

**SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMME EVALUATION IN NAMIBIA:  
TOWARD IDENTIFYING CRITERIA**

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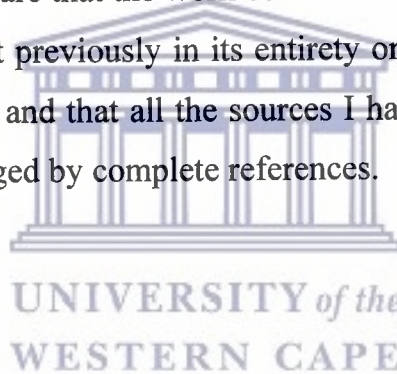


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## Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this mini-thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



Signature: .....

Date: .....

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## Chapter 1

### Second language programme evaluation for Namibia

#### 1.1 Context and rationale

At the attainment of independence by Namibia in 1990, English, which had 0,8% of the population of 1,5 million as mother tongue speakers (Brock-Utne, 2000: 186; Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas & Africa, 1986:78), became the official language of government and education. The decision to make English the official language had a clear socio-political basis: it was the result of a policy decision of the majority party, SWAPO, implemented after it had won the first national election (Chamberlain, West, Kleinhaus, Minnaar & Bock, 1993: 2). The response of the education authorities to this decision was to opt for English as the language of instruction. Since the majority of Namibian learners have an African language as their first language, the result of this choice has been that decisions involving the selection of English second language programmes and courses have gained importance.

#### 1.2 English as the language of education

Apart from other implications, the language policy for schools has meant that teachers - the most important agents in the transformation of education - were confronted with the fact that English, now the medium of instruction after the lower primary Grades 1 to 4 (Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 1993b), was not the language in which the majority of them had received training. Prior to Independence, Afrikaans was the medium of instruction for tertiary education. English now replaced Afrikaans at the Lower Primary level (i.e. from Grades 1 to 4) either as a subject or as a second language.

There is a second feature of the context that is relevant at this stage. As a result of a shift in political philosophy and style since political independence (1990), the management and organizational culture of the school environment has been marked by change. The biggest effect is visible in a different approach to teaching and learning. Top-down, hierarchical approaches to education management are being replaced at all levels by a consultative one. The choice of learning materials (formerly selected and prescribed) is being left to schools to decide upon. Teachers formerly trained in a teacher-centred teaching approach have been retrained in language teaching methods congruent with learner-centredness. A number of the effects of this shift will be evident in the later discussion of how teachers respond to innovation in language teaching (cf. Chapter 5).

In its efforts to introduce English as the medium of instruction in schools from the upper primary grades onwards, the Namibian government is assisted by English speaking countries, notably the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The government is responsible for designing curricula and syllabi for national implementation, and also has a responsibility to guide school authorities regarding the English programme or courses to be implemented in public schools.

### **1.3 Second language programmes in the Lower primary phase**

Several junior primary English second language (ESL) programmes are available on the market from which education authorities and schools can choose. One reality of this arrangement is that school authorities have to determine what a 'good' ESL programme looks like which will meet their needs. There is a potential dilemma, however, when teachers start using the material. They may find that the chosen programme is inappropriate: it may be far beyond the competence of the learners or it may not challenge the learners to the extent required. There is a question, in other words, whether teachers and school authorities are capable of making informed choices in this regard. A possible solution is to call for the

evaluation of different courses and programmes, although this could be an extensive and costly exercise for the education authorities.

No single set of ESL materials is prescribed to public schools. The selection of English Language Teaching (ELT) material for primary education in Namibia is currently done as follows: Language teaching material (i.e. teaching aids, textbooks, reading series and so forth) developed by publishers and material developers are submitted to the Lower Primary Curriculum Panel of NIED, the responsible body in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. This body is tasked to evaluate the material according to certain criteria. Approved material is then included in the annually updated catalogue from which schools can choose. The onus is thus placed on school management to select and order material. The capacity of school management to do this is never questioned. How informed are they, for example, to make decisions of appropriateness, i.e. to decide whether the materials cater for the different levels of language competence which may be found in the particular school? In the worst scenario there are even some schools with English second language learners who have opted for a 'Straight for English' approach (*The Beehive course*). They are using English first language material, with which neither the learners nor the teachers can cope.

#### **1.4 Language programmes in schools and donor-funding agencies**

The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (as it was known before March 2000), in its efforts to make learners and teachers more proficient in the use and teaching of English, receives external donor support for ESL in the lower primary phase. In this instance, too, a funding agency will have to choose one ESL course as a pilot programme and implement it in selected schools over a pre-determined period before evaluating its impact. External donor support is provided through the project structure as a delivery system, which also has certain implications. The two most notable donor aid agencies in education, the United States Agency for

International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), render assistance through second language pilot projects.

Explicit features of such pilot ESL projects are that: (a) they have a specific approach to ESL teaching, and (b) they have to be evaluated for purposes of accountability, in order to determine continued support, or to make recommendations for wider implementation.

## 1.5 Rationale

### 1.5.1 The need to evaluate language programmes

All parties concerned, i.e. the donor agency, language planners and education officials, and the school authorities, are faced with the same issue: they cannot select a programme on a trial-and-error basis and continue *ad infinitum* without evaluating its impact. The evaluation of programme implementation, however, usually poses a problem. The difficulty lies in the question of what criteria should be utilized to determine when a programme should be considered effective for the given (Namibian) situation. It is the absence of criteria that are relevant to the Namibian context that will be the focus of this study.

Evaluations are an obvious and vital feature of education. In addition, it is of great importance to enhance the capacity of any national department of education to conduct evaluations. Education evaluations carry authority and weight, and crucial decisions are taken on the basis of the conclusions they come to. As Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1992: 4) have pointed out, one must realise that “the implications of evaluation in an educational setting are potentially far more powerful than those we make in informal social settings.” In a developing country such as Namibia, it is especially important to take this into consideration: resources are scarcer than in



other countries, and the effect of implementing the recommendations of an evaluation can therefore potentially be much more wasteful than elsewhere, if such recommendations are inappropriate or unsuitable.

### **1.5.2 The teacher and language programme evaluations**

However, evaluation in the domain of language teaching or language in education, is a mystifying concept, not only in the Namibian but also in the broader context. Yet, rather than being used as an instrument of mystification, evaluation should be considered a powerful tool which should be in the hands of every trained teacher and not the prerogative or skill of external (outsider) evaluators only. The voices and opinions of teachers are probably not being heard to the extent that they should in evaluations, especially with respect to final decisions on the continuation or termination of language programmes. This can largely be attributed to the fact that evaluation in Namibia can be perceived to have been done quite subjectively. There are suspicions among educationists that in the end, views of bureaucrats feature much more prominently than those of teachers. The latter are often perceived to have been relegated to input during the week of evaluation (which is essentially summative in nature, although the claims of evaluators are often to the contrary).

Whichever way one looks at it, the teacher is vital in evaluating second language progress in the classroom in the Namibian education system. This has especially been the case since the adoption of English as the language of education, in a context where more than 90% of the learners are in rural schools in which one home (Namibian) language dominates. The country is already ten years down the independence lane, and one should think that a valid question to ask is: Are teachers evaluating the impact of ESL programmes they are using in the classroom? My opinion is that they are not. The reason may be that there is an overemphasis on one purpose of evaluation: accountability. The other two

purposes of evaluation, which aim not at accountability but at programme improvement, namely teacher development and curriculum development, are not receiving the prominence they should.

As we shall note below, these two goals, accountability and programme improvement, often generate conflicting styles of evaluation. A secondary aim of this study is therefore to consider how outsider (extrinsically) motivated language project or programme evaluation and insider (intrinsically) motivated evaluation aimed at programme or project improvement operate in the Namibian context, and whether they can be reconciled.

### **1.6 A dilemma for evaluation**

As was evident in the preceding sections, there is a potential dilemma for language instruction evaluations. The literature reveals that language teaching and learning evaluation in general could be categorized into two levels: Course or programme evaluation (which might include the evaluation of materials, teacher and classroom practice(s), or language methodology), and project evaluation. This distinction is necessary because the former deals with what Mackay (1994: 143) calls “intrinsically motivated evaluation,” as it is concerned with teachers and learners, and aimed at improving aspects of ESL programmes. Mackay considers project evaluation as extrinsically motivated, a kind of evaluation which addresses the concerns of the bureaucracy. In the latter case the emphasis is on accountability. This aspect or purpose of evaluation features heavily in all donor-aided language programmes, as it is aimed at determining whether supporting the intervention gives one value for money. Sharp (1998), in turn, highlights the project framework or model as a means or a tool to monitor implementation or impact in the short term while a full evaluation is conducted at the end of the life span of a project. The following table summarises Mackay’s explanation:



Type of evaluation	Motivation	Addressing the needs of ...	Aiming primarily at ...
Course/ programme	Intrinsic	teachers and learners	the improvement of the programme
Project	Extrinsic	education and other officials	accountability

Of prime concern, therefore, is whether we sufficiently hear the voices or opinions of the teachers regarding the quality of the language programme. At the moment it seems that during the end-phase of a project evaluation the opinions of the bureaucrats and the language experts or technical advisors of donor agencies are at the forefront, while the opinions of the teachers are relegated to feedback they have supplied during the short-term evaluation consultancy undertaken by the experts.



### 1.7 Aims of the research

To review and evaluate the Ministry's language programmes which have a national scope is far too ambitious for a small-scale study of this nature. However, as this study will focus on the evaluations done on two English second language programmes, it should be able to provide insights and make suggestions and recommendations from which programmes with a national scope could potentially benefit; especially since two of the most important features of evaluation, namely accountability and programme improvement, are prevalent both in pilot projects and in national programmes.

Until now, language programme evaluations have been used with mixed success in Namibia. This may possibly be partly due to the fact that donor agencies are the most important of the stakeholders in the evaluation of language education programmes in the country. Various programmes and evaluators are involved, and necessarily a variety of evaluation types can be expected. This study is concerned with identifying criteria to define a more appropriate type or style of evaluation for

second language education programmes within the Namibian context. This will be done by drawing a comparative analysis of the evaluation of two pilot English second language (ESL) programmes, and by so doing, identifying useful features of each. The criteria of what constitutes a useful feature of an evaluation will emerge from both the comparative analysis and the literature to be reviewed. In this way the study proposes to recommend the possible criteria and features that an adequate programme evaluation at this level should possess if it is to be successful in the Namibian context.

No language programme or project can be evaluated without specific criteria. Criteria change according to what the object is on which judgements are to be made. As Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1992: 4) point out, “(m)aking decisions about a teacher at work in the classroom will involve a different set of evaluation criteria from those needed to evaluate a set of learning tasks.” Similarly, setting criteria for evaluations brings into play the issue of who authorizes the evaluation and for what purposes it is being done. In this study the relevant authorities will be the foreign donor agencies and the top hierarchy of the Education Ministry in Namibia. Investigations aimed at reporting back to these authorities imply that accountability is the overriding concern, i.e. justification is needed for resources expended on any language programme.

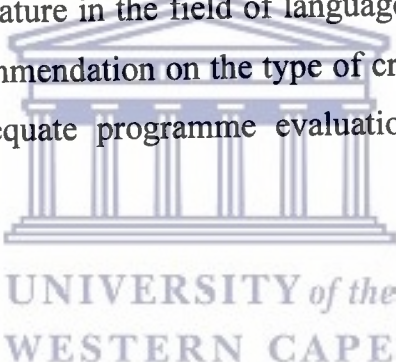
This study is located in the field of second language education evaluation. Although education evaluation is a well established domain, evaluation of second language education, in contrast, is a relatively young field that only gained momentum in the 1970's (Alderson and Baretta, 1992: 5). Furthermore, the bulk of these evaluations are undertaken for aid-funded projects like those sponsored by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), the former Overseas Development Agency (ODA), or the British Council. To a large extent the criteria for evaluation are laid down by the funding agency, which is

indicative of a heavy bias, in such evaluations, in favour of the funding agency as major stakeholder.

This study will concern itself with two evaluations of pilot second language programmes. The first is the evaluation of the *Molteno Early Literacy and Language (MELLD) Project* done by Herman Kotze and Veronica McKay for DfID and the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (Kotze and McKay: 1997). The second is Henk Kroes's evaluation of *Easing into English (an ESL beginners course)* which was done for the Urban Foundation in South Africa (Kroes, 1991a). The specific focus of the study will be to identify criteria that were utilized by the respective evaluators. These, together with criteria identified by a close examination of the literature in the field of language programme evaluation, will form the basis of a recommendation on the type of criteria and features which might be useful for an adequate programme evaluation within the Namibian context.

### 1.8 Research methodology

Since this study will concern itself with identifying appropriate approaches or styles of evaluation for second language education programmes, the method of research will in the first instance be by way of document analysis. It will entail a close scrutiny of two evaluations done on second language programmes. The reason for the selection of these two evaluations is that they compare very similar courses: initial ESL instruction in a Southern African context. They are also both fairly recent sets of work, and are fair reflections of developments in programme evaluation in the 1990's. Finally, both were pilot programmes, and needed to be evaluated for the sake of informing a decision on their continuation and broader implementation.



Before we describe and analyse these, however, we first turn, in the next chapter, to a brief overview of the language programme evaluation literature, with specific reference to how it relates to the problems we have articulated here.

As I shall remark at the end of chapter 3, which contains a discussion of how the various dilemmas facing evaluation design can potentially be overcome, one feature in the analysis and in the literature review is the crucially important role played by the front-line implementers in giving effect to an evaluation. This necessitated looking, in an additional chapter, at the contribution that teachers might make (or might have made) to evaluation. In order to identify and articulate some of the criteria teachers might be using when they have to select language courses, a questionnaire was administered to thirty-five teachers of the Windhoek and Khorixas education regions on a non-probability sampling basis.

In the penultimate chapter, this study therefore considers how we can allow teachers to articulate their evaluation criteria, and participate fully in an evaluation. Some of the practical and theoretical implications of the study are then finally summarised in the last chapter.

## Chapter 2

### A brief review of the second language evaluation literature

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will briefly examine the literature in the domain of language programme evaluation for the specific purposes of this study. The aim will be to examine relevant approaches to evaluation; to identify evaluation criteria; and to note those features of evaluation that are potentially important for language programme evaluation within the Namibian context.

