

**DECENTRALIZATION OF BASIC
EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA:
ANTICIPATING IMPLEMENTATION**

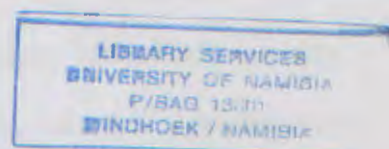
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by

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ABSTRACT

Educational decentralization in Namibia is a manifestation of wider administrative and political decentralization. In many countries, Namibia included, decentralization as part of reform, tends to be born in political arenas and driven by many motives. Through this study it became clear that decentralization in Namibia is a political commitment to take decision-making and resources to sub national level. From an educational perspective the major, pronounced rationale everywhere in the world is that decentralization will improve schooling outcomes. From the assumption that decentralization in Namibia was initiated without educational motives it misses the point that decentralization can be used as a tool to raise quality in education. By stating that, this study does not claim that decentralization, driven by whatever motives, cannot contribute to the improvement of the quality of education. However, decentralization should not be seen as a panacea for all the challenges facing education. In fact, the process of decentralization in Namibia is not without hurdles. The conditions for the successful implementation of decentralization are based on the need to promote and support institutional capacity. Human resource training at all levels of a decentralized arrangement is a pre-requisite for successful implementation. This study found that a lack of political commitment, bureaucratic resistance and inadequate resources are major factors that impede the successful implementation in Namibia. Four years after the official launch the process is seen to be still in its infancy.

Prior to and after independence until 1998, educational decentralization in Namibia was characterized by informal changes and not accompanied by legislation. The National Decentralization Policy was launched in 1998 and laws to this effect were enacted subsequently. This study specifically analyzes the design stage of the process. It further determines the primary criteria for decentralization and investigates impediments to the implementation of educational decentralization in Namibia. In conclusion the study found that a well designed policy for administrative decentralization is in place which is of paramount importance for successful implementation. However, with many stumbling blocks in the way and with much rhetoric but no action, the whole process urgently needs a serious kickstart.

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DECLARATION

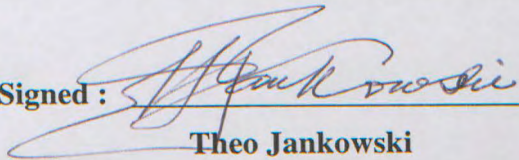
DEDICATION

To the memory of my late parents for having brought me up the way they did.

DECLARATIONS

I hereby declare that this work, entitled “ Decentralization of Basic Education in Namibia: Anticipating Implementation”, is my own independent work except where stated otherwise in the acknowledgements or the text, and that it has not been previously submitted in whole or in part for an award at any institution.

Signed :



Theo Jankowski

Date:

26
Day

03
Month

2003
Year

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	-	Administrator General
BEP	-	Basic Education Project
DIP	-	Decentralization Implementation Plan
DPIC	-	Decentralization Policy Implementation Committee
DNE	-	Department of National Education
GTZ	-	German Technical Cooperation
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
MBESC	-	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MOF	-	Ministry of Finance
MRLGH	-	Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
PS	-	Permanent Secretary
REU	-	Regional Education Unit
SWAPO	-	South West African People's Organization
UNIN	-	United Nations Institute For Namibia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, the decentralization of government services has become a common trend around the world. In Africa the wave of decentralization initiatives may be attributed to the appearance of multi-party systems. Decentralization of government services has been a popular strategy for remedying the problems of governance in many African countries. Education, in particular, which has experienced major reforms, has been fertile ground for decentralization efforts. There has been a world-wide trend to give schools greater decision-making autonomy in the interest of improving school performance and accountability. However, educational reform does not always result in change and improvement. The rationale behind decentralization efforts varies in Sub-Saharan African countries. A common central assumption in these countries' initiatives is that decentralization will improve the ability of their governments to promote development.

According to Adamolekun (1991), there is a substantial gap between proclaimed policies and implementation. I agree with his statement, because in Namibia the decentralization policy was officially launched in 1998, but after four years the process is still in its infancy. There was much rhetoric but no action. The

decentralization policy remained a blue-print on paper without practical applicability. Naidoo (2002:1) commented on this scenario of rhetoric versus real action by noting that,

"... not only is there a gap between intentions and actions; often educational decentralization has been motivated by reasons other than purely educational motivations."

The Namibian situation is a point in case. Not only has the process slowed down to a crawl but the decision for decentralization was a political one. The decision was already articulated in the Swapo Party's election manifesto of 1989.

1.1.1 Education before Independence

Prior to independence education provision in the country was based on ethnic considerations. It was unfair, discriminatory and fragmented. It is a common perception that formal education in Africa and thus in Namibia was introduced by the missionaries and colonialists. Amukugo (1993:178) opposed this view by arguing that:

"...this study recognises the fact that there existed educational systems, with both formal and informal aspects, in pre-colonial Namibia. It therefore denies the validity of the commonly held view that missionaries were pioneers of formal education in Namibia. The arguments put forward in this regard should

however, not be taken as an uncritical glorification of a perfect educational system. Lack of written materials and heavy reliance on memory, for example, were but a few of the limitations of this system." She argues further that, "... missionary education in Namibia was not introduced into a vacuum..." When the missionaries arrived in Namibia pre-colonial social formations had evolved their own distinct education systems. The pioneers of Western education in Namibia were missionaries of the London and Wesleyan Missionary Societies (1805), the Rhenish Missionary Society (1842), and the Finnish Missionary Society (1870)."

During the decades leading up to Namibian Independence the churches in Namibia would play a vital role in the education of the country despite early influence by the colonists. Prior to independence these institutions were the voice of the voiceless.

Bantu Education based on the South African Education Act of 1953 was introduced in Namibia in 1962. Up to 1960 education in Namibia was controlled from South Africa through the South West African Administration. During the late sixties there were three basic education authorities, namely the Administration of South West Africa that controlled education for whites, Education and Training, which controlled black schools from Pretoria and the Department of Coloureds and Rehoboth Affairs, which controlled education for coloureds. Amukugo (1993:70) argues that:

"...Bantu Education was no more than a well-planned state instrument for the reproduction of cheap labour power... the false decolonisation period (1977 – 1987) was characterised by a three-tier system namely central, regional and local levels. The second-tier governments executed de facto power, which simply means the Bantustan governments."

The objectives of Bantustan Education reflected the ideology of oppression as affirmed by Amukugo (1993:61):

"... the African was to be equipped with the following skills and aptitudes: religious knowledge and good manners so that they could ... become good servants that conform rather than question the existing order."

The National Education Act (Act 30 of 1980) placed African education under the final control of the Administrator-General, who in turn was accountable to the President of the Republic of South Africa. This notorious Act is known as A.G. 8.

In 1985 a Transitional Government was established in Namibia at the request of "homeland" leaders. They argued that the South African representative, the Administrator-General, took decisions which were counter-productive. In an interview with Mr Andrew Matjila, the then Minister of National Education in the Transitional Government, he mentioned that as new minister he immediately

appointed a commission of inquiry into education. The reason was that the “Apartheid” education was unfair and poorly constructed. He accordingly took ambitious decisions which were regarded as arrogant by the South African Government, the colonial power. Mr Matjila wanted to open schools to all children regardless of colour or creed. The Education Committee of 1985 compiled a report, Recommendations for A National Education Policy, Objectives And Strategies. The main objective was the scrapping in its entirety of the existing education system in favour for a new one. In Mr Matjila’s opinion the report offered the opportunity for change in the education system. He added that the recommendations were not far-reaching enough but at least was a scratch on the concrete. The representative of the Whites did not sign the final document. After Matjila made a public statement that all schools should be open to all learners, he was allegedly summoned to Pretoria by the then South African President and was reprimanded.

Amukugo (1993) on the other hand, counters virtually all recommendations of this Education Committee. She contends inter alia, that the findings of the committee reflect the committee’s difficulties in accepting real facts as opposed to what it wanted to believe. She further argues that it could also depend on the committee’s equilibrium perspective, which is quite apparent in her opinion. Education was decentralized to the second-tier authorities. Each and every group ran its own education. Cohen (1995) depicts the status quo of the Namibian education system prior to independence as follows:

By 1989 the Caprivian, Damara, Herero, Kavango, Nama, Ovambo, Rehoboth Baster, Tswana, Coloured and White ethnic authorities each had their own Directorate of Education and Culture in addition to the centralised Department of National Education (DNE). This amounted to a form of ethnic promoting the goal of ethnic fragmentation. Decision-making, policy formulation, funding and supervision were however done by Central Government. The South African administration's method of hierarchical educational structure ensured the system's dependency upon the state and its institutions.

Equity was not an aim of this sort of decentralization. Obviously it is the responsibility of any government to distribute its resources and means on an equitable basis to its subjects. It was therefore of paramount importance that Namibia undergo a radical change in governance at the attainment of its independence. Freire (1970) argued:

"...upon seizing power, formerly subjugated people must not simply introduce the oppressive management and control hierarchy of an inequitable system into the new, horizontal institutions. Such a move would simply transpose the power dynamic without changing it." (Quoted in Gonzales 2002:106).

1.1.2 Education after Independence

At the attainment of independence on 21 March 1990, Namibia embarked upon a massive education reform programme. The new Namibian Constitution guarantees free and compulsory primary education for all. The national leadership has specified the major goals of the national education policy. Wide consultations with all stakeholders took place within the Ministry of Education and Culture and in the broad education community. A coherent and focused statement of policies, goals and priorities for education had to be drawn up. The new Ministry of Education faced the formidable task of addressing the pre-independence education system, which was characterized by acute disparities, inequities and tensions. It was therefore decided to prepare the following statement, "Towards Education For All: A Development Brief For Education, Culture and Training". The broad goals of the Ministry are contained in this document. These goals are access, equity, quality and democracy. The document (Towards Education For All:168) also elaborates on decentralisation which it describes as follows:

"Fundamentally decentralization is concerned with the relocation of authority and responsibility from the centre to regional and local levels."

After independence one education ministry was formed out of the former eleven ethnic directorates, and education was decentralized to six and later to seven education regions. It was decentralized on the basis of de-concentration because the

seven education regions were sub-entities of the central Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture.

The workload is shifted from the ministry's centrally located head office in Windhoek to staff in regional offices outside Windhoek. However, employees still remain employees of the central government.

1.1.3 Achievements of the new education system (1990 – 1998)

The past decade has seen many achievements in education, culture and training. The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training (1999,17) elaborates on some of the achievement as follows:

“A unified and thriving education system, full of dedicated and innovative educators has been created. This has been built on a difficult foundation. In the previous century of colonial rule, black Namibians depended for the most part on the limited resources of the missionary agencies. Secondary education only became available to black Namibians in the 1950s. Significant government resources only started going into the education of black Namibians in the 1960s, and then with the intention of limiting and dividing the aspirations of those who were hearing about the decolonization of the rest of the continent. Every possible facility had, however, been provided for white Namibian education from the 1920s onwards. Article 20 of Namibia's Constitution, adopted in 1990,

provides for education as the right of all residents, and for free and compulsory primary education for all children. The first task of the new Ministry of Education and Culture, to create a unified structure for educational administration, melding established and new cadres in the spirit of national reconciliation, was accomplished by 1991. It is important to note that this structure included six and later seven regional offices from the outset, so that there was room to balance national interest and regional variation. By 1993 a basic document, "Toward Education For All," was published. Access to schooling has grown, both at primary and secondary levels. The total number of learners in schools has grown from 382 445 in 1990 to 497 418 in 1998, representing an annual growth rate of 2,5 percent and an overall growth of 30 per cent. 50,6 percent of learners are girls. About 90 percent of school-age children (between 6 –16) are in school. The growth in the numbers of learners has been especially impressive in the northern regions. Enrolment increased by nearly 50 percent over the decade in the Ohangwena and Oshikoto Regions combined, and by over 50 percent in the Kavango Region. The number of teachers has increased from 13 231 in 1990 to 17 085 in 1998, with many programmes in place to improve their professional skills and qualifications. Teachers' salaries have improved. Programmes have recently been launched to reach educationally marginalized groups, and to provide food at school for 90 200 children in need. A total of 2 727 new classrooms were built in the period 1990 – 1999 and 398 classrooms renovated. 867 classrooms are due to be built in the 1999/2000 financial year, following an increase in both government and donor funding.

The Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, Hon. Mr John Mutorwa echoed those achievements in an interview. He stated that :

“The problem of access to basic schooling has been solved for most children in Namibia. Now, there is a growing consensus that it is the quality of education that must be improved. We have reached the enrolment of 93 % - 94 % by implementing the policy of access. Much success has also been achieved with teacher training. The University of Namibia and the four Teachers Training Colleges do a very good job”.

It is thus generally accepted that considerable improvements in education were brought about through informal decentralization initiatives between 1990 and the present date, amongst others, access to schooling and democracy.

1.1.4 The National Decentralisation Policy

After the launching of the National Decentralisation Policy in 1998 it was envisaged that education be decentralized to the thirteen political regions (MAP 1). The Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture was requested by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing to draw up its own Decentralization Plan. This plan of the MBESC spells out the administrative decentralization process of the education ministry. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and others assist the Ministry of Basic Education,

Sport and Culture significantly in certain decentralization initiatives e.g. school boards and the school cluster systems¹ (Figures 1 & 2). From an educational perspective, decentralization is designed to improve schooling outcomes. It is also viewed as an instrument for enhancing democracy development, promoting ownership, responsibility and accountability at grassroots level. On the process of decentralization the Minister expressed himself as follows:

“The MBESC’s Decentralization Plan aims at empowering the regions. by bringing certain responsibilities, duties and resources closer to the people with the ultimate objective that the services should be rendered quite efficiently and effectively. Education should be brought closer to the people. In Namibia we must also appreciate our history. We come from a history of divide and rule. We come from a history where we had eleven administrations of education. I don’t think that we will walk a safe way if in the course of decentralizing educational responsibilities and duties a perception is created whereby a certain region or ethnic group intends to run its own education system. Neither should a perception prevail that an ethnic group can appoint their own teachers and keep teachers of other ethnic groups out. Once that perception is created then decentralization will be a big destructive monster, for national unity, national reconciliation and teaching.”

¹ A cluster system is a geographical entity, which includes primary and secondary schools, or either

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Apartheid regime in Namibia prior to independence imposed an educational system with little or no relevance to the needs and wishes of most of the population. The current educational decentralization policy intends to remedy the situation. After independence education decentralization in Namibia was characterised by informal changes, not accompanied by legislation and therefore not followed by open public debate. In the absence of public debate no agreement among the stakeholders could be reached. Without legislation and awareness programmes the process lacked the necessary impetus. Cabinet adopted the National Decentralization Policy on November 16, 1996. In 1999 the MBESC submitted its own Decentralization Plan to the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing.

Until recently (1996-1998) the political decentralization process codified by the Regional Councils Act, 1992 (22 of 1992) and the Local Authorities Act, 1992 (23 of 1992) seems to have lost momentum. The lack of necessary political commitment as well as financial constraints were factors contributing to the slow-down of the process. In an interview with Mr. P. Boltman, Governor of Hardap Region, he cited political unwillingness to relinquish responsibilities and power to sub-national level as a hampering factor. He holds further that funds allocated for the recurrent budget of the Regional Councils have been "remotely controlled" by the MRLGH from Windhoek. This paper attempted to investigate what possibly went wrong in the

primary or secondary schools.

formulation and design stage of the decentralization process, which has officially been launched in 1998. It also sought to examine which factors (if any) impeded the implementation of education decentralization in Namibia. The study concentrated on primary and secondary school levels.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to:

- ◆ Study and analyze the designing stage of the process, because successful implementation requires a well-framed policy
- ◆ Determine the primary criteria for the decentralization of education
- ◆ Investigate any factors which may be impeding the implementation of education decentralization

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study answers the following questions:

- ◆ What is the new institutional model of decentralization, and what is to be decentralized?
- ◆ What are the primary criteria for deciding on decentralization (functions, pace, capacity, etc.)?

- ◆ What are the main factors which may be impeding the decentralization of education in Namibia?
- ◆ What can be done to improve the current decentralization programme?

1.5 JUSTIFICATION

The policy makers, education and curriculum planners in attempting to activate the formal implementation stage of decentralization may hopefully use the results of this study. The study may also pose a challenge to decision-makers to obtain clarity regarding aspects on which they are not sufficiently clear in their thinking. It may enable all interested parties in education to know why and how the process of educational decentralization could be managed to promote the two goals of citizen empowerment and service delivery.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The internal logic by which the paper proceeds to answer its research questions is based upon qualitative research. The author used semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted with key figures in education, like the Ministers of Basic and Higher Education, the director and focal person of education decentralization in MBESC and a former under-secretary of education in the MBESC. Other figures included the governor of Hardap Region and a representative of the decentralization

directorates of MRLGH. The Minister of Education prior to independence was also interviewed.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on education decentralization is growing rapidly, but is still primarily descriptive in nature. Several recent studies and evaluations of primary and secondary education, both in Latin America and Africa, provide the basis for this study. Studies by NGOs like GTZ contribute to this debate. All studies refer to the rationale, forces for and against, and achievements of decentralization. The main goal of education decentralization however, remains the achievement of quality education. Though the body of literatures that I have reviewed highlights the factors of quality education, no study takes an in-depth look into the slow progress of education decentralization in Namibia. The Namibian Constitution, legislation in respect of education, decentralization, and Hansards of Parliament were perused, and form a key part of the thesis. Draft policies on education reforms have been examined. A group of papers presented at an international conference on Education and Decentralization in South Africa gave valuable comparative studies of various Sub-Saharan African countries. Lessons learned from these countries are that educational decentralization is perceived as an attempt to better educational needs. However, the process is slow and it is difficult to measure positive outcomes. Papers on education decentralization in Latin American countries indicate that although there are economic and academic arguments for decentralization, the process has been marred by politics.

The World Bank recently completed several studies on education decentralization world-wide, e.g. in Mexico, Peru, Chile, El Salvador, Argentina and Columbia. These studies have been used for comparative purposes. Papers presented by various scholars during an International Conference on Education and Decentralization held in South Africa in June 2002 were analyzed. Countries that participated include South Africa, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia and Mali.

Study course materials of Turner and Hulme (1997: 57-81), Anderson (1978: 1-23), Lindblom (1959: 79-88), and Saasa (1985: 309-321) form the basis of this investigation into the policy formulation on decentralization. Lastly, newspaper reports on the subject were perused. Through the literature review it became clear that decentralization may be viewed as an incremental process of capacity building at all levels of government.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 PREFERRED THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Decentralization is a highly ambiguous concept that has been variously defined and interpreted (Govinda 1997; Litvack et al 1998; Maclean and Luaglo 1985; Rondinelli 1981; Sayed 1997; Weiler 1989; Smith 1995; Adamolekun 1999; Tötemeyer 2002). There are perplexing differences in its implementation, with decentralization and centralisation often occurring simultaneously; and as frequently embedded in larger state reforms rather than implemented as an independent sectoral policy. Moreover, it is frequently implemented haphazardly, and decision-makers do not always control the genesis or pace of the process (World Bank 1999:107). (Naidoo 2002:2). A study of the Namibian Parliamentary Debates on decentralization reveals the different perceptions of the various lawmakers regardless of political affiliation.

While decentralization covers a broad range of concepts and each type has different characteristics, policy implications and conditions for success, a basic conception common to most definitions is that decentralization is a transfer of some form of authority from the centre to the local level. Accordingly, it may be defined in terms of the form and level as well as the nature or degree of power that is transferred. The following diagram captures the overall picture of the process.

Dimensions of Decentralization

Form		Degree of Power	
Overlapping Functional Activities	Market	Devolution	Continuum From Highest to Lowest
	Political		
	Fiscal	Delegation	
	Administrative	Deconcentration	

Source: Naidoo 2002 : 3

“Decentralization entails the subdivision of the states' territory into smaller areas and the creation of political and administrative institutions in these areas. Some of the institutions so created may themselves find it necessary to practise further centralization” (Smith 1995:1).

Adamolekun (1999:49) describes four approaches to decentralization: deconcentration, delegation, devolution and fiscal decentralisation. “First it can be used to refer to an administrative measure involving the transfer of management responsibilities and resources to agents of the central government located outside the headquarters at one or more levels. This administrative decentralization is commonly referred to as deconcentration. Second, the term decentralization is used to refer to a political arrangement involving the devolution of specific powers, functions and resources by the central government to sub-national government units.

Sub-national governments include regional, state, or provincial governments, and local governments or municipalities. Third, decentralization is used to refer to the delegation of authority and managerial responsibility for specific functions to organizations outside the central government structure. The organizations and agencies enjoy varying degrees of autonomy. Management boards for schools and hospitals are some of these types of organizations. Finally, the term is also used to refer specifically to the transfer of responsibility for budgets and financial decisions from higher to lower levels of government. This is called fiscal decentralization, which is at the heart of the relationship between the central government and the sub-national government units, commonly referred to as inter-governmental relations.” Rondinelli (1981) describes another approach namely, privatization which gives responsibility to private organizations such as non-profit or voluntary organizations, trade associations, professional groups, religious organizations, co-operatives, or business firms to carry out functions which were previously performed by the public sector. The decentralization strategies of various countries may manifest some or all of these forms of decentralization.

Decentralization has become a widespread tool in education reform, and is experiencing rapid development on the African continent. This process does not only concern administration but may also extend to other parts of management (finance, governance, etc.), or non-management aspects (e.g. curricula). The two types of education decentralization extend to lower levels of government and to individual schools. Under the generic term of decentralization, practices differ from

one country to another. While some countries have chosen to generalise decentralization, others have opted for a partial decentralization. In some instances, these practices reflect more a deconcentration process than an actual devolution of power. Decentralization takes different forms depending on the history of the schooling system and the responsibilities which are decentralized to the different stakeholders. It is evident that there is much common ground in the definitions of the respective authors on decentralization. All of them refer to the various forms namely, deconcentration, delegation and devolution.

In this thesis education decentralization is identified with shifts in authority, reflecting shifts in the location of those who govern. It entails transfers of authority from one level of educational organization to another. However, in the Namibian context of decentralization it would appear that a combination of some of the three forms do realise. Privatization, described by Rondinelli (1981), is another approach which is practised in Namibia, e.g. utility services being sourced out by Municipalities. Training of management staff and school governing bodies may also be outsourced. The study takes note that none of these forms fit in the colonial Namibian's concept of "decentralization". The principle of equity was notably absent.

The study further takes cognizance of the fact that the Namibian Constitution, laws and regulations codify the rules under which a decentralised system is required to

function. Chapter 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia provides for and requires Parliament to pass laws to implement decentralization. To give effect to the constitutional provision of decentralization two further acts, namely the Regional Council Act and the Local Authorities Act were promulgated. In terms of these provisions Namibia as a unitary state was subdivided into 13 regions and 102 constituencies.

The Decentralization Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2000) came into being in 2000.

