of education "of an elite to that of educating all" (Angula and Lewis 1997). For reasons of economy and to unify, Namibia as young and underdeveloped country could not afford to continue training teachers in

different career paths. Teacher Education therefore needed to be integrated so that it would enable teachers to be fully prepared to “face and meet the challenges of reforming” (MEC 1993:79). In the classroom, therefore, change meant the shift of theory and practice. Classroom activities needed to become learner-centered, participatory and democratic.

The SWAPO oriented Integrated Teacher Training Programme (ITTP), which was developed outside Namibia, hardly accommodated those teachers in the country who have already undergone prior teacher education. It has also not adequately provided for the transformation process, especially in the quest to provide for a paradigm shift, forcing all Namibians to realize that transformation in education should be part and parcel of the overall societal change. What was valued as important in education before independence did not serve the needs and values of the nation at large after independence. At the same time, education should, as Swarts (1999:33) believes, be an agent in transforming the Namibian society.

Transforming the Teacher Education system in Namibia therefore meant that the role of the teacher had to be re-evaluated so as to adjust to the governing worldview and those goals and policies prompted by the post-independence perspective. Swarts (1999) refers to this paradigm shift as one in which not only ideologies were introduced and one which necessitated restructuring, but also a process of “re-culturing”. This involves the breaking down of long and deeply-rooted beliefs and practices which had over time become part of the traditional structures.

According to Avenstrup (1994) the curriculum process of the BETD in itself was evidence of change. One cardinal prerequisite was that the new curriculum had to be responsive to the needs of the whole Namibian population. This included the sector of teacher education. The

implementation of a new curriculum therefore needed to include all the participants in teacher education in order to unify and democratize it.

4. Analysis of the Learners in the Programme and the Context of the Curriculum Study

The BETD (Basic Education Teacher Diploma)

In the Broad Curricula of both the BETD pre-service and In-service courses, the primary goal of teacher education focus on the needs of basic education, the educational community and the wider community. It strives towards fostering an understanding and respect for cultural values and beliefs, social responsibility, gender awareness and equity. In this new programme, teachers are also expected to be able “to develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical and critical thinking; understanding of learning as an interactive, shared and productive process; and enabling the teacher to meet the needs and abilities of the individual learning”(Swarts 1999:39).

The BETD Inset programme is a distance and open learning programme aimed at upgrading unqualified and partly qualified practicing teachers. Since August 2001 it also included teachers from Adult Basic Education and teachers at Pre-primary institutions.

The BETD Inset programme was introduced in 1994 as a one-year pilot project co-ordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In 1996 major changes were made. The BETD Inset programme became an official programme, coordinated by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. It is a four-year study programme with specialisations in

Lower Primary, Upper Primary and Junior Secondary phases. The areas of specialisation are Lower Primary Education, Mathematics and Integrated Natural Science Education, Social Sciences Education, Commerce Education (since 2001) and Language Education. The programme has the following core subjects: Education Theory and Practice, English Communication Skills and School-Based Activities.

The modular approach of the programme follows a cycle. The table in Appendix 1 illustrates that in-service teachers are obliged to complete 12 modules in the compulsory subject as well as in the options they choose. Each module is completed with an assessment task.

The programme has both face-to-face and distance modes of delivery. The face-to-face mode provides assistance and support to teachers through compulsory contact sessions which are held three times a year. The distance mode is conducted through distance teaching methods including the distribution of a series of instructional module guides. The programme delivery takes place at four Teachers' Resource Centres and Inset Units at two Colleges of Education.

The programme has an annual intake of 500 Inset teachers. The majority are usually admitted to the Lower Primary Education specialisation, followed by Integrated Natural Science and Mathematics Education. The number of Inset teachers who are currently enrolled in the programme is 2379.

Of the 2379 total enrolment, 1205 Inset teachers enrolled for Lower Primary Education specialisation and 443 for Integrated Natural Science and Mathematics Education. The emphasis on Lower Primary Education is necessitated by the fact that most of the unqualified or under-qualified teachers are found in Lower Primary classes and are found in rural areas.

As the majority of teachers in the Lower Primary phase are females, the intake per academic year is proof of affirmative action as females were the gender group who had been most marginalized. The BETD In-service Programme recognizes the fact that the Lower Primary phase is the foundation phase for ensuring quality education and successful schooling. It focuses on different ways of exploring literacy, numeracy, writing skills and concept formation (MBESC & MHETEC 2002).

The programme also responds to the need for better equipped Mathematics and Science teachers, as well as the provision of qualified teachers in a number of Namibian languages.

So far, the programme has held two graduation ceremonies, in 1999 and 2001. Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 2 reflect the distribution of graduates per region and per subject option.

At both graduation ceremonies, more teachers graduated in the Ondangwa East and West regions, and in the Lower Primary Education options. The figures also show an increase from 1999 to 2001 in most options in the Ondangwa East and West regions, while the Windhoek, Keetmanshoop and Katima regions remained lower.

A report compiled in early 2002 by NIED BETD stated that the teaching profession in Namibia benefited greatly in the following ways:

- (1) More teachers could become qualified and certified.
- (2) More certified teachers means that more professionals could be held accountable for quality learning and teaching.

- (3) An increase in qualified teachers would also mean an increase of Mathematics, Science and Namibian Languages teachers.
- (4) More teachers from the previously marginalized sections of the teaching cadre can be recognized for career advancement and further studies.

(NIED, 2002)

5.1 Analysis of the curriculum:

Prior to a discussion of the curriculum, one needs to look at core epistemological issues pertaining to the BETD Inset Programme. I wish to refer to arguments made in a similar assignment for my B Ed studies (Assignment 1). The question is often asked “Why has this country become independent?”. Within the sphere of politics, it is relatively easy to answer this question. When we are asked: “Why have we changed our Educational System? “or“ Why the BETD ?” then we cannot easily answer the question. The first question is easy because it requires superficial reasoning. The second question requires a “deeper” reasoning, touching the field of *Epistemology*.

So what is meant by epistemology? In short it refers to the theory of knowledge. Urmson (1976) states that an epistemology is a wide-ranging and loosely-knit set of philosophical problems dealing with some notions. These beliefs are, according to Urmson (1976) aspects such as knowing, perceiving, feeling, guessing, being mistaken, remembering, finding out, proving, inferring, establishing, corroborating, wondering, reflecting, imagining and dreaming. (*ibid*: 920).

In the educational field we are engaged with different views of education, that have always been present. In the B Ed Core Text 1, Van Harmelen (1999a) specifically refers to knowledge in context of the school/classroom. She argues that knowledge “implies a state of knowing” (Van Harmelen 1999a :3). As such any person is able to know something. She also includes concepts such as *concepts, skills, values* and *attitudes* to be included within the complex understanding of what knowledge embodies (Core Text 1999a: 10).

This academic view can also be considered as updated, modern and educationally and politically correct, as this view of knowledge is consistent with what is espoused in Namibian Reform Educational policies, such as *Toward Education for All* (MEC 1993). This view of knowledge can also be seen as being influenced by that of *Constructivism*, the epistemological stance that the Namibian Reform Education has chosen. Contrasting this view of education, is *Behaviourism* an epistemology that has evolved from the views of knowledge from the earliest times. Though not the central intention of this assignment, it is necessary to be reminded where this dominant world view came from. During the Age of the Enlightenment, according to Van Harmelen (1999b), knowledge came to be identified as something that can be observed through of senses and reason (Van Harmelen 1999b: 3). Furthermore, according to this text, “true knowledge” could only be achieved through the process of observation and experimentation. This view of the “real world” had major implications for societies for centuries. Auguste Comte gave another dimension to this view by stating that science should be applied to solve social problems (Van Harmelen 1999b:3). The Industrial Revolution introduced the world to the “Age of Modernity”. It was the time in history during which technology was cradled. It was further characterized by its scientific value system, consumerism and individualism. Even educationalists adopted governing

modernity modes of regarding science as the only right way to seek knowledge.

Modernism has had far-reaching and lasting implications on societies. In education its main impact was found in Behaviourism which viewed the learner as having no prior knowledge, ignored her/his socio-cultural background, aimed at standardized intelligence and which made knowledge a scientific-measurable issue. Much of this aspect has been dealt with in the socio-historic background of this paper.

Constructivism looks, according to Robertson (1999) with “new lenses” at the concepts such as the world, reality and knowledge (*Ibid*: 3). It is influenced by the impact sociological factors have had on education. As such, as illustrated earlier in this section, the learner is acknowledged to be a “knower” (Gergen 2002:1) who constructs his own knowledge. Due to cognitive and learning theories of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, we became aware of the fact that knowledge is not an entity that is “out there” ready to be discovered. On the contrary, according to these cognitive theorists, knowledge is “actively constructed”(Robertson 1999: 2)

These are the fundamental principles on which Learner Centred Education as a teaching approach rests. It demands a different view of the *learner* as well as that of the *teacher*.

It is with the above-stated epistemological background, a change of view and a different insight, that the following paragraph from *Toward Education For All* makes sense:

For Education for All to become a reality, teachers must develop new visions, new understandings, and new commitments. Curriculum content, medium of

instruction, classroom practices, assessment and evaluation – all these must be re-thought and revised.

(MEC 1993:76)

Added to the understanding that the curriculum (as will be the case of this analysis) should change the practice of education, a different value-system also needs to be instilled. For this to happen, teachers need to engage into a process of empowerment. What is required is what Prawat (1991) calls “Conversations with the Self and Settings”. Teachers need that “inner speech” to reflect upon their teaching, thus becoming reflexive practitioners. Teachers also need to get rid of persistent myths (Cornbleth 1987) the notion of accepting any given knowledge which leads to a lack of critical thinking. Teachers also need to see the school and classroom as part of a wider social context and by so doing, redefine their understanding of *knowledge*. Change in personal views will lead to “new visions”, “new understanding” and “new commitments” that Angula (in MEC 1993) refers to.

Finally, the curriculum as instrument for change also needs to honour the goals of the Namibian Education Reform Philosophy: *Equity, Access, Democracy* and *Quality*. Whether the curriculum has truthfully focused on the above, remains to be decided through the course of this analysis.

This contextual analysis will focus on the In-service mode of the BETD. As the pre-service mode can be considered as the parent course, much of the nature of the Inset programme has been derived from the full-time course that was implemented a year earlier than the In-service course.

The Broad Curriculum of the Inset Programme (MBESC & MHETEC 2002) shares the same goals and philosophy as that of the Pre-service. Both provide the same teacher status and accreditation to enable teachers

to teach in the Basic Education phases (grades 1-10) depending on the student's choice of specialisation.

As part distance and part face-to-face programme, the In-service is different from the pre-service in the following areas:

- (1) The Inset curriculum contains less subjects than its sister programme;
- (2) As a distance/face-to-face programme, it also has less formal classroom and tutor interaction;
- (3) Module descriptors are used instead of syllabuses;
- (4) The administration and execution of assessment is different due to the modular nature of the In-service Programme;
- (5) Teachers study for a length of four years with each academic year carrying 30 credits; the School-based Activities (SBA) system almost entirely depends on the liaison between the school management and the trainee teacher;
- (6) All Inset trainees are admitted with at least 3 years of experience prior to admission (including the system of Recognition of Prior Learning).

In general, the Broad Curricula for teacher education emphasize three areas of competencies:

- (1) Teaching Skills;
- (2) Professional Attitudes and
- (3) Knowledge and Understanding

(MBESC 2002)

These competencies, in conjunction with others that are not explicitly mentioned, can be considered as criteria for effective teachers and an effective Teacher Education programme. These criteria will also form the yardstick against which the BETD Inset programme is assessed in this contextual analysis. As mentioned earlier, it is the intention of this analysis to examine the dynamics that exists between the philosophical intention of the BETD and the eventual outcome.

As mentioned earlier, the very structure of the Inset mode with its modular system may also contribute to the eventual outcome and performance of its trainees. While the assumption is made that the structure and content of the modules should have a positive outcome, it needs to be looked at more critically. Inset teachers are expected to complete 12 modules in each of the subjects over the 4-year study period (Appendix 1). Each module contains topics derived from the Module Descriptors. The assumption is also made (though it is not always the case) that the structure of each module in each subject should provide for on-going self-study throughout the course of the school-based term. It is expected that the teacher should test the content of the units of each module in the real classroom situation. For this reason, it makes sense that a BETD Inset teacher chooses the option in which s/he teaches at school.

Four factors, however, influence this intention: firstly, it is questionable whether all modules in all subjects were structured in such a manner that it is in line with the subject content that the teacher teaches at school. Secondly, the prerequisite that a teacher must teach in the option s/he chooses in the programme, creates a vacuum because a teacher choosing an option in the upper primary phase may teach either in one or all three grades of that phase at school. Even for Lower Primary, the teacher may be teaching in any of the four grades included in the Lower Primary phase at school. If it is not possible for the modules to be aligned to the

curriculum of formal basic education, then at least structures should be built into the BETD modular system to enable teachers to see the relevance between what they **study** and what they **teach** in class. This factor might, hypothetically speaking, also be a contributing factor to the problems currently experienced by the weak performance of teachers in the End of Module Assessments. Thirdly, no provision in the BETD Inset structure has been made since Grade 4 has become part of the Lower Primary phase. Whereas an integrated and cross-curricular approach in all lower primary subjects is followed, the Grade 4 curriculum still demands a subject-approach. As a result, an Inset teacher who currently teaches Grade 4, is officially admitted to the Lower primary phase of the BETD and should, instead, have been taken up in the different subject specialisation areas in the Upper Primary phases. Related to this third factor is the inclusion of teachers at Pre-primary schools and those teaching Adult Basic Education.

A fourth weakness in the prerequisite that Inset teachers must take the option in which they teach lies within the whole **monitoring system** of the BETD Inset programme. During the course of the term, the trainee teacher is supposed to test the content of the study modules in class. Application of module content and linking it with their teaching, seems an easy task, but reality proves the opposite. Two factors make this difficult. The first is the fact that modules do not clearly link with the school syllabus. A second difficulty lies with the fact that both module content and teaching syllabus do not adequately support teachers in the application of teaching strategies.

To ascertain whether she/he does this effectively, there should be some monitoring system that will ensure that the correct interpretation of both the formal syllabus content and the content of the study module is made. The SBA system should in part address this aspect, but it certainly not

required of the chosen mentor of the Inset teacher to have made a study of the study modules of that particular teacher.

Apart from the debate above, the question whether the BETD curricula are aligned with that of the formal curriculum also has far wider consequences than those confined to the choice of option. In conversations with teachers in different phases of the BETD Inset programme, most of them respond similarly when questioned about the relevance of the study modules and their practice. Most of these in-service teachers will admit that English Communication Skills is perhaps the most practical and empowering subject in the course. With reference to other subjects they are not as articulate. This might perhaps be related to the fact that not all of them recognize the similarities and differences between the study programme and the formal and practical classroom situation. In a panel discussion held with the local Keetmanshoop self-study group, teachers in the lower primary phase were asked to correlate the Lower Primary Education course of the BETD with that of the programmes in the Lower Primary phase at school. It was apparent that those who teach the “normal” school programme as prescribed by the syllabuses for Lower Primary could easily make comparisons between what they study and what they teach. Others, however, who are included in the *Molteno* approach, were not able to do so. The reason for this phenomenon might possibly due to the rather rigid structure of the Molteno programme. Teachers in this programme are generally positive towards its approach, but confuse the child-centred approach with that of learner-centredness.

The above scenario draws the attention to some aspects which the BETD Inset curriculum (especially through its modules) does not provide for. Firstly, little attention is paid to the various programmes and approaches practiced at school. If the lower primary course could be taken as an example, not much is done to make specific provision for teachers who,

for example, teach the Molteno Programme and who are at the same time enrolled in the BETD Inset programme. The first one is essentially *child-centred*, with its clear distinctions of developmental phases as well as its practice of separating ability-grouping. The BETD on the contrary, constantly emphasizes LCE. The same applies to the the formal curriculum which, in contrast to the philosophy of the Reform goals, is based on the Taxonomy of Bloom (Kristensen 2000).

A second argument related to the above lies in the fact that the BETD, despite the intentions of the Broad Curriculum, does not ensure adequate grounding in theoretical concepts. If the example of the lower primary teachers can be taken, it is noticeable that they equate the Molteno approach to LCE. This is solely based on the idea that group work is an outstanding physical characteristic of the Molteno approach. As with teachers in general, these Inset teachers fell into the trap of equating group work with LCE without deeper analysis. Module 1 of LPE provides skills to observe learners and colleagues as well as designing a Practice-based Inquiry. Module 1 of ETP caters for an analytical approach towards past and present approaches. As such, teachers in this academic phase of the BETD ought to be aware of the fundamental differences in the different programmes.

The above-mentioned phenomenon elicits the question of whether Educational Theory and Practice (ETP) as core subject adequately provides for the necessary theoretical grounding. In order to teach effectively, teachers need to have a theoretical and conceptual understanding of the the learning content. This understanding is necessary when learning content and concepts are to be mediated to learners. As such, this conceptual base will be prerequisite for classroom teaching or the "acid test" as Stones (1994) refers to classroom learning and teaching. Almost every teacher who is new in the programme, will respond similarly

to the question of “*What do you find new in the BETD*” that they have learnt to become learner-centred teachers. Utterances such as these, are mostly made without understanding what it really is. Learner-centred education (LCE) as an approach is introduced in a vacuum: no epistemological reference is made to the theories that ground it. The teachers’ view of learner-centred education is understood mainly in terms of a comparison between behaviouristic teaching approaches and a “new” approach. This new approach is equated with its physical characteristics (group work, seminars, discussions and learner comments). Module 1 of ETP includes two units: “The Experience of being a Learner in the Past” and “The Experience of Being a Teacher and Learner since the Reform”. These topics *per se* may be acceptable, activities in these two units hardly invoke any LCE approach. Instead, examples of past and present systems are being illustrated to learners through the reading passages of the Support Materials. These have remained fixed over the years, with hardly any change. Reform, a concept in itself is hardly addressed in the sense of epistemology. It is seen as a historical event. It is also perceived as a political event and is as such considered as a turning point (isolated) from which different approaches have to be followed.

