NAMIBIA EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

The implementation of the Namibian language policy in education:

Lower primary grades and pre-service teacher education

Report on language policy research compiled by Karsten Legère, Richard Trewby and Mariana van Graan

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Foreword

In 1998, the Namibia Educational Research Association (NERA) was approached by the then coordinator of the Educational Research Network in Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA), Dr P. T. M. Marope, to invite NERA to participate in a regional policy research project, which was being funded by The Government of the Netherlands through its Embassy in Harare. Realising that this was a great opportunity to contribute to the debate on language policy, and with a view to presenting the findings to the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training which was then being established, NERA immediately agreed to present a proposal for consideration.

Two members of NERA, Professor Karsten Legère and Mr Richard Trewby from the University of Namibia, prepared a proposal on language policy, after discussions with the Research Unit of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). The Research Unit of NIED had already planned a research project on language issues in Lower Primary pre-service teacher training and they agreed to cooperate on the language policy project.

This Report is the result of their work and NERA hopes that it will contribute significantly to the formulation of appropriate policies for language in education in Namibia.

On behalf of NERA, I would like to congratulate Mariana, Richard and Karsten for the job well done. We also would like to thank ERNESA for the opportunity accorded to NERA to participate in this important Project.

Prof R K Auala
Chairperson of NERA
Dean, Faculty of Education

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We would also like to thank those who collaborated with us in the study and in collecting and analysing data, Selma Imene, Gerry Tjipueja and Raphael Mbala of the NIED in Okahandja, and Liina Nantinda and Samuel Elago from the University of Namibia.

There are many people in the University of Namibia (UNAM) and NIED with whom we discussed the original proposal for research and our findings. Their comments, criticisms and suggestions have contributed towards the final version of this report. The final responsibility for the conclusions, opinions and recommendations which this report contains remains with the undersigned.

Karsten Legère
Richard Trewby
Mariana Van Graan

ABBREVIATIONS

BETD	-	Basic Education Teachers Diploma
BES	-	Basic Education Support
CE	-	College of Education
CES	-	Centre for External Studies
DEAL	-	Diploma in Education (African Languages)
DSE	-	German Foundation for International Development
DTA	-	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
EMIS	-	Education Management Information Systems
ERNESA	-	Educational Research Network for Eastern and Southern Africa
FHSS	-	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
INSET	-	In-service training
LP	-	Lower Primary (school, Grades)
LWD	-	Language of wider distribution
MBESC	-	Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture
MOI	-	Medium of Instruction and Learning
MEC	-	Ministry of Education and Culture
MECYS	-	Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport
MT	-	Mother Tongue
MHETEC	-	Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation
NAMPEP	-	Namibia Primary English Programme
NELLP	-	Namibia Early Literacy and Language Project
NERA	-	Namibia Educational Research Association
NGO	-	Non-Govermental Organisation
NIED	-	National Institute for Educational Development
NLP	-	Namibia Literacy Programme
OAU	-	Organisation for African Unity
ODA	-	Overseas Development Administration
PAD	-	Directorate of Planning and Development
PRESET	-	Pre-service training
SACMEQ	-	South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADC	-	South African Development Corporation
SBS	-	School Based Studies
SIDA	-	Swedish International Development Agency
SIMs	-	Structured Instructional Materials
SWAPO	-	South West African Peoples' Organisation
TERP	-	Teacher Education Reform Programme
UCLES	-	University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate
UNAM	-	University of Namibia
UNIN	-	United Nation Institute for Namibia
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development
WASCOM	-	Wages and Salaries Commission

Executive summary

This summary is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of the research conducted but rather to highlight the main findings and the recommendations, so that interested persons, especially those responsible for determining education policy, may have easy access to them. The methods used to collect data and the rationale for the recommendations will be found in the body of the report.

This study consists of three sub-studies, called sub-studies A, B and C. These studies all deal with the implementation of the Namibian school language policy in the Lower Primary phase of schooling, although they focus on different aspects of the implementation. The sub-studies focus on issues ranging from language choice, proficiency levels in the Namibian languages to other aspects around Teacher Education and Development.

1. Summary of findings

Sub-study A: The choice of language as medium of instruction

1.1. Speakers of Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero, Setswana and San languages are disadvantaged by having fewer opportunities for using their own languages as the language of instruction in Grades One to Three.

1.2. 58 (31%) of schools using English or Afrikaans as the language of instruction in Lower Primary Grades, in the Windhoek, Khorixas and Keetmanshoop Regions, have more than 70% learners who speak the same language. In 37 the dominant group is Khoekhoegowab-speaking, in 13 schools it is Otjiherero-speaking and in 8 schools the dominant group speaks one of the San languages.

1.3. Learners who speak a language other than the dominant language in a school soon learn to use the dominant language in the classroom and in the playground.

1.4. Parents and teachers are not aware of the pedagogical advantages of using the home language as the medium of instruction in the first years of school.

1.5. The majority of schools where one language is dominant have sufficient teachers who speak that language to use it as the medium of instruction in at least some classes.

1.6. The Lower Primary teachers' knowledge of their own languages is often very limited.

Sub-study B: Language skills in lower primary schools in Ondangwa Educational Regions. Achievements and problems

1.7 In the dictation test compiled in both Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga, displaying a range of sounds frequently misspelt by Grades Two and Three, learners performed as follows:

72.7% of the total of 341 learners passed the test

In individual schools percentages of those failing as high as 56.5% and 51.1% were recorded. A failure rate of nearly 50% is considered inexcusable since the sounds tested should be mastered by learners at the end of Grade One (according to the syllabus), whereas the tests were only conducted for Grades Two and Three learners. In one extreme case, a Molteno school, none of the Grade Three learners failed, whereas in that same school there was another class where 51.1% of learners failed, the highest percentage in the test.

Dictation scores seem to be more an indicator of the individual teacher's commitment or general sound administration at a school rather than the result of the literacy programme implemented at the school.

1.8 57% of learners wrote a passable composition, message or letter, as required by the syllabus.

The teachers, who were the markers, had comments like the following:

-many learners didn't know how to put letters together (to form words)

-some learners didn't know where to put capitals, small letters, spacing of words and full stops.

The possibility was expressed by the advisory teachers that teachers' own level of competency in the official orthography influences their willingness to mark the learners' written exercises.

1.9 Little evidence was found of written dictation and composition writing in the exercise books.

1.10 Teachers for Lower Primary in this region still have low status because they are teaching through the Namibian languages. This is connected to the low status of the national languages, referred to in the background to this study, in that teachers and citizens feel marginalised because they are not proficient in the official language, English.

Adding to the perpetuation of the existing status of the national Namibian languages is the fact that English is the bread and butter language, which offers job security and opportunities in education as much as other sectors.

1.11 Inappropriate appointment of teachers is also found to be a source of concern in this study. In a teacher's own words, "I was made a LP (Lower Primary) teacher because people said you speak Oshiwambo..." , not considering that the same teacher needs formal knowledge of Oshiwambo to teach it and at the same time will also teach English.

Sub-study C: Student teacher preparation for literacy development in the lower primary phase of formal schooling

1.12 Except for 2, all the participants conceptualised literacy or being literate, equal to merely being able to read and write.

1.13 The reading observed in the majority of classes in this study was mechanical verbalising of the words, without establishing understanding of the meaning or context of the text.

1.14 In most classes one reading approach, favoured by the teacher, school or programme is used consistently in literacy classes.

1.15 Little evidence was found of teachers using remedial strategies when learners 'got stuck' in their reading.

1.16 The writing observed was predominantly copying and in many classrooms even the little writing that was done was not marked or corrected properly by teachers and learners. However, this was not the case in the classes visited in the Katutura schools.

1.17 In cases where teachers were questioned about learners' writing, many expressed their belief that the students are still too young to do free writing, where ideas are expressed.

1.18 In classes following the Namibia Early Literacy and Language (NELLP) programme, other forms of written expression were observed, like drawing.

1.19 Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) trained teachers demonstrate varying levels of awareness and application of reading approaches and strategies to use in formal reading and writing instruction.

1.20 Variation in levels of understanding and application of the literacy approaches and strategies are found across different cohorts and different Colleges of Education.

1.21 In some Namibian languages, Lower Primary BETD student teachers at Colleges of Education as well as mother tongue teachers are not all fully proficient in their languages, in the sense that the standard orthographies are not known and used consistently by all.

1.22 All the Namibian languages are not yet offered at Colleges of Education, for example Thimbukushu, Setswana and Ju/'hoasi.

1.23 Student teachers are admitted to the BETD with a grade in English, which is lower than desired.

1.24 Few teacher educators in all four Colleges of Education have the desired level of academic qualifications or level of experience appropriate for lecturing in the Lower Primary Departments.

1.25 Teacher educators do not receive the professional development, which they expressed as a need.

1.26 Colleges of Education prepare student teachers taking the Lower Primary minor option to teach the full Lower Primary phase in school (in half of the time allocated to students taking the major option)

1.27 In schools where structured reading programmes are used students get more opportunity to be exposed to interactive teaching from good and sufficient texts.

1.28 There is a lack of co-ordination among the different stakeholders working within the area of literacy in the Lower Primary grades of formal schooling. This confuses teachers as to which reading approaches are more effective.

1.29 There is a serious lack of readers in many Lower Primary classrooms, especially in the so-called Northern regions.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Language policy implementation

A. All schools should teach as a subject the language of the majority of the learners and those other languages in the school where there are sufficient speakers of that language to form a complete class.

B. Where more than 80% of the learners in Grades One to Three speak the same language, that language should be used as the medium of instruction.

2.2 Pre-service education

A. The colleges should ensure that the Lower Primary teachers they produce are capable of teaching through the medium of their own language.

B. Student teachers should be admitted to the Lower Primary course only if they are literate and proficient in at least one Namibian language besides English. If, however, a college admits students who have not reached these requirements, it is suggested that such students be admitted only if the particular College of Education can support them through their language departments outside the normal timetable.

C. Colleges of Education should establish realistic benchmarks of what a good pass in English constitutes, especially now that more student teachers with better grades apply for the BETD.
D. Students should be admitted to specialise in Lower Primary only if they show real interest and aptitude in elementary teaching.
E. The Curriculum Coordinating Group (CCG) should establish which learning areas to specialise in, as far as the Lower Primary minor option is concerned. Two possible areas are Numeracy and Literacy, which are learning areas considered by some as "the curriculum for infant or early primary schools" Richard J. Kraft (2000).
F. Once a decision is made, the CCG clarifies the issue around Lower Primary minor option in the Broad Curriculum document.
G. The MBESC and Regional Offices should be informed by NIED about the above conclusion, as this would have consequences for employing these particular teachers to teach in the Lower Primary phase.
H. It is strongly suggested that the Rundu College of Education takes responsibility to offer Thimbukushu, not only as an option in the language curriculum, but as a support to those Thimbukushu speaking student teachers who enter the Lower Primary BETD Programme, as many of them might still need support (the language being offered up to Grade Twelve level only since 1999).
I. With many BETD graduates entering the teaching field now, regional offices should make an effort to place newly qualified teachers according to their specialisation. This implies not placing specialist Lower Primary teachers in other phases, as well as not placing (minor option) Lower Primary graduates into Lower Primary.
J. Colleges of Education should recommend appropriately trained candidates, with appropriate experience, to be appointed as teacher educators, in Lower Primary departments in the Colleges of Education.
K. The MHETEC should reconsider the minimum qualifications required for teacher educators, which is similar to a teacher’s, at (T4A level 1) according to the Wages and Salaries Commission (WASCOM), p. 59. It is strongly suggested that these minimum qualifications be compared and in the future be brought in line with the Southern African Development Corporation (SADC) and other developing countries’ requirements.

L. Suitable teacher educators should be appointed temporarily if they do not possess the minimum qualifications, with the understanding that they embark upon upgrading their qualifications within a negotiated period of time, preferably in the area of specialisation for which they were appointed.

2.3 Professional development

A. The Ministry should arrange training for Lower Primary teachers presently in the system, particularly those in the schools dealt with in sub-study A, so that they can teach through the medium of their home language.

B. The teachers' own knowledge of the correct orthographies needs to be strengthened through in-service training (INSET), which implies allocation of resources to that area by regional offices and NIED.

C. Namibian African languages should be adequately developed so that they can be fully acknowledged as media of instruction in the Lower Primary phase. This implies the upgrading of the language proficiency of speakers of these languages as well.

D. UNAM should offer specialisation programme(s) in Elementary Education where Lower Primary teacher educators and teachers can enter a further diploma/degree/ post-graduate programme in the area of elementary education. This has the potential to alleviate the shortage of appropriately qualified teacher educators, as well as give Lower Primary teachers an opportunity to specialise further in this particular area.

E. As NIED develops the BETD curriculum, as well as it being the potential locus for future education development and support or continuous professional development activities, it is suggested that NIED co-ordinates an INSET programme of ongoing professional development for teacher educators, whereas the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation (MHETEC) takes responsibility for the budgetary implications of such a programme.

2.4 Methods and materials

A. The Ministry should ensure that instructional materials of a high quality are available in all the Namibian languages.

B. Dictation of short texts in Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga should be practised and assessed on a continuous basis more frequently for developing competence in this writing skill. Dictation of words displaying digraphs or letter combinations should

feature high on the classroom agenda. The same is true for practising disjunctive writing for verbs and the demonstration of correct spacing in word groups, as suggested in the syllabus. This should be monitored by both school management and advisory teachers.

C. Peer assessment of written tests could be done to enhance learners' own accuracy and sense of responsibility, as well as to save teachers' marking time.
D. Although the communicative approach to language teaching is prescribed, grammar teaching is important for understanding the orthographical conventions in Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga.
E. A policy intervention like implementing a structured instructional programme like the Structured Instructional Materials (SIMs) and Namibia Early Literacy and Language Programme (NELLP) should be retained by the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture (MBESC) after the life of the project, until such time that Lower Primary teachers are better trained and the Ministry has a more appropriate programme in place.
F. The time might be ripe that more thorough research is done to monitor the impact of the reading programmes (SIMs material and NELLP) in terms of learner outcomes. Such findings should impact on decisions made by the MBESC when investing in future literacy programmes. To investigate the long-term effects of literacy programmes, a variable could be added to the next South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) study as to how NELLP or SIMs schools fare in SAQMEC, compared to schools offering no structured programme.
G. It is strongly recommended that relevant professional staff at regional offices make sure that teachers understand that there is no one 'best' method or set of materials to successful reading instruction, and that there is a need to be eclectic according to learners' individual needs.
H. The disparities among different areas and schools within the same area need to be addressed, especially in the supply of core materials like readers and desks. Furthermore, learners need to be exposed to more than merely core readers in order to become fully literate.

1. Background

1.1 Linguistic Situation and Language Policy

Like many other countries of the world and especially those in Africa, the Republic of Namibia is a multiethnic and hence multilingual and multicultural country. Her 1,6 million inhabitants speak linguistic varieties[1] which belong to three major language phylae, namely Niger-Congo, Khoisan and Indo-European. So far, there is no comprehensive and reliable overview of the number of these linguistic varieties as well as their speakers. Thus, the 1991 population census (Namibia 1994) in some cases remains rather vague by avoiding names of both ethnic groups and languages. For example the census just speaks globally of Kavango languages or Caprivi languages, although in Kavango there are at least five linguistic varieties, that is Rukwangali, Rumbunza, Rushambyu, Rugciriku (or Rumanyo as it is now called) and Thimbukushu, while the linguistic situation in Caprivi has to account for Silozi, Sifwe, Cisubiya, Siyeyi, etcetera.[2] In documents of the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports (MBECS) such as the annual EMIS statistics a more detailed list of names is presented. Nonetheless, the exact number of linguistic varieties spoken in the country is still to be ascertained, as in particular the number and linguistic status of minority languages of the Khoisan family is unknown. For the latter the xenonym "Bushmen" is used in some documents, while others use the term "San". In both cases, the speakers of the languages reject these terms for being pejorative.

For educational purposes, that is as medium of instruction in lower primary schools (grades 1-3) and subsequently as school subjects, the following linguistic varieties henceforth called "school languages"[3] have been earlier recognised:

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[1]This term is more neutral than "language" and "dialect", as the linguistic status of a number of varieties is still to be defined. Thus, linguistically, Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama are not languages on their own (as Oshikwanyama is understood by Oshindonga speakers - and vice versa - without being learnt), but dialects which belong to a group/cluster of linguistic varieties classified as Oshiwambo. In sociolinguistic terms one may accept people's understanding of these varieties as languages, although even here the term "linguistic variety" is well founded and more appropriate.

[2]See Chamberlain (1993:10-11 and Appendix 8) and Maho (1998: 40-45 and 48-51).

[3]The terminology used in MBECS documents varies, similarly terms like "mother tongues", or "first languages" (e.g. in secondary phase) are found. None of these terms is exact enough to cover the different status of the linguistic varieties used in school. Thus, Oshindonga is

Khoekhoegowab (previously called Nama/Damara)
Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama (of the Oshiwambo family of varieties)
Otjiherero,
Rukwangali, Rugciriku (now called Rumanyo), Thimbukushu
Setswana,
Silozi,
Ju/'hoan,
Afrikaans,
English,
German.[4]

The Namibian approach to the linguistic situation with respect to the "school languages" is selective, as there are a number of linguistic varieties which are excluded from the formal domain of education. Accordingly, this selection of school languages is not a complete reflection of the linguistic setup[5] which, however, is not discussed here further, as the research has mainly focused on some aspects of how the existing "school languages" are used in lower primary grades. Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to consider also the issue of whether the number of these school languages is valid, might be reduced or needs to be expanded. But this could be the subject of another research project.

As the official language, English, as stipulated in the Constitution of Namibia in Article 3 (1), enjoys a privileged position throughout the Republic, although the number of its mother tongue speakers is very low. For quantitative reasons English would even qualify as a minority language, while in terms of its dominant role in official and formal domains no other language is equal to English. This official status strongly enhances the growing spread of English as a language of wider communication (lingua franca) even for informal domains. In

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neither the mother tongue of many learners nor their first language e.g. in lower primary grades. The same is true for Silozi whose status of being spoken as a mother tongue in this country is questioned by language experts like Mbala or Elderkin. For details see Legère (1998).

[4]Source MEC (1993c:5/6).

[5]Comp. e.g. the intervention from Caprivi (in Legère 1996) where the introduction of Cisubiya and Siyeyi as MOI was suggested

the past this position was occupied by Afrikaans which was estimated to be understood by 70 percent of Namibians.[6]

The linguistic situation in Namibia has largely been manipulated during the long period of foreign domination which formally started in 1884 with the establishment of what was called "German South West Africa" (until 1915) and continued with the South African domination which ended in 1990. In fact, the quasi-colonial South African administration of the country played an extremely negative role in this respect by importing the South African system of racial segregation (apartheid) which was aimed at perpetuating White supremacy. An important element within the apartheid system was education, the implementation of which was meant to keep the educational standards in most African schools low and consonant with the apartheid ideology.[7] Education of non-white children was targeted to provide cheap manpower with a minimum of educational qualification as well as some knowledge of Afrikaans and (after 1980) English. After starting schooling for the first four years of education in a national language, the MOI became Afrikaans for the remainder of the primary grades and the whole of secondary education. However, in the Caprivi region, the language of instruction after the lower primary grades was always English and in 1981, the schools in what was then called 'Ovamboland' also changed from Afrikaans medium to English medium. A number of other schools also changed to English medium in the eighties, in response to demands from learners and teachers for the use of the 'language of liberation'[8] instead of the 'language of oppression'.

Within the apartheid ideology language was used to

> a) classify people into tribal entities with traditional leaders, so-called second-tier institutions, as an attempt to counterbalance modern socio-economic processes like integration and assimilation as well as to instil tribal consciousness as opposed to national identity;

[6]Comp. Zimmermann (1984:184) and Maho (1998: 190) on this issue. Current figures for Afrikaans as a lingua franca are not available.

[7]For so-called White schools the expenditure for each student in 1986/7 was 3213 Rand, for so-called "Ovamboland" per student only R 329 were available (Source NANTU 1998, quoted in Katonyala 1999:18).

[8]According to Chamberlain (1993:3) a slogan coined by SWAPO supporters.

b) isolate then South West Africa from other African countries (except South Africa) and the rest of the world by imposing Afrikaans as the official language.

Language planning and its two constituents, that is status planning and corpus planning, were made to serve this end and to focus on implementing the principles which were set out by the regimes ruling the country. In public the regime pledged its support for promoting national languages, making recommendations such as those found in the Report of the Odendaal Commission of 1958 which argued for

"literacy in his/her native language as a means of communication and of preserving pride in his/her national traditions..."

but subsequently demanding

"literacy in the official language as a means of communication with the Europeans...."[9]

The National Education Act of 1980 referred to "the universally accepted educational principle" regarding the role of the mother tongue in the cognitive development of the child as the major reason for supporting the use of national languages in lower primary grades. However, as this principle was embedded in the apartheid ideology the divisive element of instruction in national languages became more important than the educational benefits. A fundamental critique of the role of languages under the apartheid system has been made by Heugh (1995:1-3) for South Africa. As the Namibian system was just a replica of the latter, Heugh's assessment is also highly relevant to the situation before independence.

The de-facto results of the quasi-colonial rule before independence were the enforced status of Afrikaans as the official language, while English was relegated to a rather insignificant role in formal domains. The development of national languages which had always been neglected since Namibia became a colony was stagnating at the grassroots. Their role in the country was undermined by being instruments of second-class education "with an impoverished curriculum" (Heugh 1995:2) and artificially upgraded media in second-tier institutions established by the illegal South African administration. Speakers of national languages were expected to learn the basics of imposed languages[10] and to speak it. The linguistic varieties

[9]quoted in Amukogo (1993:61).

[10]This resulted in an extra learning load as African children were exposed to three languages , i.e. the school language, Afrikaans as well as English.

spoken by the African majority in Namibia were not systematically developed to cope with the role they should and could play in a modern society. They had no value in the job market, where Afrikaans, or sometimes English, was in high demand. These facts contributed towards the deteriorating position of national languages as well as the emergence of negative attitudes towards them among their speakers.

One hundred years of foreign rule and in particular the South African occupation produced an educationally underdeveloped majority. The country was dependent on White expertise and know-how in most public domains including the education sector. Personnel for senior positions in government and in educational institutions were recruited from among the white minority in Namibia or South Africa. Outside the central area of the country, recruitment reflected the discrimination to which second tier institutions, including the ethnic educational authorities, were exposed and which was referred to above. Accordingly, most Namibians were kept in a semi-literate or even illiterate position, while only a few privileged benefited from being educated in the country.

Before independence the national liberation movement spearheaded by SWAPO paid particular attention to education both in the conceptual and the practical area. SWAPO established schools in exile in Angola, Zambia, and the Congo, sent cadres for training and studies to countries which supported the liberation struggle and was very active in formulating its own education policy in exile so that when liberation was achieved an educational programme would be implemented to overcome the racist educational set up. Material which mainly emanated from the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka dealt with issues such as a national education system, the structure of the education system, and the implementation of educational programmes.
The liberation movement established the following educational priorities already in its 1976 political programme:

- training of technical and professional staff at tertiary level,
- work-oriented comprehensive education and adult literacy programmes,
- free universal education from primary up to tertiary education and emphasis on teacher training,
- developing cultural creativeness.[11]

[11]quoted in: UNIN (1984:24).

Given the complex linguistic situation of Namibia and its manipulation by apartheid protagonists, particular attention was paid by SWAPO and UNIN to language policy issues. Namibia was indeed one of those rare countries which, prior to independence, discussed in detail the pro's and con's of various languages for an official language in an independent country. The comprehensive debate which was held at UNIN in 1980 concluded that English should be promulgated as the official language.[12] A number of arguments were brought forward to substantiate this decision.

A critical review of the UNIN document (UNIN 1981) from a perspective of those years (Legère 1983) drew attention to the bottlenecks which could be foreseen in implementing this decision, and that the adoption of one official language might seriously affect the status of other languages. This is exactly what has happened and it has lead to serious problems in formal education and in other domains where people now feel marginalised and second class citizens because they are not competent in the official language. This situation has arisen in spite of the fact that at the UNIN Conference and on other occasions the importance of national languages was recognized by SWAPO. For example, on the eve of the first free elections the SWAPO Election Manifesto of 1989 underscored the principles of its language policy which had been previously accepted by saying:

"LANGUAGE POLICY

> The Namibian nation is made up of the cultural and linguistic heritage of its various groups. Democratic Namibia will be enriched by all which is healthy in this heritage. A SWAPO government will therefore pursue a language policy that accords equal status and respect to all locally spoken languages. The new policy will redress the present injustice whereby the German and South African colonial states have placed emphasis on the teaching, development and use of German and Afrikaans at the expense of all other local languages, such as, Damara/Nama, Kuangari, Otjiherero, Oshiwambo, Silozi, etcetera., [which] will be improved to a satisfactory standard. **Mother language will be used as the medium of instruction at the lower primary school level. The concern here is not with so-called group identity or ethnic consciousness and**

[12]This conference, however, just corroborated previous views such as those found already in the 1975 SWAPO draft of a Namibian constitution where the official status of English in Namibia was identified.

> **exclusivity, as has been the case with the apartheid colonial regime, but with the fulfilment of cognitive and communicative functions. Since it is through the mother languages that infants first acquire social habits, manners, feelings, tastes, skills and other cultural norms, it is important that their formal schooling starts with those languages of everyday life at home**" (our emphasis - SWAPO 1989:6).[13]

To sum up, before independence SWAPO made its views and principles regarding the role of languages and linguistic varieties in Namibia publicly known by explicitly referring to the following issues:

1. English was selected as the future official language;
2. Afrikaans was to be relegated from an official language to the same level all other non-official languages were supposed to share;
3. National languages were promised adequate development and their status as media of instruction for lower primary grades was reconfirmed.

The critical issues which were obviously not properly taken into consideration or underrated by political activists, language advisers and consultants, education experts and other stakeholders were as follows:

1. The spread of English in Namibia was seen as a matter which should be mainly dealt with by the education system. However, most human resources needed for this nation-wide programme (teachers, facilitators) were Afrikaans-speaking or trained in Afrikaans and had low competence in English.
2. Upgrading national languages was a promise which was made without solidly knowing the state of affairs such as the fact that human resources were scarce, almost no research in these languages had been conducted, etcetera. Similarly, the negative attitudes towards Namibian languages, resulting from the restricted use of national languages under apartheid and their marginalisation, were completely underrated. In Namibian society, these languages were

[13]However note that the 1994 SWAPO's Plan of Action (for the elections) neither refers to the implementation of this language policy statement nor elaborates on any activity in this field for the years to come.

-seen as a divisive and conservative element to keep people uneducated and isolated from others,

- found useless, as the “bread and butter” languages were Afrikaans and, to a certain extent, English,

-underdeveloped, since the exclusion from most formal domains kept language development at a very low level.

3. The generally inadequate level of teacher training in second-tier institutions was in particular insufficient for lower primary teachers where national languages were the medium of instruction. Many of these teachers were appointed after Standard 5 (Grade 7), went through some weeks of job orientation, which could not be called “teacher training”, and sent to schools. One misconception was also prevalent in those years before 1990 and unfortunately persists to date, that speaking a language qualifies anybody with a minimum of training for teaching in lower primary grades![14]

The SWAPO position with regard to the country’s languages has become and remained Government policy as SWAPO has won all elections until now. From time to time Government officials reiterate existing views, but seldom question their relevance or implementation. The prominent role of English in Namibia as the country’s official language was debated in Parliament, when the 1991 population census figures for English mother tongue speakers were released. In view of this information "...some parliamentarians said that these low figures made it ridiculous therefore to have English as the official language". In response the then Acting Prime Minister Pohamba is quoted by the press as having made the following statement:

> "...government did not prohibit members of Parliament from coming up with ideas on the language policy in Namibia which ... could be done either through public debates or a motion in the National Assembly... schools were free to use

[14]The view that “anyone who can speak a language can teach successfully via that language” is strongly rejected by Tucker (1996:9) who calls it a “myth... relatively firmly entrenched in the minds of many parents, educators and policy makers”. Strangely enough, this myth is mainly found in Third World countries. In Europe or in the United States nobody would expect a mother tongue speaker to do the job as a language teacher without relevant formal training.

> any other language provided they complied with requirements as imposed by the law to ensure proficiency in the official language."[15]

Language policy issues were on the agenda of the National Assembly at the end of October 1995, when the opposition party, Monitor Action Group,[16] introduced in parliament a Namibia Languages Bill. According to the press, this Bill stipulates "that all Namibian languages should be official,[17] with the provisos that English be the national language[18] and that the language spoken by the majority in a particular region should accompany English in schools, business and government". In responding, both the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology and the Deputy Minister of Basic Education rejected this bill. The latter argued "a law giving precedence to a language spoken by the majority in a particular region would exclude other learners..." Reference was made to the implementation of the language policy for schools which aims "...at ensuring proficiency and promoting all national languages".[19]

A number of recommendations regarding language policy with particular reference to Namibia were made at the April 2000 Conference “Language and Development in Southern Africa. Making the right choices”. These include policy issues as well as status matters:

- There should be a comprehensive Language Policy which includes the role of all the languages in the country and their use in formal domains, that is the role of African languages in all government-controlled domains such as administration, law courts, media, parastatals, health, educational institutions, parliament, etcetera.

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[15]All quotations from Windhoek Advertiser 16/7/1994.

[16]During the debate DTA supported the motion. Its member Phillemon Moongo asked: “When are we going to promote our indigenous languages?” (quoted in New Era 2-8 November 1995: 3).

[17]This is similar to the South African model which in the then draft constitution adds all national languages to the previous two official languages English and Afrikaans.

[18]A confusing, inexact term here (authors).

[19]All quotations in this paragraph are from The Namibian, Oct. 27, 1995, p. 3. For further details of this Language Bill and the discussion see also New Era 2-8 November 1995: 3 (Languages Bill Gets Stiff Reaction).