Those political leaders who were elected into office are obliged to rule over a specified territory and its population in accordance with the provisions of the law. Esterhuyse (1985: 74-75) is of the opinion that a political system and authority can only generate legitimacy when people identify with it in the belief that it gives expression to their aspirations, values, wants and needs, and that it delivers the goods expected from it. (Quoted in, Totemeyer 2002:2).

"The people must accept the democratic values and ideology underlying a particular political system and its public policy. Legitimacy refers to the quality of a state to be legitimate and to the state's moral obligations and responsibility. Modern self-government must be accountable, acceptable and understood by its clientele, effective in its performance, efficiently dealing with the tasks expected of it and prepared to share, delegate and outsource power."

(*Ibid.*, 2002:3) further notes that as far back as 1986 a UNIN publication speculated on a possible legal and institutional frame for an independent Namibia. The ideal of a unitary state was non-negotiable. SWAPO, however, compromised and agreed to a regional dispensation as a second tier of government with local authorities as the third and lowest tier of government. The decentralization policy as recommended in the UNIN document, was meant "to decentralize with a view to balancing the requirements of democracy and popular participation with those of viability, efficiency and effective administration" (UNIN 1998: 966).

Regions and their governing authorities were instituted as new entities in the politico-administrative dispensation of Namibia. They never existed during the colonial era and are not comparable to the despised ethnic "homelands" (Bantustans) established on racial criteria. Proclamation no. 12 of 1990, which entrusted the First Delimitation Commission with the task of dividing Namibia into regions, thus automatically abolished the "homelands." The above proclamation clearly stated that any division of Namibia into regions can only be based on geographic considerations, and that neither racial or ethnic criteria should be considered. When the Delimitation Commission decided on thirteen regions, it paid particular attention to regions as interdependent dynamic entities with particular attention to their potential within the context of overall national development. The Constitution of Namibia refers to the institutionalism of decentralization of power and authority, although it is not explicit on the decentralization process, by identifying regional councils and local authorities as decentralized bodies. It is, however, silent on the

scope of power and authority to be allocated to such bodies. Tötemeyer (2002:13) brings a new dimension into the decentralization scenario when he introduces the concept of "open space".

"Considering the bottom-up approach underlying the decentralization policy in Namibia, thereby acknowledging the right of people at grass-root level to be actively involved in determining their own future, "open space" takes on a special meaning. It is a territorial space in which people can determine their existence, claim their right to a dignified life and where they can earn their livelihood. It is for the government in cooperation with the people to determine the context of this space and to explore its possibilities. This implies taking on co-responsibility when shaping the space and when giving its meaning. The space must be made bearable, acceptable and functionally useful. People must take willingly ownership of this space and in unison with government develop it to its full potential".

2.2 THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS: The Design Stage

Turner and Hulme (1997:58) state that human agents construct policy and that we need to understand their behavior. These agents have multiple, often conflicting and sometimes changing political goals. It is also generally agreed by scholars (SAASA 1985, Anderson 1978; Lindblom 1959) that public policy should not be conceived of as an isolated and single act. Rather it should be seen as a dynamic process. It involves many decisions over a time span. Policy makers should also anticipate

possible problems during the implementation process. To understand the policy process in Namibia one must first understand the political context. As the process is an intensely political process matter, great attention should be paid to the nature of politics prior to independence and after independence of Namibia.

Political scientists have developed a variety of theoretical approaches to assist them in the study of the political behaviour of entire political systems. The theoretical approaches as described by Anderson (1978) and Theodoulou (1995) include systems theory, group theory, elite theory and functional process theory. Systems theory and elite theory are being employed in this study to pursue policy formation.

The roots of decentralization in Namibia can be traced back to the 1980's when the ruling party, Swapo, was still in exile. The UNIN publication of 1986 which elaborated on a possible legal and institutional framework for an independent Namibia included the principle of decentralization. Swapo, the present ruling party stated in its Political Manifesto on Local Government and Housing of 1989 that:

"Under the Swapo government there will be democratically elected authorities in rural and urban areas in order to give power to the people at grass-root level to make decisions on matter affecting their lives".

Töttemeyer (2002:3) states that during the 1989 constitution-making process Swapo compromised and agreed to a regional dispensation as a second tier of government with local authorities as the third and lowest tier of government. Part of the

compromise according to Töttemeyer was that the opposition parties agreed to an executive presidency as proposed by SWAPO. Furthermore, the underlying motivation for decentralization, according to the Decentralization Plan of the MBESC (1998) is:

"...In Namibia the motivation for decentralization is a political commitment to take decision making and resources to the regional level."

Namibia obtained independence in 1990. Article 102 (1) of Chapter 12 specifically provides for structures of regional and local governments. In 1992 Parliament put into effect the constitutional provision under Chapter 12 by promulgating the Regional Councils Act 1992 (no 22 of 1992) and Local Authorities Act 1992 (no 23 of 1992). In 1995 Parliament promulgated the Traditional Authorities Act 1995, which provides for the establishment of traditional authorities. On 1 December 1996, Cabinet approved the Decentralization Policy and indicated actions that had to be taken in preparation for the implementation process. The decentralization process culminated in the enactment of the Decentralization Enabling Bill in 2000.

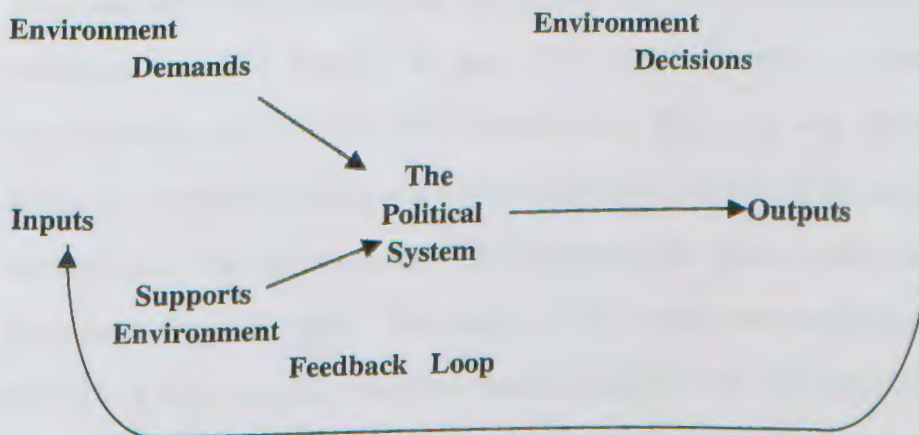
To suggest possible explanations for the political activity of the formation of the decentralization policy of Namibia the study employs the "muddling through" process as advocated by Lindblom (1959). According to him, policy-making is seen as "muddling through" rather than a search for the best policy possible. He argues that in a complex and changing world, human intelligence and decision-making capacity are limited. Decisions are thus made by rule of thumb with limited search

and information, especially as many policy problems are recurrent. Prior to independence some power was decentralized to the so-called "homelands" or Bantustans, or second tier governments. This has been an expression of racial self-determination. At the attainment of independence, the lawmakers who had limited decision-making capacity, very quickly decided on the decentralization of power in Namibia. The Constitution was written in a relatively short period of 80 days. Regional Councils and Local Authorities were identified as decentralized bodies, although the Constitution may be the result of limited research and information. Incremental change or "muddling through" advocated by Lindblom (1959), presents a cautious marginal action accompanied by slow learning from experiences. In an interview with the Minister of Higher Education Training and Employment creation, it became evident that he is of the opinion that

"changes in education should not be too radical. Negative attitudes may be created with opponents of change - thereby derailing the decentralization process. There should rather be a balance between the past and present."

Incrementalism suggests that change should take place in small steps. In many cases stakeholders try to keep the status-quo. Lindblom (1959) describes "successive limited comparisons" as the wise policy process because it eschews large leaps into the unknown, avoids expensive errors, makes decision-making easier and allows decisions to be reversed. The study found that there is little difference between the informal decentralization of the period 1990 - 1998 and the new National Decentralization Policy.

The Elite Theory described by Theodoulou (1195: 6) looks at how the policy process operates and, most importantly, who controls or dominates the process and who benefits from it. In other words, who rules? This model holds that policies are made by a relatively small group of influential leaders who share common goals and outlooks. Such theorists do not see policy as the product of group conflict and demand but rather as determined by the preferences of the power elite or ruling class. Thus it is the preferences of the elite that are adopted by policy-makers. Policies reflect their values and serve their interests. Public policy is not then determined by the masses but by a minority who have political and economic power. The persons interviewed during this study confirmed that this was the case in the Namibian situation. On the contrary, the Systems Theory holds public policy as a political system's response to demands arising from the environment. The political system is thus a mechanism by which popular demands and popular support for the state are combined to produce those policy outputs that best ensure the long term stability of the political system. Systems Theory is best exemplified by the work of David Easton. The following model illustrates it.



A Simplified Model of a Political System. Source: Easton 1965:32

This study could not find evidence that people at grassroots level have demanded for decentralization. Neither were awareness programmes developed in order to give people enough opportunity for inputs. It became evident through the study that the decision on decentralization was predetermined by some leaders of Swapo and later by the Namibian Parliament. Afterwards efforts were made to sensitise the people to accept it as "their own" policy. It is crucial that government and people at grassroots level should participate in any reform. In the Namibian case therefore, one can hardly speak of motivation and commitment at local level when the policy was designed.

In an interview with Dr R. West, Director of Planning and Development in the MBESC, it came to light that the design of the Decentralization Plan of the MBESC was a protracted process and yet still not finalized. It became clear that the plan was not initiated by the MBESC. In fact, the plan is based on an analysis of the documents provided by the MRLGH and various MBESC papers and meetings. Basic Education Project (BEP) drew up a consultancy report on decentralization and submitted it to the MBESC in June 1997. Subsequently a workshop on decentralization was held in 1997 in Rundu where this report was discussed. A follow-up workshop on decentralization of education was held in Swakopmund in the same year. The regional directors of education and the under-secretary went on a study tour to Sweden in 1998. They too submitted a report on decentralization to the MBESC. A very important document, namely the fourth draft of a document drawn up within the Directorate of Planning and Development, was discussed during a

workshop held at the Midgard Conference Centre from 7 to 11 June 1999. The BEP supported by GTZ assisted the MBESC in conducting the workshop. Important actors who attended the workshop were, the P.S of the MBESC, Ms L Katoma, and the Under-Secretary - Formal Education, Dr L. Burger, and representatives of all Directorates of the MBESC at national and regional levels. After many consultations a plan was presented to the Hon. Mr John Mutorwa, Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, during July 1999. Afterwards a Task Force was established under the chairmanship of Dr West, Director of Planning and Development. This Task Force held meetings on 9 July, 14 July, 26 July, 16 August and 30 August 1999. The Directorate of General Services in the MBESC estimated the financial implications of the decentralization of education functions. All these papers and meetings contributed to a well-designed plan. However, this study discovered no information that the Regional Councils were directly involved in the design of the plan. This fact suggests that the transfer of education is part of national policy alone rather than policy of the thirteen regions. Political and social demands for decentralization were not evident. Nor were the teachers' unions demanding such a policy change. When this author telephonically contacted the teachers' union, its spokesperson could not give the union's stance on decentralization.

What is the test of "good" policy? Lindblom (1959:83) succinctly answers this question:

"For the method of successive limited comparisons, the test is agreement on policy itself, which remains possible even when agreement on values is not."

Continuing agreements in the Namibian parliamentary debates on decentralization demonstrate the ease with which individuals of different ideologies often can agree on concrete policy. The Hon. Mr Pretorius rather calls the Decentralization Enabling Bill the "Delegation of Functions Enabling Bill" (Debates of the National Assembly 44: 57). He suggests that the content of the Bill constrains the devolution of powers to sub-national levels. Honourable Mr Pohamba is quoted (Debates of the National Assembly 44:88) as saying "Although decentralization is being propounded, it should not be misconstrued to imply self-rule. It simply means that certain functions may be delegated by the line ministries through the Hon. Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing to Regional Councils and Local Authorities" This statement does not imply devolution of real powers to sub- national levels.

