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## Using Distance Education to Improve Teaching in Namibia: Teachers' Views on an Inservice Training Program.

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# **USING DISTANCE EDUCATION TO IMPROVE TEACHING IN NAMIBIA:**

Teachers' views on an inservice training program.

A Master's Project Presented

By

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## **An Abstract**

Teacher education in Namibia is likely to involve more participants and more expenditure in the future. Analysis of the substance and character of teacher education programs as seen by the teachers are very important for the public.

This study is a compilation of the thoughts of almost 70 teachers enrolled in a distance teacher education program. Their views are captured in conversations, observations, interviews and on questionnaires. Voice is an important aspect of the study, for both content and tone. The actual words of teachers have been quoted directly and at length, so that they may speak for themselves, as they are seldom able to do in many official documents.

In an analysis of data certain aspects were closely analyzed to draw some conclusions. Teachers, almost without exception speak of the value of learning from other teachers in their study groups and gaining new insights and understanding of learner-centred approaches from attending face-to-face tutoring sessions. They also speak consistently about the opportunity the program provides for learning and sharing experience with other teachers. Of much concern to them are: study materials, support and encouragement from their school principals, critical evaluations and feedback from program administrators, the duration of the program and chances for further education.

For me, the study has served as an insight into this reform effort and has led to a series of deeper questions about how teachers respond to initiatives designed to affect teaching practice.

Table of Contents		Page
I.	Introduction -----	3
	The problem-----	3
	Purpose-----	5
II.	Literature Review -----	11
III.	Teacher Education in Namibia -----	11
	The BETD Program -----	14
IV.	Data Collection and Analysis -----	16
V.	Results and Discussions -----	19
	Profiles of the teacher trainees -----	19
	Effectiveness and support of the training -----	23
	Effects of the BETD Program as assessed by teachers -----	32
VI.	Recommendations -----	39
VII.	Conclusion -----	46
	Bibliography -----	48
Appendices:	Questionnaire -----	51

## **Introduction**

Many developing countries have expanded access to basic education so fast that they have been forced to employ unqualified or under qualified teachers. Aware that this affects the quality of the formal education, they have taken steps to upgrade the qualification of these teachers through in service training. However, such efforts have been hampered by financial constraints, low teacher incentives, and low quality training programs. During the past twenty years, ministries of education have begun to use distance education to overcome these obstacles. Distance education programs have been launched in many developing countries to provide inservice training to teachers at their own working places at prices many governments can afford. Generally such programs involve some form of self-instruction, supplemented by face-to-face tutoring (Nielsen, 1990).

Since such programs do not require permanent facilities such as classrooms, lecture halls, dormitories or even instructors, they tend to cost less than the conventional programs. Because they lead to the required certifications, they fulfill a government's mandate to upgrade its teaching force.

## **The Problem**

Namibia is faced with a huge demand for expanded educational provision at all levels. Much of this demand is for access to better education and for professional and skill upgrading. This demand created an urgent need for more and better teachers. At independence, in 1990, the country faced a huge shortage of qualified teachers. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education

and Culture in 1991, 36% of the teachers teaching in primary and secondary schools in Namibia were either unqualified (i.e., not academically and professionally equipped to teach) or under-qualified (i.e., teaching at a level above for which they have been specifically trained) (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992).

Serious efforts are being made to improve the quality of education and to provide education to all citizens. There seems to be a realization that expansion and improvement in education cannot be met exclusively by conventional school and college-based education. The solution to the teacher unqualification problem would not be to expel teachers from the profession or to expand the residentially based training at teacher colleges. As experienced elsewhere, it would take too long to get the required teaching force. The costs are also astronomically high. It is for these reasons that the Ministry of Education and Culture is looking for alternative ways of upgrading the skills of unqualified teachers. These programs will run alongside the usual training organized at the teacher training colleges.

If the efforts of teacher education in Namibia are to be successful teachers need to be involved as active participants in the change process. Unless teachers are actively involved in the new approaches, unless they feel a sense of ownership, lasting change is unlikely. Few attempts have been made to understand the perspectives of teachers on the effectiveness of current teacher education programs. To plan effective inservice programs we need to understand and know what teachers think and feel about the new programs, we need to know what they consider important and possible under the conditions they are working. It is my

contention that training provided to the teachers will not be effective unless it is perceived as helpful by the teachers themselves. It is for this reason that I chose to focus this study on the perspectives of teachers in the program.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study is a compilation of the thoughts of teachers enrolled in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), an inservice teacher training program in Namibia. There are two general purposes for the study. Firstly, it was to collect all relevant data on how participants view the BETD program. Secondly, it investigated how a distance education mode of delivery can be generally used to help improve the quality of classroom teaching. Since the program is still in the early stages of development and implementation, the information from the study can be used in further program development and refinement.

In conducting the study I limited myself to what teachers found effective, what is working well for them and suggestions they made for improvement. I examined a bit more closely certain aspects of the distance program, such as the training processes, the roles played by teacher educators and the use of materials. My main sources of information were the teacher trainees and the teacher educators. Though the opinions of the teacher educators would be of a certain interest in themselves, they were used mainly as cross-checks for the evaluation made by the teacher trainees. Heads of schools and some head teachers in the schools were included in the study. National and regional coordinators were used as additional sources of information on the functioning of the program. My approach to writing the study is descriptive.

## Literature Review

### **Studies on Inservice Teacher Education and Distance Education Programs.**

During the last two decades *developing* countries have made substantial progress in increasing access to basic education. Often quantity came at the expense of quality. Schools were built and pupils enrolled. However, the books and equipment they were provided with were inadequate and the teachers too few and undertrained. To solve the problem of teacher shortages, governments have increased pupil-teacher ratios and put into service some teachers who are unqualified. According to one analysis, as many as half the teachers in the developing world are unqualified according to the countries' own formal standards (Andrews, Housego, & Thomas, 1990).

This problem is severe in regions where access has rapidly expanded. For example in 10 out of 33 sub-Saharan African countries, most of the primary teachers have not completed secondary education (Hallak, 1990). Within many countries, the problem of under qualified teachers is worse in rural or remote areas. This means that educational quality in these areas is far inferior to that available in the cities (ICDE, 1974).

It is obvious from the above that the kind of training available in many developing countries has failed to supply teachers in the numbers needed. Attempts to increase output in the conventional colleges have often been counterproductive, especially it has been accomplished by lowering entrance standards and shortening the study time for teacher certification (Coldevin and Naidu, 1989). In

addition, conventional forms of teacher education, generally designed as preservice programs, are not equipped to upgrade the undertrained teachers who are already in the teaching force. For this, inservice training is an "obvious remedy" (Andrews, Housego, & Thomas, 1990). According to these authors, "the pace of development of such programs is, in fact, increasing as many countries turn their attention and resources to the challenge of increasing the quality of education " (p.64).

Recent research focusing on developing countries has documented the relationship between teacher qualifications, and teaching performance, (Guthrie, 1985) and student achievement (Fuller, 1987). Student achievement has been shown to relate to the kind of training teachers received, while in teacher training. The most effective teacher training emphasized subject-matter knowledge beyond that expected of students and subject specific pedagogical teaching skills (Dove, 1986; Lockheed & Verspoor, 1990).