- There should be a Language Act which would regulate the use of languages in all Government departments and their use in electronic and printed media.
- An independent statutory language board should be established to monitor the implementation of the language policy, the protection of language rights and the promotion and coordination of language development.
- The decentralisation process should include the listing of local languages for use in administrative, judicial and legislative processes.
- The language policy must be explicit and be based on objective language surveys. Such surveys must include questions on home language and other languages known well, and should form an integral part of all the future censuses in the country.
- In order to improve the status of African languages, government must make a certificate in an African language a requirement of the Public Service Commission for a job in government.
- In order to ensure optimum communication between the government and the people, government officials should use an African language where possible.
- In order for African languages to be enforced in formal domains and in society, a Task Force should be established, composed of representatives from various ministries, government institutions and other stakeholders, and charged with the responsibility of launching a National Languages Awareness Campaign.

From the discussion and recommendations above it could be concluded that in Namibia, as in many other African states, issues of language policy have not been comprehensively addressed. As human language is omnipresent in and pertinent to all facets of societal communication, the limited scope of the Namibian language policy is widely felt. The selective approach to the linguistic situation results in the overemphasis of the role of English which is glorified as a symbol of national unity. However, national unity is not brought about by a language which is used nationwide, and there have been a number of threats to national unity since independence. Simultaneously, a growing number of speakers of other languages in Namibia are worried about the future as there is no noticeable official initiative to stop and reverse the tendency of their languages being neglected and marginalised.

In fact, the result of the implementation of the language policy has produced a strong emphasis on English which has automatically become a high status language as the result of

being stipulated by the Constitution. Its prescribed use for legislative, executive and judicial matters, that is in the National Assembly, in Government and administration as well as in the law courts, illustrates its official status. In state-controlled domains, such as education, radio and television, and in parastatal companies and business, a similar high status is observed. Thus, the ordinary person, who is not or only partly conversant with the official language, lacks adequate access to written or verbal information which is conveyed in English. On the other hand, the status and use of particular national languages is reduced to a few state-controlled domains such as education, culture, and in the mass media as well as in various grassroots projects.

1.2 Education and Languages as MOI and Subjects

As the main focus of this report is on the role of languages in education with particular reference to lower primary grades and teacher training, the following section summarises issues which pertain to educational matters in relation to language policy implementation in these domains.

From 1990, the Government has given the highest priority to providing education to all. Thus, the Constitution, Article 20 stipulates: "All persons shall have the right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident…." The outstanding role of education has also been emphasised by President Nujoma who stated in 1993:

"...since independence my Government has placed education at the top of our national priorities. It is the key to better life and, therefore, fundamentally important. Consequently, access to education...should be open to all those who need it - especially children..." (MEC, 1993a:i).

Accordingly, each year, between 25 and 30% of the national budget is allocated to the Ministries of Education, making Namibia's per capita expenditure on education the third largest in Africa.

Inheriting a system of education which was manifestly inequitable and unjust, depriving many children of a decent education, the Government has identified four major goals for education, equity, access, quality and democracy, and has channelled its efforts into their attainment. All reform initiatives can be seen to be directed towards these four goals.

Consonant with this position and in view of SWAPO's pre-independence deliberations and decisions as well as UNIN's contributions, the then Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport initiated a comprehensive, far-reaching reform of the education system which focused on:

- Unifying the eleven different education authorities;
- The reform of basic education (Grades One to Ten);
- Language Policy reform;[20]
- Introducing the IGCSE examination system at Grade 12;
- The reform of pre-service teacher training.[21]

Basic education is understood as the ten-year cycle of education provided in schools from Grades One to Ten, with the first external examination coming at the end of Grade Ten. Grades One to Four are called the Lower Primary phase, Grades Five to Seven are Upper Primary and Grades Eight to Ten are junior secondary, at the end of which learners sit for the Junior Secondary Certificate. Basic education aims

2 "to promote functional literacy and language development,
3 to help the learners to communicate effectively in speech and writing in English and in another language of Namibia
4 to provide instruction as far as possible through the medium of the mother tongue during the first three years of Basic Education, and to provide for the further development of proficiency in the mother tongue, and
5 to develop competence in English as the official language for the purposes of education and public life
6 functional numeracy and mathematical thinking..." (MECa 1993:56)

The implementation of the language policy in education started already in 1990 with giving "broad directives for language choices as medium of instruction and subject at school level"

[20]The Ministry's term is used here. What is meant, however, is language planning with reference to status changes as well as corpus development supporting these status changes.

[21]A comprehensive account of the Government's reform initiatives can be found in the book 'Toward Education for All - A Development Brief for Education Culture and Training' (MEC 1993a).

and by identifying the schools "to play their role in establishing the use of English as the official language" (MEC 1993a:63). The first Ministry policy directive which included issues of language was 'Education in Transition: Nurturing Our Future' (MECYS 1990) which laid down general guidelines for the use of languages in primary education, and identified English as the medium of instruction from 1991 at junior secondary level. This marked the first step in the replacement of Afrikaans as an official language and medium of instruction. At lower primary level the 'home language' was to be used as medium as well as being a subject of instruction, while in the upper primary phase English medium should be introduced either 'fully or partially'. In the following year a technical committee on language policy was established and circulated a draft language policy for comment. After feedback from all regions and interested parties, the policy was published as an annexe to 'Education and Culture in Namibia: the Way Forward to 1996' (MEC 1991). It was subsequently published as a separate booklet *The Language Policy for Schools, 1992 - 6 and Beyond* (Longman 1993). This policy document reflected the decision already made and implemented to use English as the medium of instruction at secondary level, but at the upper primary level provided for the introduction of English medium gradually subject by subject in step with the reform of the curriculum, until English would be used as the language of instruction in all subjects from Grade Four upwards. On the medium of instruction at the lower primary level, the document advocates the use of the home language of learners as medium, but permits the use of English as an alternative.

Subsequently, language policy matters relevant to education were discussed in a programmatic meeting, the so-called Ongwediva Conference 1992, which paved the way for a comprehensive understanding of the role schools have to play in teaching the official language as well as selected national languages. According to Chamberlain (1993:4), the aim of the conference was to "sensitise the public, spread information, and allow feedback on needs and priorities for policy implementation". This is critically commented upon in an article by J. Mutumba, a lecturer at Ongwediva College of Education, published both in New Era (1999, 1-8 April: 9) and NIED's Reform Forum (April 1999), where the author draws attention to the fact that many of those who were requested to support Government's decision felt (or were) incompetent. Hence, the blessings of the Ongwediva Conference for implementing the language policy are said to be not well founded and lack substantial insight into the problems involved. What is important, however, are some fundamental statements made by the then

Minister Angula at the conference about the status and use of national languages in school, such as:

"5.2 Our Language Policy in Schools attempts... to achieve the following goals:

- During the seven years of the Primary cycle, education should foster reasonable acquisition and command of the Official Language and prepare learners for the English medium of instruction throughout the Secondary cycle.
- Education should promote language and cultural identity of the children through the use of the home language as a medium of instruction, at least at the Lower Primary, and the teaching of the home language throughout general education.
- Schools are free to organise co-curricular activities to promote any language and culture.
- Private schools may throughout the Primary School cycle use any other language as a medium of instruction provided that they will offer at least one indigenous language as a subject.
- State schools or State-subsidised schools wishing to teach non-promotional subjects at the Primary cycle through the home language are free to do so provided that such an approach would not promote intercultural tension and conflict in a school.
- Ideally, schools should offer at least two languages as subjects. Children who are not in a position to cope with such a requirement may be exempted or take a non-official language as a non-examinable subject.
- Beyond Primary level the medium of instruction for all schools shall be the Official language...

6.2 For the purpose of timetabling, learning and instructional process in schools, all National Languages (home languages and mother tongues) are regarded as equal and at par with each other. Thus, all National Languages will receive equal treatment in the official school programme in State or State-subsidised schools. Language hegemony is in conflict with the equality principle enshrined in our Constitution...

6.4 The development of the National Languages should receive due attention. Such development will include:

. codification;

. development of lexicographical reference materials;
. development of literature in National Languages;
. continuous research into National Languages;

. elevating the hitherto neglected National Languages to equal status and value with other National Languages" (Angula 1993b:19-21).

In addition, the following aspects were presented in a condensed version in the 1993 MEC document:

- the equality of all national languages,
- the ideal for learners to study through their own language particularly in the early years of schooling,
- the promotion of the language and cultural identity of the learners,
- the promotion of English as the official language of the nation,
- the enhancement of unity.[22]

Language policy matters are also included in a discussion document titled "Language Policy at the Colleges of Education" (MEC 1994b). However, the main features of this material are identical with those of the Ongwediva Conference (MEC 1993b) quoted above.

A slightly expanded version of the priorities which are derived from previous documents is given by Hon J. Mutorwa who as the Minister of Basic Education and Culture stressed:

> "1. The equality of all national languages regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language.
> 2. All language policies must consider the cost of implementation, in particular the economic/financial cost.
> 3. The fact that language is a means of transmitting culture and cultural identity.
> 4. The fact that for pedagogical reasons, it is ideal for learners to study through their own language, particularly in the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing and concept formation are acquired.

[22]see MEC (1993a:65).

> 5. The need for learners to be proficient enough in English, the official language, at the end of the 7 year primary school cycle either to gain access to further education or to be effective participants in society..."[23]

On another occasion, Minister Mutorwa had this to say:

> "Namibia has made it clear that it adheres to the principle of bilingual education which embraces, on the one hand, English and, on the other, a number of Namibian languages as well as Afrikaans and German. Thus, in adult education and in the schools, great emphasis is put on Namibian languages which are used as the medium of instruction in Stages I and II of Functional Literacy classes for adults, and in Grades 1 to 3 in Primary schools. In addition, several of them continue to be taught as a subjects up to matric or even University level."

In Namibian schools substantial donor support after 1990 facilitated the switch-over to English as the medium of instruction and learning in schools. This included language training workshops for teachers primarily of upper grades, the provision of teaching aids and textbooks, bursaries for studies overseas, and the secondment of English language teachers from other countries. The economic power of English-speaking countries made a gradual improvement of English proficiency among teachers of all grades possible. Nonetheless, much still remains to be done in particular for teachers and learners in the primary phase in rural areas where English is not spoken at all and remains a foreign language.

National languages were far less fortunate in getting support and being given attention. To date the priority of language training in school has been with English, as could be recognised from the multitude of activities with regard to the official language. The first contribution to improve the quality of teaching national languages was an initiative funded by the British ODA which was designed to improve English language skills in the long run. The Molteno Project, a South African organisation which based its materials on 'Breakthrough to Literacy', a British Schools Council project designed in the late 1960s, recognised that literacy in the mother tongue was a prerequisite for developing English language skills and so introduced intensive mother tongue literacy materials for Grade One. These were developed in 1991 in

[23]Mutorwa in Legère (1996:8-9).

Oshindonga[24] and Rukwangali, and introduced into a few selected schools in 1992. Subsequently Molteno courses have been developed in Silozi, Oshikwanyama, Otjiherero, Rugciriku and Khoekhoegowab, and are now being developed in Ju/'hoan. However the effect of these materials is limited since they are expensive and the Ministry cannot afford to provide them for all schools.

A second initiative was aimed at improving the qualifications of examiners, curriculum specialists, advisory teachers and senior teachers of Namibian languages by introducing through the University a Diploma in Education for African Languages, which was designed as a distance education course to be taken over two years with four one-week periods of face-to-face tuition. Originally funded by the Swedish Government through SIDA from 1992, this programme is now self-financing and approximately 50 teachers register for the course each year. However, since the requirement for entry is a Grade 12 certificate, most teachers at lower primary level are unable to register and remain without a qualification in their medium of instruction.

The Ministry's policy was to introduce changes in the curriculum progressively, starting with the junior secondary phase, then the senior secondary and upper primary phases at the same time, and finally the lower primary phase. During these reforms the Ministry attempted to provide equal status to all Namibian languages. Thus examinations were provided for all the 'school languages' at junior secondary level, and when the Ministry adopted the University of Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGSCE) examinations in 1995, examination syllabuses were developed for all languages which were taught up to Grade Twelve. At that time no schools taught Rugciriku, Otjiherero, Khoekhoegowab or Thimbukushu at that level, but IGCSE examinations have now been provided for these languages. In addition, languages like Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Rukwangali and Silozi have also become subjects for the University of Cambridge Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGSCE) examinations.

The education reform process did not begin to affect the lower primary grades until 1996, when new syllabuses and materials were implemented in Grade One. Until then there had been very little change in those grades as the emphasis had been on the higher grades and

[24]See the paper by Amweele in Legère (1996).

introducing new materials and methods in those grades. The implementation has progressed year by year from Grade One in 1996 to Grade Four in 1999. During this process Grade Four was moved from the upper primary phase to the lower primary phase, and the use of class teachers advised instead of subject teachers to enable the changeover to English medium to be gradually implemented throughout the year by the one teacher. As part of the reform, new syllabuses were developed for national languages at lower primary level (MBEC NIED 1996). Based on an English model, the syllabus for each school language was subsequently translated and adapted as necessary by specialists in each language.

In order to assist the reform at lower primary level, USAID funded the Basic Education Support Project (BES), which developed materials consisting of teacher's guides, posters and readers for teaching Maths, Social Studies and Literacy in Grades One to Three. The Project was aimed at poorly qualified teachers in the four northern education regions of the country, and so instructional materials were developed according to systematic design principles which provided maximum support to the teachers. They were made available in five languages, Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama, Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Silozi, and have been distributed to approximately 500 schools in those regions. Teachers with very little training have found the materials and training provided with them very useful, while those with better training have found them restrictive. The evaluation of the project has shown that the teachers using the materials provided an improved learner-centred classroom and used methods designed to promote learning among their children[25].

After independence concern was building up about the neglect of Namibian languages in comparison to English. This was reflected in a Workshop on African Languages in Basic Education which was organised in 1995 at the National Institute of Educational Development in close cooperation with a German organisation, the German Foundation for International Development (DSE). This workshop was a first attempt at striking a balance and evaluating the position and promotion of national languages after 1990. All languages taught in school including Ju/'hoan were critically reviewed, achievements praised and existing problems highlighted. The list of the latter which transpired from the papers read and the workshop discussion is rather long. This culminated in the recommendations which along with other

[25] See the paper by Makuwa and Snyder in Snyder et al (1999)

observations were a substantial input to the formulation and design of this research project. Some recommendations which bear a direct relevance in this respect follow below:

"A ATTITUDES TO AFRICAN LANGUAGES

1. MBEC should mount an awareness campaign to inform stakeholders of the advantages of home language as the medium of instruction, and the benefits of studying the home language as a subject.
2. The Ministry's policy of home language as the medium of instruction from Grades 1 to 3 should be re-emphasised and vigorously enforced.
3. Studies should be made to compare the progress of children in mother tongue medium classes with the progress of children in English medium classes.
4. An African language should be a compulsory pass requirement for all external examinations, as soon as the necessary curricula, materials and teachers are available.
5. An African language should be a compulsory promotion subject in all schools, either as a home language or as a second language, as soon as the necessary curricula, materials and teachers are available.
6. Schools in urban areas should introduce one or two African languages where the number of speakers is sufficient....

C TOWARDS BETTER CURRICULA

... 6. Particular emphasis should be placed on teaching and on acquiring reading and writing skills. However, while a broad curriculum may be proposed for African languages the syllabuses should be language-specific, guiding the teacher on the gradual introduction of digraphs and trigraphs, etcetera.

D TOWARDS BETTER TEACHER TRAINING

1. Teacher training institutions should admit sufficient students to ensure an adequate output of trained teachers for Lower Primary grades.
2. Courses in Linguistics in African Languages should be made available at UNAM.
3. To encourage people to join the profession, bursary awards and other incentives should be awarded to trainee teachers and students of Linguistics and African Languages.
4. As an incentive to those already in the profession, due recognition should be accorded their expertise, experience, and ability to train others and produce educational materials in African languages.

5. During teacher training in an African language, teaching practice should be conducted in those geographic areas where the language is spoken...
6. More frequent and better in-service training opportunities should be provided to encourage teachers of African languages and improve their confidence and effectiveness.
7. Molteno and similar projects should contribute to teacher training by having (trainee) teachers visit them, become aware of, and imitate their methods.
8. Funds should be found for the training of language experts in general linguistics.
9. Teachers should support each other through study circles, research groups and union activities.
10. Motivation for teachers in rural lower primary schools should be provided through recognition of their expertise in the mother tongue and their previous experiences, and by extending the "privation package" to lower primary teachers in rural areas."[26]

A second workshop was held in Okahandja in 1996 for the Cross-Border languages of Namibia (Oshikwanyama, Silozi and Setswana) with participation of delegates from Angola, Botswana, South Africa and Zambia.[27] The Namibian papers dealing with these languages reported among others on the situation in schools which were visited in the preparation of the workshop. Hence, a number of critical issues which were, to a large extent, also relevant for other languages, were identified.

In 1998 another series of workshops (jointly organised and funded by NIED and DSE) on national (school) languages began. The general focus was on classroom interaction/learner centered approach in junior primary grades and literacy (stage I and II). These meetings were eye-opening and shocking for the meagre, unprofessional performance of the majority of participants (Lower Primary class teachers and literacy promoters). Although it was expected to meet experts from this educational phase from all over the country one missed fundamental knowledge and expertise in how to teach in Lower Primary and literacy classes with particular emphasis on e. g. reading and writing skills. For observers it was very difficult to understand what these teachers teach their children/adult learners in preparing them e. g. for mastering skills which are substantial for educational advancement as well as equipping

[26]For a complete list of the recommendations which cover a wide range of issues pertaining to lower primary grades see Legère (1996:297-302).

[27] See Legère (1998).

learners to the switch over to English as MOI in Grade 4. Nonetheless, the feedback from the participants at the end of the workshops as well as the material developed during the workshops and back home demonstrated how useful this form of in-service training was. A number of model lessons for all languages used in school or early literacy stages were developed. In 2000 the workshops focusing on creative writing came to an end. The results so far (various short stories and texts for each school language as well as model lessons for creative writing) are noteworthy and promising.

In 1999 the Presidential Commission on Education which looked into the development of education since 1990 handed its report over to President Nujoma. Prior to this ceremony NERA organised a one-day seminar in which findings and results of various research projects (including preliminary versions of material included in this ERNESA report) were presented. The Commission chaired by Prof. Turner took an active part in this substantial and useful meeting which enabled the direct dialogue between researchers, educationists and language experts, on the one hand, and the commissioners, on the other. The Commission submitted in its material an impressive number of data and opinions which cover a wide range of issues and problems to be tackled, revised, solved or researched. It also acknowledged the existence and value of the then ongoing research projects the results of which were described to be of particular interest to the Commission.

At the recent conference "Language and Development. Making the Right Choices" (Okahandja April 2000) which was attended by a number of speakers from other African countries as well as from Europe valuable recommendations were formulated with regard to languages in the education system The recommendations shed light on what obviously needs to be changed, improved, or initiated. The following selection reflects to a large extent also the concerns expressed as a result of the research reported on in this document:

At lower primary level

C. Education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of Home Language medium at least in Grades One to Four.
D. The Ministry should strengthen the role of the mother tongue in the early years of schooling. A campaign is needed to promote this among parent communities. If a school wants to use English as a means of instruction from Grade One, certain conditions should be met, for example good teaching, appropriate qualifications of

teachers to teach in English, adequate resources, an environment conducive to the teaching and learning in English.

E. Lower primary teachers should be trained through the medium of their language. Grade Four should be class teaching. Grade Four teachers should be trained in language-sensitive teaching to support learners in this phase. It should initiate a transitional period in which English is gradually introduced throughout the Upper Primary phase.

Other levels

- Provision should be made for learners to continue to study their mother tongue throughout their school career in a way which promotes higher-order skills. This could include the teaching of some subjects through the mother tongue.
- Schools should offer not less than two languages as subjects. All learners should study two languages as subjects from Grade One onwards, one of which must be English and one a language spoken by the majority of learners.
- The Ministry should formulate guidelines to require schools in urban areas to take learners of a particular African language.
- In order to instil positive attitudes towards African languages, an African language should be a compulsory pass requirement for all external examinations and a compulsory promotion subject in all schools either as a home language or as a second language.
- In order to create awareness about African languages, the Ministry should incorporate all the national languages into the school curricula in subjects such as Social Studies and Development Studies.

In order to promote the reform of formal education, and move away from the teacher-centred education with its emphasis on control, rigid discipline, rote learning and negative assessment principles (Craig and others, 1998:33), a new teacher education was introduced into the four colleges of education in 1993. The new Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) is a three-year full-time study preparing for learner-centred education. There are two phases, a two-term Foundation Block followed by seven terms of specialisation. In the specialisation block each student takes a major and a minor option, at Lower Primary, Upper Primary or Junior Secondary level.

The 1998 version of the BETD Broad Curriculum states:

> The BETD is a unified general preparation for all teachers in Basic Education, combining a common core for all, with opportunities for specialisation in relation to phases of schooling and subject areas. It strikes a balance between professional insight and skills, and subject knowledge.' Furthermore, it strives to integrate theory and practice in all subjects throughout the course, which has the potential to be realised through exposure to school and classroom experiences (MBEC and MHEVTST 1998a: 1).

This course also strives to be related to the demands and challenges of Basic Education. Teachers coming from the BETD must have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to interpret syllabuses, select and relate content and methods on the basis of a shared analysis of the learners' needs (p.2).

As far as the curriculum content is concerned, the draft 1998 version of the BETD Syllabus for Lower Primary Education leaves scope for interpretation by teacher educators, as well as placing responsibility on them to ensure that student teachers become familiar with the theory around literacy teaching, as well as being practically exposed to teaching literacy. The objectives of the LP subject syllabus under the topic: *Understanding the Process of Language Development and Literacy in grades 1-4*, state that students will develop skills in:

> implementing, and assessing a wide range of activities and lessons covering speaking, listening, reading, phonics, look and say and writing activities.

Concerning the literacy component in the Lower Primary phase of the programme, steering documents indicate:

M. There is a wide range of activities and opportunities in place where literacy training in lower primary is both implemented and assessed.
N. These activities consist of project work, critical inquiry, microteaching, observations and teaching during school based studies, where student teachers receive opportunity to reflect on their own teaching, receive critical comments from both peers and teacher educators; and
O. During these activities there exists the opportunity to apply in practice theory about approaches learnt.

The information brochure prepared for prospective BETD students lists the languages offered by the colleges as Silozi, Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Rukwangali, Afrikaans, Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero. It goes on to say that 'individual colleges will also try to offer mother tongues recognised for teaching purposes (for example German, Rugciriku, Setswana and Thimbukushu), if there are a sufficient number of students taking them as mother tongue, and depending on the availability of teacher educators' (NIED 1999). Thus, for the time being the colleges are not able to provide training for lower primary teachers in all Namibian school languages.

The University of Namibia contributes towards the implementation of the Namibian language policy through the Language Centre, the Centre for External Studies (CES) and, in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), the Departments of African Languages, of English, and of Germanic and Romance Languages (Afrikaans, German, French and Portuguese).

The Language Centre is foremost a service institution that caters for the English language needs of the University and provides tuition for most UNAM students whose English competence and skills are generally poor. Thus, communication skills and teaching some basics of an academic study feature high in the Centre's profile.

The Centre for External Studies offers the Diploma in Education for African Languages (mentioned above) for teachers of Khoekhoegowab, Oshindonga, Otjiherero, Rukwangali and Silozi and an external Bachelor of Education programme for teachers of English. The material for the diploma which has been in use since 1993 was critically reviewed in 1997 and is now being revised. It is expected that together with adequate teaching staff the quality of the DEAL programme will substantially improve by focusing on a more language authentic approach which is based on purely descriptive structural analysis rather than imposing foreign language concepts.

The language departments of the FHSS obtain most of their students from the Faculty of Education, although a small number of the FHSS students are enrolled in the Faculty's BA programme. Students taking the Bachelor of Education are being prepared for secondary school teaching and there is no input by the University into primary education. The teaching profile covers a linguistic description of each language offered as well as an overview of its

literature. Various languages of FHSS have been facing a low student enrolment in recent years.[28] This has prompted UNAM's top management in December 1999 to freeze two senior posts in the Department of African Languages thus reducing the linguistic section to one staff member. This is a significant blow to the major national languages which will henceforth find very little academic support for their linguistic development.

[28]Thus, student enrolment for new language subjects such as Rukwangali or Oshikwanyama has been insignificant. To date four students completed the Rukwangali modules, two Oshikwanyama, two are still enrolled in 3rd year Rukwangali modules. The reasons for the students' poor response are manifold and are now also affecting languages with a longer academic tradition (in particular Oshindonga, while Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero always attracted low student numbers). For further discussion of this issue see Legère (1996:66-67).

2. The Research

2.1 Statement of the problem

Given the multilingual character of the Namibian society, a sensitive, sustainable approach to the linguistic situation is a high priority. National institutions are expected to take appropriate account of the human factor with regard to language competence and language use, people's attitude to linguistic varieties and distinct languages of the country, linguistic norms, etc. An important area where the State is in contact with its citizens, particularly the younger generation, is in formal education, where the teaching staff are employed and paid by the state.

In particular the education a child receives in the Lower Primary phase has a permanent effect on further progress throughout the education system. If young learners do not master literacy, numeracy and other skills in this phase, then it is very difficult, if not impossible, for them to catch up with their peers in the higher grades. The key to success beyond Grade Four is an effective education in the first four years of schooling. Accordingly, the language through which a child learns and interacts at this stage has a far-reaching impact on the acquisition and mastery of skills in general.

In the Lower Primary phase (Grades One to Four) two options are offered, that is

> option 1: Medium of instruction and learning is one of the prescribed school languages, English is a subject;
>
> option 2: Medium of instruction and learning is English, one of the prescribed school languages is a subject.[29]

The document "Language Policy for Schools" advises that all children in Grades One to Three should learn through one of the recognised school languages, that is Khoekhoegowab (previously called Nama/Damara), Afrikaans, English, German, Ju/'hoan, Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Otjiherero, Rugciriku (now called Rumanyo), Rukwangali, Setswana, Silozi and Thimbukushu. Option 1 is recommended by the education authorities, as it is perfectly in line with the cognitive development of those learners who are mother tongue (MT), or near MT, speakers. However, option 2 is in high demand and mainly found in urban areas and among the speakers of Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero.

[29] After grade 3 only option 2 is possible.

There is officially only a choice between option 1 and option 2, but in fact modified versions of option 1 are practised. For example:

> some Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners in the South as well as learners in some urban schools are exposed to Afrikaans as medium of instruction, although it is not their home language. San speaking children to date have been instructed in Afrikaans or sometimes English, except recently those who have attended the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)-sponsored NyaeNyae schools;
> for large contingents of learners medium of instruction and learning is a linguistic variety which is often rather closely related, or even mutually intelligible, with the variety spoken at home, for example Oshindonga which has been imposed on all learners outside Ondonga and Oukwanyama, or Silozi in Caprivi which is used as medium of instruction among Sifwe, Siyeyi and Cisubiya speakers.

The complex linguistic situation particularly in urban areas is reflected in the multilingual composition of the learners. In most cases the education authorities account for this situation by choosing English (option 2) or Afrikaans as medium of instruction, although alternatives are viable, as there might be a dominant national language which is spoken by the majority of learners.

Classroom interaction is defined to be learner-centred. This automatically leads to contradictions when option 2 has been approved, as most learners start schooling with almost zero knowledge of English. These children have to accommodate a double load, that is to learn a foreign language and to acquire basic skills in it. The result is frequently frustration, resignation, failure and drop-out, and certainly not the learner-centred education, which is the aim of the Ministry.

Learners' performance in reading and especially in writing skills in the medium of instruction is known to be problematic. For the overwhelming majority of children there is rarely a literate environment outside school to support classroom interaction. There is a shortage of

textbooks, teaching aids and support material for national languages the quality of which has only recently begun to improve.

The use of national languages in education is affected by negative attitudes and misconceptions. Similarly, the role of English is overestimated and results in pressure to teach it as early as possible. Both factors destabilise the position of national languages and undermine the status of those teaching the languages.

There is a widespread lack of interest in Lower Primary issues. This is also reflected in the allocation of Lower Primary classes to the least qualified or unqualified teachers. This situation not only affects the teaching of and in a national language, but also seriously interferes with the learners' acquisition of English, which they need to use as the medium of instruction in Grade Four.

Part of the study will look at the variables which might contribute positively to the preparation of Lower Primary student teachers through a pre-service teacher education programme. The variables which are relevant for teacher education are:

-the design of the programme,
-teachers' functional literacy skills in a Namibian language which is the language of instruction in Lower Primary,
-the exposure that students receive for teaching through school based studies (SBS), for reflection on critical incidents in the learning process and
-the level of academic training and experience of the teacher educators who facilitate the BETD Lower Primary course.

School related variables have an impact on the successful acquisition of functional literacy skills for Lower Primary learners. These variables are:

-access to readers,
-opportunities provided for reading and writing and
-strategies which teachers apply to support learners in their acquisition of functional literacy, as well as the efficiency with which teachers can apply various reading and writing approaches.

The purpose of this research was therefore to assess the impact of the language policy on children's acquisition of language skills. It focused on the following questions:

- How is the Language Policy being implemented?
- What levels of literacy in the Namibian languages have the learners achieved in Grades One, Two and Three?
- Does the curriculum for languages in the Lower Primary grades meet the needs of the learners?
- Is there a significant difference in the levels achieved by learners using the Molteno materials, the BES Project materials and other materials?
- How are student teachers in the BETD programme prepared to develop learners' basic literacy skills? That is:
    - Are BETD trained teachers equipped to teach literacy through the Namibian languages?
    - Do BETD teachers apply literacy approaches and sound classroom practice which they have learnt in the BETD programme?
    - Are there mechanisms in place to ensure the academic upgrading of Lower Primary teacher educators in the Colleges of Education?
    - Are the schools equipped with the basic prescribed readers and other learning materials to promote functional literacy in the Lower Primary phase of formal schooling?

