CHAPTER TWO

Contextualising the study: The relationship between contexts of education and education delivery practices

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The NEEC is based on the RUGF course, which was developed outside a Namibian context. In consequence although there will be many instances where both courses can meet specified course outcomes, there may also be instances where contextual differences may hinder these outcomes - environmentally, educationally and socially. This chapter therefore concentrates on providing a background to the selection, development and implementation of the NEEC. It also outlines the structure and delivery of both courses with the hope of contextualising the NEEC and thus the challenges to tutoring.

Furthermore, this chapter outlines several key concepts associated with the delivery of the NEEC, that of Distance Education (DE), semi-distance education and tutoring and briefly describes how each of these concepts are viewed by literature and the courses. Specifically this chapter will outline how DE practices directly affect tutoring processes, which in turn necessitate appropriate support structures for tutoring. Therefore tutoring processes are described in relation to the needs of tutoring, the different models of tutoring, associated competencies, roles and responsibilities of tutors and the necessary development of such tutors. This broad outline is given to link tutoring praxis of the RUGF and NEEC to the semi-distance mode of delivery and thus to define the context for discussion of results found in Chapter Five.

2.2   THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE NEEC

2.2.1   Introduction

The general trend in education in southern Africa is towards the transformation from a teacher-centred to learner-centred approach. This has been in response to a number of influential educational theories such as constructivist, liberal humanist and socially critical theories. These theories view teaching and learning differently from the behaviourist approaches of the past that regarded knowledge as being scientific and value free. Over time, the process of learning has generally changed from an instrumentalist belief based on the 'jug and mug' metaphor (filling learners with prescribed content) to the view that every learner has some knowledge and that it is most appropriate to build on this knowledge. Consequently, trends in adult learning have also embraced the learner-centred approach. Adult learning is moreover "characterised by a shift in thinking about learning away from the instrumentalist approaches to learning where a pre existing

body of knowledge is simply taught or transfered to learners" and instead the adult learner is encouraged to participate through "interacting processes of ongoing deliberation amongst participants…[encouraging] meaning-making amongst adult learners in the context of real life situations in local environments" (Lotz (Ed.) 1999 cited in Rhodes University 2003:7).

Trends therefore indicate movement from teaching to meet predetermined 'objectives', to allowing more flexibility and choice in what and how learning occurs. This is achieved by developing broad outcomes or competencies, which when developed appropriately, do not necessitate prescribed content.

With these changes in thinking in education have come parallel changes in how the environment is viewed. Trends here have gone from wanting to preserve and/or conserve wildlife to the sustainable utilisation or sustainable development of natural resources. Approaches have also turned around from an 'expert-driven top down' approach to more participatory centre-to-periphery approaches. This has been in response to various principles promoted through environmental conventions, declarations and treaties. Such views are generally internationally recognised. Global environmental conventions and treaties encourage the incorporation of internationally agreed guidelines into national environment and education policies (See Section 1.2). One such agreement is Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992), which outlines the need of fostering awareness on the environment.

Various governments have amended both environment and education policies in line with these trends. In Namibia the Educational Ministries (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training & Employment Creation) have based their policies, and thus educational framework, around social constructivism and a learner-centred approach. Theirs and the major environmental ministries' policies (Ministry of Environment & Tourism, Ministry of Mines & Energy, Ministry of Agriculture Water & Rural Development) have also incorporated sustainable development ideals. In particular guidelines given by Agenda 21 have led to the incorporation of environmental education within policies of the education sectors, but in particular within the Namibian Environmental Education Policy (NEEN 1999).

2.2.2 Developments and trends relating to the provision of education in general and environmental education in particular in Namibia - setting the stage for the NEEC

Before Independence in 1990, education within Namibia was a contentious issue. During this time the education arena was "characterised by gross inequalities in the allocation of resources for different racial and ethnic groups" (DANCED 2001: 12). Education was based on the South African system, which was inappropriate to Namibia's different economic, social and biophysical contexts. Furthermore education was seen as elitist, mainly catering for the white population (Kristensen 1999b: 28), based on apartheid and racism, on positivistic beliefs, and followed a strong behaviourist model (Kristensen 1999b: 28; Van Harmelan et al 2001: 11).

