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PERSPECTIVES ON PEDAGOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF NAMIBIA

PATRICIA M. ROWELL

University of Alberta, Canada

Abstract — This paper examines the conceptualization of pedagogical practice in the reform of a teacher education program in Namibia. Through an analysis of the views of knowledge, learning and teaching presented in government policy statements for educational reform and in beliefs and concerns expressed by a group of teacher educators, the study explores the perspectives on pedagogy. The possible obstacles to a radical shift in practice are discussed in light of these perspectives and suggestions for scaffolding the reform are made.

INTRODUCTION

For many years, observers in the schools of developing countries have noted the prevalence of didactic classroom practice which supports teacher dominance over passive learners (Heyneman, 1984; Rowell and Prophet, 1989) and leads to rote learning and a stifling of critical thinking. Exhortations to change the quality of teacher–student interactions have been criticized because they fail to take into account the social and economic context of the schools. For example, Heyneman has suggested that it is hard to imagine 'that *any* pedagogy is feasible other than memorization' when the students have no books, maps or other pedagogical resources and the teachers are untrained in pedagogy other than drill and practice (p. 295). King (1989), however, suggests that the character of classroom life is perhaps less determined by material shortages than by the emergence of a teaching and learning tradition that is not supportive of student participation and inquiry. He raises the argument that, once a particular form of pedagogy has become embedded in a society, 'it has a resilience that is almost independent of changes in government, major curricular reforms or even changes in teacher training' (p. 45). If this is the case, it does not bode well for the prospects of shifting into an alternative pedagogical mode.

Prior to Independence, there had been colonial educational establishments in Namibia for more than seventy years. In recent years, apartheid policies accentuated the role of schooling in perpetuating the status quo. In 1980, eleven separate educational administrations based on ethnic divisions were established side by side to apply the principles of apartheid in the country. Teachers for these distinct jurisdictions were trained in separate training colleges; 'white', 'coloured' and 'black'. The program for the 'black' teacher training colleges was an integral part of the Bantu education system in South Africa and deprived the black schooling system of adequate access to core subjects in the curriculum such as science and mathematics. An authoritarian system of instruction fostered memorization and rote learning and inhibited independent thinking and the development of problem solving strategies (Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth & Sport, 1990).

Non-discriminatory universal education is now entrenched in the Articles of the Constitution of the Republic. However, the discrimination based on race, colour and creed which became deeply institutionalized in pre-independent Namibia will require considerable and careful work to eliminate its effects. The achievement of Independence in March, 1990 paved the way for the dismantling of the segregated systems of education and in the process, afforded an opportunity for restructuring many facets of the national educational system. Of these, the reform of the teacher education program has assumed high priority and, within this initiative, intends to promote a radical shift in the features of classroom teaching from teacher-centredness to learner-centredness. In this paper, I document the intents of the government to effect change in the quality

of interactions in the classroom through a restructured teacher education program and, by juxtaposing the beliefs of individuals working in the Colleges, I hope to point out the potential obstacles to and the possible support for accomplishing such a change in classroom pedagogy.

The concept of pedagogy

Pedagogy involves far more than the transmission of information from teacher to student; it includes all aspects of the interactions between the learner, teacher and the object of their study. The notion of pedagogy encompasses the dynamic relationships of a situation in which teacher and learners are oriented toward the development of understandings; and the pedagogical quality of this situation rests on the assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the nature of learning held by the teacher. If knowledge is held to be 'objective' and detached from the learner, something which can be assimilated with appropriate practice, then the teacher is likely to have no difficulty working in a pedagogical mode oriented towards information transmission and memorization. But if the contribution of the learner in the development of knowledge is acknowledged, the teacher requires an alternative mode which accommodates the learner as a social being who relies on his/her interactions with others to generate meaning. If learning is perceived to be dependent on the learner making links between existing, meaningful knowledge and the content of instruction, the teacher must be aware of the kinds of conceptions most frequently brought to a school subject by learners and be knowledgeable about the strategies most likely to facilitate the restructuring and extending of those conceptions; this is what Shulman (1986) refers to as pedagogical content knowledge. The teacher also requires knowledge about the ways in which a classroom can be organized and managed in order to create and sustain the interactions which constitute a learning environment, what might be described as a procedural dimension to pedagogy.

