

EDUCATION EQUITY AND QUALITY IN NAMIBIA:  
A CASE STUDY OF MOBILE SCHOOLS  
IN THE KUNENE REGION

by

Onesmus Hailombe

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education Policy

in the

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Prof. Jan Nieuwenhuis

November 2011

## ABSTRACT

The main thesis of this study is that access to education, important as it is in terms of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is not enough. Education that is not of an acceptable quality may not serve the purpose or the intent of the MDGs, nor of the Education for All movement. The study aims to examine the Namibian education policies related to education equity and quality for nomadic pastoralist people living in the Kunene region where socio-economic and cultural factors mitigate the provision of education. The study takes a broad view in an effort to explore the phenomenon of education provision to nomadic people and its actual outcomes beyond the classroom perspective and beyond the limits of its expected results.

The data were collected over a period of five weeks. In this regard, a qualitative research design with critically quasi-ethnographic elements using semi-structured interviews to gather data from participants was used. Purposive sampling was used to select mobile school units, educators, nomadic leaders and community members. Data were collected through document analysis, audio-taped interviews and transcribed for inductive analysis.

The intent of this case study is to illuminate attempts, through various education policies and strategies used by the Namibian government, to address equity and quality in education to marginalised and nomadic pastoralist groups, and reflect the insufficiency of such efforts that are not compatible with the intended groups' culture and lifestyle. In this study *horizontal, vertical equity and equal opportunity* were used as lenses in analysing the degree to which equity has been achieved in Namibia. It became evident that the policies developed in Namibia support the notion of horizontal equity, but do not differentiate on the distribution of resources to equalise and standardise the provisioning despite unequal social circumstances.

It is argued that if equity and quality in education aimed at nomadic and pastoralist groups are to be achieved, policymakers have to be prepared to be more flexible in the kind of practices and organisational structures which they develop in order to provide education, especially for these marginalised groups.

Mere expansion of formal education provision, based on a model of what works in urban situations, is not enough to ensure equity and quality education reaches all primary school age children, especially nomadic and pastoralist children. Added to this, education aimed at nomads and pastoralists should be flexible, multi-faceted and focused to target specific structural problems such as social and economic marginalisation, lack of political representation, and interacting successfully with the new challenges raised by globalisation.

The research findings contribute to the debate and discussion concerning equity and quality in education aimed at nomadic and pastoralists in the larger context of education systems in developing nations with circumstances similar to those in Namibia.

### **Key words**

Education policy

Provisioning education

Equity

Quality

Mobile school

Nomads

Pastoralists

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this study was challenging and enlightening. I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following people and institutions, which have been there for me throughout this bumpy journey.

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Jan Nieuwenhuis, who not only gave me critical inputs but also motivated, supported and guided me throughout this study. His unwavering support for being my pillar of hope, strength and support was of great help. He worked tirelessly to ensure that I complete this study. I could not have done this without him. Prof. Nieuwenhuis, thank you for his willingness to listen, to value what I had to say, and his ability to guide me gave me the courage to continue and complete this research study. I was honoured to have had him as my supervisor. To Prof. Jan Nieuwenhuis, not only for his intellectual and critical guidance, but for being my supervisor, mentor and role model - thank you!

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my former Permanent Secretaries of Education, Mr. Vitali Ankama and the Director of Education, Mr. Crispin Kamwi Kabajani for granted me a permission to conduct my research study in the mobile school units in the Kunene region.

I would like to thank my colleagues from Directorate of Planning and Development. Special thanks go to Mr. Sam Shikongo, for providing me with all the information and data needed in my study.

I would like to express thanks to the officials of the Directorate of Education in the Kunene region for their unwavering support. I'm especially indebted to the Ondao Mobile School Management, and my thanks go to Mr. John Tjambiru, who accompanied me during my field study. Thank you for his time and his valuable contribution to my study.

My thanks go to all community members and leaders, mobile school teachers and learners who took part in this study, for their willingness to make themselves available for the interviews, it is greatly appreciated. They generously gave of their time and information.

Special thanks, to the Management of Millennium Challenge Account Namibia, and my direct supervisor Ms. Tuli Nghiyoonanye, who granted me a study leave, thus enabling me to complete this study.