In 1991, the then newly formed Namibian government agreed that in order to redress the inequalities of the past, priority should be given to education reform. From this era came the policy-guiding document "Towards Education for All" (MEC 1993), which outlines a new philosophy of education. This document prioritises national education goals of access for all, quality, equity, democracy and security in learning environments. Lifelong learning has also recently been supplemented as the sixth goal of education, with the hope that breaking down boundaries between formal and non-formal education and in and out-of-school divisions will enable a learning society (MBESC 2003: 6).

Consequently in post independence Namibia, education reform encourages democratic and participatory educational and learner-centred approaches (Van Harmelen et al 2001: 11). This is seen as *the* way to redress the colonialising and apartheid legacy (Kristensen 1999b: 28).

Since then however, various reports (Squazzin 1998a; Kristensen:1999a; Fröhlich:2000; Van Harmelen et al:2001) have shown struggles in implementing these educational reform processes. Many problems have arisen because of the gap between policy and practice. This gap is mainly the result of poor policy formulation owing to:
- a lack of stakeholder participation in policy development and therefore lack of ownership
- unclear or misunderstood policy vision, philosophies and underpinning rationales and
- the further need of contextualising policies.

The result has thus been a lack of clarity on how to implement good educational practice from policy (Squazzin 1998b: 137).

Related to these insights is the perception of learner-centred education as being a foreign import. It is thought doubly problematic when the use of such a concept is not "couched in appropriate African metaphors", nor in the "discourse of learner-centred education….anchored in the

language of African upbringing and transformed into an African paradigm" (MBESC 2003: 19). The SEEN project believes that environmental education can act as the vehicle to tackle the problem of inadequately implemented learner-centred education. This is due to environmental education's willingness (in a post modern paradigm) to critique and debate current educational theory and practice which could lead to the implementation of environmental education in both formal and non-formal education curricula that will provide models of good educational practice based on Namibian policy.

The overarching guideline for environmental education is the Namibian Constitution, Article 95 (see Section 1.2). Additionally, the Presidential Commission on Education (GRN 1999) recommends that the Namibian Environmental Education Policy guides the implementation of environmental education within all education sectors. This is supported through the inclusion of environmental education in the Basic Education Broad Curriculum Guideline (MBESC 1997), the Basic Education Teaching Diploma (MHEVTEC 2001), and the National Policy on Adult Learning (GRN 2003). Conversely, although environmental education is officially included in the formal education curricula, the extent to which it is practised on the ground is debatable (DANCED 2001:15). Moreover, there is little provision for environmental education within non-formal education curriculum, with most courses, workshops, and training programmes dealing mainly with the environmental and not the education aspect (Fröhlich & Shilunga 2002). Thus the gap for a course such as the NEEC is clearly evident, especially as interest for such a course is shown (ibid.). The aforementioned provisions and the identified basic need for environmental education within Namibia prompted the development of a project proposal specifically aimed at implementing environmental education based on environmental education policies within educational sectors. The next section will describe this process in more detail.

2.2.2.1 1998-2001-DANCED funded scoping exercise for the NEEC
Several environmental education stakeholders in Namibia approached DANCED for help in setting up an environmental education project. This project was thus a collaborative partnership between the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture (MBESC) and two local NGOs involved in environmental education, Ibis, and the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN). DANCED responded favourably and initiated a scoping exercise between 1998 and 2001 to determine if environmental education was indeed needed within Namibia. The scoping exercise began with a workshop where a number of environmental education stakeholders contributed lessons learned from previous environmental education projects and discussions arose around environmental education policy.

From this workshop an informal group of stakeholders developed an initial project idea and circulated it to environmental education stakeholders. In 1999 consultants investigated environmental education in Namibia more thoroughly and the SEEN proposal was developed in response. The finalised document became available in March and the SEEN project was implemented in October 2001.

Generally the core problem needing response (according to the DANCED 2001 project proposal) was the inadequately activated Namibian Environmental Education Policy (NEEN 2001) as a result of poor educational praxis linked to the challenges of the transforming education system in Namibia. These challenges were exacerbated by the changes in policy, structures and practices in institutional contexts of formal, non-formal and informal education (DANCED 2001). Professional development within both general education and environmental education contexts and across both formal and non-formal education sectors was thus seen as one of the core activities of SEEN (Van Harmelen 2002a: 4). The aim of this professional development is to enable teachers, advisory teachers and non-formal/informal environmental education practitioners to contribute to the improvement of education generally, but specifically focusing on environmental education across all educational sectors by enabling participatory, democratic and learner-centred education.