Reviewers Avalos and Haddad (1981) note a lack of evidence about the effect of inservice training upon students and the effectiveness of various ways of organizing inservice training. However, the authors demonstrated that inservice teacher training was important in changing teacher behavior. Teacher qualifications and training are said to be related to pupil achievement.

Government budgets are shrinking for education in many developing countries. Inservice training is expensive, especially when it requires attending courses at teacher training colleges (Ansari, 1987). Teachers in many poor countries find

inservice very expensive to fund themselves. However, inservice training through distance education are claimed to have given teachers the knowledge and skills they need for improving their own abilities and their students performance at reasonable expense (Ansari, 1987).

Studies on the effectiveness of distance education conducted in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Tanzania seem to support the above claims.

In Zimbabwe, an evaluation of the Zimbabwe's distance teacher education program (ZINTEC), was carried out during its second and third years of existence.(Mahlck and Temu; 1990) The study discussed the admission procedures, the reasons behind dropouts, the teacher trainees' performance during the short residential courses, pre and posttesting of the modules, headmasters' opinions of the program, field tutors' supervision of the trainees' practical dealing and theoretical work. Another part of the field study was a sub-sample of teacher trainees (50 persons) on the effectiveness of ZINTEC teachers. This was done through interviews and assessment of the quality of their work. One of the major findings was that pupils taught by ZINTEC teachers had slightly better results in their grade seven examinations than the national average. Thus, the conclusion can be made that proper distance teacher education programs assist in raising student achievement levels.

Another similar study was conducted by Candido (1986) in Mozambique. Unlike the Zimbabwe report, this one had a limited scope. Mozambique's first attempt in using the distance approach was reserved for the so-called monitors, i.e., primary school

teachers with no teacher training, and only four or five years of formal education. The follow-up of 85 former participants in the experimental distance course showed many problems relating to availability of radio and cassettes, problems in understanding certain written materials and delays in corrections of exercises. However, the participants, in spite of a certain skepticism at the beginning, rated the course and its modalities as useful. The conclusion of the evaluation was that distance education in teacher training can provide a valuable alternative to more traditional forms of training.

The most extensive studies of distance education programs in Africa were conducted in Tanzania. Two studies were selected for review because of the importance of their findings for this study. The first study reviewed was a diagnostic study carried out by the research team of the University of Dar-Es-Salaam. This study was on the Universal Primary Education Program (UPE), its achievements and problems of implementation (Omari, 1983). The survey covered ten of the administrative regions of the country. The overall evaluation of the distance program made by the teacher trainees was positive. The majority felt that it had prepared them adequately for their professional tasks. Both District Education Officers and teachers, indicated that the lack of teaching materials was a major problem in the UPE program. The authors also pointed out that because of the lack of materials there was substantial drop out among student teachers during their training at the beginning of the UPE program. This study highlights a need for proper material development and distribution.

A second study on Tanzania was a comparative study conducted by Mahlck and Temu (1989) on the effectiveness of Tanzanian primary school teachers trained by distance education versus traditional means of preservice teacher training colleges. They find that there was no significant difference in subject matter mastery between distance trained teachers and those trained at teacher colleges, except in science, where distance trainees scored much lower. They also concluded that teaching skills in distance trained teachers were equivalent to campus trainees. Skills in evaluation were better in distance trained teachers however they were worse in group organizing.

Distance teacher education programs appears to offer many advantages not found in conventional programs. They have been summarized by Coldevin & Naidu (1989) as follows:

From the practicing teacher's viewpoint, studying in situ (sic) means that they can attain professional certification or academic upgrading without interrupting their earnings, significant point in developing countries where many teachers have small farms.

Large numbers can be served at anyone time with no discrimination against those who live in remote areas.

It obviates the problem of replacing the teachers on college-based courses with substitutes who - when they can be found at all - often have poorer qualifications.

It reduces the tendency toward urban drift resulting from the trainees from rural areas not wanting to return to their original posts. The teacher's work situation can serve as a basic resource for his/her studies - with learning applied immediately in the classroom; sharing learning experiences with village-based colleagues can provide a multiplier effect; and DE print materials are frequently valuable references in locations where access to libraries is limited (p.12).

From the above cases distance education programs have clearly been set up for different purposes and reasons. Some programs are geared for teachers who have their academic qualifications but lack teaching credentials. Other programs are for experienced teachers who lack the required subject content. These teachers need academic enrichment or certification but little training in pedagogy. A final set of programs is for teachers who need a balance of subject matter mastery and pedagogy. Distance education is designed to meet each country's needs in teacher training and affordability.

### **Teacher Education in Namibia**

Education is looked upon as one of the most important vehicles for development in Namibia. The constitution of the Republic of Namibia guarantees the right to free and compulsory education for all children from the ages of 6 to 16, or the end of primary education, whichever comes first. The government aims to provide a ten-year basic education to all. The new educational system in Namibia as outlined in a 1992 report by the Ministry of Education and Culture is based on the following goals: access, equity, quality, efficiency and democracy.

Before independence, education was organized along racial and ethnic lines. There were about eleven education systems with each one having its own administrative structure. This fragmentation of education resulted in Namibia inheriting an educational system characterized by inequalities in the distribution of educational resources, especially of qualified teachers. According to the UNESCO (1991) inequality prevailed in Namibia and was made evident by the following problems:

- a) lack of adequate inservice training in various ethnic authorities,
- b) unequal available educational opportunities,
- c) repeated failures and high percentage of failures in primary and secondary schools,
- d) examination-directed attitude dominating educational objectives and the task of the teacher.

Prior to independence there were no systematic surveys done of professional needs across the country regarding national development needs. Training was organized from classroom visits or by needs expressed by teachers at the end of a course. In many cases, teachers were not consulted. This made the matching of content to participant needs a "hit and miss" affair (Howard, 1995).

Very few attempts were made to match the topics and activities in the training to participants' needs and interests. This situation arose partly from the lack of an inadequate needs analysis. The lack of understanding of real needs by centralized course organizers and a lack of clear information from the course content being offered contributed to the hit and miss affair. There was an ad hoc manner in which some trainers selected courses. Most of the inservice activities were planned on what is often referred to as a fluoride approach to inservice - pour it into the water which everyone must drink, and expect it to prevent decay.

Besides face to face training courses there were also examinations for improving academic qualifications by correspondence and various inservice courses. These

courses were organized by the Out-of-School Division of the former Academy and by NGOs such as the Council of Churches in Namibia and the Rossing Foundation.

According to Howard (1995) the limitations of the inservice provision, i.e., the mismatch between the needs and the content, is not particular to pre-independence. Such limitations have been identified frequently. Unique to Namibia was the fact these were compounded by the political system whose aim was to disqualify the majority from participating in the system.