Similarly, aspects of child development (under the topic of “Human Development) especially in Lower Primary Education are projected in such a manner that Piaget’s theory is interpreted as clearly distinguishable developmental stages expressed in terms of age. The knowledge of theorists is projected as facts that need to be memorised.

A further argument with regard to the relationship between the BETD programme and the real-life classroom situation should also be seen in terms of its adaptability. As a curriculum that represents Social Constructivism through LCE, the modules and implementation should also adapt to changing circumstances. The notion of knowledge that is “ This is

constantly changing and situational specific” (Van Harmelen 1999c: 7) should be applicable in this context. The current syllabuses/module descriptors restrict the scope of learning. In her desktop analysis of the Namibian Teacher Educator syllabuses, Van Harmelen (in MBESC 2000) recognizes the credibility of division of the syllabus into topics. She does, however, fail to find any evidence in the syllabus that gives the Teacher Educator the opportunity to see why and how topics were chosen. The danger of what she calls “givens” is that it deprives the learners of a chance to examine their selection in a critical manner. If the very heart of the practice-based inquiry lies in the sector of critical thinking, then the BETD syllabuses are contradictory.

A second aspect concerning “Topics” mentioned in the desktop analysis, lies in the absence of links that these topics have with each other as well as no apparent way in which the learners are made aware of finding the linkage. The same shortcoming applies to the module descriptors of the in-service programme. A further break-down of these topics which Van Harmelen (in MBESC 2000) calls “myriads”, gives rise to a multitude of content learning. Given the limited time of the in-service contact sessions, it is difficult to conceive how learners will get through this content during the term time. Subjects such as Social Sciences Education and Mathematics count in this group in which too many topics are given in one module and in this manner creates an overload of content.

A further aspect of the lack of links, lies within the absence of a clear *relationship* between topics in the Module Descriptors and those of the syllabuses the teachers teach at school. Once again reference can be made to subjects such as Lower Primary, Mathematics and Integrated Natural Science and Social Sciences Education. In the case of the last-mentioned subject, for example, Module 12 for Religious and Moral Instruction, include the following sub-units under “Content Areas”: (i) Guidelines for

teaching RME (ii) Means of assessing in RME and (iii) Means of Evaluating in RME. Mugridge (1997), in his report states that the programme needs to “provide Inset Teachers with the required expertise in the subject matter of the BETD programme”. When the BETD Inset was restructured in 1997, all school syllabuses in the Upper primary phases were rewritten. It appears as if little liaison between the different units within NIED (BETD in-service Units and the Curriculum Panels) exists.

Mugridge also contends that tutors or Teacher Educators need to acquaint themselves with the procedures and pedagogy to teach at a distance. In the absence of a clear linkage between topics, then, as is the case of the Molteno programme and the BETD LPE, it is expected that Module Descriptors and course materials should provide a mechanism to alert teachers to the appropriate teaching strategies and methodology true to Learner-centred Education. If the programme is to uphold its intended outcomes, and honour the basic competencies (Appendix 4), then serious efforts need to be made to re-align topics and content areas.

5.2 Assessment in the Inset Programme:

The Broad Curriculum of the BETD Inset promotes both Formative and Summative Assessment but is not very explicit in stating what is meant by in-service Teachers’ learning and progress throughout the duration of the study. Promotion from one academic year to the other is entirely derived from the summative assessment which includes: assignments, End of Module Assessments and Portfolios.

In practice, the inclusion of “Formative Assessment” means little for the promotion of a learner in the programme. Provision in School-based Activities is made for a Formative Progress report which the principal completes. Regardless of the rating here, passing in the SBA module

depends on the final grading of the Graded Observation Lessons. Grading of lessons entirely depends on the principals and differs from centre to centre. An imbalance between ETP and SBA final grades makes one suspicious of the level of consistency in this formative evaluation. A study of the table in Appendix 3 reflects this discrepancy.

Assignments and portfolios which may contain a strong element of formative assessment, hardly contribute to a formative promotion.

The Broad Curriculum for Inset also emphasizes that assessment in the BETD programme focuses on three main areas: professional skills, knowledge and understanding and teaching skills. By way of promotion only through the summative vehicle of assessment, the BETD Inset Programme Curriculum endorses and over-emphasizes examinations and testing, losing much of the inherent spirit of the philosophy of the programme. End of Module Assessment is in practice perceived as testing how well learners know the content of the module they have covered for that particular term. This applies, ironically to ETP in which the end of module assessment is the only form of assessment focus on testing in a positivistic manner to assess how little each Inset teacher knows, is in sharp contrast with the intentions of *Toward Education for All* (MEC 1993: 127). In addition, typical of the behaviouristic nature, scrutiny of some teachers' answer papers (even for ETP), reveals a mere reproducing of content of the subject module. In the case of this curriculum (Inset), its policy document gives validity to a practice that is alien to its philosophy and by no means effectively assesses the three basic competencies.

Assignments are set in all subjects except in ETP and LPE and are criterion-referenced. Band descriptors are developed and differ from one subject to the other. A major critique, as in the case of the absence of a clear linkage of topics discussed earlier, is that themes chosen for

assignments do not always link with module topics. There is also a discrepancy in the weighting of some assignments as in ECS, in which, for example, one module expects the teacher to write a story compared to another which only requires the teacher to write a letter of 150 words. Where the Broad Curriculum promotes a spiral effect of competencies, tasks expected in assignments show the opposite tendency. The lack of assignments in ETP deprives the teacher-students from doing research. As a result, teachers are not exercised in academic writing and synthesizing of concepts and their experiences.

Other than the Broad Curriculum of the Presevice programme which does provide for an alternative epistemology in their alternative assessment strategies, the equivalent policy document for the In-service programme gives license to a system of content testing – hampering a paradigm shift, and instead, preserving the old status of examinations.

5.3 School-based Activities (SBA):

SBA is that part of the Inset programme that connects the theoretical instruction during the contact sessions with the practical reality of the classroom. The Broad Curriculum prescribes that SBA activities should be a culmination and dynamic interaction of the teacher's knowledge of her/his theoretical learning and practical implementation of her/his knowledge of the self and experience.

Northfield *et al* (1996) value the significance of a teacher's own experience and knowledge. No other place than the classroom can be more suitable to afford the teacher the opportunity to display and practice the knowledge she/he has accumulated. The classroom is the environment in

which teachers can practice their “authority of their own experience” a concept the authors use to describe the recognition for the confidence teachers achieve. The context of the classroom is a very rich environment in which her/his professional development can take place. They also assert that the classroom is the place to recognize the role of the teacher as learner as it is here that she/he is actively constructing ideas based on personal experience. Russell (1988) also refers to the context of the classroom and capitalizes on Schön’s concept of “reflection-in-action” by arguing that learning is not necessarily the result of experience, but rather part of the experience, thus labeling it “learning in the experience”. Experience is therefore not a once-off event, but rather an on-going process.

To be a learner-in-experience, the teacher needs to focus on her/his *own* experience. Learning should take place in some of the following areas: (i) ideas about learning and teaching (ii) ideas in relevant knowledge discipline areas; (iii) understanding of self; and (iv) the social structures within the profession and in school communities. The first three areas were interwoven in the discussion above. The fourth one refers to the fact that the experience the teacher gains, is not isolated. Worthwhile experience is not only a quest for gaining a set of skills, but also respecting the act of teaching. Loughran & Russell (1997) differentiate between telling and teaching. For them the latter is the understanding of oneself and others. Fundamental to this is the building of a relationship which in turn is developed and enhanced by an understanding of all participants within the realm of the individual’s experience.

In the light of the rubric so far, the question arises whether the current SBA system honours these principles. The two major instruments used in this system are the Focused Observation and the Graded Observation, the latter being a variation of the first-mentioned. A strong element of these

instruments is the principle of reflection. By way of this, the teacher needs to think about what they do and why they do it in a specific manner. In verbal communication with teachers they testify that this is initially a very difficult mental practice. Rethinking what was done and how it was done is further enhanced by the presence of another person (the school-based mentor) through discussion of the lesson.

Teachers are also required to complete a number of observations of their mentor and to have the same type of reflective discussions. In this sense, the spiral effect is visible as mutually-agreed areas of improvement are uncovered. SBA therefore affords improvement of multiple teaching as it is not only the Inset teacher, but also the mentor who will change practices through reflection.

A second advantage that the SBA has is that assessment is supposed to be done in an authentic manner. People within the environment of the teachers' experiential learning and the learning of their learners are personally involved in a relationship that should be built on trust.

Focused Observations, however, fall prey to weaknesses as well. In the annual analysis of the SBA Portfolios of Inset teachers, no definite pattern can be established of how teachers and their mentors decided upon an area of focus. Reflections on a completed lesson should in one or other way identify a following area of focus for a next lesson.

Furthermore, one fears that over-exploitation of the Focused Observation may narrow down the attention to some aspects of teaching only. Related to the practice of Micro-teaching, it may be seen as an artificial practice. So far, structures in the SBA administration exist to provide for variation of focus areas within the teaching field of a trainee teacher. In this regard,

therefore, the question might be asked whether it is justified and valid to grade a teacher if only some areas of teaching are being focused on.

5. Conclusion:

This assignment attempted to examine some underlying assumptions about Teacher Education in Namibia. Firstly, it is assumed that the BETD represents the Educational Reform in Namibia in the field of Teacher Education. Secondly, it is assumed that the BETD as a reformed course, will enable teachers to conform to the set of criteria true to the underpinning epistemology. An analysis of the two cohorts of graduates reveals a positive one in terms of the increased number of qualified teachers. Evidence of greater **access** and **equity** is visible especially in the sense of gender equality.

The Broad Curriculum of the BETD, as a guiding policy document for this Teacher Education programme, gives a firm foundation for the overall personal and professional development for Inset Teachers.

What is also clear, however, is the fact that through the interpretation of its module descriptors and/or the lack of revision of these guiding documents, and the interpretation of the module writers, major aspects of the initial intentions are being neglected. The most significant of these lies within the sphere of conceptual development. The absence of this conceptual development may only prolong unchanged practices and unchanged views.

Toward Education For All reflects the education ministries' quest to bring about change through strategies meaningfully different from the past system. Teachers (and educators) are regarded to be in the forefront in these ideas and strategies (Swarts 1996:1). The special emphasis on

teachers makes their reform in aspects such as professionalisation and theory conceptualization even more urgent. For this to happen, Van Harmelen believes, teachers must undertake a “complete leap in paradigm” (Van Harmelen in MBESC 2000:3) through efforts that enable teachers better understand and accept what constitutes knowledge and how it is acquired. A vital part of this process of shifting lies in the degree of ownership (Mostert 1999). Policy makers and organizational structures should, in an on-going basis prevent alienation and enhance ownership by honouring the goals of Democracy and Access. Teachers need to be encouraged to develop certain epistemological “tools” such as inquiry oriented skills (Prawat 1991:742).

This also involves a process in which teachers improve their analytical skills with a demystification of prevailing (and dominant) myths about learning and teaching.

Finally, weaknesses in the BETD lie not so much in the Broad Curriculum, but rather in its interpretation and implementation where there is room for more change. Northfield *et al* (1997:55) state that no worthwhile teacher education programme is complete. Teacher Education is an on-going learning process, and a life-long one. By this definition, the BETD is therefore a starting point and not an end unto itself.

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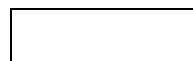
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8. Appendices

Appendix 1:

Table: Module and End of Module Assessment cycle

Study Year	August Module	December Module	April Module
<i>1</i>	1	2	3
<i>1</i>		1	2
<i>2</i>	4	5	6
<i>2</i>	3	4	5
<i>3</i>	7	8	9
<i>3</i>	6	7	8
<i>4</i>	10	11	12
<i>4</i>	9	10	11
<i>4</i>	12		



Module



Assessment

Appendix 2:

Table 1:

The number of Inset Teachers who graduated in 1999 per educational region and their areas of specialisation:

Educational Region	Areas of Specialisation			
	<i>Lower Primary Education</i>	<i>Integrated Natural Science & Maths</i>	<i>Social Sciences Education</i>	<i>Language Education</i>
Katima Mulilo	13	4	10	10
Rundu	14	1	10	5
Ondangwa East & West	118	48	36	25
Keetmanshoop	22	6	7	10
Windhoek	14	8	9	8
Khorixas	17	6	10	6

Table 2:

The number of Inset Teachers who graduated in 2001 per educational region and their areas of specialisation:

Educational Region	Areas of Specialisation			
	<i>Lower Primary Education</i>	<i>Integrated Natural Science And Maths</i>	<i>Social Sciences Education</i>	<i>Language Education</i>
Katima Mulilo	13	2	5	16
Rundu	53	24	27	23
Ondangwa East & West	193	86	56	75
Keetmanshoop	17	2	6	6
Windhoek	23	1	3	3
Khorixas	46	16	12	11

Appendix 3:

Summary of Grades for 1999 Graduates

Table 1: Educational Theory and Practice

Contact course Site	Grades			
	A	B	C	D
Katima Mulilo TRC	0	4	34	0
Keetmanshoop TRC	0	1	45	1
Khorixas TRC	0	3	37	0
Ongwediva College of Education Inset Unit	0	10	217	7
Rundu TRC	3	7	26	0
Windhoek College of Education Inset Unit	2	7	30	0
Total	5	32	389	8

Table 2: English Communication Skills

Contact course Site	Grades			
	A	B	C	D
Katima Mulilo TRC	0	4	34	0
Keetmanshoop TRC	0	13	34	0
Khorixas TRC	0	5	34	1
Ongwediva College of Education Inset Unit	2	13	217	3
Rundu TRC	0	1	35	0
Windhoek College of Education Inset Unit	1	7	30	0
Total	3	43	384	4

Table 3: School-based Activities

Contact course Site	Grades			
	A	B	C	D
Katima Mulilo TRC	1	7	30	0
Keetmanshoop TRC	8	13	25	1
Khorixas TRC	5	14	21	0
Ongwediva College of Education Inset Unit	80	67	86	1
Rundu TRC	0	12	24	0
Windhoek College of Education Inset Unit	7	24	8	0
Total	101	137	194	2

Appendix 4:

Summary of the Competencies for the BETD In-service Programme:

Three broad competency areas for the BETD Inset Programme are derived from the aims. The BETD Inset Programme develops the competencies needed to teach Basic Education successfully. By a competency for the teaching profession is meant an observable performance which can for example be evaluated in the school situation. The many specific competencies which a teacher has to master, can be grouped under the three broad competency areas, which are given direction by the aims. They are:

1. **Teaching skills:**

The Inset teacher should be able to demonstrate the ability to teach the subject(s) through a learner-centred approach.

2. **Professional attitudes**

The inset teacher should be able to demonstrate professional behaviour such as responsible citizenship and the ability to construct meaningful relationships

In order to promote efficient teaching and learning.

3. **Knowledge and Understanding:**

The Inset teacher should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the particular school phase and the subject area(s) in which s/he specializes.

The teacher should also be able to develop and understanding of LCE as approach and the implications of this approach in all areas of teaching, e.g. planning, classroom work, assessment and discipline.

Subject area curricula specify the particular competencies which are to be achieved on the basis of these three broad competencies, and the Inset teachers will be assessed on the basis of their performance in the competencies.

The Epistemological foundation of the Reform Process.

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Abstract

This paper will deal with the epistemological bases of Behaviourism and Constructivism in an effort to extrapolate the hidden and broad meaning and interpretations of these concepts. It will endeavour to deal with concepts such as existence, knowledge, reality, truth and understanding as it was understood in the era of The Enlightenment to the Post Modern Era. Discussion and critique of these epistemologies intends to illustrate the complexity, difference and similarity of these key concepts.

Introduction

A useful starting point will be to explain some concepts frequently used in this study.

An Epistemology is understood to be a theory of knowledge. Ontology refers to the theory of reality. A paradigm is a view of the world.

Mankind differs from all other beings on earth because of its mind or mentality. So far it is the only creation that claims that it *is*, in other words, that it does exist. Existence has therefore given man license to create a world for itself. Whereas this world was initially concrete and physical, man evolved mentally too. This can be regarded as the human's distinction over all beings in its first discovery of its own existence and itself. Man's intellect is primarily that source of its being that brought about that self-discovery. Within this complex composition of mind and matter, the intricacies of its views exist. It is also the primary source that convinced Rene Descartes, philosopher and metaphysician of the 17th century that **he** (as representative of mankind) exists because of his quest to seek truth. (Urmson 1976:73). Seeking for truth that is in essence indubitable, led him (Descartes) to realize that he is capable of doubting. Following this, Descartes was sure that he could not doubt if he was not thinking. Woven around these webs of reasoning, he formulated his *Cogito* in which he declared "*cogito, ergo sum*", in simpler terms it means "I think, therefore I am".