As mentioned in Chapter One, DANCED (2001) suggested that professional development be offered to education practitioners as a praxis-focused course. They further state the course and its delivery should be based on current thinking in adult education, which implied that it should be context based and promote the principles of participation and reflection (Van Harmelen 2002a: 18). Accordingly it was envisaged that a professional development course be developed and implemented as a pilot to develop capacity for provision of appropriate environmental education in all education sectors. The RUGF course was proposed as a possible model to accomplish this (DANCED 2001: 48, DRFN 2001).

2.2.3 The RUGF course as framework for the NEEC

The RUGF course was started and funded by the gold mining company Gold Fields in 1992, which at the time were sponsoring environmental education centres at nature reserves, parks and Botanical Gardens throughout South Africa. Gold Fields determined a need for a professional development course on environmental education because "the [environmental education] officers were expressing good ideas and made significant contributions of a practical nature, but they were limited by a lack of theoretical background" (Shongwe cited in University Leaders for a Sustainable Future www.ulsf.org/pub_declaration_parvoll3 Accessed 24 July 03). Initially Gold

Fields environmental education centre staff stationed at the environmental education centres accessed professional development by means of a once off week-long workshop. Two prominent figures in environmental education, Janse van Rensburg and Shongwe facilitated the workshop and afterwards believed that money spent on this workshop could have been better spent on a course of more substance, ideally one which could provide the centre staff with additional professional support throughout the year. They also saw a need for educational processes to be more meaningful to staff and thus more closely tied to real life work and context. At the same time the Gold Fields funding agency was concerned with the simplistic view of, and approach to environmental education taken at many of the education centres (Janse van Rensburg 1995: 281).

Therefore, Janse van Rensburg and Shongwe invited a number of environmental educators, science lecturers, government and Gold Field representatives to join in discussions relating to the development of a new curriculum, which they hoped would contribute to a course designed to deal with the issues identified. The result was "The Gold Fields Participatory Course for Fieldworkers", which was then established as an Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) project in 1992. The aim of this course was to "support the best possible use of environmental education centres, by providing their staff with professional development opportunities to reflect on practice in light of educational theories" (ibid.).

The course also attracted a large range of people outside the Gold Fields environmental education centres. People involved in community, extension work and especially teachers looking for in-service programmes in environmental education participated in the course (ibid.). Additionally, as time progressed participants on the course began to request Rhodes University formally accredit the course. In consequence the broadening and formalising of the RUGF began to have implications for how the course was delivered, assessed and moderated.

Through discussions with this broadening course participant group, along with feedback obtained from courses each year, a modified format for the course became the certified RUGF. Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux (1998: 43) state that deliberations surrounding the course's need for localised emphasis but also the need for it to be run on a larger (national) scale stimulated the development of a semi-distance mode where both needs could partly be accommodated. This format also seemed appropriate for the provision of continuous support of participants grappling with learning in a formalised course and its possible effects on their own workplace based contexts. Janse van Rensburg and a small number of other dedicated environmental education practitioners became tutors for this course but saw themselves as 's-tutors (student-tutors) because they considered themselves both learners and educators rather than 'experts'. This belief

was influenced by the NGO forum principle "we are both learners and educators" adopted (by the course) after the 1992 Rio Summit.

The resulting changes made in the RUGF course began to have a great influence on the RUGF course but particularly in the area of tutoring. For example, in the developing stages of the RUGF course, the course developers and tutors alike began to notice tensions of uncertainty regarding the course orientation (the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of the RUGF) and content. These tensions revolved around the need for course processes to model 'good environmental education' and to clarify associated conceptual frameworks (ibid. :41, 42); and with understanding course content in the context of its development. Generally speaking, because the newer tutors were not involved with the development of the course, they found it difficult to understand the orientation and related content underpinning the course and could thus not clearly articulate key conceptual frameworks. In addition, these tensions were often exclusionary in nature since pre-course meetings, which were arranged informally, excluded some tutors and course developers. Janse van Rensburg notes that

> *…this was a key problem in the course development process, as it must have contributed significantly to some tutors being poorly prepared for supporting students…and to the 'uneven' nature of the course, including varying quality of support in the provinces.*
> (Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux 1998: 42)

Additionally, as the course became certified tutors began to need (and indeed request) more formalised guidelines (a tutor manual) and 'training' workshops (O'Donoghue 2003: 6). In response, official pre-course, tutor development workshops evolved to support tutors in understanding course orientations, processes and associated tutor roles and responsibilities. Since 1997, meetings for tutors have been held to work through the course materials and share ideas around course processes (Raven 2003: 25). For example in 2003, the focus of tutor meetings revolved around the adapted "Tutor Support Booklet" (Rhodes University 2003) with tutors commenting and again adapting these guidelines related to their own experiences (and experiencing) of tutoring (O'Donoghue 2003).