From the time of independence efforts were mounted to upgrade the professional skills and academic qualifications of teachers. In 1991 an extensive survey was conducted to determine precisely what kind of training teachers wanted and how it might be offered. Samples of 418 teachers from 125 schools in each of six education regions were interviewed. Teacher responses from the survey provided a clear indication on how inservice teacher education should be developed. Most of the teachers wanted a course that would lead to a formal qualification, one with contact class sessions to be held in school vacations but with self-study materials that would also allow them to learn at home during school terms time. They were interested in learning modern teaching methods, improving their English Language skills, studying child psychology, and reviewing subject teaching methodology. Teachers also indicated their willingness to pay for the course. It was from this background that the BETD distance program was developed and introduced at the beginning of 1994.

## **The BETD Program**

The BETD program was conceived in the context of Namibia's independence from the colonial and apartheid educational structures. The Minister of Education and Culture when opening the formal launching of the BETD program in March 1993, set out some basic goals to govern the evolution of the program. He stated that in-service teacher education should, among other goals:

1. improve teacher classroom effectiveness,
2. promote educational efficiency,
3. improve teachers' career development prospects. (The UNDP/UNESCO Curriculum Development and Training for In-service Teacher Education Project, 1995).

These policy goals helped guiding the development of the broad curriculum for the BETD program whose main aim is:

To develop the professional expertise and competencies that will enable the teacher to optimize the new basic education for the learners and to be fully involved in promoting change in educational reform in Namibia (BETD Broad Curriculum, 1994).

The BETD broad curriculum is based on the combination of different curriculum development approaches. For instance it draws elements from Learner-centered education, student teachers' reflective teaching and learning, learning through production, holistic education teacher educators' role as curriculum developers and many other approaches. To prepare teachers for the new role and new approaches the Broad Curriculum advocates:

Training based on democratic pedagogy and a methodology that promotes learning through understanding and practice. (BETD Broad Curriculum, 1994).

Another Ministry document stated that:

The historical and cultural context of Namibia today, and the nature of the teaching profession, needs teachers who are adequately qualified, self-reliant, motivated and enthusiastic. The teacher is a key person for the development of the nation, and has a lot of potential as a local resource for the community. It is therefore essential that the teacher relates closely to the community and can integrate school and life outside the school for the learner (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994).

Drawing from the ideas of Klein (1993) and Schon (1987) these approaches seem to be based on the assumption that the curriculum development process is a joint planning by all educators. In the new approach teachers are recognized as major curriculum partners. This negates the former role teachers were assigned under apartheid as implementors of a prepackaged curriculum. To achieve the new approach, a principle of reflection on the personal meaning of the content and experience on the part of all educators is emphasized. By encouraging these ideas, the program hopes to bring about classroom practices that allow time for self-examination and personal reflections in various ways and forms (Klein, 1993).

The BETD program has two components: preservice and distance inservice. The preservice offers a full-time program for three years while the inservice takes six years to complete. The starting point for the inservice component is the same as the preservice training. The rationale for linking the two components was, according to the coordinators, to avoid creating a two tier structure in which those completing the BETD by full-time preservice study would become the elite and those in the inservice program would be considered as second class teachers. This led to the idea of making both in-service and preservice training have exactly one and the same program and qualification.

The BETD inservice component is a pilot program, designed to allow teachers to set their own pace while working and earn their teaching qualification. Experienced teachers with a minimum of five years teaching, who completed Grade 10 or 12 but have no professional training, are admitted. The contact sessions in school vacations and provision for self-study in school terms are the two major modes of delivery. These methods require teachers to make frequent trips to regional centers or a teacher college, to pick up self-instructional materials and submit assignments to tutors for evaluation. During each school vacation five days contact sessions are held which focus on a wide range of teacher competencies. Teachers are required to form study circles/groups giving them the opportunity to reflect on what they are learning in relation to their everyday classroom experiences. The program requires inspectors, advisory teachers, and teacher educators, periodically to visit the teachers in their schools to observe their practice and to learn the difficulties they have in applying their new knowledge and skills. At the end of the course the teachers will receive a trained teacher diploma, have good opportunities for advancement, and receive a salary increase.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The study was conducted in the two northern regions of Namibia. The reasons for selecting those two northern regions (Ondangwa 1&2) were; my familiarity with the language spoken there and the fact that most of the teachers in the program are living in the two regions. Since teachers in Ondangwa 1 and Ondangwa 2 meet during the vacation at Ongwediva Teacher Training College I decided to conduct the study at their meetings. The main data collection instruments were:

- questionnaires,
- formal and Informal interviews,
- participant observations,
- reviewing of program documents and reports.

The questionnaires cover trainee background characteristics, perception of the training process and to what extent to which the teacher trainees felt well prepared academically and professionally. The questionnaire included questions on the overall effectiveness of the various components of the inservice BETD program. The questions covered face-to-face tuition, encouragement and support given to teachers during the training, and the effects of the training as perceived by the teachers. The questionnaire items were in the form of pre-designed rating response alternatives with a few open-ended questions. Questionnaires were designed to serve two purposes: to provide information that would help me formulate the interview questions and to draw information from a wider audience.

The questionnaires were pretested in two different settings at the College of Education in Windhoek and at Ongwediva College. The draft questionnaires were piloted on twenty persons and copies were given to colleagues for comments. Notes were taken of difficulties experienced and suggestions were made by respondents of the pilot sample. The questionnaire was translated in Oshiwambo to ensure that the teachers well understood every item. The reactions of the pilot respondents were positive. The tryout allowed me to modify and reword certain items.

My initial intention was to provide questionnaires to all 248 participants, but due to the financial constraints this was never possible. I managed only to distribute a hundred questionnaires, to five classes, of which 70 were completed and returned. From the information in the questionnaires, interview questions were designed.

Participants interviewed came from six classes where I did my observation. Two interviewees were selected from each class, a male and a female. People were selected from the classes I observed. A total of 12 students were interviewed. Four of the twelve were visited at their schools. In addition to interviewing trainees, seven teacher educators were interviewed. Of all the teacher educators interviewed two are not teaching in the inservice program this year. However, they taught in the program last year. All seven are preservice teacher educators at Ongwediva College.

After classes, I held informal conversations with individual teacher trainees. I also had a chance to have discussions with small and large groups.

Besides the interview questions, I participated for two weeks in face to face contact classes for BETD in service and preservice classes. I also participated in a four-day workshop for supervisors of teachers. This workshop was intended to provide information regarding supervision to school principals, inspectors and subject advisors. In addition to these observations I attended a national workshop for material developers for all the courses from all the regions. My interest for observing at these workshops was to learn more about how the program is being developed and the challenges it is facing.

All interviews were recorded on audiotape. The tapes were transcribed and information was typed up. Most of the analysis was done from the recorded information, though some was done from my interview comments, informal discussions, observation notes and questionnaire responses. The research process and analysis was iterative. On a fairly regular weekly basis, I reviewed interview and observation notes and documents collected that week for general themes, problems or gaps in my data, jotting down rough ideas as I worked. These rough notes then became the basis for round of interviews or observations.

