

# Voices of divergence: resistance, contestation and the shaping of Namibia's teacher education, 1990-2010

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*This paper reports on an aspect of a broader study that investigated teacher educators' uptake of learner-centred pedagogy in post-apartheid Namibia. The paper shares part of the study that illuminated the path traversed by Namibian teacher education policy from 1990 to 2010, two decades into the country's post-apartheid self-rule. It argues that, far from being smooth sailing, teacher education reform in post-apartheid Namibia has been characterised by severe turbulence with divergent forces wrestling over the philosophical and epistemological orientations of the new teacher education. The paper concludes that these forces, voices of divergence, criticisms, resistance or contestations were a significant feature that helped define and shape post-1990 teacher education for basic education to its present-day state.*

**Keywords:** Teacher education reform, official pedagogic discourse, recontextualisation, resistance, contestation.

## Background

With the cessation of the liberation struggle in late 1989, and the subsequent transition to self-rule on 21 March 1990, teacher education became a high priority on the agenda of the newly elected political leadership in post-apartheid Namibia. Colonial teacher education was not only seen to be antithetical to the new political ethos of social justice and democracy, but its programmes also tended to privilege

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academic content learning at the expense of teacher professionalisation (Swarts, 1999). Swarts (1999:31) contends that colonial teacher education programmes had a tendency to concentrate too much on academic knowledge while devoting insufficient time to professional issues related to teaching as students were prepared superficially for the day-to-day management of classrooms and the running of schools. A major teacher education reform was thus declared, resulting in teacher education becoming a site of struggle, contestation and conflict in which oppositional discourses wrestled over the ideological and epistemological orientations of the new teacher education programmes.

This paper forms part of a broader study that investigated teacher educators' uptake of learner-centred pedagogy in post-apartheid Namibia (Nyambe, 2008). In particular, the paper shares part of the study that illuminated the path traversed by Namibian teacher education policy from 1990 to 2010, two decades of Namibia's post-apartheid self-rule. The paper maps out the reform landscape, illuminating the major forces that were at play, as well as the tensions, conflicts, struggles and oppositions that shaped the whole reform process. Following the broader study, the paper draws on Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse (1990, 1996, 2000) to provide a theoretical lens for generating the insights necessary to understand the tensions, struggles and ideological contestations associated with teacher education in Namibia from 1990 to 2010.

## **Theoretical framework**

The premise of our argument is that Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, in particular his model of the pedagogic field and ideas about the process associated with the movement of pedagogic discourse through the field, affords us a theoretical vantage point from which to analyse and make sense of the contestations and struggles that characterised the first two decades of teacher education in Namibia post-1990 (Nyambe & Wilmot, 2012). By using the external lens provided by Bernstein and by writing from a position of hindsight, we provide evidence of how we have been able to gain insights into a teacher education reform process in a specific context.

According to Bernstein, the movement of pedagogic discourse through the pedagogic field (which consists of three fields: the field of production, the field of recontextualisation and the field of reproduction), is a social and dynamic process which is not neutral. He asserts that 'the primary discourse undergoes ideological transformation according to the specialized interests of the various positions in the recontextualising field' (Bernstein, 1996:116). The original discourse is appropriated, delocated and transformed in the field of recontextualisation before being relocated for further transformation in the field of reproduction. Bernstein's (1990) explanation of how official discourse such as policy is received, selectively appropriated, transformed and interpreted for use in a new context, is pertinent to understanding the movement of teacher education policy in Namibia. Of significance to the research reported in this paper, is Bernstein's distinction between two subfields within the

recontextualisation field, namely the *official recontextualising field* (ORF) and the *pedagogic recontextualising field* (PRF). According to Bernstein (1996:118), 'the ORF is created and controlled by the State for the construction and surveillance of state pedagogic discourse'. The ORF consists of officials from various state pedagogic agencies, consultants from the education system, specialised departments and local education authorities (Tan, 2010).

Wilmot (2005:247) observes that 'working alongside the agents and agencies in the ORF, and performing similar functions, often in unproductive tension due to different ideological positions, are the "non-state" agents and agencies who share membership of the PRF'. The PRF is a field in which different discourses (with their associated texts), all of which stand as a reservoir for potential recontextualisation, circulate to form pedagogic discourse. These texts include textbooks, research articles and education advocacy documents produced by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The PRF consists of agents and agencies drawn from various non-state subfields, for example, university education departments, teacher training colleges, polytechnic departments of education, and publishing houses (Tan, 2010).