#### 2.2 Educational evaluation: definitions and concept; approaches and types of evaluation

##### 2.2.1 Definitions

Since the root of the term evaluate is 'value,' evaluation implies that a judgement is to be passed, i.e. "a value is being placed on the thing being appraised" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981: 17). Because judgement is the major and inevitable feature of evaluation, it implies "the systematic investigation of the worth or merit of some object" (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation [JCSEE], 1981:11). Over the past five decades the definition of the process or exercise of evaluation has varied from "determining to what extent educational objectives are realized" (Tyler, 1950: 69) to that of Nevo, who is of the opinion that definitions of evaluation are so broad that in fact "it would include assessment, measurement and testing as parts of evaluation and as terms having a narrower meaning than the term evaluation" (Walberg & Hartel, 1990: 89). Relevant for this thesis is the definition of Weir & Roberts (1994: 4) that the "purpose of evaluation is to collect information systematically in order to indicate the worth and merit of a programme or project and to inform decision making." They contend that since insiders tend to focus on development and outsiders on end products, their definition "would seek

to integrate and synthesize both views.” This perception coincides with that of Rea-Dickens & Germaine (1992: 55) on the reasons for evaluation, namely that it is done “for assessment and accountability where the information obtained can be used primarily for administrative purposes.” Furthermore it “can serve a developmental function ... for purposes of curriculum development on the one hand and teacher-self development on the other” (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992: 55).

### 2.2.2 Evaluation approaches

We have noted that evaluation implies that a value is to be attached to something, in this case ‘an educational object.’ The immediate question is: How should one go about to determine that value? Secondly: Does one need a specific approach that needs to be followed to determine that value? McMillan & Schumacher (1993: 525) identify the following three common approaches in the evaluation literature: the objective-oriented, decision-oriented and naturalistic and participant-oriented evaluation.

The objective-oriented evaluation reminds one of Tyler's definition, because it focuses on “determining to which extent the objectives of a practice are attained by the target group - teachers, learners, parents, etc.” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 526). The theory of educational change is central in decision-oriented evaluation, as both the decision-maker and the evaluator are engaged in a process to determine the value (merit and worth) of a programme or practice. This is done by evaluating its implementation, process and outcome.

The most common characteristic of the naturalistic and participant-oriented evaluation is that it “is a holistic approach using multiplicity of data ... to understand a practice from the participants’ perspective” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 532). The point of departure in this case is the involvement of participants as stakeholders in the evaluation process, right from the beginning. The participants are allowed and required to determine the values, criteria, needs and data for the evaluation. Because an approach is without exception embedded in a particular philosophy, ideology or worldview, it is important to note that the



underlying justification for participant-oriented evaluation is to be found in critical approaches that encourage reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Cousins & Earl, 1995: 10).

### **2.2.3 Language evaluation designs or models**

As mentioned before, the field of language evaluation is relatively young and much of the paradigms, concepts, methods, etc. evolved from the much broader field of educational evaluation. In language programme evaluation literature, the terms 'design' and 'model' are used interchangeably, although "model tends to be seen as the more grandiose of the two terms and refers not only to the plan for collecting the information on which the evaluation will be based, but also to its theoretical basis and purpose" (Lynch, 1996: 80). The literature in language education evaluation further reveals that the quantitative-qualitative debate is embedded in a philosophical worldview of what counts as evidence (validity). These two worldviews are the positivistic (quantitative) and naturalistic (qualitative) paradigms respectively. As we will notice in chapter 6, the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy is not so rigid as it seems at first glance.

Briefly, the literature distinguishes between positivistic and naturalistic designs. The positivistic paradigm uses quantitative data collection and analysing techniques by applying a treatment (in this case, a language programme) to an experimental group and having a control group to which the treatment is not applied (Lynch, 1996: 70). Naturalistic designs "pay considerable attention to the processes, to what is happening inside a program" (Lynch, 1990: 90). Lynch distinguishes between a responsive model, an illumination model and a goal-free model (1996: 81-85). I do not elaborate further on these since the distinction between the different types of evaluation that will be dealt with next is much more relevant to the current investigation.

## 2.2.4 Types of evaluation

An aspect of evaluation closely related to attributing value (worth and merit) is whether the evaluation should be conducted in a formative or a summative manner. In a formative evaluation data is collected to improve the practice or programme under investigation, especially if it is still being developed. This type of investigation is done for the programme personnel, i.e. people directly engaged in the programme in terms of its design, the development of material and its implementation. **Formative evaluation** is therefore closely related to the *merit of a programme*. In a **summative evaluation** an already developed practice is evaluated and recommendations are made regarding its widespread adoption and use. This type of evaluation is typically done at the end of a programme for funding agencies, educational officials, users / potential users of a programme (e.g. teachers) as well as programme personnel. This type of evaluation can typically be linked to the *worth of a programme* (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 533).

We return to a discussion of these two main types of evaluation below (see 2.5).

## 2.3 The selection of evaluation criteria

Because stakeholders are not normally trained in evaluation methodologies, criteria to evaluate a specific aspect of a project or programme should ideally be selected in close consultation between the evaluator and the stakeholders (staff members, government officials, programme recipients and community members) according to Posavac & Carey (1992: 45). Furthermore, since there is a big difference between the choice of criteria and standards used to evaluate the different phases of a programme or project, these should be selected with reference to what aspect is to be studied (Posavac & Carey, 1992: 45). For the purpose of this study, evaluation criteria will focus on the implementation of an operational programme. Weir and Roberts (1994: 42), for example, reveal that many donors (like the DfID, formerly ODA) require in their terms of reference an evaluation which is strictly summative in nature (and is therefore output oriented), and typically uses a paradigm which is external to the programme. The paradigm used is called a logframe, indicating all



the objectives, and is aimed at measuring and verifying the extent to which each objective has been achieved.

### **2.3.1 The objects of English language teaching (ELT) and English second language (ESL) evaluation**

#### **2.3.1.1 Evaluation of ELT material and the role of teachers**

The role of teachers during the evaluation of a language programme or project can easily be underestimated. There are many reasons for this. As Gearing (1999: 122) emphasises, evaluations must be informed by at least two sources: the expertise found in the 'local' classroom, and that which is associated with theory. Administrators might too easily minimize the role of teachers where the language under consideration (for example English) is the teacher's second language. In this case the assumption can quickly be made that they are not proficient in English anyway. Gearing cites a number of authorities to make the point that teachers' priorities and concerns should indeed be taken into account (1999: 123). The problem in fact is not with the low English proficiency of the teacher, but rather that evaluation checklists are drawn up for teachers with tertiary education. Therefore the accessibility of the language used in the evaluation criteria (Gearing, 1999: 122) is in fact the problem.

#### **2.3.1.2 Teacher development as the object of ELT evaluation**

When one takes into account that many lower primary teachers are often not adequately trained as language teachers, and are therefore dependent on projects for in-service training, teacher development should be a crucial object of language programme evaluation.

On the other hand, the success of the programme is also dependent on the teacher. If, for example, the content of a programme is transferred to teachers in a non-negotiated manner, it can lead to what Bax (1995) calls 'tissue rejection.' Tissue rejection occurs "when the ideas and agendas of stakeholders in the 'source

culture' clash with those of stakeholders in the 'recipient culture'" (Bax, 1995: 262). Regarding the transferability of evaluation criteria in ELT, Bax (1995: 263) is of the opinion that evaluation criteria that differentiate between good and bad teacher development can be the same as those used for evaluating language teaching material (Bax, 1995: 263). Tissue rejection can be minimized if "outsiders ... share the priorities and concerns of those who have to implement ... and, eventually, manage the project" (Bax, 1995: 262).

### **2.3.1.3 Process evaluation and the role of the teacher in an in-service language programme or project**

Because "language teaching is a highly complex and extremely demanding activity" (Morrow & Schocker, 1993: 47), teachers should be made aware that learning is not merely an uncritical transmission of knowledge, but rather that a process is involved. Process evaluation initiated by the teacher (as a member of the project or programme) will enable him/her to build personal and professional capacity by drawing on their daily experiences. To achieve this, the teacher should be engaged in "a systematic and continuous evaluation of the methodology and content" (Morrow & Schocker, 1993: 48) of a language programme or project.

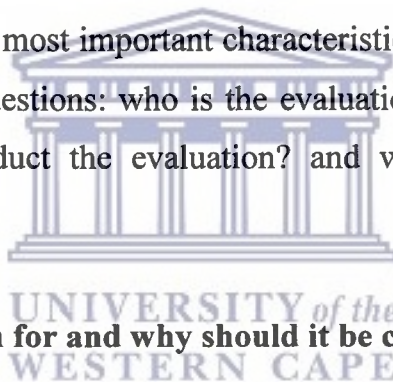
### **2.3.2 Strategies to identify and elicit evaluation criteria**

Evaluators like Weir & Roberts (1994) and Brinkerhoff (1983) emphasize for all evaluations the four main groups of criteria suggested by the Joint Committee on Standards of Educational Evaluation [JCSEE] (1981), namely:

- (a) **Utility standards**, which "are intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the practical information needs of given audiences" (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 37);
- (b) **Feasibility standards**, which "are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic and frugal" (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 37);

- (c) **Propriety standards**, which are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by the results (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 38); and
- (d) **Accuracy standards**, which are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features of the object being studied that determine its worth or merit (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 38).

Within these broad categories, the evaluation literature reveals the importance of the Wh-questions (Why, When, How long, What, Who and How?) in identifying criteria for conducting evaluations in education. Let us examine some of these wh-questions in more detail. The most important characteristics of an evaluation should be revealed by posing the questions: who is the evaluation for? why is it needed? (purpose); who should conduct the evaluation? and what is to be evaluated? (Silvester, 1997: 110).



### **2.3.2.1 Who is an evaluation for and why should it be carried out?**

This question probes the JCSEE's Utility standard, emphasizing the expectations of the audience. However, one needs to distinguish here between the funding agency, on the one hand, and the adopters, implementers, and recipients on the other hand. The funding agency often carries out an evaluation "to determine if the project is giving value for money and then to justify a future course of action or vindicate a decision already made" (Silvester, 1997: 110).

Posavac and Carey (1992: 50) have noted that this question mediates between "the unmet needs of the people versus the services available through the programme." The neglect of this standard in the evaluation of the Bangalore Project (evaluated by Baretta and Davis in 1985) resulted in "disappointment ... at the limited extent to which it provided insights for a wider audience about the project and how it achieved its results" (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 11).

The expectations of an audience wider than that of the funding agency should be acknowledged from the beginning, because recipients are increasingly viewing evaluations as having a developmental function (Rea-Dickens and Germaine, 1992: 15), i.e. are aimed at improving a practice or programme. This will entail conceiving evaluation questions to which they (the recipients themselves) want answers. By emphasizing a wider audience, one may once again counter the negative effects of a financially motivated or accountability-oriented evaluation. Such an evaluation is extrinsically motivated and aimed at satisfying only the programme sponsors.

### **2.3.2.2 Who should conduct the evaluation?**

Another critical question before embarking upon an evaluation is *who should do the evaluation*. This question encompasses questions 1, 2 and 3 (whom the information gathered is for, why the evaluation is being carried out and what is to be evaluated), contained in the framework suggested by Rea-Dickens & Germaine (1992: 135). The choice of an evaluator(s) is therefore closely linked to whether the evaluation is insider- or outsider-motivated (intrinsically or extrinsically). The evaluation literature reveals that the bulk of language evaluations are done for donor-aid projects like DfID and the British Council (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 14), and therefore accountability rather than programme improvement is their most prominent feature.

Literature on the evaluation of language programmes reveals that the choice of evaluators is closely tied to perceptions on evaluation expertise, i.e. that outsiders with many years' language teaching experience, with experience in running projects and training courses, are considered specialists in evaluations. Although such experience is not to be depreciated, one needs to consider whether it is sufficient to qualify you as an evaluator. Given the small numbers of evaluators (if any), one would consider it vital that, in the present case, Namibian counterparts should be

actively involved in formative evaluations. This will guarantee capacity building in evaluation expertise.

In an activity like an evaluation, aimed at eliciting as much unprejudiced information as possible about a practice or programme, an aspect like impartiality is crucial. As indicated above (in section 2.3.2.1), two distinct parties have an interest in the evaluation: the funding agency on the one hand, and the recipients (inclusive of the programme staff, learners and education officials) on the other hand. The argument put forward by many evaluators and sponsoring agencies that impartiality is more likely by employing fly-in-fly-out experts, does not hold water because “the purpose and nature of his / her evaluation is likely to have been determined by the sponsors” (Silvester, 1997: 111). This bias is often not adequately understood or considered in selecting evaluators.

Project sustainability is another crucial aspect for both the sponsor and the recipients. Project staff are in the best position to determine threats to sustainability, and their inclusion in an evaluation team should therefore be considered logical and natural. However, to counter subjectivity during the evaluation, that can flow from familiarity between the ‘insider’ evaluators and teachers, it would be equally appropriate to have both parties, external and internal evaluators, represented in the team when an evaluation is conducted.

### **2.3.2.3 What is to be evaluated and what is to be done with the information gathered?**

The objects of an evaluation are undoubtedly crucial, because they form the focal point(s) of the evaluation, i.e. “what a programme sets out to achieve” (Weir & Roberts, 1992: 84). Other focal points could be the teaching and learning methodologies, the teaching materials, the teaching staff, learners’ performance, or resources. However, although it might sound strange, time can be considered a watershed when evaluators have to determine the objects of evaluation (what is to be evaluated). Funding agencies, driven by external accountability, traditionally



focus on whether outcomes had been achieved (i.e., they are **product** oriented). The evaluation is aimed at determining effectiveness (the degree to which programme objectives had been achieved), efficiency (objectives achieved in relation to cost), and impact (on the wider socio-economic circumstances of beneficiaries) (Silvester, 1997: 112). To evaluate with a view to determining whether outcomes had been achieved does not require a lengthy period of time (a few weeks to a few months).

Should the object of the evaluation be the **processes** in which the programme was engaged, then a considerable amount of time would be required (e.g. 12 to 18 months and more). Without doubt, one can assume that when participants in a programme are allowed, and are actively involved in adapting it, to make it relevant, the more they are inclined to take ownership of it (Silvester, 1997: 113). It follows that participants should be involved from the beginning in evaluating a programme.

The further question on *what is to be done with the information gathered through the evaluation* (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992: 74), then becomes relevant here. With a product-oriented evaluation, information is most likely to be of value to the sponsoring agency and probably officials as well. Process evaluation is more revealing of the effect of a programme over the long-term. Therefore, it is more beneficial to the front-line personnel. By considering the object of the evaluation, we touch on one of the central issues addressed in this thesis: is an evaluation being conducted for purposes of accountability more beneficial in the Namibian context than an evaluation aimed at improving programmes or projects? Information gathering through process evaluation will also address the subsidiary question: the appropriateness of second language material (including the language learning and teaching methodologies) for the Namibian classroom, and the capacities of teachers and principals to evaluate and choose appropriate second language material.

In the next section, there is a closer examination of the purpose or motivation of an evaluation.

## **2.4 The motivations for evaluation**

Weir & Roberts (1994: 4) distinguish between two critical motivations that have been mentioned in passing several times in the preceding discussion: evaluation for accountability, and evaluation for programme improvement. We look in more detail at each of these in turn below.