Knowledge is also related to concepts of reality. Mankind exists within a world that is not only physical, but that also consists of other elements including his mind or the inner self. This is known as a theory of reality or ontology. Different epistemologies share different and related perspectives in what is regarded as real. To this end a more detailed analysis of the concept of “reality” will emerge in the discussions of the epistemologies.

Theories of Knowledge can also hold different views or paradigms. The term was given prominence in philosophy by modern-day philosopher, Thomas Kuhn. Broadly speaking, it refers to a basic orientation to theory and research. According to W. Lawrence Neuman (1997:62) a (scientific) paradigm refers to a “whole system of thinking” which includes basic assumptions, questions and puzzles. A (sociological) paradigm refers to a way of thinking or a “lens” according to Robertson (1999:4).

Interpretations of epistemologies and basic concepts in this paper may seem to have an over-balance to the discipline of education. If it does, it should be seen in terms of education as a philosophy and not so much to “education-in-schooling” a sociological term used by modern sociologists to systems of Education in which knowledge is reproduced in a “top-down” and enforced manner (Flanagan 1991:30).

Behaviourism:

Commonly, this term is closely associated with the pure sciences and an orientation which prefers thought and action governed by a discipline which is fully accountable, explainable, measurable and predictable to mention but few characteristics. Implicitly, the above also applies to the notion of knowledge. Behaviourism as an epistemology, is not definable simplistically. It should therefore not be seen as a “single theory” (Van Harmelen 1995:51). Instead, she argues that it would be safer to perceive behaviourism as a “network of theoretical perspectives held together by the

common belief that personal experience is understood and exhibited as behaviour or actions that result from our interaction with our physical and social environment”(Van Harmelen 1995:51).

Behaviourism, as it popularly came to be known in the 1950's, has not had its foundations in this post-war era. Its roots go further back in classical history. The type of behaviourism that was developed by John B. Watson, a psychologist, reflected in part arguments of the French philosopher, Isidore Auguste Comte (1798-1857). The latter, ironically, had his beginnings with the socialist writer Saint-Simon. Hence Comte had strong beliefs of the important hierarchical order of sociology. For the purposes of this paper, Comte is better known for his so-called Positive Philosophy. Positivism as epistemology (or theory) was therefore the hybrid modern scientists developed from Comte.

The epistemological roots of behaviourism can, however, be traced further to the classic Realists of the 16th and 17th centuries. Reality, and implicitly existence, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is reflected in two main branches of philosophies namely Platonic and Aristotelian Realism. Contributors to this article, define the nature of reality in Platonic Realism as an entity that “exists externally to the mind and which is located in things”(Encyclopaedia Britannica 1982:542). Aristotelian Realism on the other hand links with *theism* in its belief that nature can be mystically seen as an entity that is “absolute, specific and omnipotent.” In more recent times, realism signifies the notion that “physical objects exist independently of thought and experience”(Urmson 1976: 246).

Behaviourism is also associated with the empiricists. Empiricism is derived from the Greek word “experience” and is understood to be the theory that honours experience to be the only source of knowledge. Aspin (1995) sees this as the belief that experience refers to data one receives through the sense organs. Senses provide evidence of the existence of a world or real objects external to themselves (Aspin 1995:21). Classical

foundations of empiricism are reflected in the works of Aristotle. Later philosophers, William of Ockham and Roger Bacon, argued that empiricism evolved into the formulation of “direct sense experience, accumulation and classification of acquired data, experimentation, induction of probabilistic conclusions, the elimination of incorrect hypotheses and the establishment of probable causations”(Urmson 1976:86) as pillars of the scientific method.

The influence of works and convictions of two later British philosophers, John Locke and David Hume gave rise to a new momentum in the way science approved of epistemologies. Logical-Empiricism differed from earlier empiricists in that they strove towards “accounting for the growth of human ideas and knowledge that was grounded only in human experiences” (Aspin 1995: 23). Furthermore, according to Aspin (1995), the primary source of obtaining such experience, is the indubitable evidence of the senses and the inner feelings, based on the psychological principle of association.

It had been the theories of John B. Watson that moulded our understanding of behaviourism. He was a psychologist who believed that this discipline of the sciences was not concerned with the mind or with human consciousness. For him, psychology would be concerned with behaviour only (De Mar 2002:1).

Watson based his work on that of the experiments of Ivan Pavlov, who studied animals. Pavlov was primarily concerned with the animals’ responses to conditioning. This scientist is famous for his experiments in which he would ring a bell every time he fed dogs. When the dogs heard the bell they anticipated food and salivated. He also rang the bell without feeding, but on recognizing the sound, the dogs would still salivate. Watson was most impressed with this conditioning and believed that humans react to stimuli in the same way.

B.F. Skinner, followed in Watson's theory of human conditioning, but added to it, the belief that people respond to their surroundings, or environment which they also use to produce certain consequences (Ozman & Craver 1986: 166). This led to formulation of the theory of "operant conditioning" (*ibid*) which holds the belief that humans behave the way they do because this particular behaviour has had certain consequences in the past (De Mar 2002:1). A prior experience validates and reinforces behaviour regardless of any role that human (or animal) feelings play.

What Watson and Skinner promoted as a philosophy of science, can be regarded as a variation of "strong" behaviourism. This held the belief that "through the adherence to a principle of significance, it is possible to account for past behaviour and to predict future behaviour" (Van Harmelen 1995: 54). This can be done, they argued, with a "certainty and consistency" (*ibid*). Of importance in this respect, she argues, is that if future behaviour can be foreseen, it is *possible* to monitor behaviour. What has greater implications, Van Harmelen (1995) argues, is the fact that behaviour can be changed according to certain patterns.

For Watson and Skinner, behaviour is caused. This is linked to the classical idea that "every event has a cause" (Neuman 1997). Based upon the latter slogan, it is believed that all events and phenomena that can be traced according to this 'causal chain' have validity and credibility. Lawrence Neuman (1997) compares this 'causal chain' to a string of balls lined and hitting one another in sequence (Neuman 1997: 53). Cause and effect can be seen as being in line or linear. As such the causal chain seen in this illustration, can be seen as both explanation and prediction, two close criteria in this scientific paradigm. It also creates confusion between the two. Neuman suggests that an explanation should be seen as a logical argument that tells why something occurs. A prediction, on the other hand, he argues, is a statement that something will happen (Neuman 1997:49). Scientific explanations are done according to a set of rules and laws

governing events and thus formulated as general statements or universals (*ibid*). This process is also called Induction (Van Harmelen 1995: 56).

Sulzer-Azaroff (1995), a modern-day behavioural educationalist, argues very strongly for the validity of the following principles applicable to behaviourist action:

- The Reinforcement principle;
- The chaining principle;
- The Stimulus Control principle;
- Principles of diminishing behaviour;
- Transfer of behaviour principle;
- Principles pertaining to the maintenance of behaviour.

(Sulzer-Azaroff 1995:97-98)

In summary, behaviourism as an “off-spring” of modernity, can be seen as a set of multiple theories providing a mainstream paradigm in which “the world was seen to be linear and controllable” (Bowring-Carr & West-Burnham 1997:33). According to these critics it has had a major influence on our perceptions of a society governed and characterized by a bureaucracy that is rule bound and slow to change. It holds a view of knowledge that is minimalistic and sees knowledge acquisition as a piecemeal or box-like process. It is confusing and dualistic in its views of man as separate from nature and man being subject to the laws of nature, and yet needs to conquer it. The predictability of science renders a linear view of the social structure which in turn provides the absolute certainty. As much as nature is separate, so is reality “out there” and waiting to be discovered. It adheres to a belief of a hierarchy or order as the only means to reach “ultimate knowledge” (Bowring-Carr & West-Burnham 1997: 41).

Constructivism:

Constructivism is, in its epistemological sense also not a singular theory and may even be “controversial” (Davson-Galle 1999:205). It projects differently from behaviourism in its paradigm of knowledge and the world in which man lives. There are different types of constructivism, all of which see the acquiring of knowledge and making sense of the world around us as totally different from the views of the behaviourists.

In order to gain a wider understanding of what constructivism entails, one can only start at looking at the semantics of the word. “Construct” and/or “construction” means building. In the epistemological sense, it inevitably refers to knowledge that is built. It therefore makes it necessary to investigate the learning and cognitive theories underpinning it.

Constructivism is a theory which is based on results of the pioneer work of Piaget and Vygotsky (Murphy 2002a). Piaget believed that knowledge cannot be severed from the mind and it does not exist independently. Based on this idea, Piaget believed, according to Murphy (2002a) that the human mind is not a *tabula rasa* as claimed by behaviourists. One foundational premise is that all humans (even children) actively construct their knowledge, a process which is not associated with absorbing ideas, physical modeling and rote learning. On the contrary, Piaget believed that all people can “invent their ideas” (Murphy 2002a:1).

Murphy (2002b) also states that based on Piaget’s initial theory of learning, humans are capable of assimilating and accommodating, the former referring to the process of fitting existing structures and the latter to a process where the fitted knowledge is changed to suit the individual’s mental structures. Bruner, as does Piaget, sees the above-mentioned processes as the result of a disequilibrium or disturbance of a balance causing a cycle of processes in which sense is made of information. With

support within context, children develop critical insight into how they think and what they know about the world as their understanding of the world increases in depth and detail. Constructivism emphasizes the careful study of the processes by which children create and develop their ideas.

Piaget developed the concept of broad *stages* of learning: sensor-motor, pre-operational, concrete-operational and formal operational (Elliot 1998: 27).

As indicated earlier, the multiplicity of constructivism can better be understood by an investigation of different types. Social Constructivism as related theory, derives its place in this epistemology in the way people construct knowledge as thinking beings (*homo sapien*). The individualistic view of man is altered to a view in which he is not seen as being alone in the world or environment in which she/he operates. Vygotsky, a psychologist, agreed with the Piagetian theory that knowledge was constructed internally but added that society as an external factor, has a major influence in cognitive development. Society is here epitomised by the elements of culture and language. These two elements are deemed inseparable. The B.Ed hand-out, “Vygotsky: Mind in Society”, describes this interaction as a “dialectic” interaction in which language expresses culture and culture is expressed via language. It continues to stress the high value placed on the individual’s interaction with her/his environment. Vygotsky, according to this writer, was convinced that thought started with social interaction. He regarded language as a tool for thought and as such, central to learning. Referring to cognitive development in children, but not necessarily excluding the fact that similar mental processes take place in adults, Vygotsky identified two types of speech. The mode in which one “speaks” to oneself is called egocentric speech. This is used as a tool to regulate actions in performing a task. Inner speech is typical of older children in which thoughts are internalized and thus becoming a silent tool for thought. (B Ed paper 2000:2). Bruner (in Schunk

1996) sees this internalisation as a process in which the outside social world gets into the inside of the mind.

Vygotsky was also known for proposing a theory which he described as the zone of proximal development or ZPD (Bauman *et al* 1997). Vygotsky believed in the importance of an individual's potential for development. This aspect was to be valued more highly than the ability a person has to work on her/his own. ZPD is described as "the gap between what a child can do by independent problem-solving and what a child can achieve with collaboration and support by another person (Bauman *et al* 1997). In this respect Bruner's idea of scaffolding can be regarded as an application of Vygotsky's ZPD (Schunk 1996).

Returning to the epistemological nature of constructivism, Gergen (1985:270) draws further distinctions between the positivist-behaviourists' views of knowledge and reality. In contrast, the constructivist view argues that knowledge and reality do not have an objective or absolute value or, and that we may not even know this reality. Gergen (1985) wishes to argue that reality cannot be seen as a reflection or map of the world, but rather as an artifact of communal interchange (Gergen 1985:1). His argument challenges conventional thinking of the real world and has implications for disciplines such as psychology and education. These altered views are in essence conceptual rather than empirical (Gergen 1985:8).

Gergen (2002) artfully refers to every human as a " knower" who interprets and constructs a reality based on his experiences and interactions with his environment. Different from the Realists' view that truth is found in terms of a match to reality, von Glaserfeld (1989) focuses instead on the notion of viability. Knowledge of reality will in this reasoning make sense if done within the context of the thinker (Gergen 2002).

Critical Constructivism challenges the classical notion that knowledge and reality is fixed and indisputable. Gergen (2002) cites Giroux's (1983) definition of the critical thinker as one who questions knowledge that is

presented as a priori (what comes before) or self-evident, looks for the assumptions on which knowledge is based, considers implications and alternative outcomes and solutions, and works for a restructuring of those parts of school life that do not support and facilitate critical thinking (Gergen 2002).

Radical Constructivism as a variation is seen by most as typical of the post-modern era. It is an unconventional approach to the problem of knowledge and knowing. It starts from the assumption that knowledge, no matter how it is defined, is in the heads of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he or she knows on the basis of his or her own experience. What we make of experience constitutes the only world we consciously live in. Experience is in the opinion of Von Glaserfeld (1989), seen as essentially subjective. It is also radical “because it breaks with convention and develops a theory of knowledge in which knowledge does not reflect an objective, ontological reality but exclusively an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience”(ibid). He sees knowledge as being actively received either through the senses or by way of communication. It is actively constructed by the cognizing subject. Cognition is adaptive and allows one to organize the experiential world, not to discover an objective reality (von Glasersfeld 1989, as cited by Gergen 2002).

Critique:

Kenneth Gergen (2002), in a website article, emphasizes the importance of an epistemology. It serves as tool to come to grips with fundamental issues such as “How do we come to know what we know?”, “What is knowledge?”, “What is truth?”, “What is reality?”(ibid). Above-stated questions form the bedrock of our purpose in life, whatever life-long discipline we practice.

Gergen (2002) also quotes Wilson who described the evolution of world views as saying that from ancient times people entrusted the reality of the world and absolute knowledge in God. Kant (1724-1804) refuted this, stating that man cannot arrive to precise conclusions to these pertinent issues. Gergen (2002) also argues that despite this Kantian liberative statement, the modern societies still revolved around this essentially empiricist and realist mode of reasoning.

For the reasons above, it is therefore necessary to look at both advantages and disadvantages of both behaviourism and constructivism.

As behaviourism can be perceived to be an “off-spring” of modernity, it can be seen as a set of multiple theories providing a mainstream paradigm in which “the world was seen to be linear and controllable” (Bowring-Carr & West-Burnham 1997:33). According to these critics it has had a major influence on our perceptions of a society governed and characterized by a bureaucracy that is rule bound and slow to change. It holds a view of knowledge that is minimalistic and sees knowledge acquisition as a process of fragmentation. They see behaviourism as confusing and dualistic in its views of man as separate from nature and man being subject to the laws of nature, and yet needing to conquer it. The predictability of science renders a linear view of the social structure which in turn provides the absolute certainty. As much as nature is separate, so is reality “out there” and waiting to be discovered. It adheres to a belief of a hierarchy or order as the only means to reach “ultimate knowledge” (Bowring-Carr & West-Burnham 1997:41).

Critique against behaviourism is strengthened by the statements of Guba and Lincoln (1989) which they called the “Fourth Generation Evaluation”. Although evaluation per se is not the focus of this discussion, I have drawn from these arguments on the basis of its strong constructivist approach and because these arguments reinforce the fundamental differences between constructivism and behaviourism as epistemologies pose.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to behaviourism, and positivism as the “conventional method”. Firstly, they detect a disregard of the conventional method for the identification of the participants of an evaluation. The fact that behaviourists believe in the given *priori*. It believes that the “real” world is driven by natural laws that are a given entity. A specific inquiry should, therefore, according to behaviourist satisfy this by “building on them, extending them or applying them in new situations” (Guba and Lincoln 1989:58).

A second problem these evaluators had, dealt with the fact that conventional methods cannot solicit claims, concerns and issues except by adopting a discovery rather than a verification position. Yet, positivists, they argue, rather cling to the principle of verification. They detect contradictions in the philosophical roots in positivists’ view of discovery. They agree (against their normal view), that discovery requires creativity (typically what constructivists claim). Guba and Lincoln (1989) feel that they cannot apply conventional methods which disclaim its own principles.

The third and fourth issues they take with conventional methods, are to do with the fact that the conventional methods do not consider contextual factors, except by physically and statistically manipulating them. Thought in conventional thinking is seen as internal and isolated from the outside. Constructivists like Guba and Lincoln (1989), however, believe that constructions held by people, result from their experience and interaction with their contexts. They take this argument further by stating that these constructions are indeed responsible for creating a context (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:60).

The fifth reason why these evaluators reject the conventional method, and a very important one, is seated in the behaviourists’ view of values. They state that conventional researchers’ claim that their methods are value-free, is a dubious one. For the purposes of their business in evaluation, the positivist stance is contradictory. They argue that value statements cannot

be made without value standards. Furthermore, they find a dual contradiction. This is because facts, a vital component of scientific investigation are both theory-laden and value-laden. (Guba and Lincoln,1989:64).

Matthews (1992), however, is skeptical of the many praise-singers of *constructivism*. He traces the shortcomings of this epistemology to the “deficient theory that parented it” (Matthews1992:1). For him it is deceptive as it poses as “old wine in new bottles”.

Matthews (1992) holds the view that constructivism displays many contradictions within its own theories. He sees a similarity between Empiricism and Constructivism. He has used the arguments in a journal article entitled “Toward a Humanistic Constructive Model of Science Learning” as the basis for his argument and especially targets ontological arguments of Von Glaserfeld (1989), a radical constructivist. Constructivists’ perspectives, Matthews (1992) believes, are “subject-centered, experience-based and relativist.” (*Ibid*: 2). This he says, negates the constructivists’ view of knowledge and experience as it does not tell us about the world at all. Instead, it says more about our experiences and how they are best organized. (*Ibid*).