I looked at interview transcripts and notes for emerging themes. My strategy was that of a cross case analysis. I looked for common themes, convergence as well as inconsistencies and contradictions within interview transcripts from individual teachers and between teachers. Because my purpose was to understand teachers' perceptions of the BETD program, rather than evaluate whether those perceptions were accurate conceptualizations of the program, I used teacher educators and program coordinators' views as a cross-check.

## **Results and discussions**

### **Profiles of the teachers**

The ages of the trainees were between 21 and 50. Most of the teachers were estimated to be between 27 and 45 years. The Ministry's age requirements for admission into the program is a maximum of 50 years old. Given that the requirement age for a public servant in Namibia is 60 years - some of the teachers in the program have taught more than half of their teaching careers.

Concerning regional distribution Ondangwa 1 and Ondangwa 2 were treated as one region. Teachers from both regions attended face-to-face class sessions at Ongwediva College. Since the demarcation of the two regions has been done a year before the study was conducted, I felt that categorization by region would not have any significant impact on the results of the study. Rather an attempt was made to have teachers teaching Junior and Senior primary level and Junior secondary level to be fairly represented. Teachers teaching the junior primary are the majority of the participants in the program. Of the 500 total participants in the program the Ministry requires that 50% of the places go to the junior primary teachers, 30% to senior primary, and 20% to junior secondary.

The criteria for selection into the BETD inservice program as laid down by the Ministry of Education stipulate the following:

- 1) minimum of five years teaching experience;
- 2) have no professional training;
- 3) employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC);
- 4) have completed Grade 10.

Of the 500 teachers in the program two hundred and fifty teacher trainees were selected from the two Ondangwa regions and 50 from five other regions. Most of the conditions were respected.

Questions in the questionnaire concern the minimum level of education the teachers beyond the minimum level of education required. The result showed that about 25 of the trainees had grade 12 and one had Grade 12 and a Primary

Teaching Certificate (PTC) before entering teacher training program. There is a small difference between the teachers teaching Junior or senior primary and Junior Secondary. Most of those teaching Junior Secondary education had completed Grade 12. A few have indicated that they had done Education Certificate Primary (ECP), PTC and other courses. My assumption is that they probably did not pass the examination at the end of their courses.

Teacher educators are hired on a part-time basis for a year. The criteria for selecting them for the distance program are the same as those for the preservice program. A degree or a four-year teaching diploma, experience at training teachers, residence near the contact site and exposure to new teaching methods are necessary requirements. All the teacher educators I interviewed are well qualified. All had a three-year degree/diploma or higher. Most of them had more than five years of teaching experience. One had twenty-one years of teaching experience at a college in Europe. However, none of the teacher educators had primary school training or experience.

Teacher educators attended special orientation courses to meet the demands of the distance education program. They were frequently invited to attend national workshops to learn how to practice distance education tutoring, participate in micro teaching sessions and work with other teacher educators to plan the year's course of study. The duration of the training courses ranged from less than one week to more than two weeks.

The teacher educators I talked to reported that they were not adequately trained and equipped to handle all aspects of the program. Very important to them were the aspects of assessment and evaluation techniques encouraged in the program. The majority were feeling that assessment techniques recommended in the program are not possible under the conditions they were operating.

On the other hand, most teacher educators felt that the N\$ 30.00 an hour honorarium they are given is very little compared with what other institutions are paying. The University of Namibia (Unam) was cited as an example. Some teacher educators felt that if there is no increase in the honorarium, they would "definitely join Unam's distance education programs."

Training courses in supervision were also organized for the school inspectors, advisory teachers and school principals. Official information confirmed that not more than one course of supervision was conducted for the latter category of people. While inspectors, principals and advisory teachers were expected to supervise and observe teachers, these people were hardly provided with an adequate training for distance education. There is a need for more practical training and professional development at all levels in the program.

In addition to the supporting staff the program in two Ondangwa regions has two regional coordinators based at Ongwediva Resource Center, on the campus of Ongwediva College of Education. Both coordinators are expatriates. Their work among others involved: receiving and dispatching materials to students and teacher educators, recruiting and assessing the work of teacher educators,

organizing workshops and providing various kind of support to both teacher educators and trainees.

Both teacher educators and teacher trainees were unhappy that all regional coordinators are non-Namibians. They felt strongly that the program should be coordinated by Namibians. For teachers to claim ownership of the program urgent steps need to be taken to bring in the Namibians to run the program.

Having looked at stake holders in the program let me analyze the various components as seen by the participants.

### **Effectiveness and support of the training**

Instructional materials, consisting of module study guides, and face-to-face tutoring, in school vacations, are the two main characteristics of the distance program. The materials are produced nationally by groups of lecturers recruited from various colleges. A group method is used in the development of materials. How useful are the distance education materials? Is the assistance provided by the teacher educators beneficial? How helpful are the teachers' study group? Are required classroom observations helpful to the trainees?

How useful are the distance materials in the BETD program? The regional coordinators were responsible for distributing materials to teacher educators who in turn distribute the materials at face-to-face contact sessions to the trainees.

The arrival of instructional materials to students and in fact to the centers happened quite late in the year. Most of the materials arrived the first week of September, five to six months after the program has began. I observed that most of the materials were distributed on the first day I visited the center. The coordinators and material developers explained that delays were due to technical and logistical difficulties involved in producing the materials. The trainees complained that they did not have anything to start their studies with. They found the situation unacceptable in the light of the high fees they paid for admission into the course. The program requires trainees to pay N\$210.00 per course.

Besides receiving instructional materials very late some trainees complained that they had never received some of their assignments back. They also complained that the assignments they had received, were never on time, and had very few, and at times, no comments from the teacher educators. Some teacher educators indicated a few problems in sending and receiving assignments from students. Some problems resulted from the delays in the postal system and from the fact that teacher educators were overloaded with work. The question of time arose. All the trainers had full-time teaching jobs at a college or at a nearby high school. Several teacher educators commented:

..We have no time. It's too much work...many assignments to mark in a very short time. We have also our own work to do.

Both teacher educators and teacher trainees found the study materials not to be very helpful. The teachers reported difficulties in understanding the style and language of the materials. Study materials in courses such as Education Theory & Practice (ETP), English, and Science contain very little detail and some ideas seem

not to be following one another in a systematic and logical order. One teacher commented:

Most of the materials are out of topic. Some documents referred in the materials are not attached to the study guides ... In Oshindonga we are provided only with one assignment.

Trainees complained that assignments and tasks contained in the materials are too difficult and unclear for them to understand. Some examples cited were ETP and Science. Some reported that the language used is too difficult for them:

The program should give books with low understandable English. Most of us used Afrikaans in the past. Understanding the modules is difficult for us.

Teacher educators offer little assistance as they experience difficulties in understanding the materials. They indicated that the study guides are very short and do not cover all the necessary aspects of the work. This situation forces them to use their own materials, mostly materials they use for teaching preservice classes.

I conclude that some problems in the materials are to be expected. Most of the materials were produced within a short time due to the urgency to deliver. Now the materials need a systematic review to make contents more rich and relevant, and instruction more pedagogical.