Yet another dimension to pedagogy is that of critical inquiry into the ways in which the learner obtains access to information. In this dimension, the teacher questions the ways in which knowledge is produced, legitimated and distributed; he/she takes note of the interests and values embodied in particular forms of knowledge and challenges the relations between knowledge, power and control. Smyth (1987) takes this sense of acting pedagogically to mean acting in such a way as to 'empower' learners within the political and social contexts of their situations. This way of thinking pedagogically situates the classroom in the cross-currents of a national community.

Such multiple dimensions of pedagogy are integral to teacher education programs. When prospective teachers prepare for work in classrooms, they bring with them beliefs and ideas about the nature of knowledge and about ways of learning and strategies for teaching. Studies of preservice teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching suggest that the beliefs are remarkably persistent and that unless formal training can modify pre-existent images of teachers and teaching, future teachers will practice what their teachers did (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Zeichner *et al.*, 1987). The implication for teacher education programs is that it will be necessary to design activities which differ substantially from those predominant in transmission modes of teaching so that recognition is given to the differing sets of beliefs and experiences which influence the learners' (preservice teachers') abilities to 'see' connections with the information being accessed and to the contribution of the learners in constructing knowledge about teaching. For both those learning to teach and their experienced mentors, their perspective on pedagogy is the guide to teacher–learner interactions.

THE STUDY

This is a study of the conceptualization of a teacher education reform program which sets out to transform teaching in primary and junior secondary classrooms through a shift in pedagogical emphasis *from* the teacher *to* the learner. It is a study of a particular case, that of Namibia.

The data for the research are derived from two sources: first, background papers and policy documents prepared for and by members of the Ministry of Education & Culture in the Government of Namibia; and second, field notes, transcripts of interviews with, and daily journals of 12 educators who participated in a workshop for which I was the co-instructor for

two and a half weeks in June/July, 1992 (six months prior to the commencement of the new teacher education program). As co-instructor in this period of extended group interaction, I was able to work as a participant observer in the groups for much of the workshop time. Daily field notes which recorded specific exchanges between participants and opinions voiced by participants were used to generate some of the questions asked in semi-structured interviews with individual participants at the conclusion of the workshop period. The interviews were voluntary and not a component of the workshop; they assumed the form of a conversation about the ideas held by participants about their experiences and views on teaching and learning. A thematic analysis of the data from the government documentation was carried out by searching for and assembling references to various dimensions of pedagogy as stated or inferred in arguments for a restructuring of the national teacher education program.

The 12 educators participating in the workshop were drawn from the Colleges and Senior Secondary schools in northern Namibia. All but one of the participants had a first degree (BA) and some were doing correspondence courses towards a graduate B.Ed degree. Their teaching experiences had been predominantly in senior secondary schools, but at the time of the workshop, they were (or anticipated becoming) instructors in the teacher education program for primary school teachers.

The workshop was designed to introduce the participants to a variety of strategies and concepts in environmental and science education using a pedagogical approach oriented towards the participants' construction of knowledge. A few of the participants had encountered the notion of learner-centred teaching in seminars conducted by advisers to the government on its teacher education reform but, for most of the participants, this workshop was their first experience of this kind of pedagogy in action.

The intent of this study is to examine the nature of the pedagogy suggested in the policy documents prepared for implementing reform in teacher education in Namibia and, by portraying the beliefs held by some of the educators involved in the teacher education program, to consider potential obstacles to achieving a shift in pedagogical focus from the teacher to the learner. While this research is presented as a case study, its findings have implications for all teacher education programs which have, as their aim, the preparation of teachers who are oriented to the quality of their students' learning.

TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM IN NAMIBIA

During the exile of many prominent Namibian educators in the 1970s and 1980s, Education Centres and Institutes were set up in Zambia and other southern African countries to prepare for the period of transition immediately following Independence. By the early 1980s, SWAPO had formulated an educational policy which outlined goals and strategies. Educational initiatives, which included teacher education programs, were organized by SWAPO with the financial support of donor agencies and non-governmental organizations. Teachers were identified as the 'prime-movers in education delivery' by the future Minister of Education (Angula, 1990), who indicated that the reform of teacher training programs should be a priority in order to 'respond to the critical demands of participatory learning'.

Soon after Independence, in a frank assessment of the country's education system, teacher education was described as 'similar to education in general: uncoordinated, fragmented, ill-organized and non-uniform' (Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth & Sport, 1990a). It was apparent that reform of teacher education was needed, together with a rehabilitation and strengthening of the teacher training institutions (Colleges of Education) in terms of staffing and resources. Implementation of a new preservice teacher education program began in 1993. There are currently four Colleges of Education in Namibia, staffed by national and expatriate teacher educators with disparate educational experiences and philosophies. Prior to Independence, the three institutions situated in the northern regions admitted black students only to two or three year training programs in preparation for teaching in primary schools. The reform program now being implemented offers a common three year program of studies for primary and junior secondary teachers and a four year program for senior secondary teachers.

The direction for this teacher education reform in Namibia has been laid out in a series of documents prepared by the Minister

of Education and his technical advisers, many of whom are expatriate and some of whom provided assistance to SWAPO during the exile. A primary concern has been to achieve consistency between the aims and objectives of the new curriculum for formal Basic Education in the schools and the new program in the Colleges. Among the earliest recommendations was the suggestion that a different pedagogical approach be introduced so that the objective of active learning in the classrooms could be achieved.

PERSPECTIVE ON PEDAGOGY IN THE REFORM PROGRAM

As outlined in the previous section, reform of the teacher education program was undertaken with one of its goals being the development of teachers who would encourage active rather than passive learning in the country's classrooms. The methodology of the new teacher education program rests on what is described as 'democratic' pedagogy and is intended to promote 'learning through understanding, and practice directed towards the autonomous mastering of living conditions' (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992). In this section, the documents prepared during the planning of the reform are analyzed for the views presented on knowledge, learning and teaching within this 'democratic' pedagogical mode.

View of knowledge

The view of knowledge and knowing expressed in some of the pre-Independence writings (for example, SWAPO, 1987) displayed a strong thrust in favour of scientific and technological thinking, based on the widely held assumption that such forms of knowledge could be used to change both nature and society (see Flanagan, 1992, p. 28, for example). But this view has been tempered in the resulting curriculum policy statements for Formal Basic Education by recognition of multiple domains of knowledge (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992b) such as the aesthetic, spiritual, moral and ethical, as well as the scientific, domains. And in the new teacher education program, it is pointed out that teachers will have to develop the ability to create opportunities for learners to 'explore different ways of knowing' (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992). Given these latter statements, it is somewhat surprising to find a number of references to 'scientific' ways of thinking in the Teacher Diploma curriculum (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992a). For example, there is the intent to provide prospective teachers with an early introduction to education as 'an area of scientific research' (p. 3) through an exploration of the relation between theory and practice. Future teachers will be introduced 'to basic scientific principles and working methods, such as objectivity, gathering information from many sources . . .' (p. 14), and encouraged to develop 'scientific and critical' (p. 4) analytic skills to probe the role and functions of school in society. This inclination to label the questioning of school practices as 'scientific' will be examined further in the Discussion section of this paper.

The descriptions of a learner-centred pedagogy provided in the policy documents (see below) imply that knowledge is characterized by meaning and is generated through experiences which extend what already exists in terms of the knower's understandings. However, the language used in these documents reveals vestiges of a view of knowledge as a commodity which may be accumulated through a systematic presentation of specific content. For example, the curriculum is referred to as being 'delivered', materials are designed 'to get a message across', and the teacher must be able to 'clarify exactly what it is that the learners are to understand'.