Matthews went further and draws a second parallel between constructivism and empiricism. He believes that because of lack of substantial critique against constructivism, the trend to follow is like clinging to a doctrine. This, he believes is reminiscent of Realism and the theory of knowledge of Aristotle. For him it is also Aristotelian because constructivism formulates the problem of knowledge in terms of a subject looking at an object and asking how well what they see reflects the nature or essence of the object (*Ibid*:4).

Three other criticisms Matthews (1992) holds against constructivist thinking lie with the following:

- (a) Constructivism regards ideas and reality as prerequisites for knowledge and therefore is contradictory in its epistemology.
- (b) Related to the above, Constructivism cannot bring us closer to “truth” because of its neglect for the communitarian dimensions of cognition.
- (c) Lastly, Matthews claims that constructivist theories are illusionary in the aspect of theory production. Though man can create the world, he cannot control the material and means of production.

Peter Davson-Galle (1999) shares Matthews’ ideas. Like the latter, he also targets mainly the radical constructivist thinking. He cautions that seemingly lucrative pedagogical traits should be separated from philosophical underpinnings. Firstly he takes issue with the fact that constructivist pedagogy is too relative. It yields too much to a plastic view of reality that, in turn, gives rise to a twisted reality. As such anything can be “just as true”(ibid:215). This in turn, questions the “truth” status of this epistemology. He doubts the validity of constructivism is its implication that what one constructs in one’s own mind and thus being one’s own experience, should be seen as a view of reality (Davson-Galle 1999:217).

Conclusion:

Both epistemologies reveal a multiplicity in their answers to the questions of “What is Knowledge”, “How is knowledge acquired” and “What is Reality?”. They contain some elements in common, but also reveal startling differences. In this age of the post-modernism we are often left with the question of what is the “right” and “wrong” way of thinking. This

question in itself is dependent on a scrutiny of the epistemologies. Societies around the world often use a careful mixture of both as is evident in the statement of Goeudevert (1996) an advisor for Unesco, who urged that “what we need is a return to the kind of general education prevalent in the first half of the century”(Goeudevert 1996), but later in the same speech pleads for a foundation for global knowledge to enable future education!

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This literature review offers a critical analysis of the theories and practices embodied in this research study which deals with mentoring in schools.

This introductory part is accompanied by a diagramme (page 3) which in part illustrates graphically the route of thought I followed in my vision of the research. This route starts with what is understood with mentoring within the context of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) Inset programme in Namibia, and is destined for the main goal, namely professional development.

It should be noted that as this writing is regarded as “work in progress” this concept map is subject to change. It might easily change during the process of actual research. It should also be noted that the review contains several foci which are interrelated. As such some elements may seem to be duplicated. As this is the case, it might be because I shall try to look at some aspects with different theoretical perspectives. Various theoretical approaches and perspectives associated with constructivism serve as a framework for this study.

Consistent with the main argument, the diagramme starts with a tentative definition of what mentoring is.

From this foundational definition stems two main divisions: (1) who and what it **involves** and (2) what mentoring **includes**, the first being the physical and generic, while the second represents the more profound and underlying theories.

The diagramme intends to emphasise the important interplay between the two sections or “sides” associated with mentoring. It illustrates the first main argument in this research, namely that mentoring includes, but exceeds the limitations of classroom

practice, observational procedures and processes and that effective mentoring is underpinned by wider and deeper approaches, values, theories and epistemologies.

The vertical downward route of the physical, generic and administrative side of mentoring serves to give a picture, and more specifically that picture which is anticipated in the setting and context of the BETD Inset Teacher. This section of the “concept route” describes the Inset Teachers’ school experience and how they and their mentors respond to requirements of the School-based Activities (SBA) system.

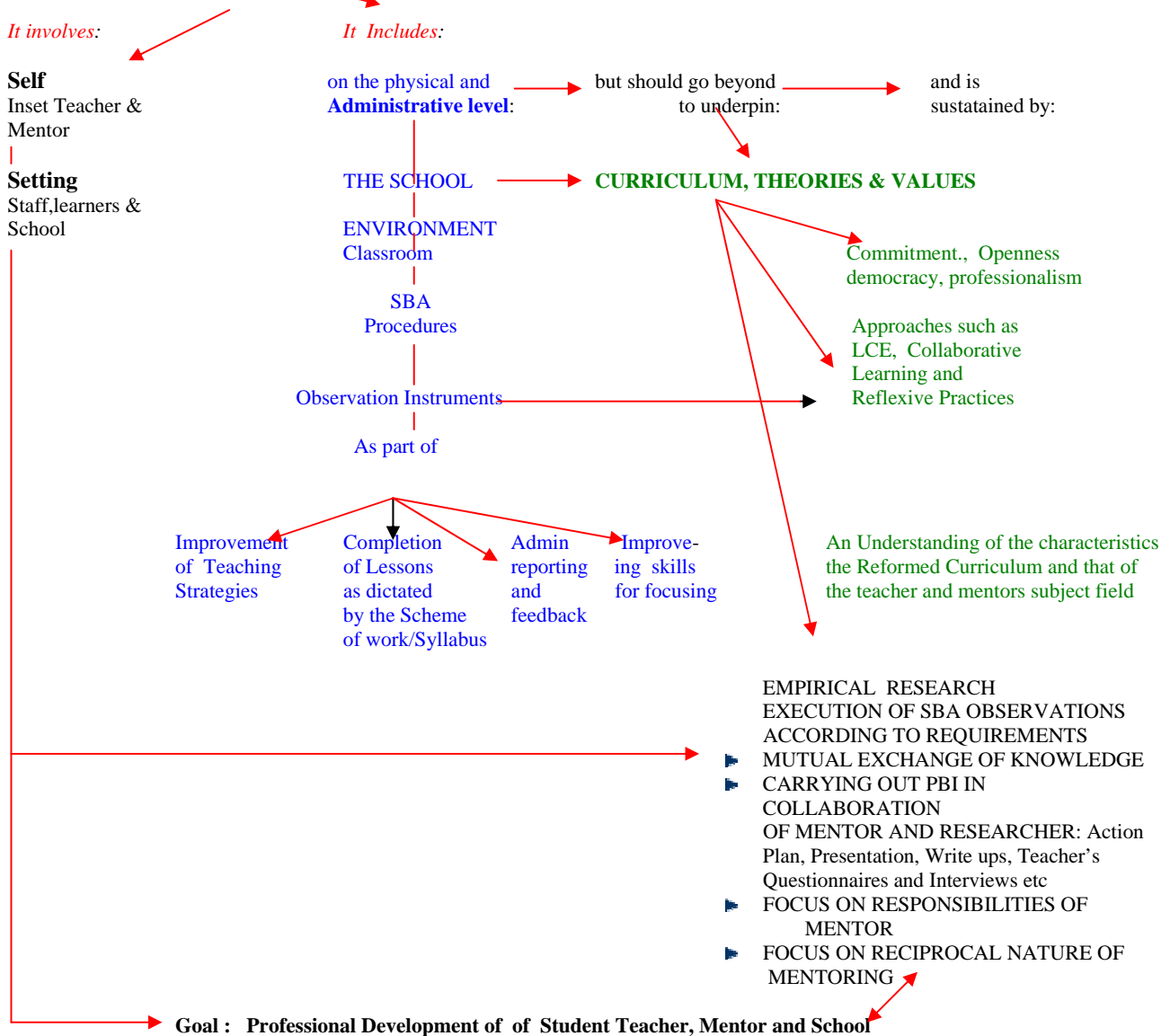
Juxtaposed to the first route described above, is another which represents the other side of mentoring that deals with aspects that are deeply embedded in teaching. In other words, it is that side which claims that good mentoring is dependent on relationships and that it is reciprocal.

Together, and hopefully through the Action Research Intervention that is illustrated by means of its main components, the interplay between these two sections culminates in the ultimate goal, namely professional development for mentor, teacher and school.

MENTORING

IN THE SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITIES OF THE BETD INSET

Is seen to be a school-based arrangement in which continuous support an expert and experienced teacher renders to an Inset Teachers who studies towards qualification.



2.1 The Concept of Mentoring- the BETD Inset Context

This section will deal with the classical and original use of the concept mentoring placing it in the context of the teacher who follows the Basic Education Teacher's Diploma In-service Programme. These are adult learners who study in a partial face-to-face and distance mode and whose context is different from full-time college students.

The term "mentoring" is derived from Mentor, who was a mythological figure and entrusted to the education of Odysseus's son. Mentor was an exemplary teacher from whom his students could observe and emulate good practices. Since then, the term refers to a dual responsibility: facilitating knowledge in a close but professional relationship and being a role model. Monica Janas sees this as far-reaching and as the epitome for what we today see as mentoring in education (1996: 1).

Despite the fact that the term is a familiar one in education, not so much is documented, mostly because it is not a long-standing and well-established intervention worldwide. Available literature also reveals that in practice, mentoring differs from the one continent to the other. Literature I used, draws mainly on experiences with so-called "Initial Teacher Training" referring to college or university-based students who are placed for some periods of time at a school. Available Namibian experiences that were documented are that of the college students who are engaged in the so-called School-based Studies. The focus in this research study is therefore different as it will deal with the BETD Inset Teachers.

Teachers enrolled in this programme are full-time practicing, unqualified and under-qualified teachers who have had a minimum teaching experience of five years. They are mostly from rural schools and more importantly, from that section of the population who had been marginalized by the past and pre-independence educational

system. Having gained this image, it is also necessary to look at the suggested psyche of such a teacher: When s/he entered the profession it was expected from this person to teach. The teacher might probably be equipped with the essential teaching materials, but was at risk of only relying on her/his intuition and the model of her/his past teachers.

BETD Inset teachers differ from pre-service college students who are also adult learners. Unlike their counterparts, Inset teachers have already assumed the responsibility for full time teaching. They have already agreed to be accountable for good and quality teaching. An adjusted type of pedagogy which is the art and science of teaching children (Brookfield 1986), the Inset teachers as adults require teaching that goes beyond the restricted notions of pedagogy (*ibid*). Based on the principles of Adult education, the art and science of teaching adults, a shift is made from the notion of education about teaching to one that is assisting learning (*ibid*). Researchers like Knowles (1990) contend that adults develop a self-concept making them take responsibility for their own decisions. They demand from others to be regarded as individuals capable of self-direction. But, typical of the adult learner, once they are in a situation in which they perceive education as a situation in which they are the learners and receivers (in this case knowledge) they tend to fall back on the conditioning of their own school experience (Knowles 1990: 39). This is equally applicable to the classroom practicum of the unqualified teacher. Not only does she/he heavily rely on the past experience of her/his own schooling, but sees a greater need to depend on an expert to guide her/him in classroom practice.

Being different from younger learners does not mean that adults do not share the same weaknesses that their counterparts in learning have. Adults, and most certainly the BETD Inset teachers, experience a conflict created by adult learners' will for self-direction and their dependency that needs to be carefully treated in adult education. Knowles (1990) contends that such adult learners need to be helped "to make a transition from dependent to self-directing learners" (*ibid*: 41).

He warns, however, that the aspect of “greater experiential wealth” (Knowles 1990: 43) should not be regarded naively. It may also have negative effects. As adults gain experience, this experience may also act as reinforcer and agent of confirming potentially negative practice if it is not confronted. This may lead to conforming to practices that are based on their uncontested mental habits, which in turn is characterized by biases and assumptions. This blinds them from seeing things from different perspectives (*ibid*). Teachers enrolled in the BETD In-service Programme are typical specimens of the above. As individuals who are able to draw on their own experiences, at school level, they need to be guided in such a way that they are sensitized to review their habits and biases, and open their minds to new approaches. Mentors therefore have this on-going responsibility towards professional development at school level.

Another type of conflict that the BETD Inset teacher experiences, is that of her/his praxis. With praxis, I refer to the practical reality where studied theories are implemented. Ozmon and Craver (1986) recognize the pragmatic element in the praxis. It prompts us to “seek out the processes and do the things that work best to help us achieve desirable ends” (*ibid*: 98). Being engaged in studying the theories of teaching, trainee teachers are also immersed in the teaching process itself. This particular context necessitates a re-assessment of traditional views of the learning-teaching situation. The controversial question is raised whether teacher-preparation is the teaching of skills, competencies or theories. Tomlinson (1995) sees it as a dilemma. The post-war view which can also be seen as the traditional view, sees teacher education as one in which “subject-knowledge” is of paramount importance. This involves the inculcation of specific teaching procedures. However, a more recent development, according to this author, is the trend for “teacher training” in which emphasis is placed on “teaching skills that can be trained” (*ibid*: 12).

Teachers in training should be assisted in bridging this dilemma. At school level the mentor can, according to Tomlinson (1995) help the training teacher with the concept that he borrows from Shulman who uses the term “subject pedagogical knowledge”

(*ibid*: 105). This refers to the principle that teachers should not only possess knowledge and a capability in their teaching subject, but that they also have an awareness of how learners tend to learn that subject. The degree of how effectively a teacher assesses the learning styles of her/his learners, requires from any teacher a broad sense of assessment. To be able to determine how and what to teach, a teacher is required to have an inquiring and diagnostic approach to the learning styles of learners.

The context of the BETD Inset teacher remains a continuous process of finding appropriate ways to teach. It is therefore also a process of “learning teaching”, a process which Tomlinson (1995: 14) regards as a phase in which the teacher acquires skills in the complex art of teaching. He proposes a teaching skill cycle that draws on the skills learning theories of David Kolb, Hubert and Dreyfus (in Tomlinson 1995) and others. Tomlinson’s (1995:48) model consists of planning and reflection followed by a teaching attempt or actual class practice. This, in turn is followed by monitoring outcome. In each phase purposeful action is followed by purposeful reflection. In this very complicated situation in which a training teacher finds her/himself, it is clear that for a teacher to become professional, she/he needs to be supported.

2.2 The Influence of the School Ethos in the mentoring context

The context of the training teacher includes her/his own position, but also goes beyond that level. It only gets full meaning in the total school environment. The context and outcome of mentoring is largely effected by the school ethos. With ethos we assume all the moral values, beliefs and norms which the school community upholds as valuable. Miller labels the ethos as a “culture” which he describes as the “written and unwritten rules” (1996: 93) that regulate behaviour, the stories and the myths of what an organisation has achieved, the standards and the values sets for its members. Miller cites from research done by Deal and Kennedy, who stated that the

school ethos refers to a “system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time” (Miller 1996: 93).

The School Development Plan should reflect especially the professional development of such a plan. More particularly, reference here is made to the actual Development Plan which is executed and not merely to be the supposed development plan.

Such development should also incorporate and accommodate the teacher in need of mentoring. Ormston and Shaw (1993) believe that a good ethos is a prerequisite for successful learning and teaching. They contend that the ethos is controlled by the quality of relationships throughout the school and that the degree to which each staff member is made to feel part of the school community. The school environment which is endorsed by its ethos, also confirms or opposes the teacher’s idea of role models. Ormston and Shaw (*ibid*) make a very important case in this regard by stating that “teachers tend to lead as they are led” (Ormston & Shaw 1994: 57). They draw the line further to the classroom stating that it cannot be exhorted from a teacher to treat learners with self-respect, taking responsibility for their own learning, if such teachers are denied the same rights. The school management staff members, who include the mentor, are therefore active implementers of their school. They are to lead the school ethos in their commitment towards development and improvement of teaching strategies and formative assessment of teachers and learners.

As hinted earlier, the actual school ethos should be a living one and not only one that exists in writing. Of particular importance is the School Development Plan which should be grounded in the collective and democratic beliefs and norms of a school community and has direct influence on the classroom performance. Ormston and Shaw (1993) are convinced that teaching outcomes depend heavily on a working relationship and highlights the following aspects of a school ethos and development plan:

- good habits of work and behaviour;
- self –discipline and mutual support;
- self-confidence;
- quality of learning.

(ibid: 56)

Morris and Chance (1997) similarly agree that a customized school development plan is instrumental for teaching and learning and adds that it is “critical to the educational achievement of students in the classroom” *(ibid: 335)*.

2.3 The BETD Inset Teacher within this existing context

With the above profile, it stands to reason that a new Teacher Education Programme should address these shortcomings. In *Toward Education for All*, the educational brief, Angula prompts teachers to “have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to interpret syllabi and subject content in terms of the aims and objectives of Basic Education and to relate these to the learner” (in MEC 1993:80). This quote adequately justifies the reason why such unqualified and under-qualified teachers needed to upgrade their professional status.

The “work” of the teacher is classroom practice. Although she/he is, most of the time, the only adult in the class, it does not mean that her/his practice is necessarily cut off from others and that it is done in isolation. Implementation of the SBA component of the BETD studies, therefore aims to enhance the professional development of such an Inset Teacher as priority. To ensure this, the BETD structure provides for a mentor for every Inset teacher and her/his peers in the Self-Study group.

Within the context of the BETD Inset Programme, Mentoring is seen to be a school-based arrangement in which continuous support by an expert and experienced teacher is rendered to an Inset Teacher who studies towards qualification. Underlining of some words in the above sentence serves to emphasize the weight the concepts of “mentoring”, “school-based”, “continuous”, and “expert” carry in this analysis.