Honourable Dr Amukugo is quoted (Debates of the National Assembly 44:113) as saying: "In this respect, I saw two different lines of arguments from the ruling party. There was the Hon. Mr Pohamba who argued for more power to the Minister and his Ministry and for limited powers to the Regional Councils and Local Authority Councils". Also Hon. Ms Schimming-Chase is quoted (Debates of National Assembly 44:115) as saying : "Yesterday I listened to Hon Mr Pohamba who put the party position of Swapo, and then I listened to Hon. Nahas Mr Angula and Hon. Mr. Nyamu whose analysis of the Bill and their positions reminded me of the analysis put by Hon. Mr Pretorius". All the speakers mentioned eventually agreed to the passage of the Bill.

The countless ends-means and means-ends that are allowed by incrementalism may provoke public debate on policy-making. Stakeholders may agree or disagree on critical values or objectives. When the Minister of Higher Education Training and Employment Creation, Hon. Mr Nahas Angula was interviewed on 16 April 2002 he expressed second thoughts on the decentralization process. He contended that a learner should have freedom of choice. A learner should be able to enrol at any school of his choice in any part of the country – given his abilities. Amukugo (2002) states that:

“...as an example all children in Namibia are free to attend a school of their choice. In reality however, parents’ financial position determine that choice.”
(Quoted in ., Winterfeldt et al:250).

However, if decentralization promotes regionalism this will prevent a learner from attending a school of his own choice. Unity and power sharing were matters of big concern to Hon. Mr Nahas Angula. He explicitly stated his views in this regard in parliament on 27 September 2002. A rare disagreement and policy debate ensued even among Swapo ministers after his contribution. “The Namibian” newspaper of 30 September 2002 reported as follows:

"This subject of regionalization reminds me of AG 8². Iyambo, now Minister of Mines, said it was "unfortunate" that the programme to give more powers to regions was now being attacked by a member of Cabinet, which approved the plan in the first place. Angula explained why he equated the current decentralisation to AG 8, an Apartheid proclamation that gave ethnic groups powers to run some affairs such as schools and hospitals. Angula pointed out that Namibia was a unitary State. If you are using laws to undo the spirit of unity I'm not sure you are patriotic. You are moving further and further towards creating homelands. I want decentralisation, but not to create parallel powers. Angula then asked about the recruitment policy that gave the Minister and Regional Councils equal powers and raised concern about politicians having to appoint the regional administrators."

Looking to the formation of the decentralization policy it is clear that there are aspects on which decision-makers are not sufficiently clear in their thinking. It became evident that there is limited understanding of the concept of decentralization. Different perceptions were evident not only amongst different political parties but also amongst the members of the same party. The debates in the Namibian parliament is a case in point. Some leaders see the end goal of decentralization in the delegation stage and cannot yet accept devolution as the ultimate stage. In particular, this study has much critique against the Decentralization Plan of the MBESC, which spells out the decentralization of education in Namibia. It does not explicitly refer to

² The Administrator-General was the representative of the South African Regime. He had the right to

what pedagogic objectives it intended to achieve through decentralization. The Plan merely refers to governance changes. Only political motives are evident but no education motives. It therefore misses the point that decentralization can be used as a tool to raise quality in education. By saying this, it is not being stated that decentralization is a poorly framed policy and that it will be a failure. It only stresses the need to clarify the uncertainties around the process. It is for instance not clear how the division of responsibilities and resources between the regional council and the local authorities will be organised. Furthermore, it seems that the policy-makers cannot clearly distinguish between decentralization in a federal state and that of a unitary state. This has caused that some policy-makers backtracked on their early support for decentralization.

make laws. AG 8 was a law promulgated to give direction on how Namibia had to be governed.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRIMARY CRITERIA FOR DECIDING ON DECENTRALIZATION AND THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL MODEL

Many scholars regard decentralization as a major change effort that directs the way that people are governed, resources are mobilized and services are delivered. This requires clear criteria to determine what gets decentralized, when, and at what speed. The following criteria will be applied to determine functions to be decentralized, the timing and pace of such decentralization.

3.1 FUNCTIONS

Education complies with the requirements laid down by the MRLGH to be one of the seven line ministries, whose functions were to be decentralized in Namibia. According to a recent report by the Ryukoko University, Japan, on the decentralization in Uganda, it is often argued that decentralization brings public services closer to people, who have more opportunities to participate more actively in the decision-making process of local policies and activities than in centrally-determined ones. Namibia has experienced that some functions are so extensive that they can only be usefully carried out at national level. Big dams, hospitals and school complexes are therefore built by central government agencies. Some services

can be provided less expensively on a larger scale, or their benefits may spill over across districts.

It is also generally accepted that functions, which are close to the people in terms of use and access, are more amenable to decentralization than those, which are not. An increasing number of countries have transferred responsibilities to levels considered closer to the school and have augmented the role of the school principal or school board through the introduction of school-based reforms. In all probability basic education in Namibia will be delegated only to Regional Councils. Nowhere could this study find evidence that basic education would be devolved to municipal or school level. One presumed benefit of decentralisation is that local governments make better use of resources. They are closer to the people and more responsive to local needs. It is therefore assumed that local governments will direct resources towards such human priority concerns as basic education and primary health care. However, some local governments may choose to spend money, meant for development projects, on prestigious colleges and hospitals instead of primary schools or village health units.

Decentralizing governance can be one of the best means of promoting participation and efficiency. Local officials and politicians can be much more open to public scrutiny than national governments. They can be more accountable to the communities and individuals they are supposed to serve. Public projects – be they dams, roads, schools or health programmes become more relevant and effective if the communities concerned have a real say in the planning and implementation.

Locally elected leaders know their constituents better than authorities at the national level and should therefore be well positioned to provide the public services local residents want and need. Physical proximity makes it easier for citizens to hold local officials accountable for their performance. The World Bank Development Report (1999/2000:109) states that:

“In Central America, decentralizing management responsibilities from the central government to provincial and local levels had little effect on the primary education sector. But decentralizing management responsibility directly to the schools did improve educational performance”.

From a survey on school boards in the Rehoboth area it is evident that the Regional Office often overrules decisions of school boards regarding the appointment of staff. School boards argue that they know their communities best. Whenever people are requested to pay for services, the more direct the relationship between the payment and the delivery of services the better. Interestingly parents often pay easier for services like private computer classes and sport tours for their children, than to pay the annual school fees. Where people pay for services accountability is demanded.

3.2 PACE OF DECENTRALIZATION

When agreements have been reached on decentralization, the pace of decentralization has to be determined. Expectations about how fast decentralization can be implemented must be realistic and generally shared and understood by all concerned.

There are issues, which affect the pace of decentralization, speeding up or slowing down the process. These issues are inter-alia democracy, governance and feasibility.

Decentralization typically takes place during periods of political and economic upheaval. An orderly process of decentralization is highly unlikely in turbulent times of a country. Even when decentralization occurs in a less dramatic context, questions of strategy and timing still arise. The World Bank Development report (1999/2000:123) states:

"The most compelling lesson of recent decentralization experiences is that all elements of reform must be synchronized. The political impetus behind decentralization prompts central government to make concessions hastily. Granting local elections is a step that can be taken rapidly. But making decentralization a success requires a number of slow and difficult steps that create new regulatory relationships between central and sub-national governments, transfer assets and staff to local levels, and replace annual budgetary transfers with a system of tax assignment and intergovernmental transfers. The recent history of decentralization illustrates the dangers of not sequencing appropriately. Revenues need to be decentralized at the same time as expenditures."

Democracy delayed is democracy denied. It means that a promise of democracy in future is no substitute for democracy now. Generally democracy should be guaranteed by proper institutional development, otherwise it could be endangered. If

it fails as a result of inadequate institutional preparation, it gives an excuse to non-democratic forces to roll back the democratic process. Therefore democratic development must include institutional development for its implementation and sustenance. Governance implies participation in decision-making. Therefore the pace of decentralization must be co-determined by all the players in a process of information sharing, situation assessment, negotiation and consensus. Participation in the process of development of democratic and governance institutions is itself the democratic process.

3.3 CAPACITY

Policy-making, implementation, monitoring and review capacity are necessary determinants of the pace of implementation of decentralization. The origins of decentralization can be traced back to pre-independence when it was articulated in SWAPO's Election Manifesto of 1989. Shortly after independence laws were enacted (1992) to come in line with Constitutional requirements. The policy was formulated in a relatively short period. After the launching of the National Decentralization Policy in 1998 the implementation, unlike the concept of political decentralization itself, came virtually to a standstill. Recent developments, e.g. donor funding and new political commitment gave impetus to the process. It would appear that the process is going forward once more.

Administrative and institutional development capacities are necessary. The Cross-Ministerial Task Forces (CMTFs) are busy with their various duties. The six Task Forces are those of Personnel Issues, Training, Legislation Harmonization, Housing

and Office Matters, Development Planning and Budgeting, Financial Management and Inter-governmental Transfers. Some of these Task Forces' work, however, is behind schedule.

Resource Availability: Financial, material and human resources can speed up or slow down the pace of implementation. Godana & Mukwena (2002 : 15) state:

"A proper and clear allocation of functions between different layers of government should also clearly indicate the sources of revenue for each level of government. The cardinal principle is that adequate and sustainable resources of revenue should accompany the allocated function. If Namibia is to be successful in the implementation of her decentralization policy it is imperative that a workable and sustainable government relations framework is put in place. It is also equally important that adequate and sustainable sources of revenue accompany the factions (to be) delegated to the regional and local levels. Hence the importance of fiscal decentralization."

3.4 THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL MODEL

Decentralization requires laws, regulations and directives that clearly outline the relationships among different levels of government and administration, the allocation of functions among organisation units. Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution states that " All persons shall have the right to education." A close look to the documents, which codify the rules for education decentralization in Namibia reveals the following:

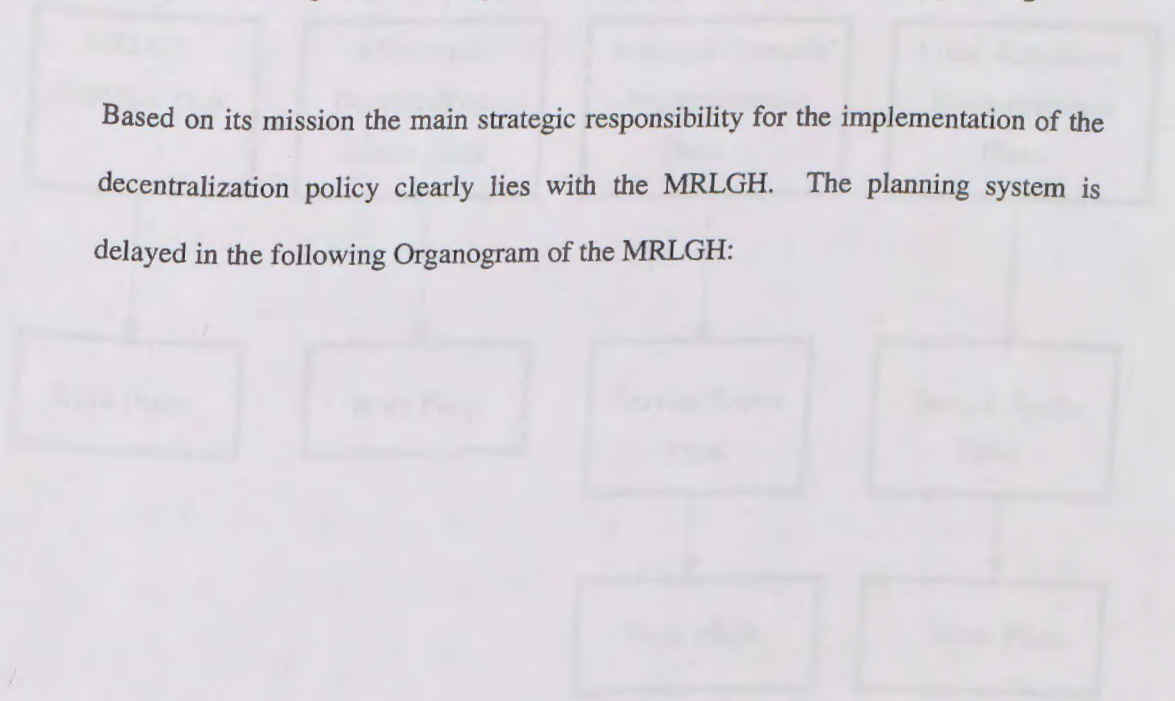
1. The National Decentralization Policy identifies the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture as one of the seven line ministries whose functions have to be decentralized.
2. The Decentralization Enabling Act 2000 (Act 33 of 2000) provides for, and regulates the decentralization to regional councils and local authority councils of functions vesting in Line Ministries.
3. The Education Act 2001 (Act no16 of 2001) makes provision for accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service, and the establishment of the Regional Education Forums and School Boards. It is however envisaged that the school cluster system, which is already in operation in the country, will be legalized once the basic education policy has been finalized. At the attainment of independence The Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture started decentralizing education to 6 and later to 7 regional offices, each under a regional director, to carry a number of responsibilities for the management of schools and other institutions in the region. This form of decentralization is referred to as deconcentration, where part of the work load is shifted from the ministry's centrally located offices to staff of offices outside Windhoek. Employees are still employees of the central government. They have generally little direction in implementing policies.

The Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture submitted its Decentralization Plan in October 1999 to the MRLGH, which spearheads the country's

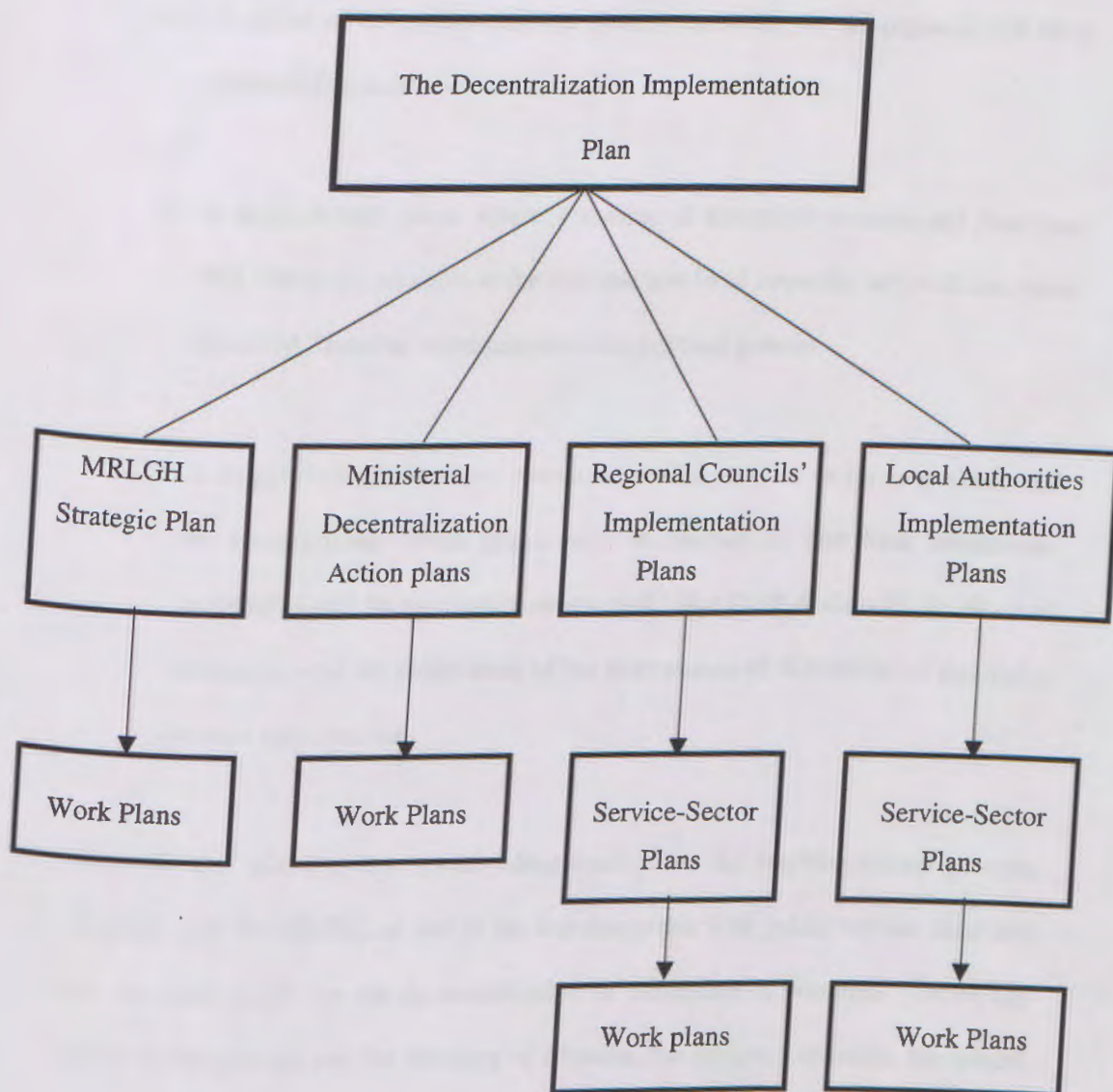
decentralization of education. The government of Namibia has now moved to the stages of implementation of decentralization reform.

A new Mission Statement has been developed and adopted by the MRLGH. It states the following: The Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing is committed to facilitating the establishment of an effective Regional and Local Government system, which brings government closer to the people and which is capable of delivering services to the satisfaction of all communities. In the process it provides central government support in areas of housing and physical planning.

Based on its mission the main strategic responsibility for the implementation of the decentralization policy clearly lies with the MRLGH. The planning system is delayed in the following Organogram of the MRLGH:



The hierarchy of plans and budgets to implement decentralization of public services



Source: *MRLGH : 1999*

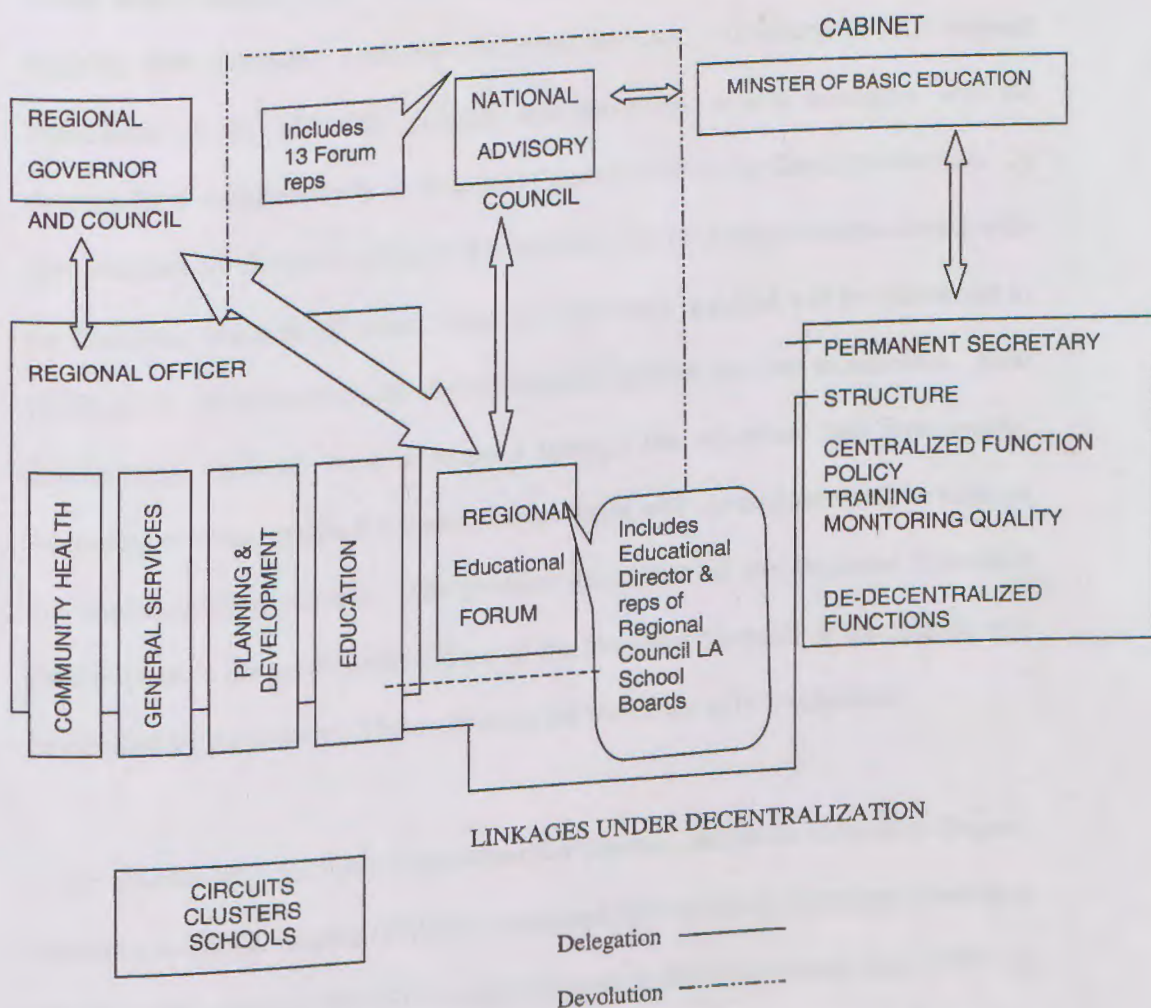
In terms of the policy documents the phasing of the reform implementation includes three stages:

1. A phase of delegation prior to powers devolving to the regional and local councils (short term).
2. A medium-term phase where a number of identified services and functions will effectively devolve to the regional and local councils, who will also have devolved financial, administrative and political powers.
3. A longer-term phase where remaining public services as far as possible will be decentralized, block grants will be introduced and local democratic procedures will be thoroughly entrenched. The D.I.P deals with the phase of delegating and the preparation of the next phases of devolution of functions, powers and finances.

The MRLGH which is the spearheading agency for the implementation process, together with the MBESC as one of the line ministries with public service functions are the main actors for the decentralization of education in Namibia. Other key actors in the process are the Ministry of Finance, the regional councils, the school boards and the school clusters.

Line Ministries are required to have developed decentralization action plans regarding delegation of service functions, staff and other resources in Phase 1. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture has its own Decentralization Plan.

Planners need to be familiar with the different forms of decentralization. They also need to know which functions have to be . The following diagram indicates the MBESC's proposed relationships in education decentralization in Namibia. In terms of the Decentralization Plan of the MBESC the following arrangements will be made:



Source: *DECENTRALIZATION : MBESC: 14-3-2002*

The MBESC will retain the prerogative of policy formulation, quality determination and standard setting. The present seven Regional Educational Offices will be fully incorporated into the new administrative structures of the thirteen Regional Councils (See table I).