2.2.4   Adoption or adaptation of the RUGF course in countries other than South Africa or for specialised courses.

Since the broadening of the RUGF course, it has been adapted and/or adopted by various industries and within several countries. In 1995 the course was adapted by Zanzibar (1995-1996), by Zimbabwe (1996-present), Malawi (1999), Angola (2000), Swaziland (2000-present), Zambia (2001 to present) and Namibia (2002 to present). The RUGF course was also redeveloped as a continuous two month International Certificate course for environmental education practitioners in the SADC region (1995 to present). Furthermore it has been adapted for various South African

internal courses for teachers, national parks and industry. The Zanzibar, Angolan, Swazi, Zimbabwean, and SADC courses all closely resemble that of the RUGF in terms of orientation and content, whilst the Industry courses in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi are tailored to suit industrial requirements and thus content differs in places.

The Zambian course is based on the RUGF course however it focuses on community environmental education programmes and more closely responds to these programmes. Additionally the Zambian course has the prerequisite that participants have tertiary qualifications (and therefore is not an open-entry course). The Zambian and the Angolan courses also differ from the RUGF course in that they are delivered within a four-week full time duration, followed by a period in their home/work environments (the distance education part), during which participants apply theory in practice.

The only course adaptations (other than the NEEC) that run at the moment are the Zimbabwean, Swazi, Zambian, and South African courses as well as the Nature Conservation courses of South Africa. Of these current courses, only the Zambian and Swazi courses use volunteer tutors. Both the Zimbabwean and Nature Conservation courses employ tutors officially. Currently it is only the South African and Swazi courses that use tutorials within a regional (cluster-based) system. All other courses have tutorials/workshops that are centralised, i.e. all participants come together at the one place at the same time for tutorial sessions, often because of fewer numbers of participants.

The NEEC and Swazi course tutoring systems are rather unique in that they are influenced by contexts somewhat different from the original RUGF course, while at the same time attempting to follow the RUGF course framework closely. It is thus deemed important that this study focuses on the effect of context on the NEEC, in particular on tutoring (which has been based on the RUGF situation), and attempts to provide more appropriate support for, or make changes to, this process. Such findings may then specifically aid in the sustainability of the NEEC as well as providing some ideas on how similar RUGF adaptations could deal with tutoring issues.

2.3   SETTINGS AND FRAMEWORKS RELATING TO EDUCATION DELIVERY STRATEGIES APPLICABLE TO THE NEEC

Education is generally accepted as an activity that aims at guiding or accompanying learners towards the attainment of relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Learning cannot effectively occur in isolation and hence some means of support is part and parcel of learning. In

particular, the role of supporting structures in education is to construct an appropriate environment for learning.

Support of education begins with its provision, which can be achieved through a range of delivery modes. Such modes range from full-time (contiguous) face-to-face contact, through non-contiguous contact modes often referred to as semi-distant, to fully distant learning methods whereby no face-to-face contact occurs between teacher and learner. The NEEC falls under a semi-distance education mode because it employs a mixture of non-contiguous face-to-face contact with learning through text at a distance from the learning institution (see also Section 1.8.1).

However, learning cannot occur effectively in isolation and education consequently aims to guide or accompany learners in this process. It is therefore not surprising to find that this guidance often comes in the form of a tutor. A tutor is "a person charged with the instruction and guidance of another" (Merriam-Webster online Dictionary www.webster.com Accessed 24 July 03). Tutors can be found in contiguous face-to-face, semi-distance and fully DE situations. However because the NEEC employs aspects of both face-to-face and DE, a relatively unique situation arises with learning requiring support strategies that cross several course delivery boundaries. In the NEEC tutors must thus be familiar with, and capable of, supporting learners in both situations. This study is specifically aimed at investigating the challenges that tutors experience particularly whilst tutoring in a semi-distance mode. The section following will outline education as provided by both distance and semi-distance modes of delivery and the effect on tutoring processes.