My discussions, interviews and questionnaires with the trainees did not only include questions on the materials. Some questions covered the overall effectiveness of face-to-face contact sessions and classroom observations. Thus, addressing the question as to the benefit of the assistance provided by the teacher educators.

Teachers indicated that they "gained a lot" from attending contact sessions. They expressed appreciation for some teacher educator assistance during contact classes. However, there seem to be a general fear, among teachers, of expressing critical remarks about people in the neighborhood and people who teachers feel depend on i.e. teacher educators and program coordinators. Generalized oppression and the lack of freedom of speech, in the recent past, are strong factors affecting people's inclination to speak freely, when asked for opinions. Despite that, the following two teachers expressed concerns that some teacher educators do not provide enough support:

One of our lecturers always asks us to read a piece from the book to look for the main idea and discuss that among ourselves in the class. We do not know where to start. Many of us read these books without understanding. If the lecturer is not explaining anything to us, we will never benefit from attending the classes .... We also realize that we do not need to bother the lecturers too much because we recognize that this course is given on a part-time basis. If these lecturers refuse to continue assisting us where will we get other people to help us? Lecturers who are willing to assist during the vacations are very scarce. People have their full time duties to attend to. We have to behave and be careful not to offend them. However, they need to act as leaders and we need to give them our support.

This teacher is more specific:

Some of our facilitators do not put much effort in helping us. Like the facilitator for Social Science hardly does anything...she just comes in the class and tell us to sit in groups and give us a topic to discuss. She hardly monitors our discussions or teaches us anything new.

The situation described by the above teacher became very apparent in the classes I observed. Tasks were given to teachers to discuss in groups with no follow up or reporting back. In some instances teacher educators appeared very inflexible in their approaches. In one class a teacher educator dominated class

discussions and showed little tolerance and respect for different ideas teacher trainees offered.

Responses from the questionnaires showed that some trainees felt publicly humiliated by statements made by teacher educators. One teacher felt offended by the following two statements made in the class by a teacher educator:

“If you don’t want to learn I can’t force you to learn” and “You must run when it is time.”

In explaining their conduct and approaches in the classes one teacher educator pointed out that the learner-centered approaches are new to her and she was “not provided with enough training in these methods” . She mentioned that it is difficult for her to adjust to the new methods.

All the teachers interviewed, reported that they attend self-study group meetings once a week. The meetings are held after school, in the afternoons depending on the distance a teacher has to travel. The distance they have to travel to attend these meetings varies from two miles to seven miles. Each study-group elects a chairperson and a secretary. Normally one group consists of 5 to 10 members, some groups have up to 12 members. The agenda at these meetings is determined by the teachers. Most of the time their agenda are dominated by assignment tasks people find difficult to understand, sharing of classroom problems, helping each other in lesson planning and media production. The minutes of meetings, consisting of a topic of discussion, names of people present are recorded and kept in the personal files of each member. These files are handed to the coordinators at the end of each year as part of the overall assessment.

Did the trainees find the study-groups to be useful setting for discussing professional concerns with their colleagues? Most of them said they do. In fact the majority reported that the cluster or self-study groups were useful setting for discussing professional tasks and daily classroom problems with their colleagues. They indicated that their participation in these groups helped them change some of their established teaching processes. The teachers learn from their peers and are likely to be influenced by other teachers. As one teacher noted at the end of their group meeting:

I am always motivated to try different things when coming from these groups.

The increased frequency of discussions with colleagues, especially about ideas with a greatest potential for success with their students, seem to help teachers overcome isolation:

Networking is important. Developing support systems, both personal and professional. Without that super club, I would not made it through the year.

The groups seem to have created an atmosphere of sharing and joint work. This experience allows participants to dismantle some barriers constructed behind their closed classroom doors. Some of their written comments included:

It is always beneficial to hear my colleagues' opinions and Teachers need this type of forum to talk, share ideas, and acquire new ideas and philosophies.

The trainees also reported that after participation in study groups they would be more likely to seek help from other teachers in their groups when they encountering professional problems.

Working in our Study Group has been very exciting ... our discussions sometimes go on till very late. Our group is wonderful...We help each other and last time they helped me produce some teaching aids for my class.

A large majority of the teachers in this study found study groups to be a very positive experience.

Another process that also seems to work well with teachers is the classroom observation done by other teachers in and outside the program. Classroom observation in the program are done according to the 2 + 2 Model. This Model was designed in a workshop attended by a group of BETD facilitators. It is based on the principles of positive feedback. The 2 + 2 Model encourages peer observation and is described as:

...a concept of classroom observation that focuses on the power of feedback, discussion and the importance of perspective and collaboration in the improvement of instruction (BETD Curriculum Materials, 1994).

In 2 + 2 observations the observer, trained or untrained, is asked to observe a classroom as long as necessary to identify two important compliments and two suggestions for improvement. The concept limits the feedback to two of each because it helps to focus both teacher and observer on what the observer considers to be most important. (BETD Broad Curriculum, 1994).

Teachers, I talked to, like the concept because it is simple. They like the idea of being observed by their peers either teachers in the program or qualified teachers at their schools. Many indicated that some of their colleagues are giving them support and encouragement as the following teacher pointed out:

I do not have any problem in obtaining assistance from any teacher. Perhaps, it is because of my personality. I like going to people and ask them. At our school the assistance we get is quite enough. But at other schools, as some of my colleagues in our study group reported, are unwilling to assist them. Some are willing to assist but do not understand the program. At my school I get all the assistance I need. My qualified colleagues who teach the same subject have provided me with assistance several times. I always asked them to observe and complete my observation form. So far, nobody had refused to do it.

Teachers appreciate compliments and suggestions for improvement from their colleagues. However, most teachers are receiving little support from their principals.

Some school principals refused to give teachers permission to attend study-group meetings. Many principals are reluctant to do classroom observations. Some principals are unhappy because after completion the teachers are likely to be placed in a higher category than the principals are at. They are concerned that upon completion these teachers may replace them.

The school principals were not the only ones required to provide support to the teachers in the program. The inspectors of education, teacher educators and advisory teachers were also required to supervise and visit teachers in their classes. Most of the teachers told me that they had never been visited by any one of the three groups. One teacher educator illustrated the problem in this way:

This year they have to be observed in the field by the advisory teachers and school principals. We, the lecturers cannot observe them in the field...we have our own full-time work to attend to. Last year nobody observed them. For us, it was difficult to observe them. They are at many different schools. Last year the budget was not even there. Even at regions where they were observed people later dropped out because they had to use their own transport and were not properly reimbursed.

Most teacher educators indicated to me that because of their work load they do not have time to carry out all the envisaged activities of the program. As the following teacher educator clearly pointed out:

I think theoretically you can ask somebody to achieve but not in this situation under which we are operating. We as lecturer are expected to give individual attention, mark and remark students work and do classroom observation. Its hard and impossible to do all these under the circumstances we are operating. In theory it sounds good, but it's difficult to carry out in practice....When teaching a class of more than 30 students how can you expect me to help the students when I do not even know the names of some students. To do that with more than two hundred students in the program is a problem...unless they employ many teacher educators. We do not have time for providing supportive assistance .... One can say that we are not ready for this type of assessment. We are not trained for it.

