

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### 4.1. A framework for analysis

In South Africa the current aim and purpose of teacher education and that of environmental education in particular is a move away from the old education system (teacher -centred methodology, instructive and authoritative teaching, rote learning, fixed teaching syllabi) to the one of the Outcomes Based Education (learner -centred, learner directed, learner paced, flexible learning, flexible syllabi) (Rabie, 1997). As Kim (2001: 231) puts it, presently the move is towards the incorporation of the liberal constructivist teaching methodology (emphasizes learner autonomy and independence), constructivist perspective (emphasizes teaching from learners understanding, their background knowledge and experiences) and critical social theory (emphasizes learner's engagement with real life situations, encourages questioning the state of affairs in formal education, questioning also the underlining assumptions of particular education theory, methodology, etc). With OBE now in place in the country, the critical social analysis is becoming relevant and is hailed by many environmental education practitioners, researchers and facilitators (Janse Van Rensburg, 2002; Taylor, 2003; Loubser, 2005; O'Donoghue, 2001)). Environmental Education Focus Group (2001:118) agrees that through this approach, learners are taught to be responsible citizens who have the ability to effect changes in their communities. In order to achieve this broad aim, teachers need to develop in learners the cognitive skills, attitudes and knowledge and understanding of the complexity of their local environments (EECI, 2002). This thinking dictates that the classroom setting in this regard should be organized in such a way that learners are involved in debates and discussions on matters that affect their lives and their immediate environments. As the social critical theory proponents, Bull, (1998) for example, suggest, this would give learners room to challenge the present education policies, identify weaknesses, and demand change. Eventually that change is expected to lead to progress

and sustainability (MacMahon, 1997). On the whole the critical social approach goes with the thinking that education, environmental education in particular, is about changes that are geared towards improving the lives of people.

#### 4.2. The social critical perspective

Critical social perspectives, firstly, assume that our social institutions, including schools, are not wholly democratic but instead contribute to the maintenance of social and economic inequalities (Frey, 2001). For example, majority of Black people in South Africa are educationally disadvantaged (and as a consequence, economically disadvantaged) because they have limited culturally valued forms of knowledge (their language and culture are not part of the dominant western culture hailed and celebrated in learning institutions) (Signoir, 2001). The concern of the critical social perspective is, therefore to critique the dominant cultural patterns and identify alternatives that provide greater social justice and enhance human potential.

In other words, “this approach is concerned with the social processes in creating knowledge and critical intervention for change” (Huckle, 1995:35). The social critical perspective recognizes that environmental problems are at their roots social problems and that their solutions are linked to social transformation and the need to challenge political, social and economic systems (Wickham, 2000; Huckle, 1995). Similarly proponents of environmental education processes tend towards empowering educators and learners to participate in the resolutions of problems and to act in the interest of democracy and social justice (Huckle, 1995). Put differently, environmental education processes are interactive challenges of learning and planning, together followed by action-taking to bring about change (Wickam, 2000). Both environmental education and the critical social theory perspectives seek to empower learners to participate in a democratic transformation of society.

Moreover, while this approach appears to put more emphasis on immediacy in action to foster change in society, it also seeks (Kemmis, 1986:13) “to locate and interpret current

educational culture within a historical context”. Using this approach one needs to “learn to re-learn” what the school bureaucratic culture of schooling has hidden from us. The theory gives a sense that we are not only the product of history in education and in environmental education, but also the makers of it. In this respect social critical theory deconstructs, and challenges the dominant views of education experts, of knowledge, of the role of teachers, of the broad curriculum organization, and of environmental education policies, initiatives and projects (Kim, 2001).

### **4.3. RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

#### **4.3.1. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES**

In South Africa the national environmental policies support environmental education. These policies explain how environmental education should be interpreted, implemented, run and taught in schools (Department of Education and Training, 1996). Below is a brief description on how national environmental policies recognize and value the role of environmental education in schools:

##### **National Environmental Policy Act (1982)**

In South Africa since the 1980s the need for coordinated body of environmental experts, practitioners and developers coming from different government departments and private institutions has always been seen as the path towards the formulation of the national environmental policy (Irwin, 1990). In 1982 the National Environmental Policy Act was formulated and inputs from academics were requested so that the selected committee to implement the National Policy on Conservation and Preservation of the Environment would include all key suggestions from various departments and institutions (Council for the Environment, 1986). After that wide consultation, a policy was implemented by the then Department of the Environment, Conservation and Development. The policy was called the National Policy on Environmental Conservation. The purpose of that national policy was, among other issues, to promote environmental education by means of “joint

and coordinated campaign at all levels of government and by all forms of education authorities and persons and institutions involved in formal, non-formal and informal education” (Council for the Environment, 1986: 36b).