2.3.1 Distance Education

What was originally coined 'DE' has its roots in Europe in the 17th Century. However, in southern Africa, DE was pioneered in 1946 by the University of South Africa (Unisa - situated in Pretoria South Africa). At that time Professor A.J.H van der Walt of Unisa was tasked to develop and implement a DE system based on postal tuition (Unisa website. www.unisa.ac.za Accessed 23 July 03). The result was the 'Division of External Studies' and with this Unisa became the pioneer of tertiary DE. Since then there has been a tremendous growth in the popularity of DE. At the time of this study there were more than 140 000 students enrolled in Unisa, supported by nearly 2 000 professional staff (ibid.).

Particularly in Africa, the popularity of DE can be related to the increase in African students who have taken advantage of the opening up of educational opportunities (Glennie 1996: 23). DE has also become increasingly popular for a number of other reasons. By way of illustration, DE provides an opportunity for learning without the disadvantages that arise from being far away

from educational institutions. It is also often more affordable than standard education and does not necessitate time spent away from work, home and/or family life. In other words DE is often accessible, flexible, and affordable. Moreover, DE is increasingly seen as a complement to standard educational methods, so it is considered credible.

When related specifically to the field of environmental education, DE provides an effective strategy as it

> ...deal[s] with one of the main problems of environmental education, namely the traditional difficulty in involving groups other than schoolchildren and breaking the barrier posed by time constraints, thus gathering the involvement of adults and promoting their environmental awareness.
>
> (Fox, cited in Filho 1998: 11)

In the 20th century we have seen a strong movement towards democratisation of education, and DE in general (Paul 1993: 114). The concept of DE has been questioned and debated to reflect the changing view of what 'education at a distance' should entail and represent. In the place of DE, concepts such as 'distance teaching' (Tella 1998: 4), 'home study', 'correspondence study', 'external studies' (Harry, Keegan & John 1993: 289), 'distance learning' and 'open learning' have begun to emerge. These concepts have opened up a debate on the potential education 'at a distance' has, in particular in terms of liberation, enlightenment and equality of learners thus leading to democratisation of societies (Paul 1993: 114). Consequently ways of achieving DE have changed through time. This is in response to both the recognition of the learner as having an essential role to play in the learning process and/or because of the recognition of the learner as a paying client/customer. Hence a two-way communication process has emerged through the learner having contact with the 'subject expert' or their representative. Accordingly, this model of DE increasingly emphasises the advantage of satisfying learner needs. In doing so, the facilitation of learning (in a two way communication model) rather than the old style of 'lecturing' (one way communication model) has come to be the ideal. Facilitators/mediators in the form of tutors are now being used in DE approaches. In particular, Lentell (1994: 29) states that "the old model of distance education which marginalised and minimised the role of tutoring has been jettisoned for a new model which gives far greater emphasis to active educational support".

DE has also begun to employ interactions other than solely self-instructional (learner-content), and/or teacher- expert (learner-instructor) kinds. Learner-learner forms of interaction, between one learner and other learners alone or in group settings with or without facilitators, instructors or mediators is emerging (Moore 1993: 22-23). Such interactions are deemed important primarily when working with adult learners, who in postmodern times are recognised as being knowledgeable and experienced who can equally contribute to the 'knowledge' field. To do so, learner-learner interaction such as face-to-face tutorials, are used as ways of promoting learning

amongst adults. Such movements have prompted the formation of semi-distance education and associated teaching-learning strategies discussed below.

2.3.2   Semi-distance education

Unfortunately, time needed for face-to-face tutoring makes it an expensive option. Additionally it can be difficult to arrange a time and a place where all learners can come together. Therefore in most DE programmes, face-to-face contact time is limited. However, if a learner is far from the DE institution, telephone calls can also be expensive, and are "a hollow option for African students, who often have access only to public telephones" (Glennie 1996: 26). Therefore learners may not use them extensively for support. Learners then have to rely on the modes of communication that are less expensive such as post, or when available via email or websites, or struggle on by themselves. This is not an ideal situation given the drop out rate of poorly supported learners. Institutions have recognised that it may be advantageous to develop a combination of delivery modes and have become semi-distanced.

Additionally, DE institutions often view the leaner as a paying customer or client and usually respond favourably to their need for quality support. It is thus difficult, if not impossible to find institutions that are solely distance orientated without any form of contact with their learners. The extent and mode of such contact however can vary greatly between DE programmes, with the most contact occurring within semi-distance education programmes.