### **2.4.1 Evaluation for accountability**

Evaluation for accountability is characteristic of donor-funded projects, as it focuses on the value-for-money aspect, and is therefore extrinsically motivated. The accountability function will be served once sufficient and appropriate information is gathered to enable the bureaucracy (in our case, Namibian education officials) to make decisions on either adopting or terminating a language programme. The drawback of an accountability-oriented evaluation, which is extrinsically motivated, is that the programme personnel (teachers, principals, etc.) normally participate neither in the design of the evaluation study nor in conceiving the evaluation questions.

### **2.4.2 Evaluation for programme improvement**

Evaluation for programme improvement emphasizes the importance of programme staff (principals, teachers, learners, and communities) in taking ownership of a second language programme, and is intrinsically motivated. An outstanding characteristic of such evaluations is their formative nature, because time is still available to take action and improve the programme, which is not the case with summative, end-of-project evaluations. The fact that such evaluations are internally motivated opens them up to the concerns of insiders. For participants, such evaluations can identify strengths (that can be built upon), as well as obstacles to progress, and most importantly, suggest more effective means to achieve the desired programme objectives. Evaluations which are self-directed also open the way for teacher development, i.e. “evaluation is used as a means to develop teachers’ skills” (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992: 108).

### **2.4.3 The conflict between evaluation for accountability and evaluation for programme improvement**

The disadvantage of doing evaluations to determine accountability, however, might have negative connotations, i.e. stakeholders might be apprehensive. Apart from checking whether money was used for the purposes intended, the evaluation exercise might be seen as an inspection aimed at determining whether tasks have been executed. A negative attitude can blur the outcomes of the evaluation, especially in situations where teachers, who are the implementers, feel intimidated or inadequate (Gearing, 1999: 122).

However, if the evaluation is motivated to improve the programme by adapting and modifying it or change teachers' behaviour (in other words allows flexibility, and not only to determine whether objectives have been achieved), stakeholders' perceptions and attitude will be different. A less threatening evaluation atmosphere might stimulate teacher participation more.

The conflict between evaluation for accountability and evaluation for improvement therefore lies in the lesser than ideal participation levels of *implementers* in the former type. Evaluations that are motivated by bureaucratic concerns are not 'owned' by those who are most able to effect changes in a programme, i.e. those who are ultimately responsible for implementing it. We return to this dilemma in 3.3 below, but first turn to a consideration of how these two varying motivations (accountability and improvement) relate to different types of evaluations.

### **2.5 The interaction between formative and summative evaluation, and accountability and improvement**

What is the relationship between formative and summative evaluation, and the two main motivations (accountability and improvement) for undertaking an evaluation, discussed above? The decision to conduct an evaluation either in a summative or a formative manner is often influenced by whether the evaluation is conducted for



accountability or programme improvement purposes. Let's briefly consider each of these again.

The literature (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 14) reveals that programmes or projects can be evaluated either (a) before they start i.e. to assess their feasibility; (b) during their life span, and (c) at the end, by means of a summative evaluation. As a formative evaluation provides valuable information about the processes and activities during the programme implementation (i.e. during the life span), the implementers (teachers) are more likely to gain from it (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992: 26). A formative evaluation counters hit-and-run 'snapshots' by an outsider evaluator; it ensures more contact time between the evaluator and programme implementers, and the type of data collected over a longer period of time improves validity, reliability and credibility. On the other hand, as a summative evaluation focuses on what was achieved (i.e. on the products or outcomes achieved at the end of a project's life-span), final decision makers, i.e. the bureaucracy and sponsors, would be more inclined to favour it (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 14).

A critical consideration in the Namibian context is whether the evaluation should be conducted in a formative or a summative way. The timing aspect is brought in here, i.e. the question on when in the life-span of a programme or project it should be evaluated (throughout or at the end). As the duration of an evaluation is closely related to those involved (i.e. the evaluator, the programme or project staff and the audience), one again needs to determine what would best suit the Namibian context.

It is obvious that the ideal would be to merge both dimensions (formative and summative) by way of a systematic evaluation throughout the life span of a project. The question is whether this is achievable in the Namibian context.

Taking Rea-Dickens and Germaine's (1992: 135) framework into account, I am sure the evaluators of both the MELLD Project (in Namibia) and the Easing into English Project (in South Africa) were confronted with the same cardinal question:

how is the evaluation to be carried out? This brings into play the time factor (i.e. how much time is to be set aside to conduct the evaluation). It is the time factor, in turn, which will determine whether the evaluation is formative or summative in nature. If, e.g., a year or more is available, then the evaluation may more readily be formative, while if its duration is only a few weeks to a few months, then it is likely to be summative.

Necessarily, evaluators doing a summative evaluation will be more prone to utilise measurement-based methods such as tests to evaluate an object (as revealed by the Bangalore Project evaluation). Such evaluations have the limitation of emphasising the ends (characteristic of an objective-oriented evaluation approach) rather than the means, or, in other terms, the product rather than the process. Having enough time available to conduct a formative evaluation therefore favours the use of methods and instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and classroom observation, and encourages a participant-oriented and action-research approach to evaluation.

In the Namibian context, with its vast numbers of untrained language teachers, such an approach and methods could perhaps provide a richer picture about the appropriateness of a language programme. Formative evaluation attempts to marry the dimensions of process and product. Weir & Roberts (1994: 25) remark in this regard that the “methods for formative, insider-led evaluation are designed to explore issues and problems, monitor classroom events, and assess the relative success of teaching”. It follows that the collection of data and information which is aimed at developing a more comprehensive insight into language teaching and learning, will gain more from methods that are qualitative in nature, as they are more descriptive and explanatory. A formative evaluation approach is the natural choice when “the primary concern is to capture and understand the reality of what happens in the classroom in order to retain what works” (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992:73).

In the next chapter, we take the matters raised in this survey of the literature a step forward, in examining some enabling and constraining factors in the Namibian context.



## Chapter 3

### **Toward an appropriate theoretical evaluation framework for language programme evaluation in Namibia**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

What the literature survey reveals with regard to language programme evaluation is that (a) the choices of what approach to use, what type of evaluation to select and who to task to do the evaluation, are quite complex, and (b) such choices may have inherent conflicts and contradictions.

In this chapter I will discuss two issues. First, I wish to examine a model that attempts to provide for the two main functions of evaluation, namely accountability and programme improvement, since such an accommodation might yield a more acceptable evaluation of ELT programmes and projects in Namibia. In this regard, I shall introduce the Indonesian model for ELT evaluation proposed by Ronald Mackay (1994) and discuss its application potential to the Namibian context. Second, I wish to make a preliminary identification of the evaluation criteria that have thus far figured prominently in the discussion of the literature and that are related to the constraints of doing an evaluation in the Namibian context.

#### **3.2 The choice of an evaluation framework: determining factors**

As we have noted, both donor-funded and public-funded language programmes cannot continue indefinitely without evaluating their impact as an intervention. This is because “the eighties and early nineties have been dominated by ‘market-economy’ thinking ... which has emphasized the need to identify how resources are being used, whether the purpose of spending has been achieved, and making accountable those who are responsible for spending” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 53).

As is evident from the literature, there are several models and approaches in conducting the evaluation of language programmes. However, it is also obvious that no ready-made model can be transferred to Namibia. The situation in which

programmes or projects operate differs considerably from one country to the next in terms of values, political realities, experiences and practical constraints. It is more realistic to say that educational authorities “should develop their own standards for evaluations, according to their own needs and circumstances” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 36).

In considering an appropriate model and criteria for evaluation in Namibia, the following realities should be taken into account:

- Language programmes in the Namibian lower primary phase will for the foreseeable future still be dependent on donor support;
- Donor agencies are financially accountable to their own constituencies, whether it is governments or Boards of Trustees;
- The majority of Namibia’s lower primary teachers have not been trained as language teachers by teacher education institutions. They are therefore dependent on INSET offered through language teaching projects.

As we pointed out in Chapter 2, the evaluation literature highlights two critical features of evaluation, namely accountability and programme improvement. Although accountability in donor-funded projects normally entails focusing on the value-for-money aspect (and is therefore extrinsically motivated) it can be developed further to include intrinsic accountability, i.e. it may involve staff running the project or programme. By emphasizing ‘insider’ accountability, the way is paved for the programme improvement function of evaluation. This is a simplification, since the accountability and programme improvement functions require careful understanding in order to be effectively utilized as features of second language evaluation. It is worthwhile to consider this in greater detail.

From the outset one should be aware of the inherent tension between accountability-oriented evaluation, which mainly aims at quality control, and evaluation for improvement. This tension is created when outside evaluators are

“faced with insiders’ expectations of help in developing their programmes” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 102).

### **3.3 The need to involve Namibian counterparts from the beginning**

The drawback of an accountability-oriented evaluation, which is extrinsically motivated, is that the programme personnel (teachers, principals, etc.), participate neither in the design of the evaluation study nor in conceiving the evaluation questions. This is especially the case in Namibia, since approval for project evaluation is normally granted in the higher echelons of the government bureaucracy. The danger is that such decisions and agreements are made in isolation from beneficiaries who make up the front line of any second language programme. This in turn brings about a lesser degree of responsibility on the part of the implementers. A second obvious problem is that, during the actual evaluation, external evaluators usually have only a week or two to do ‘snapshots’ of operations, and it is an open question “what you can learn by sitting in on a teacher for one or two classes” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 105). No wonder that there is the belief that “accountability is usually linked with summative evaluation ...” (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992:27).

There is no doubt that for the accountability function to serve a better purpose, donor-funded language programmes in Namibia should opt to involve Namibian counterparts from the outset in conceptualizing their evaluation. In so doing, the programme personnel are recognized, and with that a higher level of what one may call internal accountability (and responsibility) is established.

Such an approach has definite positive advantages for Namibia:

- the importance of programme staff (principals, teachers, learners, and communities) is recognized and they are allowed to take ownership of the programme;



- the evaluations are formative in nature, because time is still available to take action and improve the programme, which is not the case with extrinsically motivated summative, end-of-project evaluations;
- The fact that such evaluations are internally motivated, opens them up to the concerns of insiders, as they can identify strengths as well as obstacles to progress, which will enable them to introduce more effective means to achieve the desired programme objectives.

Evaluations which are self-directed also open the way for teacher development, i.e. “evaluation is used as a means to develop teachers’ skills” (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992: 108). Weir and Roberts (1994:8) concur that teachers who are involved in self-directed (participant-centred), formative evaluation, develop a better understanding of classroom events. They develop and improve their professional dialogue with peers and improve their skills and confidence in exploring and articulating issues of professional concern. The incorporation of the feature of programme improvement in evaluations of second language programmes in Namibia addresses one of the central issues being raised in this study, namely whether the implementers of a language programme are capable or informed enough to make decisions regarding its appropriateness.

The preceding discussion clearly shows the need to balance the accountability and programme development functions when evaluations are conducted in Namibia. The problem posed by extrinsically motivated evaluation that is aimed at accountability only toward the donor country can be countered if programme personnel are involved from the beginning of the project design and evaluation. In such a case the chances would be much greater that they “accept the responsibility for undertaking self-motivated, internal improvement-focussed reviews” (Mackay, 1994: 145).

### **3.4 The Indonesian evaluation model proposed by Mackay**

A model or framework for project and programme review used by Mackay (1994) in Indonesia could be equally relevant for future evaluations in Namibia.

Mackay's involvement with programme evaluation efforts in Indonesia has led him to propose a framework (model) for programme and project based review. In essence, it suggests that

a systematic internal evaluation system 'owned' by the project, involving project personnel in a cooperative exercise, to overcome obstacles and resolve problems standing in the way of programme excellence, can meet most of the requirements of both (internal) improvement and (external) accountability (Mackay, 1994: 146).

Its most prominent feature is that it is an evaluation model aimed at accommodating both bureaucratic concerns (for purposes of accountability) and the programme personnel (who wish to evaluate for purposes of improvement). This is exactly the point made by Silvester (1997: 109), that these concerns "need not be mutually exclusive but can be developed in such a way as to render them mutually supportive."

In the case described by Mackay (1994), the objects of evaluation were fourteen language centres established in government departments and institutions of higher learning. The goals of these language centres were described as:

... the enhancement of communication within fourteen economic development projects dealing with such areas as forestry, rice storage, fishing, public works, etc. as well as the preparation of technical and scientific personnel to undertake professional development training in English-speaking countries, principally the UK (Mackay, 1994: 146).

A significant aspect of Mackay's review framework is that project staff are in a favourable position to identify threats to sustainability early enough and enable them to take appropriate remedial action while funding is still available from the project sponsor (Mackay, 1994: 146). The most essential ingredient of this model is that it employs "indicators of the particular strengths and weaknesses which centre directors and teachers (i.e. front-line programme personnel) believed to be important, and which involved these same people in the evaluation undertaking" (Mackay, 1994: 147).



Mackay argues that such a performance indicator model has a distinct advantage in that it enables language centre directors and teachers to decide which components of their projects require scrutiny, and also the criteria by which those components should be judged.