These remarks underline the need for more trained personnel. However, to provide effective support to the trainees, the program needs to have more personnel employed on a full-time basis. These tasks are too demanding and too many to be left to the overloaded teacher educators.

The remarks also indicate a lack of administrative support and commitment regarding supervision in the program. All of us like support and encouragement in our work. But in teaching, where extrinsic rewards are minimal and intrinsic rewards short lived, a sympathetic cheering squad and a principal's kindly word may be essential. According to Lortie (1977) teaching is a flat profession where the real world rewards for professionals e.g. money, status, and opportunities for advancement, are very low.

Administrative commitment and support are vital for success. Teachers have to know that administrators value the process and take it seriously before they commit

to it. On the other hand, it is not very clear who is responsible for providing classroom supervision in the program. Statements by the coordinators that classroom supervision is going to be provided by all teacher educators, all advisory teachers, school principals and inspectors are not very helpful. It might also be optimistic that good classroom supervision can be provided to all the teachers in the program when there is not adequate staff to run the program.

### **Effects of the BETD Program on teachers.**

Does the training given to teachers help them acquire the necessary theoretical knowledge and teaching skill to be more effective in the classroom? To what extent do the teachers feel helped by the BETD program? What are the frustrations the teachers experience with the program? What are their suggestions for improvement?

It is too early to know clearly the effects the program will have on the majority of teachers. In this section I described what most of the teachers told me about their experiences in the program so far.

It is difficult to attribute all the positive and negative experiences of teachers to a single factor such as their participation in the BETD program. Teachers learn and acquire experiences in many different ways. Some experiences have more impact than others. Experiences such as the professional support by sharing experiences with peers and tutors may have a bigger impact on teacher behaviors than a high score in the assignment. An increase in competence and job satisfaction have

probably more impact than the explicit teaching and learning of appropriate attitudes from the program.

Teachers who participated in the BETD program expressed that they had acquired new skills in using the learner centered methodologies. Some indicated that they have changed their approaches in dealing with learners:

...Before I joined BETD, I thought kids who fail to give proper answers were stupid and dumb. But now I try to study the child and his environment and factors in their home environment that may prevent them from learning. Some children have big problems at home. I have children in my class who go to sell tombo at home. The parents do not even care about them drinking, because some of these parents are alcoholics themselves.... I came to know all the children in my class. Like some children in my class had eye problems...The program also helps me understand my own children at home.

Another teacher remarked:

I have learned to observe and understand children. I have noticed that as a teacher I can also learn a lot from small children. Children give some new ideas...ideas I never thought before. I have realized a change in my relationship with them. Kids used to be very scared of me. But now the relationship has dramatically changed....I think the methods of coming nearer to them makes them feel comfortable and see me as a friend. Normally I group them to do some tasks in groups. But I noticed as I go around sitting with them in their groups some kids want just to touch me. They just feel good by touching me....There is a lot of improvement and progress in kids work.

The program made teachers aware of the different social roles they have both inside and outside the classroom. The program prepare teachers for "many different roles". It makes them aware of the need to have close relationships with students, other teachers, parents and the larger community. Some seem to have developed the necessary perceptive and analytical attitudes that helped them understand the needs of children in their classes. The recognition and

understanding of differences among learners and the actions teacher take are very important changes.

The program encourages teachers to use remedial teaching and group methods. Many teachers indicated that they were trying out those new methods. They noted that methods such as group work helped them understand and learn from their kids. Kids learn from each other, " kids love to associate with their friends," one teacher put it.

Some teachers were quick to point out the practical realities in most of the classroom not addressed in the program. Realities such as the overcrowding problem and insufficient learning materials were commended on by the teachers. They pointed out that they have classes with 50 to 70 children in one room. Very few methods, advocated in the program, help those teachers deal with such large classes. As one teacher noted "effective teaching is very difficult in a class of 56 children."

Methods advocated in the program need to take cognizance of the practical realities of the teaching environment. The methods need to start from and fit those realities.

Despite problems, the program seems to have created conducive environment that enables teachers to share and exchange ideas regarding various methods and teaching aids for their classes.

Another area where teachers feel helped by the program was the production of various teaching aids. At the few schools I visited, teachers showed me pictures, drawings and various artifacts they designed and produced for use in their classrooms. Some teachers talked about cultural activities and instruments such as games and musical instruments they constructed. Some have learned to use new equipment:

In the last assignment we were required to measure the current temperature. We were provided with thermometers. At our school we are lucky. We received many equipment from the Instant Project. Most equipment for teaching Physical Science and Life Science we have them. Now, I know how to use most of them because of the training I received here. In the assignments we are required to use those equipment. The program encourages us to use various teaching aids with students.

Both teachers and teacher educators considered the design and production of their own teaching aids as one of the most important learning aspect for them.

One teacher educator put it this way:

This program encourages student (teacher trainees) production. Apart from relying on the resources that are already available they have to be trained to produce new resources and booklets for their own use....There is a big change...Compared to the students we had in the ECP program these students have developed different attitude...they are more reflective and analytical of what they do in their classrooms. They are trying out many of these ideas...They are really trying to do their best, and I come to appreciate this way of teaching.

Besides producing materials for their classes the program encouraged some teachers to be creative in generating their own ideas. In the words of teacher educators trainee teachers in the inservice program "are eager to know and learn" than students in the preservice program. Many factors make them more motivated than the preservice students. Factors like:

not having the same resources as the preservice teachers, not having enough time, having many responsibilities such as children as many are married people

with young children, and having a lot of school work. Besides all their responsibilities they try and always come up with interesting responses to problems in their assignments. They work hard. The problem is only that their academic development level is very low.

Most teacher educators mentioned that some students are experiencing difficulties in grasping new concepts in courses like mathematics and Science:

Most of the students lack the necessary background in mathematics. Their language is very poor. Most students do not know what a square meter is. To catch up they need more time than provided in the curriculum. Math needs time. Weak teachers need time to process the new concepts.

I noticed when observing in the contact classes that most class discussions were dominated by male teachers. Many comments made by the teacher educators gave an impression that most of the female teachers were experiencing difficulties in understanding the tasks and assignments handed out to them. The old female teachers find it difficult to articulate their own thoughts on any phenomena or concept being addressed in a class or in the assignment because of the level of English in the program.

But teachers' feelings regarding the use of English language in the program was mixed. Some teachers indicated that the program has given them a renewed confidence in expressing their views in English 'without any shyness'. The following teacher reports some improvements while at the same time pointing out some difficulties:

The first time in the BETD class I was afraid to speak ... We have been used to Afrikaans for many years. To use English the whole time was new to me...In discussions I have noticed that I have improved my English skills. But when listening to lecturers in some classes I'm lost.