In semi-distance education, contact between the learner and the educational institution occurs regularly. Such contact is often in the form of face-to-face group work, whilst also recognising that some learning 'at a distance' will be necessary. By face-to-face it is meant that learners meet at the same time at the same place (spatially) and not via video conferencing or the like. Face-to-face contact time is important, as in southern African countries, particularly in Namibia, such electronic support is usually not affordable or accessible to a large percentage of DE learners. In this semi-distant mode of delivery, learning often rests equally on face-to-face sessions along with written materials to be studied at home. The highlighted column in Table 2 below shows this situation. What this table also shows is that instruction in semi-distance education contexts relies on (more or less) an equal combination of self-instruction and teacher-based techniques.

Semi-distance education is considered an appropriate mode of education when the learner indicates desirability for face-to-face support. Learners who work at a distance through text, audio or video material may be cut off from peer group and tutor support and therefore learn in isolation with no opportunity to test their learning with others, to exchange ideas, views and experiences, to vent frustration or to express elation (Walmsley 1997a: 134).

Table 2 Learning situations in Distance Education (adapted from Hutton d.u: 17)

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Teaching happens in a face-to-face situation where there is a facilitator or a teacher. There are few written materials.	Teaching happens in a face-to-face situation, but written materials are used as a back-up or supplement to face-to-face learning.	Half the learning happens in the face-to-face situation, and half happens through the written materials.	Most learning happens through the written material, but there is still some contact with a facilitator or teacher who gives support.	All the learning is through the written materials and there is no facilitator or organisation to support the reader.

decreasingly self-instructional ---- increasingly self-instructional
Standard face-to-face education------Semi-distance-----------------Distance education

However face-to-face sessions can help overcome these problems giving learners "a chance to share ideas, discuss points and develop links with colleagues and others working in the same field" (ibid.). Semi-distance education also allows for effective interaction between the learner and the education institute. Such interaction has a positive effect of enabling:

- more learner control within the learning programme
- programme adaptation based on learner input
- participation and communication- building community
- meaningful and personalised learning
- pacing, and
- opportunity for valuing another person's perspective, which is the key learning component in constructivist learning theories.

(Anderson www.abed.org.br/congresso2002/ppta.ppt Accessed 21 July 03).

All of these interactions are similarly valued by the RUGF/NEEC course and thus the semi-distant mode provides the ideal mode of delivery for a course with this orientation.

Semi-distance education becomes equally favourable when the face-to-face mode is supplemented by work-away sessions. Such a combination of modes allows the learner to take advantage of those elements of DE that make it accessible, flexible, affordable and credible whilst enabling face-to-face interaction between the learner, educator and other learners.

Because of the emphasis placed on providing face-to-face support, a key component of semi-distant education is the tutor and the tutoring process. The next section will focus on discussing the need for tutors and tutoring processes, specifically face-to-face tutorials, in learning situations.

2.3.3   The need for tutors and face-to-face tutorials in DE situations

As stated earlier (see Section 2.2.3), to provide quality support to learners and to help meet the needs of a 'distanced' learner, there has been a movement from teacher-centred, one-way and distant education to more learner-centred, multi-mode with emphasis on participatory and real-time interactions. The outcomes of full participation, demonstrating professional development and growth and critically reflecting on one's own and others' work may not develop fully without the presence of appropriate mediating tutors and a time for coming together for social interaction and deliberation. Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux (1998: 48) further reiterate that participation and in-depth and critical engagement in ideas and work-based practices are most often discussed and deliberated during small group and tutorial sessions. Raven (2003: 26) further supports this by stating "tutorials are really the space in the course where all course processes are given effect and as such play a major role in supporting the various aspects of professional development underpinning a reflexive review in/of practice". Tutors and tutorials play an important role in "encouraging and supporting the professional development of participants" (Raven 2003: 25).

In the case of the NEEC, the role of the tutor is to mediate a process of learning (see also Section 2.3.4.1). This process of learning and the emphasis on participation, both guiding the orientation of the NEEC, is again promoted through interaction with others on the course (Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux 1998: 48). Weedon (1997: 41) supports this by suggesting that social interaction and deliberation is needed in order for learners to develop and learn. However she also notes that the addition and support of, at least initially, a more experienced person (in this case a tutor) to guide (or mediate) the learning process provides the most beneficial learning environment, at least in the early stages. Weedon notes that the relationship between the tutor and the learner should change as the learning progresses, with the tutor having a much bigger role to play at the beginning of the process of providing an appropriate learning environment that allows the learner to progress to eventual autonomy.