The organizational structure of the Indonesian model consists of three vertical levels:

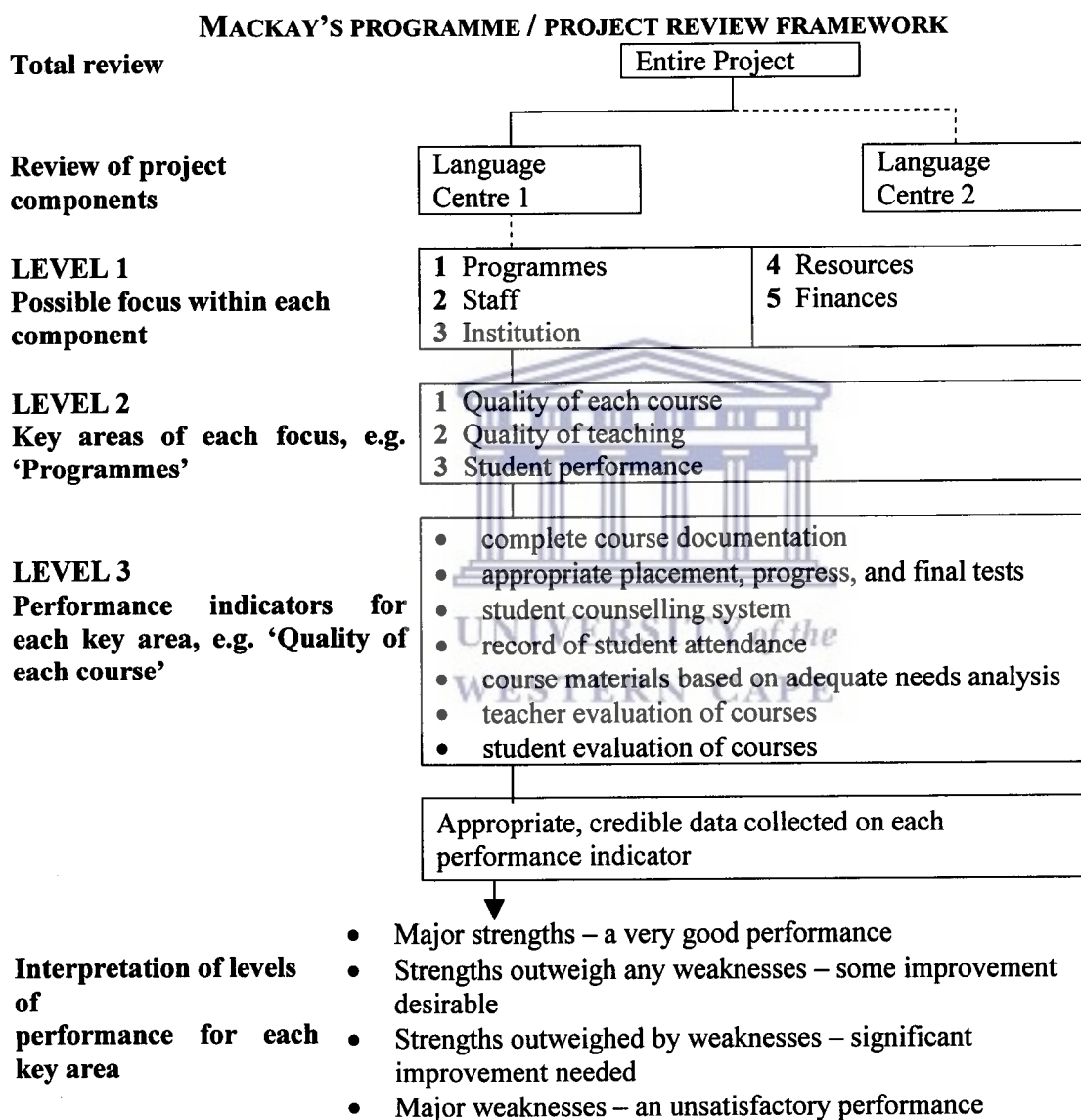
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	Possible focus within each component (language centre)
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	Key areas of each focus, e.g. 'Programmes'
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	Performance indicators for each key area, e.g. 'Quality of each course'

Level 1 therefore might have several possible focal points for review, such as programmes, staff, institution, resources and finances. Each focal point in turn has a number of key areas (Level 2). In this case, under the focus 'programmes' (Level 2), the Indonesian Project personnel identified three key areas, namely (a) the quality of each course offered in the language centre, (b) the quality of the teaching, and (c) student performance.

Significant in this regard is that key areas represent a level of detail that makes measurement possible, for the purpose of estimating adequacy or effectiveness. Furthermore, "the criteria on which key areas are measured are unique and appropriate to each" (Mackay, 1994: 147). Finally, the data collected for each performance indicator is organized (Level 3) in order to assist the project staff to interpret it and draw conclusions regarding the centre's performance and allow them to consider appropriate action for improvement. The same information gathered can be summarized to meet the interests and concerns of the bureaucracy.

Mackay stresses that the focuses decided upon must represent areas over which the programme personnel have control. He argues that if factors, over which the programme personnel have no control (background factors), become the focus of a

review, it becomes a frustration for those concerned, and should instead simply be considered as constraints, and acknowledged. He considers programme and project reviews (evaluations) as a craft which focuses “attention and energy onto areas which require improvement and which can be directly affected by project personnel” (Mackay, 1994: 148).



### 3.5 Application of the Indonesian model to Namibia

How can the Mackay model discussed above provide useful evaluation features and help to develop evaluation criteria for Namibia? As we have mentioned, Namibia has, since Independence, employed several English language programmes

in the lower primary phase of which some are national programmes, while others are pilot projects:

- The Molteno Early Literacy and Language Development (MELLD) project is sponsored by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom. It introduces literacy in the mother tongue and English in selected schools countrywide;
- The Basic Education Support (BES) project is a USAID-sponsored project aimed at developing lower primary literacy materials and in-service teacher development, and is implemented in selected schools countrywide;
- Publishers have developed a language teaching programme, the Namibia Primary Education Programme (NAMPEP), currently implemented as a national literacy programme for the lower primary phase.

The project or programme personnel (implementers), i.e. the teachers and principals as well as officials in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC), are not in a favourable position to compare the effectiveness of each language or literacy programme. This is due to the fact that donors and material developers (publishing companies) are accountable to their individual constituencies. Evaluation of these projects is done by a person(s) appointed by the funding agency. In the case of the MELLD project, for example, DfID has reduced the role of programme staff (teachers, principals) to providing information to the evaluator during a review, lasting anything from a few days to two weeks.

A performance indicator model as proposed by Mackay (1994) would have distinct advantages for Namibia. The programme staff will be involved from the outset, i.e. donor-funded projects and publishing companies will be encouraged to recognize teachers and principals not merely as implementers, but as programme or project personnel. They will have the flexibility to consider improvements and adaptations to the programme to suit their local conditions. A major objective embodied in the Indonesian model will be achieved, i.e. merging the accountability and programme

improvement functions. Performance indicators that are attuned to the local conditions could be set by Namibian programme staff, in conjunction with, or without external evaluators. When the final evaluation is embarked upon (to consider wider implementation), teachers and principals will have a much more prominent input in determining the value of a programme.

### 3.6 Implications

The main implication of the discussion in this chapter is that some of the potentially conflicting, contradictory and complex choices in setting up an evaluation of language projects can be mediated if one selects an approach that can accommodate more than one set of concerns. Mackay's (1994) example of this in the Indonesian context indicates the importance of involving programme participants in the evaluation from the outset.

This points, preliminarily, to an approach that is participatory, or participant-oriented (cf. Section 2.2.2 above) while it at the same time takes into account the concerns of sponsors.

In the next chapter, we examine some further considerations for an appropriate evaluation framework for language programmes in Namibia, by considering two specific cases.

Before I started out on this study, my own experience with language programme implementation and evaluation told me that the involvement of teachers in evaluation is crucial. My opinions in this regard were confirmed in engaging with the literature, which points to this critically important feature in no uncertain terms. In fact, the whole dilemma of intrinsically or extrinsically motivated evaluation that features so prominently in the discussion exists only because the concerns of front-line implementers (trainers and teachers) are not adequately catered for in most conventional, objectives-oriented evaluations. These

considerations have therefore led me to consider, in addition to the two cases reviewed in the next chapter, the contributions that teachers and other implementers might make to the design and execution of an evaluation. This is dealt with below in Chapter 5.



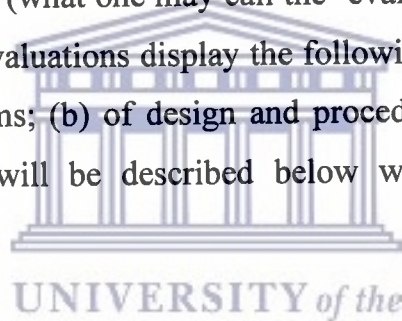
## Chapter 4

### Description and assessment of two language evaluation reports

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe and examine two evaluation reports with a view to identifying those features of each evaluation that might yield additional criteria for evaluations in Namibia to those identified in Chapters 2 and 3.

It is necessary to understand the structure, nature and underlying philosophy (research design) of the evaluation in order to shed light on how the evaluation was done and what it was based on (what one may call the 'evaluation model' that was adopted). Broadly speaking, evaluations display the following components: (a) the articulation of context and aims; (b) of design and procedures; and (c) findings. The two evaluation reports will be described below with reference to these elements.



#### 4.2 Description and assessment of the *Easing into English* (EIE) project evaluation

##### 4.2.1 Background, context and course objectives

The EIE project was an English second language (ESL) course developed under the auspices of, and with financial assistance from, the Urban Foundation (a private sector initiative in South Africa). The course was piloted as an English supplementary course for three years in selected black primary schools in Bloemfontein, capital city of the Free State province of South Africa. The funding agency, the Urban Foundation of South Africa, engaged Dr. Henk Kroes, an independent evaluator, to do the evaluation.

In his report (Kroes, 1991a: 6), the evaluator states that the evaluation was informed by the following project objectives: (a) to teach English to black primary



school children in a communicative way and as a medium of instruction in order for them to become communicatively competent; (b) to equip teachers with innovative methods and techniques to teach English; (c) to help both learners and teachers to learn English as a second language in an informal and non-threatening (and non-racial) environment. The EIE programme designers claimed that information regarding method, content and classroom atmosphere could be revealed by the course. These statements, according to the evaluator, anticipate that, should the conclusions of the evaluation be favourable, the EIE programme could compete with similar programmes on the market, such as the Molteno *Bridge* programme, the Maskew Miller Longman *Day by Day*, Macmillan's *MAPEP*, and so on.

#### 4.2.2 The aims of the evaluation

The evaluator set out to evaluate: (a) the course aims as revealed by materials; (b) the content and sequencing of the materials in terms of the communicative needs of target groups, utilising the evaluation criteria used in the HSRC comparative evaluation of language courses used in township schools (Kroes, 1991a: 7), and by considering current views on second language acquisition; (c) the methodology espoused and implemented in course materials; (d) the language teaching approach, drawing on theories provided by cognitive psychology, applied linguistics, educational psychology, etc.; (e) the needs assessment for teacher in-service training; (f) the evaluation of the extent to which black learners have bridged the linguistic and cultural gap to Western thinking; (g) the course as a tool to disseminate knowledge about innovative techniques of teaching English (Kroes, 1991a: 7).

#### 4.2.3 The research design, its underlying philosophy and evaluation procedures

The evaluator of the *Easing into English* project, Henk Kroes, followed a two-pronged evaluation research approach consisting of a theoretical and an empirical

investigation, respectively. The theoretical investigation consisted of (a) a study of course materials, video material and documents which explained the rationale of the course, and (b) discussions with the project leader and project staff (team members), with the aim of getting information and clarity on the programme objectives and the theory underpinning the language approach. To achieve the latter, the evaluator used perspectives from different disciplines with the understanding that each would provide theoretical insights that underpin the development of the course materials.

The empirical investigation had a qualitative-interpretive research design (Kroes, 1991a: 9). Data was collected by the evaluator with the participation of project personnel, by way of (a) a structured observation schedule used in classroom observations; (b) testing of learners; (c) collecting and analysing teachers' opinions on the course; (d) examining the in-service training potential for wider implementation of the course, (e) analysing the existing conditions of implementation, i.e. the facilities as well as teacher quality and qualifications. The qualitative data collected was consolidated and interpreted by way of a triangulation process. The evaluator motivated his decision against a quantitative approach in that it would be too difficult to control all variables (Kroes, 1991a: 9 and Kroes, 1991b: 35f.).

#### **4.2.4 Findings**

The evaluator presented the findings yielded by the two-phased investigation by way of a summary of strong and weak points. The following points are relevant:

- The underlying theory of current views on cognitive development adopted by the course designers was reflected by the course content; an eclectic didactic approach to language was implemented
- The objectives of the course, namely to address teacher training as well as the communicative needs of pupils, were reviewed. In this regard the evaluator

concluded that there were some advantages and disadvantages: teachers were not qualified to conduct the course; making implementation problematic from the pupils' point of view; the ideal teacher-pupil ratio could not be achieved; the course is constantly monitored and guided by project leaders.

- The course content is communicative and relevant; lesson content appropriate to allotted time; attention is given to the “four skills”.
- The didactic implementation is sound: clear didactics in teachers' guides; materials suited to teacher development; active and interactive participation of pupils with materials and guidance in groupwork; adequate attention to English for special purposes (ESP) and English for academic purposes (EAP) activities.
- Learners received exposure to the target language, because English is used as medium of instruction.
- Teaching aids, especially visual aids, are adequate and inexpensive. However, the Molteno Bridge courses may be better off in this regard.
- In the final analysis the evaluator concluded, firstly, that the *Easing into English* course has a theoretical foundation that reflects “universally accepted views on second language acquisition...” (Kroes, 1991a: 2), and secondly, that the two main course objectives — teacher upgrading and the improvement of pupils' communicative skills — had been achieved.

#### **4.2.5 Possible criteria arising out of the *Easing into English (EIE)* project evaluation**

- **Evaluation approach: both objective- and participant-oriented**

From the evaluator's final conclusions and recommendations (Kroes, 1991a: 3) one can conclude that the evaluation was objective- and outcomes-oriented because it had to determine whether two distinct course objectives had been achieved (Kroes, 1991a: 3). Furthermore, the evaluator had to report back its findings to the sponsor, the Urban Foundation. Secondly, the evaluation approach was also participant-oriented. The evaluator of the EIE project concedes that if this

was not the case, the evaluation would not have done justice to the programme itself (Kroes, 1991a: 1). This underscores the fact that both approaches can be married (without giving overriding priority to the sponsor) and emphasising the role of programme staff during the evaluation.

- **Research design: qualitative**

The evaluator admits that although the theoretical rationale and intended course methodology was known to him (Kroes, 1991a: 1), the value of the course could be revealed only by empirical investigation, i.e. through qualitative data collection methods. A quantitative evaluation approach would not have been able to provide empirical information with the same richness, and devising appropriate measurement instruments would be too time consuming. Qualitative ethnographic evaluation instruments such as a structured observation schedule, and triangulation of the data yielded by interaction with participants and programme staff seemed to be more appropriate. By opting for a qualitative-interpretative evaluation design, programme staff were from the outset aware that the evaluator would not disregard their role and viewpoints. The criterion that emerges from this is once again the involvement of programme participants.

While Kroes chose a mainly qualitative evaluation design, he also argues persuasively that, if one is using triangulation as an interpretation instrument, and therefore needs multiple sources of data to reveal congruencies among them, one may also make use of quantitative data. In the *Easing into English* evaluation this is indeed what he did, since the data utilized included a set of pre-course and post-course learner performance test results.

- **Duration and motivation for evaluation** (*How long* and *who* should conduct the evaluation)

The programme staff's input was sought during the evaluation period, which lasted a few weeks, and not for the duration of the project. In this respect, therefore, the

evaluation was outsider-driven (externally motivated) because an outside expert was appointed by the project sponsor - the Urban Foundation - to conduct the evaluation. Although not clearly stated, the evaluation could also be considered as seeking to secure continued financial assistance by the funding agency.

- **The course objectives as the foci of the evaluation** (*What is to be evaluated?*)

The evaluator states (Kroes, 1991a: 3) that the evaluation was informed by the course objectives. The course objectives informed the evaluator as to what the project was set to achieve on completion (upgrading teachers and improving the communicative skills of learners). The extent to which the course objectives had been achieved, enables the evaluator to measure the programme's effectiveness and enables the stakeholders (donors, teachers and education officials) to interpret the merit and worth of the programme.

#### 4.2.6 Implications

Apart from other possible features of the evaluation report, four distinct features can therefore be discerned: an objective- and participant oriented evaluation approach; a qualitative-interpretative research design; an externally motivated evaluation, conducted over a relatively short period of time; course objectives as the objects of evaluation. These features imply that, broadly speaking, the evaluator had a strong orientation to accommodate the programme staff during the evaluation. Although the evaluation was outsider-driven, Kroes did not stop short by aiming for a product-oriented evaluation. The inclusion of an empirical component in the research design underscores the fact that the classroom situation is ultimately the place where the effect of a programme can be seen. By opting for a qualitative-interpretative approach, he went the extra mile to prove that, although an evaluation is externally motivated, room can still be made to accommodate insiders' opinions (and probably concerns).