Along with functions the MBESC will decentralize finances and human resources together with adequate authority and responsibility. Contrary to the original framework of the MRLGH, primary and secondary school education will be decentralized simultaneously to Regional Councils and not to Local Authorities. A new structure for the head office of the MBESC will be devised commensurate with the functions, which it will retain. Personnel no longer required will be transferred to the Regions. Until recently the decentralisation process has lost momentum. New developments however were announced through the electronic and print media. According to these reports the French Government will sponsor some of the costs of the implementation process. The position and status of the Regional Executive Officer (who is the accountable officer of the Regional Council) of the regions will be elevated by parliament. The position of the Governor will be clarified.

In the absence of a vigorous implementation process, the Basic Education Project, funded by an NGO, namely GTZ, has developed decentralised structures based on a school cluster system. This GTZ-supported project started in Rundu May 1995. It was a resounding success and was expanded to other education regions afterwards. Currently only three of the seven education regions have not been covered. These regions, namely Windhoek, Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West will start with the

cluster system in 2003. A cluster is a group of schools that are geographically as close and accentually designed by people outside the immediate school network, staff of the Basic Education Project (BEP), the regional offices and consultants. Dittmar et al (2002:3) elaborate on the advantages of the cluster system as follows:

"The growth of the system has mainly been driven by needs springing from three factors: the isolation of schools, the small size of the great majority of schools, and organisational problems. After the success in the Rundu Education Region, it is generally observed that clusters can improve the quality of education in the great majority of Namibian schools. "Clusters improve efficiency because they divide the very large circuits into a series of inter-related and more manageable parts. Clusters allow more management decisions to be made at local levels in schools and clusters, thus contributing to decentralization."

BEP states that by partitioning schools into manageable groups, clusters provide the new regional council administrations with a framework for managing and planning education. Regional councillors and officials will relate more easily to groups of schools than to a large number of dispersed schools.

In the opinion of Mr. H. Hartmann, GTZ Head Office, Germany (Dittmar et al:2002), many people in the Rundu, Katima Mulilo, Khorixas and Keetmanshoop Education Regions (MAP 2) appreciated the school clusters and confirmed that education management and the delivery of education services were notably strengthened and,

ultimately, equality of education would improve. Result I³ assigned to Rundu Region states as follows:

Based on the decentralization process the school cluster system in the Rundu Region is institutionalised and the efficiency and quality of administration and education services are further strengthened.

³ Main objectives are assigned to participation regions. When the first objective has been achieved, it is regarded as Result 1. Result 11 will indicate that the second objective has been achieved.

CHAPTER 4

THE MAIN FACTORS IMPEDING DECENTRALIZATION IN NAMIBIA

Decentralization is not an easy objective to achieve. This is because the imperative to decentralize education service delivery depends on the workings of other facets of the system that are not directly linked to education. Often educational decentralisation has been motivated by reasons other than purely educational. Many factors thus far played a significant role in impeding the progress of the decentralisation of education in Namibia. These factors include the following:

4.1 LACK OF POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Decentralisation in Namibia is a political process. It is largely government initiated and not coming from local structures and communities. However, it became clear through this research that some central institutions are reluctant to relinquish power to sub-national level. As mentioned earlier, at least two senior government ministers and a deputy-minister came out publicly against decentralisation. During a debate in the Namibia Parliament in late September 2002, ministers of the ruling party refuted each other on the decentralisation policy. In an interview with Mr. G. Kamseb, Deputy-Director of MRLGH, he declared that there was a lack of understanding and overall approach among some political leaders. In another interview the Governor of the Hardap Region, Mr. Boltman, was of the opinion that some of the Cabinet Ministers were not in agreement with the decentralization policy.

Parry (1996 : 211) states that:

“On one hand, successful decentralization depends on the willingness of the central government to turn over the power to make important decisions to the decentralised institution. Otherwise, decisions will not benefit from the knowledge held at regional and local level institutions and efficiency and effectiveness will not improve.”

According to Dr. L. Burger in an interview, the governors of the thirteen regions in Namibia eagerly await the new responsibilities because they will be in charge of large sums of money from the budget and the appointment and removal of principal educational officials. Dr. Burger's doubts about the competency of governors and regional councillors became patently clear. If governors are not competent to handle huge sums of money, it can be detrimental to the education system. Competent governors and regional councillors should be in a better position to know the wishes and needs of the people at grassroots level. They can put money to good use – better than the head office of the ministry in the capital. The views of these bureaucrats attest to the importance of “political will” in the process of educational decentralization.

4.2 INADEQUATE HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

According to the deputy-director for decentralisation in the MRLGH the government cannot provide the necessary human and material resources to all 13 political regions at this point in time. There is also the issue of inadequate infrastructure in the

regions. The intention for decentralization is to transfer functions and powers to the sub-national level, namely devolution. The Regional Councils have been designed to accept new functions. The line ministries, through the cabinet, determine which functions to which level have to be decentralised. For the Regional Councils to fulfil their new roles it is of paramount importance that they have the necessary financial resources. Previously the Regional Councils were "remote-controlled" from Windhoek by Central Government - in the words of Mr Boltman. It is only for the last two years that they control their own recurrent budget. Since last year (2002) they also controlled their capital budget.

The Regional Councils were provided an accountant each only from last year (2001) and a uniform accounting computer programme as from June 2002. Widespread mismanagement of money has been reported according to Mr Boltman. Sub-national governments lack the resources needed to carry out the transferred functions. Rondinelli and Nelis (1986:17) suggest that this is a common impediment in most developing countries. They hold that:

"The inadequacy of financial resources and the inability to allocate and expand them effectively were noted in evaluations of decentralization in nearly every developing country."

For these reasons central government is obliged to give the decentralized institutions access to sources of revenue through block grants, thereby giving them new legal

sources of revenue. Central government provides the funds for the regional council's recurrent expenditure. Since the beginning of the year (2002) they have their own allocation of funding for capital expenditure. Godana and Mukwena (2002 : 17) state that:

"The present financial base of regional councils is inadequate and uncertain and outside the control of the regional council. Apart from the expenditure currently determined and administered by MRLGH the only income of any substance to which regional councils are entitled is 5% of the rate income from local authorities."

The principle that resources must accompany functions is cardinal to decentralization, and the MRLGH is committed to this principle. There is no guarantee that the resources coming from the breakdown of line ministries' budgets will be adequate to provide the services at current level. However, under devolution lower level governments will have full decision-making power over the functions they perform. It is hence likely that they will be able to determine freely the level, scope and quality of the services they provide. Inadequacy of financial resources has been one of the most critical factors hampering successful implementation of decentralisation in Namibia. Currently we have one education director for the two political regions of Hardap and Karas, and no other director for any other ministry. After implementation of decentralization we will have four different directors for each of Karas and Hardap regions. In addition, every region will have a regional executive officer which will be analogous to an under-secretary in the public service.

The status of the governor will also be elevated. When the governor of the Hardap Region was asked about this additional expenditure in the new dispensation he frankly answered: "Democracy is expensive."

The Regional Council must be ready to execute the new responsibilities allocated to it. Those staff members of the Regional Council must be capacitated to carry out the new functions. Many staff members will follow the decentralised functions but many may not, for obvious reasons. We assume that basic education will not devolve to the local level in the near future. If the Regional Councils are to be responsible for many new functions, they will require a high level of trained staff. In the Namibian scenario however, it is evident that the better educated end up in the employment of central government, leaving the less trained to work in the rural areas. This can lead to administrative inefficiency and the failure of the decentralization programme. A lack of skilled administrative clerical staff exists in the regions. Highly qualified teachers opt for positions in the big towns while unqualified teachers are found in the villages.

4.3 BUREAUCRATIC RESISTANCE

It is stipulated that when a function is decentralised, then the staff member and resources must follow the function. All persons who have been interviewed are of the opinion that many staff members will not be willing to move to the rural areas to take up their duties. It is generally accepted that many civil servants will rather

resign. Infrastructure, social life, education facilities and housing are common reasons for these intentions. Government is unable to solve the housing problem at this stage. Moreover, there is lack of understanding of the concept of decentralization among civil servants. Even high-ranking officials who have a good grasp of the concept have second thoughts about decentralization. Dr. L. Burger is of the opinion that decentralisation of education was not initiated by MBESC. He affirmed that the decentralization policy was designed by the MRLGH and its consultants. He is quoted as follows from the interview:

"If the old dispensation of eleven authorities was expensive, watch this one."

Under decentralization, all personnel in each region will resort under the Director: General Services. Personnel officers will attend to all staff members in a region on an equal basis and preference will not be given to teachers. The Director of Education will have no jurisdiction over the personnel officers, as is the case now. To give an example, if books are needed urgently, the procurement officer at the regional level might attend to issues of other ministries first. The Director of Education will have no power to force these officials to execute the duties of the MBESC first, since they are responsible for other Ministries as well.

The Director, Dr. R. West of MBESC, who is at the helm of educational decentralization in Namibia explained the situation as follows in an interview:

"At first the impression we got was that the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing felt that the line ministries were opposed to decentralisation. We are not. One has to sort out practical issues first. Before they are resolved, we cannot move forward. "The MBESC held its first workshop at Swakopmund in December 1997. At this workshop we looked at some issues of decentralization. We invited the MRLGH to participate in the workshop. They attended part of the workshop but refused to say anything while they were there. They were themselves not very sure at that stage of some practical issues. The next workshop of the MBESC was held at Midgard from 7-11 June 1999. We made an attempt to develop a Decentralized Plan for our Ministry. As part of that plan we set a number of pre-conditions, which we expected to be met before decentralization could actually take place. Some of those pre-conditions applied to our own Ministry and some applied to other ministries or central agencies like the National Planning Commission, or the Office of the Prime Minister. The MRLGH also set up a liaison process with focal persons in various ministries. The focal persons held meetings on an irregular basis. Consultants were also hired. At the end of last year(2001) they set up six Cross-Ministerial Task Forces to look at various issues. Some of those different Cross-Ministerial Task Forces have made some progress, but others not. The one on financial matters estimated they should need two full years to get through all the work. The Cross-Ministerial Task Force on Personnel Issues reckoned they could complete their work at the end of this year (2002). I don't know if the others have set realistic completion dates

for themselves. Our ministry is represented on all those committees. So what we have is the National Policy which is being refined, National Decentralization Implementation Plan which is being revised as new information becomes available, and then within our own ministry in parallel with this but touching at many points with our own Decentralization Plan which we also have to revise."

What Dr West said is indicative of the often-faulty communication between policy-makers and bureaucrats. If bureaucrats do not know precisely what they are expected to do, it will lead to ineffectual implementation. It is evident from the various interviews that the attitudes of public bureaucrats, whose task it is to implement the decentralization policy, is very important. There is an indication that some of these officials are resisting the decentralization policy, as devolving of power may leave them without authority. Deducing from the statements of Minister Nahas Angula some bureaucrats may see the decentralization process as an extension of, rather than a move away from Apartheid practices.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMEMNDATIONS

This study sought to discover what went wrong during the formulation and design stages of the decentralization process, which has been officially launched in 1998. It also sought to examine which factors impeded the implementation of education decentralization in Namibia.

Through this study it became clear that decentralization is a political process which was introduced when it was politically expedient to do so. After a long history of colonial oppression, the ruling party SWAPO wanted to establish democratic roots in Namibia. The motivation for decentralization therefore is a political commitment to take decision-making and resources to the regional and local level. The Namibian decentralization process is largely government-initiated. There was none or little demand for decentralization from grassroots level. Given this situation, can decentralization really empower the local structures and communities?