2.2 Theoretical and conceptual framework

2.2.1 Language policy and language in education

It is taken for granted that the language policy of a given country has a direct impact on most formal domains of communication. To a certain extent this impact is also reflected in informal domains or in religious services, in economy and trade and in other domains which are not under the control of the State. The social status of a language is heavily influenced by decisions made or attitudes displayed by ruling circles or other significant parts of the society with regard to a language (languages) or language variety (varieties). Thus, ex-colonial languages like English, French or Portuguese are high-status languages, since from the colonial past in Africa onwards they have been associated with social advancement, appropriate education which in its turn leads to good chances on the job market (bread and butter languages), access to the achievements of science and technology, etc. In contrast, national (African) languages are widely felt to stand for poverty, backwardness, under-development, second-class education, traditionalism. Hence their status in most African countries is low or in the case of some languages of wider distribution (LWD) second to the ex-colonial language. Of course, this paradigm is wrong and must be rejected. However, theoretical considerations and reasoning about the value and role of national languages are inappropriate as long as the situation at the grassroots is not changed for the better.

Formal education is an important institution which is state-financed and thus in the long-run subject to fluctuations and changes in policy. Schools are expected to implement the official language policy as much as possible, though sometimes in a modified way.

The choice of medium of instruction is a complex decision which contributes vitally towards educational success or failure. For cognitive reasons, acquiring basic skills in literacy and numeracy or problem discussion and solving only a language or linguistic variety the child is familiar with, that is the mother tongue, a closely related linguistic variety or a LWD, is the optimal choice. This in turn enables learner centred activities and efficient classroom interaction. In Namibia this is option 1. The use of this language as medium of instruction and learning is advisable for a period of approximately six years in order for appropriate communicative and academic skills to be developed. A second language may be introduced as subject in Lower Primary, but shall not take over the function as medium of instruction before the aforesaid skills are acquired. The introduction has to take place in an additive way, that is

the learners continue to be instructed in the language they started schooling in, while second language competencies (initially oral) are acquired. The additive approach is contrasted with the subtractive approach, in which the initial medium of instruction is prematurely replaced by a foreign language. This approach has a serious detrimental effect on the initial medium of instruction which is reflected in its low status, in negative attitudes, imperfect command of communicative and academic skills, etc. Similarly, school dropouts or teacher frustrations may also be partly credited to this issue.

The training of teachers for national languages has to include both educational and linguistic components. The latter are indispensable for empowering human resources by equipping them with comprehensive knowledge about all aspects of the language, competence in as many skills as possible, reading, writing and communication, confidence in the subject matter and in the relevance of teaching a national language, etc. These features must equally be passed on to learners in order for them to appreciate the role of national languages and to use them adequately.

The framework of the research project is heavily influenced by the principle "Education for all" as formulated in Government documents. This principle encompasses a number of details which are reflected in policy documents and subsequently in implementation. "Education for all" implies a democratic approach to educational matters, free from segregationist and racist ideas. It further implies equity and a fair share of all population groups in decision-making, for example in educational issues including the choice of medium of instruction at Lower Primary level. Special attention is given to those areas which were previously marginalised and neglected in order for education to be spread to the young generation there. Further issues which feature high on the education agenda are

- promotion of national unity,
- gender equality (even particular support for female learners),
- sustainability.

The role of language is mainly seen in

a) promoting national unity and international commitment, for example in the SADC region, at Organisation for African Unity (OAU) level and world-wide facilitated by competence in English, and

b) reflecting the vast cultural heritage of Namibia's population as preserved in the national languages.

All those Namibian languages which have been confirmed after independence as media of instruction and learning as well as subjects from Grade Four upwards are developed in a way which guarantees an equal use in each case. Previously neglected languages have been elevated to the same status with others. However there are some linguistic varieties which are not included in the curriculum, although, in the case of the speakers of one of the San languages, this is being corrected.

In order to understand where the research questions originated from, there are a few concepts, both for language policy and for teaching and learning, which need to be explained. Part of the study will look at the variables which might contribute positively to the preparation of Lower Primary student teachers through a pre-service teacher education programme. The variables which will be considered in looking at teacher education are the design of the programme, the level of teachers' functional literacy skills in a Namibian language, the level of exposure that students receive in teaching through school based studies for reflection on critical incidents in the learning process and the level of academic training and experience of the teacher educators who facilitate the BETD Lower Primary course.

School related variables are considered, which might impact on the successful acquisition of functional literacy skills for Lower Primary learners. These variables are access to readers, opportunities provided for reading and writing, strategies which teachers apply to support learners in their acquisition of functional literacy, as well as the application of various reading and writing approaches, which support learners acquiring reading and writing skills in a learner-centred environment.

2.2.2 Definition of terms

Additive bilingualism: a gradual introduction of a second language to supplement the use of the first language. The second language will be used for certain limited functions.

Bilingual: being able to speak two languages with the same appropriate degree of perfection.

Code-switching: the switch between different languages, dialects or varieties in communication.

Ex-colonial language: a language which was used by a colonial power for administrative and other purposes when the country was a colony.

First language: in Europe and the United States, the concept of a first language is synonymous with the mother tongue or home language. It is the language or linguistic variety which the child learns first. In Southern Africa, however, the concept of first language has been extended to mean a language or linguistic variety which is acquired and used as if it is a first language, even though it may be a second or third language. Thus it is a language or linguistic variety which at a certain point in time replaces the mother tongue or home language, and becomes more prominent in communication than the latter.

INSET: The ongoing support to both trained and untrained teachers who are already teaching, through activities such as workshops, class and school visits.

Language policy: That part of the political concept which deals with the linguistic situation in a given country and its intended change along the lines perceived by political or social groups and parties. It is the politically motivated attitude towards a language or languages, in particular their role and use in domains which are directly or indirectly controlled by these political and social groups. A language policy may be formulated by groups of different social or political profile, but its implementation is mostly confined to the ruling class which controls the State and its institutions. However, even circles which are not in power may pursue their language policy and implement it within domains which are either beyond the control of the State or where the State is not much interested.
The language policy of a given country may be expressed in policy statements by ruling circles as well as by the opposition or other groups, and may be subsequently entrenched in the Constitution or other legal documents (adapted from Legère 1996:42).

Language of instruction and learning: see medium of instruction and learning

Language of wider distribution (LWD): a language which is used for communication over a whole region, and which is used by speakers of different languages. The region might include a whole country, or parts of several countries.

Literacy: In the context of this report literacy is used interchangeably with reading and writing skills; thus the acquisition of reading and writing skills through a school language in order to

attain conceptual understanding and for cognitive development, as well as to function effectively in a particular speech community.

Medium of instruction and learning (MOI): the language used in school (hence also school language) for classroom interaction by teachers and learners. In Namibia the medium of instruction and learning in Grades One to Three is selected by the school authorities, including the school board, and then authorised by the regional education office from the list of 11 officially recognised linguistic varieties in consultation with the speech community in which the school lies.

Mother tongue: the language learnt and spoken from infancy (language of earliest childhood). This is often also called the home language, but in places where parents speak different languages, the language used in the home might be the "father's" language.

National language: four meanings of this term are distinguished.[30] The most comprehensive meaning (no. 1) deals with a language/linguistic variety which has been inherent to and existing on a given territory for a long time. Thus, languages like Oshikwanyama or Otjiherero qualify as national languages, while German, although spoken in Namibia for a century, does not, as it originates overseas. This meaning has been adopted in this report, although in government publications which emphasise the equality of all languages, German and Afrikaans are referred to as national languages. Meaning no. 2 refers to a language/linguistic variety which is an integrating and assimilating element (languages of wider distribution) at the regional level. In Namibia this term could be used for Rukwangali in Kavango or Silozi in Caprivi. After independence the Angolan government selected among the existing linguistic varieties of Angola some languages of wider distribution (calling them "linguas nacionais") for use in some formal domains including education (status planning) and for corpus development accordingly. Other examples are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba for Nigeria, Lingala, Kikoongo, Ciluba and Kiswahili for Zaire, etc. Meaning no. 3 accounts for a language/linguistic variety which like Kiswahili in Tanzania, Malagasy in Madagascar or Somali in Somalia are spoken by the majority of a country. Finally, for meaning No. 4 national language is the synonym of "official language".

[30]See Brann (1994:124p.)

Official language: the language or linguistic variety stipulated in the constitution or any other legal document for use in the legislative, executive and judiciary. Sometimes as there is no language dispensation and the official status results from language practice in these formal domains, for example in Angola nowhere has Portuguese been promulgated as the official language, but everybody identifies it in this capacity.

Pre-service training (PRESET): the preparation of student teachers through a full time course in order to qualify and be accredited as a trained teacher.

Readers: Readers imply prescribed books, other than subject related books, that can be used to teach functional literacy skills, as well as reading for enjoyment.

Reading Approaches: Only the most common approaches observed in this study will be clarified here. The ***Phonic Approach***, where learners learn the individual sounds of the letters first is commonly used, but also confused by teachers for the Alphabet Method, (see Imene 2000). Another common approach to teaching reading and writing is the ***Look-and-Say***, or Whole-Word approach, where learners recognise common words first, to be broken up into smaller components again. The approach propagated by NELLP is the well-known ***Breakthrough Approach***, also called the Language Experience Approach, which starts with sentences from the learners' worlds of experience. Words in those learner-generated sentences are broken up into syllables and eventually into sounds.

Reading skills: the ability to interpret marks on a paper and decode them into words, and the ability to understand or make sense of what is read.

School based studies: During the course leading to the BETD, students go, under supervision, on extended periods of practice teaching to specific schools, either to observe or to present lessons.

School language: a language used as a medium of instruction and learning or taught as a subject.

Second language: a language learnt in addition to the mother tongue or home language.

Subtractive bilingualism: a process whereby a second language gradually replaces a first language in those domains in which initially the first language was used, for example in upper grades of primary education in Namibia English takes over the role of school language from a national language which becomes a mere subject, thus being deprived of adequate formal use in school.

Writing skills: the ability to write words and sentences on paper which can then be understood by other people.

2.3 Literature review

The sub-studies in this report are targeted at different areas of implementing the language policy in school on the one hand, as well as aspects of the education policy of the country on the other. Accordingly, the literature review focuses on relevant aspects of these policies.

2.3.1 Language policy

The existing literature on language policy and its implementation are legion. There are several substantial publications which deal with language policy from a general point of view by summarizing theoretical positions and practical steps. More specific are region- or country-oriented publications where African issues are covered, shedding light on a wide range of problems, solutions and unfulfilled promises in sub-Saharan Africa. This scenario is aptly described by Bamgbose (1991) whose substantial critique of language policy and implementation in Africa is still highly relevant nearly ten years after the publication of his book.

Hountondji, one of Africa's leading philosophers, Benin's Education Minister (1990/1) and subsequently Minister for Culture and Communication (1991-1993), is another critical voice which vigorously advocates the formulation of "a coherent language policy... which aims to take advantage of the unique potential of local languages for a harmonious development of all peoples" (Hountondji 1997:25). He blames those who spread lies about African languages, but warns:

> "Prejudices are tenacious. Despite their inconsistency and lack of foundation, one must unfortunately often spend much time and energy in refuting them. African patriots are not alone in this struggle" (Hountondji 1997:25).

Another important aspect is the status of ex-colonial languages which are described as follows:

> "...while French and English are not entirely foreign languages, they nevertheless remain languages of foreign origin, a colonial legacy. Even if the present elite have assimilated and adopted them to varying degrees, they cannot be compared to the indigenous languages that for centuries have served the African people as a means of expression and communication" (Hountondji 1997:24).

Commenting on recent rejections of national languages in several countries Hountondji is convinced that people are not against their own languages, but are not satisfied with "a poorly prepared and hastily implemented language policy that had been done without the accompanying measures necessary for success" (Hountondji 1997:24).

Namibia's language policy and possible options were widely discussed at the eve of independence and shortly thereafter. Since approximately 1992 international attention has shifted away to other countries, in particular South Africa which in 1994 set an example for Africa by elevating all national languages to an official status. Nonetheless, Namibian policy issues have continued to be dealt with by scholars and experts based in Namibia. In several papers Harlech-Jones argues that the country does not have a language policy. According to him, Namibia handles language problems on an ad-hoc basis which he calls "language agenda" (Harlech-Jones 1993, 1997:228). He discusses a number of issues which are described as being not optimally solved, although the provisions of, for example, the Namibian Constitution offer alternatives. Legère (1996) is of the opinion that there is a Namibian language policy which has been formulated before independence. Both authors share the view that implementation with respect to national languages is weak, slow and of low quality. A lack of interest, commitment and political will is also observed. Negative attitudes towards national languages which date back to pre-independence years have not been overcome; they persist and have even grown bigger as the result of the emphasis on English in almost all formal domains of communication. These facts have already been observed by de

Cluver (1993) who speaks of Namibians being foreigners in their own country in respect to language. Another critical voice is Pütz (1995). Some of the authors in this book relate discrimination through language to Namibia.

2.3.2 Language and education in the Lower Primary phase

As the present study focuses on languages in education and in particular the Lower Primary phase and on training teachers for this phase, a number of relevant publications which include findings, observations and views on issues like medium of instruction, role of mother tongue or languages of wider distribution vs. international languages like English, French or Portuguese or the implementation of language policy in school were consulted.

The UNESCO document of 1953 (UNESCO 1953) even in these days frequently referred to is the classic post-war publication on the importance of an adequate use of national languages in acquiring basic skills in literacy, numeracy and subject knowledge. It is argued that the better the mother tongue of the child is taught, the more efficient is the transfer of acquired skills to a second language.

Key issues of recent research with respect to the use of mother tongue and second languages in education are reviewed in a substantial paper by Nadine Dutcher (Dutcher 1995). She summarizes the state of the art as follows:

7 Children require at least 12 years to learn their first language.
8 Children do not learn second languages more quickly and easily than adults.
9 Older children... are more skilled than younger children in learning a second language.
10 **The development of a child's first language** with its related cognitive development **is more important than more exposure to a second language**.[31]
11 Children in school settings need to learn academic language skills, as well as social communication skills.
12 Children learn a second language in a different way... (Dutcher 1995:vii).

[31] Emphasis by the authors.

Dutcher subsequently draws the following conclusions which are based on her extensive study of relevant literature:

- Development of the mother tongue is critical for cognitive development and as a basis for learning the second language.
- Teachers must be able to understand, speak, and confidently use the language of instruction, whether it is their first or second language.
- Parental and community support and involvement are essential to all successful programmes.
- Recurrent costs are... about the same for bilingual programmes as for traditional programs (that is emphasis on non-mother tongue instruction)... (Dutcher 1995:viii)[32]

Some fundamental positions of the paper are further commented upon in more detail. Thus, it is asserted that first language development is optimal with six years before schooling and six years within formal education, which implies that this language should be the medium of instruction through primary education while the second language is learnt. "The first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading, and for comprehension of subject matter. It is the necessary foundation for the cognitive development upon which acquisition of the second language is based" (Dutcher 1995:36). Similarly Hutchinson (1998:5) quotes American researchers who assert:

> "When students are allowed to use their first language, performance in reading and writing in English is enhanced, particularly in the development of concept knowledge and critical thinking."

Learning the second language is recommended for the time when learners have already become literate. Thus, Hutchinson (1998:13) refers to francophone African experimental schools and their experience as follows:

> "...in a context in which L2 is not widely spoken and a literate environment for L1 is not imminent ... French as a subject - that is for oral competence - should not begin until the third year of primary school."

[32]Similar conclusions are made by Tucker (1996:10-12)

Recently African researchers have studied the issue of medium of instruction in Lower Primary in various sub-Saharan countries. Their papers resulted in a background document which underlines:

> "Linguists and educational psychologists agree that the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the early years of education has proven advantages... Conversely, it has been demonstrated that classroom use of a language which is not the language already spoken by the child results in cognitive and pedagogical difficulties."[33]

When in a South African experiment, the Threshold Project, the mother tongue as medium of instruction was replaced by English in Grade Three, the following experience was made:

> "Pupils could not explain in English what they already knew in their first languages; nor could they transfer into their first languages the new knowledge that they had learnt through English."[34]

The conclusion was that any premature shift of medium of instruction away from their mother tongue, for example before children reach a certain age or level of cognitive academic language proficiency (a term coined by Cummins 1979), may be a failure.[35]

In sub-Saharan countries children are frequently instructed in an African language which is not their mother tongue, as the multitude of linguistic varieties makes it impossible to take all into account. Hence, the discussion of medium of instruction also includes the role and use of languages of wider distribution (LWD) like Swahili, Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, Shona, Chewa and others which are frequently subsumed in this category of mother tongues, although they are not. In fact, children (in urban areas, much less in the countryside) are more familiar with these languages than the ex-colonial language. Universal praise for countries like Tanzania, Nigeria or Malawi for their educational policy which emphasizes the use of an African

[33]Summary in ADEA Newsletter 8, 4 (Oct.-Dec.):5. The material was submitted to the Pan-African conference on"Problems and Perspectives of the Use of African Languages in Education" (Accra 26-30 August 1996). See also ADEA (1997:18) which includes further references from Africa.

[34]Luckett (1994:5) quoted in ADEA (1997:39).

[35]Arguments again from ADEA (1997:39).

medium of instruction is only one side of the coin, as it ignores the non-mother tongue component and many inherent problems. A critical account of achievements and problems pertaining to a language of wider distribution as medium of instruction in particular in Lower Primary is found in Malekela (1991), Legère (1991a), Legère & Kanuri (1991)[36]- all referring to Swahili and East African cases. The Nigerian Ile-Ife Primary Project is frequently mentioned[37] as the classical example of how successful instruction in the mother tongue (here: Yoruba) could be in comparison to English. However, critics have made clear that this project has been carried out under ideal conditions which do not exist in ordinary schools, thus the very positive results are not likely to be achieved in other places.

It is stated that "all education takes place in a political context" (Dutcher 1995:37). Accordingly, programmes and changes of existing models need political support as well as involvement of the community and parents. Otherwise, failures may be expected.[38] On the same issue, Komarek (1997:6) points out that so far measures in favour of mother tongue as medium of instruction have been "school-centred". As language policy "is determined by the political interests of the power elite concerned" which is said to have "specific interests in or objections to mother tongue" (mother tongue education - the author). In its turn the education system which is state controlled "makes it possible for the government to hinder initiatives favouring mother tongue, if not to stop them, as soon as it appears politically opportune" (Komarek 1997:6).

Dutcher (1995:38) also refers to cost-benefit results based on a World Bank study in Guatemala. Bilingual education, that is mother tongue as medium of instruction, Spanish as a second language) was found to be cost saving (reduced student repetition) and a reduced drop-out rate which reduces the extra years of schooling, and hence in the long run provides increased earnings for better qualifications, as calculated by World Bank staff.

Tucker (1996:13) notes as he calls it "some relatively neglected areas (of multilingual education) which deserve additional future attention". For mother tongue there is the:

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[36]For their papers see Legère (1992).

[37]See ADEA (1997).

[38] See also ADEA (1997:18).

F. "Need for additional sociolinguistic research...
G. Need for materials development, reproduction and distribution... (for example the majority of the African languages spoken in Namibia...)
H. Need for developing a cadre of trained teachers who are proficient speakers of these languages... to teach via many of the world's languages."

In addition, Tucker (1996:14) identifies a number of important questions which are of particular interest to stakeholders in education such as:

- Is there general satisfaction... with the level of educational attainment... (both those who terminate their education relatively early and those who wish to go on to tertiary studies)?
- What priorities are accorded ... to the value of education for those who may permanently interrupt their schooling at an early stage...?
- Are sufficient core *and* reference materials available for teachers and for students in the language(s) of instruction? If not, are there **trained individuals**[39] available who can prepare such materials?"

Major problems which have been experienced in the past in the field of educational programmes for mother tongue and second language medium of instruction are:

P. Poor preparation for the change from one medium of instruction to another...
Q. Negative attitudes towards the use of some languages in the bilingual and multilingual programme (arising from the lack of harmony between what is valued in the classroom and what is valued in the world outside the classroom);
R. Inadequate resources; and
S. Poor planning... ("Languages of Instruction"1996: 53).

Another crucial problem for mother tongue education is identified by Komarek (1997a: 6). He emphasises that even if there is progress in this area in school, the information potential in the particular mother tongue does not automatically increase. This has been neglected and has to be addressed by creating adequate mother tongue material in various subjects which supports the learning strategy and contributes towards the creation of a literate environment in national

[39]Author's emphasis.

languages. Komarek (1997a: 38) states: ”Teaching and learning aids are not only didactically of central importance, but strategically as well.” He further refers to the well-known fact that for many teachers the textbook guides their classroom interaction, as they may not have the syllabus, or rarely use it for lack of information on how to run day-to-day instruction. It is also emphasized that mother tongue education only makes sense, if learners are exposed to publications and material in national languages outside the classroom. They must be motivated to become literate, and this motivation is found in attractive material which is also accessible to the masses. The latter aspect has not been properly addressed, as Komarek (1997a: 41) asserts.

For the sake of reference the immersion approach is mentioned here. It is argued that the best way of handling language learning and teaching is to expose learners immediately to the (foreign) medium of instruction. Their strongholds are UK, USA, Canada and other developed countries which offer ideal conditions for (immigrant) learners to practice language skills outside the classroom. The majority of countries (in particular in the Third World, Namibia included) are in a completely different position, even if a foreign language like English is medium of instruction in grade 1. Immersion studies can probably be ignored here, as the out-of-school conditions in sub-Saharan Africa are adverse. The paper by Carey (1994) is a valuable source which informs about the way immersion programmes have been implemented in Canada, which results are achieved and which problems are encountered.

2.3.3 Languages in Lower Primary education in Namibia

For Namibia Lower Primary medium of instruction issues have rarely been addressed in publications. However, some state of the art reports including first evaluation comments have been compiled and published. The MEC (1994) publication “How much do Namibia’s children learn in school” contains valuable data and findings for Grade Four as available in 1992. For English and Oshindonga test scores are included and commented upon with reference to the ethnic background of the learners. “One general finding of the study is that the expected level of English proficiency in Grade 4 is too high” (MEC, 1994:xviii). Another result which supported earlier observations found that the learners in the North (second-tier history) “performed half as well as learners in the former Administration for Whites...” (MEC, 1994: xviii). The important role of national languages in passing and failing of learners has been evaluated by Kristi Fair (1994). In her report she lists serious problems such as those

arising from teachers' qualifications and their competence in basic skills to be taught in Lower Primary, textbook problems, learner's background and others.

English proficiency and performance in selected areas countrywide, as well as the impact of the language policy on national languages taught in school, are dealt with by Chamberlain (1993) who toured several educational regions in Namibia and collected information on current language use in schools. His recommendations and conclusions are still far from being implemented. With reference to the role of national languages as medium of instruction or subjects, one substantial paragraph of Chamberlain's report reads as follows:

> "CONCLUSION 6
> NATIONAL LANGUAGES
> The status and attitudes towards National languages varies. Great care must be taken to ensure that the presence of an existing high profile lingua franca (Afrikaans) and the promotion of English as official language do not undermine National language values, especially where these languages can have connotations of poverty, deprivation, marginalized groups, or communicative inadequacies. Learner, teacher, and employer attitudes are critical here, as are appropriate profiles for examination systems. Much has already been done through the MEC/UCLES link to instutionalise national language development and options.
>
> RECOMMENDATION
> An aggressive national language promotion campaign is desirable and has already been suggested at Ongwediva. Mechanisms are required to activate this. The Ministry and the University, amongst others, should move to set a dynamic promotion body... which could create an action agenda. Such an agenda should first establish 'ideal' criteria to be utilised nationally. These criteria would relate to the Constitution and democratic educational and social goals already specified" (Chamberlain 1993:73).

An attempt to thoroughly evaluate national language problems in basic education was made at the first workshop on African Languages in Basic Education (1995) whose revised proceedings were published in 1996 (Legère 1996). In particular the contribution by Swarts and the workshop keynote paper by Legère illustrated the Namibian approach to medium of instruction in Lower Primary school and beyond in education and drew attention to the gap between policy objectives and the reality of what was achieved. Further details of the situation

in school grades 1-3 were illustrated in the papers on Khoekhoegowab (Namaseb), Thimbukushu (Legère), Otjiherero (Kavari), while the successful introduction of Molteno in Oshindonga and Rukwangali classes was described by Amwele.[40] Of particular importance are general comments on the medium of instruction debate. In view of the existing problems, Swarts (in Legère 1996:19) has this to say:

> "That for pedagogical reasons, studying in one's home/local/mother tongue, particularly in the early years of schooling, will help the child acquire basic skills of reading, writing, and concept formation. It is this point that most of our communities fail to understand. In many cases where communities have opted for a different medium of instruction in their schools, we have failed them in that nobody from us as professionals took time to explain the implications of such decisions to them to help them understand the pedagogical advantages of a child leaning in its mother tongue at least for the first three years of schooling. We know that... English is seen as a language of the elite and hence a necessity to any good thinking parent to guarantee the future of his/her child in the world of work and employment. Pedagogical reasons never played a major part in their decisions."

The study by Brock-Utne (1995) conducted immediately after the 1995 Workshop draws heavily from the workshop papers and recommendations supplemented by comments and views from the grassroots about the importance of national languages. In addition, there are considerations about language use in other domains which are not relevant for this section. The study has been criticized by various educationists and language experts for repeating well-known facts and being not realistic enough.

Partial reference to Lower Primary is made in Legère (1998). The languages covered are Oshikwanyama, Setswana and Silozi. Among other issues, the lack of competence in orthography both of teachers and learners is touched upon.

Various papers read at the April 2000 Conference "Language and Development. Making the right choices" already mentioned above dealt with language policy issues in education. However, the discussion of language problems in education still concentrates on deficiencies

[40] All papers see Legère (1996).

and experiences which have already been reported earlier. There was a lack of reference to the situation at the grassroots as studied in field research.

Certainly, there are internal reports, evaluations and other written sources on medium of instruction in Lower Primary which, however, are unpublished and difficult to trace. Access is at random which is a pity as for instance valuable information is contained in a cyclostyled report on visits to schools by members of the Oshikwanyama CC (June 1998) where many positive aspects as well as bottlenecks are enumerated. There is also on-going research by NIED education officers who study the performance of Lower Primary learners in reading in Khoekhoegowab (L. Davids) and the perception of Thimbukushu as a school subject and medium of instruction (R. Munganda). The contribution by Davids is highly interesting and valuable for contrasting MT reading skills with those taught in English which are hardly mastered.

Mutumba (1999:9) is rather critical in his view of the current situation which he describes as follows:

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

After having discussed aspects of language policy implementation in schools Harlech-Jones (1998:15) argues that time is ripe for revision as the current situation "frustrates the attainment of educational aims..." He continues by saying "...that the focus should in future be on drafting a language policy in education that assists students to learn better..." (Harlech-Jones 1998:15).

2.3.4 Literacy teaching

The term literacy, or functional literacy is often used interchangeably in Namibia, referring to reading and writing skills. The progression of the term from 1962 where UNESCO described the concept of 'functional literacy', to Freire's views that literacy is a means of social control in that it empowers people to fight the depressing establishment is acknowledged. Cook-Gumperz, cited in Jackson (1993:7), describes it as a 'socially constructed phenomenon' which is formed through interactions in a variety of contexts and not the mere acquisition of decoding and encoding skills. To be considered literate will have different meanings in different contexts. After having considered the different definitions of literacy Jackson (1993:3) summarizes literacy as being “much more than the ‘simple’ acts of reading and writing; it involves notions of power, of culture and community and of social learning.” She continues to the meaning of literacy in a school context, where children engage in literacy events, of which reading and writing are only two of these events, in order to ‘make meaning’ (Jackson 1993:11).

Cunningham (2000: 64-71) attempts to show the impact of societal changes on the implicit definition of literacy, and illustrate how devices like audio-books and the internet will impact on the definition of literacy. It is predicted that employers will demand instrumental uses of reading and writing in that students are able to apply reading and writing skills in a real-world information-based environment and that the quest for critical reading and literacy to be added to the school curriculum will even become less.

2.3.5 Learner-centred education

If one considers what Toward Education for All prescribes in terms of learner-centred education it is clear that the cognitive learning theories influenced the formulation of these life-long learning goals.

This policy prescribes that methodology should be applied that “promotes learning through understanding” (p. 120). It further promotes the ideas of going “beyond relying on what they have read or been told” and the need to learn “to think independently and critically” (p. 119).

Nowadays, the discourse around learning theories in Namibia seems to be dominated by constructivist viewpoints. What can be hoped for in terms of learning in the Namibian

classroom is that learning takes place in a specific cultural context and that learners' knowledge of reality is constructed through new experiences and interaction which are linked to learners' existing knowledge. This only becomes knowledge when learners understand the nature of this reality.

Although Piaget's "stage" theory is criticised nowadays, it is still relevant in terms of the selection of developmentally appropriate education. Whereas Piaget propagated the ideas that learners become ready for certain forms of learning at a specific age, Ausubel (1978:iv) wrote this relevant caution: "The single most important factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain that and teach accordingly." Vygotsky's theories of learning are nowadays a powerful force in developmental psychology. Vygotsky's view on when children are learning is when they learn within their zone of proximal development, which is the distance between their actual development and the level of potential development which usually realises under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky 1978:86).

When considering the above it is clear that what is propagated in learner-centred education is co-operative and interactive learning, while using language, starting with learners' own world view and beliefs about reality. These become the basis for determining to what new levels of cognitive development individual learners can potentially progress. These existing world views and knowledge also form the starting point to new conceptual and procedural knowledge development, with teacher and peers acting as scaffolders and facilitators of this process.

2.3.6 Pre-service teacher education

As far as preparing pre-service teachers to support literacy development, Morrow and Rand (1993:145) propose a pre-service framework which is built on the knowledge base needed by teachers of early literacy (Morrow and Rand 1993:185). The following are also stated as necessary components of a teacher education programme:

- field experiences preparing and practising current classroom experiences, in which student teachers receive both a model for effective teaching which corresponds to the theoretical and research perspectives they are learning, as well as opportunity to participate actively in the classroom

- classroom research in which student teachers pose questions about classroom practice, collecting and interpreting data (Morrow and Rand 1993:190).

As far as the expectations of the effects of pre-service teacher education (PRESET) is concerned, a summary of the literature shows that:

Craig and others (1998:65) propose that beginner teachers ideally need initial preparation and teaching strategies in the subject matter they will teach, verbal competency in the medium of instruction, some instructional materials, knowledge of how to use these materials and basic classroom management skills in managing both learners and the learning environment. Lastly, teachers also need basic skills in observation and reflection. Many of these skills can be learnt through on-the-job practice with coaching.