The following teacher has adopted a different approach of encouraging and motivating his learners to become proficient in English:

In my class learners are sitting in groups. Students are always actively participating and I require them to speak English. They actively participate in class discussions. I do not talk to them in Oshiwambo. They are used to be talked to in English. I also give them rewards to motivate them to do better next time. Sometimes I made them leaders in the class because of their performance that day. They feel very good about that.

The following teacher is concerned that some of his or her colleagues are experiencing problems:

The program has helped us to be confident in using English language in the classroom. In cases where the child does not understand, the program encourages us to use pictures and drawings instead of explaining in Oshiwambo. However, there are some of our colleagues in the program experiencing problems with English. One always notices when Mr. Amposa comes in to make announcements, after he left you find people asking what was said. There are older people who were educated in Afrikaans. They do not understand many English words.

This point came up repeatedly when talking to teachers and from written comments in the questionnaire. Many teachers indicated difficulties with the language used by some teacher educators and found in some study materials:

We are all teachers in this program. A teacher educator may always think that these people are teachers, without properly examining the level and standard of the people, she or he teaches. There are teachers in the program who teach lower grades. Some are only teaching in Oshiwambo. Some are teaching basic English to grades one's and two's. These teachers are unable to understand various English concepts. Many teacher educators forget that we are at different levels in this program.

Another teacher put it this way:

Many of us read these modules without any understanding. Some people just read the words without knowing what they mean...And if they read and just go home to do the assignment from the same

book, they will not benefit from attending classes.

Teachers teaching in the lower grades represent the majority of the teachers in the program. The risk of neglecting those teachers is potentially a problem for the program. The situation must be avoided where teachers who have little skills in English might feel shy and embarrassed to show their struggle to learn in front of other more advantaged teachers in the same program.

Since English has assumed much importance both in terms of period allocation and in practice, as reflected in the materials and classes, its use needs reexamination. The use of English is often explained by its role as the country's adopted official language. However, the educational policy requires teachers teaching grades 1-3 to teach in their mother tongue. Since the majority of the teachers in the program are not using English in their classrooms, the importance and prominence accorded to English in the program seems unwarranted.

The duration of the program attracted many complaints from many of the teachers. The teachers indicated that the six years required to complete the program is too long. They feel the program must be shortened. A standard program of six years is simply too long. The program requires too much of the teachers time. Most of the teachers have families, a full teaching load, a family to look after and various social and church obligations. On top of all of this they are giving up much of their free time to studying.

Some teachers and teacher educators expressed concerned about opportunities for further studies. They reported that there is nothing written down in the BETD

program that gives clarity regarding opportunities for further education at the University of Namibia. Since Unam is required to accredit the BETD, some teacher educators feel that there is a need for the BETD program to affiliate to the Faculty of Education at Unam.

## **Recommendations**

From the beginning this study was designed to learn about the experiences of teachers in the BETD inservice program. It was also to investigate how a distance education mode of delivery can be generally used to help improve teaching. Since the study was conducted in only two educational regions its results may not be applicable to other regions. What works well for teachers in Ondangwa may not have the same results in Keetmanshoop region. The suggestions made by teachers in Ondangwa may not apply in all five other regions. Given the fact that the same program is implemented in all regions and all regions face similar problems, it is likely that most, if not all, recommendations made in the study will find applications beyond the two regions' borders.

If the goals of education in Namibia are to be achieved priorities need to be given to the training and retraining of teachers. Following are ten recommendations I wish to make from my study. These recommendations come from my interviews and discussions with teacher trainees. Most of the recommendations are contained in the text.

***1. Additional Coordinators and Management Staff*** - *More coordinators and management staff need to be hired for the BETD administration at all levels.*

Looking at the resources allocated to the BETD program in the two regions I studied, it became clear that more human resources need to be allocated to the program. I recognized that two coordinators are not enough to effectively run the program in the two regions. More coordinator and management staff need to be recruited. Expatriates have been exclusively running the program at the national and the regional level, this is unacceptable. More people from the region should be recruited to organize and run the program. Once additional personnel are recruited, consideration must be given to their career development and advancement. There is a danger that considerable potential of the program to contribute to an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in schools, will be lost, if proper allocation of resources is not in place soon.

**2. Development of Personnel** - *Existing personnel at regional level need more systematic and extensive training.* There is a need for the BETD program to have an adopted policy and plan for development of regional coordinators, teacher educators, advisory teachers, school principals and school inspectors. The first and immediate priority should be given to the development of teacher educators and advisory teachers. The teacher educators have indicated the need for training in learner-centered education methodologies, evaluation, and assessment techniques encouraged in the program.

Since the majority of teacher educators are from Ongwediva College of Education (OCE) the suggestions made in OCE Report (1994) that staff development programs at OCE should emphasize training and experience in lower grades both practically and theoretically are valid. One way to do this will be to

compel all college lecturers to visit schools and forge close cooperation with associate schools.

According to OCE Report (1994) it is important that lecturers take seriously their own research into new developments in primary and junior secondary education and follow inservice training going on in new approaches and curricula, for example the Molteno Project in initial reading and writing at lower primary level, and the new Grade 4 mathematics syllabus. These could be areas of staff research or even student studies with staff support, along with research into how new approaches and curricula affect school teaching.

**3. Clear Policy on Classroom Observation** - *There is a need for a clear policy on who should do classroom observation.* There is a need for a firm policy on the support role of advisory teachers and school inspectors in the program. It is not clear who, between the school inspectors and advisory teachers, should do classroom observation in the program. School inspectors are administrators. Using them to provide support and observe teachers in the classroom can have both advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is that they are familiar with the situation and the context. Perhaps they know the teachers in their circuits personally. The main disadvantage is that most of the school inspectors have been long out of schools. As a result they have lost touch with the workings of the classroom. Advisory teachers, on the other hand, are professionally trained in a specific subject. They are likely to do a better job and may be more useful to provide support in the classroom than school inspectors. However, it must be

stressed at this stage that it is not an easy task for the BETD coordinators to develop a fully coordinated program for advisory teachers.

**4. Orientation Program** - *A compulsory orientation course for new personnel need to be designed.* It is desirable to have an induction course for all new teacher educators and advisory teachers. Such a course would help them to know the basic organizational and administrative procedures. It would also address the issues of how to work with adults and educate the teacher educators on how to approach schools, procedures and protocols.

If long-term effects of the program are to be worthwhile, strong support and follow-up in the classroom is needed. There is a need to sequence and coordinate participation in inservice activities by advisory teachers and school principals with the regional education offices. The impact of the program should be spread and be embedded across several staff in the school.

**5. Contact and Communication with Schools** - *Closer contact with schools need to be established.* Regional coordinators must make regular and greater efforts to maintain contacts and communication with study groups, subject head teachers and principals. School principals must be provided with training and given more responsibility for supervising the teachers. Coordinators must also analyze the information from the teachers, so as to plan and take action more effectively.

**6. Develop a Handbook** - *A handbook for all personnel involved in the BETD program needs to be written.*

To enable the work of the program to be efficiently and effectively carried out there is a need for a manual or handbook detailing the work to be performed by each person. This manual should provide all the administrative procedures in an easily usable format and should be regularly revised. People involved in the program should be provided with administrative detail to avoid having to constantly refer to the center.