Mentoring deals with people. In the educational setting it will deal with teachers. The Schoolbased Activities Manual for the BETD Inset Programme sees mentoring as providing “an opportunity to observe, critique, and shape classroom performance in Inset Teachers and for them to reflect on their own teaching” (MBESC 1999: 1) and “The kind of work they do and the quality of support they get from their colleagues, Mentors and Principals ...” (*ibid*: 3). As learners in the adult education model, teachers are self-directing learners who have a sense of what they want. As such, they will also be able to indicate their need for knowledge. “Knowledge”, for adult learners, makes most sense to them if it draws on their past experience and if it is presented within the context of real-life situations. They are motivated if made aware that the knowledge which is induced through mentoring will help them perform tasks and solve problems they encounter in their real life situation (Knowles 1990: 44). Hargreaves (1993: 90) sees the trainee teacher’s need as being of practical urgency in his statement that the knowledge in greatest demand by the trainee is that needed to get by.

2.4 Roles and Responsibilities:

Mentoring at schools will be done effectively if all parties accept and understand what to do and how to do it. Roles and responsibilities imply more than administrative duties. This section will deal with aspects of quality, dimensions in the mentoring process, a reciprocal relationship and lastly with the basic functions of mentoring.

Mentoring has to do with good teaching. Van Harmelen (2001) is of the opinion that the changes in teaching and learning identified by the Namibian Reform Process will depend on “good teachers” who include all those people “whose business is education”(*ibid*: 1). Good teaching also implies an understanding and application of what is taught. Not only are the young learners worthy of good teaching, but also the

training teacher who needs to emulate good teaching from her/his mentor. Stones is of the opinion that the hallmark of quality teaching lies in the fact that it “fosters understanding and equips learners [Inset teachers] to apply their knowledge in new circumstances” (1994:105).

Teachers’ work takes place within a community of people with the same responsibilities opening the door for work- relationships. Mentoring will inevitably immerse teachers in a specific relationship that is marked by challenge and support. A research team led at Leicester suggested that mentoring is:

a multi-faceted concept incorporating personal support and the more rigorous notion of professional development leading to enhanced competence.

(McIntyre & Hagger 1996: 44)

The same team, also commented on issue of the relationship in mentoring as follows:

...there is little clarity about the nature of the relationship despite the fact that mentoring is well-established in some schools and that of empirical evidence exists, yet no dominant model has emerged.

(McIntyre & Hagger 1996: 44)

McIntyre and Hagger (1996), who cited the above research team, are also convinced that no fixed definition can be attributed to the concept of mentoring as it is multi-faceted and also because this empirical intervention is not long in existence in schools worldwide. They also contend that the roles and relationships depend on the context (*ibid*: 144-145).

The concept of mentoring entails a relationship that is characterized by a partnership and a certain degree of reciprocity. This two-way relationship needs to develop so

that there is a flow of communication between mentor and Inset teacher. The example displayed by the classical figure of Mentor is that of a faithful teacher who takes great care of the progress of his protégé. This has also become the trademark of mentoring in that the one person who teaches is assumed to be the more experienced and the one who learns is in need of knowledge. Mentoring brings a new dimension to this teaching-learning relationship, because it depends on the mutual collaboration of two adults. Mentoring also brings a different dimension in the sense that both become teachers and learners. Being engaged in this unique situation both contribute towards the school professional development mentioned elsewhere.

Prior to looking at what some researchers on mentoring labeled as roles and responsibilities for the mentor, it is useful to look at the suggested dimensions of mentoring suggested by N.H.Cohen and used by Yarrow and Millwater (1997) in their research on mentoring. The six dimensions are:

Relationship Emphasis	This refers to the establishment of relationships with teachers
Information Emphasis	Focus is on clarifying mentee's future, personal and career goals
Facilitative Focus	Guiding mentees in critical reflection on their interest, abilities, ideas and beliefs
Confrontational Focus	Challenging mentees' past actions and future plans for development as adult learners
Mentor Model	Sharing personal life experiences and feelings about own journeys towards educational and career goals
Student Vision	Stimulating trainees' critical thinking about and vision for the future, and their strategic plans

for ensuring maximum
development of their future
personal and professional
development potential
(Yarrow & Millwater 1997:353)

Several aspects of this model of Cohen are reflected in one or the other way in this literature review in an integrated manner. The idea of mentoring viewed with different dimensions serves to strengthen the idea that the mentoring practice is not meant to be done superficially and without cognizance of the deeper theories embedded in the practice. It simultaneously echoes the message of mentoring being “multi-faceted” according to McIntyre and Hagger (1996: 145).

Other researchers like Monica Janas (1996) recognize the fact that mentoring is not simplistic. She sees mentoring as a process. She cites Mendler who proposed ten stages in mentoring. This research was done as a university project in which the researcher acted as the staff developer. The stages are:

- ▶ attraction, cliché exchange;
- ▶ recounting;
- ▶ personal disclosure;
- ▶ bonding;
- ▶ fear of infringement;
- ▶ revisiting framework;
- ▶ peak mentoring;
- ▶ reciprocity;
- ▶ closure.

(Janas 1996: 3)

Janas (1996) summarizes the stages as follows:

A university official monitors the whole process in which not only the mentors are trained, but their mentoring is supervised. During the first five stages, this staff developer ensures that the mentor cements her/his relationship with the teacher. During the sixth stage, this staff developer is wary of problems that may arise in the relationship between mentor and teacher. The first seven stages cover measures that ensure that a firm relationship exists between staff developer, mentor and trainee teacher. Initial stages need to be revisited to ensure that each stage is meaningfully done and to prepare for the final three stages in which the staff developer moves to the background, giving the mentor and the trainee the opportunity to continue their relationship on school-based level.

(Janas 1996:3)

Reference to this model appeals to me, because the BETD Inset Programme uses a similar procedure.

The foregoing paragraphs provided a prelude of what is expected of a mentor and are extended in the more specific descriptions of the school-based mentor which follow. These descriptions are from various projects in which different dimensions and aspects of mentoring have been researched. These passages also alert us to the fact that mentoring does not necessarily focus on the mentor only. Instead, it has to be seen in terms of its reciprocal relationship and that it is part and parcel of staff development.

The experience of Paul Stephens (1996) as researcher and school-based mentor, should be seen within the context of British schools where mentoring refers to induction of new teachers in their so-called "Initial Teacher Training". It should also be noted that since the 1990's more and more arguments are made in favour of skills training in the British schools. He regards the following generic skills as pivotal in mentoring:

- ▶ planning;
- ▶ liaising;
- ▶ demonstrating;
- ▶ facilitating;
- ▶ observing;
- ▶ assessing;
- ▶ guiding.

(Stephens 1996: 38)

These generic skills should not be seen in separation of other characteristics of a mentor. It is especially the last skill of guiding which connects the responsibility of the mentor with other traits that reflect the wider and encompassing nature of mentoring.

Hagger, Burn and McIntyre (1993), educators at Oxford University listed the following aspects which students value the most of mentors:

- ▶ Awareness of realities, practicalities, constraints;
- ▶ Classroom control;
- ▶ Knowing when to step in;
- ▶ Opening routines;
- ▶ Building habits with classes;
- ▶ Tried and tested strategies for handling different situations;
- ▶ Knowing how to turn academic knowledge into lesson content that makes sense to the pupils;
- ▶ Timing of a lesson;
- ▶ Different ways of dealing with disruption;
- ▶ Knowing what is going on and how to change tack;
- ▶ Developing ways of interpreting what goes on and being able to respond quickly to classroom events;
- ▶ Marking and assessing;

- ▶ Pitching work appropriately for pupils of different abilities.

(Hagger et al 1993: 14)

John Holloway (2001) uses the findings of a research done by an American research team who assessed mentoring programmes. The following reflect how they saw the role of mentors and how the programmes should be:

- ▶ Mentors should participate in professional development in order to learn about the mentoring process before they act as mentors
- ▶ training (formal or informal is necessary);
- ▶ Trained mentors help novice to plan lessons;
- ▶ Mentors assist teachers in gathering information about their practices;
- ▶ Observe teachers' lessons;
- ▶ Provide feedback.

(Holloway 2001:3)

Trainee teachers in turn:

- ▶ Reflect on their lessons and practices in general;
- ▶ Apply what they have learned to future lessons.

(Holloway 2001:3)

The research done by John Furlong and Trisha Maynard in 1995 and cited by Stephens (1996), adds another dimension to mere skills honing. Their research draws attention to the following:

- ▶ The mentor starts with being a model for the student and providing 'solution- focused' routines;

- ▶ Gradually encourages student teachers to become less 'performance-conscious' which enables them to "de-centre" from themselves giving reflexivity
- ▶ Give the students space to act independently as professionals who are willing to take on responsibilities for their own learning (classroom practice).

(Stephens, 1996: 12)

The above-mentioned research illustrates three aspects of importance. Firstly it draws our attention to the dynamics created by the mentor and teacher interaction. Secondly it shows that mentoring is a process and therefore an ongoing interaction. Lastly, we are made aware of the fact that the particular interaction between mentor and teacher creates a particular setting without which mentoring would be futile. The setting has importance for the context of the teachers' practice.

As mentioned earlier, mentoring should enhance and facilitate learning and practice that is not superficial. It should be the channel through which theory meets the classroom practice. Tomlinson (1995) proposes five basic functions in mentoring assistance. They are:

- ▶ Assisting planning by contributing to pedagogical understanding and grasp of a repertoire of teaching strategies;
- ▶ Direct assistance and support for teaching activity;
- ▶ Assistance with monitoring of teaching activity;
- ▶ Assisting analysis and reflection both during and after the action;
- ▶ Taking account of skill acquisition phases;
- ▶ Harnessing student motivation and commitment through interpersonal sensitivity and skill.

(Tomlinson 1995: 39-45)

The above basic functions capture very adequately the complexity in the teaching and mentoring situations. It serves as a basis to understand the process of mentoring and also to connect theory with practice through the emphasis of understanding of an individual's practice. It is also worthwhile to use these functions as a premise for analysis of data collected in the research related to mentoring.

2.5 The role of Assessment in the responsibilities of the mentor:

It is assumed that to be an effective mentor, she/he should be able to observe well, to provide constructive criticism, and to guide and support trainee teachers in their practice. These traits expected of a mentor are in essence good assessment skills.

The philosophy of the BETD Inset programme underscores education that provides for continuous support and development. An essential element of this growth is assessment which, according to Kathleen and James Strickland (1998:27), enhances the quality of teaching and learning and which increases the likelihood that all members of society will acquire a full and critical literacy. As the responsibility of the mentor goes beyond that of the immediate trainee teacher, her/his role in assessment is of special significance. Furthermore, the BETD Inset programme accepts the constructivist orientation that assessment is about and for teaching and learning. Applied to the situation of the BETD Inset teacher, it therefore means that assessment in its various forms goes along the whole duration of the teacher's study period. Assessment is not only concerned with the end result or product, but forms an integral part of the continuum of learning and teaching. It is part of the holistic development of the trainee teacher who is continuously subject to formative assessment. In this regard Tomlinson (1995:144) states that assessing what learning has occurred is an inherent part of any teaching or training. He further argues that teachers are responsible for their own self-development. As independent learners Inset teachers need to monitor their own actions, by being reflective. Reflective skills, however, do not come naturally. They need to be developed with the assistance of another experienced professional. In this case it is the mentor. The

mentor therefore has the prime responsibility to make the trainee teacher aware of the full meaning of assessment in her/his practice. This awareness making is a process that ought to be one in which :

- the mentor illustrates assessment through her/his own example;
- the mentor uses a variety of strategies which are formative in terms of development of competencies and skills;
- the mentor uses summative assessment (the graded observation lessons) in an open and non-authoritative manner;
- assesses the trainee teacher against mutually agreed criteria;
- assessment is used not only to give feedback, but also feed-forward in order to plan future improved teaching;
- the trainee is not only monitored by the mentor, but the mentor helps the trainee to develop self-reflective practices.

3.1 Empirical Status of Mentoring

Mentoring as concept seems to have a justified position in Education at least in theory. Practice in schools, however, does not seem to reveal the same. It appears that mentoring is neglected in schools. This phenomenon needs to be investigated in detail. This section of the literature review will therefore deal not only with the superficial and generic levels of mentoring, but also with other forces that positively and adversely influence its status in education.

It will firstly strive to motivate that mentoring **is**:

- ▶ sustained by deeper theories and epistemologies;
- ▶ a reciprocal relationship;
- ▶ is a tool for change;
- ▶ a tool for professional development;

Secondly, it will emphasize that mentoring **is not**:

- ▶ merely an administrative task;
- ▶ done merely for the sake of completing the SBA Portfolio.

Investigations will include aspects such as the factors that influence the tensions that reduce the status of mentoring for professional development, pervasive myths in Teacher Education, the traditional view of teaching, the changed paradigm of education and lastly the value of professional development.

3.2 The tensions and factors influencing the status of mentoring in schools

To find justification for mentoring in the realm of the Empirical field one needs to go deeper into the meaning of it. In its simplest form, the Greek word “empeiria” means experience and therefore refers to the “employment of methods based on practical experience” (Urmson 1975:86). Neuman defines empirical evidence as “observations that people experience through the senses” (1997:7). It is, however, complicated by the philosophical view that empiricism has in its theory that all knowledge is derived from experience. Neuman (1997) states that people are confused with the fact that, though it deals with a theory of knowledge acquisition, it is difficult to use their senses to directly observe the social world in which they seek for answers. Within the above statement, traces are found of a tension between the practical experience and that of knowledge. This is paralleled by the phenomenon that administrative delivery of the SBA in the BETD enjoys preference to other aspects. The only operating theory here might possibly be that many people theorize classroom practice as delivery of content that requires a certain amount of skills that can be mechanically acquired. It is this area that forms the crux of the argument of what aspect of classroom practice is considered to be more empirical than the other. This perplexity brings a tension between skills and knowledge.

As much as we assume mentoring to have wide and far-reaching benefits for personal and professional development, it needs to be stated that mentoring likewise also has potentially negative and limiting aspects. Mentoring as aspect of reality should not be naively looked upon as being only beneficial. Most references in this literature reflect on positive effects of mentoring, but Feiman-Nemser alerts us in a study conducted by herself, Parker and Zeichner in 1993, that showed that mentors can also promote and prolong conventional and unchanged norms and practices (Feiman-Nemser, 1996:2). This might well be the case in the Namibian situation where it is suspected that mentoring is seen as an administrative issue, rather than a tool for professional development and reform.

Maintaining the status quo of the old classroom practices may also be linked to some other negative forces in which the purpose of mentoring has a total different paradigm than what is expected by a reformed and constructivist view. Four areas of possible tension are discussed below:

The first of these forces lies with the tension between theory and practice. Conventional thought values theory more highly than practice. Theory is seen as a body of knowledge that is external while practice relates to an experience. This is anchored in the positivist, bureaucratic and technocratic paradigms. Arguments that flow from this world view, are sustained by prominent modern educationalists who see theoretical exposure as preceding to practice. Gerwel (1995) cites Davies who argued that teachers who did not have training usually found themselves in a survival situation. Although Davies does allow for a degree of integration between theory and practice, he maintains that theory has to be covered before actual practice. Gerwel (1995) is in agreement with this view and supports it by stating that there is little time and opportunity in the classroom to reflect on practices and to discuss philosophies. Views like these are in contrast with constructivists who believe that reflective practice is not necessarily separate from the action, and that reflexive practice entails thought-in-action (Zeichner & Liston 1996: 14).

A second element relating to the conventional view of knowledge is that knowledge gained through experience (classroom practice) does not carry the same respect as theoretical knowledge formally acquired at college or university. It contrasts sharply with what the constructivists believe: that every person constructs his own knowledge (De Mar 2002). Added to the above, is the fact that the setting of the school does not carry the same status as that of tertiary institutions. Often, during mentoring at schools that accommodate BETD Inset Teachers, virtually no monitoring from the side of the school management is launched. Consistent with the positivist view that only measurable and quantifiable things can be assessed, the SBA is seen as non-formal and not examinable entities. These factors mentioned are symptomatic of schools where the value and priority of the unseen professional development and formative assessment are ignored in the school ethos.

A third contributing element is located in the profiles of those teachers who act as mentors for BETD teachers. Most mentors of BETD Inset teachers do not really have a clear idea of what the BETD programme entails, despite the existence of the course for nine years. This aspect needs careful investigation and is deemed necessary in order to make final conclusions about the status of mentoring in our schools. Many such teachers were the products of foreign courses done in distance mode for mere certification purposes. Surprisingly, many of these more experienced teachers operate on a set of misconceptions and myths which will be discussed as a fourth element of tension below.

Myths are generally understood to be beliefs which are not necessarily true, but have over generations secured a place in the beliefs of people as if it is truth. They also possess a firm place in education, the curriculum and the school. Myths according to Cornbleth (1987: 86) have “holding power” and as such, hamper innovation in teaching. This “holding power” is also related to the maintenance of old conventions at schools to which Freiman-Nemser (1996) referred. These myths Cornbleth

maintains, are acted upon “ritualistically” (1987:186). Over years, these myths become a theory as they are closely linked to aspects such as:

- (a) thinking skills;
- (b) myth of the one correct answer and
- (c) the belief that cognition takes place in stages.

(Cornbleth 1987: 186)

One of the problems that myths cause, is the effect it has on the perceptions teachers have of their learners, especially in the case of learners with problematic behaviour. Teachers tend to evaluate behaviour and responses of learners in a broad and general manner. The generalised judgment is considered a truth as if these learners would respond in certain ways at all times (Miller 1996: 93). An altered concept of assessment is needed.