McGinn and Borden (1995:67) summarise necessary components of a PRESET course in four points:
1. basic education in subject matter content;
2. exposure to the instructional objectives and methods specified in the curriculum;
3. exposure to classroom management techniques;
4. opportunities for student teaching, that is, supervised practice teaching.

The importance of teaching practice is described in the findings of Mcnally and others (1997:485-495). Student teachers valued the 'lived experience' of the teaching practice (rather than their training course), the social and emotional support of supervisory teachers and the quality and nature of the feedback they receive are all considered as contributing to the transition from student to teacher.

As far as the level of qualifications of **teacher educators** in colleges of education is concerned, research in developing countries shows that teacher educators in the developing world are mostly females, seem to have a lower percentage of doctorates but a higher percentage of master's degrees, possessed degrees acquired nationally, rather than internationally, and prefer teaching to research, when compared with professors of other disciplines. The conclusion of the research of Schiefelbein and Tedesco (1992) concludes that teacher educators in the developing world have a lower training than their counterparts in the other disciplines. Craig and others (1998:68) summarise, 'Proxies such as advanced degrees,

teaching ratings, and research and publication records give some indication of the calibre of individuals who are involved in teaching at the teacher education institutions.'

Judging from his own experience in Madagascar, Komarek (1997b) is rather sceptical with respect to pre-service teacher training. He quotes the following factors:

- not being sufficiently cost-efficient (unsolved problem of recurrent costs);
- insufficient output of teachers (compared to the growing demand) and
- the uncertainty of acceptable returns through significantly higher teaching quality (Komarek 1997b:3).

According to him, in-service training offers various advantages including cost-effectiveness.

Sub-study A: The choice of language as medium of instruction

1. Aims and purpose, limitations

This study attempts to assess the impact of the language policy on children's acquisition of language skills and is focussed on the following question, among others:

> How is the language policy being implemented in schools which have chosen English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction?

This research was conducted as a result of a request from the Presidential Commission on Education for some information on how the language policy for schools was being implemented in urban schools, and particularly in those schools where the home language of the learners was not being used as the medium of instruction. The data was collected and presented at a seminar on Language Policy conducted by NERA and attended by members of the Presidential Commission on Education on 30th July 1999. This study will attempt to show how the language policy is being implemented in the lower primary grades, concentrating on what choices of medium of instruction are presently made in Namibia.

The urgency of the request from the Presidential Commission and the lack of free time for visiting schools meant that only four schools were visited and that very few interviews were conducted with teachers. Thus the main findings of the study are taken from the statistics for schools collected by the Directorate of Planning (PAD) and Development in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in 1998.

2. Methodology

The Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture collects each year detailed statistics from every school in the country. Much of this information is published by the Ministry in a book of statistics, but more information than can be adequately published is collected. This data is stored on computer and is easily accessible to researchers. Accordingly the main information in this paper was collected from this database.

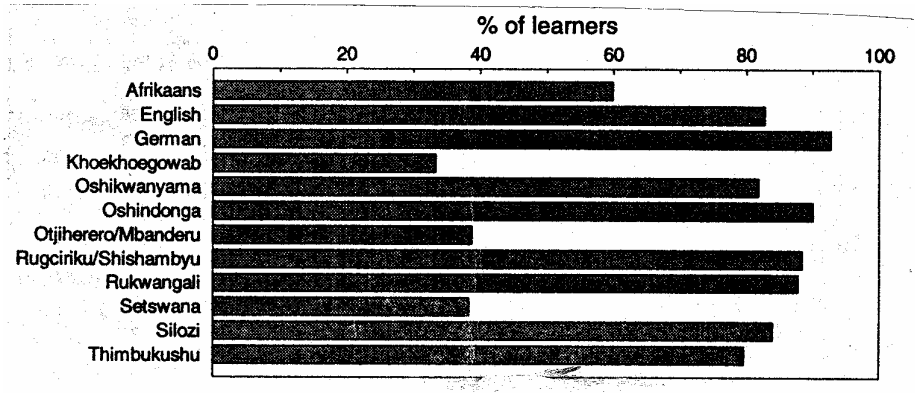
By looking at the published statistics, it was possible to ascertain that the major discrepancy between home language of learners and medium of instruction occurred among speakers of Otjiherero, Khoekhoegowab, Setswana and the San languages, and that the majority of these learners were to be found in schools in the Windhoek, Khorixas and Keetmanshoop Educational Regions. Thus a request was made for the statistics of the learners' and teachers' home languages in schools using English or Afrikaans medium of instruction in those three regions. The statistics were then reviewed and a number of schools selected to provide examples of various configurations of learners.

Further information on the reasons for the choice of medium of instruction was gathered by sending final year students from the University of Namibia to a number of schools to interview the principals and to observe what languages were actually being used in the classrooms, the playground and the staff room. A questionnaire to be used with the principals was designed to identify the decision-makers in the choice of language of instruction and to determine the reasons for the choice made. Extracts from these reports can be found in Appendix A.

3. Data and discussion of findings

The existing situation in the schools was determined from the statistics on languages provided by the Education Management Information Systems of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC 1999). More up-to-date language statistics for lower primary grades in Windhoek schools for the year 2000 were collected by NIED and showed almost no change at all from the figures for 1998. Figure 19 in the *1998 Education Statistics* (MBEC 1999), reproduced as Table 1 below, shows that certain language groups have a much greater chance of being taught through the medium of their home language in Grades One to Three than others. For instance 94.5% of German speakers in those grades are taught through their mother tongue. Among the speakers of the major Namibian languages in the north (Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Rugciriku, Rukwangali, Silozi and Thimbukushu) about 80% are taught through the medium of their home language.

Table 1 Percentages of learners taught in their home languages in Grades One to Three



However only just over 50% of Otjiherero speakers receive instruction in the lower primary grades through their home language. For speakers of Khoekhoegowab the situation is even more serious as only just over 30% are taught through their home language, (see Table 2). Yet both these languages are major languages in Namibia, with Khoekhoegowab speakers accounting for 51 958 learners (10.4%) in school and Otjiherero for 37 388 (7.5%) out of a total of 497 418 learners[41]. The only language groups with a higher number of learners in school are those speaking the Oshiwambo languages.

Table 2. Medium of instruction for Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab learners

Grade	Language	Total no of learners	Home language as MOI	%	Eng as MOI	Afr as MOI
Grade 1	Khoekhoegowab	6758	2246	33%	3445	996
	Otjiherero	4340	2300	53%	1709	164
Grade 2	Khoekhoegowab	6429	2088	32%	3221	1065
	Otjiherero	3992	2051	51%	1661	174
Grade 3	Khoekhoegowab	5665	1933	35%	2869	833
	Otjiherero	3470	1787	51%	1451	156

In addition to these two languages, very few speakers of Setswana and the Bushman languages are taught through the medium of their home language. The percentages are 44% and 19% respectively. These low percentages are not unexpected as the number of speakers of these languages is very small. There are only 1610 Setswana speaking learners and 3095

speaking Bushman languages. The Setswana speakers are scattered across the central and eastern parts of Namibia and in many places have been assimilated into the local communities, while for the Bushman languages there are almost no materials and very few teachers who know the languages. Thus it was decided to concentrate on the schools where there were a large number of Khoekhoegowab or Otjiherero speakers. However some figures have also been collected and included for schools where speakers of one of the Bushman languages are in the majority.

Most of these schools are in the three southern educational regions, Windhoek, Khorixas and Keetmanshoop, where one finds many heterogeneous communities containing speakers of several different languages. The home languages of the children in the schools in these communities often include Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero, Afrikaans, one of the Oshiwambo dialects and other languages of the northern communities. It is not easy therefore to prescribe the language which should be used in any one school and one has to investigate each school separately. The speakers at the workshop on African Languages in Basic Education, which was held at NIED in September 1995, (Legère 1996) identified a number of possible reasons why a school might decide not to use the home language of the learners as the medium of instruction in Grades One to Three.

13 The school might have such a heterogeneous population that the learners speak too many different languages for one to be chosen as the medium of instruction. (Legère 1996, Chamberlain 1993)
14 The authorities and the community may have decided that it would be fairer if all the children were to learn through the medium of another language, i.e. English or Afrikaans, since the other learners might be disadvantaged if the language of the majority was used.
15 The staff of the school and the community may think that there is no value in learning the language. (Legère 1996, Chamberlain 1993 and Harlech-Jones 1990)
16 There might be no teachers on the staff of the school who could teach that language. (Legère 1996, Brock-Utne 1995)
17 There might be no upper primary or secondary schools where the learners could continue to study their language. (Legère 1996, Brock-Utne 1995)
18 The instructional materials for the language may not be as good as those for English or Afrikaans. (Legère 1996, Brock-Utne 1995)

[41] All figures in this paper are taken from the school statistics for 1998.

3.1 Heterogeneity

Let us examine each of these issues in turn. In order to assess the effect of the first reason, the statistics of all the schools in the Keetmanshoop, Khorixas and Windhoek regions which use English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in Grades One to Three were obtained. There are 295 schools with lower primary classes in these three regions. Of these schools, 184 use English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction and not one of the national languages. However, out of these 184 schools, 58, or 31.5% have more than 70% of their learners who have the same home language. The majority of learners in 37 of these schools are Khoekhoegowab speakers, in 13 schools Otjiherero speaking and in 8 San or Bushman language speaking.

There are schools where there are a number of speakers of several different languages and where it might be impossible to select a dominant language as the medium of instruction. One example is Marti Athisaari School in Windhoek, an English-medium school. Thirteen different languages are spoken in that school and the largest group, who speak Khoekhoegowab, comprise less than one third of all the learners in Grades One to Three. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the learners by language in the first three grades. See also Appendix A for extracts from a report on the school.

Table 3 Languages spoken by learners at Marti Athisaari Primary School[42]

Marti Athisaari PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (10 classes)	23	2			153	56	41	4	21		53			2			Eng
Gd 2 (6 classes)	6		1		60	28	34	4	17		46		1	3	1		Eng
Gd 3 (5 classes)	12				49	45	16	1	14	1	28			2			Eng

Another example of a school with a similar language situation is Bet-el Primary School as can be seen from the figures given in Table 4 below.

[42] **Abbreviations**

Af -	Afrikaans	Ok -	Oshikwanyama	Ot -	Otjiherero
Sa -	San	On -	Oshindonga	Rg -	Rugciriku
En -	English	OL -	Other languages	Rk -	Rukwangali
Ge -	German	OO -	Other Oshiwambo	Se -	Setswana
Kh -	Khoekhoegowab	OC -	Other Caprivi	Si -	Silozi
Th -	Thimbukushu				

Table 4 Languages spoken by learners at Bet-El Primary School

BET-EL PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 5 classes	14				89	26	16	5	21	3	7		3	3	1		Eng
Gd 2 5 classes	20				96	21	15	19	30	4	4	1	4	2			Eng
Gd 3 4 classes	11				73	16	12	11		2	14	2		5	1		Eng

A school with an even greater spread of languages is Van Rhyn Primary School.

Table 5 Languages spoken by learners at Van Rhyn Primary School

VAN RHYN PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 4 classes	59		10		16	3	5	4	22	1	17			1	3		Eng
Gd 2 4 classes	67		19		16	3		2	11	3	21			1	1		Eng
Gd 3 4 classes	58		13		22	4	10	4	2	1	21			1	1		Eng

In the other 58 schools mentioned above, more than 70% of the learners in Grades One to Three speak the same language. Among the schools where Khoekhoegowab is the dominant language, Moses van der Byl Primary School has 375 (70.6%) learners whose home language is Khoekhoegowab out of a total of 531 learners in Grades 1 to 3, Otjivero Primary School has 97 out of 114 (85.1%), and W M Jod Primary School has 354 out of 462 (76.6%). Yet all these schools use English as the medium of instruction. The breakdown of the learners in these schools and other schools is given in Tables 6, 7 and 8.

Table 6 Home languages of learners Moses van der Byl Primary School

Moses van der Byl	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (5 classes)	12		2		115	7	5	4	17		16						Eng
Gd 2 (5 classes)	11				124	7	1	2	5		21		1	3			Eng
Gd 3 (6 classes)	22				136	3	5	3	10		12	2		3	1		Eng

Table 7 Home languages of learners at Otjivero Primary School

Otjivero PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)					40	1					4						Eng
Gd 2 (1 class)	7				30												Eng
Gd 3 (1 class)	1				27						4						Eng

Table 8 Home languages of learners at W M Jod Primary School

W M Jod PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (5 classes)	52				130												Eng
Gd 2 (5 classes)	45				119												Eng
Gd 3 (5 classes)	38				105												Eng

Among the schools where Otjiherero is the dominant language, Theo Katjimune Primary School has 571 (93.3%) learners in Grades One to Three whose home language is Otjiherero out of a total of 612 learners, Bethold Himumuime Primary School has 604 out of 686 (88.0%), Ovihitua Junior Primary School has 59 out of 59 (100%), and Coblenz Junior Secondary School has 226 out of 258 (87.6%). The figures for these schools are given in tables nine to twelve. (see Appendix A for a report on Theo Katjimune Primary School)

Table 9 Home languages of learners at Theo Katjimune Primary School

Theo Katjimune PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (6 classes)	2				6	2	7		1		198						Eng
Gd 2 (6 classes)	1				2				6		196						Eng
Gd 3 (6 classes)	2				2	3	1	1	2	1	177				2		Eng

Table 10 Home languages of learners at Bethold Himuime Primary School

Bethold Himumuime PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (6 classes)	4				3	3	4	2	2		212	1		2			Eng
Gd 2 (6 classes)	1	1			2	11	9	5			192		3	1	1	1	Eng
Gd 3 (7 classes)	1				6	7	6		2		200		1	3		1	Eng

Table 11 Home languages of learners at Ovihitua Primary School

Ovihitua PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)											15						Eng
Gd 2 (1 class)											21						Eng
Gd 3 (1 class)											23						Eng

Table 12 Home languages of learners at Coblenz Junior Secondary School

Coblenz JSS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (3 classes)		6			4						88		1				Eng
Gd 2 (3 classes)					10						78						Eng
Gd 3 (2 classes)		2			8						58		1				Eng

There are eight schools where the San speakers are in the majority. For example, Aasvoelnes Primary School has 100% speakers of a San language, Grashoek Primary School has 76 learners whose home language is one of the Bushman languages out of a total of 80 learners in Grades One to Three, Kukurushe Primary School has 33 out 35 (94.3%), Gqaina Primary School has 55 out of 94 (58.6%) and Tsumkwe Junior Secondary School has 65 out of 105 (61.9%). Yet these young learners not only face the trauma of facing the school environment, but they also have to learn a language which is almost unknown to them.

Table 13 Home languages of learners at Aasvoelnes Primary School

Aasvoelnes PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)		22															Afrik
Gd 2 (1 class)		21															Afrik
Gd 3 (1 class)		17															Afrik

Table 14 Home languages of learners at Grashoek Primary School

Grashoek PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)		33									1						Afrik
Gd 2 (1 class)		18									1		2				Afrik
Gd 3 (1 class)		25															Afrik

Table 15 Home languages of learners at Kukurushe Primary School

Kukurushe PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)		14			1												Afrik
Gd 2 (1 class)		8															Afrik
Gd 3 (1 class)		11			1												Afrik

Table 16 Home languages of learners at Gqaina Primary School

Gqaina PS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)	1	25			9						6						Afrik
Gd 2 (1 class)	2	15			9				1		3						Afrik
Gd 3 (1 class)		15			4						3						Afrik

Table 17 Home languages of learners at Tsumkwe Junior Secondary School

Tsumkwe JSS	Af	Sa	En	Ge	Kh	Ok	On	Ol	OO	OC	Ot	Rg	Rk	Se	Si	Th	MOI
Gd 1 (1 class)		23			6					1	4	1	9		4		Eng
Gd 2 (1 class)		27			2						1	3					Eng
Gd 3 (1 class)		15			3					2	1		3				Eng

If one looks at the statistics for these schools (and there are many similar schools), one can see that there are sufficient learners to make one or more classes in each grade where the learners can learn through the medium of their home language. Some schools already use two languages as media. However most of these schools are former Afrikaans medium schools which have added one or two classes of English medium in addition to the Afrikaans medium classes.

3.2 Neutrality

Another argument is that it is fairer for all children in a multilingual school if a neutral language is chosen, because the speakers of the minority languages will be disadvantaged if the language of the majority is used. However there are two reasons why English should not be that language. The first is that the structure of English is very different from the structure of any of the Namibian languages with the exception of Afrikaans and is therefore more difficult to learn. The second is that in most communities in Namibia very little English is used and therefore the learners will not be exposed to English except in the classroom. A third pedagogic reason is that the sound system of English and its realisation in print is more complex than the sound system of the Namibian languages, so it should be easier for a child to learn to read and write in a Namibian language. A further point has been observed during visits to schools[43]. When some schools were visited, the researchers have found that in a school where there is one dominant language, learners who speak another language are

[43] See Appendix A for extracts from reports of visits to schools.

assimilated into the dominant language group and use that language for much communication. Thus it is no longer a foreign language, but what is called a 'language of wider distribution'.

3.3 Status

Several speakers at the Workshop on African Languages in Basic Education in 1995 spoke of the attitudes of teachers and the community towards the learning of their own language. Namaseb (Legère 1996 p148) quotes the 'negative attitudes of parents' towards Khoekhoegowab, while Tjoutuku (Op. Cit. p 223) says ' teachers/parents did not understand why their learners should take Otjiherero' and ' learning in Otjiherero would prevent learners being employed in some companies and industries owned by Afrikaans-speaking people'. There is no doubt that there is a widespread belief that, because English is the official language, English should be used and taught as much and as early as possible in schools, and that the Namibian languages have very little value. Parents and teachers are not aware of the pedagogical implications of using an unknown language, either English or Afrikaans, to teach children in the lower grades. Much more publicity needs to be given to the need for children to learn the basic concepts and literacy in a known language.

3.4 Human resources

The fourth argument against using the home language is that there may be no teachers in the school who know the language. Sometimes the teachers come from a different language community from the learners. This is true for the eight schools mentioned above where speakers of a Bushman language are in the majority. None of the teachers at these schools speak the language of the learners. However at the other schools mentioned a different picture emerges. At Moses van der Byl Primary School, eight out of sixteen teachers in Grades One to Three are Khoekhoegowab speakers, at Otjivero Primary School two out of three, and at W M Jod Primary School nine out of fifteen. At the four schools mentioned above where Otjiherero is the dominant language almost all the teachers are speakers of Otjiherero. At Theo Katjimune Primary School fifteen out of the sixteen teachers in Grades One to Three speak Otjiherero, at Bethold Himumuime Primary School nineteen out of nineteen, at Ovihitua Junior Primary School, where all the learners are speakers of Otjiherero, three out of three, and at Coblenz Junior Secondary School seven out of seven.

From the statistics of teachers for each school, given at Appendix B, one can see that in most schools where there is a majority of learners speaking one language, there are sufficient

teachers who speak that language to use it as the medium of instruction in at least some of the classes and to teach it as a subject. In the schools where Khoekhoegowab is the dominant language, 26 out of 37 have more than 50% Khoekhoegowab-speaking teachers. In the 13 schools where Otjiherero is the dominant language, only three schools have less than 50% Otjiherero-speaking teachers.

However the question needs to be raised as to whether the teachers who are speakers of Otjiherero or Khoekhoegowab can actually teach in that language. Most were trained through the medium of Afrikaans, and even now lower primary teachers taking the BETD with the lower primary option spend most of their time learning how to teach in English. The study on the BETD has shown that the training of lower primary teachers at all four colleges of education is done mostly through English and that student teachers very often do not even get a chance to do their practice teaching in a school using their language as medium of instruction.

Thus the teachers' knowledge of their language and their metalinguistic skills may be very limited. They may not know in their own language the terminology needed for teaching at lower primary level or even the correct orthography of their language. This is particularly likely for Khoekhoegowab, for which a new orthography was introduced in 1981 and which was only introduced as a secondary school subject in 1993, with the result that almost all teachers presently in the schools terminated their study of the language at the end of the primary school. This situation could be remedied by providing in-service training for lower primary teachers in their home languages and by insisting that the colleges conduct the training of lower primary teachers in their home languages. The inadequacy of the training of lower primary teachers and their lack of knowledge of the orthography of Khoekhoegowab are clearly described by L Namaseb and J Boois in their papers reproduced in Legère 1996. In the same publication J U Kavari reports of a survey of 50 teachers in the Kunene Region that 'Although all teachers teaching Otjiherero were native speakers, they were neither qualified teachers in general nor were they qualified Otjiherero language teachers.'

3.5 Further studies

A further point to be made is that the number of upper primary schools and secondary schools offering Khoekhoegowab or Otjiherero is limited so that learners cannot always continue the study of their home language (J Boois in Legère 1996)[44]. Since most schools offer only two languages and make the learning of a second language compulsory, learners competing for places will be at a disadvantage if they do not know the second language offered by the school. There are not many schools in urban areas which offer Namibian African languages as subjects, particularly at junior and senior secondary level, or provide a choice of languages for the learners. Thus many learners are being deprived of their right to study their own language up to senior secondary level. It would be possible for the Ministry to introduce a curriculum which would make the learning of a Namibian African language compulsory in all schools.

3.6 Instructional materials

The final reason given above is that the instructional materials available in English (or Afrikaans) are better than those available in Khoekhoegowab or Otjiherero (A Tjoutuku in Legère 1996). This is certainly true of the materials available for teaching the languages, since there is a wide variety of materials available for the teaching of English, whereas the number of books and readers available in Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero is limited to one or two readers per grade. Until the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture began the lower primary reform in 1995, the books available for other subjects at the lower primary level were different and better in English or Afrikaans than the other languages. However now that the policy has been introduced that publishers must supply books in all languages for the subjects taught at lower primary level, i.e. Maths and Environmental Studies, there is very little difference between those available in English and those supplied in, for example, Otjiherero. However, when one looks at the books available for language and literacy teaching, there are few books available for teaching the national languages, but a vast range of good quality books for teaching English. It is vital to ensure that good quality instructional and learning materials are made available in all languages and that there is not a discrepancy between the books in English and those in other languages.

[44] The situation has improved since that paper was written, but in 1998 there were over 5000 Khoekhoegowab speaking learners in Grade Four and less than 2000 were studying it as a subject. Of nearly 4000 Otjiherero speakers, less than 2000 were studying the language.

4. Recommendations

It is suggested that the situation for Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab speakers in the schools could be made more equitable and those languages be given a status more equal to the other Namibian languages if a number of small changes were made to the language policy for schools. It is not suggested that all these changes could be implemented immediately or that the disadvantaged status of the languages would be altered overnight, but at least there would be some progress made. The following five recommendations arise from the points made in this paper.

- All schools should teach as a subject the language of the majority of the learners and those other languages in the school where there are sufficient speakers of that language to form a complete class.
- Where more than 80% of the learners in Grades One to Three speak the same language, that language should be used as the medium of instruction.
- The Ministry should arrange training for lower primary teachers presently in the system, particularly those in the schools dealt with in this study, so that they can teach through the medium of their home language.
- The colleges should ensure that the lower primary teachers they produce are capable of teaching through the medium of their own language.
- The Ministry should ensure that instructional materials of a high quality are available in all the Namibian languages.

5. Conclusion

This has been a summary of some of the statistics relating to the choice of the language of instruction in the lower primary schools, with particular reference to Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero. The main finding has been that there are many schools where the number of learners speaking the same language would permit the children to be taught through the medium of their home language, but they are being deprived of the opportunity to make good academic progress in the early grades through the use of English or Afrikaans instead of their mother tongue. It is to be hoped that more decision-makers will come to realise the merits of the use of the home language for learning early cognitive skills, and that the Ministry will enforce the recommended language policy more firmly.

Sub-study B: Language skills in Lower Primary schools in Ondangwa Educational Regions. Achievements and problems*

1. Background

The Educational Regions Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West are the most densely populated parts of the Republic of Namibia. Consequently, compared to the rest of the country, the schools in these regions have to accommodate a very high number of learners who have to be adequately taught.

The breakdown of the figures for those learners whose mother tongue is a linguistic variety belonging to Oshiwambo in Grade One-3 (1997 figures)[45] is as follows:

Oshikwanyama	44.0 percent
other Oshiwambo	30.8 percent
Oshindonga	25.2 percent

In addition, there are a number of children who speak other languages including those of San origin as well as those from other parts of Namibia.

The medium of instruction (MOI) in Lower Primary grades of Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West is either Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga.[46] According to the statistics (source: EMIS 1997, table 20, p. 42) for Oshikwanyama there are

> 223 schools with 306 classes in Grade One (10479 learners), 290 in Grade Two (10270) and 346 in Grade Three (16798) - the total is 37547 learners.

Oshindonga is the MOI in

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*Author Karsten Legère - Earlier versions of this case study were presented at the Language Policy Seminar organized by the Namibia Educational Research Association (NERA) 30 July 1999 at UNAM, an updated manuscript was submitted for publication to the Presidential Commission on Education.

[45]Source EMIS 1997:Table 18, page 40.

[46]Some schools both in Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West have opted for English as MOI from Grade One. These schools have not being dealt with in this survey. 759 Oshikwanyama speaking learners, 692 Oshindonga speaking learners and 652 other Oshiwambo speaking learners are said to learn in English right from Grade One. These figures, however, cover the whole country and thus do not represent the situation in the two Ondangwas.

400 schools with 518 classes in Grade One (17284), 502 in Grade Two (16330) and 538 in Grade Three (20365) - the total is 53979 learners.

Excluding English and, in two urban areas Afrikaans, no other languages (such as San languages) are used as the MOI in the Regions. An insignificant number of speakers of Bushman languages learn in Oshikwanyama, that is 10 in Grade One, six in Grade Two, and 23 in Grade Three3.[47]

The implementation of the educational policy in the Lower Primary phase in the Oshiwambo-speaking area with reference to languages as MOI and subjects has yielded valuable results, but has also lead to a number of problems and difficulties as reported in the past. Thus, previous surveys, case studies, classroom observations as well as unpublished reports by advisory teachers, inspectors and others[48] have pointed out that teachers' and learners' performance in Grades One to Three leaves much to be desired. This was documented, among others in Legère (1996, 1998).[49] Although his focus was on English, Chamberlain (1993, 16-19) observed various aspects pertaining to the role and use of national languages in the regions such as:

- Lower Primary grades which are good in Oshindonga/Oshikwanyama are also good in English (no reason given - but this seems to be the result of the teacher's commitment);
- mother tongue is spoken extensively outside the classroom;
- national languages are widely used among teachers in school meetings;
- national languages are dominant media of communication in hospitals, police stations and other public places.

The lack of reliable, up to date data and findings about the situation in Lower Primary with regard to language skills has been widely felt by educationists who trace imperfect performance in upper grades back to weak foundations laid in early years of schooling.

[47]Source EMIS 1997 (table 21, 43-44).

[48]For example, the report by members of the Oshikwanyama Curriculum Committee who toured schools in 1998 and subsequently summarised their observations in a paper whose findings were discussed at subsequent committee meetings.

[49]1998 in particular for Oshikwanyama, for other language groups comp. papers by Namaseb (Khoekhoegowab) and Legère (Thimbukushu) in Legère (1996).

Accordingly, there were ample reasons for conducting a survey in Lower Primary grades in schools in Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West to look into some burning issues and frequently identified problems with regard to language skills being an important factor in achieving academic skills. Visits to schools were targeted to collect data which should make it possible to understand the situation better in a widely neglected area. The emphasis of the visits was initially laid on observing classroom interaction as well as on testing reading and writing skills, including creative writing. However, since classroom observation was a time consuming exercise, the focus of the survey was shifted to the study of writing skills, as mastery of these skills were understood to be of prime importance and a precondition for a smooth, successful performance in upper grades. In addition, competence in the MOI was another sensitive issue (given the high number of non-Oshindonga mother tongue speakers as well as the existence of small marginalized San communities) and included in the research schedule accordingly.

In general, the syllabus for national languages in Lower Primary grades includes in the aims to

> "- develop the full range of listening, reading and writing skills;
> - create a reading and writing habit..." (MBEC, NIED 1996:3).

The survey was coordinated with the Advisory Teachers (National languages) for Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West who advised which schools to visit for distributing and administering the survey instruments. The selection of schools took into consideration the role of the two dominant media of instruction, that is Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga, as the mother tongue as well as in particular the latter as a closely related linguistic variety which, however, is not the mother tongue of the majority of learners. In addition, some schools were identified where children of ethnic minorities of probably San origin were said to be learning.

2. Instruments

2.1 For writing skills

2.1.1 A word list was compiled both for Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga.[50] This one page list consisted of words or word groups displaying a range of sounds which have been described by LP teachers to be a stumbling block for learners in writing as well as in reading. These sounds are said to be frequently misspelt (, for example attempting to spell them individually such as

[50]The word list is enclosed in Appendix C.

the velar fricative "sh" being read as "s" and not as [S]). The list includes examples with sounds written with two letters (digraphs) such as

- the dental fricatives [D] (=DH) and [Q] (th) in Oshindonga,
- palatal nasal "ny" [ù],

letter combinations as found in

- affricates like [dJ] (dj, ly), [tS] (ty) in Oshindonga,

as well as the combination of

- a consonant followed by the non-syllabic high vowels "u" and "i" (i. e. semi-vowels /glides "w" and "y"), thus forming letter sequences like "kw", "lw", "ly" etcetera
- the nasalized fricative [nD] (=ndh) in Oshindonga and affricates like "ndj", or bilabial nasal+stop followed by a glide like "mbw", etcetera.

In the sample schools the teachers of Grades Two and Three were subsequently requested to select words from this list and to dictate these to the learners of their class. Sometimes the selection was made by the researcher as in the case of Molteno schools, since by the end of Grade One the learners were supposed to have been taught all sounds and letters including digraphs, trigraphs and letter combinations.

In fact for all Namibian schools the syllabus for Grade One suggests that

"Learners should be able to...