The perspective on knowledge set out in the policy statements, while giving recognition to the personal knowledge brought to the learning situation by individual learners, does not tackle the dilemma of the relationship of personal to public knowledge. Learning is perceived as 'an interactive, shared and productive process' (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992), although an explication of the socially constructed nature of knowledge is not developed. Nor do the government policy documents offer a clear indication of how learning may be interpreted as being 'productive'. This matter is discussed in the report of a seminar held with teacher educators and government advisers (Dahlstrom, 1992). Production is interpreted as a 'way of active learning' (p. 24) in which the learners participate in tasks in which there is a visible product and the outcome of the production process is the generation of knowledge. The pervading

sense of the policy statements suggests a desire to establish what Barnes (1976) refers to as 'action knowledge' as an outcome of learning in school; that is, knowledge which becomes part of the learner's world-view, rather than 'school knowledge' which remains separate from the intellectual 'inner map on which actions are based' (p. 80).

View of learning and teaching

The desired approach to learning and teaching in the current reform is learner-centred, described (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992b) in the following manner;

- the starting point is the learners' existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school;
- the natural curiosity and eagerness of all young people to learn to investigate and make sense of a widening world must be catered for by challenging and meaningful tasks;
- the learners' perspective needs to be appreciated and considered in the work of the school;
- learners should be empowered to think and take responsibility not only for their own, but for one another's learning and total development; and
- they should be involved as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth.

In this description, the learner is portrayed not only as someone involved as making sense of the world but also as an individual with responsibility for pursuing that goal and assisting others to do so. The view of learners as 'partners' in educational growth contrasts with the teacher-dominated and authoritarian pedagogy of the past. Callewaert and Callos (1992, p. 14) point out that the notion of democratic education may be considered from a number of aspects; from a civic education point of view, from a civil rights standpoint embracing the multicultural facets of Namibian society, and from the perspective of school governance. The final aspect, which is of primary concern in this analysis, is the implication that a democratic pedagogy implies a high degree of participation in decision making by students. This would necessarily have to be accompanied by considerable flexibility in the actual subject-based content, methods of instruction and pacing of the instruction. The traditional lock-step methods of instruction where each student works on the same page of the workbook in the same week of the term would not support a democratic pedagogy. Neither would variable pacing but with the expectation that all students 'cover' the same content presented in a set and established manner. A shared responsibility by those in any particular classroom for the development of learning activities appropriate for the learners in that specific situation implies that there may not be uniformity in the classroom experiences across the nation; nor may there be a set of uniform learning outcomes.

In a learner-centred pedagogy, the role of the teacher becomes that of mediator of learning experiences in which the learners generate meaning rather than one of transmitter of knowledge to the learners. The new program for teacher education (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992) sets out to prepare teachers who are capable of adapting and creating materials for their students so that there is continuity between the learners' existing understanding and the instructional materials. It will be the teachers' responsibility to become aware of students' prior knowledge and current interests and plan activities which engage the participation of the learners. Hence the recommendation that teachers organize their classes 'in small groups, pairs, larger groups or individually' to provide for 'learner participation and involvement'. But, as in the language used to present the view of knowledge discussed in the previous section, the teaching strategies identified as useful for achieving learner participation bear an unfortunate resemblance to previous teacher-dominated practices, namely 'explaining, demonstrating, posing questions, checking for understanding, helping, providing for active practice and problem-solving, etc.' (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992b).

The policy documents have also attended to the role played by assessment for selection (promotion) in driving the previous pedagogical tradition, and have indicated that the intention for assessment in a learner-centred pedagogy is to inform learners, parents and teachers about progress in various fields of study as well as assuming a 'formative' role by promoting good study habits, building a positive and realistic

self-image and establishing sound values (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992b). The new teacher education program sets out to illustrate to prospective teachers a range of diagnostic, formative and summative strategies through continuous assessment procedures as well as final evaluation.