Bernstein (1990:61) argues that 'it is the recontextualizing field which generates the positions and oppositions of pedagogic theory, research and practice'. The existence of different agents and agencies in both the ORF and the PRF means that different micro-processes of appropriation and transformation are taking place at the same time and in parallel. Bernstein (1996:118) explains that 'both fields may well have a range of ideological pedagogical positions which struggle for control of the field. And these positions in the ORF and PRF may well be opposed to each other'.

Bernstein (1990) illuminates the tensions further by using the concept of classification (C). Classification refers to power relations and is concerned with the degree of insulation or boundary maintenance or demarcation between agents and agencies. Depending on the degree of insulation, classification can either be weak (C) or strong (C<sup>+</sup>). Nyambe and Wilmot (2012:57) observed that strong classification (C<sup>+</sup>) leads to strong insulation between the various agents, discourses and practices and highly specialised identities and voices coupled with little interchange between the various categories, agents or discourses. Weak classification (C), on the other hand, signifies weak insulation between the various categories, agents and discourses, with less specialised identities and a high level of interaction between the various categories.

The tensions and conflicts are more severe when there is strong insulation between the ORF and the PRF, particularly when the PRF has a certain degree of autonomy over the construction of pedagogic discourses and practices.

Bernstein's ideas and concepts, when considered in relation to the teacher education reform process in Namibia, provided us with a theoretical framework and

descriptive language with which to discuss the specific happenings in Namibia in a more abstract and generalised way.

The following section maps out the post-1990 teacher education reform landscape in Namibia. It illuminates the major forces and ideological interests that were at play, and the contestations and tensions that these gave rise to as the official pedagogic discourse of teacher education reform was being received and interpreted for use by agents and agencies located both within the ORF and between the ORF and the PRF.

## **The National Institute for Educational Development**

Created in 1990, and charged with the responsibility to spearhead the post-apartheid educational reforms, the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) was the most powerful epistemological force shaping the post-1990 reform process. In particular, the Division: Professional Development and Research was charged with executing NIED's mandate of innovating, guiding, coordinating and directing teacher education reform for basic education (teachers of Grades 1 to 10).

Serving as a state agency operating in the ORF, NIED was the overseer of pre-service and in-service teacher education for basic education. It supervised and coordinated the design, development and implementation of teacher education reform at the former colleges of education in Namibia. In the same vein, it also exercised oversight over the 34 teacher resource centres (TRCs) country-wide that served as delivery centres for in-service teacher education.

Cohen (1994), Swarts (1999) and Angula (1999) emphasise yet another dimension to NIED's role in the reform process: to ensure the translation and enactment of the ideological values embedded in various exile education programmes. According to Angula (1999:15), education activities that were offered in exile by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) 'provided the model or basis' upon which post-apartheid education reform would be based. Inclusive of formal and non-formal education programmes, and ranging from primary education to teacher education and other forms of tertiary education, the exile education programmes were thoroughly imbued with the SWAPO liberation ideology of solidarity, freedom and social justice. In terms of policies and practice, both in relation to teacher education and classroom teaching, the liberation ideology gave rise to specific ontological, epistemological and pedagogical orientations that were generally communicated through discourses such as 'social constructivism, student-centredness or learner-centred education, critical and transformative pedagogy, democratic education, conceptual learning, integration of knowledge, meaning making and reflective practice' (Dahlstrom, 1999:7). Thus, championed by NIED, the Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) programme was, by and large, a translation of the philosophical and ideological values of exile programmes.

As the agency responsible for the 'construction and surveillance' of state pedagogic discourse, NIED successfully established itself as the heart-centre, the focal point

and the 'epistemological guardian' to which teacher educators at the former colleges turned for new ideas, initiatives and professional guidance. Though initially NIED was to make recommendations to the Task Force for pre-service teacher education, with whom the powers and authority for policy decision-making under the chair of the Minister of Education were vested, the Task Force slowly died away with its role and functions gradually being taken over by NIED through its Curriculum Coordinating Group (CCG). This power shift from the Task Force to the CCG further consolidated NIED's authority as a significant force in the post-1990 teacher education reform. With the Task Force disappearing from the scene, the CCG, chaired by the NIED Director, became the only professional body at the national level dealing with issues related to teacher education and the sole official body for policy interpretation in teacher education (Dahlstrom, 2002). This meant that NIED had the leverage to make decisions over the reform process without necessarily referring them to another level higher up in the hierarchy.