- write all the letters of the alphabet in the correct position on the lines in Grade One exercise books..." (MBEC, NIED 1996:8).

Furthermore, Grade Two should continue with exercises referring to the sound system and its graphemic representation.

In addition, various texts were adapted from Namibia Literacy Programme (NLP) textbooks (hence unknown to LP learners) for dictation.[51] However, the writing of dictation from these texts had to be dropped, when it was found out that in the first test the teacher was dictating by telling learners details of how to write words, indicating punctuation, etcetera. The emphasis of the data collection was shifted to learner centred activities such as composition writing where teacher's interference and attempts to influence results were kept to a minimum.

[51]The syllabus (MBEC, NIED 1996) prescribes both the length and the content of the texts for dictation which was taken into account when adapting the NLP material.

2.1.2 **Composition writing** was identified as a valuable area for producing authentic material which originates from learners. Together with the advisory teachers several topics which were very familiar to the learners were selected for the composition. Subsequently, as also agreed upon in discussion with the class teachers, the learners were requested to write on one of the following topics:

"Our village"

"Our trees"

"In the hospital".

In addition, as suggested in the syllabus, a letter to a friend, an invitation or any other written communication might have been composed.

In April 1999 (end of first school term) Grade Four learners were selected for writing a composition of 7 to 10 sentences. This creative writing exercise was consonant with the syllabus which requires learners by the end of Grade Three to achieve this objective. Similarly, Grade Three learners were requested to write a composition/text of 5 sentences.[52] Subsequently in July 1999, after more than half of the school year had been completed, the Grade Four activity was shifted to Grade Three, expecting the Grade Three learners to write 7 to 10 sentences. The Grade Three April exercise in writing a 5-sentence composition was also given to the Grade Two learners in July.

2.1.3 At a later stage of the survey two illustrations from the adult literacy primer stage I[53] were copied and distributed to the learners in Grades One, Two and Three. Learners were requested to describe in their own words what they see in the picture either by single words (Grade One) or in sentences. The fact that the same illustration was used in different Grades was intentional in order to compare the learners' progress.

The aims of these written exercises were manifold. Some reasons for using these instruments and exercises are sketched below:

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[52]Comp. MBEC, NIED (1996:15) for Grade Two, and MBEC, NIED (1998:23) for Grade Three.

[53] "Elongo Laveshe" (Oshikwanyama, NLP 1993) and "Tu ilongeni okulesha nokunyola" (Oshindonga, NLP 1994). See Appendix D.

- Primarily the tests were targeted to assess the performance of the learners and to draw a comparison with what the syllabus requires.
- Parallel to that it was assumed that the tests would shed light on how teachers tackle the issue of appropriately teaching and stimulating writing skills, including creative writing, in a national language as an important aspect of developing the intellectual potential of children, as outlined in various paragraphs of the 1998 syllabus.

More specifically the following questions were focused on:

- Could the learners elaborate their ideas with reference to a given topic or an instruction and how are they prepared by the teachers to do so?
- Do the learners have the knowledge to write down their ideas by appropriately using the medium of instruction (learning) which implies adequate handwriting skills and knowledge of the graphic representation of the sounds?
- Do the learners meet the objectives as formulated in the syllabus which expects them to be competent in:
  - the proper use of nouns (singular and plural, gr. 2),
  - verbs in all tenses and with extensions (gr. 2, gr. 3)
  - simple abbreviations (gr.2),
  - demonstratives, adjectives, pronouns, (gr. 2) etcetera?
  - to what extent are learners familiar with the orthography of the MOI?[54]

2.2 For reading skills

Texts were selected from the adult literacy primer to avoid any imitation of reading by just memorising previously read material, as is often the case when the textbook is used.[55]

[54]According to the syllabus for Grade Three learners should know the correct conjunctive or disjunctive spelling (which comes automatically as soon as the verbs are properly introduced and used). In other words, gradual competence in the orthographical conventions is expected from all learners from Grade Three onwards.

[55]In one case even an unadapted newspaper text was used to check whether the difficult wording could be mastered by advanced learners of Grade Four.

Initially learners of three different categories, that is (good, average and slow readers - the selection being left to the discretion of the class teacher) were requested to read a text from the primer. The performance was recorded on audio as well as on videotape. After the reading was completed some questions were asked to test comprehension. This reading test was a time-consuming exercise which was effective in gaining an insight into the performance of only a very small number of individual learners, which could not be a representative sample. Therefore, in order for a comprehensive understanding of the learners' progress, achievements and problems in reading, the individual tests of reading skills were replaced by material which allowed for a complete group or even a whole class to be assessed. The material consisted of a text to be read silently followed by questions which had to be read as well. Subsequently the questions had to be answered in writing. In this way learners were expected to display competence both in reading and understanding a text. Nevertheless, one has to be aware of the fact that the test of comprehension and reading skills in this exercise was seriously hampered in the case of those who are weak in writing when answering the questions resulting from the text. Accordingly, being aware of this constraint, for the time being only one sample of the reading/comprehension test will be presented. It is hoped that a more adequate way of tackling the problems surfacing from the lack of writing skills will be found in future. The results of the oral reading test will not be discussed here, as they are found to be not representative enough to account for the situation. Hence, in this respect, the SACMEQ report (Voigts 1998) might fill the information gap, as it sheds light also on the two Ondangwa Educational Regions.

3. Discussion of the test results

3.1 Writing test - dictation of words and word groups

A total of 341 learners from 9 classes[56] in 5 schools took part in the test in April 1999. The marking was done according to the following criteria set by the researcher:

Total marks = total number of examples (words or word groups) written.

One spelling error meant half a mark less, two spelling errors in the same word one mark less, that is, the word was not counted correct. This method of assessing the learners' work may be

[56]In fact, another Grade Three class (from Ongenga, hence number 10) was also tested, but as the researchers left the class for some minutes the teacher started advising learners on how to correct the dictation. For this reason, the test was cancelled. The interference by teachers is a problem which must be avoided by all means, otherwise the results are manipulated.

disputed, but it was an attempt to extract as much information as possible from the exercise. Some teachers were much more strict in their marking, that is a wrong letter (for example a capital for a small letter) resulted in a zero mark which would have made many learners (the overwhelming majority) fail. Thus, it was necessary to remark the exercise so that a uniform marking scheme would be applied. Other teachers were not confident in marking and how to mark.[57] In this case marking was done by the researcher. Finally all results were converted to a five point scale where 5 (A) is the highest score and 1 (E) the lowest (a fail).

The emphasis of assessment was on the recognition of what the learners wrote, hence on the sequence of sounds in the written word or word group as reflected in the arrangement of the letters. Accordingly, questions like was a verb disjunctively written or a post-nominal adjunct connected to the following noun (in short - orthographical conventions) were ignored at this stage, since this would further negatively influence the result.

A summary of the results is displayed in the Table 1. The table will not be commented upon in detail, but some remarks are necessary to understand cases of very low performance as well as strikingly positive examples.

Table 18: Writing tests – dictation: Ondangwa East and West

Score: School/ Grade	A	B	C	D	E (fail)	Total learners	Comments
A Gd 2	12 (26.1%)	2 (4.3%)	1 (2.2%)	5 (10.9%)	26 (56.5%)	46	Molteno school
B Gd 2	21 (58.3%)	3 (8.3%)	2 (5.6%)	2 (5.6%)	8 (22.2%)	36	
C Gd 2	17 (37.8%)	2 (4.4%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (4.4%)	23 (51.1%)	45	
D Gd 2	11 (26.8%)	5 (12.2%)	5 (12.2%)	8 (19.5%)	12 (29.3%)	41	Molteno school
A Gd 3	15 (55.6%)	9 (33.3%)	2 (7.4%)	1 (3.7%)	0 (0.0%)	27	Molteno school
B Gd 3	17 (70.8%)	2 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.2%)	4 (16.7%)	24	
E Gd 3	24 (55.8%)	10 (23.3%)	1 (2.3%)	3 (7.0%)	5 (11.6%)	43	

[57]See below the discussion of reasons with reference to written exercises.

Score: School/ Grade	A	B	C	D	E (fail)	Total learners	Comments
B Gd 4 (2 classes)	57 (72.2%)	5 (6.3%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (19.0%)	79	
TOTALS	**174**	**38**	**14**	**22**	**93**	**341**	
%	**51.0%**	**11.1%**	**4.1%**	**6.5%**	**27.3%**		

The overall percentage (total 341 learners = 100%) of those who passed the dictation test was 72.7 (that is 248 learners), while the failures amounted to 27.3 percent (or 93 learners out of 341 children). The extremes are zero failure (= 0 percent) in Molteno school A for Grade Three, and in the same school A in Grade Two also the highest percentage of those who failed the test, that is 26 out of 46 learners (= 56.5%). Next comes school C, Grade Two with 51.1% failures. Requested to comment on the results, the Grade Two class teacher in school A complained that a number of weak learners joined her class in January 1999 from other (non-Molteno) schools. She argued that these weak learners affected the general level of the class which had achieved good results in Molteno Grade Two. However, this does not explain why even learners who were at the school in Grade One failed the test. According to the advisory teacher who is familiar with the school, the low performance results from the teacher's lack of commitment and the weak school administration which does not properly supervise and monitor the learners' performance after Grade One. The result of more than half of the learners failing the writing test is not acceptable (given also the lenient marking), as even slow learners from other schools might be brought up to the level of the class with remedial work based on the existing Molteno material from Grade One. A convincing proof is provided by Grade Three of the same school where all the learners passed the test, the majority even with A marks. In addition, one could also compare this Grade Two class above with another Grade Two in Molteno school D which exhibited similar problems (learners from outside joining in Grade Two), but nevertheless performed quite well (70.7% passing). The words which were written as dictation in the latter Grade were difficult with a number of digraphs and trigraphs in the examples as these were assumed to be known from Grade One (the teacher herself did not object). This proves that Grade Two learners can pass the test provided that efforts are made to work with those who have not been previously exposed to Molteno methods and are behind the class average.

In summary one could draw the preliminary conclusion that schools in the sample performed quite well in dictation despite the fact that this type of exercise has not or rarely been given before, as confirmed by learners and advisory teachers. On average a failure rate of one quarter of the learners is observed. This group needs the teacher's special attention. A fine example of individual handling of the problems of slow learners was found in Ongenga. There a teacher started working with a class of slow learners in January 1999 and proudly presented the achievements of 3 months committed work among these learners to visitors in April 1999.

In the negative examples mentioned above the weak performance is not only a matter of the class teacher, but also of the principal who ignores or does not enquire about learners' progress, at least in this area of written works. Another negative example was a Grade Four class (school L) which was just kept busy with copying and drawing, as the children were described as being "special cases" and not capable of learning reading, writing and other skills.

But to cut premature enthusiasm about 75 percent of learners performing well in writing skills down, one has to bear in mind that the dictation exercise just commented upon was not the one which should normally be done in the classroom. The exercise focused on selected words which should be known by the end of Grade One (or Grade Two at the latest, as the syllabus requires). However, the fact that a number of learners in higher grades stumbled over these examples made quite clear that systematic work in consolidating Grade One tasks should be high on the agenda. This, of course, coincides with the opinion of teachers (whether justified or not) that for them it is not possible to teach all sounds of the medium of instruction in Grade One. The counter argument is provided by the Molteno method which includes all sounds of the MOI in the Grade One material[58] and obviously succeeds in making Grade One learners familiar with all these sounds and their graphic representation.[59]

[58]This material (learners' kits) was seen during visits to Molteno schools in Olukonda, Nuukata, Kandjengedi, , etcetera

[59]Comp. the statement by Amweele (in Legère 1996:130): "At the end of the year (that is Grade One-K.L.) most learners can write and read accurately and fluently." This is a generally acknowledged observation which is also expected, given the criteria for admission to the Molteno programme, the intensity of monitoring, the training of teachers involved, the type of material specifically developed for the programme - this all contrasts a Molteno school with other schools where such conditions are not found. Nonetheless, as the example mentioned

The syllabus (MBEC, NIED 1996:15) suggests that learners in Grade Two should "write correctly from dictation 5 short sentences containing known words", the same learning objective is found in Grade Three too, where dictation of 7-10 sentences with known and unknown words (author's emphasis) is included in the syllabus (MBEC, NIED 1996:23). Administering this type of exercise was not possible for the reasons already mentioned above.

As initially suggested, the writing test included words with digraphs and letter combinations. Below is a summary of learners' performance in writing some of these words. Reference is made to Grade Two, although other grades such as Grade Three or even Grade Four might face problems in this area as was discovered. But with a committed teacher the problems could be overcome.

Table 19: Learners' scores in writing words with digraphs and letter combinations (Grade Two, Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga)

	Example	Correct	Incorrect	Total	Percent correct	School(s)
1	dhana	29	19	48	60%	Olukonda, Onezizi
2	nyola	36	12	48	75%	Olukonda, Onezizi
3	okaxuxwena	11	11	22	50%	Panguleni
4	omapya ogendji	8	21	29	28%	Nuukata
5	ompo	14	14	28	50%	Onezizi
6	omunhu	4	10	14	29%	Ongenga
7	ondjaba	16	20	36	44%	Ongenga, Panguleni
8	onghambe	10	12	22	45.5%	Panguleni
9	Oshikwanyama	19	17	36	53%	Ongenga, Panguleni

The table above illustrates how many learners are able to write correctly a particular word which contains a digraph or letter combination(s). In increasing order these words are:

omapya ogendji (28 % correct),

omunhu (29 % correct),

ondjaba (44 % correct),

onghambe (45.5 % correct),

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above shows, Molteno achievements in Grade One are not always a guarantee for stable and continuous uplifting in e. g. Grade Two.

okaxuxwena and ompo (50 % correct),
Oshikwanyama (53 % correct).

The words above, together with the others from the list, present a sequence of sounds which require appropriate knowledge of how to reduce them to writing. However, such frequently used words like *omunhu* or *Oshikwanyama* should not be found in this list. Every day learners are exposed to the word "Oshikwanyama" as part of their syllabus and the medium of instruction. Accordingly, both teacher and learners are expected to make sure that this word is always correctly written.

Various digraphs or letter combinations did not appear to be as problematic as described by teachers, although they are a source of errors. For example "dhana" (play) in the sample was six times written with the voiceless fricative becoming "thana" (which is still a digraph, thus this concept is not ignored by the learners). Or, "nyola" (write) was misspelt as "nsola", "wola" (2x), while the velar fricative "sh" [S] was written as "s" in "oshivike" (week) or "ovashamane" (gentlemen). But at the same time words like "oshinamwenyo" (creature) or "shangeni" (write, imp.) were correctly written. The word "ompo" (ostrich) was written as "opo" (5x), "onpo" (2x), "opmo" (2x), "opno" (2x), the rest being unintelligible. Thus, one is prompted to assume that individual words which are not frequently found in written texts or exercises are more likely to be misspelt.

The word list included verbs, where the disjunctive spelling was tested, as well as word groups, for example noun+possessive. The latter also required appropriate spacing. Neither aspect was marked.

Table 20: Learners' scores in writing word groups and verbs – spacing (Grade Two, Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga)

	example	correct	incorrect	percent	school(s)
1	esiku limwe	4	73	5%	Nuukata, Olukonda, Onezizi
2	eumbo laye	3	19	14%	Panguleni
3	evi lyetu	3	45	6%	Olukonda, Onezizi
4	omapya ogendji	3	26	10%	Nuukata
5	oka pya	4	18	18%	Panguleni

	example	correct	incorrect	percent	school(s)
6	otatu dhana	2	46	4%	Olukonda, Onezizi
7	otandi nyola	7	70	10%	Nuukata, Olukonda, Onezizi
8	tu leshe	2	46	4%	Nuukata, Olukonda
9	tu shangeni	4	10	29%	Ongenga

The table above is self-explanatory. It reveals the weak foundations of orthographic competence in this early stage of education. Obviously there is only a small number of learners who pay attention to or are aware of the conventions of writing words as separate units (1-4). The same is true for the disjunctive writing of verbs (5-9) which is widely ignored or unknown. The syllabus in its turn postpones this issue to Grade Three. Nevertheless, as teaching cannot take place without using verbs it was deemed interesting to find out to what extent simple and frequently used verbs are correctly written.

Table 21: Problematic words, word groups and verbs - spacing (Grade Three, Oshindonga)

	Example	Correct	Incorrect	Percent	School(s)
1	efano ndjika	26	21	55%	Olukonda, Onezizi
2	esiku limwe	33	14	70%	Olukonda, Onezizi
3	evi lyetu	42	36	54%	Olukonda, Onezizi, Onampira
4	omapya ogendji	33	14	70%	Olukonda, Onezizi
5	ohayi landithwa	14	33	30%	Olukonda, Onezizi
6	okwa nyanyukwa	17	61	22%	Olukonda, Onezizi, Onampira
7	otandi nyola	13	18	42%	Onampira
8	okamatyona	8	23	26%	Onampira
9	oshimbyupeke	3	44	6%	Olukonda, Onezizi

It is evident that there is substantial improvement with regard to correctly spacing noun groups such as *esiku limwe, evi lyetu, omapya ogendji*, as well as *efano ndjika.* The writing of verbs (no. 5 - 7) remains problematic. This fact coincides with the experience from other tests in particular composition. Finally, there are still words in Grade Three which are not properly mastered. The two examples, that is *okamatyona* (boy) and *oshimbyupeke* (sour plum tree) prove this here.

3.2 Creative writing test - composition

Composition writing was another, more advanced step of testing language skills. This exercise required the learners to arrange, in a meaningful way, ideas about a well-known topic by using adequate linguistic devices. In fact, this exercise should not be so difficult as both Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama are linguistic varieties which are very close to the phonetic transcription, mostly displaying a 1:1 relationship between the sound and its graphic representation. Accordingly this seems to be much simpler than the unsystematic English spelling which learners have to understand. More complicated for the learners to handle are the orthographical conventions of Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama. In particular the disjunctive writing of the verbs is a recurrent source for mistakes. The learners have a natural understanding of what a word is. This concept is refuted in the case of verbs by the orthography which has been imposed by missionaries. Accordingly, as already noted above, creative writing (and writing exercises in general) are heavily affected by orthographic incompetence.

The results of the composition exercise are detailed in Table 5. Out of a total of 592 learners, 336 learners passed. This is a 57 percent pass. 256 children (43 percent of the pupils) scored E which means they did not achieve the majority of basic competencies (according to MBEC, NIED 1996:24) and less than the required D mark which is still a pass in school.

Table 22: Scores obtained in writing tests – composition: Ondangwa East and West

School/Grade	Type of writing	Total learners	Pass	Pass percent	Comments
F Gd 4	Composition	30	9	30%	
C Gd 3	Composition	32	20	63%	
G Gd 3	Composition	37	28	76%	Molteno school
A Gd 4	Composition	30	23	77%	Molteno school
H Gd 2/1	Picture	25	15	60%	
H Gd 2/2	Yesterday	25	14	56%	
H Gd 2/3	Letter	25	14	56%	
H Gd 1B	Describing a picture	36	24	67%	
H Gd 1B	Naming objects	36	17	47%	
J Gd 3	Describing a picture	29	22	76%	
J Gd 2	Describing a picture	34	17	50%	

School/Grade	Type of writing	Total learners	Pass	Pass percent	Comments
J Gd 1	Describing a picture	27	12	44%	
C Gd 2	Describing a picture	40	23	58%	
C Gd 3	Describing a picture	31	26	84%	
I Gd 3	Describing a picture	23	23	100%	
K Gd 1	Describing a picture	26	6	23%	
K Gd 1A	Describing a picture	33	15	45%	
K Gd 2	Describing a picture	44	19	43%	
M Gd 1	Describing a picture	10	0	0%	
M Gd 2	Describing a picture	19	9	47%	
TOTALS		**592**	**336**	**57%**	

To summarise, 57 percent of learners wrote a passable composition, message or letter. This fact is a strong argument for maintaining and encouraging further activities in this field as well as other areas of creative writing, such getting the learners to their own stories - as prescribed by the syllabus – either individually or in a group.

43 percent of the learners did not cope properly with the syllabus requirement of writing a meaningful composition or a message, letter, etcetera This group was not able to write adequately on a given topic as found by class teachers or fellow teachers[60] who assessed the content of the exercise.

The high proportion of failures reflects a weak foundation in writing skills among an important percentage of learners. For them the exercise was obviously too demanding. When learners were asked about written exercises, some of them (from different schools) said that even in Grade Three they had never been exposed to composition or dictation of texts as set out in the syllabus. This claim needs to be substantiated, as it contradicts the teachers' assertion that written exercises are done regularly. However, the teacher's answer remained vague, when asked about the date of a recent dictation or composition. Nor were they in a position to present exercise books with any writing exercises. This fact has also been observed by researchers involved in Sub-study C.

[60] identified with the help of the advisory teachers for Ondangwa East and West.

Here is what Ms Mulundu[61], Grade Three teacher of Panguleni Junior Primary School (Ondangwa West, MOI Oshikwanyama) comments on the performance of learners in describing a picture in various Grades of the school:

"52 Grade One learners wrote this exercise. 41 of them tried to do their best and passed, while 11 failed the exercise. In this Grade, I found that all learners could recognise and identify persons/objects in the picture, but some learners had problems in correctly writing words. They didn't know how to put letters together. But I hope they will do better in writing at the end of the year.

40 Grade Two learners wrote the exercise. 23 tried to do their exercise, while 17 could make words by their own, but the problem I found is that they fail making sentences. They didn't know where capital and small letters had to be used as well as how to space words and where to put a full stop. Many of them can orally build sentences and I hope they will be better, if an exercise like this will be repeated.

Grade Three learners were better, they do understand and many of them can make sentences on their own without somebody's help. They know where to use capital and small letters as well as full stops. Some have problems in spacing words and some have language problems (that is orthography, interference of another Oshiwambo variety - K. L.) and in writing some of them also have problems with the letters *p, d, b, g, y, h*. 31 learners wrote the exercise, 26 passed and 5 tried.

I find that this method of describing pictures suits well and is helpful to the learners in the lower Grades (1- 4)."

This verbal summary by an experienced teacher sheds light on existing problems as well as on areas for future activities.

The fact that the performance of learners in writing a composition is poor was also witnessed in material collected in Rundu in the Kavango Region. In June 2000 Grade Two and Grade

[61]Ms. Mulundu was a participant in all three Workshops on Classroom Interaction organised by NIED in cooperation with the German Foundation for International Development (DSE). The visit to her school and class was a fine demonstration of how an "ordinary" school with a committed teacher stimulates learners to perform well across the curriculum.

Three of a Junior Primary school (Kasote JP) were requested to describe in Rukwangali the picture "Building a house (or classroom)"[62]. The texts of this composition exercise were subsequently distributed for comments and marking to the participants (mostly Lower Primary teachers from the region) of the Workshop "Classroom Interaction. Focus on Creative Writing" which was jointly organised by NIED and DSE and held in Rundu September 26 to 29, 2000. In addition, during this workshop classroom observation of a teacher (a BETD graduate) presenting a lesson in creative writing was arranged. After initial discussion of two pictures which referred to a typical Kavango environment (river related activities) adequate key words were identified by the learners and word cards placed on the chalkboard. These words served as a guide for the learners who were tasked to write a short story in Rukwangali with reference to the pictures. These texts were made available for the present study and marked by the author.

The marks allocated to the Kasote material by the workshop participants were heterogeneous. Although informed about criteria for marking such as syllabus requirements (that is length of 5 to 7 sentences in Grade Two, 7 to 10 in Grade Three), relevance of content, acceptable way of expressing ideas (style) and the importance of appropriately handling the language with regard to punctuation or orthography there was a wide range of inconsistencies in teachers' marking. This was due to the lack of experience in dealing with creative writing and its assessment, as found out at the beginning of the workshop.

Below in Table 6 to are the results of the marking exercise which will be discussed afterwards:

Table 23: Describing a picture in Rukwangali (Grade Two)

No.	Length in sentences	Teacher's mark	Remarked	Comment
1	6 (-2)	A	E	
2	5 (-1)		E	
3	5 (-1)	C	E	complex structures
4	3	C	E	
5	3	C	E	
6	5 (-1)		E	
7	3	C	E	
8	4 (-2)	C	E	

[62] See Appendix D

No.	Length in sentences	Teacher's mark	Remarked	Comment
9	5	B	B	
10	5 (-2)		E	
11	3	B	E	spacing
12	4	B	E	
13	5 (-2)	B	E	
14	5 (-2)	C	E	
15	3	B	E	
16	3	C	E	
17	5 (-2)		E	complex structures (NP+NP)
18	5 (-2)		E	
19	3		E	
20	3	B	E	

Table 24: Describing a picture in Rukwangali (Grade Three)

No.	Length in sentences	Teacher's mark	Remarked	Comment
1	5	C	E	
2	6 (-3)	B	E	
3	5	C	E	
4	5		E	
5	5		E	
6	4	D	E	
7	9 (-2)	B	C	
8	2	D	E	
9	3		E	
10	6	A	E	
11	4	D	E	
12	2	D	E	rest are words
13	words	E	E	
14	7	E	E	not comprehensible
15	5	D	E	
16	8	D	E	not comprehensible

No.	Length in sentences	Teacher's mark	Remarked	Comment
17	7 (-1)	C	D	style acceptable, many mistakes

It is evident that the teachers' marks and those after the remarking exercise differ fundamentally. In the latter case the guiding principle was the syllabus requirement regarding length. Only one learner in Grade Two and two learners in Grade Three wrote a composition which was consonant with the length set out in the syllabus. In other words, out of a total of 37 compositions 34 (= 92 percent) were a Fail for length, and only 8 percent (3 papers) passed the test. Judging from the tables above, it may seem that there were more papers which met this length requirement, but in several cases one or more sentences were almost identical and so these sentences were counted only once, for example, candidate No. 2 (Grade Three) wrote six sentences of which only three were original the rest being almost identical in wording with a different subject such as

vatntavaKavetamema - i. e. *Vantu tava ka vheta mema*. (People are going to fetch water)

mututaKavetamema - i. e. *Muntu ta ka vheta mema*. (The man is going to fetch water)

and

mukabitanburanotopi - i. e. *Mukadi ta mbura nodopi.*

m*umatitatngranotopi* - i. e. *Mumati ta mbura nodopi.*

This fact is expressed by putting the total number of written sentences minus similar forms in brackets, for example, 6 (-3).

Below is one example from each grade for an acceptable composition (in terms of length, content, language use/style excluding orthography). The learner's version is given first:

Grade Two

1. vantukwakutunga nonzugo 2. onanekwasimbisihemerepomutwe 3. mukadonakwakusidikasikatoroli 4. otatevasimbindopi 5. munonakwakunokerapomakende

The correct version is:

1. *Vantu kwa kutunga nonzugo.* 2. *Onane kwa simbi sihemere pomutwe.* 3. *Mukadona kwa kusindika sikatoroli.* 4. *Otate tava simbi ndopi.* 5. *Munona kwa kunokera pomakende.*

People built houses. Women carried a bucket on head. A girl pushed a wheel barrow. Men are carrying a brick. A boy peeped through the windows.

Grade Three

1. vandu kunokudikago 2. onanetavavetamema 3. vatungisekonzugo 4. onanevanasimbikakiriva 5. otatetavagoronga 6. onanetavaturanodopi 7. onanevanasimbimema 8. otatevanasimbinodopi 9. otatetavanokereponze

The correct version is:

1. *Vantu kuna kudikapo.* 2. *Onane tava vheta mema* (3) *va tungise konzugo.* 4. *Onane vana simbi kakiriva.* 5. *Otate tava goronga.* 6. *Onane tava tura nodopi.* 7. *Onane vana simbi mema.* 8. *Otate vana simbi nodopi.* 9. *Otate tava nokere ponze.*

1. People are building. 2. Women are fetching water (3) for having the house built. 4. Women are pushing a wheelbarrow. 5. Men are plastering. 6. Men are laying bricks. 7. Women are carrying water. 8. Men are carrying bricks. 9. Men are looking from outside.

The examples above reveal again recurrent problems found in all texts. These are

- no capital letters at the beginning of a sentence, but sometimes capital letters in a word;
- no punctuation mark (full stop) at the end of a sentence;
- almost no learner observed spacing;
- wrong letters.

In addition, the following shortcomings were observed:

- in general no word division at the end of a line;
- *g, j, p, y* are written above the line by one fifth of the learners;
- *b, d, f, h, k, l, t* are written as the same height as *a, c, e, m, n*, etcetera
- aspirated voiced bilabial plosive [vh] written as the non-aspirated sound, for example, *veta* instead of *vheta* (fetch water), although *veta* means ‘law’ (<*wet*/Afrikaans)

Some of the papers which were seen by teachers were partly corrected for wrong use of capitals, missing full stops, letters/syllables and concords, but not for Rukwangali orthography

(in particular spacing). No plausible reason was given by the teachers when they were asked why they had omitted to mark these features.

Learners obviously do not have problems in oral communication, but as soon as it comes to writing down ideas or presenting a written summary of what they have said there is a barrier which stops the flow of communication. Hence, they have to be encouraged and guided by the teacher, even if orthographic problems cannot be handled correctly for the time being.

One may ask the question: Why in a number of cases does teaching rarely or never include creative writing activities like compositions? The answer is not directly available from the teachers themselves, as nobody is willing to admit their own problems.

Composition and dictation according to the objectives of each Grade are part and parcel of the syllabus. Even if the failure rate of 42% in the random sample is high, any claim that the syllabus is too demanding with regard to composition should not be accepted, as there is ample proof of good examples. When properly taught and guided, written exercises should even be fun. Accordingly, those teachers whose learners did not perform well were advised during the school visit to take the exercise as a starting point for capacity building by emphasizing the importance of writing skills.

3.3 Handwriting

Handwriting is another issue which requires more attention. In most cases teachers were too lenient in accepting exercises whose quality was below standard for handwriting. There was only one case where a teacher rejected several texts for marking by commenting “cannot read the learner’s handwriting”.

A generally adequate handwriting performance was found in Epato Combined School. Most Grade Three learners in the sample produced a proper handwritten composition in cursive writing. In contrast, learners in other schools even in Grade Four still produced texts in print. Epato is a good example of a school where the teacher did not tolerate learners’ flaws and inconsistencies.