Currently some senior government leaders are backtracking on decentralization. It would seem ironic that a basic obstacle in the implementation of decentralization is the reluctance of some government ministries to relinquish power.

Hoppers (2002:1) states that:

“Both central government and grassroots participation are key to the success of any reform. Central government sets the scene for changes and how they should be carried out. However, a prerequisite for successful implementation is motivation and commitment at the local level.”

There were few efforts to sensitise people on decentralization. Crucial decisions were predetermined before communities were sensitised to then accept it as “their own” policy. This led to a lack of public debate. In the absence of public debate no agreement between all stakeholders could be reached.

Regarding the design stage of decentralization the following became evident:

1. The new decentralization policy differs only marginally from what was happening in education in Namibia from 1993 until 1998 when the National Decentralization Policy was launched.
2. The type of design encourages small-scale experimentation.
3. Actions took place in small steps.
4. Goals and objectives lacked clear perimeters. The Plan does not explicitly refer to what pedagogic objectives it intended to achieve, but merely refers to governance changes.

5. The process is status-quo oriented.
6. There was no public agreement, and only a few awareness programmes were instituted.
7. There is no single decision or "right" solution to achieve the broad goals of education.

Although improving the quality of education was often a goal, it was not the principal goal in the Namibian case. Educational decentralization is a manifestation of wider administrative and political decentralization. The MBESC is committed to the broad outline of the approved national policy on decentralization, but with certain pre-conditions to be met. Some of these pre-conditions are the responsibility of the MBESC, but other key actors also have a role to play, as is specified in the following table (The Decentralization Plan of MBESC 1999:14):

GENERAL PRE-CONDITIONS AS REGARDS

All Key actors

- ◆ Implementation of the decentralization programme must commence at the beginning a new financial year

Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

- ◆ The OPM must approve staffing norms for schools
- ◆ The OPM must approve a staffing structure for regional administrations
- ◆ The OPM must put in place a mechanism for ensuring that additional posts necessitated by the expansion of services are created

Ministry of Finance (MOF)

- ◆ The MOF must provide training on regulations and procedures to Regional Councils and line ministries
- ◆ The MOF must provide clarity on the implementation of the computerized accounting system

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC)

- ◆ The MBEC must prepare or update manuals to guide regional administrations and institutions in the application of the Education Act and regulations
- ◆ The MBEC must ensure the promulgation of the Library and Information Service Act
- ◆ The MBEC must propose the new personnel structure at HO and for the REUs

- ◆ The MBEC must propose a formula for achieving equity in the distribution of finances to the regional administrations
- ◆ The MBEC must commission a cost-implication consultancy once the MOF has provided the revised financial regulations and the staffing structures have been approved
- ◆ The MBEC must develop and implement a nation-wide training programme for officials of the ministry
- ◆ The MBEC must clarify the issue of a National Teaching Service Commission
- ◆ The MBEC must engage dialogue about the decentralization process with all stakeholders
- ◆ The transformation process must be planned in such a way that it causes minimal disruption to MBEC activities

Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH)

- ◆ The MRLGH must put in place a budget structure by 1 April of the year prior to implementation
- ◆ The MRLGH should initiate consultation with the PSC regarding the establishment of the RDC (Recruitment and Disciplinary Committee)

- ◆ The MRLGH must develop regulations and instruments which provide the assurance of a tied budget (recurrent and development)

Regional Council (RC)

- ◆ The RC must design and develop an Organogram for their administrative structures and define roles
- ◆ The RC must define standards and norms for personnel employment
- ◆ The RC must provide adequate office accommodation, equipment and furniture
- ◆ The RC must develop a clear policy on the allocation of transport and the maintenance of vehicles, which will enable education and CALL functions to be effectively executed
- ◆ The RC must indicate to MBEC their readiness for the taking over of functions to be devolved

This study used many definitions and theories by various scholars in an attempt to analyse the decentralization of education in Namibia. The concept of decentralization as defined and interpreted (Smith 1995; Adamolekun 1999; Rondinelli 1981; Naidoo 2002; Totemeyer 2002) is found applicable and relevant in respect of Namibia. Namibia as unitary state has been divided into 13 regions based on geographical considerations. The MBESC's Decentralization Policy is designed

to empower the regions and the schools by bringing certain responsibilities, duties and resources closer to the people. This study concentrated on the design stage which precedes implementation. Public policy (Turner and Hulme 1997; Anderson 1978; Saasa 1985; Lindblom 1959) is seen as a dynamic process. As is evident from the research, the objectives, notably pedagogical objectives of education decentralization in Namibia are not explicitly described in the policy. Neither have failures been anticipated. If the goals, which are to be achieved, have clear perimeters, minimal uncertainty will result. Uncertainty among bureaucrats – the implementers – leads to resistance. The various interviews revealed the bureaucratic resistance among the Namibian civil servants. In line with some policies there should be opportunity in the design stage for small-scale experimentation. A process of trial and error will create the situation where one will learn from one's mistakes. The study found that these notions were not taken into consideration and this has led to the decentralization process being implemented haphazardly. To get all aboard on the decentralization process, there should be consensus. Great plans may be made, strategies put into place, but without consensus everything is doomed to failure. After four years the process in Namibia is regarded as still in its infancy. Policy-makers (Lindblom 1959; Anderson 1978) however, are of the opinion that action must take place in small steps.

Different governments have different rationales behind decentralization. Some governments use decentralisation as a tool to quash secessionist ideas in a country. It is generally accepted by many that the development currently taking place in the

Caprivi region is the result of the secessionist attempt of 2000. Other governments implement decentralization to develop the regions in the country, which support the government. By doing so it is believed that the political dissidents will fall in line with government's policy. In to many people's view this has this has particular relevance to the Northern regions of the country.

The policy of "successive limited comparisons" advocated by Lindblom (1959) is status-quo oriented. The "decentralization" prior to independence was based on ethnicity. Education was run by each of the eleven ethnic governments. After independence education was decentralized to six and later to seven educational regions based on geographical considerations. Administrative-wise, little change took place between these two time periods. According to the Decentralization Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2000) education will be decentralized to thirteen regions. Again, little change will take place in terms of administrative arrangements – thus the connotation of status quo-orientation.

Strong bureaucratic resistance can be sensed among civil servants. Hoppers is of the opinion that any reform must not underestimate the strength of institutional rigidities and inertia. Education structures and practice are shaped by long traditions. Professionals might individually and collectively resist change. The passage of the decentralisation policy does not necessarily mean the appearance of a new system of education. Dr Burger, citing the Swedish example, observed that the decentralization

process there took decades to get momentum, despite Sweden being a highly developed country. Mr P. Boltman, governor of the Hardap Region contends that decentralization should take place incrementally. The pace of decentralization in Namibia therefore is, in his opinion, right. Dr Burger agrees with him.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As is evident in this study, decentralization policies in many countries have often failed to live up to their promise. This however, has not led to a rejection of the theory. Rather it has led to greater emphasis on the need to consider the conditions which are necessary for successful implementation of decentralization. Therefore this study recommends that:

- (i) Since decentralization affects the whole fabric of life of the Namibian population, a vigorous marketing campaign should be undertaken to mobilize and sensitise the people towards decentralization. This would be in line with Rondinelli, McCullough and Johnson (1989:76), who state that:

“The conditions for the successful implementation of decentralization are based on the need to promote and support institutional capacity. These conditions depend on political, cultural psychological, organisational and financial factors.”

- (ii) It became evident through public statements by leaders and during parliamentary debates on decentralization that there is limited understanding of the concept. It has now become necessary to ensure adequate training for decision-makers, both in the upper level and at the bottom of the pyramid.
- (iii) In order to minimize bureaucratic resistance to decentralization, the attitudes and behaviour of those in both the central and decentralized organisations should be changed through “sensitization” measures.

- (iv) Qualified and competent leadership at different levels have to be in place in order to make a success. It takes time to retrain, re-orient, or recruit committed professionals to run with an idea.
- (v) Successful implementation of any reform requires a detailed, explicit strategy that anticipates possible problems. Commitment needs to be built among stakeholders, including teachers and parents. Time frames for piloting should be planned realistically.
- (vi) The MBESC ideal for decentralization must be redefined so that it will be very clear as to the division of responsibilities and resources between the regional council and the local authorities and as to how the decentralized functions will be organized, especially in regions which contain a number of municipalities.
- (vii) The Regional Councils must be capacitated to carry out their new functions. The calibre of councillors is an issue that warrants attention, as the government has recognized. A training institution should be established whose objective is to train local government officials and provide guidance to councillors.
- (viii) The six cross-ministerial task forces must be pressurised to complete their work. The MRLGH must supervise them and support them where possible. The time has arrived that all uncertainties regarding decentralization be cleared. According to Mr G. Kamseb, Deputy Director for Decentralization,

the D.P.I.C is the relevant authority to put pressure on the line ministries, and not the P S of the MRLGH.

- (ix) If the Decentralisation Policy is to be successfully implemented there is need to pay particular attention to the issue of fiscal decentralisation. Godana and Mukwena (2002:21) are of the opinion that:

“The taskforce working on this aspect should without further delay conclude its work on the matter. If functions are going to be delegated to the regional and local levels without adequate transfer of financial resources and clearly-defined financial arrangements, the implementation of decentralization is not likely to succeed.”