View of learning to teach

The new teacher education program rests on the assumption that teachers will 'have a holistic view of the learner, valuing the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies' (Ministry of Education, 1992). Thus the task of the program which prepares individuals for the role of teacher is to introduce them to the multiple dimensions of the learner. Moreover, the lack of books, maps and other pedagogical resources has been noted in the recommendation that the 'new approach should enable the teacher candidates to work creatively relying on and developing their own skills. The training program must emphasize production and reflection rather than reproduction and rote learning. The teacher candidates must be trained to and prepared for work in schools with insufficient material resources' (Andersson *et al.*, 1991). In accordance with the participatory feature of a 'democratic' pedagogy, prospective teachers in the new program will be expected to be responsible for their own learning and involved in the planning and organization of activities.

The view of teachers as life-long learners is explicit in the reform documents. The preservice teacher education program is seen as 'the first induction into the profession, an initial step in an ongoing process of professional growth and development' (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992). Teachers will be expected to regard their careers as progressive professional development.

TEACHER EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON PEDAGOGY

The pedagogical practice advocated for educational reform in Namibia represents a radical shift from past educational experiences of current teacher educators. In this section, the views of knowledge, learning and teaching held by a group of teacher educators and potential teacher educators are explored.

Views of knowledge

The opening sessions of the workshop immediately revealed assumptions about the nature of knowledge held by the participants. For example, they held the strong belief that, for any discrete course of study, there should be a prespecified body of knowledge and/or skills which has been identified by the instructor. The task of the instructor is to utilise appropriate media to facilitate a step by step accumulation of this knowledge by the learners. And if the occasion arises to present this same course to another group of students in another location and at another time, the instructor (whether it be the same individual as in the first course offering or not) should strive to present the same prespecified content in the same step by step manner. In the context of their participation in the workshop, these assumptions surfaced in discussions about the content of the course following an invitation to build it around ideas and concerns which they held with regard to primary teacher education in general and primary environmental education in particular. The participants were concerned to find out if the content of this environmental education course was the same as the content of the course with the same title which I teach in Alberta; and there was considerable unease amongst the group when I described how the development of ideas about environmental education would vary according to the participants' interests in their specific contexts. For these educators, knowledge was independent of people and context; in other words, objective.

These teacher educators, none of whom had ever contemplated teaching environmental education and thus viewed themselves as novices in this situation, were thrown off balance by the suggestion that they might have ideas which would both count as knowledge and be valuable in this learning situation. I argued that, as teachers, they had accumulated beliefs and experiences which, either explicitly or implicitly, they drew on in their interactions with students. Moreover, as inhabitants of specific localities in their country, they had accumulated beliefs and experiences about the interactions of living and nonliving objects in their environment. What the workshop set out to do was to assist these teacher educators in examining this personal knowledge as starting points for preparing to work with prospective primary teachers.

Having experienced the teacher-as-expert relationship for all of their school lives, the participants needed considerable encouragement and time to begin looking at their personal beliefs about teaching and learning. In reflecting on this pedagogical shift in attention to the learner, one participant noted that 'previously it was the teacher who was the one who has the knowledge, not the students themselves.' The educators also anticipated the responses to such a pedagogical approach in their own teaching situations and acknowledged that, if they were to invite their college students to share their preexisting ideas in an instructional setting, more than likely the students would think that this was a 'fill-in' strategy because the instructor had not prepared a lecture.

The participants were invited to keep a daily journal during the workshop, in which to comment on and question emerging ideas. The use of writing as a means for examining one's thinking was a novel activity for most of the participants and needed deliberate support. The participants found it difficult to accord their personal knowledge the status of publicly accepted knowledge. Also, they were not sure how to integrate this opportunity to reflect on their existing practices in this particular form of expression with the daily activities of the workshop. However, they did use the journals to question other people's ideas and to contemplate what it would be like to implement a learner-centred approach to teaching in primary schools where there are 45 or more children in a poorly equipped classroom.