Earlier some handwriting problems have already been identified, for example, *g, j, p, y* as written above the line and *b, d, f, h, k, l, t* as written the same height as *a, c, e, m, n*, etcetera. To give an example of the extent of the problem, in a dictation of words in Grade Four (Onampira-total 33 learners) 16 wrote *p* and 7 wrote *g* above the line, and 6 wrote a capital *s* instead of the small one.

We can conclude, therefore, that handwriting problems arise from the teachers' lack of concern and the absence of adequate guidance in overcoming these problems.[63]

4. Assessment and further discussion of results

As stated earlier, marking the composition or picture description was at the discretion of the class teacher or a fellow teacher. In the Oshiwambo examples, the allocation of marks was fair and consistent. However, it seems that the assessment of the content and the correctness of the language and probably of other relevant components such as handwriting needs general guidance. The teachers consulted and involved in the assessment did not know about content marking criteria issued by the Ministry. Accordingly, they produced an impressionistic type of marking which, however, could certainly be made more uniform, if there was a marking guide available to them.[64]

For the time being it was not so much the form (handwritten performance) and correct language use which was looked at and evaluated, but the sheer fact that learners were exposed to this type of writing activity and how they expressed themselves in writing about a given topic. As commented upon by teachers who were initially not very confident of this exercise, the children liked the exercise as another form of learner centred activity where pupils were using the language in this written form of communication.

[63] A valuable discussion of handwriting and its assessment is found in "Ideas on how to teach handwriting in the junior primary phase" (distributed at the NIED Workshop on Classroom Interaction, October 5-8, 1999). See also "Guide for Identification of Problems and Compensatory Methods. Handwriting - Grades 1- 4" (MBEC 1999). See Appendices F and G for samples of learners' handwriting.

[64] Nor are the authors aware of any relevant document for composition marking.

As confirmed again in the composition tests, most learners did not know the rules of disjunctive or conjunctive spelling and how to write several word categories in their language. As the result of ignoring orthographic conventions they developed some individual approaches in order to come to terms with this issue. There are examples of the learners' "creativity" (A to C) in circumnavigating the official orthography:

- Learner A writes from the beginning of the exercise to the end as one word.
- As learner B is not sure about word boundaries, s/he leaves very little space between what is thought are two segments or words. Hence it is up to the reader to identify the words.
- Learner C has developed her/his own system of conjunctive and disjunctive writing, as there is a natural feeling of what a word in the language is. Accordingly, s/he writes a verb as one word which is correct in linguistics, but in confrontation with what the missionaries and other so called language experts have formulated as rules for the language.

There is, however, only one solution which is practised by the following learner:

- Learner D carefully listens to what the teacher teaches in grammar and, by looking at the way the language is written in the books, s/he just extracts the rules from the material. Accordingly, this learner writes in line with the existing orthography. But this is an extremely rare case.

It is quite clear that in marking learners' written work the orthography has to be taken into account, although in the given case this aspect was not assessed. In composition language choice is unpredictable. However, this should not lead to the neglect of language use as well as grammatical and orthographic correctness. In this study teachers mostly did not correct the orthographic mistakes and inconsistencies of which the learners' texts are full. Although this aspect should not have been ignored in marking, very few corrections were made in the papers.

It is difficult to understand why learners make so many mistakes in writing words which are definitely words and not broken down into smaller units by illogical rules. Thus, a noun or an adjective has to be written with space before the following word, and the same is the rule for demonstratives, numbers, and other qualifiers. Not doing so violates the orthographic rules, and the teacher should see to it that learners are able to use and write their medium of

instruction correctly. There is no alternative, as the problems grow bigger with English spelling and orthography. In fact, the way learners write in their school language is one result of the teachers' indifference or probably even lack of competence in the language structure, the orthography and the appropriate way of teaching grammar and making rules plausible to children in Lower Primary. The problem rests with the teacher who is in most cases not competent enough as s/he accepts the versions A to C sketched above. This also sheds light on the way teachers neglect the requirements of the Grade Two and Three syllabus regarding grammar (quoted above in section 2.1). In fact, grammar teaching is included in the Lower Primary syllabus (see for each grade under writing skills, section 5.), but is obviously not done seriously and systematically in the classroom.

The experience from learners' difficulties with the orthography underlines the need to look for a remedy. In these days, language instruction is mainly done on the basis of the so-called "communicative approach". Given the need to account for the orthography where necessary, this approach must include at least those aspects where orthography departs from the logical understanding of what a word is. Within the framework of the communicative approach some sort of grammar teaching must take place to the extent that learners understand the rules for disjunctive and conjunctive writing in Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga (as well as Rukwangali and all other national languages).

If grammar in Lower Primary is properly taught, then even the largely disjunctive verb system in Oshiwambo could be handled. Compare a (verb) in Oshindonga (Oshikwanyama) like

otandi(l)ilongo

According to the spelling rules in Oshiwambo this verb has to be written either as two or even three orthographic units, thus

otandi (l)ilongo (*affirmative cont 1st p. sing. self*instruct) - I am instructing myself > I am learning

or *otandi (l)i longo* (*affirmative cont 1st p. sing. om* instruct) - I am teaching it.

While in English with its complicated spelling system basically a word is written as one unit, writing the foregoing example in Oshiwambo is different, as the verb is broken up into smaller units. Thus, the auxiliary part (tense, aspect, mood + class or person in this example) is generally separated from the verb stem which carries the meaning (here: instruct). This is a

simple matter which, however, needs regular attention and exercises.[65] From the very beginning, the teacher should pay attention in teaching to the orthographic conventions currently in use. In fact, since they have to teach the verb in Grades Two and Three, as prescribed in the syllabus, it is not clear why verbs are rarely correctly written. One wonders how a teacher could teach verb structure and subsequently ignore the way verbs are written.

5. The role of the class teacher

There are various Lower Primary support projects currently going on in schools all over the country including the North. These are geared towards improving a situation which does not fully produce the required and expected results, in particular in formerly marginalized educational regions. But whether it is Molteno, Basic Education Support or a so-called ordinary school (one teacher wrote in his - good - report: "My school is not a Molteno school") - the central figure in any classroom interaction and responsible for educational progress is the teacher. This, it is hoped, should also have become evident in the presentation above. However, it is well known too that any teacher who deals with a national language is not appropriately recognised in the Namibian society.[66] Their status as teachers is low, as the language they are teaching neither has any official status in the country nor earns most people a living after completing school. As English has been identified as the official language, in most cases formal domains require a sound knowledge of English. Thus, vacancies in administration and other jobs are mainly filled with incumbents whose mother tongue competence (certified in, for example [H]IGSCE documents) is irrelevant to date.[67] It is English which matters, hence its important social status as ideal bread-and-butter language.

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[65] In addition, the Oshiwambo verb above incorporates an object marker (separate from both the auxiliary complex and the verb stem), while the reflexive morpheme has to be conjunctively written with the verb stem. Admittedly, this subtlety might not be mastered by learners in lower grades, but the general idea on how to write disjunctively the verb should already have been internalised by them.

[66] Personal communication by advisory teachers, CC and community members and UNAM students, see also the comprehensive seminar paper "Teachers attitude towards African languages" (by S. Elago) as well as various contributions in Legère (1996), in addition Legère (1998), specifically the paper on Oshikwanyama.

[67] It is highly interesting to note that the PCE suggests that IGCSE results for national languages should be taken into consideration in applications for jobs in public institutions.

Accordingly, there is the general belief that real education starts only with English and subjects taught in this language. The stereotype "educated = English", "national language = uneducated" exists among fellow teachers, parents, probably school principals, administration officers educationists and beyond.[68] Class teachers rightly complain that they do their job with commitment, but people look down on them, although they are expected to produce quality in the sense that the learners must be well prepared for Grade Four where English becomes the medium of instruction. Many of them are not qualified and do not have a teacher training certificate, diploma, but just a short in-service training course. They have been made LP teachers because there is the belief that as soon somebody speaks Oshiwambo, this is qualification enough for using Oshiwambo as the medium of teaching literacy, handwriting, numeracy, environmental issues, grammar and, of course, English. This belief is completely wrong, as stated earlier in section 2. It is, however, a persistent argument. As a matter of fact, the number of unqualified teachers (teachers without formal teacher training) in Ondangwa East and West according to EMIS statistics (1997, table 48, 86) is as follows:

Ondangwa East 32.4 percent (890 teachers)[69]

Ondangwa West 23.1 percent (753 teachers).

As known, these teachers are mainly in charge of LP grades. Since it is thought that subject instruction in Senior Primary grades is more demanding, qualified colleagues are normally recruited for this phase and not for Lower Primary grades. For instance, in Onepandeulo CS (Ondangwa West) five out of nine LP teachers were unqualified at the time of the visit (July 1999).

This is, in a nutshell, a description of the underprivileged position of those teaching in grades one to three compared to other colleagues. There is no wonder that a number of LP teachers lack quality in their job. Other factors have also been observed as contributing to poor results in primary education, for example, insufficient number of textbooks in national languages forcing learners to share, overcrowded classes and inadequate infrastructure (learners being taught in shacks[70]), but also lack of commitment by some LP teachers. In general many

[68]For details of people's views see Legère (1996:66-67).

[69]The second highest percentage. Rundu leads with 62.9 percent of unqualified teachers (940).

[70]In Kandjengedi CS for instance a Grade Three class was taught in a corrugated iron shack. The temperature inside might have been 40C. While the teacher occasionally went outside

teachers love their profession and do the best they can to take good care of this precious asset entrusted to them - the young generation. Even if other people do not acknowledge how important the role of LP teachers is, they keep on doing the job. That's why from Grade Four onwards another group of teachers continues, but there is no reason to despise those who pave the way for them.

For two major reasons LP teachers' comments, suggestions and feedback are quite rare in this section:
Firstly, there were time constraints. In fact, teachers should have been consulted in particular after learners' answer sheets were seen and marked, but this was impossible in the limited period available for the survey in each school. However, all teachers were initially invited and requested in writing in Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama to submit a confidential report. They were asked to comment on various issues and to submit suggestions about the language policy and its implementation. The answers were due by the end of April 1999. Unfortunately, only 3 teachers out of 25 contacted responded. Accordingly, the distribution of questionnaires to teachers was discontinued at a later stage of the survey.

6. Medium of instruction vs. mother tongue

So far the discussion has focussed on Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga as the linguistic varieties of Oshiwambo which are used as MOI in Ongangwa East and Ondangwa West schools. However, as stated earlier, there are a number of other linguistic varieties which also belong to Oshiwambo, but have not become school languages. Thus, neither Oshingandjela, Otshikwambi nor Oshimbaanhu, Oshimbadja,[71] etcetera, are found as medium of instruction in the Namibian classroom. Learners speaking these linguistic varieties are instructed in Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama respectively. Accordingly, it is not correct to speak in this case of MT instruction in Lower Primary grades, as only some mother tongue speakers benefit

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learners had to continue until the end of the period. This situation prompted fellow teachers to teach in the schoolyard under a tree.

[71]The spelling suggested by NIED should be Oshikwambi (which is either the Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama name for the Kwambi language), Oshimbalantu and Oshimbandja (called a mixed - sic - dialect). It is felt that the correct and acceptable language name should be that as adopted by the speakers themselves and not any which is imposed by another Oshiwambo group.

from the use of Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama. In fact, the non-Oshindonga speakers are even more numerous than the Aandonga learners.[72]

There is the interesting question:
“Are other Oshiwambo speakers discriminated against by those whose language is the MOI?”
The answer may not be given with absolute confidence, but at least for the time being the survey did not find substantial differences between these two groups of learners. There was interference in oral work, as even the teacher (observed in Grade Four in school D) switched sometimes to Otshikwambi, so did the learners. Similarly, in school C the Grade Two teacher used sometimes Oshikolonkadhi, although MOI was Oshikwanyama. Among learners mother tongue interference was not found in written exercises. The reason might be that teaching and classroom interaction focused on particular words, concepts and texts (from textbooks) which were introduced in MOI and not in the mother tongue. Thus learners were not tempted to refer to the mother tongue in writing as even this skill was acquired in Oshindonga.

A slightly different situation was reported from Okahao where the dominant linguistic variety of Oshiwambo is Oshingandjela. A student researcher[73] who was involved 1999 in data collection observed 20 LP learners in various lessons and subsequently commented on their speech behaviour. Here is a summary of her findings:
“The learners displayed a rather strong Oshingandjela interference in Oshindonga oral exercises. One example was story telling. All of them were switching from Oshindonga to Oshingandjela and vice versa. Learners used various Oshingandjera words instead of Oshindonga words. Lexical interference was recorded in the following cases:
"Paife" (Oshingandjela) instead of "ngashingeyi" (Oshindonga) - now
"ndele" instead of "ihe" - but
"omusaane" instead of "omusamane" - man
"ekishikishi" instead of "ethithi" - monster, or
"shinga" instead of "hinga" - chase.

[72]Figures were given above.

[73]Ms A. Ambambi, 4th year B. A. student in 1999.

In addition, there was also a strong interference of the Oshingandjela sound system. Learners told their stories by speaking with an Oshingandjela accent. The same was also observed for reading.

Teachers were asked to explain how they assist learners in properly using Oshindonga. They said it is very difficult for them, because they are also Oshingandjela speakers and Oshindonga is not their MT but a variety which they learnt. They also admitted that code-switching is frequently taking place among themselves. This was consonant with the researcher's classroom observation."

The facts sketched above confirm what was expected to occur. The existence of two linguistic codes leads to interference (negative transfer) of the MT at all levels of the target variety (Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama) as long as the linguistic competence in the latter is not equal to the former. Whenever contrasting features exist, then the likelihood of MT interference is high. In the case of the school languages in Owambo, this MT interference might be reduced or overcome by giving learners appropriate exercises which relate to recurrent points of contrast. Even teachers without linguistic training could do this by referring to lexical and phonetic examples which are different in the respective linguistic varieties. However, it seems that teachers do not know what to do.

Khoisan speaking communities are found in both Ondangwa Educational Regions. Knowledge about their whereabouts is almost zero among those recently contacted. Education officers as well as teachers rarely take note of this minority. The advisory teacher for Ondangwa West was aware of a school (Uutsathima) in Okahao district where San learners attend classes, are fed and accommodated in a hostel. During a visit to Okahao at the end of July 1999, clarification was sought, but not much achieved. Although the principal of this school was met by chance, she could not provide details about her San learners and the language they speak. Eight other schools described as San schools were finally identified by the secretary in the Inspector's office, that is Akutsima, Amaarika, Iitapa, Okatseidhi, Okeeholongo, Olumpelengwa, Onanyanga and Tongo. The San children attending these schools were said to speak Oshiwambo, specifically Oshingandjela. For lack of counter evidence this claim is reproduced here. One school (Iitapa, 42 km south of Okahao) was visited in an attempt to shed light on the issue at the spot, but upon arrival the school was found closed (for lack of water). The teachers contested the claim that some of their learners were of San origin. In fact

meeting some learners outside the class playing football I could not find anybody who admitted to be a San language speaker.[74]

Subsequently, Oshisho JP in Okongo circuit (12 km north of Okongo) was visited. There, three San learners were traced in Grade Four. They all spoke Oshikwanyama (MOI) as well as an unidentified San language (probably !Kung). Other schools in the Circuit are also attended by San learners, but their attendance is said to be rather irregular. In the case of Ekoka which was mainly a San school, the learners deserted the school, thus teaching was discontinued. As the performance of all the learners in Oshisho was generally very low, the San children did not present a special case. In a short contact outside the classroom they did not reveal any information about their language background claiming that even at home they speak Oshikwanyama. However, they gave one short example of how Khoisan speakers in the area greet each other. Although recorded, this utterance does not identify the Khoisan language spoken there. According to the Okongo Circuit Inspector, the Ovakwanyama call the language spoken by their Khoisan neighbours in the area "Oshixwaga" (Oshihwaga in Oshindonga meaning "‡Akhoe")[75] as well as "Oshingongolo" (which stands for "!Kung").

7. Recommendations

7.1 Emphasis should be put on dictation in Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga in teaching as well as in monitoring teaching activities by both school management and advisory teachers.

7.2 Dictation of short texts should be practised and assessed on a continuous basis more frequently for developing competence in this writing skill. Dictation of words displaying digraphs or letter combinations should feature high on the classroom agenda. The same is true for practising disjunctive writing for verbs and the demonstration of correct spacing in word groups, as suggested in the syllabus. Again this should be monitored.

7.3 Peer assessment of written tests could be done to enhance learners' own accuracy and sense of responsibility, as well as to save teachers' marking time.

[74]U. Kann suggested that the Khoisan community of the area are probably of Hai/kom origin.

[75]B. Heine (p.c. 9 October 2000) suggests that this is basically Hai//kom.

7.4 Although the communicative approach to language teaching is prescribed, grammar teaching is important for understanding the orthographical conventions in Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga.

7.5 The teachers' own knowledge of the correct orthographies needs to be strengthened through INSET, which implies allocation of sources to that area by regional offices and NIED.

7.6 Regular monitoring needs to be done on learners' written work by both school management and the advisory services.

7.7 Namibian African languages should be adequately developed to be fully acknowledged as media of instruction in the Lower Primary phase. This implies the upgrading of the language proficiency of speakers of these languages as well.

7.8 With many BETD graduates entering the teaching field now, regional offices should make an effort to place newly qualified teachers according to their specialisation. This implies not placing specialist Lower Primary teachers in other phases, as well as not placing Lower Primary (minor option) graduates into Lower Primary classes.

8. Conclusion

Problems pertaining to the material in the various versions of this report were discussed with the advisory teachers for national languages, inspectors, Lower Primary teachers and students in the region. Where relevant, some of their comments were included in the report. Although data analysis will continue, it seems that some important observations have already been made with regard to writing skills. It is now the task to seek valuable solutions which aim at improving these skills, as these are substantial to learners' progress and advancement and for a literate environment.

As initially formulated, Grade One to Three learners are expected to acquire a firm foundation in the national language selected as the medium of instruction in order for them to transfer their Lower Primary skills to classes which are run in English. Accordingly, the survey in various schools has focused on achievements and problems in acquiring skills which are subsequently needed from Grade Four onwards. In this respect, the syllabus categorically states "the learners must be able to transfer their reading and writing skills from the mother tongue to the official language..." (MBEC, NIED 1996:2). Therefore, it is of fundamental importance to investigate how these skills are taught by the class teachers and subsequently

mastered by the learners. The better the competence in these skills are, the better the learner is qualified to proceed to what awaits her/him in Grade Four. But from the data collected and briefly discussed above competency in the national languages Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga needs to be improved in a number of respects. Writing skills are just one example which could be supported by some others.

Sub-study C: Student teacher preparation for literacy development in the Lower Primary Phase of formal schooling

1. Introduction

The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) has become aware of the growing concern about inadequate reading ability among the Namibian school-going population. The recent SACMEQ Report No. 2 (1998:64) reports on the low reading performance among one cohort of Namibian learners. The picture was described as gloomy with only 25.9 percent of learners reaching the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy and only 7.6 percent of the cohort reaching the desirable level. There is a general awareness that these findings are not only representative of the cohort of Grade 6 learners of 1995, but in reality, might reflect the reading ability of the larger school-going population.

Although there is not much structured information available on the level of reading and writing in the Lower Primary phase of schooling, anecdotal verbal reporting from at least two of the education regions over the last few years portrayed that in isolated cases the majority of learners in a class would fail in the Lower Primary phase, because the learners could not read.

As part of a series of investigations into the origin and nature of the reading problems, NIED's Research Unit (RU) decided to include the four Colleges of Education in the search for a better understanding of the origin of the reading problems, since an innovative Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) received its first intake of student teachers in 1993 in the four Colleges of Education (Ongwediwa, Rundu, Caprivi and Windhoek). The first three colleges are situated in the so-called northern regions, where the biggest shortage of appropriately trained teachers exists. In these same regions, the biggest proportion of Namibia's learners in Basic Education and Lower Primary also attend school. There are still major expectations in terms of the products that the BETD programme will deliver, especially to fill the gap in the provision of specialists trained for the Lower Primary grades of formal schooling.

Curriculum development in the BETD is done through input from selected teacher educators at the Colleges of Education and co-ordinated by NIED. Therefore it was thought appropriate that the Broad Curriculum policy document, as well as the actual Lower Primary syllabus should be scrutinised. NIED has policy-making authority and if policy needs to be addressed,

NIED's Curriculum Co-ordinating Group (CCG), which is representative of all the different stakeholders, will be the first body with which to negotiate.

2. Statement of the problem

In this study the perceived low level of literacy among learners leads to the problem to be explored, namely to establish whether the products of the BETD programme (specialist Lower Primary teachers), have the potential to develop into competent Lower Primary teachers, who could support young learners in the successful acquisition of reading and writing skills.

3. Goal of the study

Through this research there will be an attempt to investigate whether the pre-service (PRESET) training course, the BETD, prepares future teachers to deal with young learners' reading and writing skills. It will focus particularly on areas that are related to policy, like the design and implementation of the programme as prescribed in the policy documents and the provision made for the national Namibian languages, other than English, in the Lower Primary phase of the course.

4. Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. The researchers attempted to find the data in the context where it happens, the classrooms and the colleges of education. Those who were studied, spoke for themselves as far as possible, although the researchers interpreted much of what happened in the lessons according to pre-conceived assumptions of what were expected in literacy classes of appropriately qualified BETD teachers.

5. Research design

The research team planned to conduct the research in the following way. Firstly, initial data was gathered through written protocols to identify the emerging issues. To probe deeper into these issues, semi-structured interview schedules were developed to collect information from stakeholders such as, students, teacher educators at Colleges of Education, advisory teachers and other regional office staff members in the targeted regions. At the same time classroom observations were conducted in reading and writing classes of previously qualified BETD teachers (see Appendix E for examples of instruments). Analysis of the data was done throughout the process of data collection. Emerging issues were followed up and pursued

where there was a necessity for it. New research questions were formulated as the data gathering and analysis proceeded.

Throughout the study there was an attempt to create forums to communicate with the key participants, to interact and agree with them on the findings as they emerged. In the process the key players, the Colleges of Education, NIED, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC), and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation (MHETEC) participated in formulating the proposed recommendations.

6. Target groups

The main participants who took part in this study were thirty-six (36) BETD graduates, who specialised in Lower Primary and were at the time of the study teaching in the four (4) regions that formed part of the study. These education regions are Rundu, Katima, Ondangwa and Katutura in Windhoek. Others who also contributed to the data were twenty-eight (28) students in their final year of the Lower Primary BETD programme, fifteen (15) teacher educators in the Lower Primary and Namibian languages departments of the Colleges of Education, school principals from the sample schools, as well as four (4) Namibian languages and six (6) Lower Primary advisory teachers from the four (4) northern regions where the study was conducted.

The schools in the northern regions were purposively selected by the regional offices. The main criteria for selection were: setting of the school (rural/urban), BETD qualification of Lower Primary trained teachers, medium of instruction used in Lower Primary, which were in most cases the home language of the learners of that area. Only two (2) schools in the sample offered English as a medium of instruction. In Katutura (in Windhoek) only four (4) schools were selected where Namibian languages are offered as medium of instruction in Lower Primary.

7. Data collection techniques and resource persons

7.1 Pilot phase

In order to gather the data during the pilot phase, two (2) visits to the Rundu College of Education and nearby Rundu schools followed each other within a period of a month. The

initial data was gathered by written protocols, completed by three (3) teacher educators, as well as four (4) BETD trained teachers who will be called BETD teachers in the rest of the report. These teachers completed their studies at the Rundu College of Education and had a number of years' experience.

From these protocols specific issues emerged which were followed up by semi-structured interviews with the same teacher educators and BETD teachers. Further interviews were conducted with six (6) Lower Primary final-year student teachers, four (4) advisory teachers, two (2) working in Lower Primary and two (2) working in the Namibian languages (Rukwangali and Rumanyo) departments. Three (3) principals, from three (3) schools visited in the Rundu area, were also interviewed to get their perceptions on how the BETD teachers are able to implement the literacy curriculum of Lower Primary.

In these three (3) semi-urban schools lesson observations were conducted without any predetermined categories of observation. In all five (5) classes literacy lessons were conducted through the medium of English. In one (1) school it was the medium of instruction in Lower Primary and in the other two (2) schools the English language literacy lessons were recorded. The observer attempted to record a full version of everything that was said and happened during the lesson. This was done so that rich data could be collected to inform the study, but also to compile more structured instruments later. Later during the study, when patterns started emerging, a more focussed observation sheet was compiled that also left opportunity for contextual field notes. (See Appendix for instruments). These instruments were used in all four (4) regions.

7.2 The main study in four regions

Classroom observations were conducted with BETD teachers from both urban and rural schools.

Only teachers who had completed the BETD Lower Primary phase were selected, although some had taken it as a minor option. They were teaching Lower Primary classes at both rural and urban schools. Some schools were using the structured reading programmes of the Namibia Early Literacy and Language Project (NELLP) and the Basic Education Support (BES) projects, while others used the readers prescribed by the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture (MBESC). All lessons observed were reading and writing lessons conducted through the school language of that particular school. In almost all cases the lessons

were conducted in one of the indigenous local languages, which was not always understood by the observers, although it was easy to follow the pattern of the lesson. Pre and post observation discussions also contributed to clarifying what had been taught, these discussions took place in English where the observer did not understand the local language.

The three (3) researchers conducted all the lesson observations and where possible an advisory teacher of the region accompanied the researcher. In the Katima region a Silozi language specialist at NIED accompanied the researcher and took part in the study. One (1) of the researchers was able to work in three (3) regions, Windhoek, Rundu and Ondangwa West, which made it possible to compare how different colleges and regions manage and implement their literacy curriculum.

8. Data analysis and the dialogue process

- Qualitative data were analysed to identify trends, issues and anomalies, using data gathered through the analysis of the written protocols, various interviews, classroom observations and documentation analysis.

- In the beginning of the study there were at times two (2) researchers present when conducting the interviews and classroom observations and they discussed their findings at the end of each session. During the data gathering and analysis period the three (3) researchers held regular meetings among themselves in which patterns, anomalies and emerging issues were identified and discussed.

- Preliminary findings were discussed at different forums, which provided opportunities to cross-check findings and observations with the participants, pursue new issues, as well as formulate and negotiate recommendations. Examples of these are the NERA conference of 1999, where some of the commissioners of the Presidential Commission were present, a NIED in-house week, a meeting with the Lower Primary - Languages - and Professional Development subdivisions of NIED, a UNAM/NIED seminar, as well as a meeting with representatives of the Languages and Lower Primary departments of the four Colleges of Education. On two (2) occasions findings from the main study were presented to the Curriculum Co-ordinating Group (CCG), which is the policy making body of the BETD programme.

Through these meetings possible recommendations were invited from the forums, as well as the fact that policy makers and implementers had opportunities throughout the study to critique methods, findings and contribute to the dialogue of policy formulation and policy changes.

9.Discussion of the findings

9.1 Language related issues in the BETD

Because Lower Primary at school level is taught through the medium of the Namibian languages and some of these languages have only been developed to grade 12 level since and after Namibia's independence in 1990, the situation exists where some students entering the Lower Primary specialisation of the BETD are reported not to be “fully literate” in their respective languages. They were described as not always knowing and not fully able to recognise the standard orthographical conventions of their languages. This is perceived, as a problem as some teachers don’t write correctly themselves. The problem is exacerbated when teachers have to correct learners’ writing in that they can then not give guidance on the correct use of the orthography, with the result that learners’ writing often remains not properly marked or without feedback from the teacher.

Although this seems to be perceived as a bigger problem in the languages that were developed later up to IGCSE level, (Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero, Thimbukushu and Rumanyo), individuals also share the same concerns in some of the more established languages like Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga and Rukwangali. The orthographical problems that Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama speaking learners experience, one of which is the disjunctive writing of the verb, are discussed in detail in sub-study B of ***this*** report.

In Khoekhoegowab, one of the major languages, an education officer at NIED described the problems that teachers and learners experience with the orthographical conventions of the language as follows:

i) Confusing the old orthographies, used in the Bible and Hymnbooks and new standard orthographies.
ii) Confusing length marks with tone indicators.

iii) The disjunctive use of especially nouns (and to a lesser extent verbs) that should be written as one word.
iv) The wrong use of punctuation, in the sense that full stops and capital letters are not used at the end and beginning of sentences.

This has some implications for the Colleges of Education, as it places an extra burden on especially the Windhoek and Rundu Colleges of Education to prepare prospective Lower Primary teachers to teach through their home language. However, this situation is already changing, as more of the languages are now developed to IGCSE level and thus more student teachers will enter with language development up to at least Grade 10 level. They would also have had the opportunity to take their language as a subject up to Grade 12 level if the school they attend offers the language. Thus, it is to be expected that future students entering the BETD programme will be more confident of the orthographic and other conventions of their languages if they attended a school offering their respective mother tongues. The concern is still with teachers who are in the field in need of language development in the medium of instruction of the school and who are teaching through the medium of that language. See sub-study B for a more detailed discussion on the issue of mother tongue and mediums of instruction.

At the Windhoek College of Education a programme was implemented in January 1999 to support students in language development of the Namibian languages. The focus is still much on standardisation of orthographies. This implies, though, that part of the time allocated for student teachers to come to terms with the theory and practice of an already full Lower Primary programme has to be spent on language development. A positive outcome of the initiative at this college is that speakers of the different Namibian languages developed reading texts for Lower Primary learners, which were edited, compiled and bound in book-form by the college. This variety of texts from different writers have the potential to become a valuable resource in their own and other teachers' literacy classes.

9.2 Academic Qualifications of Teacher Educators

The following table shows the academic and professional qualifications of the teacher educators teaching in the Lower Primary Departments of the four Colleges of Education.