I would like to extend my special thanks to Mrs. Sarah Adams and her family for her financial assistance. I could not have done this without her support.

My sincere thanks go to Melody Edwards for linguistic editing and formatting this dissertation.

Last, but in no way least in importance, I would like to thank my family (my wife Frolian and my two children Pandu and Iyaloo) for their outstanding support and motivation. I am deeply indebted to them for the sacrifice and the time they spent alone while I was doing this research study.

Above all, I give thanks to God Almighty for His mercy and grace and granting me health, strength and wisdom to complete this research.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my uncle, **Lazarus Nghituwamata Nghifikwa**, who was my mentor and the pillar of my life.

## DECLARATION

I, Onesmus Hailombe, declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis, or with the assistance, of any other body or organisation or person outside the University of Pretoria.

---

Onesmus Hailombe

---

Date

## ACRONYMS

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
BEAP	Basic Education in Africa Programme
BETD	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
ECCE	Childhood Care and Education
ECP	Education Certificate Primary
EDI	All Development Index
EFA	Education for all
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQUIP1	Educational Quality Improvement Programme 1
EQUIP2	Educational Quality Improvement Programme 2
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
HIPO	Hizetjitwa Indigenous People's Organisation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HoDs	Head of Department(s)
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MDGS	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAMAS	Namibian Association of Norway Namibia
NEPRU	The Namibia Economic Public Research Unit
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non Government Organisations



NIED	National Institute for Education Development
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Aid Development
WCEFA	World Conference of Education for All

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF ANNEXURES</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, PROBLEM, RATIONALE, RESEARCH DESIGN</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction to the study	1
1.2. Background of Namibia	3
1.3. Rationale for the study	7
1.4. Purpose and objective of the study	8
1.5. Problem statement and research question	9
1.6. The conceptual framework for the study	12
1.7. Quality in education	15
1.8. Research methodology	17
1.9. Limitations of the study	19
1.10. Significance of the study	20
1.11. Organisation of the chapters	22
<b>CHAPTER 2. EQUITY AND QUALITY AS EDUCATIONAL IMPERATIVES</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1. Introduction	24
2.2. Equity in education	25
2.3. Quality in education	33
2.4. Equity and quality: International perspective	38
2.5. Equity and quality education: Developing country perspective	42
2.6. Equity and quality education to nomadic groups in a developing country context	47
2.7. Conclusion	50
<b>CHAPTER 3. EQUITY AND QUALITY: STRATEGIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1. Introduction	53
3.2. Enrolment and participation rates in sub-Saharan Africa	54
3.3. Strategies used in attaining MDGs	62

3.4.	Equity and quality in the Namibian education system .....	64
3.5.	Provisioning education for nomads in Namibia .....	78
3.5.1	Multi-grade teaching .....	81
3.6.	Conclusion.....	83
<b>CHAPTER 4.</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1.	Introduction.....	85
4.2.	Research design.....	87
4.2.1	Naturalism .....	92
4.2.2	Understanding .....	93
4.2.3	Discovery.....	94
4.3.	The researcher as the research instrument.....	94
4.4.	Entering the field.....	96
4.5.	Ethical considerations.....	98
4.6.	Research sampling and site.....	99
4.7.	Data collection .....	103
4.7.1	Documentation .....	103
4.7.2	Interviewing .....	104
4.7.3	Observation field notes .....	109
4.7.4	Field notes.....	111
4.8.	Data analysis .....	111
4.9.	Trustworthiness and credibility.....	114
4.10.	Limitations .....	115
4.11.	Summary .....	116
<b>CHAPTER 5.</b>	<b>THE HIMBA AND ZEMBA PEOPLE .....</b>	<b>117</b>
5.1.	Introduction.....	117
5.2.	Culture and formal education .....	119
5.2.1	Culture demands .....	119
5.2.2	Formal education.....	127
5.3.	Features of Himba and Zemba culture that make the provisioning of education difficult .....	131
5.4.	Conclusion.....	133
<b>CHAPTER 6.</b>	<b>PROVISIONING OF EDUCATION FOR THE HIMBA AND ZEMBA .....</b>	<b>135</b>
6.1.	Introduction.....	135
6.2.	Education provisioning in pre-independent Namibia .....	136
6.3.	Education provision in independent Namibia .....	139
6.4.	Education provision for Himba and Zemba people.....	140