As Paxton states (in Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux 1998: 48), "the course stands or falls on the strength of its tutors". In a mediation process, Weedon (1997: 42) suggests that tutors should support participants by "identify[ing] the essential aspects of the course…develop[ing] language skills to 'negotiate for meanings', [and] by providing for discussion and debate around clearly identified topics". Within the role they may also identify (ibid.)

> *gaps in students' knowledge that need plugging for progress to be made, [produce] supportive material that encourages students to explore ideas in an active fashion and [try to] identify generally the areas that cause the greatest difficulties so that these can be tackled effectively.*

Without such mediation participants may be left to muddle through the course on their own, often on an individual basis, which places the responsibility of learning firmly on the shoulders of the learner. This 'individualistic theory' [1] leaves tutors to play a marginal and unnecessary role in the learning process. In contrast, if learning is seen as a social process through interacting with others (the Vygotsky theory) the tutor becomes much more important in the learning process i.e. as the mediator of the process. This Vygotskian theory states that 'human thinking develops through the mediation of others' (Moll 2001: 113). Teaching should therefore involve helping the learner learn 'proximally…involving those abilities that are developing and that can only be manifested with the assistance of others' (Moll 2001: 114). Thus a much more important relationship between the learner and tutor emerges and the tutor's worth in the process begins to be recognised (see Figure 1 below). Hence tutoring within the NEEC is deemed a very important and integral part of the course as a whole in order to support participants in meeting course outcomes.
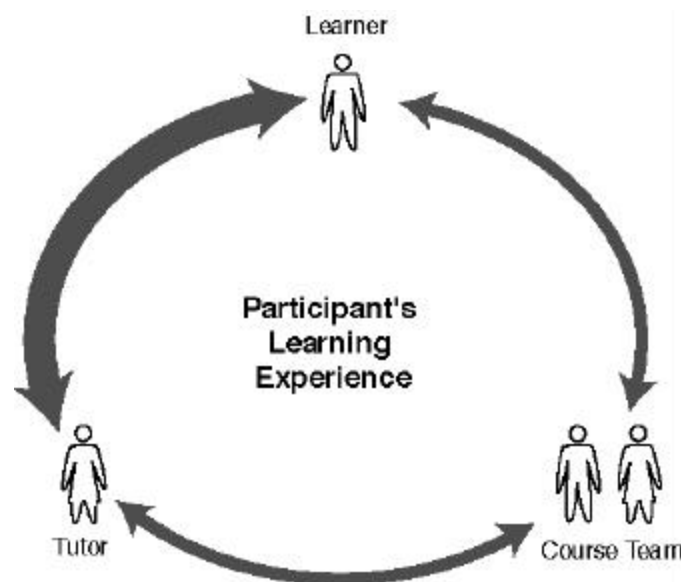

Figure 1 Model showing an increased emphasis on the relationship between the learner and tutor (adapted from Weedon 1997: 42)

In this case tutors are responsible for making the course 'work', which means that the tutor has to be "more rigorous, more clear, put intellectual effort into the course materials" (Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux 1998: 98). O'Donoghue (2003:6) adds that the tutor's responsibility is to promote course deliberation and that the heart of what it is to tutor involves "a deliberate process of helping others to learn through a shared deliberating on emerging issues in ways that all contribute and the group gets a clear grasp from which it is possible to narrate better practice".

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[1] Individualistic theory is based on Piaget's theory, which sees learning occuring through the learner constructing their own knowledge (Weedon 1997: 42)

Through tutoring in a face-to-face situation the 'distance' is taken away from DE (Unisa website. www.unisa.ac.za Accessed 24 July 03). To do so different mediums for tutoring are found in DE. These mediums include tutoring via the telephone, through correspondence (by means of post or electronically), or via audio or visual material (Rowntree 1992: 80-81). Additionally tutoring can be in the form of less distant face-to-face situations, with one-to-one dialogue or within a group situation such as that found within tutorials. Rowntree (1992: 77) believes the most effective support systems are those in which someone 'talks back', preferably during 'real time and space'. This active support is important because as Rowntree (1992: 72) and Freeman (1997: 47) have shown, learners without support are more likely to drop out or delay the completion of their education due to anxieties and difficulties that learners experience when involved with DE studies. Most importantly learners need personal support related to "specific and unique concerns" (ibid.:77). This they can get from a variety of people, though Freeman (1997: 49) suggests that the key supporter in DE is the tutor.