College 1

POST	GENDER	QUALIFICATIONS
Snr. lecturer	female	BA, HED[76]
Lecturer	female	BSc, ETC
Lecturer	female	BA, B.Ed-Honours
Lecturer	female	Dip. Basic Education (gr. 1-7), HDTE
Lecturer	male	BA, HED, B. Ed
Lecturer	female	BA, Dipl. Early Childhood

College 2

POST	GENDER	QUALIFICATIONS
Head of Department	female	LPOD (2 years), BA, HDE (Prim. Ed)
Lecturer	female	HED
Lecturer	female	BETD (Spec: LP), BA, B.Tech

College 3

POST	GENDER	QUALIFICATIONS
Head of Department	female	BA, PGED, M.Ed
Lecturer	female	HED, B.Ed
Lecturer	male	HED (Primary)
Lecturer	female	Ed. Diploma (Primary)

College 4

POST	GENDER	QUALIFICATIONS
Snr.lecturer	female	HED
Lecturer	female	Lower Primary Teachers' Diploma
Lecturer	female	HED, Dip. Remedial Ed.

From this information it is clear that a number of teacher educators are not specialist trained in Lower Primary, although a number of them have a broader specialisation area in primary teaching. In three of the above-mentioned cases, a person has an appropriate qualification, but has not taught in the Lower Primary phase of formal schooling before being appointed as teacher educator in the Lower Primary department. The ideal situation would be one where all staff members in a department have the academic qualifications in elementary education, as well as sufficient experience in Lower Primary classrooms in schools.

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[76] HED Higher Education Diploma
ETC Education Teacher's Certificate
PGED Post-graduate Diploma in Education
B. Tech Bachelor of Technology
HDTE Higher Diploma in Technical Education
LPOD Laer Primêre Onderwys Diploma (Lower Primary Teacher's Diploma)

The lack of appropriate academic qualifications or lack of relevant teaching experience undoubtedly has an impact on the level of support that can be provided during school-based studies (SBS), a crucial component of the BETD. It also has implications for their practical knowledge base in the teaching and learning of young learners.

9.3 Professional Development of Teacher Educators

Although the input of NIED and the University of Umeå to provide professional development opportunities for teacher educators is acknowledged, the concern was expressed from teacher educators themselves, as well as from other stakeholders in the MHETEC and NIED that ongoing professional development for teacher educators is needed in the form of shorter in-service teacher training (INSET) courses. The National Seminars for Professional Development, co-ordinated by the Teacher Education Reform Project (TERP) in the past, were mentioned as an ongoing need.

However, there have been and still are opportunities for peer development of teacher educators working closely with volunteer teachers and contract personnel, who often received specialist training in the particular specialisation area and who bring with them new ideas and experiences of dealing with literacy in the elementary classes. These opportunities seem to have been largely missed in at least two of the Colleges of Education over the past few years, often to the mentioned frustration of these counterparts.

Although it is realised that it is ultimately the teacher educators' responsibility to keep abreast with the latest theory, practice and research findings in an area like literacy, it is felt that with more co-ordination among NIED, the regional offices and the Colleges of Education, teacher educators could have the opportunity for more ongoing professional development. Present programmes and INSET initiatives targeting teachers and advisory teachers in the four regions where the Colleges of Education are placed, are ideal venues and opportunities to establish links between schools and tertiary education and thus between theory and the practical reality. Both advisory teachers, as well as teacher educators seem to see the need for closer co-operation between formal schools and teacher education institutions, but it needs to be a co-ordinated attempt from which both schools and the Colleges of Education can benefit.

9.4 Admission requirements of students

The 1998 Broad Curriculum for the BETD (p. 3) states the minimum academic level entry requirement as 'at least 5 good IGCSE passes including English, or the equivalent.'

In some Colleges of Education teacher educators reason that the level of the students specialising in Lower Primary enter the programme with low grades in especially English, which has an impact on the depth of theory that can be done in three years' time. At one particular College of Education several students still enter the Lower Primary specialisation BETD with a G in English. However, gradually the number of students with better grades entering the BETD programme has increased, providing Colleges of Education with the opportunity to establish appropriate criteria for entrance into the Lower Primary BETD.

9.5 Offering Lower Primary as a minor option

When considering the statement in the Broad Curriculum document, views of officials at NIED and the actual practice at Colleges of Education, it is clear that there are some misunderstandings and different interpretations of the prescriptions in the Broad Curriculum document regarding the scope and purpose of the BETD Lower Primary minor option, which must be taken by all upper primary major student teachers. Minor, in this context, implies that it is not the main area of specialisation.

Whereas the Broad Curriculum document states that student teachers will be prepared in certain learning areas, Colleges of Education prepare minor option Lower Primary students (in half of the time allocated to major students) to teach the full Lower Primary phase in schools. In the Broad Curriculum document (p. 7), which is the policy document for the BETD, a rather ambiguous statement is made to this regard, "Each student is thus prepared for teaching Basic Education Grades 1-7 with a weighting towards Grades 1-4 or 5-7;"

One official at NIED is of the view that Lower Primary minor students should be able to understand how young learners learn and be able 'to help out in at least one of the learning areas in the Lower Primary phase of schooling'. It is not clear how schools interpret these rather contradictory messages and how principals make decisions to appoint Lower Primary

staff members. What is happening at school and regional office level, though, is that BETD graduates, specialising in Lower Primary only as a minor option, are employed in the Lower Primary phase without principals or regional officials understanding exactly what they are able to teach.

9.6 Findings emerging from the classroom practice

- **Structured Reading Programmes**

Although findings available do not provide sufficient evidence that learners who are presently being exposed to the structured reading programmes (e.g. NELLP and SIMs), perform better in reading and writing, it is clear that more interactive and participatory teaching and learning occurs when teachers use the structured programmes in literacy classes, if compared to classes where no specific programme is used. It has also been observed that learners spend focused 'time on task' when being exposed to all the activities in the structured programmes. In most cases the materials are also more accessible, more copies are available and especially in NELLP literacy classes, more writing is being done than in any of the other classes observed.

If we accept that level of functional literacy will impact learners' performance in other subjects taught through home language, the outcomes of the *Monitoring the Basic Education Support Intervention* (reported on in 1999) indicate that the SIMs intervention boosted average achievement in Mathematics and Environmental Science, controlling for other variables like higher qualifications and the positive effects of female teachers.[77]

- **Co-ordination needed among the different stakeholders providing training**

Some teachers and advisory teachers expressed the feeling that the workshops provided by different stakeholders, like the NELLP and the Basic Education support (BES) project with the Breakthrough to Literacy and the SIMs material, Namibia Primary English Project (NAMPEP) and The Lower Primary Reform workshops offered by NIED are confusing to teachers, especially as they focus on different methods and approaches to teaching reading and writing. Both teachers and advisory teachers are unsure which reading method is the most

[77] See MBEC and PAD 1999 for specific outcomes

successful and which material is the best to use in classrooms, which brings us to the issue of reading approaches:

Although it is acknowledged that literacy is a much wider concept than just mechanical reading and writing and various techniques or approaches to teach reading, it was the issue of **how** to teach children to read that kept emerging. Therefore, for the purpose of this report ***reading approaches*** will be discussed, although it is realised that this reflects a technisist and reductionist view of literacy instruction.

The study revealed that a number of approaches to teaching reading and writing are being applied in literacy lessons of BETD teachers. The general observation is also that teachers seem to know a certain approach and use it constantly. The reading approaches observed in the majority of classrooms were Whole Word, Phonics, or a combination of the two, coined the Combined Method. It was observed and reported that approaches used by a teacher or a specific school are due to one or a combination of the following:

- taught in the BETD.
- observation of how it is taught by other teachers in their schools.
- taught at a workshop, offered by Ministry officials or a literacy project.

Examples of projects involved in literacy instruction are the BES project with its SIMs materials that promotes Phonics in the context of a word and a story and NELLP that is advocating Breakthrough to Literacy, also referred to as the Language Experience Approach. Findings available do not provide sufficient evidence that learners who are presently exposed to the structured reading programmes (e.g. NELLP and SIMs) perform better in reading and writing. However, it was observed that more interactive and participatory teaching and learning occur when teachers use the structured programmes in literacy classes, if compared to classes where no specific programme is used. It has also been observed that learners spend focused time on the task of reading and decoding when exposed to all the activities in the structured programmes.

Although it was observed that teachers use specific methods or approaches to teaching reading and writing, what was found missing is a holistic approach with the emphasis on understanding, rather than mere decoding. Often the reading and writing was observed to be mechanical reading aloud and copying from a chalkboard or from other texts. Little evidence

was seen of meaningful writing in which learners communicate the meaning that they make of texts or the world around them. The context of the text and the way learners relate to it was neither dealt with nor does it seem to be assessed on a regular basis. One teacher's response to the question of whether learners understand what they read was that it was their "own language", implying that learners understand text just because it is the language that they speak. It might be that learners understand words, but there is not much evidence that the teachers generally determine whether learners understand the context in which the words were used.

Closely related to reading approaches are remedial strategies that are used to support learners to overcome reading problems.

Strategies to deal with learners with reading problems

It is generally accepted that teachers need to know a variety of reading approaches and various activities that would lead to the development of reading skills. Knowing a variety of techniques and approaches put teachers in a more favourable position to become eclectic in their classroom practice and to provide the kind of support that individual learners might need, especially during remedial stages in the literacy encounter.

During the observed lessons little evidence was found of teachers using approaches or strategies to deal with learners who struggle with decoding. Two common strategies that teachers employ were observed, namely to verbalise the correct word and ask the learner to repeat it, or to ask another learner to give the 'correct answer'. Very few attempts were observed where teachers attempt to find out why a learner 'gets stuck' and to use strategies to support learners to overcome the problem.

- **Other general notes about the classroom observations**

In some classrooms, especially in the northern areas, there is only one reader, the teacher's, or in some cases a few readers are shared among many learners.

Learners sharing a reader

Reading passages are written on the chalkboard for learners to read from - in pairs, rows, whole class and sometimes individually. While some are reading, others are looking around and seem to be quite bored.

Reading from the board

In other classes there are enough readers, especially where there is a reading programme implemented in the school, but no desks, or only a few desks, chalkboard or stationery. In one classroom, while doing their writing exercises, the learners sat or knelt on the floor with their books on their knees or on the floor.

A few general methodological and class management related issues seem to be common in many of the schools. In many schools especially in the northern regions, teachers often seem to have a problem to keep learners 'on task'. Much time is spent managing the classrooms and often learners sit doing nothing while individuals or pairs are reading. There is never really time to do any writing after reading lessons and the proof of that can be seen in the exercise books, as some learners had only copied about three or four short exercises in their books by April. All the writing exercises are examples of copying and no examples of any writing as a response to reading were seen. Exercises are also sparsely marked and often there are no corrections done by learners.

Writing on the board

The researchers also observed that learners often 'read' parrot like, while the meaning of what they read is not established by the teacher. Furthermore, many teachers use the technique of merely repeating if a learner ‘gets stuck’, rather than finding out why a learner makes a mistake and using the mistake as a learning opportunity.

10. Recommendations

The following recommendations were negotiated with the different stakeholders including NIED, Colleges of Education and the CCG, which is the policy making body of the BETD:

a) Student teachers should be admitted to the Lower Primary course only if they are literate and proficient in at least one Namibian language besides English. If, however, the College admits students who have not reached these requirements, it is suggested that such students be admitted only if the particular College of Education can support them through their language departments outside the normal timetable.

b) It is strongly suggested that the Rundu College of Education takes responsibility to offer Thimbukushu, not only as an option in the language curriculum, but as a support to those Thimbukushu speaking student teachers who enter the Lower Primary BETD Programme, as many of them might still need support (the language being offered up to Grade Twelve level only since 1999).

c) Colleges of Education recommend appropriately trained candidates, with appropriate experience, to be appointed as teacher educators in Lower Primary departments in the Colleges of Education.

d) UNAM considers offering specialisation programme(s) in Elementary Education where Lower Primary teacher educators and teachers can enter a further diploma/degree/ postgraduate programme in the area of elementary education. This has the potential to alleviate the shortage of appropriately qualified teacher educators, as well as give Lower Primary teachers an opportunity to specialise further in this particular area.

e) The MHETEC reconsiders the minimum qualifications required for teacher educators, which is (T4A level 1) according to WASCOM p. 59. It is strongly suggested that these minimum qualifications be compared and in the future be brought in line with SADC and other developing countries' requirements.

f) Suitable teacher educators be appointed temporarily if they do not qualify with minimum qualifications, with the understanding that they embark upon upgrading their

qualifications within a negotiated period of time, preferably in the area of specialisation for which they were appointed.

g) As NIED develops the BETD curriculum, as well as it being the potential locus for future education development and support (EDS) or continuous professional development (CPD) activities, it is suggested that NIED co-ordinates an INSET programme of ongoing professional development for teacher educators, whereas the MHEVTST takes responsibility for the budgetary implications of such a programme.

h) Colleges of Education establish realistic benchmarks of what a good pass constitutes, especially now that more student teachers with better grades apply for the BETD. Furthermore that student teachers be admitted to specialise in Lower Primary only if they show real interest and aptitude in elementary teaching.

i) This issue be discussed at a common forum, like the CCG) so that there is agreement whether students taking the BETD Lower Primary minor option need to be prepared to teach in this phase, or whether the phase is intended to supplement their upper primary specialisation. (This has already been discussed at that forum while the report was finalised).

j) The CCG establishes which learning areas to specialise in, as far as the Lower Primary minor option is concerned. Two possible areas are Numeracy and Literacy, which are learning areas considered by some as "the curriculum for infant or early primary schools" Richard J. Kraft (2000).

k) Once a decision is made, the CCG clarifies the issue around Lower Primary minor option in the Broad Curriculum document.

l) The MBESC and Regional Offices be informed by NIED about the above conclusion, as this would have consequences for employing these particular teachers to teach in the Lower Primary phase.

m) A policy intervention like implementing a structured instructional programme like SIMs be kept up by the MBESC after the life of the project, until such time that Lower

Primary teachers are better trained and the Ministry has a more appropriate programme in place.

n) The time might be ripe that more thorough research is done to monitor the impact of the reading programmes in terms of learner outcomes. Such findings should impact on decisions made by the MBEC investing in future literacy programmes.

o) To investigate the long-term effects of literacy programmes, a variable could be added to the next SACMEQ study as to how NELLP or SIMs feeding schools fare in SAQMEC, compared to schools offering no structured programme.

p) It is strongly recommended that relevant professional staff at regional offices make sure that teachers understand that there is no one 'best' method or set of materials to successful reading instruction, that there is a need to be eclectic according to learners' individual needs.

q) The disparities among different areas and schools within the same area need to be addressed, especially in the supply of core materials like readers and desks. Furthermore, learners need to be exposed to more than merely core readers in order to become fully literate.

11. Conclusion

This sub-study has attempted to illuminate factors that potentially influence literacy and language development of young learners directly or indirectly. Some of these factors are the ***language proficiency*** level of specialist trained Lower Primary teachers, lack of a holistic and integrated ***approach*** to reading and writing instruction in many classes of BETD Lower Primary teachers. Other factors are the lack of ***reading materials*** available in some Lower Primary classrooms, lack of appropriate ***qualifications*** and / teaching ***experience*** of teacher educators in Elementary Education, as well as issues related to ***course-specialisation*** the Broad Curriculum of the BETD.

Through the approach taken in this Policy Dialogue Research, there were opportunities to go into dialogue about many of these issues, not to only raise awareness, but also to formulate and act on recommendations.

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APPENDIX A: REPORTS ON SCHOOL VISITS

1. MANDUME PRIMARY SCHOOL 27 and 28 July 1999

by *Liina N. Nantinda*

The Head of Department told me that the medium of instruction is English. She told me that it was the School Board who decided but the parents were also invited to a Parents meeting to give their views on the medium of instruction. The HOD told me that they have two streams, namely: Oshindonga & English and Afrikaans & English. She told me that this was decided by the School Board and Parents recommended it. On the question: what about the other Namibian languages? She told me that most of the learners are Oshiwambo speaking and those speaking Otjiherero or Khoekhoegowab and those who do not want Oshindonga can take Afrikaans.

The whole instruction is in English in Grade One. From Grade Two up, learners can choose between two streams: Oshindonga & English or English & Afrikaans. There are six Grade Two classes, but only one Grade Two which is offering English and Afrikaans stream.

I observed Grade One classes, and the whole instruction was in English. I noticed that learners could understand what the teacher wanted them to do. Communication between teachers and learners is very good. The classrooms of Grade One are well equipped with instructional materials and some are displayed on the wall all around the classroom in English. I also observed that the learners try to communicate with each other in English. The teachers encouraged the learners to communicate with them in English and also to one another in English. The learners are not shy to speak English. I also checked home work-books, and I could notice that even the parents of these learners are fully involved in the education of their children. Instructional materials are adequate in English. The teachers are all well-trained teachers for lower grades.

In the Grade Two classes, I observed that the teachers are very hard-working teachers and motivated. The teachers have the will to work with such learners. Classrooms are big and the instructional and learning materials are displayed on the wall. Some of the instructional and learning materials were obtained from the Teachers' Resources Centre or from workshops, but some were created by the teachers.

The teachers created instructional and learning materials in Oshindonga and displayed them on the wall in order to facilitate learning. But most of the materials are in English. In the Afrikaans class, there are instructional and learning materials in English which occupied most of the classroom while Afrikaans had a smaller part.

Learners from Caprivi, Kavango and Angola are following the Oshindonga and English stream. I observed that they are coping very well in Oshindonga. There is no code-switching from English to Oshiwambo/Oshindonga although all teachers for Grade Two are Oshiwambo-speaking people. The teachers of Grade Two at Mandume are all well-trained in instructing lower Grades. I noticed that learners understood very well what the teachers were telling them to do.

I gave some learners in Grade Two a dictation in English, which they completed satisfactorily. Learners in Grade Two can write sentences in English. I also gave pictures to twelve learners in one class of Grade Two, and found that the learners can write sentences in both English and

Oshindonga. The learners know how to read and write English, Oshindonga and Afrikaans, and how to use English only in class discussions.

I observed also Grades 3 in the afternoon. Communication is done only in English in the classrooms. Learners are not allowed to communicate in their mother tongues in the classroom. I gave some learners a dictation, and they did it very well. The dictation was done in English and also in Oshindonga for the English and Oshindonga stream. Learners did very well in both languages. Unfortunately I could not do a dictation in Afrikaans because my Afrikaans capacity is not good enough.

I observed also one Grade 4 and I could see that the learners are coping very well in English as the medium of instruction and Oshindonga or Afrikaans as subjects. I also observed learners in the playground and noticed that the learners were communicating in Oshiwambo. The speakers of Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero and Setswana were playing together during break-time and communicating in Afrikaans. I observed that learners from Caprivi and Kavango were trying to communicate with Oshiwambo learners in Oshindonga, although some used a mixture of Oshindonga and English.

I also observed that most of the teachers are Oshiwambo-speaking and they communicate with each other in Oshiwambo. However those teachers who grew up in the South or Windhoek, even though they are Oshiwambo-speaking people, communicate in Otjiherero. The principal and some Heads of Department try to communicate in English or Oshiwambo with Oshiwambo-speaking teachers. Some teachers also communicate in Afrikaans.

The Head of Department explained that the school is offering Oshindonga and not other African languages because most of the teachers are Oshiwambo-speaking and most of the learners are Oshiwambo-speaking. Learners can continue to study Oshindonga at junior and senior secondary schools as a subject and it is also offered at tertiary level.

2. NAMUTONI PRIMARY SCHOOL 26 and 28 July 1999

by *Liina N. Nantinda*

The school principal told me that Namutoni Primary School is a multilingual school and the medium of instruction at Lower Primary level is English. She told me that in Grade One, learners are instructed only in English, while from Grades Two to upper primary, the school offers two streams, i.e. English & Afrikaans or English & Oshindonga. The whole instruction is in English in Grade Two to upper primary grades, but learners must have either Afrikaans or Oshindonga as a subject. No other Namibian languages are offered at this school.

The school principal explained that the two languages, Oshindonga and Afrikaans, were selected by the community/parents and were also recommended by the School Board. Most of the learners are Oshiwambo-speaking and there are few learners from Kavango, Caprivi, Nama/Damara, Otjiherero and three Angolans in Grade Two. The School Board plus the community of Namutoni Primary School decided that the learners can choose between Oshindonga or Afrikaans because most of the learners are Oshindonga-speaking, and Otjiherero, Setswana and Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners can take Afrikaans.

Methods

I distributed papers with pictures to Grades 2-3 learners. Twelve learners from each class were asked to write what they could see in the picture in English. The same picture was also used to test written skills in Oshindonga in Grade Two and Grade Three. I also tried to give the same picture to six learners in Grade Three who have Afrikaans as a subject. I also observed learners during break-time and the teachers communicating with the school principal and each other.

English is the medium of instruction, In Grade One, most learners, though not all, can understand the teacher very well. The whole instruction and communication in the classroom is in English, although all the Grade One teachers are Oshiwambo-speaking. Most of the learners in Grade One attended pre-primary school and this is what makes learning and communication in English easier. The few learners who did not attend pre-primary school are experiencing a problem.

The teachers of Grade One indicated that the only problem they have are the learners who have come straight from the North and did not attend a pre-primary school. In such cases, teachers have to help those learners individually. Although some of those learners are coping better, it is really difficult to instruct and communicate with them in English only.

During the observation of Grades Two and Three, two teachers of Grade Two classes were observed instructing in Oshiwambo although the medium of instruction is English and the lessons were arithmetic and reading and writing skills in English (a dictation). Communication with the learners was only in Oshiwambo and the learners were also communicating with their peers in Oshiwambo. Learners who are Rukwangali-speaking or from Angola could also communicate with Oshiwambo-speaking learners in Oshiwambo. When I asked these learners to write what they could see in the picture, they could not write anything. Even those in Grade Three could not write any single correct word or any sentence about the picture in English. The teachers concerned selected the best twelve learners to write, but the papers show that the learners cannot write correct words or sentences in English. Some did not understand what I wanted them to do, and some just started to copy the picture on the piece of paper.

In the other three Grade Two classes, where the teachers were observed to be very strict, the learners could write correct words and sentences about the picture I gave them. They did it very well.

It was observed that many learners in Grade Three could not read. The teacher told me that most of them came straight from the North and because of age, they could not be placed in Grade One or Two. It shows that such learners had never attended a pre-primary school.

The learners who were not Oshindonga-speaking, e.g. from Kavango, Caprivi, Angola, are coping very well in Oshindonga. The learners to whom I gave the dictation in Oshindonga, included some learners from Kavango, Caprivi and Angola. Those who did well in dictation, were the ones from the best Grade Two class. Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero and Setswana learners were able to write good sentences in Afrikaans from dictation.

In the playground the learners were communicating in Oshiwambo mostly, but the Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero and Setswana speakers were playing together separately and they were speaking in Afrikaans.

The teachers spoke to each other mostly in Oshiwambo because most of them are Oshiwambo-speaking but the principal communicated mostly to her teachers in English.

The teachers and the principal stated that they were pleased that Oshindonga was now being offered in Junior and Senior Secondary schools in Windhoek, so that learners will be able to have it as a subject up to Grade One2. In the past, it was very difficult for the learner to continue with Oshindonga in Junior Secondary School because it was not offered in Windhoek.

3. MARTTI AHTISAARI PRIMARY SCHOOL 14th April 1999
by *Samuel Elago*

Languages spoken in the school
The statistics that I obtained from the Principal's office revealed that the learners speak several different languages. The home languages of the learners include almost all the Namibian languages: Oshiwambo, Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero, Setswana, languages from Caprivi and Kavango, as well as Afrikaans.

Medium of instruction
Although there are so many learners with different languages, English is the medium of instruction and mainly spoken by learners either inside or outside the classroom. But this does not necessarily mean the other languages are not spoken outside the classrooms. Communication between teachers and learners in English is really more motivating than I expected, right away from Grade One.

In some cases, there is a problem that faces the Grade One teachers, because there are some children who do not understand or speak any English. These are mainly children from both urban and rural areas who never attended pre-primary school.

It was confirmed first by the principal, and then I observed learners in Grade One very carefully and managed to identify some learners who couldn't understand any English, because they did not do what the teachers instructed them to do. After that I asked the teachers about them, and they answered that there are some learners in Grade One who have 'zero knowledge' in English.

In order to communicate and help those learners to learn, an internal arrangement can sometimes be done. Such a teacher can get another teacher who speaks the same language to work with the child to translate and explain for him what she wants to say to that child. In other cases a teacher can use another learner to help with the translation. In some cases some teachers do not translate, but they explain to the child in English over and over again. They say these children one day may pick up English bit by bit and step by step. If explanation fails they can guide the children physically by writing or drawing something as the teacher would like them to do it.

Communication and arithmetic skills
Most of the learners are good at arithmetic. No teacher said that there were problems with maths in all grades.

From Grade Two onwards, I recognised that communication is very good. Teachers and learners communicate in English fluently. The teachers ask questions and the learners answer quickly. Learners are fully involved and actively participating in classroom activities, mainly orally. This is supported by English being the medium of instruction in most grades. A child-centred approach is also fully utilised.

Reading Skills
None of the learners in Grades One to Four have good reading skills. Most learners do not know all the letters. In the classes with over 30 learners only approximately 5 can read, especially in Grades Two to Four. I observed Grade Four learners reading a book in Environmental Studies and realised that most learners could not read. The class teacher deliberately asked them to follow with their fingers the sentence that was being read. To my surprise, I saw some learners pointing to the top paragraph, other to the middle paragraph, while the reader was reading from the bottom paragraph. Some teachers told me that some learners could read the upper grades without good reading skills or without any reading skills at all.

There was one Grade Three class where half the class read well, the next quarter read fairly well and the last quarter were fair. This teacher explained to me that she used to do remedial work for one hour each day and that helped her learners to read better than others. Another reason she gave me was that she been trained to teach the Molteno Programme from Grade One up to Grade Four.

Writing Skills
Another problem that I recognised from observation and which was confirmed by the teachers when interviewed, was the lack of writing skills from Grade One to Four. I will not pay much attention to Grade One, because it was still the first term of the year. In Grade Two, the situation was very bad. The learners were not even able to copy down correctly long words from the chalkboard. They were still writing some letters upside down or back-to-front, e.g. S = 2 or e = ɘ, or writing from right to left.

Once again that was not the case in all grades. The exception was still that single Grade Three class that I mentioned above. The learners in this Grade Three class outperform the others in writing. I am fully convinced that this teacher puts a lot of effort into her work, because you would not expect that learners would write in such good handwriting in the first term.

Teachers' viewpoints about the above issues
When I talked to the teachers individually, everyone had their own complaints and arguments about the teaching situation. Most of the teachers said that the Molteno Programme teaches children only how to communicate in English but not how to read and write. The reason is that there are no reading skills introduced in the normal programme until the third term of Grade One.

They also blame the books, because there is no phonics teaching in them and they are also written in English, which is difficult for children at that level. They even think that it should be replaced by 'English Alive', which is used in some other schools in Windhoek, such as Mandume Primary School. They concluded that even though children could not express themselves better than those using the Molteno Programme, the children in the English Alive programme could read and write better than children in the Molten Programme.

Some teachers conclude that the Molteno Programme is the best programme for them. They support the programme strongly because it teaches learners how to speak, read and write as quickly as possible at the same time. They argue that when the Programme was implemented for the first time in Grade One, at the end of that year, those Grade One learners performed far better than the other in different programmes and even better than those who were in Grade Four at that time.

The other important views given were about the attitudes of some teachers towards the Molteno Programme that seem to be very negative. One teacher said, "this programme is very frustrating." Some teachers feel that other teachers do not want the Molteno Programme because it is too demanding. They do not want to evaluate, assess and monitor the progress of their learners continuously. Issues of in-service training were also reported as hindering teaching. Some teachers come to class normally but spend time on their own assignments and their teaching duties. It was suggested that the Ministry should do something about it.

All teachers said learners cannot read and write English properly, if they do not know how to do it in their own languages. As a result most learners never do their homework if it includes writing, but they will do drawing. This is a common practice in almost all grades. Parents are also not serious about their children to be taught in the national languages, which is why they send them to that school where the medium of instruction is English. Teachers do not support different education for different language groups, because they do not wish to return to the Bantu education system.

4. THEO KATJUMUNE PRIMARY SCHOOL 19 and 20 April 1999
by *Samuel Elago*

According to the Principal and teachers, the school accommodates learners with mixed mother tongues. But the majority of both learners and teachers are Otjiherero speakers. As a result Otjiherero is the dominant language in that school. The medium of instruction is claimed to be English.

There is language assimilation at that school. This simply means that learners who are not Otjiherero speakers are assimilated into Otjiherero quite easily. One teacher in Grade One showed to me one Kavango boy in her classroom and she said that he could communicate with his classmates in Otjiherero. I observed that boy to determine how fluent he was in Otjiherero, while they were playing outside during the first break. I heard the boy being asked a question in Otjiherero by another and he responded quickly. They kept chatting to themselves in Otjiherero without even switching to English.

Another interesting issue is that children themselves prefer to learn through Otjiherero. When I was observing a Grade One class in maths lesson, I heard children talking to each other in Otjiherero. For instance a teacher asked the class what they could see in a picture. The class replied that they saw a tree and a nest. Then the teacher asked one learner to come forward to identify the tree from the two pictures. The child pointed to the nest, because the child did not understand what the English concept of tree refers to in the picture. After that one learner in the group told him through translation by saying "omuti", then the child switched quickly from the nest to the tree. This process was repeated several times throughout the lesson. This

example demonstrates that children mimic the teacher's use of English without understanding the concepts.

The second issue I observed was the communication hindrance in English. As a result teachers have to translate into Otjiherero for their learners, whenever they do not understand properly. Teachers say that communication hindrance can sometimes be attributed to urban migration, since most of the learners at that school are from rural areas. As a result these learners cannot understand English at all and are unable to speak in English. Communication hindrance is also attributed by the teachers to the lack of pre-primary school attendance. Most of the learners both from rural and urban areas just come straight to Grade One from home. Only a few of them attended pre-primary school. One can see that there is a great disparity in general performance and communication between learners in Grade One who attended and those who did not attended pre-primary.

