

Bericht über Forschungsaufenthalt in Namibia Oktober 1999

Vorbemerkung:

Die Einladung nach Namibia erfolgte durch eine namibische Non-Governmental-Organization (NGO): das Institute für Educational Career Development (IECD), das in enger Verbindung mit dem namibischen Bildungsministerium landesweit Schulentwicklungsprogramme anbietet. Der Managing Director von IECD, Mr. Lloyd Ulrich hielt sich 1998 und 1999 zu Weiterbildungsaufenthalten an der Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel auf. Ziel der Reise war, in enger Verbindung mit dem IECD und dessen Direktor Lloyd Ulrich eine Einschätzung eines norwegischen Entwicklungshilfeprojekts (Träger: NAMAS) im Norden Namibias zu erarbeiten: die Einführung von sog. mobile schools für die dort lebenden nomadisierenden Oji-Himbas.

Der vorliegende Bericht bezieht sich auf die ursprünglichen Ziele dieses Projekts und deren tatsächliche Umsetzung und ist das Ergebnis der gemeinsamen Beobachtungen und Auswertungsgespräche. In erweiterter Form wurde er der finanzierenden norwegischen Institution (Namas) vorgelegt. Der vorliegende Bericht wird ergänzt durch eine umfangreiche Video- und Fotodokumentation.

REPORT: Travel Kaokoland 13 – 21 October 1999

In order to be able to compile this report, the IECD with the approval of NAMAS and Mr. Tjivikua decided to invite **Prof. Dauber and Mr. Nolle from the University of Kassel (GhK)** to accompany the IECD on a conclusive visit.

The programme of this visit was developed in such a way that the team would have the opportunity to visit a number of Himba communities, a number of Mobile School Units and for three successive days have the opportunity to discuss all different observations with the Principal Mr. Tjivikua. The team from Germany prepared itself extensively for this task by studying all reports the IECD has published as well as all different kinds of articles and discussions available on the Internet, which range from the Epupa issue to regular articles in the daily media.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The agreement with NAMAS defines that: *At the end of each visit*

· *IECD must compile a comprehensive report which will reflect all different aspects of the project and which will enable both the Ministry as well as NAMAS to establish a realistic impression of the actual level of progress of the project.*

This has been done and the three different project reports can be studied on the Internet.

For the final visit it was agreed that:

· IECD management at the end of the period will give all stakeholders in the project their view and opinion about the sustainability of the project.

The evaluation team thus decided to study the history of the project and with this information in mind travel up to Kaokoland, meet wherever possible with different members of the Himba community, visit a number of mobile units and together with Mr. Tjivikua discuss the situation surrounding the Ondao Mobile School Units from different perspectives. Based on these discussions and observations, the final report would then be compiled.

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

To start off the IECD wants to state categorically that this is the most unusual project the IECD has been associated with and taking into consideration the given circumstances surrounding this project, it undoubtedly has to be evaluated as being a very successful project.

But like everything else, there is room for improvement and the IECD would like to take a critical look at those areas that should / could be re-addressed and in which new updated decisions need to be taken so that realistic objectives for this project can be formulated and then achieved at an acceptable human as well as material prize.

Comparing the initial intentions of the project with the present situation

The former reports have referred to actual physical findings associated with the project. So we all know about the tents, desks, teachers, teaching aids, lesson preparation and numerous other observations. But no report went back to the original document, which was compiled in April '97 by the late Hans Hvidsten from NAMAS together with a counterpart, a Principal of Kaokoland, Mr. Kavari. And which to the understanding of the IECD all accepted or at least which was not questioned in its basic statement. The document referred to is called:

Education for Marginalized Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Children Preliminary Field Study Report.

It was this document that outlined the general situation in the Kunene Region and which also tried to predict what it would take to successfully launch and operate this project during the pilot phase. In this document the framework for successful operation was defined and I would like to

take a closer look at a select number of points from **Chapter 5**, the conclusive chapter of this field study report.

The school terms cannot follow the ordinary terms of the national curriculum, but must be organized to fit in with the seasons and the migration patterns of each community. This could mean a variety of patterns depending on the migration patterns of the community where the school unit is located.

This recommendation has not been taken into consideration and the Himba children with their teachers are presently bound to an inflexible trimester system within the regular Namibian setup and examinations, continuous assessment as well as subsequent promotion of children are dealt with as they are in all other Namibian schools.

The school days may have to be organized differently from the ordinary 08:00 – 13:30 school day. The children may need to take the herds for watering and drive them to the pastures before attending classes, and classes may need to continue until it is time to get the herds from the pastures again and drive them for watering.