Further to this was the restoration of the political dimension to the curriculum policy decision-making process with the crafting of the Teachers' Education Colleges Act in 2003 (Namibia, 2003) under the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP). The new Act brought in new structures and new relationships in the teacher education reform process. Under this Act, an Advisory Council on Teacher Education and Training (ACTET) was established to advise the Minister on policy issues pertaining to teacher education. With the ACTET taking over its roles and responsibilities, the CCG disappeared from the national teacher education reform landscape. With the disappearance of the CCG, NIED's decision-making powers waned seeing that it now had to participate in the ACTET on an equal basis alongside the other agencies. However, due to subsequent reforms in teacher education, the lifespan of the ACTET was short with it disappearing, without any ceremony, from the scene in approximately 2010.

The death of the political influence (as seen in the dying away of the Task Force), its resurrection through the ACTET, and the subsequent removal of NIED's CCG from the scene, signified a subtle but ongoing contestation between the political force (represented by the Ministry of Education) and NIED over the control of the epistemological domain. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that, while the Ministry of Education had political clout in terms of policy formulation, qualification structures, administration and management, epistemological power was vested with NIED as it exerted the most influence on pedagogy and curriculum orientation, i.e. it was the most powerful epistemological force shaping the context of the reform.

## **Foreign agencies and donor projects in the post-1990 teacher education reforms**

Despite a body of literature (Altbach, 1977; Berman, 1979; Ngugi, 1981; Hancock, 1989; Sikwibele, 1996; Tabulwa, 2003) demonstrating the negative impact of donor agencies in educational reform in developing countries, the post-1990 teacher

education reform in Namibia was dominated by donor projects, particularly in its early stages. Generally treated as 'experts' by their Namibian counterparts, despite their official title as volunteers (Dahlstrom, 2002:146), foreign project staff members commanded significant control over the intellectual and professional lives of Namibian educators.

Until it was officially phased out in December 2000, the Teacher Education Reform Project (TERP) from Umea University, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), was the main foreign actor exercising significant influence over the conception and implementation of the post-1990 teacher education reform for basic education. Not only was it the TERP project that produced the first steering documents (such as the concept paper for the reform, the Draft Broad Curriculum, and the draft syllabus documents for the reform programme), but it was also the TERP project that established 'special' libraries (commonly known as Education Development Units – EDUs) in addition to existing libraries at the colleges to render professional development for teacher educators. In this way, the TERP project was a significant force in shaping teacher educators' intellectual and professional lives, and the teacher education reform in general. The TERP project worked closely with NIED within the ORF to shape teacher educators' understanding and practice of learner-centred education that underpinned the post-1990 teacher education reform.

The TERP influence stretched even further in the reform facilitators who were hired by TERP from Umea University in Sweden and from other universities in Europe. Though the TERP headquarter was at NIED, reform facilitators were stationed at the colleges to provide guidance and mentorship to teacher educators and to ensure that the BETD programme, and the entire reform, was being implemented as intended. While these reform facilitators were easily accessible to teacher educators, their placement at the colleges signified the extent of penetration of the TERP influence into the intellectual and professional life of the post-1990 teacher education for basic education. On the ground at the colleges, reform facilitators mentored and supervised teacher educators on the TERP professional development programmes such as the B-Level Course, Higher Diploma in Teacher Education and the Master's Programme in Teacher Education – all issued under Umea University. In addition, reform facilitators provided general guidance on organisational and college management issues, making the TERP influence college-wide. Reform facilitators also served on college management teams.

Also worth noting is that the TERP project was a continuation of the Swedish technical and professional support that was being rendered to the SWAPO teacher education activities in exile. Thus, while in exile, the Swedish technical staff assisted with the setting up of a teachers' magazine, *The Frontline Teacher*, a quarterly magazine that was published by the Integrated Teacher Training (ITTP) programme. TERP, in post-1990 Namibia, supported the establishment of a mirror-version, namely the *Reform Forum*, which has been published by NIED since the early 1990s.