#### **4.2.7 Kroes's application of a 'shortcut' approach of the HSRC evaluation model**

It is significant to note that the *Easing into English* evaluation had a strong theoretical basis, referring to various language acquisition theories to contextualise the evaluation in terms of globally accepted criteria. This theoretical basis was strengthened by his utilisation of the multidisciplinary approach that characterised the HSRC's evaluation model (cf. Kroes, 1989) of various courses used in African schools, and which employed perspectives from different disciplines.

The disciplines were: cognitive psychology, applied linguistics, subject didactics, curriculum development, teacher training, the audio-visual perspective, practice, English at lower primary level, education administration (Kroes, 1989: 3). Each panel member representing these disciplines used their own theoretical orientation against which they drew up their criteria. The multiplicity of criteria was then reduced to the following eleven (against which each course was given a quantitative score): orientation of the course, teaching / learning objectives, need for special resources or facilities, selection and sequencing of context, English across the curriculum, view of language learning, methodology and classroom management, the four skills, audio-visual support, teacher support and teacher training. Each evaluator used these to evaluate the course material only of the six courses under investigation (Kroes, 1989: 4). In the *Easing into English* evaluation Kroes used the same theoretical framework but short-circuited the model.

He succeeded in accommodating this theoretical component in the EIE evaluation. This gave the evaluation an edge over the MELLD evaluation if one compares the two. We return to the issue of an evaluation design having a theoretical justification in the final chapter.

### **4.3 The Molteno Early Literacy and Language Development (MELLD) project evaluation**

#### **4.3.1 Background, context and course objectives**

The MELLD project was a project located in the (then) Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC). The project sponsors, the British



Department for International Development (DfID, formerly ODA) in 1997 contracted two evaluators, Veronica McKay and Herman Kotze, to conduct the evaluation in order to determine the feasibility of their continued financial support. The project's operational team consisted of education department officials (of the National Institute of Educational Development [NIED] and the Regional Offices) as co-ordinators, and teachers (as implementers), the British Council (as financial manager), and the Molteno Project (of South Africa) as contracted implementing agent. The evaluators describe the project (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 13) as providing literacy and English language teaching for disadvantaged primary school learners. They claim that the project is in line with international research evidence that second language learning is most effective where literacy has first been achieved through the first or home language.

#### 4.3.2 The aims of the evaluation

In its terms of reference, the evaluators state the aims of the evaluation on three levels (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 27).

First, they wished to **assess the extent to which the planned outcomes have been achieved**, i.e. to assess the qualitative standard of literacy; the level of language teaching and learning achieved in the target schools; the impact of the project to date; whether the learner-centred methodology has been applied successfully; the impact of the Molteno training approach, methods and materials on the target group of learners; the capacity of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) to provide and manage the in-service training of teachers; the capacity of the research and development corps to develop Namibian literacy materials for the lower primary grades; and to establish whether there has been an increase in the number of learners in basic education with appropriate mother-tongue and English oral, reading and writing skills.

Second, the evaluators had to determine to what extent the progress of the project had been affected by internal financial administration; by the MBEC/NIED contract with Molteno Project South Africa; the procurement and distribution of material and vehicles; with respect to monitoring and training workshops conducted by the Molteno Project South Africa (MPSA); Thames Valley University (TVU) consultancies and training; by the managerial administration of MELLD.

Third, the evaluators defined their aims in terms of the Department for International Development (DfID) criteria for project evaluation. The evaluators state (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 28) that the project sponsor, DfID, provides a four-point scale against which all DfID projects must be measured. The evaluators were expected to judge the overall project success by awarding a rating of:

- Highly successful (objectives completely achieved or exceeded and very significant benefits in relation to costs)
- Successful (objectives largely achieved and some significant benefits in relation to costs)
- Partially successful (some objectives achieved and some significant benefits in relation to costs)
- Unsuccessful (objectives unrealised and no significant benefits in relation to costs) (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 28).

One should note here that the ratings are not neutral in respect of criteria. Every measure of 'success' is placed "in relation to costs." This means that externally motivated criteria are built right into the ratings themselves.

#### **4.3.3 The research design, its underlying philosophy and evaluation procedure**

The evaluators state that "within the limitations imposed by time, scope and distance, this study attempted to base its exploration on the participative-qualitative" research approach (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 29). They describe the investigation as action research which involves "*all participants in all stages* of the research enterprise" (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 29).

The evaluators' claim to action research is questionable, because action research invariably refers to practitioners researching their own practice (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993: 586) with a view to make incremental improvements to it. As action research involves looking at one's own practices and not those of others, this is therefore a false claim. Furthermore, one must doubt whether action research can be conducted over a period of one week (the time the evaluators spent in the classrooms of teachers in Namibia). What they did could barely have been action research, because they were not contracted to focus on improving their own (evaluation) practice, but rather "on the applicability of the Molteno programmes to the teaching of English and literacy in a pilot project conducted in a sample of primary schools in Namibia" (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 1). Their lip service to action research is apparent in their classroom observations (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 37). Here they are mere 'observers' who "look at the classes in terms of *predetermined criteria*" (emphases added). This goes against the spirit and practice of action research, which seeks to develop criteria out of the practice (in this case, the instructional practice) itself. It is certainly also contrary to the evaluators' own declared intentions of following a participatory approach, which should seek to secure the full and deliberate participation of those involved, especially in the development of criteria. Observers change the performance of teachers, and ethnographic approaches normally acknowledge this. However, we find no such acknowledgement of this in the discussion of how classrooms were observed.

Four research methods were employed by the evaluators, namely document analysis (at the Molteno project offices in South Africa), group interviews, classroom observations, and self-evaluation questionnaires. The latter three data collection techniques were used over a one-week period, while the evaluators were in Namibia. Regarding their motivation for the choice of interviews, the evaluators state that an interview engages "the research subjects in a conversation in which the researcher encourages them to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the issue under investigation" (Kotze & McKay, 1997:

31). However, they acknowledge that the short time available impacted negatively on this method (group interviews). Regarding the self-evaluation questionnaire which teachers had to complete, the evaluators were of the opinion that “one of the main limitations which affected us in this review was that answers are framed by the options teachers are given” (Kotze & McKay, 1997: 39).

One can only speculate as to why the evaluators chose to adopt a limited option questionnaire (i.e. one which contains only closed questions), if by their own admission it is deficient. Perhaps this is an indication of the powerful forces that exist, and come into play, in externally motivated evaluation.

#### **4.3.4 Possible criteria arising out of the MELLD project evaluation**

- **Evaluation approach – both decision- and participant-oriented**

From the evaluation aims it is clear that the evaluation aimed at determining whether the project and programme (course) objectives had been achieved. The evaluation approach was therefore decision-oriented (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 529), because the majority of the evaluation aims were directed to make one important recommendation: that the course be expanded in its present format to other regions, as well as that follow-up courses should be undertaken. Furthermore, the evaluation approach can be considered participant-oriented in so far as it included the implementation staff during the week of the evaluation. However, for participant-oriented evaluation research (including action research) to provide more detailed and ethnographic data, the programme staff should obviously have been engaged for a much longer period (certainly much longer than a week).

- **The research design – qualitative or quantitative**

The evaluation favoured a qualitative evaluation approach to a quantitative approach. This approach guaranteed that the role and viewpoints of traditionally neglected stakeholders, e.g. the teacher, would not be disregarded. The qualitative

data was collected over a relatively short period of time through qualitative techniques. Normally one would conclude that data collected in such a way is formative in nature and aimed at improving the project. Unfortunately the project was already at its end and therefore time was not available to improve the practice of its implementation. Moreover, in not involving implementers in the design, the chance of this ever happening decreased sharply.

- **Duration and motivation for evaluation**

The physical evaluation was conducted over a period of a month by the contracted evaluators. The MELLD evaluation was externally motivated by the project sponsors, DfID, in order to determine its value for money aspect as per DfID's evaluation criteria (i.e. the judgement on overall project success by determining the level to which objectives had been achieved, and an assessment of the benefits in relation to costs). The non-inclusion of Namibian counterparts in the evaluation team emphasised this point. The fact that the evaluation was aimed at recommending wider implementation to the Namibian education authorities, further underscored this motivation.

The third level on which the two evaluators defined their evaluation aims was DfID's four-point evaluation scale, determining project success in terms of objectives achieved in relation to costs incurred. From the sponsor's evaluation criteria the evaluation was clearly objectives-oriented. A critical aspect that obviously was not a major issue for the sponsors, was the English language proficiency of teachers and trainers. The transfer of course content depended to a large extent on teaching through the medium of English, because 90% of the courses evaluated were English courses. The literacy level in the home language of learners could anyway not be evaluated because the two evaluators were not proficient in the Namibian languages. To determine the standard of literacy, as stated in their evaluation aims, the evaluators had to rely only on learners' physical



(body) responses to teachers. This in turn implied that the two evaluators should have first-hand knowledge of the programme, which is doubtful.

The issue of home language and English is a vital aspect, which calls for a much more comprehensive discussion than has featured in both the *Easing into English* and the MELLD evaluations, and will be elaborated upon in Chapter 6.

The primary argument that I have thus far put forward is that teachers could have made a significant impact during the evaluation if they considered themselves 'owners' of the programme. Ownership would guarantee another type of accountability, namely **internal accountability**. Both evaluations had a strong component of **external** accountability, largely because the evaluation was donor-initiated. A prerequisite for internal accountability is that "the practitioner (e.g. the teacher) retains control, and influences the direction of the investigation" (Weideman, 2000). An ethnographic or critical approach which does not seek to manipulate the classroom situation or other variables is today considered to be a far better tool in the hands of the teacher to achieve this. Internal accountability, i.e. taking ownership and responsibility for improving practice, is boosted by an ethnographic approach.



## Chapter 5

### The role of teachers in an evaluation

The examination of the MELLD evaluation discussed in Chapter 4 revealed that teachers were marginalized in that process, to the extent that one would be interested to know whether the picture might have been considerably different if teachers were expected to contribute to the evaluation, i.e. if it were done in a participatory manner. In this regard it might be worth probing their possible involvement by posing the following three questions:

- What could the teachers have contributed if they were expected to participate fully (as equal partners) in the evaluation team?
- How was the MELLD report received by the recipients of the programme and how did the teachers' opinions feature in this regard?
- Regarding the Molteno language course itself, how might teachers have influenced the programme if evaluation was part of their day-to-day duties in the classroom?

Below, I will probe some partial answers to these questions with the aim of highlighting other dormant realities of the programme evaluation which might not feature in an evaluation report, especially if it is externally motivated.

#### 5.1 Teachers as researchers in evaluation

In the same way that language programme evaluation is a comparatively new field in the established field of educational evaluation, the concept of the teacher-as-a-researcher in English language teaching (ELT) is a fairly recent phenomenon in mainstream education (McDonough & McDonough, 1997: 25). Like others before them, these authors are critical of evaluation as an end product, which is characteristic of the objectives-oriented model of evaluation. Instead, they argue, one needs a process perspective, so that one might develop “a view of the teacher as an extended, not a restricted, professional, engaged directly in the discovery and creation of knowledge through ... their own involvement” (McDonough &

McDonough, 1997: 26). Action research belongs squarely to this evaluation paradigm, which is described by Carr & Kemmis (1986: 162) as “a form of reflective inquiry which is undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve ... their own practices”. In an ELT context this approach would mean that “a teacher is concerned about apparently different uptake in course book activities, collects data via observation, field notes and questionnaires, decides to vary the sequence of presentation, monitors success rates ... until some useful changes have been effected” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997: 26).

From the above one can infer that teachers should not be expected to follow slavishly what is contained in a language programme or course. In fact, because education – and therefore language teaching and learning – evolves, teachers should be in a position to make useful changes to a course. The lack of that flexibility was exactly one of the reasons cited by former Molteno teachers in the Windhoek region for the termination of the course. This role of teacher as researcher/evaluator is further underscored by one of the conclusions drawn (at the end of this chapter). Teachers indeed want to have a say (want to evaluate a course in order to determine whether it meets learners’ needs and contains new developments in language teaching) before it is purchased.

Weideman (2000) distinguishes between six language teaching research traditions. The sixth, and most recent tradition, post-modernism, acknowledges “that there is a multiplicity of possible perspectives in the investigation of language teaching problems” (Weideman, 2000). The existence of various perspectives and viewpoints should make evaluators sensitive and persuade them to be inclusive in their orientation. This would certainly, therefore, also include the viewpoint(s) of teachers-as-researchers in an evaluation.

## **5.2 The teacher as member of the evaluating audience**

As we noted in Chapter 2 (2.3.2), the JCSEE’s utility standard states that an evaluation should give due regard to the information needs of the evaluation

audience. Lynch (1996: 168) differentiates between three levels of audiences as well as their proximity to the programme, as indicated in the table below:

	<i>Proximity to programme</i>		
	<i>Day to day contact</i>	<i>Occasional contact</i>	<i>No contact</i>
Sponsors	P	P	T
Administrators	P	S	T
Teachers	P	S	T
Researchers	P	S	T
Students	S	T	T
Evaluators	X	T	T

P = primary evaluation audience; S = secondary evaluation audience;  
T = tertiary evaluation audience.

The primary evaluation audience represents the stakeholders who requested the evaluation and who will receive a formal evaluation report. The secondary audience “may receive an informal report ... or may request a copy of the formal report” (Lynch, 1996: 168). Because the audience is interested in determining whether or not a programme was successful, they might either have a judgmental or descriptive goal for the evaluation. The goal is judgmental when the audience

wish to have judgements made concerning students’ achievement ... teacher effectiveness, teacher attitudes toward the program, or the cost-effectiveness of the program (Lynch, 1996: 169).

The goal is descriptive when the audience wishes to

have descriptions of the program’s instructional process, the various perspectives of program participants, language use (both target language and native language, in certain contexts), the administrative process, and the type of materials being used (Lynch, 1996: 169).

Crucial in this regard, as highlighted by Alderson (1992), is that there may be a substantial difference of opinion among audiences, which needs to be reconciled “through negotiation in advance of the planning and implementation of an evaluation” (Lynch, 1996: 169).

As primary member of the evaluating audience, whether as conveyer of knowledge to learners or as action researcher, the teacher is, on a day to day basis, in contact

with the programme or course. In this ideal position the teacher should be able to contribute substantially to the different opinions shared by the evaluating audience.

Given the difference of opinion among various audiences, it would be worth investigating the extent to which the teacher-researcher ethos has or has not been reflected in the MELLD project evaluation conducted in Namibia. I will now elaborate.