From the examples provided above, it is clear that these teacher educators' perspectives on the nature of knowledge are more closely aligned with a view of knowledge as detached from the learner than with a view of knowledge constructed by the learner. Such a perspective has significant implications for the introduction of a new pedagogy which rests on the recognition and development of personal knowledge and practice.

Views of learning and teaching

Throughout the workshop, the participants worked in small groups in a variety of activities which utilized the immediate environment. At the conclusion of our time together, the groups were invited to present an environmental topic of their choice to the class. This was not a comfortable situation for several participants, due to lack of confidence in their subject matter knowledge and also due to some reluctance to risk moving out of their familiar and heretofore taken-for granted pedagogical style. However, they introduced activities designed to elicit the learners' ideas, introduced group work and outside activities and, probably most important of all, subsequently engaged in intensive debate about the value of the activities with respect to the development of concepts associated with each environmental topic. They had opportunities to recognize the risk-taking dimension of teaching intrinsic to a learner-centred approach which contrasts sharply with a teacher-oriented pedagogy. They experienced the shift in control which inevitably occurs as students contribute to the shaping of the learning activities.

While these educators were not accustomed to teaching directly from textbooks (textbooks are generally not available in sufficient quantities), they were used to working from a centrally derived syllabus. 'The normal practice' commented one participant, 'is that the teacher is expected to teach from Topic #1 up to the last topic, just as it appears in the syllabus.' In addition, the syllabus is supported by a study-guide which summarizes the course content and is supplied to the students. Intended to supplement the course activities, the study-guides have tended to be used as crammers for examinations, a situation recognized by the teacher educators as counterproductive to the development of understanding.

Learner-centred approaches to teaching imply that continuous assessment of learning is taking place; assessment is not limited to the major assignment of the course and the final examination. *All* participatory activities in a teaching–learning situation provide opportunities for evaluating the quality of learning; the challenge is to provide for participation and to develop an awareness of the kinds of learning taking place. A thoughtful participant noted that he 'read [the learning] from their participation in class; before we start off any new topic, we always talk.' The description of 'talk' is significantly different from the usual pattern of questioning in that there are no designated answers anticipated and, indeed, there may be learner questions.

An activity in which the workshop participants worked individually was the production of a poster to illustrate the village where they had attended school as a child. The purpose

of this was two-fold: firstly, to highlight to the participants that they were the 'experts' on this particular topic and that they had knowledge which qualified them to analyze the human impact on this particular portion of the environment, 'their' environment. Secondly, in a country where print and picture resources are scarce, it was important to demonstrate that, as recommended in the new teacher education program, teachers should be prepared to produce teaching materials themselves; and, because these materials are focussed on the home environment, they are particularly valuable. The posters were presented to the class as each participant gave an oral description of the environmental changes which had occurred in the home village since childhood days. In contrast to the uncertainties of the journal writing and the shaky confidence of the topic presentations, the assessment of environmental changes in the home village was an engaging and unexpected success. And all the more surprising for the depth of analysis and the openness of the participants who derived from various localities within the country.

In the posters, the relationships between natural terrain, water supply, modes of transport and housing are portrayed by individuals who lived and worked in each community. Certainly, the discussions of the posters exemplified the participants' prerogative to recognize their biographical experiences as valuable and contributing to the development of concepts about the environment. But, in addition, the discussion about the significant institutions in the village, schools, hospital, elders' homes, opened the doors to an examination of early practices which have shaped their ways of thinking about learning and teaching. From this activity, the educators derived personal knowledge of a learner-centred pedagogy which not only started with their personal knowledge but invited them to probe the accessibility of knowledge in a social framework.