In addition to TERP, other donor projects that shaped the post-1990 reform of teacher education included the English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFES), USAID and the Namibia Association of Norway (NAMAS). While some of these projects kept a low profile, others – notably the ELTDP and the NAMAS projects – tended to be as prominent as the TERP project. Though focused on the development of the teaching of the English Language, the ELTDP mirrored many aspects of the TERP activities ranging from the placement of Reform Facilitators at the colleges, the setting up of an English Language library, and providing professional development at diploma and postgraduate level (master's) to teacher educators in the teaching of English.

The NAMAS project also placed a reform advisor at NIED, who was instrumental in driving the activities of NIED during the project term. The reform advisor shadowed the NIED Director and worked with the Director daily, rendering guidance, support and mentorship. By virtue of this positioning, the reform advisor had a powerful voice in the affairs and direction not only of teacher education reform, but also of NIED. The activities of the reform advisor ranged from organisational development issues at NIED, to teacher education curriculum development and implementation.

While no explicit tension was observed in NIED's relation with these donor projects, the projects were, however, one of the key sources to the resistance that was being received by the reform from participating institutions outside of NIED and the public in general. Although there was general consensus among the public to reform teacher education for basic education after independence, there was equally a feeling that the substance and direction of the reform was being externally imposed by some of the foreign donor projects. These tensions are elaborated in the subsequent paragraphs.

### **The University of Namibia and the post-1990 teacher education reform for basic education**

Though serving on reform structures established under NIED such as the CCG and subject panels, the University (UNAM) was perceived by NIED, as will be demonstrated below, as a hostile force in general. This perception was based on the belief that the University was ever engaged in an epistemological and ideological war over the underpinning tenets of the new teacher education reform, encapsulated as social constructivism, learner-centredness, critical and transformative pedagogy. In particular, the BETD was being criticised for being 'less academic' – that is, for teaching less subject content and placing too much emphasis on acquisition of pedagogical skills (Nyambe, 2001:74). The tensions, conflicts and contestations were particularly evident in October 1998 when the University advertised its admission requirements for BETD diplomates intending to enroll in the BEd programme:

### **Candidates must have**

1. An IGCSE certificate [International General Certificate for Secondary Education] with a pass in at least 5 subjects or equivalent qualification;
2. A minimum of an upper Credit BETD diploma certificate with subject passes at the level of a 'B' grade or better;
3. A minimum of three (3) years teaching experience after successfully completing the BETD. (NIED, 1998)

The advertisement was not well received by NIED who interpreted it to mean that the University would recognise no prior learning associated with the BETD to enable BETD holders to enter the BEd at a point other than right from the beginning of the study programme. According to NIED, the advertisement meant that the knowledge, skills and experiences acquired through the BETD would not be recognised by the University for granting credit transfer or exemption from a given number of years of study. This was further aggravated by the fact that the University appeared to be equating the BETD to a mere high school leaving certificate. Consequently, NIED charged:

*We would like to express our shock and dismay at the advertisement which appeared in today's Die Republikein and The Namibian. Since the notice does not link the requirements to the point at which BETD graduates enter, it creates the unfortunate and unjustified impression that the BETD is equivalent with a school leaving certificate and that it is in fact put on par with a school leaving certificate (IGCSE). It also seems to convey the impression that those BETD graduates who have obtained Credit or Complete would not qualify for the degree programme. This is very disappointing since it seems to negate the notion that through their experience as teachers over the three years their knowledge base, skills and attitudes have not remained static, but have further developed. (NIED, 1998)*

While these protest letters managed to yield some form of public apology from the University – 'we apologize for the inconvenience caused by our previous notice' (UNAM, 1998) – the second set of advertisements after the apology did not differ significantly from the first ones. Though the it dropped the IGCSE requirement, the second advertisement still reflected the initial stance of denying credit transfer to BETD diplomates. It still equated the BETD to a high school leaving certificate seeing that it continued to ignore the possibility that, during their three years of study in the BETD, students' knowledge, skills and attitudes could have developed. The requirement of a 'B' grade or higher meant that only exceptionally good students from the BETD would be accepted to the BEd programme. This was despite the fact that the admission requirement to the BETD was a Grade 12 or high school leaving certificate. However, it should be noted that, despite the claims made by NIED for the non-recognition of the BETD by the University, the two programmes (BETD and BEd) were significantly different in terms of focus, content and methodology. The BEd placed more emphasis on academic content, while the BETD tended to emphasise



the professional aspects of teaching. Furthermore, while the BEd prepared teachers for the secondary phase, the BETD prepared teachers for the basic education phase. In spite of the antagonism and the alleged non-recognition, BETD diplomates intending to register for the BEd programme were given exemptions by the Faculty of Education for the professional courses taken at the former colleges of education. However, exemptions were not given for content areas offered by other faculties in the University.