6.5.	The organisation and administration of mobile schools .....	143
6.6.	The NAMAS Era .....	147
6.7.	Ondao mobile school under the Ministry of Education .....	151
6.8.	Physical services .....	155
6.8.1	National curriculum .....	155
6.8.2	Instructional materials .....	159
6.8.3	Teaching spaces/facilities .....	159
6.8.4	Transport .....	160
6.8.5	Teacher provision in mobile schools .....	162
6.8.6	Teacher absenteeism .....	162
6.8.7	Quality of education .....	163
6.9.	Instructional experiences .....	166
6.9.1	Multi-grade teaching .....	166
6.9.2	Enrolment and dropout rates.....	168
6.10.	Conclusion.....	178
<b>CHAPTER 7.</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>180</b>
7.1.	Introduction.....	180
7.2.	Summary of findings .....	181
7.2.1	Equity in education .....	182
7.2.2	Quality in education .....	185
7.3.	Findings related to the culture/education interface .....	194
7.4.	Contribution of this study to knowledge production .....	196
7.5.	Conclusion.....	199
<b>REFERENCES</b>	.....	<b>202</b>
<b>ANNEXURES</b>	.....	<b>225</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Primary Net Enrolment Rate per region – 1991-2008 .....	44
Table 3.1	Numbers of schools, learners, teachers and support staff .....	56
Table 3.2	Dropout/ school leaving rates from 2003 to 2009 .....	57
Table 3.3	Namibia primary education enrolment rate 2009 .....	70
Table 3.4	Means and sampling errors for the reading and mathematics test scores of learners with all items (SACMEQ I and SACMEQ II) .....	73
Table 3.5	Total number of teachers .....	77
Table 4.1	Number of mobile units and the grades offered .....	100
Table 4.2	Enrolment rate of seven mobile units participated in this study - 2010..	102
Table 6.1	Ondao Mobile School enrolment rates .....	148

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Research design .....	19
Figure 2.1	Input, process and output variables in education.....	27
Figure 2.2	A framework for understanding education quality .....	35
Figure 2.3	Learner reading scores by country .....	45
Figure 3.1	Gross and Net Enrolment and Survival rates (selected African countries) .....	55
Figure 3.2	Primary NER and Completion rates for selected African countries (% of relevant age group) .....	58
Figure 3.3	Primary education completion ratios for selected African countries- 2010 .....	59
Figure 3.4	Primary school age not attending school in the world 2010 .....	60
Figure 3.5	Diagram of the educational system in Namibia.....	65
Figure 3.6	Learner mathematics scores by country .....	71
Figure 3.7	Teacher mathematics scores by country .....	72
Figure 3.8	Example of a tented classroom .....	81
Figure 3.9	Total number of mobile school teachers.....	82
Figure 3.10	Primary enrolment rate for Kunene region (Grade 1-7).....	82
Figure 5.1	Himba woman milking .....	123
Figure 6.1	Percentages of Junior Secondary examination results per region 2009	141
Figure 6.2	Mobile school unit: tented classrooms.....	142
Figure 6.3	Inside the tent classroom .....	145
Figure 6.4	Satellite image indicating limited number of roads in the Kunene region .....	161

## LIST OF ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Interview schedule for mobile school teachers .....	225
Annexure B: Interview schedule for community members and leaders .....	227
Annexure C: Interview schedule for nomadic learners/Children .....	229
Annexure D: Interview schedule for Educators .....	231
Annexure E: Letter from the Permanent Secretary of Education .....	232
Annexure F: Letter signed by the Director of Education.....	233
Annexure G: Letter signed by the Ondao Mobile School Principal .....	234
Annexure H: Ethics clearance certificate.....	235
Annexure I: Letter of consent from the researcher to participants.....	236
Annexure J: Letter of consent from the researcher to community members and leaders (translated into Otjiherero).....	237
Annexure K: Proof of submission of an article to an accredited journal .....	238
Annexure L: Ondao Mobile School Statistics 2010.....	239