I asked one teacher if they offer Afrikaans. She answered that they proposed it one day, but they were turned down by the parents. Parents do not want their children to learn Afrikaans. They were labelled as "Puppets of Boers" who do not know themselves. They explained introducing Afrikaans as a subject at their school would be more beneficial and advantageous than doing English and Otjiherero only, because Afrikaans will give them access to other schools after leaving that school. When the learners leave that school they can only attend Ella du Plessis and Agustineum Secondary School, because other schools need learners to have Afrikaans as a subject plus English. However they did not convince the parents.

Furthermore, I asked one teacher about her views on the current language policy. "Do you support the use of mother tongues as Medium of Instruction in Lower Primary Phase?" She said: "No we do not want those languages. What will a child do with a knowledge of mother tongue in future – to work on radio or where else?" These two cases coloured parents' and teachers' attitudes towards national languages.

I also asked about what learners liked doing most. She replied that they like speaking Otjiherero too much. Sometimes they could be asked a question in English but they reply in Otjiherero if they know what is being asked. This is true, because you cannot hear them talking English either inside or outside the classroom.

The other problem they referred to is that of communications hindrance in the classrooms in English. The reasons they give are just that of learners being from rural areas and lack of attending pre-primary school. Disparity in advancement between them and those who attended pre-primary schools is also pointed out here, because those who attended pre-primary classes have a better understanding of English. It seems that most of the teachers are aware of the disadvantages of the immersion or submersion system in education. But they do not know how to overcome it, because of the negative attitudes of the community towards national languages. One teacher reported that, "some parents do not care whether their children understand English or not, they just force them to be in English classes."

One teacher who previously taught Grade Five said that learners still experience reading and writing problems both in English and Otjiherero even beyond Grade Four. The blame here goes to the "automatic promotion". Learners are being promoted from one Grade to another without meeting a pre-determined criteria for promotion until they reach Grade Ten – a bottleneck that reduces the flow of learners from the junior secondary to the senior secondary phase of education.

The Principal also raised one issue that learners cannot do well in schools because the time which is allocated from them is abnormal. It is abnormal in the sense that learners in Grade One to Four cannot attend classes as it is prescribed, because they have to go home earlier in order to give way to the afternoon session. Those in the afternoon session cannot be expected to do better because the learning environment cannot be constructive at that time. The children are tired and even the teachers themselves. The time is too short and there are not enough classes for every child to attend in the morning.

APPENDIX B: Number of teachers speaking the dominant language in schools

(Figures taken from the 1998 school returns for schools where the medium of instruction is English or Afrikaans)

School	Dominant language	Medium of instruction	Grade 1 teachers	Grade 2 teachers	Grade 3 teachers
Aasvoelnes	San	Afrikaans	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Aurora	Khoekhoegowab	English	4 out of 4	1 out of 1	2out of 2
Ben Hur	Khoekhoegowab	English*	0 out of 2	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Bethold Himumuime	Otjiherero	English	6 out of 6	6 out of 6	7 out of 7
Coblenz	Otjiherero	English	2 out of 2	3 out of 3	2 out of 2
De Frederick	Khoekhoegowab	Afrikaans	1 out of 3	1 out of 3	1 out of 2
Don Bosco	Khoekhoegowab	Eng/Afrik	2 out of 3	1 out of 3	2 out of 3
Drimiopsis	Khoekhoegowab	English	0 out of 2	-	-
Elifas Goseb	Khoekhoegowab	English	2 out of 3	2 out of 3	1 out of 2
Erongosig	Khoekhoegowab	Afrikaans	0 out of 1	1 out of 1	0 out of 1
G K Wahl	Otjiherero	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	1 out of 1
Gquaina	San	Afrikaans	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Grashoek	San	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Groot Aub	Khoekhoegowab	Afrikaans	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Gunichas	Khoekhoegowab	English	1 out of 6	1 out of 5	2 out of 5
Immanuel Ruiters	Khoekhoegowab	English	3 out of 7	3 out of 8	2 out of 5
Kamanjab	Khoekhoegowab	English	1 out of 1	1 out of 1	0 out of 1
Kamwandi	Khoekhoegowab	English	0 out of 2	2 out of 2	2 out of 2
Kanovlei	San	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Karundu	Khoekhoegowab	English	1 out of 4	1 out of 4	1 out of 4
Khoichas	Khoekhoegowab	English	2 out of 2	2 out of 2	2 out of 2
Kukurushe	San	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
M'kata	Khoekhoegowab	English	1 out of 1	0 out of 1	1 out of 1
Makalani	Khoekhoegowab	English	3 out of 5	2 out of 4	3 out of 4
Mangetti Dune	San	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Moses v d Byl	Khoekhoegowab	English	3 out of 5	1 out of 5	4 out of 6
Noodweide	Khoekhoegowab	English	1 out of 2	2 out of 3	1 out of 2
Nowak	Khoekhoegowab	Afrikaans	2 out of 2	1 out of 2	3 out of 3
Okatamatapatu	Otjiherero	English	3 out of 3	2 out of 2	3 out of 3
Okongwe	Otjiherero	English	1 out of 1	1 out of 1	2 out of 2
Omatako	San	Afrikaans	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Orwetoveni	Otjiherero	English	3 out of 3	3 out of 4	2 out of 3

School	Dominant language	Medium of instruction	Grade 1 teachers	Grade 2 teachers	Grade 3 teachers
Otavi	Khoekhoegowab	Eng/Afrik	1 out of 2	2 out of 3	2 out of 3
Otjikondo	Khoekhoegowab	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	0 out of 1
Otjituuo	Otjiherero	English	1 out of 1	-	2 out of 2
Otjivero	Khoekhoegowab	English	0 out of 1	1 out of 1	1 out of 1
Otjohorongo	Otjiherero	English	1 out of 1	1 out of 1	1 out of 1
Outjo	Khoekhoegowab	English	2 out of 3	1 out of 3	1 out of 1
Ovihitua	Otjiherero	English	1 out of 1	1 out of 1	1 out of 1
Paheye	Otjiherero	English	2 out of 2	2 out of 2	1 out of 1
Rogate	Khoekhoegowab	English	3 out of 4	5 out of 5	2 out of 3
Shalom	Khoekhoegowab	English	2 out of 3	2 out of 3	2 out of 2
Sonop	Khoekhoegowab	Afrikaans	1 out of 5	1 out of 4	0 out of 4
Spes Bona	Khoekhoegowab	English	2 out of 6	1 out of 5	2 out of 3
St Konrad	Otjiherero	Afrikaans	0 out of 1	1 out of 1	0 out of 1
Theo Katjimune	Otjiherero	English	6 out of 6	5 out of 5	4 out of 6
Tsumkwe	San	English	0 out of 1	0 out of 1	-
Ubasen	Khoekhoegowab	English	2 out of 2	3 out of 3	2 out of 2
Ugab	Khoekhoegowab	English	3 out of 3	2 out of 4	2 out of 3
Vooruitsig**	Khoekhoegowab	Eng/Khoe	4 out of 4	2 out of 3	2 out of 3
Vrede Rede	Khoekhoegowab	English	1 out of 3	3 out of 5	1 out of 2
W M Jod	Khoekhoegowab	English	4 out of 5	2 out of 5	3 out of 5
Welwitschia	Khoekhoegowab	English	0 out of 1	1 out of 1	1 out of 1

*One class of Grade 1 uses Khoekhoegowab as the medium of instruction

**One class in each Grade uses Khoekhoegowab as the medium of instruction

APPENDIX C: Word list for writing test (dictation)

	Oshindonga	Oshikwanyama
1	aantu	etunhilo
2	aasamane	eumbo laye
3	andiya	mukweni
4	efano ndjika	oikulya
5	egege	oikuni
6	egumbo	oimaliwa
7	esiku limwe	oka pya
8	evi lyetu	okaxuxwena
9	Mbandje	omedu letu
10	ohayi landithwa	omufyati
11	okakadhona	omunhu
12	okamatyona	omuti
13	okwa nyanyukwa	ondjaba
14	olusindo	ongala
15	omapya ogendji	ongeleka
16	ombwinayi	onghaku
17	ompo	onghambe
18	ompya	ongwe
19	omulongwa	onyanga
20	omuti	Oshikwanyama
21	oondjuhwa	oshinamwenyo
22	oongombe	oshivike
23	oonzapo	ota yele
24	oshimbyupeke	otatu tyapula
25	Oshindonga	otava djala
26	otaka ka hondja	oukumwe
27	otandi nyola	ovanhu
28	otatu dhana	ovashamane
29	Shimbungu	oxuxwa
30	tu leshe	tu shangeni

APPENDIX D: Illustrations from NLP publications used for stimulating creative writing

APPENDIX E: SOME DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Classroom Observation Sheet

Date----------

School name----------

Syllabus information

Does the teacher have a syllabus?

Does she use the literacy part of the syllabus?

What is the syllabus prescribing/what the learners should be able to do at this stage?

Is the continuous assessment (CA) in literacy done according to the basic competencies in the syllabus?

If the teacher does not use the syllabus how is the CA done?

Lesson plan ?

Focus of Observation

School background	Rural /urban
Medium of instruction at school	Eng./ MT
Grade observed	Gr.--------
Lesson observed	----------
No. of learners in the class	----------
Seating arrangements	Groups/pairs/individuals

Is any writing done in literacy books? How many exercises have been done since the beginning of the year? Is it merely copying or is any free writing done?	
Are the books regularly corrected?	

Are any corrections done by learners?	
Are learners allowed to read and write on their own or is the teacher 'in charge' all the time? Does groups or pairs sometimes read on their own?	
Are girls and boys equally participating?	
How do girls perform in reading and writing? Ask the teacher her views.	
If they share textbooks/ a ruler or rubber for example do they have equal access to the item	
Notes:	
Notes:	

The lesson:

Recorded steps of the lesson, e.g**.**

Step 1: Teacher reads whole reading passage from chalkboard

Step 2: Learners read lesson line by line

Classroom management

What lesson is in the timetable? Literacy/reading and writing / handwriting

Reading approach used during the lesson? Phonics/look-and–say/a combination/not obvious

What method of reading does the teacher say she uses?

Any individual support given to slower learners in class? How?

How are the learners kept busy when the others are reading?

Pattern of teaching at school as seen during observation and interview?

Interview with BETD graduates? (Teachers)

- How many years have you been teaching now?

  Major lower primary----------years

  Minor lower primary----------years

- Was it your choice to become a lower primary teacher?

- Do you think the BETD course has provided you with necessary skills to teach literacy?

- What problems are you experiencing in using reading approaches that you were taught?

- Which approach(es) to teaching literacy work well in your situation?

- These approaches you are using, where did you learn them? From the college? A Reading Programme?

- You were trained in English and in teaching you are expected to teach in your own mother tongue? Were you confident enough to teach in your mother tongue when you just stated teaching ?

- Do you remember having any problems with the interpretation of the syllabus in your mother tongues after school/ during SBS?

- Did you get into contact with the lower primary school syllabi when you were doing the BETD?

- Do you have enough reading materials ? What do you do to improve your situation?

- When you look back at the way you were trained, what do you think the college should have done to help you more in teaching literacy?

Student teachers

1. What is literacy?

2. How did the college prepare you to teach literacy (reading and writing) at lower primary level?

3. How would you teach a grade one learner to read? (If the students say they will start with the sounds /phonics try to establish if they know the different **sounds** of the alphabet.)

4. Where would you start?

5. What did you observe during the SBS in terms of reading approaches being used?

6. What did you observe in school about individual support learners receive who cannot read?

7. What kind of activities do you do in the lower primary course that will support you in teaching literacy through mother tongue?

8. How confident do you feel in teaching through the mother tongue?

9. Can you read and write the language of instruction fluently?

10. Up to which school grade did you have formal training in the language?

11. What have the BETD Lower Primary Department and Language Department done to assist you in being able to teach through the medium of instruction?

12. How do you feel about teaching initial literacy through mother tongue (try to gauge students' attitudes about mother tongue instruction in Lower primary?

13. If you end up in Lower primary when you graduate, do you think you are skilled enough to teach lower primary?

Advisory teachers

Do you observe the teachers? What do you think about them? What about their confidence?

What problems are you experiencing with regards to the teaching of literacy at lower primary?

What problems are your teachers experiencing in teaching reading and writing?

In your own view, which program seems to produce the best results?

Do you think one reading approach is more suitable then the other?

Do you recruit students to teach lower primary who did not specialize in Lower Primary/specialized in Lower Primary as a minor option?

How fluent are the BETD teachers in the mother tongue they are teaching?

What do you think the College of Education should do to improve the training of the new students?

Language Department- College of Education

What strategies do you have in place to assist students who are not proficient in the target language?

What activities do you do in the course to assist your students to acquire skills in their mother tongue?

When admitting students do you look at their language proficiency?

Do you use any of the reading materials being used at the schools?

Do you find time in the timetable to equip your learners with the necessary skills to teach in their mother tongue?

What are the problems experienced by students in teaching through the target language?

Are teachers adequately prepared to teach in the MOI?

Information to be found out at the Colleges of Education

Formal training of Teacher Educators in Lower Primary Department:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Years of experience in schools teaching Lower Primary

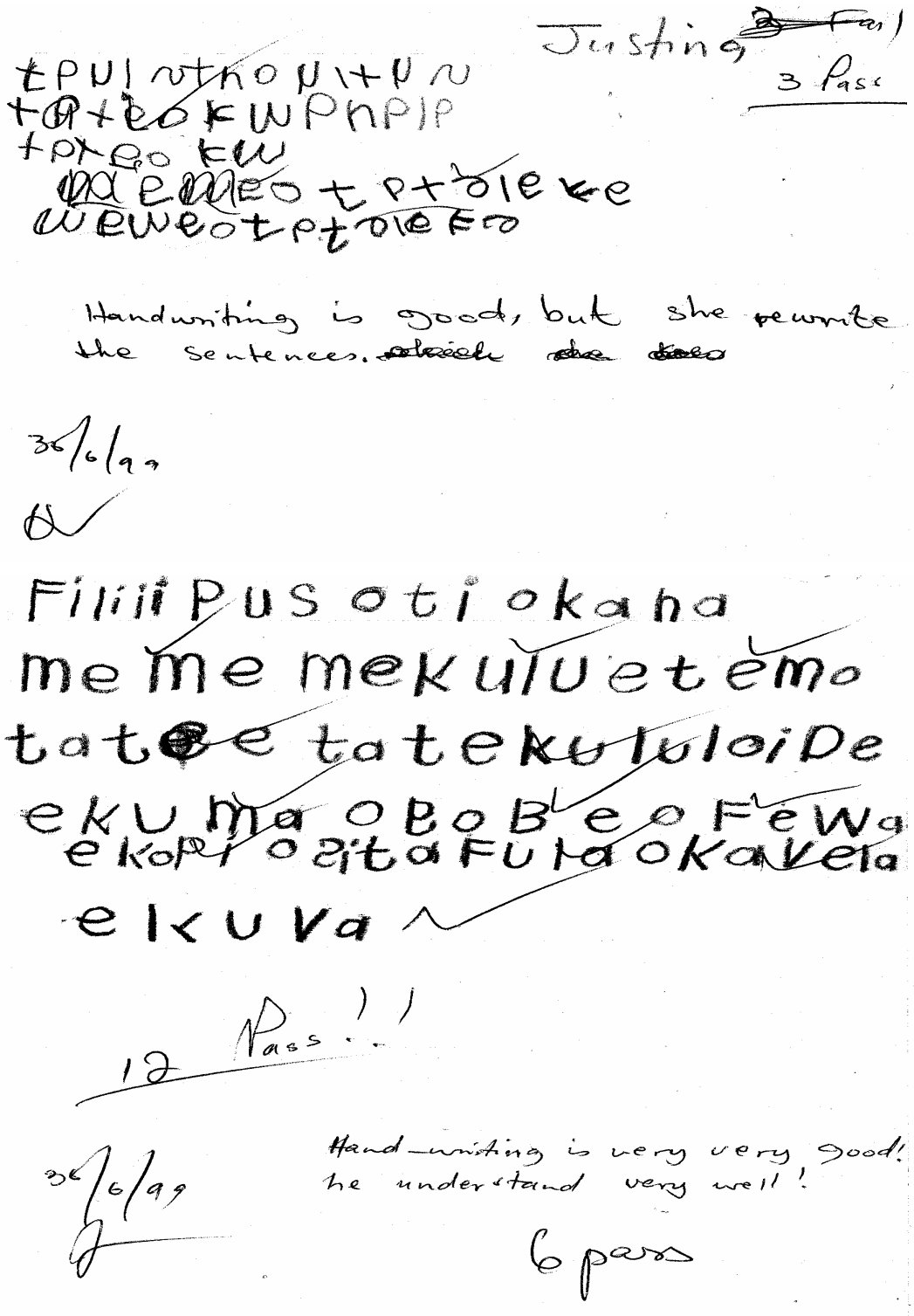
_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX F: SAMPLES OF LEARNERS WRITING

Grade One



Justina Fail
3 Pass

Handwriting is good, but she rewrite the sentences.

30/6/99

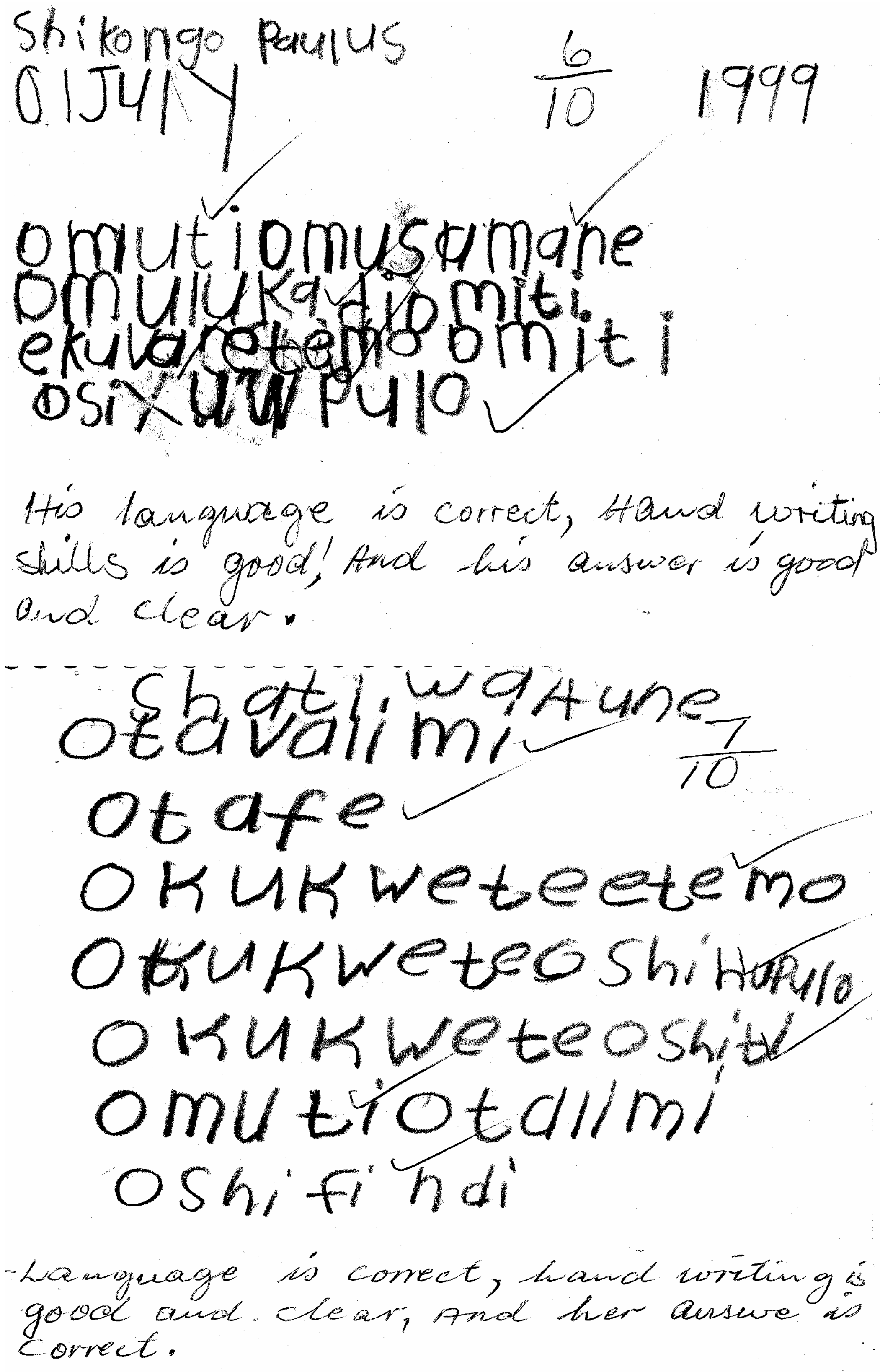
12 Pass!!

30/6/99

Hand-writing is very very good! he understand very well!

6 pass

Grade Two



Shikongo Paulus
01J41Y 6/10 1999

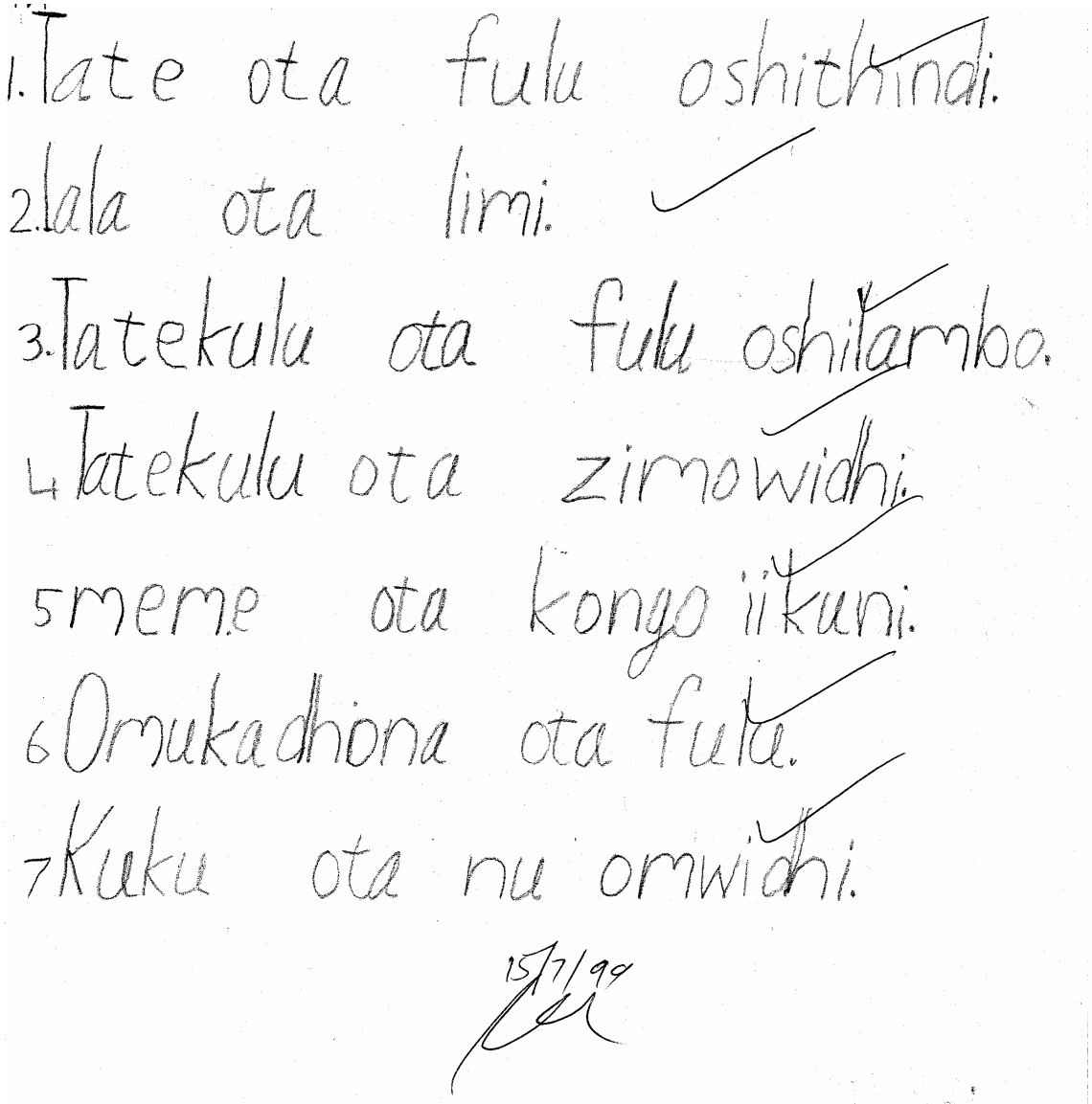
omuti omusamane
omulukaliomiti
ekuvaretemo omiti
osixuupulo

His language is correct, Hand writing skills is good! And his answer is good and clear.

Shatiwaaune 7/10
otavalimi
otafe
okukweteetemo
okukweteoshihupulo
okukweteoshiti
omutiotalimi
oshifindi

-Language is correct, hand writing is good and clear, And her answe is correct.

Grade Three


1. Tate ota fulu oshithindi.
2. Lala ota limi.
3. Tatekulu ota fulu oshilamba.
4. Tatekulu ota zimowidhi.
5. Meme ota kongo iikuni.
6. Omukadhona ota fuka.
7. Kuku ota nu omwidhi.

15/7/99

Filimon

15 July 1999

1.1 1. Meme ota lesha.

2. Kuku talili.

3. tateaatye.

4. laSaatalongo.

5. Meme ota Kongo kuni.

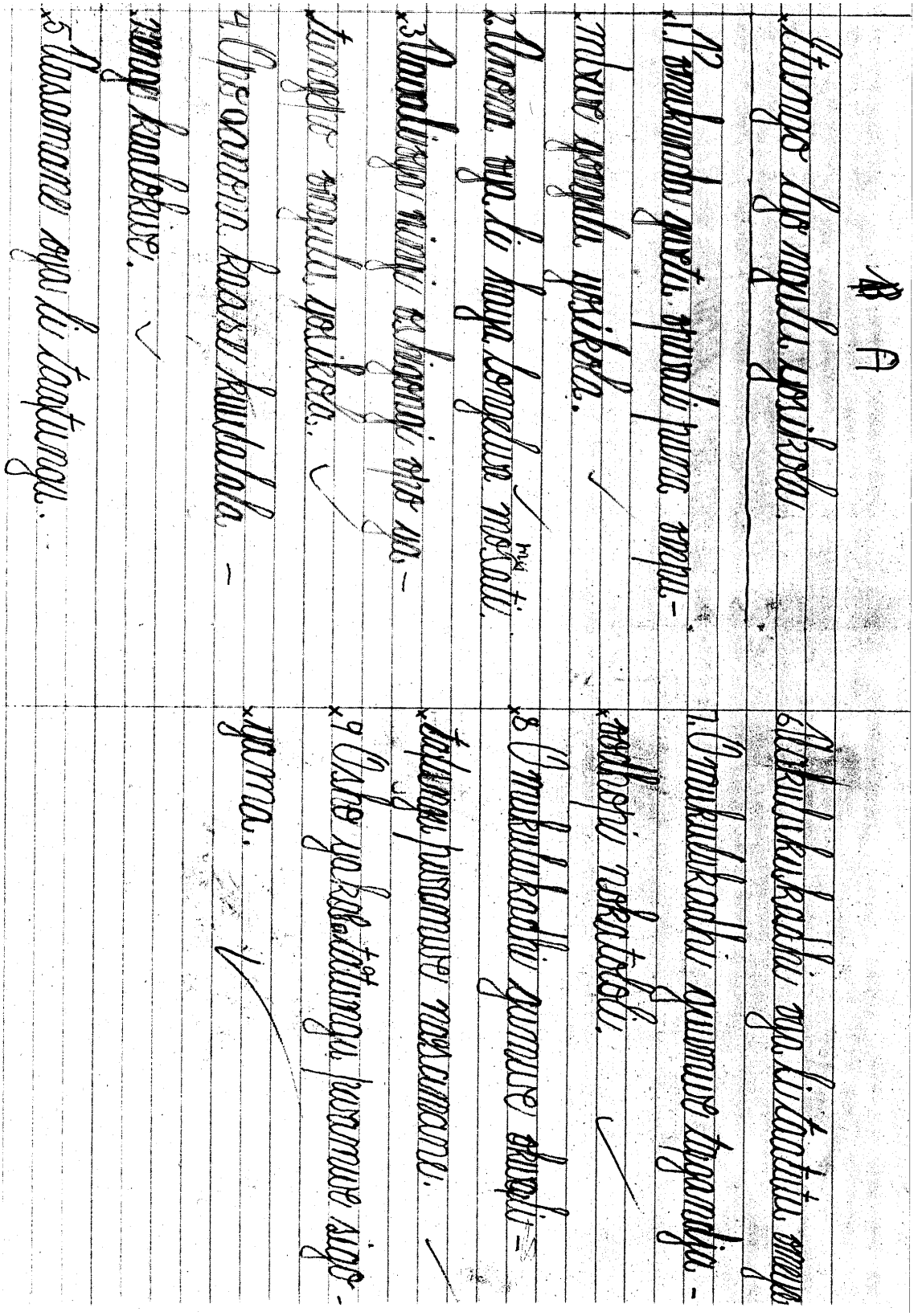
6. Tate tkuyaevi. ota kutha evi.

7. Lalaotavi.

8. Timootavi.

15/07/99

Grade Four



(XX) Shufhuka Leopold – Grad (4)

22 April 1999

Omiti dhetu

~~Aatuvaot~~ Aatuvulu okutalyamo mamiti gahio omugonko?
Omoshilogo gshetu aatumononoma omiti oshilyi gashi.
Omugonko ninulunga nominkiya nomunyanti nomilandula!
komilunjan nako aakurisha ombike oonduna tadhiiya
komungogo nako aakurisha oomangogo Aantu tanu tayakoko
nomomutato uhe aakurisha yehi ontatahe tadhiikwa omuke
Omukwiyu aakuzi ookwiyu tadhiliwa kaantu
Omunyandi aakuzi oonyandi thiliwa kaantu nokanyanyo
Omitifhetu shimwe dhetu shimwe odhi erago

Content

4/10

Conjunction of words – is a problem!!
→ Capitalization

APPENDIX G: Handwriting samples