The fifth element of tension deals with the unchanged behaviourist orientation teachers still have. The educational dispensation from which most teachers in Namibia came, was characterized by that of the positivist orientation. In this paradigm, learning and teaching are seen as what the teacher (as adult) dictates. Learning is seen as the obligation of the learner. The teacher is the dispenser or giver of knowledge while the learner receives. Similarly, discipline is also seen within the framework of silence, obedience and unquestioning behaviour. Learners learn best by copying and reproducing.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the more experienced teacher would expect the in-service teacher to follow her/his instructions and advice unquestionably. Problem-solving will follow a linear path and if this recipe-approach is not followed, then such an Inset Teacher does not fulfill the requirements, criteria and expectations of the expert teacher. The Inset teacher’s skills and competency are measured regardless her/his application of theories.

The above scenario is that of a teacher whose thinking and practice have been shaped by behaviourism, a worldview in which the teacher is the dispenser and fountain of knowledge. Classroom activities focus on the teacher while the learners must ape his example. Teaching is done in a strict routine and the ability of the learners' is measured in an uncritical reproduction of factual content.

Many such teachers in the Namibian context are also the products of the pre-independence Teacher Education system. Swarts (1999) describes some of the teacher certification courses in the following manner:

In general, all these programmes showed a tendency to concentrate too much on academic knowledge and formal examinations at the expense of professional development. The programmes treated school practice differently, both in scope and organization and provided different competencies for teacher qualification. Many of them devoted insufficient time to practice teaching, school organization. Students were prepared very superficially for the day-to-day management of classrooms and the running of schools.

(Swarts

1999:31)

Coupled to the above, one must also view such teachers as the product of a past dispensation where the values of Christian National Education had a strong influence on the critical thinking of people (Van Harmelen 1999: 16). It is therefore suspected that such teachers would already have had an influence on their learners through their role model as teachers and similarly would endorse their behaviour on new teachers-in-training.

Different to the above is the classroom that had been introduced by Dewey in the early twentieth century. The "new" view of schooling is captured by the quote used by Kalantzis and Cope:

Progressivist education, in Dewey's conception, was a direct response to the inappropriateness of traditional curriculum which imposed knowledge from above and outside.

(Kalantzis and Cope 1993: 45)

They continued by quoting directly from Dewey:

To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed to free activity; to learning from teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill is opposed acquisition of them as a means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the opportunities of present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world.

(Kalantzis & Cope 1993: 45)

The explanation of the above has a major influence on the acceptance of mentoring as an act of empirical education and has an influence on the status of mentoring in schools. This research needs to investigate to what degree teachers who serve as mentors identify or not with what has been espoused by these theories.

3.3 A changed Curriculum and changed classroom practice

Reform of the Namibian Education meant the introduction of many new ideas, approaches and strategies. Of the more prominent changes has been the introduction of the approach of Learner Centered Education which, in its essence is located in Constructivism. Swarts (1999) commented in this regard that this did not only mean a change on the surface, but the real change is meant to be in behaviour and practice of teachers and Teacher Educators. Learning was intended to become active, meaningful, purposeful and goal-oriented. She contends that this places the responsibility on the teacher to make meaning of the content and strategise how to

mediate it by applying her/his own thinking and experience in consideration of the environment of the learner. (Swarts 1999: 38).

What Swarts was alerting us to is a change in the classroom practice by acceptance of Constructivism as epistemology. Etchberger and Shaw (1992) quotes from the works of Confrey, Piaget and Inhelder and Von Glaserfeld and offers the following as an introductory definition of constructivism:

Knowledge does not exist outside of a person. True knowledge can only exist when it is constructed within the mind of a cognizing being. Understanding of any event, situation or problem occurs only when relationships are made to existing understanding in a learner's mind. Making sense of information and experience is the construction of knowledge.

(Etchberger & Shaw 1992:411)

An important aspect of constructivism is the fact that a learner (in this case the Inset Teacher) can draw on her/his own experience in order to correct and improve future actions and decisions. This is reflection. Learning and construction in this mode is cyclical and depends largely on the quality of the person's potential to be reflective. Schön sees reflective practice as "practice of reflection-in and – on-action" which includes a "constantly turning over of situation in the minds" (in Zeichner & Liston 1996: 14).

The above idea of a changed epistemology is the foundation for teachers to change and base their teacher development. If this view of the child is held, then it stands to reason that the basic principles will be applied to adults and peers. Research of the mentoring status at schools necessarily needs to include an assessment of the trainer-teacher's utilization and assimilation of this epistemology.

Unless conscious efforts are made to facilitate the change from behaviourist to constructivist thinking and action, undesired practice will remain an impediment and

will perpetuate undesired outcomes in the mentoring process. This research will, therefore, as necessity be wary of ways to mediate changes.

3.4 “Realities” that influence work of mentor-teachers at schools

It was mentioned earlier in this review that mentoring deals with classroom reality. As such, one also needs to look at the factors which negatively influence the day to day performance of teachers. Fullan (1991) is well-aware of the existence of such elements which, though generic, do create a stressful environment which make the work and life of teachers less satisfying:

- ▶ time demands, too much marking, lesson preparation, administrative deadlines;
- ▶ discipline/ attendance problems and student confrontations;
- ▶ lack of student motivation, apathy, negative attitudes;
- ▶ lack of administrative support, poor administration;
- ▶ colleague’s negative attitudes, incompetent/poor teachers;
- ▶ working conditions, lack of equipment, texts, low budget;
- ▶ lack of security, redundancy;
- ▶ large class size;
- ▶ Ministry regulations, restrictions;
- ▶ Lack of public and parental support, negative attitude towards education.

(Fullan 1991:124)

Taken into account that the mentor envisaged in the Namibian educational system is a teacher who is subject to the above, additional responsibility of mentoring might seem to be an extra responsibility, especially when seen in relation with the suggested roles and responsibilities cited in this review.

4. Conclusion

The BETD Inset programme is currently the only officially recognized Teacher Education course in Namibia that makes use of full-time school-based mentors. It differs from the system used by full-time colleges where students are assisted by host-teachers and guardian lecturers.

If the BETD purports to enhance “the optimal development of its members” and if that “teaching and learning should not be seen as a one-way process” (Swarts 1999:39) then it should yield teachers who are distinctly different. It is expected that these teachers will have mastered the necessary skills and competencies during their study term and will be experienced in alternative strategies and practices by the time they qualify to stand them in good stead for their whole career. The period of formal study is by no means sufficient for a task, which in the words of Patricia Wasley lasts “teachers for a lifetime of teaching” (1999:4).

The practicum (SBA of the BETD) is the key mechanism in fostering and developing reflective practices as a prerequisite to apply accumulated knowledge (theory and practice) in a critical manner for the sake of good teaching. The BETD Inset Programme provides for a better case for continual teacher improvement through mentoring and by so doing, “keep teachers engaged in an interesting, stimulating, growth-oriented profession” (Wasley 1999: 4).

If these are the expectations we hold of the BETD trainee, then much more is expected of the person who mentors the Inset Teacher. If the supposition is made that BETD Inset teachers can make a difference in the Namibian Education, then the same supposition should apply for an effective mentoring system.

If mentoring is an intervention of collaboration and reflection by committed professionals, it will make a positive and significant impact on the life of others. If focus in Education is on the teacher (trainee and mentor) then we need to address issues about human development and the purpose of Education.

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Field of Research

General Education Theory and practice

1. TITLE

The perceptions of mentors and In-service teachers in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma of the nature and role of the mentoring system: A Case Study of Mentoring in Keetmanshoop Schools.

2. Context:

Prior to current attempts to reform Teacher Education in Namibia, education was characterised by several inequalities. Likewise Teacher Education was “fragmented and uneven” (Reimers 1999:1). Angula (in MEC 1993:78) reminds us of inequalities that existed in the different teacher education programmes of the pre-independence era. In some cases, programmes over-emphasized classroom study (theory) at the expense of professionalization. This has been the reason, according to Avenstrup (1994:16) why teachers were “mere dispensers of rote learning” as long as they obtained the required certificate.

Distance courses in Namibia were previously mostly offered by foreign institutions and did not provide face-to-face sessions. In addition, hardly any meaningful classroom practice was observed and commented on. In this way, many teachers obtained mere theoretical, paper certification.

The in-service Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD Inset) was implemented in 1994, based on the Broad Curriculum for teacher education (MBEC & MHEVTST, 1996). Face-to-face classes during the

three sessions per academic year offer core disciplines such as Educational Theory and Practice, English Communication Skills and School-based activities, which were identified as carrier subjects for professional development and reform. Combined with these subject fields, teachers may choose the Social Sciences, Sciences and Lower Primary education options to align with what they teach at school (*ibid*). It is expected that students practice theoretical aspects of their options in their classrooms during the course of the term. Evidence of this should be reflected in their School-based Activities portfolio (MBESC 1999). To assist teachers at school-base, senior teachers are designated as mentors to trainee teachers. It is expected that these mentors should assist trainees with their professional development by aiding them through the cycle of their studies. Classroom observation rests mainly on identifying focus areas of teaching (*ibid* 1999:3). As this skill of focusing on specific areas within a lesson is a relatively new strategy in the Namibian context, trainee teachers are introduced to it during the contact sessions. Training of mentors at schools is also done, but not in an intensive manner.

Despite the fact that the generally accepted idea of mentoring is a familiar one in education, it is not a well-practiced (Tomlinson 1995; Janas 1996; Feiman-Nemser 1996). Available literature also reveals that in practice, mentoring differs from one continent to the other. Literature draws mainly on experiences with so-called “Initial Teacher Training” referring to college or university-based students who are placed for some periods of time at a school (Tomlinson 1995; Stephens 1996; McIntyre & Hagger 1996).

In whatever form mentoring takes place globally, it is commonly expected that it is not merely an administrative tool towards certification. Mentoring is also not merely a one-sided intervention for monitoring purposes (Avenstrup 1994; Du Plessis in Graig *et al*; Rath 1995;

Scannel & Scannel 1995). In line with this, Janas (1996) concurs that mentoring includes, but exceeds the limitations of classroom practice, observational procedures and processes and that effective mentoring is underpinned by wider and deeper approaches, values, theories and epistemologies in order to make it worthy as a means towards professional development.

Mentoring in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) programme also shows similar problems. The Moderation report (MBESC 2002:49), like previous ones, reported that it appears as if lessons presented for School-based Activities had merely been done in order to complete the portfolio. It further states that most of the lessons included in SBA files, do not adequately supply evidence of continuity in the skills which needed improvement. Furthermore, portfolios do not seem to show evidence of a link between what the Inset teacher has done in ETP for that term and what the teacher does in the lessons. Thus, moderators feel that no clear evidence between theory and practice is visible.

Discussions in the meetings with the trainee teachers and interaction with their mentors, led one to believe that both parties have difficulties in interpreting Learner-centeredness in classroom practice. Together with this, there seems to be reason enough to suspect an absence of a repertoire of teaching strategies, similar to the ones which Wasley (1999) regards as indispensable and which Tomlinson refers to as the 'teaching skills cycle' (1995:)

3. Goals:

It is assumed that mentoring in the School-based Activities system should be reciprocal on both the administrative and curricular levels

(Stones 1994; Rowley 1999). Both mentor and teacher contribute towards development of the school and teacher education curriculum and are therefore ‘agents of change, who do not only deliver the curriculum, but develop it’(Hargreaves, as cited in Swarts 1996:24).

The research aims:

- (1) to investigate how teachers and mentors interpret the School-based activities policy in her/his school environment and
- (2) to assess the degree of reciprocity that exists in the mentor-teacher relationship.

Derived from the aims the following question will serve as a basic focus:

Is the mentor in the SBA system merely an observer for summative purposes or is the relationship based on reciprocal development?

It is hoped that this question will elicit the perceptions of trainee teachers and mentors.

4. Methods:

My involvement in this teacher education programme will enable me to do this research on mentoring practices of the five local schools. Given time and other limitations, not all aspects of mentoring can be covered. This research therefore serves as a preliminary study that seeks to develop mentoring in the BETD Inset further.

The theoretical framework for this study is that of Social Constructivism. The Namibian Learner-centered approach is located in Social Constructivism and presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the

learner and regards the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies (MEC 1993). In teacher education the teacher is a learner her/himself and the classroom practice or school-based activities, provides the opportunity for revealing her/his life experience. Fraser (1995) sees the constructivist teacher as distinctly different from the traditional one. In this paradigm, he argues, the teacher mediates the logical structures of her/his knowledge and scaffolds learners through rational inquiry to discover predetermined universal truths.

As a case study it intends to provide opportunity to observe some individuals in their school-based settings. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) regard a case study as one in which the researcher conducts a series of regular observations on an individual to see if there are patterns or regularities in an individual's behaviour. These observations might also be enhanced with interviews and thus it serves as a rich basis for data. It is hoped that in this way insights might be gained in order to either refute or confirm assumptions. In the case of this particular study it will afford me the opportunity to collect data on site. A case study will therefore afford me the opportunity to meet both Inset Teacher and her/his mentor on site in a face-to-face situation.

Case Studies, however, also have their limitations. Crowl (1993:222) regards a case study as one in which the researcher takes an "impressionistic" and therefore passive stance. To mitigate this problem, I hope to capitalize on description that will enable me to enquire "beyond surface illusions to uncover real structures" (*ibid* : 223). He also contends that critical researchers use critique of a social setting in order to transform it. This, they do by revealing underlying sources of social relationships (in this case, the relationship between mentor and Inset teacher) and by empowering the less powerful people (in this case the Inset Teacher). Neuman (1997) extends the inquiring nature of this researcher, by stating that the Critical Social Science researcher actively

contributes towards helping people to change the situation by themselves.

- Intended Data Analysis methods and Strategies:

Data collection will be done in an interpretative approach. Part of the process of meaning-interpretation, will be the formulation of *explanations* or generalizations which are close to the concrete data. This is also related to the formation of *concepts* which, in turn, helps with the sorting and categorizing of themes and concepts. By referring to questions and goals of the research one should be able to form a pattern. This is also referred to as the process of coding which Neumann (1997) regards as an inseparable part of the analysis.

Through the data analyzing approaches employed, I hope to illustrate the interaction between mentor and trainee teacher and their effects on the development of the Inset teacher through the school-based activities experience.

Instruments that will be employed will be researcher-completed (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996) such as rating scales to assess teachers' interpretation of the Broad Curriculum for BETD Inset and performance checklists that will be used in classroom observations. Most instruments, however, will be completed by the teachers and mentors. Such instruments will be examples of the so-called selection-type (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996).

All activities of the self-study group will provide opportunities to employ such instruments. These include activities set collectively by

the Inset teachers and those identified by the Inset teachers and their mentors.

Classroom observation at schools will be both a supervision of mentoring and class teaching. A class visit may in itself generate and determine further activities in which several of the instruments may be used.

Calhoun (1994) suggest that one needs to know for what purpose data is collected. Possible questions to ask when data is collected are:

- What important points do these data reveal with regard to the study
- What patterns or trends emerge ?
- How does data from various sources compare or contrast ?
- Do any correlations seem important ?
- Are the results different or similar to what I have expected ?
- What actions are indicated by the data analysis

(Calhoun 1994:81-85)

- Ethical Considerations

Cognizance is taken of the following:

- Participants may not have been involved in research before.
- Research can be seen as “intrusion” of classrooms and teachers’ practice.
- Lesson observations can possibly be seen as *Inspection*.
- The existing tension and degree of suspicion towards officials outside the school.
- Research of any kind might make the school community feel exposed.
- Visits by outsiders may have an influence on behaviour of learners.

To address the above, the following measures might be applied:

- Authorization from Regional Office
 - Co-operation from schools by explaining the relationship between SBA and improvement of classroom practice
 - Cognizance of the school programme and prior notice before visits
 - Care to be taken to address all communication via the prescribed channels.
 - Regular meetings with mentors at schools
 - Participants to be assured of confidentiality
 - School management staff to be informed of the possible implications this research project may have on the whole school development
- Time Schedule:

The time scheduling for the BETD Inset Programme is useful to coincide with this research. The Academic year starts in August. During the first Contact Course, special time is allocated on the time-table for the week to deal with School-based Activities. Inset teachers are given the opportunity to give feedback on their experiences at school during term time. By the time these meetings are to be held, I hope to have worked through the SBA Portfolios.

Teachers are encouraged to work out a time schedule for their Focused Observations for the three terms ending in middle June. They also need to tentatively work out a schedule for their respective Self-study Group meetings. The planning for their BETD studies must be done in

conjunction with their school calendar of activities. Each Self-study Group is to give feedback to the Teacher's Resource Centre.

As I am working with local Keetmanshoop schools only, I shall have easy access to the selected teachers and mentors. The broad time frame for research to be carried out can therefore be done within the academic year of the Inset teachers ending in July 2003.

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Research Paper

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Title: *The perceptions that Mentors and Inset teachers in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma have of the nature and role of the mentoring system.
A case study of Keetmanshoop schools.*

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Field of Study: General Education Theory and Practice

Abstract:

This case study presents the perceptions mentors and practicing trainee teachers have of the mentoring system in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma. It argues that mentoring should not be done for administrative purposes only, but should enhance professional development for both the teacher and mentor. The evidence shows shortcomings in the functions of mentors but is generally positive about the delivery, intentions and trainee-mentor relationships.