DISCUSSION

There is no doubt that the intents of the reform of the Namibian teacher education program are consistent in their advocacy of a learner-oriented pedagogy. Moreover, this has been laid out in a critical framework, directed toward the transformation of a society fragmented by the former policies of apartheid. What are the potential obstacles to this alternative pedagogical mode, given the tradition which has preceded it? And are there ways in which to scaffold the alternative mode until the pattern has been established?

Potential obstacles to a learner-centred pedagogy

The view of knowledge as a commodity and of learning as 'banking' of that commodity which was so firmly established in the previous pedagogical tradition of Namibian classrooms (and, it should be added, in classrooms around the world) is incompatible with a learner-centred pedagogy. It has resulted in widespread reluctance in the community at large to acknowledge the status of personal knowledge and the processes of knowledge construction. In no way does this suggest that learner-centred pedagogy rejects the 'common knowledge' that has been generated through centuries of human interactions, but rather that the teacher and learners become mutually oriented towards recognition of the contribution of personal perceptions to the establishment of meaningful shared, or public, knowledge. The manner in which knowledge and knowing are referred to in the Namibian reform documents displays a tension between the intent to acknowledge the significance of learners' perceptions and a hesitation to recognize that public knowledge is socially constructed. Attempts to draw on the authority of science and its (presumed) objective outcomes in the development of a teacher education program are unlikely to support a pedagogy which is social rather than scientific in its shaping.

A 'new' pedagogy which acknowledges the social construction of knowledge and is democratic in action will give rise to a shift in the locus of control at all levels in the educational system; in the classroom, in curriculum administration, and in educational government. In the classroom, interactions which transfer responsibility for learning to students generally involve the relinquishing of some of the usual control mechanisms. For example, a mode of control commonly exerted by teachers is dominance of classroom 'talk'; but in knowledge-generating interactions, students must contribute, indeed, even dominate the classroom talk. Such a pedagogical relationship requires the teacher to examine the ways in which a classroom is managed in order to

sustain active student engagement in learning rather than managed to condition submissive students. This substantial change in the procedural dimension of classroom pedagogy will need to be anticipated and accommodated by students, teachers and parents lest it lead to a breakdown of classroom organization and a subsequent backlash and retrenching of the existing patterns of teacher–student interactions.

The reform in teacher education in Namibia sets out to prepare teachers to question the relationships between learning and teaching through awareness of the social and political frameworks shaping national schooling. New patterns of communication and discourse will be needed to provoke the debate which promotes professional growth. If these are successful in empowering teachers and in raising the status of education, the construction of knowledge will likely reside in discrete communities: as Britton has suggested, education will occur 'as an *effect of community*' (1985, p. 75). This implies that the learning experiences in each community could be generated by teachers and community members to engage the students in acknowledgement that the needs and interests of that community are different from those of another. However, the previous pedagogical tradition has entrenched the expectation that all students working at a particular grade level will encounter identical content and will be examined for identical kinds of learning, regardless of the requirements of the learners and their communities. Such expectations may act as obstacles to the introduction of a learner-centred pedagogy which develops differing learning experiences for students in varying locales and communities.

With the legacy of Bantu education still fresh in the minds of many Namibian educators, the fear of discriminatory learning situations is appreciated. This is alluded to as the 'crisis of expectations on the part of the majority who were historically left out' (Ministry of Education, Youth, Culture & Sport, 1990). However, the issue of the quality of learning experiences is one which must be dealt with in terms of the preparation of teachers who are capable of developing activities which are appropriate for assisting their particular students to make sense of their world.

Closely associated with the issue of quality of schooling is that of standards for student performance. The desire to provide equal opportunities for learning, if interpreted as the introduction of standardized performance objectives controlled by a central examination system, could be a major obstacle to transforming the pedagogy of educational institutions. Successful implementation of pedagogical change may ultimately require the devolution of centralized educational governance. This has far-reaching implications for centrally administered assessment techniques which have a tendency to impose expectations for the 'products' of particular pedagogical practices. The experience in other countries with national assessment strategies is not encouraging for learner-centred pedagogical practice.