The teachers of most units have tried to interpret this recommendation to their best ability. Now a special group of people should address this issue and develop a number of basic guidelines, which could be used by the staff of the Ondao School to determine to what extent they have met the basic requirements of teaching and learning for the different grades. Unfortunately some units at one stage of our consultative visits had already fallen back to an 8:00 – 13:00 school routine.

The organization of the school day must accommodate for the lifestyle patterns that vary from one community to another, the key always being flexibility and unconventional thinking.

This recommendation should have been accompanied by a lot of advice and it was unrealistic that the staff of the Mobile School Units would during the pilot phase of the project be in a position to identify a suitable pattern to organize a school day. However two years of practical experience that varies from weekend teaching to teaching in sessions have gone by and it would be appropriate if a special committee would address this issue and formulate a number of basic criteria.

CURRICULUM

There must be a special curriculum for this school, one that takes into full account the culture and traditions of the Ovahimba. At the same time it must prepare the pupils for modern society; they will have to compete with other people for jobs later. The land and environment cannot

possibly accommodate the whole population's growth in the future; the annual growth among the Ovahimba is more than 5%. This means a doubling of the population in less than 20 years.

Little has been done in this field and presently the children are still using the normal curriculum for Junior Primary. Fortunately the late Hans Hvidsten had started the process of development and some of his materials are presently being used. To underline the problem, I would like to quote one of the teachers Mrs. Tom “When it comes to teaching religious and moral instruction, we refer to a syllabus, which accommodates the Christian believe but does not acknowledge the Himba culture.”

To ensure that the pupils get a continuous education when they shift from one school unit to another because of the movements of livestock, the curriculum could possibly be organized in modules, with a time frame indicated for covering each module. Thus all the units would be teaching the same modules at roughly the same time over the year, and the pupils could easily shift from one unit to another without losing out chunks of the curriculum.

A very valid point, which has not been taken any further but there are two units that actually do have a shift of learners from one to the other.

INTEGRATION IN ESTABLISHED SCHOOLS

A number of established schools have a pure Himba / Zemba population of learners, or predominant Himba / Zemba. These schools are situated often in major home areas of Himba or Zemba groups.

The principal has started to address this and he actually visits one of the local schools but this needs to be followed up and the consequences of being feeder schools have to be thought through and should among others be discussed with the communities, the MBEC and potential funding will have to be sought and secured to accommodate the consequences thereof.

TEACHERS

The communities should identify suitable candidates for teacher training from among their own ranks. These candidates should preferably have minimum Grade 10 background or qualifications. We should not rule out suitable candidates with, as low qualifications as Grade 8, however, as there may not be enough candidates with Grade 10 qualifications to meet the needs. The teacher-training programme would have to be designed to take care of such discrepancies. With teachers coming out of the local communities we could be more insured that the teaching of the curriculum would be culturally affirmative and acceptable to the parents.

The communities have done this but suitability will have to be confirmed and if necessary addressed.

There would be need for a special training programme for the teachers. This would be the responsibility of the Curriculum Development Officer in close collaboration with NIED. The development of this Teacher Training Curriculum must take place parallel to the development of the Primary School Curriculum for the children, so that the teacher training could start from the beginning of 1998. The first mobile units could then be operational sometimes in 1998, towards the end of the year.

This is most probably one of the most crucial single aspects of the programme through which quality can be secured. The Ondao teachers not only are:

- Unqualified
- they have to teach multigrade classes
- In a physical setting for which there are no comparative experiences advisable and with syllabi which have not been adapted to meet the specific circumstantial requirements.

This is a daunting task even for those who have the experience and qualification. For a young and unqualified teacher, with very limited experience and with a support structure that still needs to establish itself it is a near impossible assignment. In this light the previous evaluations should have differed more between praising the teachers for their courage and dedication to cope on the human side and a realistic comparative academic assessment of the amount of learning and teaching that has actually happened. The IECD fears that such evaluation would reveal that these children in spite of being automatically promoted have not learned what they should have in Grade one and two in spite of the commendable inputs from their teachers.

It is difficult at this stage to determine the exact number of teachers needed for the programme...

This will have to be a very serious point of discussion. Issues such as how many grades should sit in a multi Grade class, how big would such a class be, would a unit need more than one teacher ... will have to be addressed. The Outstanding solutions that will be based on what should and what is possible should however bear in mind that quality should not be sacrificed at the expense of quantity and the IECD would like to caution the stakeholders to enlarge the project before a certain level of quality has been secured.