The foregoing discussion has illuminated the ongoing ideological screening and contestation over the epistemological orientations of official discourse (the BETD) as it was being received in the PRF by the University. The tensions and conflicts were being exacerbated by the strong insulation between the ORF and the PRF, particularly in this case, as the University had a certain degree of autonomy over the construction of pedagogic discourses and practices

In 2004, however, the University softened its stance towards the BETD and introduced a special Bachelor of Education degree for basic education to provide opportunities for BETD graduates who wished to pursue further studies.

## **Colleges of education**

Operating within the PRF, colleges of education constituted yet another significant force in the shaping of the post-1990 teacher education reform. Despite their official role as implementers of the teacher education reform, some college teacher educators harbored misgivings towards the programme they were made to implement as they resented and resisted it. NIED took note of this resistance:

*It was during the appraisal exercise that some college staff demonstrated their resistance to the BETD through overt and covert actions. The appraisal took a long time to complete, longer than it should have. The appraisal period was characterized by tension and conflict, in an attempt to regain what was deemed 'lost territory' in having compromised 'standards'. The issue of more content and the real or perceived lack of examinations came up as major issues (NIED, 2000:47).*

The tension and resistance was even more evident at the 2001 BETD Forum where most teacher educators advocated philosophical and epistemological orientations that radically opposed those of the BETD Broad Curriculum. In particular, the demands for an 'increase' in content knowledge, expressed by the participants at the Forum, were at odds with the constructivist perspective embedded in the BETD which emphasised knowledge construction and the process of learning. The demands for 'more content knowledge' expressed at the Forum assumed that 'knowledge' was an already existing object or entity which could be collected in determinant quantities. While not suggesting that there is anything wrong in demanding for more content knowledge, it is equally important that such demands be consistent, for instance, with the view of educators as 'transformative intellectuals' (Hill, 2003:45) who, apart from merely demanding more content knowledge, are capable of critically interrogating

the ideological and hegemonic interests underpinning school knowledge. The demands for more content knowledge aside, teacher educators' misgivings towards the programme were also evident in the Forum's insistence on 'strengthening formal examinations in the BETD' and the demand for 'common examinations across colleges to be introduced' (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, 2001:24). This was contrary to the programme's alternative approaches to assessment which put less emphasis on formal examinations as the sole mechanism of assessing students.

In sum, it can be concluded that teacher educators at colleges of education constituted another significant force in the shaping of teacher education reform, not only through their teaching activities and participation in curriculum panels, but also through their reservations about, criticism of, and overt resistance towards some of the underlying tenets of the programme. Being implementers at the same time, teacher educators were a potentially dangerous force because they could sabotage the reform through their reservations about the programme. The resistance meant that some teacher educators were implementing what they did not believe in. As a result, they could not be that enthusiastic about the reform.

### **The general public**

The general public in the PRF added another layer of resentment to the University and college teacher educators. 'General public,' as used here, included the ordinary public, teachers employed by the state and students at colleges. For instance, towards the end of the first decade of the post-apartheid teacher education reform in 1999, the head of state convened a presidential commission to investigate the state of education and training in the country amid the complaints that kept coming from the public regarding the poor quality of the new education system. Regarding teacher education, and the BETD in particular, the Commission noted:

*We received many criticisms of the BETD program. These came from members of the public at large, from serving teachers, and from tutors and students of the colleges of education (Government of the Republic of Namibia [GRN], 1999:135).*

The general public also criticised the reform programme for focusing too much on methodology and teaching little content, and that teacher graduates from the programme might have mastered the skills of teaching, but might not be that competent to teach as they lacked content knowledge. This was highlighted in the report as follows:

The BETD broad curriculum focuses on the methodology while neglecting the content of subjects which students are going to teach. The question arose if newly qualified teachers are then competent to teach. There is much criticism of BETD graduates by schools and the wider community that they may have mastered the skills but have poor command of subject knowledge (GRN, 2000:11).