### **5.3 Responses of teachers to the MELLD evaluation**

The MELLD end-of-phase evaluation had an opportunity to consider the first hand opinion of teachers in the Windhoek urban environment, where the programme was first established. However, as we have noted, after five years of involvement in the programme, teachers were left in the cold when it came to designing and carrying out the evaluation. The effect of this was that, after the conclusion of a one-week classroom evaluation, the evaluators recommended that the programme be terminated in urban Windhoek schools, and rather be implemented in rural schools.

The minutes of a meeting held after the MELLD evaluation between programme staff and principals of MELLD pilot schools in Windhoek on 5 November 1997 (National Institute for Educational Development [NIED] 1997), reveal a number of issues pertaining to the evaluation and to the programme itself. Some principals and heads of departments, for example, were not aware that the visit of the evaluators to their schools was indeed intended to evaluate the programme. They had thought it was just one of the normal classroom monitoring visits conducted by project staff. Another group of teachers (and principals) were disgruntled with the programme, as it did not make provision for flexibility and adaptability, because “Molteno staff says that you shouldn’t combine Molteno with other English projects”. Some teachers viewed the programme as of too low a standard because, according to them, “the programme is suitable for learners from rural areas who hardly ever hear or read English”. This constraint limited opportunity to stimulate learners to the

extent expected in an urban setting. Teachers had not been allowed, apparently, to enrich the programme with tasks and materials from other courses.

The MELLD evaluation did not mention or even vaguely hint at any of these matters. In fact, its implicit response to these matters was to recommend that the programme be removed from urban Windhoek schools, which served merely to circumvent the issue.

The JCSEE's standard of ethics (see above, 2.3.2) becomes relevant in this case. By not probing for the possible reasons why urban Windhoek schools were not in favour of continuing with the programme, the evaluators actually neglected the concerns and opinions of a significant group of teachers, omitting any mention of such concerns in their report. From an ethical point of view, one must also question why the programme was considered appropriate for rural schools if it was inadequate for urban schools, which considered it as inappropriate and not responsive enough to the needs of learners.

There is no doubt that, if teachers had been fully involved in conceptualising and doing the evaluation, these kinds of concerns would have been adequately aired. As it was, however, they were not, and a valuable opportunity for improving the programme was lost.

#### **5.4 How was the evaluation report received?**

The two most prominent parties for whom the evaluation was meant were the sponsoring agent (DfID) and the education (MBEC) officials at both head office and regional level. The regional education officials (called Advisory Teachers) are in fact the representatives of the implementing staff, the teachers. The MELLD project evaluators first circulated the draft report to the regional education officials and finally submitted it to DfID. DfID then convened a meeting with the



administrative head (permanent secretary) and senior education staff of the MBEC, who accepted the report.

The evaluators stated that the evaluation was conducted over a period of four months. Upon closer examination, however, it appears that 75% of this time was used up in compiling and circulating the report. Only one week was actually spent in Namibian classrooms. Two weeks were spent in the Molteno project head offices in Johannesburg, to do document analyses and conduct interviews with Molteno project staff members. The three remaining months were used to compile and circulate the report to regional offices in Namibia. The evaluators expected comment from regions, of which some were forthcoming. However, one finds no evidence that teachers were consulted on the content of the report, which is surprising if one remembers that they are the classroom implementers of the programme.

Four years after the evaluation, the project is due to come to an end. The expectation of the sponsor eight years ago was that the Namibian education authorities would consider the value of the programme to be such that they would adopt it as a national programme for public schools. This take-over should have taken place incrementally in the last three-year phase. This has not realised as yet (while the project is due to end in October 2001).

Why has this transition not taken place? It is striking that, after eight years of implementation, the education authorities have not given any indication that they will take the programme on board. Why is there not an urge to take ownership, while the sponsoring agent went to great lengths to conduct annual follow-up reviews, and submitted recommendations to the MBEC as well? There could be many reasons, but it is possible that teachers' minimal input in the evaluation plays a much larger role than the authorities and sponsors suspected. If one takes into account the above discussion, it becomes clear that the teachers played a marginal role during the evaluation. They merely took up the role of objects to be evaluated



during the very limited observations of their interaction with learners and the learning material.

Ownership of a programme is much more possible if those involved in it are in a position to reflect more critically on its classroom implementation, i.e. if they take up responsibility for improvement, or what I have called internal accountability. Ownership at the local level could have ensured that an open and responsive relationship would no doubt have developed between teachers and education officials (advisory teachers, co-ordinating and overseeing the implementation of the programme).

### **5.5 What could teachers have contributed to the Molteno course itself if evaluation was part of their day-to-day activities?**

If, as this study has emphasised, teachers could have a significant impact on language programme or course evaluation, what is it that they might bring to the table? The aim of any evaluation is to determine the value and merit of the language teaching and learning materials available, in order to be able to make a responsible (internally accountable) selection. For the ordinary teacher, the selection of appropriate learning materials probably is the most useful function that language programme evaluation possesses.

A large cohort of literature on the evaluation of English language learning material exists, as work done by Gearing (1999: 122) and Cunningsworth & Kusel (1991:128) demonstrates. Such evaluators use a wide range of methods (like checklists) and techniques in the selection of materials. The foci vary, but one important focus, for example, would be learners' performance. Teachers and advisory teachers arbitrarily have much to say about the improvement or lack of improvement in the performance of learners. However, such comment often remains subjective because learners' performance is largely measured through general assessment (the application of which is questionable in most cases) and not

through language course-specific assessment e.g. a pre- and post-course test procedure.

### **5.5.1 Selection of research sites and subjects, and administering of the questionnaire**

In order to do make a responsible selection of materials, teachers use certain criteria, though they do not always articulate these. The questionnaire administered to teachers for this investigation seeks to identify and articulate some of these criteria.

The questionnaire was administered to 35 teachers in the Khorixas and Windhoek education regions respectively. Selection was done on a non-probability sampling basis (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 160), i.e. those that were readily available to the researcher, but who nonetheless, in the opinion of the researcher, represent a potentially significant and relevant opinion in respect of the questions being answered. Teachers were selected from 5 schools that used the Molteno materials, and 5 which did not use, or had given up using, the same materials. This was done to see how teachers who are exposed to different courses employed the suggested criteria to select language teaching materials.

When we designed the questionnaire, we did it with reference to the Textbook evaluation instrument (see Appendix A) used by the curriculum committee of the Lower Primary phase of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, under the auspices of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). Our questionnaire is an abbreviated, and perhaps more user-friendly form of this instrument.

This is the questionnaire:

**TABLE 1. HOW DO WE EVALUATE ENGLISH COURSES BEFORE ORDERING THEM?**

1. How important are the following considerations:

	not important			extremely important	
Affordability of course	1	2	3	4	5
Course level right to meet learners' needs	1	2	3	4	5
Course matches my own approach to language teaching	1	2	3	4	5
Course is in line with new developments in language teaching	1	2	3	4	5
Course is relevant to local circumstances	1	2	3	4	5
Course is conventional and has a traditional approach	1	2	3	4	5
Course can be adapted to local conditions	1	2	3	4	5
Learning material is culturally sensitive	1	2	3	4	5
Material is visually attractive	1	2	3	4	5
Course has its own pre-test and post-test to measure learner performance	1	2	3	4	5

2. What other considerations would you take into account?

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Thank you for your kind attention! Your opinions are much appreciated.

#### **5.5.1.1. Result presentation and analysis of the responses to the questionnaire**

A total of 35 respondents — 13 Molteno project teachers and 22 non-Molteno teachers from the Khorixas from the Windhoek education regions — completed the questionnaire. The actual numbers of responses are reflected below, followed by a description and interpretation. A correlation is also drawn between responses, followed by an interpretation.

**Table 2**

	Summary: Molteno respondents (13)						Summary of non-Molteno respondents' (22)					
	not important	extremely important	Mean response	% response	not important	extremely important	not important	extremely important	Mean response	% response		
Q 1: Affordability of course	1	5	4	70,0	7	5	4	5	2.95	59,0		
Q 2: Course level right to meet learners' needs	1	1	5	78,4		1	1	20	4.86	97,2		
Q 3. Course matches my own approach to language teaching	1	5	3	73,8	1	4	7	6	3.45	69,0		
Q 4. Course is in line with new developments in language teaching	-	3	3	86,0		1	5	16	4.72	94,4		
Q 5. Course is relevant to local circumstances	-	4	6	78,4		1	3	18	4.81	96,2		
Q 6. Course is conventional and has a traditional approach	1	2	1	73,8	1	6	7	8	3.95	79,0		
Q 7: Course can be adapted to local conditions	-	3	2	83,0		2	7	13	4.50	90,0		
Q 8: Learning material is culturally sensitive	-	4	7	72,2	2	1	2	8	3.90	78,0		
Q 9: Material is visually attractive		2	3	89,2	4	7	6	5	3.54	70,8		
Q 10: Course has its own pre-test and post-test to measure learner performance	1	-	6	80,0	1	1	6	7	3.81	76,2		

### 5.5.1.2 Description: respondents' responses to each individual question

In this section, I will statistically describe the responses. I wish to acknowledge here the assistance and support I received from Dewald Nieuwoudt, of the Education Management Information Service of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, in describing and analysing the responses. The responses of respondents to each question will be looked at by grouping them into three groups: (1) very to extremely important, (2) not a strong position to either side, (3) less to not important.

#### Question 1: Affordability of course

*Molteno classes:* 6 (out of 13) considered it very to extremely important, 5 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 2 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.53 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 70% of teachers considered it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 9 (out of 22) considered it very to extremely important, 5 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 8 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 2.95 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 59% of teachers considered it an important criterion.

#### Interpretation

Percentage-wise the mean response (Molteno – 70% and non-Molteno – 59%) makes it look like an important consideration. However, in reality only 15 (out of 35) teachers consider it an important criterion. The majority (20 out of 35) do not. A possible reason could probably be that teachers are not expected to give input or

make decisions when material is ordered. It can also be that they consider other criteria to be of bigger importance when material is ordered.

### Question 2: Course level right to meet learners' needs

*Molteno classes:* 10 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, 1 teacher did not take a strong position to either side, while 2 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.92 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 78.4% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 20 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, 1 teacher did not take a strong position to either side, while 1 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 4.86 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 97.2% of teachers considered it an important criterion.



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### Interpretation

The overwhelming positive response from the two groups, with 30 (out of 35) rating this important, is indicative that teachers are very strongly in favour of this criterion. The most probable reason might be pedagogical, and this should not be surprising because learning material that suits the needs of learners constitutes the best aid for teachers.

### Question 3: Course matches my own approach to language teaching

*Molteno classes:* 7 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, 5 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 1 felt it is less to not important.



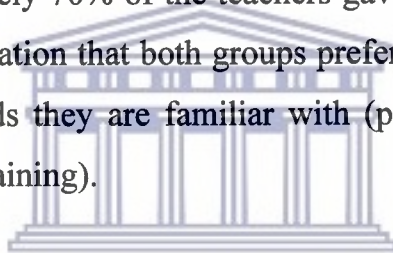
The mean response was 3.69 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 73.8% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 10 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, 7 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 5 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.45 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 69,0% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

### Interpretation

Again, the fact that approximately 70% of the teachers gave this criterion a strong consideration, gives us an indication that both groups prefer a course that is in line with language teaching methods they are familiar with (possibly also trained in, during their PRESET teacher training).



### Question 4: Course is in line with new developments in language teaching

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*Molteno classes:* 10 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, while 3 teachers did not take a strong position to either side.

The mean response was 4.30 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 86,0% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 21 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, while 1 teacher did not take a strong position to either side.

The mean response was 4.72 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 94.4% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

### Interpretation

In comparing the two groups, we find that, teachers overwhelmingly (31 out of 35) considered this an important criterion.

### Question 5: Course is relevant to local circumstances

*Molteno classes:* 9 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, while 4 teachers did not take a strong position to either side.

The mean response was 3.92 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 78.4% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 21 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, while 1 teacher did not take a strong position to either side.

The mean response was 4.81 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 96.2% of teachers consider it an important criterion.



### Interpretation

Significant is that none of the respondents considered the criterion as less or not important. The overwhelming majority (30 out of 35) views this an important criterion. It is very clear that the majority prefer a course that is not alien to, and which can incorporate the circumstances or conditions in which both the learner and teacher find themselves.

### Question 6: Course is conventional and has a traditional approach

*Molteno classes:* 9 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, 1 teacher did not take a strong position to either side, while 3 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.69 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 73.8% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 15 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, 6 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while

1 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.95 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 79% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

### Interpretation

The fact that the mean response was more than 70% positive toward this criterion is indicative that the majority of the respondents have a traditional and conventional inclination toward language teaching. Furthermore, the fact that only four teachers view the criterion as less to not important indicates that unconventional approaches are not favoured. There is a possible contradiction here between teachers' responses to this question and the answers to Question 4, where the mean response for both sets of teachers was overwhelmingly in favour of new (and therefore potentially unconventional) developments. We return to this below.

### Question 7: Course can be adapted to local conditions

*Molteno classes:* 9 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, 3 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 1 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 4.15 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 83% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 20 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, while 2 teachers did not take a strong position to either side.

The mean response was 4.50 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 90% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

### Interpretation

The overwhelming positive mean response (83%-90%) could be interpreted as a strong indication that a course should not be rigid but rather flexible in order to

adapt it to conditions prevailing locally. On another level, it could also be interpreted as an indication that local input should be sought when courses are designed.

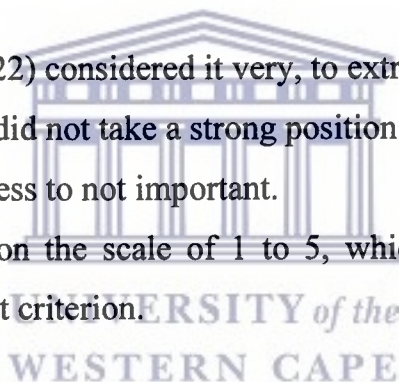
#### Question 8: Learning material is culturally sensitive

*Molteno classes:* 8 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, 4 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 1 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.61 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 72.2% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 17 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, 2 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 3 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.90 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 78% of teachers consider it an important criterion.



#### Interpretation

The clear message (72% - 78%) conveyed by both groups of teachers is a strong indication that the local culture should be valued and reflected in the material.

#### Question 9: Material is visually attractive

*Molteno classes:* 11 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, while 2 teachers did not take a strong position to either side.

The mean response was 4.46 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 89.2% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 11 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, 7 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while

4 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.54 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 70.8% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

### Interpretation

Again, both groups consider it an important criterion. However, when the two groups are taken individually, 84% of the Molteno teachers (11 out of 13) consider this criterion very to extremely important. On the other hand, only 50% of the non-Molteno teachers (11 out of 22) do. A possible explanation could be that Molteno course material is not visually attractive (a complaint raised by principals of Molteno schools and cited as one of the motivations to discontinue the course in city schools of the Windhoek education region in 1997).