### **White Paper on Education and Training (1995)**

According to the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education and Training, 1995), environmental education should be sold to the public in such a way that it is aimed at changing and bettering the lives of people. This can be achieved by exposing people to critical environmental debates and issues. In education this further suggests that environmental education should be planned in such a way that it is interdisciplinary in approach (EECI, 1999). It should run across all learning areas and themes (EECI, 1999). The White Paper document confirms:

*Environmental education involving an interdisciplinary, integrated and active approach, must be the vital element of all levels and programmes of education and training system, in order to create environmentally literate and active citizens and ensure that all South Africans, presently and future, enjoy a descent quality of life through the sustainable use of resources* (Department of Education and Training, 1996:6).

### **Bill of Rights (1996)**

The Human Rights Constitution of South Africa enshrines “the right of every citizen to a healthy environment” (Bill of Rights, 1996:10). The government, like many African others, supports Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992). Agenda 21 states that “education is critical for sustainable development” (UNCED, 1992, Chapter 36:2). Sustainable development suggests taking classroom environmental knowledge and projects to communities (Sachs, 1995). It suggests on going learning and a change in attitudes and behaviour

towards better environmental practices. This concern is reflected in the RDP which advocates:

*“programmes to rekindle our people’s love of the land, increase environmental consciousness amongst youth, to coordinate environmental education with education policy at all levels, and to empower communities to act on environmental issues and promote and environmental ethics” (RDP,1994:40)*

### **White Paper on National Environmental Management Policy Act (1998)**

Two concepts have come to define environmental education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are: sustainability education and education for empowerment (Bateman, 2001). Learners need to be empowered by developing in them skills, values and attitudes about sound environmental practices. This, it is hoped, will lead them towards sustainable development. The White Paper on National Environmental Management Policy Act (NEMA, 1998), Goal 5 confirms that environmental education should be able to:

*“promote the education and empowerment of South Africa’s people, increase their awareness of and concern for environmental issues and assist in developing the knowledge skills, values and commitment necessary to achieve sustainable development” (White Paper, 1998:197)*

### **4.3.2. Gauteng Department of Education**

The Department of Education has made various attempts to see to it that environmental education policy initiatives and projects are implemented at school level (Gauteng Department of Education, 2000). For example, from the Gauteng Department of Education, the Gauteng Institute of Curriculum Development (GICD) has been formulated to look into the question of environmental education policy design and curriculum development (Department of Education and Training, 1996). In order to achieve this aim different people from different education disciplines had to be mobilized

to participate in the development of environmental education initiatives. For that reason, the Interim Steering Committee was established on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1996 at the launch of the Gauteng Stakeholder meeting on environmental education (Department of Education and Training, 1996). The Committee worked well over time and attracted a number of private companies and institutions to help in the funding and the promotion of environmental education (Department of Education and Training, 1996). The EECI Report (1996:9) argues that the committee existed only for a while because it received minimal support from the academic public. The EECI Report claimed that people would be invited to meetings and forums but could not attend. It was also claimed that there was also lack of commitment from the committee leaders. For example, only five reports out of the possible eleven were disseminated to the general public for the year 1998 (EECI, 1996).

As a response to that lack of commitment, the National Department of Education further broadened the aim of promoting environmental education in schools and in the country at large (Reid, 2001). The following objectives were suggested:

- to gain support from the Gauteng government officials and schools
- to establish contact with critical stakeholders
- to conduct four training workshops in the district selected by the year 1999
- to develop materials to be used during the workshop
- to conduct school visits to support schools
- to conduct Curriculum Expos at the end of each school term so that schools could share the work they have done with other schools in their districts.

All these goals have not been successfully implemented by the Department of Education. In workshops held in Soweto College of Education in 2000, the attendance of teachers dropped from 785 to 320 (Ranjeen, 2003). In another Expos Training conducted in central Soweto, Pimville Hall, the attendance dropped drastically from 540 to 120 (Teachers' workshop and Expos, 2000). With such a drop in a number of participants and attendance it was evident that the aim of empowering teachers to be environmentally

aware citizens and as possible carriers of environmental education knowledge to learners was not achieved.

In 1998/9 the National Department of Education established the National Environmental Education Programme (NEEP) to coordinate all initiatives which support active learning and participation in OBE (NEEP, 1999). According to the NEEP Pilot Project (2000:78), the programme formed a coordinating framework for all environmental education national projects, while initiatives such as the EECI were supporting its implementation. The pillars of NEEP were:

1. The promotion of sound environmental learning within the school curriculum. The Department of Education had to appoint coordinators to run and implement environmental education curriculum initiatives and projects in schools. However, there were few trained environmental education coordinators in the country. The Department had to appoint curriculum developers and specialists to be environmental education coordinators and runners. With little knowledge and understanding of environmental education processes, issues and policy, these coordinators have been unable to coordinate and run environmental education projects successfully in schools (Ranjeen, 2003).