**7. Support Groups** - *Collaboration and Communication among participants in the program needs to be increased.* An Educator Support Group, similar to the trainee study groups, should be developed to provide a forum for regional coordinators, teacher educators, advisory teachers, to meet, discuss, and exchange ideas on matters of interest and concern.

The self-initiated teacher trainee study groups seem to work well with the teachers. They provide opportunities for teachers to share their experiences and expertise. Such opportunities have increased communication and cooperation among teachers. However, the idea needs to be carefully studied and supported by the program coordinators. Links could be established with each group. Groups could then be encouraged to invite coordinators, teacher educators and advisory teachers for visits. The whole idea could be extended to provide a frequent communication network with teachers by the program coordinators. By maintaining continuous contacts the distance between the program coordinators and teachers will be minimized.

**8. Shorten the Length of Inservice Training** - *The duration of the program needs to be shortened and training need to improve on-the-job performance.* The six years required to complete the program are too many. The teachers involved in the program are complaining that they are required to give up too much of their time. The program needs to focus on the practical classroom realities of the teachers and less on theory. Activities and methodologies encouraged in the program need to incorporate activities that encourage the teachers to apply the concepts to real- life situation. One way to this might be to identify qualified teachers, at each school where there is a BETD trainee teacher, to share in the responsibilities for classroom observation and supervision. These teachers can serve as on-site coordinators for the program. They should be asked to help the trainees to apply their new skills to their day-to-day work situations.

**9. Reviewing of Training Materials** - *The level of English in some materials need to be reviewed. The prominence of English in the program needs to be reconsidered.* The materials that teachers and teacher educators are unable to understand and use, need urgent and systematic review. Since many teachers seem to have problems with understanding English, provision should be made to use the local languages. One way to do this can be by requiring teachers teaching in the lower grades to use their mother tongue in completing program tasks and assignments. Requiring teachers to do their work in English does not make sense if teachers are not using English in their classes. Another possibility that needs to be seriously looked at is the translation of some materials into the local languages. Teachers should be requested to help in translating various aspects of the materials at their study groups. In this way teachers will be allowed a voice in the development of

materials. To feel a sense of personal responsibility teachers in the program should be encouraged to write and produce materials about their work in their local languages.

**10. Partnership Development** - *There is a need of networking and mobilization for support.* There is a need to develop national and regional partnerships between the BETD program and the University of Namibia. This partnerships can also be extended to other agencies such as Namibia College of Open Learning (Namcol), Teacher Unions and to various NGO's. Closer partnership between and within the regions is needed. These links are not only needed to make it easier to reach all teachers at their various schools, but also to maintain functional linkages between the BETD program and other educational activities. The BETD staff at the regional level need to become more actively involved in encouraging support for the program among regional and local leaders, school principals and teachers outside the program.

Additional suggestions for improvement of the program in the teachers own words were:

1. The leaders of the schools and circuits should be motivated to implement this program continuously, not only some times.  
Train principals how to provide us with support, how to do classroom observation and remind them to do it on time.
2. The money we pay should be paid in two or three installments instead of cash at once.
3. The money we pay for each course is too much it should be reduced because the materials are bad.
4. We are experiencing problems in consulting lecturers after the contact sessions.
5. New training centers for contact sessions must be opened to cut long distances.
6. Some teacher educators do not come for their classes. They must be reminded of their duties.
7. English Communication as a subject is not effective.

8. The program helped me about my teaching but it must increase learner involvement.
9. Some of our assignments get lost. Improve the systems to avoid this to happen again. Assignments must have different due dates.
10. Enroll many unqualified teachers who are still teaching at schools or design courses for them.
11. The program can organize workshops to concentrate on specific subjects. Some subjects like Natural Science and Social Studies are new to us. Most of us do not know how we can teach these subjects.
12. One area that need improvement is specialization in Human Science Movement (HSM). There are teachers who want to specialize in this subject. Give them opportunity to do so. Apart from that the BETD program is an excellent program in this country. Viva BETD!

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion that can be made from this study is that training presented through distance education can give unqualified teachers in rural communities access to training where more conventional forms of training are not available to them. The BETD inservice program has an important role to play in upgrading the current backlog of untrained teachers in Namibia. However, teachers must take a very active part in planning and delivering their inservice training. It is clear that for effective teacher upgrading, distance education programs should not be too distant. They require support and group learning systems that are linked with schools and focused on day-to-day school problems. To be most effective they also need to provide practical training and tutorial visits that actually upgrade the teachers' classroom teaching skills.

So far the BETD program has given the unqualified teachers a wide range of training experiences that seem well suited to their needs. However, the success of these efforts will depend largely on well functioning support systems and partnership in which both the stake holders share the responsibilities for the training.

There are no better words to conclude this study than to quote the opening remarks made by the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education at the national seminar of the review of the BETD program in January 1996 at Okahandja:

During this week you will have to look at the BETD program in a holistic way if you want to bring about more than cosmetic changes. The key themes in successful improvement and consolidation efforts are: vision-building, evolutionary planning and development, initiative-taking and empowerment, staff development and resource assistance, monitoring/problem-coping, and altering the organizational arrangements and roles.

These six themes feed into each other. All are required for substantial change and improvement to occur.

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8. What motivated you to participate in the BETD inservice program?  
Oshike sheku twa omukumo opo wuuye moBETD?

9. In which areas has the program helped you cope with your work?  
Omo inima ilipipo wa vatelwa koprograma ei moilonga yoye?

10. How much of a difference (if any) has participating in the program had on your student's school work?  
Okukala kwoye moprograma okwa eta elunduluko lifike peni momikalo nomeenghedi dovahongwa voye?

11. Please rate the extent to which your involvement with the program has affected the following:

Tonga kutya okukala moprograma okwanwefamo ngahelipi ei tai landula:

	None Kapena	Some Kanini	A great Deal Unene
a) Increased my understanding of children Okwa eta nge opo ndi udeko nawa ounona	1	2	3
b) Improved my language skills Elunduluko mokushiiva elaka	1	2	3
c) Changed my perceptions about my students' learning abilities. Okwa eta elunduluko mokuvatela ounona	1	2	3
d) Changed my instructional methods Okwa lundulula omukalo wange wokuhonga	1	2	3

In what way(s) has it been affected.

Oinima ei oya lundululwa ngahelipi.

a)

b)

c)

d)

12. Describe the kind of support you receive from the following people:

Hokolola omavatelo ho mono kwaava tava shikula apa:

a) The program coordinators

Ovawiliki voprograma

b) Teacher educators  
Ovahongi moprograma

c) Your school principal  
Omukulunhu-fikola woye

d) Other teachers  
Ovahongi vakweni

13. Write What you like and do not like about the BETD program?  
Shanga eshi u hole naashi u yeke moprograma yoBETD?

15. What are your suggestions for improvement in the program?  
Yandya kutya oprograma oina okukala ngahelipi opo ivatele nawa  
ovahongi?