1. **Introduction:**

Mentoring or school-based activities (SBA) in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) for practicing teachers aims to compliment theoretical knowledge with classroom practice (MBESC 1999:1).

Trainee teachers and mentors in the case study have contradictory views of the mentoring system. The duality of their views and beliefs are dealt with in this paper by means of broad themes or basic functions of mentoring. Research tools used to illustrate discrepancies in teachers' views and are used to ascertain which patterns and regularities emerge from the participants' behaviour (Fraenkel & Wallen 1996:453). Teachers' perceptions are interpreted through their actions which are preceded by intentions and accompanied by reflection within a specific context (Connole1998).

A case study of this kind was deemed necessary in order to assess the perceptions of trainee teachers and their mentors given the emphasis on SBA in the in-service programme for Namibia. It is also necessary to assess the level of reciprocity in the relationship between mentor and teacher. A further focus of the study was an attempt to ascertain whether SBA is done as a mere administrative task. Professionals often complain that training teachers and graduates of this programme do not comply with the expected competencies and skills in their classroom performance. Annual analysis of their SBA portfolios also show that Inset teachers normally score better grades in their graded lessons than in their other subjects (MBESC 2002).

It is hoped that through an interpretative analysis of questionnaires, interviews, discussions and observations the degree of reciprocity in the

relationship between mentor and trainee at each school can be assessed. The kinds of assistance that mentors are expected to give to the teachers in training should according to Dewey, transcend the superficial level of the administrative tasks (in Zeichner & Liston, 1996:27). The concept of reciprocity includes those activities, ideas and interaction through which both the mentor rejuvenates and the teacher generates their own theories of teaching. Stones (1994:9) is of the opinion that the lack of such an underlying theory confines the relationship between an experienced and beginning teacher. The relationship that exists between mentor and teacher is foundational for further professional growth. Stones (1994) views quality teaching as dependent on the existence of a relationship which is part of the complexity of human activity. He further argues that a theory of teaching should help both mentor and teacher to remove these constraints and to establish a more accurate perspective of teaching.

2. **Methodology**

The research study is done as a case study. Fraenkel & Wallen (1996) regard a case study as one in which the researcher conducts a series of regular observations on an individual to see if there are "patterns or regularities" in an individual's behaviour (Fraenkel & Wallen (1996: 453).

In order to grasp the above-mentioned patterns and regularities, the interpretative orientation serves as helpful medium. Connole (1998) regards this approach to be essential for the researcher to understand the teacher's actions which take place within a certain context. As a symbolic science, the knowledge interest in this research is not of a technical nature, but rather practical. In this way, according to Janse van Rensburg (2001) the researcher is able to make a deeper understanding of the situation. This understanding, according to this academic, is a

prerequisite for people to be able to take practical actions within their own situations (*ibid* 2001).

The ability of people to construct their own knowledge allows for the research to use the Social Constructivist paradigm in which the learner-centered approach of the Namibian Reform is located. It believes that teachers have a holistic view of the learner and regards the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies (MEC 1993: 80).

The research tried to follow the normal schedule of the BETD Inset programme, which starts in August and ends the following June. In this way participants could be assessed authentically. Three sets of questionnaires probed the wider population and covered questions eliciting teachers' understanding of why mentoring is necessary. Items also tested attitudes especially those related to relationship between teachers and mentors.

Interviews and questionnaire were first piloted with all participants.

In the actual data collection process I chose to give structured interviews for the mentors in order to suit their busy schedule. Only the interviews with mentors were recorded and documented. Views of trainee teachers were gathered through questionnaires and discussions in the series of self-study group meetings. During the pilot phase, trainee teachers were not comfortable with recorded interviews.

3. Findings

Different instruments produced different responses in participants. Analysis from data of the questionnaires and interviews gives the idea that participants are satisfied with their mentoring system. The discussions during the contact sessions and self-study group meetings produced a different picture in which teachers were more open with

regard to difficulties they experience. Interaction with individuals during the contact session and self-study group meetings influenced, to a large extent, the choice for research tool items and planning of the research schedule.

The first of these tools were two questionnaires. I decided to start the research process with this instrument through which I hoped to assess the attitude of the bigger BETD Inset population. It was hoped that it would give me a wider and regional insight into the teachers' perspectives of the School-based Activities system. The questionnaire consisted of thirteen questions with "Yes/No" responses. In addition, space was provided for short answers in which teachers could state with what aspects in SBA they have problems and which aspects help them the most. Of the 152 questionnaires distributed, 140 responses were returned.

The basic assumption was that the questionnaire would enable me to discover the attitudes of teachers by asking them to respond to a series of statements. These statements were related to the administrative delivery of the system, teachers' planning and time management and more importantly, the quality of relationship between the mentor and the teacher. Analysis of the responses of this questionnaire was quite the opposite of what I have expected. It was for this reason that the initial questionnaire was modified and given to the sample group of ten local teachers. The questionnaire items in the second one were based on those which had the most negative responses. Local teachers were once again requested to complete this questionnaire. In addition to the "Yes/No" response, they were asked to qualify each. Results of the smaller-scale questionnaire, however, confirmed the impressions of the preceding one, but revealed even more contradictions when their personal responses were analyzed. The table below shows the most important findings.

Table 1: The most important findings of the research

Questionnaires	Interviews	Observations	SBA Portfolios
Complaints of time management and planning and presentation of prescribed set of Focused and Graded Observations.	Time management and planning of lessons	Teachers uncomfortable	Grades generally good
Teachers generally positive to items	Mentors know the procedure prescribed for SBA	Inset teachers not very clear which 2 aspects to use for focus.	Grades do not correlate with teacher's performance in other branches of study.
Not all teachers observed by mentor. All final year teachers, though, were observed.	Mentor-IT relationship generally good. Local schools Vary from good to bad.	Some lessons give reason to suspect "rehearsed lessons".	Grades awarded in some cases not consistent with the comments given by mentors.
Mentor and IT discuss focus areas, but the mentor makes the final decision.	3 local mentors find focus as technique good 2 are not so articulate	Lower Primary teachers, more particularly the Molteno teachers are at ease with different class atmosphere	Summative sheets done by the principal and not by the mentor.
Mentors do provide feedback but lacks substance.	All local mentors see need for SBA training sessions	(Indigenous) Mother tongue instruction in Lower Primary hampered observer's understanding.	
ITs claim that they seek help from others	All appointed by the principal. Only one mentor had prior involvement with teacher.		

3.1 The Questionnaires

85.5 % of the regional population of 140 in-service teachers and 80% of local sample of ten in-service teachers had problems in completing the full set of Focused, Graded and Mentor observations for the academic year. Teachers in the sample felt that this is attributed to work pressures

and the school programme. Teachers argue that mentors are not available on the designated day to do an observation. Not honouring the schedule frustrates teachers who feel that they are left to the mercy of mentors. This complaint of teachers is consistent with mentors' defense in the interviews that teachers are not considerate of the mentors' time. The last-mentioned complaint, however, is in contrast with question 10 of the questionnaire which tested the co-operation of the school management. Based on this last-mentioned item, it seems as if the management co-operates well when lesson observations are to be made. This praise is also in contrast with the short answer responses which some offered. Several mechanisms are being provided for teachers to complete the full cycle of lessons per term. This includes a ministerial letter in which principals are requested to give full support to trainee teachers with the executions of the SBA. Another strategy to help teachers complete the full cycle of observation is a suggested time schedule drafted during the August contact session.

Not all teachers have had opportunities to observe their mentors. Results of the sample deviated slightly from the larger population. Of the ten local teachers, three had never been observed by their mentors. The two mentors involved, are both heads of department at their schools. Their responsibilities in their senior posts were cited as the main reason why they do not have time for "extra" class visits. This view corresponds with the views of the mentors who admitted that they are overloaded with duties. In view of the drastic changes in the staffing norms at schools, especially in the Karas education region, their excuse deserves some consideration.

Mentors and Inset teachers decide together on areas of focus for a lesson. It is pleasing that Inset teachers do not decide alone on which teaching strategies and techniques to focus on for observation points.

Teachers do, however, state that in most cases it is the mentor who makes the final decision on the focus areas a teacher must choose for a next lesson.

The questionnaire results reveal that 93,8% of the total BETD population and 100% of the sample seek help from others. This includes help from the mentor, other colleagues, available tutors and the TRC. Comments made by mentors in their interview on two particular cases in the sample, contrast very sharply with the 100% tally.

3.2 Interviews:

Interviews were recorded and transcribed and were done with the mentors only. I found the interviews helpful in the sense that it afforded me the opportunity to verify or refute my pre-existing impressions of the mentors and their settings. It was also useful in the case of the mentors of two primary schools, mentors 1 and 3, whose interviews coincided with observation sessions at their schools. Interviews served as a useful tool with the interpretive approach to “find out what is on their mind- what they think or how they feel about something” according to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996:447).

Problems raised here resemble that mentioned in the discussion of the questionnaire. In the case of Mentor 1 the situation is different. One teacher for whom she is responsible has a weak student profile and did not give her full co-operation and maintained weak communication. As a result of this, much of the mentor's time had been absorbed in making arrangements and decisions for the student.

Mentors know the procedure prescribed by the SBA Manual. All five mentors seem to be familiar with the content of the SBA Manual. They

all seem to understand the working procedure and what their responsibilities are.

Mentor-Inset teacher relationships vary from good to bad. Analysis of the interviews show that three mentors in the sample enjoy very good relationships with their teachers. Mentor 4 does not have a necessarily bad relationship, but due to the fact that she and her teacher only meet when requested to do an observation, no other professional relationship exists. The relationship between Mentor 5 and one of the two teachers for whom she is responsible is neither professional nor friendly. One of the remaining three mentors show interest in the affairs of her teachers but assistance only covers the basic requirements in term of administrative execution. Mentors 1 and 3 show a deeper professional relationship. This could be attributed to the fact that both are junior primary teachers themselves and spend some time everyday with teachers in planning lessons. One is a BETD graduate with an exceptional good record and the other a tutor for Lower Primary in the programme.

The Issue of focusing in the observation instrument does not seem to be consistent and well-understood by all. The series of lessons to be completed consist of a collection of Focused and Graded Observations. The graded version is identical to the other except that it is graded according to the prescribed BETD assessment scale. Deciding upon observation points to focus on is a relatively new aspect in Teacher Education in Namibia. The SBA Manual does not articulate itself so clearly on this aspect. It is therefore expected of the mentors to take the lead in this respect by helping the trainee teacher to decide upon some strategies and techniques on which a teacher can improve. All except one mentor agree that this is a helpful tool to improve the trainee teachers' performance. One, mentor is of the opinion that focusing on some aspects will limit the scope of the multitude of areas on which to focus.

She has doubts whether an Inset teacher will, over the span of three years, be able to cover all the required areas of focus needed to teach effectively.

3.3 Observations:

Not all teachers in the sample were observed because mentors were not always available. Of the seven observations four were only done of the pre and post observation discussions and excluded the actual lesson presentations of the teachers. My role as researcher varied from that of "complete observer to observer-as-participant" (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996:446). Most observation exercises were done in the latter mode as I was known to the participants who knew my intentions for my observations. In addition, I participated in conversations during the pre and post observation discussions. In the case of lessons I observed I was the complete observer who did not interfere in the lesson procedure. I chose to do this in order not to cause any interruption and to gain a realistic picture of the class activities. In addition it would make the teacher more at ease and also because all the lesson observations were of the junior primary phase, of which I have had no personal experience.

Though most teachers seemed uncomfortable during observations, those in the Molteno Programme appeared to be more at ease. This is attributed to the particular way in which lessons in this variation of the "Breakthrough to Literacy programme" are structured. The routine of every lesson provides for variation of activities, group work and teacher-learner interaction. Every lesson requires specific teaching strategies the teacher needs to use.

As in the case of the interviews, classroom observations also revealed uncertainty with regard to focus areas. Areas of focus need to be taken

from the particular lesson to be given. During the pre-observation sessions, a teacher needs to indicate to her mentor which are observation points and justify why they were identified. In all the four cases teachers lacked assertiveness when stating the choice of focus points. Mentors, too did not seem eager to state why a particular area of focus has been decided upon. It is assumed that during the post-observation discussion on the previous lesson that the mentor and teacher should have jointly identified weaknesses during that lesson. During the pre-observation discussion, the mentor is to make sure that there is a degree of continuity with the focus of the previous lesson. Discussions in some cases have perhaps given the idea that I did “inspection” on the teacher. This might also have added to the discomfort of teachers during the lesson presentations.

3.4 Portfolio Analysis

By the end of June each year, Inset teachers are expected to submit their SBA portfolio for assessment. A complete portfolio will contain six focused lessons during which s/he observed the mentor, six lessons in which she/he was observed by the mentor and three graded lessons. In addition they also need to give evidence of reports on Self-study Group meetings and training scenarios. A Portfolio, according to the Broad Curriculum for BETD Inset “contains evidence which shows an Inset teacher’s achievement of each competency at both the subject and broad curriculum levels” (MBESC 2002:13).

Analysis of the portfolios of local teachers revealed that grades achieved by teachers were exceptionally good, but that they do not correlate with teachers’ performance in other subjects. In addition to the above discrepancy it should also be noted that grades awarded were not consistent with the comments given by mentors. A teacher who received

an "A" would for example be critiqued for not keeping to chosen focus areas. This, to me, is an indication that the mentor has misinterpreted the criteria. In other cases, there is also not a consistency in the comments between focused lessons and the graded lesson. It is expected that two focused lessons would precede a graded one, and that there is a connection among the three lessons. The impression in most cases is that the three lessons per term do not have much in common.

The portfolio analysis of the sample group reflected the same tendencies noticed in the larger population. The summative sheets which report on the professional development of the teacher were completed by the principals and not the mentors. A second observation yielded by the portfolio analysis was that most teachers in the sample, like the larger population, did not seem to know how to handle the writing of training scenarios. Most trainees seem to have the notion that the training scenario has to deal with learning and discipline problems only.

4. **Analysis of Results**

The findings in this research on mentoring in the Keetmanshoop schools deliver a duality in the perceptions of teachers and mentors. The one set of views indicates that the SBA system is accepted, understood and executed positively. The other alerts us to shortcomings that may hamper effective pedagogical mentor-teacher growth. The duality in the views of participants is representative of the complexity of mentoring and its basic functions. At the heart of mentoring is the concept of assistance. The basic functions of mentoring espoused by Tomlinson (1995:39) and quoted in the literature review, are used in the greater part of the analysis as a mirror for the research aims and questions. Further analysis is based in terms of the BETD curriculum and the school ethics.

Table 2 below shows the most important themes extrapolated from the findings and in addition to the basic functions serve as basis for the analysis.

Table 1: Most Important Findings of the Research

Theme	Questionnaires	Interviews	Observations	SBA Portfolios
A lack of clear conceptualization of mentoring	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anxiety about the “delivery” of series of lessons and management of time.		✓	✓	✓
Contradictions in views of Mentor-trainee relationship	✓	✓		
Quantity of lessons enjoys more attention to quality of lessons			✓	✓
Obscure views of mentor-trainee relationship	✓	✓		

As discussed in findings, a major concern of mentors and teachers lie with the management of time in which to complete the required set of lessons. This view reflects an overemphasis on administrative completion of lessons at the cost of other pedagogical aspects. Their concern with the administrative correctness reminds us of Dewey’s warning that teachers have the tendency "to place too much emphasis on the immediate proficiency and their lack of capacity and disposition to keep on growing" (in Zeichner and Liston 1996:27). Teachers’ anxiety to produce a set of completed or delivered evidence regardless the quality, can be related to various beliefs practicing teachers hold (Prawat 1992: 361). Emerging from a behaviourist context in which knowledge is measurable, teachers regard the entire school-based activities which should include their learners and the content, as relatively fixed entities. Because of this notion, they regard mentoring activities as static givens that only need to be delivered. The delivery of content in this way is

overemphasized and given higher status than other aspects such as teaching strategies and making sense on the part of the learners.

The school-based activities as curriculum is seen by trainee teachers and mentors as a fixed entity with a preset body of knowledge to be covered and which has predetermined ends (Prawat 1992:358). In addition to this, they handle their school-based activities as an isolated body of learning content which has little to do with their actual class teaching. In the interview with the first mentor, she refers to the fact that the separate handling of SBA lessons has become a "farce" because teachers do not regard such lessons as part of their teaching. As a result of this belief, teachers value the planning of their activities as one of the most important aspects in their mentoring.

Ideally, lessons for observations should fit into the normal progress of lessons. It is, of course necessary that prior planning be done with mentors. If for one or other reason this planning cannot be executed and that a specific lesson could not be observed, teachers are totally "derailed" and find it difficult to adjust. Eight of the ten local participants described this phenomenon as most frustrating when they had planned lessons and could not be observed due to reasons out of their control. Their planning enjoys bigger priority than flexibility and adjustment to the needs of their learners. Problems of this kind are unfortunately used to assess the effectiveness of the mentoring system. All except one mentor and all ten local teachers in the sample regard mentoring as an additional and separate responsibility in addition to their already-existing programme. In this regard it is appropriate to respond to this complaint by referring to the first of Tomlinson's (1995) basic functions which deals with assisting planning by contributing to pedagogical understanding and utilizing a repertoire of teaching strategies. The planning of mentoring cannot be done only by the trainee teacher. On

the contrary, it is a prime function of a mentor to assist a trainee teacher in this regard. It is therefore expected of a mentor, according to this basic function, that planning should contribute towards pedagogical understanding. Mentors in this study are typical of the ones mentioned by the mentor, a former BETD student who said, "I honestly think that they were not well-equipped to help me. I must say that they are well-qualified, but still they did not know enough of the BETD and how things are done there. I felt that this was a stumbling block for me" (Mentor 1).