It is obvious that a learner/teacher ratio of 35/1 cannot be observed in this programme. The communities vary greatly in size, and are geographically scattered all over the area. Likewise the people move with their cattle to wherever there are pastures and water. This would call

for a much greater flexibility and variety in class size per school unit. A figure of 100 teachers or more at the initial stage is probably more realistic.

No comment is needed here. This recommendation is valid and should be seriously addressed.

MOBILE UNITS

The mobile units must be truly "mobile" in order to be moved around without too much hassle and too heavy demands on transport. Many places where the units will need to be set up are without any roads or tracks negotiable even in the best 4x4 vehicle. In such places transport by donkey's back would probably be the only viable solution.

During our year of consultation the IECD came to understand the term mobile units as it applies here. Many of the units have moved and where they have it was good that the classes have been in position to move along with the livestock and the children. But these communities are only pastoral in so far that they may change their grazing grounds between two, perhaps three predetermined positions, depending on the cost, and availability of water and grazing. In the long run it seems appropriate to avail funding and counseling for those communities who would like to build basic classrooms. The IECD sees the tent classrooms as interim, but not as the final solution. What needs to be mobile is the class with all learning and teaching materials and not the building. The IECD would like to suggest that a separate low cost sharing scheme to be negotiated which would enable those communities interested to build their own multi purpose class rooms.

SERVICE UNITS

The project will need a certain number of service units for supply of learning materials, moving the school units between locations, and for visits by personnel from the Opuwo center in a scheduled follow-up programme.

Very little can be added here except that initially the three units came to be two and from 1999 only one was left. This has resulted in the necessity of the principal investing more and more time into actual transport related activities at the expense of time he would have otherwise dedicated to other crucial aspects of his young, developing school.

The principal needs someone to with technical skills who would share the burden of driving and transporting on those extremely difficult roads.

STAFFING

The staff at the Opuwo center will have to take care of a number of functions. They will have to develop curricula both for the Primary School

programme and the special Teacher Training Programme. They will have to develop syllabi for the different subjects, and they will have to develop the learning materials to teach these syllabi. In addition there will probably have to be an education research component running from the start of the project.

All production of the learning material will take place at the Opuwo center, and the distribution of the material will also be organized from the center. In addition there will be the organized follow-up programme of teachers in the field, for support and in-service training.

If the programme shall succeed the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture must employ enough qualified personnel to take care of all these functions.

One Curriculum Development Officer and possibly one Education Research and Development Officer must be employed from the very start of the project in July/August 1997. These two posts are important for further development of the project; the work of these two officers will lay the foundation for all further development of the whole project. Any delay in the commencement of their work will cause serious delays in the implementation of the whole programme.

Other necessary personnel must be employed from 1998. This would include teacher educators for the field follow-up programme and for the teacher training part of the programme, and one Clerical Assistant for production of learning materials and teaching aids, and for practical office administration tasks.

It is obvious that most aspects listed have not materialized. The question to ask here is not so much who is to blame but how could this be avoided in future.

What we have in the initial document is an assumption on how at that time the two authors thought it would be possible to actually get the mobile school off the ground and then operate it.

Nobody at that time questioned these recommendations. But nobody actually was committed to the implementation either. In future one should perhaps do planning in stages where firstly one outlines the ideal situation and then the different partners commit themselves to a realistic plan. This noble project has been seriously slowed down by inadequate interpretive communication and its consequences and not because there were any big conflicting objectives.

EQUIPMENT

The project will need a powerful state-of-the-art computer that can handle graphic files and desktop publishing tasks. Types and prices are already being considered. A high-resolution laser printer connected to the computer will be necessary to produce quality imprints for mass duplication on the digital printer. A scanner connected to the computer should be considered, but may not be necessary with a digital printer in place.

The principal as well as his secretary will have to be trained in utilizing the computer they have at their disposal.

THE HIMBA COMMUNITY

Throughout the country the IECD has observed the relationship between the level of development of the school and that of its feeder community. Of the 140 schools presently counseled by the IECD all successful ones have dedicated themselves to community upliftment and increased involvement. In our eyes it is of crucial importance that not only all units have functioning literacy classes but that much more than reading and writing skills need to be taught here to give the Himba communities a chance to understand their present and future position in society and how their future position will be determined by themselves.

Lastly the IECD would like to comment that most Himbas we have met were by no means poor but they were certainly different. It is wrong to think of them as a poor people who need charity. What they need however is counseling and guidance to help them make their own choices, as they have no previous modern world experiences to guide them.

On behalf of the IECD Team

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