### Question 10: Course has its own pre-test and post-test to measure learner performance

*Molteno classes:* 11 (out of 13) considered it very, to extremely important, while 2 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 4.00 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 80% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

*Non-Molteno:* 14 (out of 22) considered it very, to extremely important, 6 teachers did not take a strong position to either side, while 2 felt it is less to not important.

The mean response was 3.81 on the scale of 1 to 5, which means that 76.2% of teachers consider it an important criterion.

### Interpretation

For both groups, the responses were overwhelmingly in favour of this criterion. It seems that both non-Molteno (76.2%) teachers and Molteno (80%) teachers do not feel comfortable with only the education authorities' assessment measures and instruments.

### 5.5.1.3 **Bivariate correlations: Description and analysis of responses to questions posed to Molteno and non-Molteno teachers**

I will now look at the responses to certain questions and see how they correlate with specific others. I will also look at what the frequency of their relationships is with others and then draw some conclusions. In this section correlations were drawn between the ten questions (see Appendix B for full details, and of parameters for statistical significance) in order to elicit more conclusions and/or verify preliminary conclusions drawn through descriptive statistics in the previous section. Three distinct significant correlations can be discerned.

**A statistically significant correlation exists between Question 3 (course matches my own approach to language teaching) and Question 6 (course is conventional and has a traditional approach).**

The Molteno teachers accorded values of 73,8% and 73,8% to these, while the non-Molteno teachers accorded values of 69,0% and 79,0%, respectively. The close link between the two variables is possibly an indication that both groups are relatively conservative in that they feel more comfortable with their own approaches to language teaching, which seem to be traditionally inclined, leaving little room for unconventional approaches.

From the correlations drawn between questions, a pattern can be discerned based on the number of times (“hits”) a question relates to others.

Question 3 (course matches my own approach to language teaching), for example, had “hits” with questions 1, 6 and 10. The fact that teachers prefer courses that reflect the language teaching approaches they are familiar with should not come as a surprise, because as traditionalists, they do not prefer unconventional approaches to language teaching. Their preference for built-in learner performance tests is a further indication that they are probably more at ease with a pre-designed



assessment instrument than to rely on their own judgement. This further corroborates the fact that respondents are traditionalists.

Question 6 (course is conventional and has a traditional approach), in turn, had “hits” with questions 3, 4 and 10. Teachers show a strong inclination toward convention, pre-designed learner assessment and a reluctance to take on other approaches to language teaching than those they are familiar with. This further stresses that they are relatively conservative.

**A second correlation, that between Question 5 (course is relevant to local circumstances) and Question 7 (course can be adapted to local conditions) is statistically significant.**

The Molteno teachers accorded values of 78,4% & 83,0% to these, while the non-Molteno teachers accorded values of 96,2% and 90,0%, respectively. The strong relationship shows that both groups feel convinced that a course should be adaptable to make it relevant to the conditions in the country.

Question 5 (course is relevant to local circumstances) had “hits” with questions 2, 4 and 7. Respondents see new developments as closely knit with the local environment in which the learner finds him / herself. The priority given to this criterion reinforces the view that material developers and publishers should take local needs into account.

Question 7 (course can be adapted to local conditions) had “hits” with questions 2, 4 and 5. Teachers’ response in this case is a replica of what was mentioned under question 5 above.

**Another interesting, actually surprising, correlation is the one that exists between Question 4 (course is in line with new developments in language teaching) and Question 6 (course is conventional and has a traditional approach).**

The Molteno teachers accorded values of 86,0% and 73,8% to these, while the non-Molteno teachers accorded values of 94,4% and 79,0%, respectively. Both groups seem to be in favour of conventional and traditional approaches to language teaching but such courses should also incorporate new developments in that field. This looks like a contradiction, because traditional language teaching methods such as the grammar-translation, audio-lingual and direct methods hardly embody new developments.

How would one interpret this? It seems that a probable explanation might be that, while teachers acknowledge that their own approach is conventional, they indeed genuinely wish to be informed of, and seriously consider, the new. This explanation is corroborated by teachers' comments in the second, open-ended response section of the questionnaire (see below). If this is indeed then a plausible explanation, it reinforces the importance of thorough and proper training for teachers before innovations are introduced.

This explanation is further validated when we look in more detail at responses to Question 4 (course in line with new developments in language teaching). Question 4 had "hits" with questions 2, 5, 6 and 7. It is obvious that teachers view innovations in language teaching as of paramount importance. Language teaching methods and methodologies are being developed and change over time, and teachers probably want to keep abreast of these. Without reading too much into this, one is also aware that newer aspects of teaching like communicative language teaching and learner-centred teaching were absent from courses (prior to Namibian independence) through which teachers themselves were taught. One can conclude that new developments need to be incorporated in a course and be adaptable to provide in learners' needs, i.e. needs that they experience in the conditions and environment in which they find themselves. The fact that teachers prefer conventional courses which display a traditional approach to language teaching, is indicative that not all new developments in language teaching might be welcome, but perhaps only those that relate in some way to traditional approaches.

Another indication of how difficult it might be to introduce an innovation can be found in the strong correlation that Question 4 (course is in line with new developments in language teaching) has with Question 7 (course can be adapted to local conditions). The Molteno teachers accorded values here of 86,0% and 83,0%, while the non-Molteno teachers accorded values of 94,4% and 90,0%. The very strong positive relationship between the two variables seems to be indicative that (for both groups) new developments in language teaching should be adaptable to local conditions (probably district / village / town level).

Another interesting observation is that Question 2 (course level right to meet learners' needs) which has 4 "hits", namely with questions 4, 5, 7 and 8. This question also scored the highest mean among the non-Molteno teachers. For both Molteno and non-Molteno teachers, the needs of learners seem to be paramount. For both groups it is important that the course should be on the level (neither above, nor below) of the learner. Teachers seem to be convinced that learners should not be lagging behind regarding new developments in language teaching. All educationists will agree that, for pedagogical reasons, learning material should match the cognitive development of learners, otherwise learning will fail. Furthermore, they seem to have a condition: that such developments should be adaptable to the learners' local conditions where they live. It further seems that teachers expect that in order for a course to be on the level of the learner, such a course should be cognisant of a learner's culture.

### **5.5.2 Conclusions regarding the questionnaire presented to teachers to elicit possible evaluation criteria**

The research had its limitations. For one thing, not too much should be read into the descriptive and statistical data: the sample is simply too unrepresentative to make any general set of conclusions. Furthermore, the Molteno respondents (teachers) are geographically more isolated than the non-Molteno respondents because the Molteno course only operates in a selected number of project schools. The 13

Moltano respondents were spread in a radius of 100 km in a rural setting while the 22 non-Moltano respondents were within a radius of 3 km in an urban node. However, without trying to generalise too much, some conclusions can be drawn:

- Both Moltano and non-Moltano respondents displayed an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward all the criteria. It could possibly be an indication that they indeed want to have a say in the evaluation of a course before it is ordered.
- This positive indication, that teachers want to play a role in course evaluation, underscores the need to involve them from the outset as part of an evaluation team (whether summative or formative) when new language courses (innovations) are introduced, especially with the project delivery system.
- From the correlations drawn between questions, Question 2 (course level right to meet learners' needs) and Question 4 (course in line with new developments in language teaching) displayed the best correlations. For both groups learners' needs and new developments in language teaching can be considered to be the highest priority when a language course is to be chosen or purchased.
- A distinct group of responses to questions — those with 3 “hits” — emphasised that teachers place a high priority on their own approaches to language teaching, that they prefer courses traditional in approach, and that local circumstances and conditions are very important. This gives a clear signal: teachers are conservative. For course developers and external evaluators, this is also a message: Do not overestimate the progressiveness of teachers with regard to innovations. They might give an indication that they welcome innovations, but they may not want to step outside their comfort zone or the traditional methods they are familiar with.

A third group of questions, those with less than three “hits”, were questions 1, 8 and 9. Question 1 (affordability of course) had hits with questions 3 and 10. It seems that teachers consider it important that a course should accommodate their own approach to language teaching and that the inclusion of learner assessment

tests should be a strong consideration when the cost of a course are considered. The low “hit” is probably also an indication that teachers consider the suitability of a course as much more important than its cost.

Question 8 (learner material is culturally sensitive) had one “hit” with question 2. It seems that respondents are of the opinion that by using culturally sensitive material, you provide in the needs of learners.

Question 9 (material is visually attractive) did not strike a cord with any other criterion. Perhaps one can conclude that although teachers are very positive (70.8%-89,2%) about visually attractive material, they would not give it a major priority when courses are ordered. The Molteno teachers gave it a high score. The reason might be that the material of the specific course they are using is either visually attractive or not, and therefore this criterion is considered important by them.

How did the teachers respond to the open-ended section? When asked, in the second section of the questionnaire, what criteria they themselves would employ to select textbooks and materials in addition to those criteria they were asked to rate in terms of importance in the first section, teachers make a variety of suggestions.

In the first instance, several respondents mention the availability of reading materials or readers that are associated with a course as an important consideration for adopting a specific programme. Others mention that the course should cover all four skills, and that it should be accompanied by workbooks for learners. Thus, while all skills are important, attention to both reading and writing are specifically mentioned.

Other concerns range from the ability of the material to be usable in large classes, to the durability of the books themselves (both considerations that can be expected in a scarce resource environment).

Most significant, perhaps, is the mention of proper training for teachers on how to use the course. This stresses the point made earlier, about the teachers being both traditional in their approach, and possibly yearning to be exposed to new and current developments in second language instruction. Teachers are willing to consider the kind of change envisaged in adopting for use a second language course, but they want to be fully informed about how to use it first. The following remark of one of the respondents is pertinent here:

Teachers who attend courses should get information about the implementation beforehand, because they have to attend courses ... to implement the new course.

In view of the thesis made in this study that the inputs and involvement of teachers in evaluations are critically important, I believe that these suggestions should be taken quite seriously. Given more scope, it would have been interesting to probe further the articulation by teachers of criteria for second language course selection. Unfortunately, that interesting avenue of investigation will have to await the attention of further research.

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## Chapter 6

### Appropriate criteria to determine the impact of language programmes or projects in Namibia

#### 6.1 Clarifying the choices

From the literature review and discussions of the two language programme evaluations, it becomes clear that it would be presumptuous to measure all language programme evaluations with the same yardstick. The importance of context would make nonsense of such oversimplification. The discussion has further underscored that the various sponsors, involved on account of a variety of reasons, follow different approaches. Yet, the discussion has also revealed that a need nevertheless exists to identify common criteria for future programme evaluations in Namibia.

What the review and discussions have not revealed are the underlying or philosophical motivations for selecting certain approaches and avoiding others in the first instance. For there are indeed choices, many of them apparently quite stark, in conceptualising an evaluation of a language programme. The following table attempts to capture some of these difficult, and at times contradictory, choices:

**Choices for evaluation in respect of various aspects**

<b>Paradigm</b>	<b>Positivistic</b>		<b>Naturalistic</b>
<b>Orientation</b>	objective	decision	participant
<b>Types</b>	summative		formative
<b>Design</b>	quantitative		qualitative
<b>Duration / time</b>	end of project		during project
<b>Motivation</b>	extrinsic		intrinsic
<b>Aim</b>	accountability		improvement
<b>Emphasis</b>	product		process

On closer examination, however, it has appeared that these apparently opposing and contradictory choices are often not as sharply distinguishable in practice as

they are portrayed to be in the literature. For example, many qualitative designs nowadays allow themselves to be informed by quantitative data. The Kroes (Kroes: 1991a) evaluation of the *Easing into English* programme is a case in point. Here, the evaluator also decided on an evaluation **orientation** that was both objective- and participant-oriented. Information was gathered to convince the sponsors that the stated objective had been achieved, and this was achieved by making use of the project team in a participatory manner.

Another example of the boundaries between these kinds of opposites disappearing or at least being less starkly conceived, one finds in the fact that the *EIE* evaluation was **aimed** at both accountability and programme improvement. While the evaluation could confirm that the sponsor has received ‘value for money’, it could elicit weaknesses in the programme which the project staff needed to improve.

The MELLD evaluation also **aimed** at being both accountability focussed and participant **oriented**. Although they may not have realised this in practice, it is indeed possible, as we have seen in discussing the proposals made by Mackay (1994) and Silvester (1997). Accountability should in fact be seen as a concept that includes both external and internal accountability, with the latter occurring where the programme-staff take ‘ownership’ of a programme.

## **6.2 Summary of criteria**

Below, I briefly review the criteria that have thus far been identified in the survey of the literature (Chapter 2), and in the preceding discussion of the two evaluation reports and the Indonesian model (Chapters 3 and 4).

### **6.2.1 Criterion: Participant-oriented evaluation approach**

The literature reveals that a naturalistic and participant-oriented approach to evaluation is more revealing of teachers’ behaviour in the classroom, in terms of interaction with the instructional material, learners and the application of teaching methods. As first-line implementers of a programme, teachers’ thoughts and opinions are without doubt most important when the suitability of a programme is

being considered. Teachers are much more engaged in the evaluation process in this respect than in an objective or output-oriented approach. It is vital, furthermore, that a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere (characteristic of a participant-oriented approach), which is conducive to openness, prevails during an evaluation. This becomes even more important when one takes into account that there are already negative factors prevailing in the Namibian classroom, such as the low English proficiency of teachers (English Language Teacher Development Project [ELTDP], 1999), and a dependence on INSET through projects.

A participant-oriented approach further acknowledges, from the outset, teachers as partners and not as the objects of the evaluation. The voices of teachers should be heard. This is vital, since the primary aim of language programme evaluation in Namibia is to determine what a 'good' ESL programme looks like. Without teachers participating and contributing, our understanding of a good ESL programme will be poorer.

Of paramount importance, however, is that evaluators should not pay lip service to this concept, especially if an ethnographic research technique like action research is employed. Action research could well enhance the evaluation of a programme considerably, but then teachers should be the ones reflecting on their classroom practice and not external evaluators. If this criterion is considered appropriate for the Namibian context, enough time for reflection should be built into the programme. Teachers may need to be trained in reflective techniques, particularly procedures such as action research that can be directly adapted to make incremental adjustments and improvements to instructional materials being used in the classroom.

### **6.2.2 Criterion: formative (as opposed to summative) evaluations**

The literature reviewed brings one to the conclusion that in the Namibian context the choice should be in favour of formative evaluations. Summative evaluations, normally conducted over short periods of time (ranging from a week to a month), place an inordinately large emphasis on expert evaluation knowledge. Evaluators

with specialised knowledge and experience to grasp a situation (especially in an environment completely unfamiliar to them) are, however, rare in Namibia, so the validity of external expert knowledge can easily be questioned.