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FIGURE 1:**DECENTRALISATION PROCESS FOR THE
MBESC**

DECENTRALISATION PROCESS FOR THE MBESC

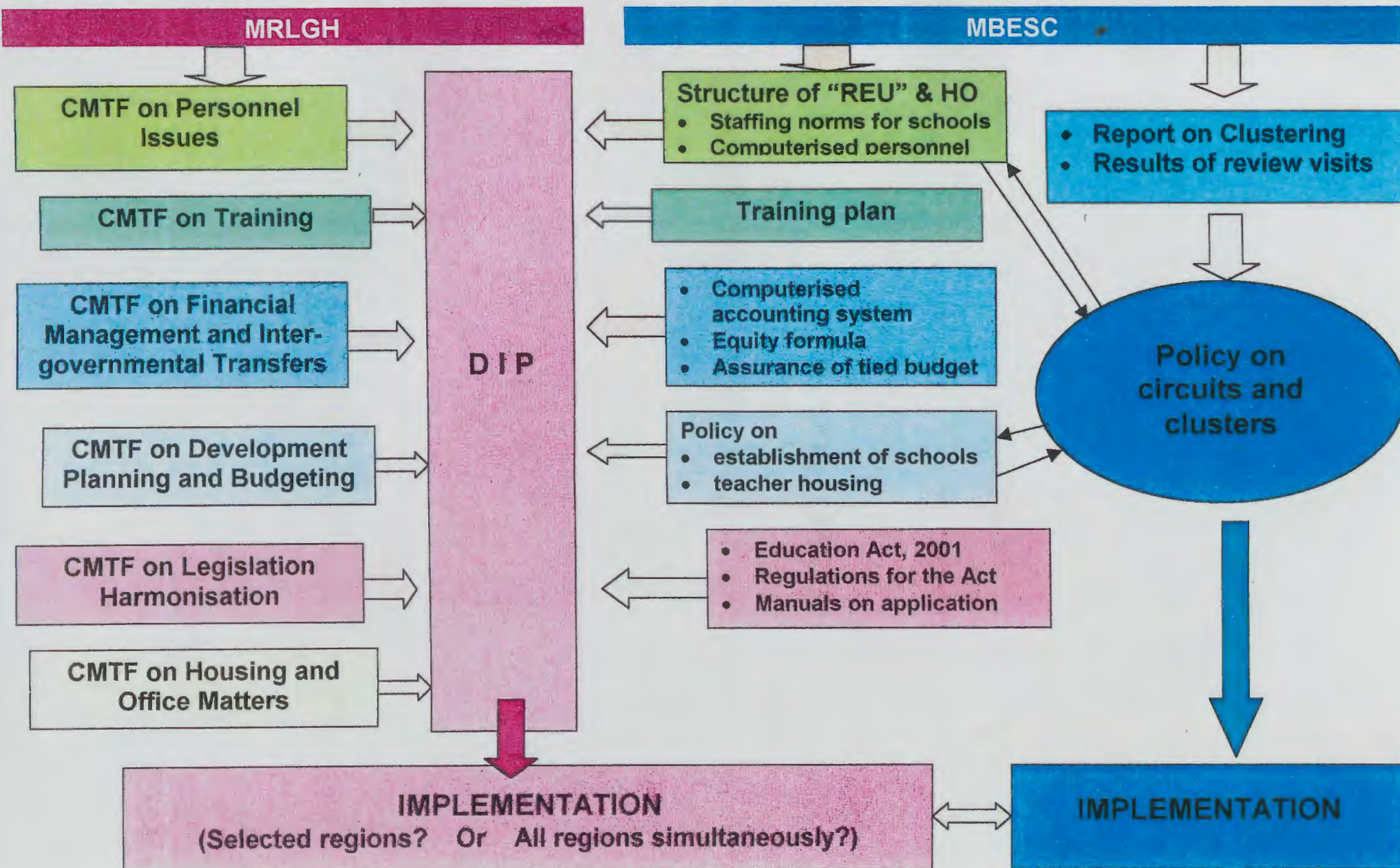


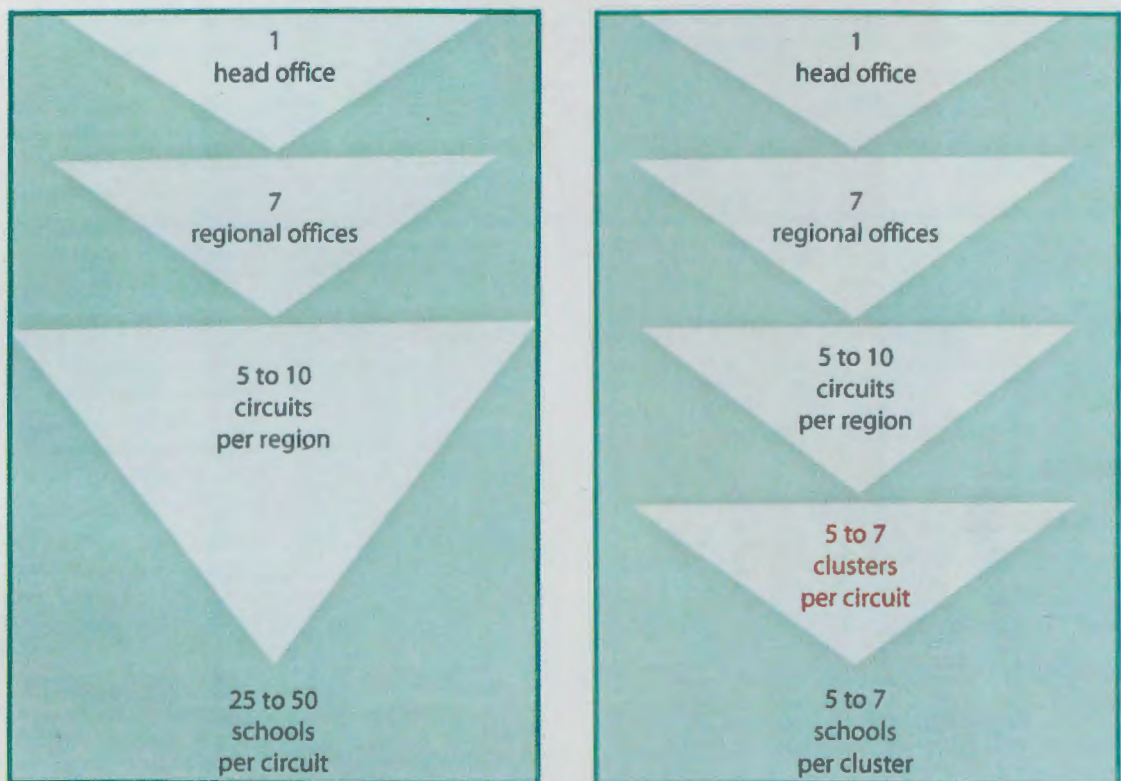
FIGURE 2:

FIGURE 2:

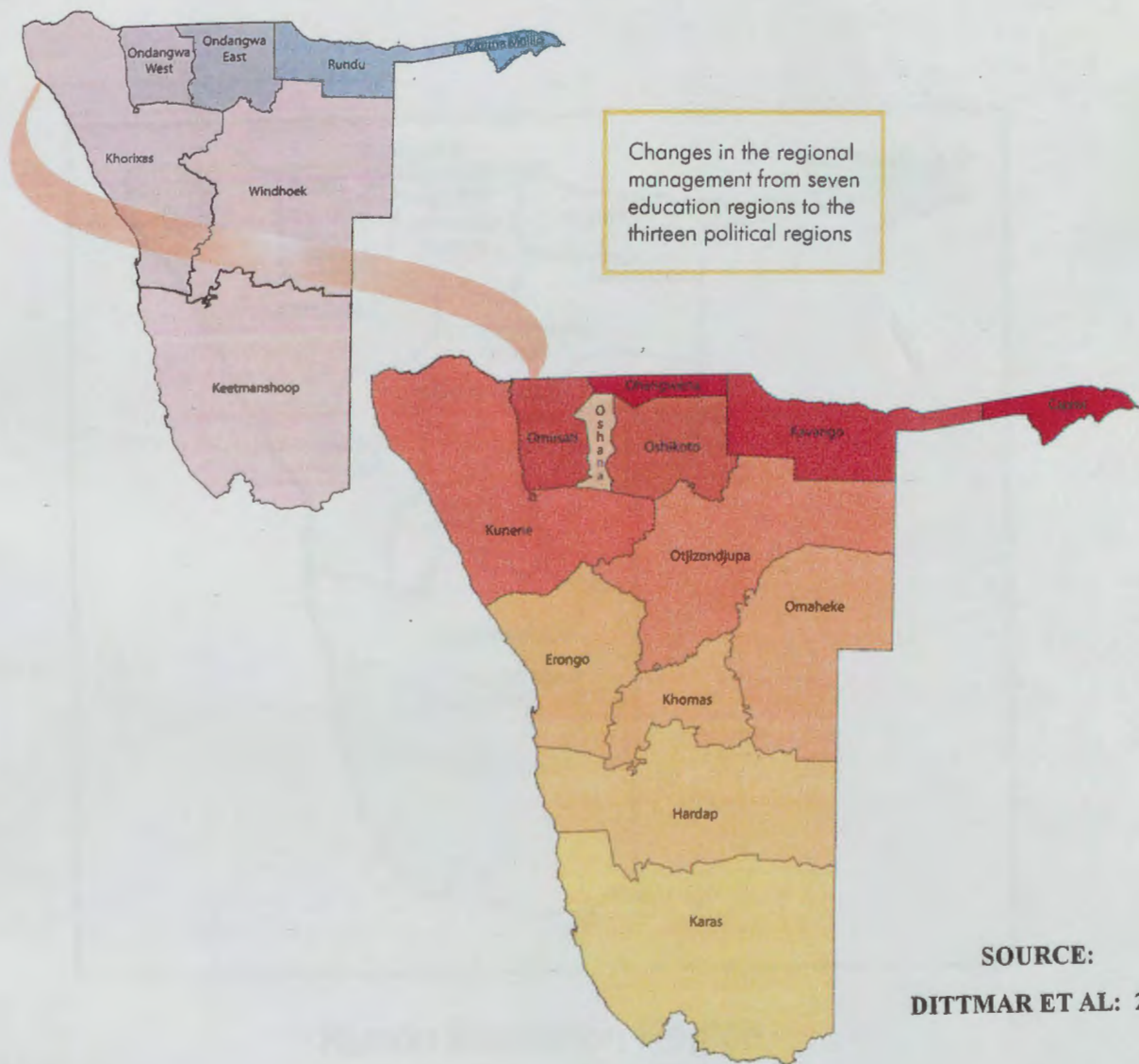
CLUSTER SYSTEM

Figure 2:

Levels of management in the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture before the introduction of the cluster system (left) and after it (right). The numbers at each level are the numbers of units managed by the level above that level. For example, the head office manages 7 regional offices, each of which has between 5 and 10 circuits.



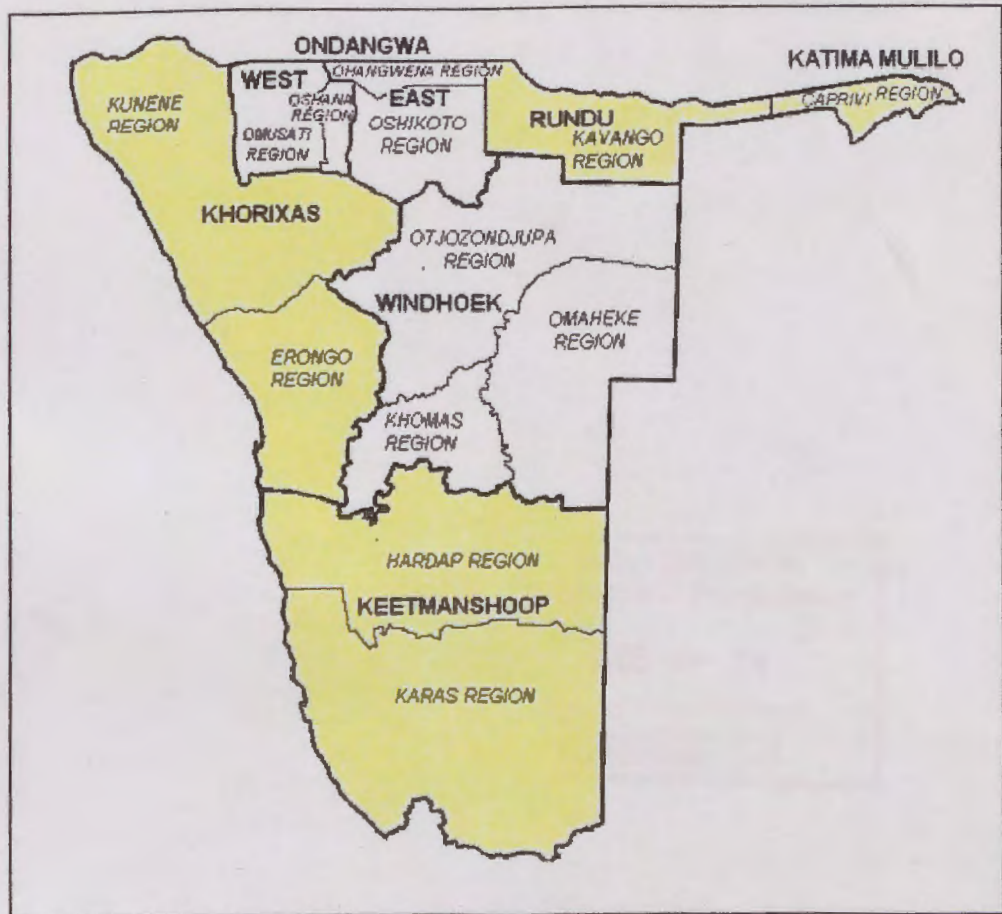
MAP 1



SOURCE:

DITTMAR ET AL: 2002

MAP 2



Rundu Education Region
Khorixas Education Region
Katima Mulilo Education Region
Keetmanshoop Education Region

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