2. NEEP had to assist with teacher development programmes and models (NEEP, 1999). Spiral, cluster, and workshops expos were used as learning models to help teachers understand development plans, ways and strategies that can be used to promote environmental education in schools (Reid, 2001). According to (EECI Update, 2000), the cascade model failed to live up to its expectations. At times, themes for discussion were left half-way, some issues remained un-discussed and trainers found themselves moving from one theme to the other without teachers understanding the first ones. On the other hand, the cluster model is seen to be time consuming and circular. Two or three themes are discussed per term leaving the bulk of work on hold for trainers. What this evidence shows is that teachers have not yet been empowered to take environmental education to schools. Environmental education has not yet reached most schools in Soweto.

3. NEEP helps with material development for environmental learning in schools (NEEP, 1999). The Department of Education did try to produce some school environmental education resource material and information booklets. It however, stopped along the way. The Department had budget constraints (Delta, 1999). As a result, it had to work with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Land Affairs in designing and distributing environmental education booklets to schools. Delta Environmental Centre was also officially appointed by the Department of Education to coordinate Gauteng's NEEP activities (Delta, 2000).

4. NEEP had to see to it that schools are maintained for the better and that they are cared for (NEEP, 1999). The NEEP felt it had to play a constructive role in the promotion of school environmental management policies. But the Department had not been very instrumental in this regard (Reid, 2001). Instead the task of promoting environmental management in schools was done by the EECI and Delta (EECI, 2000). These institutions developed and designed school environmental policies and distributed them to schools.

#### **4.3.3. Other government departments**

The Gauteng Department of Education is working with various government departments in the promotion of environmental education in schools. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is helping with the design of environmental education learning material and is working with area districts in the promotion of environmental education (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, 2002). This department has also played a crucial role in the launching of the National Environmental Campaign. The campaign was to mobilize learners to be active in environmental issues and projects (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, 2001). Until recently (2003) however, the campaign enjoyed little support from provincial education departments. It stopped working in 2003. It was not fully supported by the GDE (EECI, 2004). It is claimed that GDE had no funds to conduct research and do projects.



The Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs (DACEL) in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education has recently (2004) launched a new series Environmental Education booklets to be used in schools (DACEL, 2003). These series, it is thought, will help teachers and learners explore environmental issues in a way that stimulates debates about people's relationship with, and interaction with the environment. DACEL is to work closely with the Area Districts. But according to the interviewee at DACEL only a few selected schools are visited per term. As a result most schools end up not being visited at all.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has also over time played a constructive role in the promotion of EE in school in Gauteng (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2002). It was instrumental in giving direction in the implementation of the NEEPI (National Environmental Education Policy Initiative and EECI (Environmental Education Curriculum Initiative) (EECI, 2001). The EECI was a state civil society partnership project enabling staff from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, provincial government education departments and environmental education practitioners around the country to work together, debate and define environmental education in the emerged school curriculum known as C2005 (EECI, 2001). Today the EECI is working hand in hand with the Department of Education to collaborate on matters pertaining to active learning in OBE (Ntirisano Strategy, 2002). Again District officials are still the ones coordinating and running environmental education in schools.

#### **4.3.4. Inferences and Deductions**

Having gathered data from Environmental Policies (NEMA, White Papers-1982, 1995, 1998), from government departments and institutions (Department of the Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and the Delta Environmental Centre) it was easy to come up with some inferences and deductions about the state of environmental education policy and development in Gauteng. These are drawn from analyzing what is happening in the

Department of Education in relation to environmental education initiatives and projects and what is happening in other government departments. These are the triangulated common findings from the analysis:

- NEEP has failed to live up to some of its goals. It is coming to an end in 2005 but the spiral model, expo and cluster workshops have not yet reached most schools in Soweto.
- Ongoing visits to schools from the Department of Education and Delta and government departments is poor
- District officials do not have a clear direction on how to run and coordinate environmental education in schools. They rely on officials from other government departments
- Very few projects and environmental education resource materials are reaching schools in Gauteng. Only selected schools are privileged to have them.
- Generally most schools do not have clear knowledge of what environmental education is all about because they have never been exposed to its projects, initiatives and discussions

#### **4.4. Summary**

Chapter Four is a policy framework section. It documents a shift from conservative, old system of teaching to the new OBE method of teaching. The critical social theory is used in this chapter to explore this shift. The underlying assumption of the critical social theory is that environmental education projects and initiatives are still managed by education researchers, experts and curriculum developers. In the background section the relevance of the National Policy Act (1982), White Paper on Education and Training (1995), Bill of Rights (1996) and NEMA (1998) to environmental education is discussed. The role of DET and other government departments in the implementation and the facilitation of environmental education in schools is discussed. Inferences and analysis are then drawn from these policy documents.