Possible strategies to scaffold a learner-centred pedagogy

Individual teacher educators will need to make explicit their own existing beliefs as they set about the task of constructing an authentic learner-oriented pedagogical practice. Teacher educators need to be helped to examine their past in order to recognize the ways in which it influences their perspective on teaching and learning. Developing a sense of their personal biographies and personal history 'is one way for them to begin to overcome their inertia and unwillingness to question where particular practices came from' (Smyth, 1991). Namibian teacher educators need to recognize, as Smyth argues, that silences on these matters are perhaps not accidental at all, but may be socially constructed responses to a wider societal agenda. Strategies for examining the historical and political roots of pedagogical practice (which include writing in journals, generating displays such as posters, and oral histories) are being incorporated into the activities of the new teacher education program.

Change is likely to succeed only if it begins by acknowledging the practicalities and immediacy of the personal situation in the classroom. Teachers of prospective teachers will have to, themselves, experience the work of the classroom. Since the career route of many of the college instructors has been via secondary school teaching, these educators will need to be committed to placing themselves both physically and intellectually in the primary classroom situation. The curriculum for the new teacher education program identifies school-based assignments as key features (Min-

istry of Education & Culture, 1992a); teacher educators must be coparticipants in these.

The teacher education program must necessarily rest on its own pedagogy. It will be within this program that prospective teachers come to see what is possible and begin to question the expectations and beliefs which they have brought to the program. Strategies which seem to assist learners to construct or re-construct his/her meaning involve the elicitation of the learners' existing ideas, opportunities for collaborative but nonjudgmental sharing of ideas, experiences in which the learners' ideas are applied, extended or modified, and mediation of the restructuring processes. The preconceptions held by future teachers of what it means to be a learner and what it means to be a teacher will have to be challenged by the very nature of the interactions in the teacher education program; for, as Feiman-Nemser points out, 'the likelihood that professional study will affect what early experiences have inscribed on the mind and emotion will depend on its power to cultivate images of the possible and desirable and to forge commitments to make those images a reality' (1983, p. 154).

The teacher educators will need collegial support in building social relationships which will illuminate their teaching practices in the Colleges and which will act as a scaffold during the process of reconstruction. Short-term workshops of the kind described in this paper serve the purpose of bringing together educators from a variety of locations to not only share in idea generation, but also to build a nonthreatening and collegial community which offers personal support and challenge.

In order for the community at large to lend support to a 'new' pedagogy, there must be attempts to re-situate the school in the community. The teacher education program directs future teachers to see themselves as a resource for the community in which they work and urges them to develop social responsibility towards the community. The school should be an institution for not only children but parents and adults too. The school should be the focal point of a learning community which values its existing knowledge and seeks to extend it. Members of a community need to come to view educational phenomena as socially constructed and schools as having the potential to contribute to the reconstruction of a nation. The new teacher education program paves the way for the building of community support for the school and its pedagogy by introducing sociological school-based studies which question the relationship of the school in its community, and require that the prospective teachers talk with people representing different walks of life in a particular community.

There are multiple layers of potential support or of resistance to building a new pattern of interactions between teachers and learners. The individual teacher, with his or her personal interpretations and theories, is a member of a learning community with established social relations and expectations. Furthermore, the learning community is upheld by the broader community in which it is embedded. It will be necessary for not only teacher educators to reconstruct their patterns of interaction with future teachers, but for schools and the whole of the social fabric of the nation to recognize the purposes of a significantly different way of thinking and acting in a learning situation. As Callewaert and Kallos (1992) have noted, it is 'never sufficient to change teacher training to obtain 'new pedagogical practices' if the school (and community) system remains intact (p. 7).

In conclusion, the current changes in education policies in Namibia have offered an opportunity to take apart what is there and create 'open spaces for alternative theoretical and strategic options for transformative praxis' (Flanagan, 1992). The teacher education program will, indeed, be pivotal in keeping these 'spaces' open.

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