If the formative dimension of evaluation is built into the programme design from the outset, then teachers and programme staff (local counterparts of external evaluators) will know that it is their responsibility to determine the suitability and applicability of whatever they implement. By so doing, they are taking ownership of it. By reflecting on their own actions on a day-to-day basis, they are in fact empowering themselves with evaluation skills. Ultimately, it is the teachers (apart from the education officials) who have to make the recommendations and final decisions regarding the wider implementation of second language programmes. I would argue therefore, that they have monitoring and evaluation as part of their day-to-day job description for as long as they are attached to a language programme or project. A formative dimension, built into a participant-oriented evaluation approach, does not conflict with such an approach, but rather complements it.



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### 6.2.3 Criterion: Insider-motivated

The discussion above points clearly towards the teachers (as well as officials of the education department) being an integral part of the second language evaluation team from the outset, answering the critical question posed in Rea-Dickens and Germaine's (1992) framework discussed in Chapter 2 on *who should do the evaluation*. Insider-led evaluation becomes a reality when teachers have self-confidence and can reflect on their own classroom-practice. Reflection encourages critical thinking and, among others, also an openness to share views. Capacity building in this way minimises reliance on fly-in-fly-out experts. The role of externally appointed (donor-initiated) evaluators is not to be dismissed wholesale, but once the evaluation is insider motivated, external evaluators rather become supportive of the evaluation and not initiators *per se*.

#### **6.2.4 Criterion: Programme improvement**

As the Indonesian model referred to above illustrates, evaluation for accountability could be coupled to programme improvement and teacher development, as these concepts are not necessarily in conflict with one another. In fact, the latter would enhance the former. However, the aim to determine whether objectives had been achieved (external accountability, driven by the sponsors) through reviewing outputs at regular intervals, should be de-emphasised. With programme improvement at the centre, teachers will not merely see themselves as implementers of a programme ‘according to the book’ (which unfortunately encourages subjectivity and window-dressing in the classroom). They rather see themselves as having the power to question, adapt and change methods, activities and approaches to make them more suitable to local conditions. Teachers can achieve this by means of peer evaluation (using instruments like self-reporting questionnaires and interviews) and, through that, acquire their own evaluation skills.

An evaluation approach which embraces both the dimensions of accountability and programme development, accommodates the goal of determining the value of the educational product (in this case, the language programme), satisfies the contractual demands of sponsors (e.g. DfID and the Namibian government), and supplies information on strategies for programme or project improvement. Central in this approach is “insider involvement ... as it encourages active participation in identifying and collecting information which all parties recognise as useful” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 8). This approach also “can forge stronger and more trusting relations between the bureaucracy, staff and external evaluators” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 8f.), and this will encourage staff to implement evaluation recommendations, since they were party to the evaluation (investigation) process.

#### **6.2.5 Criterion: Qualitative research design**

Regarding the choice between a qualitative and quantitative approach, I am of the opinion that a qualitative research design to evaluation should be considered as



more appropriate for second language programme evaluations in Namibia. Such an approach allows for eliciting more in-depth information regarding teachers and learners, the application of language methodology, the applicability of course material, and human and financial resources. A qualitative evaluation research design, conducted in the form of an ethnographic study, enables the evaluator (researcher) to utilise qualitative data collection techniques. Such techniques could include observation (observing phenomena as they naturally unfold in the classroom situation over an extended period of time), interviews (enabling the evaluator to pursue a wide range of topics related to the programme) and document analysis (contained in reports, minutes, etc.). A qualitative evaluation research design, with a built-in action research component, has an added advantage because teachers “gain research knowledge and skills, are more aware of options for change, and become more critical and reflective about their own practice” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 21).

Indeed, a purely quantitative design might not necessarily reveal all the data required. As mentioned earlier (6.1), a distinctly positivistic or naturalistic language programme evaluation is not that easy to find in practice. The development “of the *compatibilist* stance (also referred to as the *accommodationist* stance)” (Lynch, 1996: 155) has in fact paved the way to mix designs from both paradigms. This viewpoint provides that “quantitative data and statistical analysis can make sense in the naturalistic way of knowing, and qualitative data and analysis can make sense within the positivistic way of knowing” (*ibid.*). The HSRC model developed by Henk Kroes and others (cf. Kroes 1991b) is a case in point, where quantitative data collection techniques were used successfully. The six language teaching courses were subjected to a theoretical evaluation assigned ratings on a scale of 1 – 5 for the twelve categories / perspectives decided upon by the eight panel members. Through the application of a quantitative technique, three out of six were eliminated from the second level of evaluation that was empirical in nature. This shows that the inclusion of a quantitative data collection technique is especially valuable when two or more language courses are compared. However,



in this regard Kroes (1991b) cautions that, although the HSRC model can definitely be used to evaluate a single language course/programme, its application in such a case places a much bigger responsibility on the expertise and discretion of the evaluator.

### **6.2.6 Criterion: Theoretical justification**

The evaluations done by Kroes (1991a, 1991b) are an illustration of how the conduct of an evaluation can be strengthened if it can be justified in terms of some theoretical framework. Without such a framework, in fact, an evaluation design that runs into difficulties has no theoretical basis to refer to, and therefore no theoretical foundation that might suggest alternatives.

This criterion, however, is seldom referred to in the literature. It is taken for granted that an evaluation will have some theoretical foundation but the need to articulate it so that the foundations of the evaluation can themselves be scrutinized and debated, is seldom mentioned. Yet, as this analysis has shown (see above, 4.2, and specially 4.2.7), such a foundation can significantly enrich an evaluation design.

### **6.2.7 Ethical considerations**

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the issue of language as medium of learning and instruction should feature much more prominently in language programme evaluations in Namibia than it currently does, since it calls up a range of ethical issues. Let us consider this matter in a little more detail.

In both evaluations, the evaluators accept uncritically that English should be the language through which learners should learn, be instructed and acquire knowledge. The critical point is not addressed, namely whether this is the best

strategy for learners to become competent readers and learners. Overwhelmingly the evidence is that mother tongue instruction is the only good foundation for literacy. The Molteno materials acknowledge that, though the first language materials were not evaluated to any extent in the evaluation under scrutiny. The *Easing into English* evaluation similarly fails to problematise the choice of English as language of learning.

The Namibian case is compounded by low levels of proficiency among teachers (ELTDP, 1999), at exactly the level (Grade 4) that the switch to English has to occur, according to policy (MEC, 1993b). How can learners learn from teachers who are themselves not proficient in English? Thus learners may be doubly disadvantaged: a too early switch to English as medium of instruction, and low levels of teacher proficiency in English.

There are obvious ethical questions that arise out of this, for it is clear that the policy and organisational arrangements prescribed by policy play a role in putting learners at a disadvantage. There is thus a structural reason for learners' failure, over which they have no control (cf. Weideman 2000). Indeed, as is pointed out here, such organisational arrangements create "low expectations of learners, and low levels of support for them in the form of textbooks and materials." In the light of the latter, it is worrisome that the evaluators of the MELLD project did not provide for a more in-depth discussion, for example with the teachers of urban Windhoek schools (see discussion in previous chapter), who had problems in using the materials provided by the Molteno programme. Their response to locate the programme to rural schools actually implies an unequal outcome. Why would materials that are not good enough for an urban environment be good enough when they are dumped in a rural environment?

All of this further accentuates the importance of including in an evaluation the proprietary standard of the JCSEE, which proposes that due regard be given to “the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results” (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 38).

### **6.3 Conclusion**

Where, finally, do we stand with the evaluation of language programmes and projects in Namibia?

Throughout this discussion, there was a thematic thread: teachers, as front-line implementers of language programmes and innovations, have a much greater role to play than currently anticipated. The prerequisite, however, is that their role in the evaluation process need to be identified and clarified even before a language programme or innovation is introduced. This implies the inclusion of a training programme that equips them to reflect on their future (and current) practice as implementers of innovation, as well as support from external evaluators attached to projects.

I trust that this discussion will have made some contribution towards achieving that.

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## TEXTBOOK AND MATERIAL EVALUATION INSTRUMENT (Languages)

1. Subject: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Phase: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Grade: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Series: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Type of text: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Author(s): \_\_\_\_\_
8. Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_
9. ISBN No: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Year published: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Price: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Submitted as: (book, manuscript, dummy copy)

- *Material refers to book / tape / video / workbook / etc.*

*All four categories should be completed to contribute to the final mark. Grading is between 5 (high) and 1 (low). Completed forms are confidential documents.*

Evaluator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Suitability of theme/commentary: target group, age, impact on reader

Quota: .....

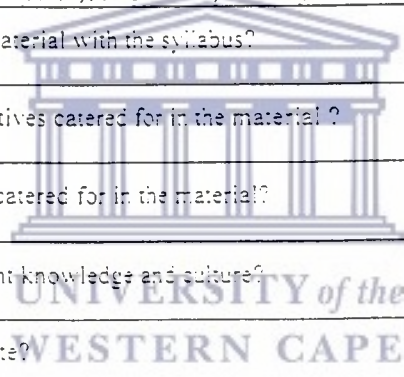
APPROVED NOT APPROVED AS SUITABLE MATERIAL FOR LEARNERS/TEACHERS

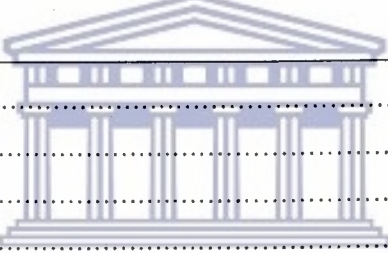
CHAIR: COMMITTEE: .....

DATE: .....

<b>1. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS / LAYOUT</b>	
1.1	<b>Durability:</b> Quality of paper and binding. Is it likely that the material will be usable for five years? (5 Yes to 1 No)
1.2	<b>Typeface and size:</b> Is the type, including captions and labelling of illustrations clear and large enough for learners intended? (5 Yes to 1 No)
1.3	<b>Layout and appearance:</b> Is the material aesthetically appealing? Look at general layout, width of margins, etc. (5 Yes to 1 No)
1.3.1	Does the book contain a table of content? (5 Yes to 1 No)
1.3.2	Does the material contain an adequate index? (5 Yes to 1 No)
1.4	<b>Cost:</b> Is the cost reasonable compared to similar materials? (5 Yes to 1 No)
Sub-total: 30	
Comments: .....	
.....	
.....	

<b>2. CONTENT</b> <i>(Please see if section is relevant to a course book (*), a reader(&amp;) or a reference book (#).)</i>	
2.1	How consistent is the approach used in the material with the syllabus? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.2	To what extent are relevant knowledge objectives catered for in the material? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.3	To what extent are relevant skills objectives catered for in the material? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.4	To what extent does the content reflect current knowledge and cultures? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.5	Is the content of the material factually accurate? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.6	How free is the material of bias unacceptable to teachers, learners, communities and MBEC policies? (5 Entirely to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.7	To what extent do the materials reflect the contributions and perspectives of various ethnic and cultural groups where appropriate? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.8	Is the material free of stereotypes? (5 Yes to 1 No) (*.&.#)
2.9	To what extent does the material encourage a positive attitude towards gender? (5 Largely to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
2.10	To what extent does the material encourage a positive attitude towards issues? (e.g. population, environmental, etc.) (5 Largely to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.#)
Sub-total: 50	
Comments: .....	
.....	
.....	



<b>3. PEDAGOGICAL / METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS</b>		
3.1	To what extent is the content of the material likely to be clearly understood by the learners who will be using it? (5 Largely to 1 Hardly) (*.&.=)	
3.2	How helpful are the tests and other assessment devices in the material likely to be to the teacher? (5 Very to 1 Not much) (*.&.=)	
3.3	How helpful are the tests and other assessment devices in the material likely to be to the learner? (5 Very to 1 Not much) (*.&.=)	
3.4	Does the design of the materials allow teachers to use them effectively in mixed ability classrooms? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.=)	
3.5	How does the methodology of the material help the learner achieve the syllabus objectives? (5 Fully to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.=)	
3.6	Is the material of an appropriate length? (5 Yes to 1 No) (*.&.=)	
3.7	Is the use of the material easily manageable by the teacher? (5 Largely to 1 Not easily) (*.&.=)	
3.8	Does the material include activities that learners are capable of performing and will find stimulating, interesting and rewarding? (5 Largely to 1 Scarcely) (*.&.=)	
3.9	Does the material use appropriate tables, illustrations, diagrams, charts, sketches and photographs to explain the content? (5 Yes to 1 No) (*.&.=)	
Sub-total: 45		
Comments: .....		
.....		
.....		
.....		
 <b>UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE</b>		
<b>4. LANGUAGE LEVELS</b>		
4.1	Is the material written at an appropriate reading level for the learners who will be using it? (5 Yes to 1 Too difficult/easy) (*.&.=)	
4.2	Is the material written at an appropriate comprehensive level for the learners? (5 Yes to 1 Too difficult/easy) (*.&.=)	
4.3	Are new and critical concepts defined in a glossary or explained when they are first introduced in the text? (5 Yes to 1 No) (*.&.=)	
Sub-total: 15		
Comments: .....		
.....		
.....		
.....		
.....		





APPENDIX "B"

	Q_01	Q_02	Q_03	Q_04	Q_05	Q_06	Q_07	Q_08	Q_09	Q_10
Q_01 Pearson Correlation	1.000	.227	.426*	.130	-.158	.084	.183	-.032	.201	.415*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.189	.011	.458	.365	.630	.294	.854	.246	.013
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_02 Pearson Correlation	.227	1.000	-.020	.652**	.636**	.232	.598**	.408*	-.234	.220
Sig. (2-tailed)	.189		.909	.000	.000	.179	.000	.015	.176	.204
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_03 Pearson Correlation	.426*	-.020	1.000	.146	-.008	.468**	.202	.284	.191	.351*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.909		.403	.966	.005	.244	.098	.271	.039
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_04 Pearson Correlation	.130	.652**	.146	1.000	.527**	.401*	.528**	.305	-.269	.271
Sig. (2-tailed)	.458	.000	.403		.001	.017	.001	.075	.118	.115
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_05 Pearson Correlation	-.158	.636**	-.008	.527**	1.000	.258	.549**	.122	-.228	-.037
Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	.000	.966	.001		.135	.001	.486	.187	.833
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_06 Pearson Correlation	.084	.232	.468**	.401*	.258	1.000	.240	.303	.207	.465**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.630	.179	.005	.017	.135		.165	.077	.233	.005
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_07 Pearson Correlation	.183	.598**	.202	.528**	.549**	.240	1.000	.050	.049	.138
Sig. (2-tailed)	.294	.000	.244	.001	.001	.165		.773	.778	.428
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_08 Pearson Correlation	-.032	.408*	.284	.305	.122	.303	.050	1.000	-.197	.263
Sig. (2-tailed)	.854	.015	.098	.075	.486	.077	.773		.256	.127
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_09 Pearson Correlation	.201	-.234	.191	-.269	-.228	.207	.049	-.197	1.000	.236
Sig. (2-tailed)	.246	.176	.271	.118	.187	.233	.778	.256		.172
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Q_10 Pearson Correlation	.415*	.220	.351*	.271	-.037	.465**	.138	.263	.236	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.204	.039	.115	.833	.005	.428	.127	.172	
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).