Apart from what was shared with the presidential commission, newspapers also carried articles where the BETD was being blamed by the public for poor examination results:

*In The Namibian (March 24, 1998) poor examination results among grade ten learners in Ondangwa West Education Region were blamed on BETD graduates. The newspaper article, Teachers Blamed on Results, charged that although some teachers were in possession of the BETD Diploma certificates they did not understand English, which is the medium of instruction. This article made specific reference to Ongwediva College alleging that even during their study period at the college prospective teachers speak only Oshiwambo [a local language]. Their training is not in-depth and they struggle to teach things which they themselves do not understand properly (Nyambe, 2001:78).*

It is therefore evident that the general public played an important role in the shaping of the post-1990 teacher education through their criticism, resentment and dislike of the new system.

## **The Teacher Education Reform Plan (TERP)**

The ongoing struggles and contestations, and the attendant misgivings over the quality of the teacher education reform for basic education as outlined above, culminated in the commissioning of a consultancy 'to provide recommendations on how to improve the quality of teacher education [emphasis, mine] and to provide an implementable Teacher Education Reform Plan' [TERP] (ACTET, nd:ii). This was commissioned in 2008 by the Ministry of Education through the ACTET. The University, which had been one of the key players in the contestations over the teacher education reform, dominated the consulting team, claiming three members out of a team of five consultants. Thus, consistent with the University's position over the reform as outlined in the foregoing presentation, the recommendations of the consultancy were almost obvious:

*The Four colleges of education be merged with the Faculty of Education in the University of Namibia;*

*The new primary programme (preferably a degree) be designed to be registered at level 7 on the NQF [National Qualifications Framework];*

*Admission standards are increased....;*

*That the regulations in teacher education programmes relating to assessment and promotion be reviewed to bring them in-line with general education and tertiary education practices;*

*That in 2009 the first intake of trainees for both phases of secondary school into the B.Ed. occur.... (ACTET, nd:171-184).*

The recommendations of the consultancy brought about major changes on the Namibian teacher education landscape. The drive towards university level content teaching was realised which, as seen in the earlier criticism of the BETD by the University and the general public, was the most celebrated indicator of 'good' quality teacher education. The recommendations led to the following changes: the abolition of colleges of education and their subsequent absorption into the Faculty

of Education; the upgrading of the level of content teaching; and the phasing out of the BETD (which was seen to be teaching less academic content) which was replaced with a university Bachelor of Education degree. In addition, common examinations written across the education campuses were introduced.

Regrettably, however, this move towards university-based teacher education yielded its own problems. These included fewer students being admitted to specialisations such as Lower Primary Education due to high university admission requirements; gaps in graduating teacher cohorts due to the phasing out of the BETD under rushed circumstances that were not properly thought through; and gaps in the supply of new teachers to the field resulting in the Ministry of Education resorting to recalling retired teachers and the hiring of unqualified teachers. These and other problems initiated discussions on whether or not to re-introduce a diploma programme for teacher education and more extreme considerations including whether or not to de-merge the colleges.

The absorption of colleges of education into the University gave rise to other developments including NIED's losing its role as overseer of teacher education for basic education, because the merger meant that all teacher education was now falling under the ambit of the University. With all teacher education shifting to the University, the ACTET was no longer relevant and died off quietly despite its being the body that commissioned the consultancy which crafted the *Teacher Education Reform Plan* (TERP). This was due to the fact that being an autonomous institution, the University had its own governance structures. It is therefore concluded that the TERP constituted an important force in shaping the post-1990 teacher education in Namibia. This Plan did not only mark the culmination of the tensions and conflicts that had been going on since the inception of the reform in approximately 1990, but it also gave rise to a major turn of events in the Namibian teacher education. Though voices of discontent towards the Plan were expressed at its inception, these have, however, remained insignificant and insufficiently organised to amount to any meaningful opposition.

## Conclusion

The objective of this paper was not to analyse why certain positions or oppositions or voices of divergence were taken, or to judge which ones were appropriate. Instead, we have mapped the route taken by teacher education in the first two decades after Namibian independence, and we have described the major forces that were at play, as well as the tensions, conflicts and struggles associated with the reform process. The paper has argued that these forces and voices of resistance and contestations were significant features that helped to define and shape the post-1990 teacher education for basic education to its present-day state. By drawing on Bernstein's ideas and concepts, we have been able to take up a theoretical vantage point from which to identify and explain how different state agents and agencies worked – often in tension and opposition – within the ORF, and between the ORF and PRF, to exert

their influence and control over teacher education. Importantly, we have shown how teacher education policy formulation, interpretation and implementation form a complex, dynamic and social process.

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