It is evident that mentors fail to assist trainee teachers with clarification of pedagogical complexities. Instead, only efforts to explain the contents and procedure of the SBA manual are seen to be of importance. Similarly, little evidence in planning is available concerning aspects such as the learning styles of learners, available resources and rationales for lessons. One particular mentor in the sample felt that theoretical teaching is the responsibility of the BETD tutors and that they regard planning of visits and observations as their prime responsibility.

Connected to the issue of delivery, is that of quantity. Completion of the required amount of lessons seems to suffice all needs. Teachers regard the number of lessons observed as adequate proof that learning has taken place. None of the lessons observed showed a connection between focus of one lesson with the next. Focus areas in the BETD curriculum refer to aspects of weaknesses on which teachers need to concentrate. Neither the comments of the mentors nor the teachers' own reflections show any correlation between the focus points they chose and what learning they acquired as a result of its application. The assumption is made that teachers have automatically acquired all skills needed by the mere use of focus areas and completion of the required number of lessons.

The teachers' obsession with administrative issues can also be related to the second basic function of Tomlinson (1995), which deals with direct assistance and support for teaching activity. Teachers regard the visits of the mentor and discussions before and after observations as sufficient support, regardless of the quality of attention given to planning and teaching activity. The number of visits a mentor paid to a trainee teacher is equated to effective learning. According to Prawat (1992: 357) teachers commonly think that quantity determines effectiveness by the mere engagement in an activity. Similarly, in the case of mentoring, compliance to the prescribed number of observations which are not always accompanied by pre- and post-observation discussions, is considered to be effective assistance to a trainee teacher. In contrast with this, teachers feel that their mentors do not spend enough time in their classes. They likewise, do not spend enough time in the classes of their mentors. The above issue, stands in sharp contrast with teachers' general opinion that good relationships exist between them and their mentors.

Findings in the research revealed that many teachers do not have a practical concept of focus areas as a pedagogical tool. Observations and analysis of lesson comments prove that mentors also have difficulty in grasping the idea. Tomlinson (1995) believes that his third basic function, dealing with assistance with monitoring of teaching activity, analysis and reflection, serves to give a trainee ongoing and long-term guidance. It relies on feedback that is based on monitoring of actions and outcome. Using certain teaching strategies as focus areas is one way in which a trainee can monitor her/his own growth. It is a tool that enables her/him to assess if what she/he actually did was what was intended. The critique one mentor in the sample raised about the over-emphasis on focus areas in the BETD, is an example of the inability to recognize it as part of a series of strategies needed for effective teaching. This misconception also alludes to other mentors' practice of handling areas

of focus in isolation. It also alludes to the teachers' notion of looking and assessing trainee teachers' performance against their own notion of focusing. Although findings report that after-lesson discussions are generally conducted, it should be stressed that feedback should be given in terms of the whole teaching skill cycle, both within the lesson activity and after it. Feedback is not a singular event, but should elicit reflection-in-action as well as reflection-on-action (Schon in Zeichner and Liston, 1996: 14).

Quality, according to Tomlinson (1995), also depends on his fourth basic function, dealing with skill acquisition phases. It is clear from the preceding arguments that teaching is not a once-off event, but a process. Substantial research proved that mentoring involves stages, phases and levels (Janas 1996; McIntyre and Hagger 1996; Mendler 1994, as cited in Janas, Yarrow and Millwater 1997). Although teachers were satisfied with their relationships with their mentors, little evidence is found of a professional relationship outside of the class-visit appointments. Findings in this research reveal that mentors are appointed by principals and observations are done by mentors only on a sporadic pattern. It was only in the case of one mentor that evidence was given of a relationship that started prior to her appointment as mentor. The pedagogical relationship is also hampered by mentors' general reluctance to be observed and critiqued by the trainee teacher. Student motivation depends on the degree of interpersonal sensitivity and skill which serves as a fifth basic function of mentoring (Tomlinson 1995). If learning is regarded as an important element of mentoring, then trainee teachers need to participate actively in this pedagogical relationship. If taken into consideration that all mentors in the sample are heads of department, more efforts need to be made to break down the bureaucratic barriers between mentors and trainee teachers. Reciprocity in the mentor-trainee relationship is further

hampered by the view of mentors who maintain the idea that it is only the studying teacher who needs to be committed and motivated.

5. Conclusion

Perceptions of teachers discussed in this work reflect superficial and uncritical views of trainees and mentors. This is so because they regard mentoring as a physical and generic activity, disregarding its deeper pedagogical value. It is also an indication of their lack of a clear theoretical underpinning, despite their studies in Educational Theory and Practice which is done as a compulsory subject (MBESC 2000).

Trainee teachers in different academic phases reveal the same tendency of showing little correlation between school-based activities of their studies and classroom practice. This may be the result of the low status that mentoring actually enjoys in the schools. It can also be linked to the persistence of behaviourist practices which are sustained by the quality of support mentors give. Teachers' failure to see the impact that mentoring has on their own classroom improvement can further be linked to the fact that they do not fully participate in the school development plan. As a result of this, teachers merely deliver the school ethos in terms of administrative compliance of duties. In this manner the school ethos is a mere duty and not a "living" one as referred to in the literature review (Miller 1996; Deal and Kennedy 1982; Ormston and Shaw 1996).

If the quality of mentoring in our schools is to improve, it needs to become one in which both the mentor and trainee benefit from the learning process which uses the administrative rigour as a means to reach the deeper and meaningful pedagogical level.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 1: Questionnaire for All Inset Teachers at Contact Session (April 2003)

Questions	Yr 1			Yr 2			Yr 3			Yr 4			
	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%	
			22			50			25			43	
1	11	11	50	15	35	70	8	17	68	-	43		100
2	15	7	68	15	35	70	5	20	80	4	39		90.6
3	9	13	59.1	19	31	62	12	13	55	7	36		83.7
4	12	10	45	24	26	56	10	15	60	4	39		90.6
5	13	9	40	12	38	75	6	19	75	6	37		86
6	11	11	50	10	40	80	4	21	82	7	36		82.7
7	9	13	59	15	35	70	9	16	65	5	38		88.3
8	16	6	27	26	24	48	12	13	52	8	35		81.3
9	4	18	81	19	31	62	9	16	64	7	36		83.7
10	16	6	27	13	37	74	7	18	72	8	35		81.3
11	15	7	31	12	38	76	6	19	75	8	35		81.3
12	5	17	77	14	36	72	6	19	76	6	37		86
13	2	20	90.9	6	44	88	2	23	92	2	41		95.3

Appendix 2

Table 2: Modified Questionnaire for local Inset Teachers

Questions	Yr 1			Yr 2			Yr 3			Yr 4	
	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%	No	Yes
3				0	1		0	6		0	4
6				0	1		0	6		0	4
8				0	1		1	5		0	4
9				0	1		0	6		0	4
10				0	1		0	6		0	4
11				0	1		0	6		0	4

Appendix 2

Activities During Contact Courses of the BETD Inset Programme

Contact Courses for the BETD Inset Programme take place during the first full school week of each school holiday. The contact site for the Karas and Hardap Regions is the Keetmanshoop Teachers Resource Centre.

This centre accommodates teachers in all four study years and offer all options except for the Business and Accounting options. More than two-thirds of the Inset Teachers are women, of the minority language groups and of rural areas.

The academic year starts in August every year. A second contact session is held in the December holidays and the last session is held in April every year.

Educational Theory and Practice, English Communication Skills and School-based Activities (SBA) are compulsory. SBA is not treated as a conventional subject and will be discussed later. Each option comprises 12 hours for the contact course week. Split options such as Mathematics Education and Integrated Natural Science, English Language Education and a Namibian Language each uses six hours of tuition. Subjects such as Lower Primary Education and Social Sciences Education are offered as full options.

A time-table is drawn up in order to make sure that all subjects receive the required number of hours, but also to ensure opportunity for other activities as will be discussed below:

1. Orientation to Programme:

During such sessions, new intakes are introduced to the philosophy of the Reformed Education Namibia. Linkages are made with the Broad Curriculums of Basic and Secondary Education as well as Teacher Education of which they are part. Being first-time students many teachers need to be induced into the role of students. Others who have had prior qualifications, need to be showed the difference between their former courses and the BETD. It is emphasized that this programme is not merely a distance course, but rather a distance and face-to-face

one which is done in terms of what is nowadays commonly called the Open mode.

2. Self-Study Groups SSG

BETD teachers are made aware of the fact that the contact sessions constitute only part of their studies. For a greater part of the time, teachers need to work away from the contact site and the tutor. The SSG is one way in which they can overcome total isolation.

During these sessions the concept of a SSG is explained and teachers are invited to make suggestions of how they will use such a forum. They are divided into groups based on their geographical placing. In its simplest terms, a SSG consists of a group of teachers in close vicinity. More often however, because of isolation of some rural towns and villages, there might be the case where only one Inset teacher in such an area is found. An SSG might also be formed by teachers of the same option or year group.

3. School-based Activities:

During the August contact session each year, a session is also arranged for explanation of SBA. This takes the form of a “mini workshop” for different year groups. For teachers who enter the programme for the first time, a detailed series of activities are worked out. It is hoped that after this session the Inset teacher will understand the SBA Manual and why SBA is provided and what her/his responsibilities are when back at the school. In addition, teachers are given a suggested time schedule which needs to be aligned with that of the school. In this way, teachers are made aware of the need for planning of their studies.

Activities of the Keetmanshoop SSG:

During the August Contact course this group drafted a schedule of dates for meetings for the first [BETD] trimester. This group has the advantage of teaching in the same town as the contact site to which they need to come from time to time as teachers. Most tutors and advisory teachers are also located in this town. In addition, the group also has the advantage of having two members and one mentor who are very enthusiastic and through whose efforts regular meetings can be held.

At their first meeting the group identified the following areas of interest on which to plan and base the activities throughout the year:

- (i) Key concepts in ETP
- (ii) Dealing with End-of-unit assessments in ETP and LPE
- (iii) Assignments in all subjects
- (iv) School-based Activities
- (v) Practice-based Inquiry for final year students.

Based on the above, the following activities followed:

- (i) Consultation with local ETP tutors in which teachers had opportunity to raise problems and discuss key concepts.
- (ii) Workshop on Focusing as important part of the Observation instruments for the SBA
- (iii) Brainstorming session on expectations of “Good Mentoring practices”
- (iv) Work sessions in year groups to clarify texts in modules in each subject
- (v) Work sessions on assignments – especially final year teachers assisting others
- (vi) Preparations for End of Module Assessment

Reflections on the Portfolio

This portfolio intends to provide evidence of my progress during the course of my research studies in the M. Ed degree. I hope that it is not merely a repository of academic and pedagogical ideas that sound acceptable on paper. On the contrary, I hope that anyone reading it, will be able to find *me* in the portfolio. In doing so, I hope that the portfolio will enable the reader to recognize the effort, progress and achievements over the course of my research studies. It is also hoped that the reader will be able to construct a clear picture of me as learner and professional.

The portfolio begins with a contextual analysis of my working environment with specific emphasis on the curriculum of the BETD Inset Programme. The next section deals with the epistemological foundation of the Namibian Reform. This was necessary in order to get clarity on the philosophical bases of our education system. The third paper deals with the literature review of mentoring. This is probably the most significant evidence of my learning and at hindsight, I realise that it is far from complete. It has, nevertheless, given me a firm footing on which to base my proposal which aims to reflect the perceptions trainee teachers and their mentors have of the current school-based activities system. Evidence of the actual research is reflected in the research paper.

On reflecting on my personal growth, I decided to choose the following criteria:

- My personal academic growth in terms of *learning, critical thinking, reflective practices* and *articulation* of thought.
- My spiritual growth in terms of traits such as patience, rigour, confidence, my value-system and above all, being true to my own convictions.

I shall therefore deal with the above-mentioned broad aspects in terms of "Weaknesses" and "Strengths".

Strengths:

The most important aspect of my growth lies with conceptual understanding. All the research assignments and tasks given to us during the contact sessions contributed to a large extent to development in this area. Prior to the M. Ed studies, I had completed the B Ed also through Rhodes University. This gave me a very good foundation of various concepts in education. I realize that often in our day-to-day interaction, we easily use terms very superficially. The following questions represent some of these concepts:

- What is *education* ?
- What is *teaching* ?
- What is *knowing* ?
- What is *learning* ?

Though these are indeed very ordinary and seemingly simple concepts, I have learnt that these were the aspects that absorbed most of my time. Contact sessions in which these very elementary issues were discussed, and during which I had an opportunity to share the ideas with lecturers and fellow-students, have been instrumental in my learning process as an adult-learner. The multitude of reading materials in the form of carefully selected handouts served as another source for building my concepts. I think that I am now in a position to be more careful in using these concepts. In addition, when engaged in conversations with teachers I often use this "newly-discovered" ability to make them ponder over the habitual use of such concepts. The effect it has on such teachers is also remarkable. In this way I hope to help others in developing.

My personal conceptual understanding was also boosted by examining my own theory of learning. To my shame, I must admit that it has taken me a long time (and perhaps it still continues) to search for my personal theory of learning. Since I started teaching, I have been aware of the fact that do not fully agree with the learning theories we were "weaned" on in our teacher studies. I could never reconcile myself with the approaches to teaching that were forced down our throats. Needless to say, that it was even more difficult to do things contrary to my beliefs. This struggle with my own theory and the realities of teaching made me succumb to practices which have perhaps given me a false picture of education. Fortunately, the B. Ed and M. Ed studies made me "look" at myself - to re-examine my critical thinking and reflective practices to finally coming to grips with my own theory. The various research assignments largely contributed towards this period "self-research" process.

The portfolio tasks have also contributed towards development of my critical thinking. It is not a very easy task to be analytical. Because I am by nature critical due to my upbringing at home, it was not difficult to be critical. It has been this trait of my personality that often landed me into controversial arguments with others. The portfolio and in particular, the various assignments made me ask myself this question: *Am I really critical enough for that specific task?* This prompted me to look for other strategies and approaches that influenced my notion of rigour. Being critical, I have learnt, is complicated and requires integrated skills. Being aware of its complexity, I think that I am improving in terms of *critique* and *criticism*.

Closely related to the above aspect, is the ability to be reflective and reflexive. I have always thought that I knew what it meant, but through these research tasks, I have really learnt what it means to be reflective and reflexive. I learnt that to reflect is not a singular event, but an on-going

process that needs to be integrated in every action and something which, through regular practice improves the quality of my actions and decisions.

A third aspect of my learning is the skill to articulate my thoughts meaningfully so that my intention is clear to my readers and listeners. This has been a major weakness in my academic past. I would often feel very bitter for not being recognized for my thoughts and intentions. The integration of the above-mentioned skills and approaches in my portfolio has contributed to a large extent to development in this area. It has also had an influence on my personal patience and rigour as it meant that I had to re-do many of the tasks. I am now more comfortable after realizing that it is important to let others know *what* and *how* I reason, but that it is equally important to communicate my intentions in ways acceptable for the reader and listener. A very good example of practice is my different approach of elicitation during the research process. I realized (after much irritation and pain) that people's responses were determined by my approaches and the way I formulated questions.

In summary, I have gained much through Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* which I perceive graphically as a spiral and upward and widening movement of accumulating more knowledge with the help of elements such as critical thinking and reflexivity.

Weaknesses:

My learning has not yet ended. For this reason, many elements discussed above need even more refinement. They are:

- Academic reading and writing:

Though I think that I improved in this area, I need a lot more confidence. In addition, I need more practice in grouping similar ideas, statements and thoughts of authors. A lot more exposure in reading academic material.

- Policy Analysis:

I need a lot more academic guidance in this area. I find it hard at times to relate policy statements and documents to the broad goals and philosophy of the Reformed education system. In short, when is a document a directive, a brief or guideline ? I also find it difficult to assess sociological agenda in some policy documents. One such example is that of the Special Needs Education and Assessment document. I was disappointed that we did not do an assignment on policy issues.

- Assessment and Evaluation:

This is a domain in our curricula in which big conflict exists between the aims of the broad curricula and its eventual implementation. Where we "preach" LCE for example, *assessment* in practice, is by far the most anti-LCE intervention in school and teacher education.

An assignment that we did (though not for portfolio inclusion) served as a vitally useful tool for me to come to better grips with assessment. It has especially helped me to integrate it with other domains. I still, however, need more skills in mediating our current assessment as the official documents (or my inability to understand them) do not help much.

- Skills and strategies to advance the philosophy of the Reform:

Despite improved theoretical grounding, in practice I encounter many difficulties with professionals who fail to change and who neglect to implement reform changes in their practice. I need more "tools" to work with people with a total negative attitude.

- Research methods:

Although we had a special workshop in Grahamstown on research methods I am honest when saying that I have as yet not mastered them all. The research project was a small-scale one and has introduced me into the difficult processes of research. I look forward to working in this area in more detail, but I feel I need to develop my skills in this area further.

Finally, the portfolio has largely contributed to the ability of assessing myself. The portfolio has helped me in building a sense of responsibility and ownership of my own learning. The direction of my research has not been dictated by anyone but myself. The good aspects of my learning and progress that the portfolio succeeds to reflect are not the result of my exclusive effort but rather an indication of what I was able to learn from others.