2.3.4   Tutoring processes

Tutoring as a means to educate has been recorded in various forms in (Western) times as long ago as 7000 BC (Gordon & Gordon 1990: 9). Throughout history, the meaning of 'tutoring' has "shifted over time, country and culture" so that now there are over 30 different definitions (ibid.:2). However for purposes of this study tutoring is defined as "one-to-one or small group instruction" (Gordon & Gordon 1990: 6) with tutoring specifically referring to the support of course processes a tutor gives to his/her learners.

Gordon & Gordon (1990: 327) note that:

> *Some of the most important philosophers of the West developed educational theories based upon their practical experience as tutors, rather than as schoolteachers. Their tutorial philosophy developed into many of our modern educational principles.*

Unfortunately the movement of tutoring from a one-to-one or small group basis to that of educating the masses through a school approach has not been effectively traversed. In today's schooling the educational principles originally intended for tutoring have been adopted in the classroom without appropriate adaptation. As a result many teachers have become frustrated with attempts to carry out educational ideas meant for the one-to-one teaching approach to that of a classroom (ibid.: 330) or to mass education situations such as those applied by DE institutions.

Additionally, tutoring of the past was mainly undertaken by parents or a trusted individual to "teach about values, ideas and skills for the improvement of society", unlike education today, which "…remains focused on the study of its own bureaucracy. For many, education has become

the pursuit of personal material success, rather than an awakening of the individual's responsibility for societal improvements" (ibid.:331). One of the principles of tutoring idealistically nurtured throughout time is the development of an individual's thinking processes. This principle can today be equated with DE's aim to develop autonomous, independent learners. However this principle has not been fully realised given the lack of critical, autonomous learning approaches in our modern education system. Here then lies a dilemma for education today- the need of producing autonomous, critical thinkers in a system that often opposes such thinking and instead seems to endorse the status quo. Thus the importance of tutors within DE situations.

Tutoring is not solely based on how well the content of a subject is known. A good tutor may not necessarily be the one who is a subject expert whilst an excellent tutor may have only sufficient knowledge of the subject (Freeman 1997: 49). One opinion is that a good tutor must be an effective mediator of the learning process rather than a teacher of content. This support function however can be misinterpreted, interrupted, ignored or discarded for various reasons. Examples of some of these in the context of the NEEC will be discussed at a later stage (see Section 4.3).

In terms of the tutor support discussed previously, the tutor may model a number of different tutoring styles. These and the 'ideal' tutoring model will now be discussed.

2.3.4.1 Tutoring models
Just as there have been many debates over the different approaches to DE, so there is discussion over what a tutoring process 'is'. The purpose of this section is to clarify a number of basic styles tutoring processes can take within a face-to-face tutorial, which in turn affect the type of support offered to learners.

According to Murgatroyd (1980: 45) there are four general models of face-to-face teaching. These and a brief description of each model are as follows:

- *Knowledge centred:* A knowledge centred tutorial has the teacher's role as that of illuminating knowledge. Their task is to ensure that the learner understands prescribed knowledge and hence the teacher employs a number of strategies in which to convey and test knowledge. The learner's role in this model is to master the knowledge.
- *Remedial:* Here the teacher seeks to diagnose learners' problems and to correct them through the use of didactic teaching. The teachers are presumed capable of diagnosing problems because of their tutoring experience. The students' learning framework is determined by the teacher.

- *Explicator:* The teacher's role in this model is to explain the material that the learner has to study. The learner is then to check his/her understanding against what the teacher has presented.
- *Facilitator:* The Facilitator model has the teacher promoting the skills of self-learning amongst learners. In doing so the teacher promotes confidence building, motivates and encourages the students study and self help skills. They also provide resources to help learners attain their own learning goals. The student role is to take active part in deciding what will happen during the tutorial sessions and to make sure that they, rather than the teacher dominate these sessions. The students are also expected to resolve any conflicts they have through discussion with their peers rather than to expect the teacher to come solve them. All of these skills are expected to increase over time so that the learner becomes increasingly independent of the teacher.

A fifth model is proposed here as it specifically refers to that which is promoted by the RUGF course. This is the '*Mediation*' model.
- The *Mediation* model is similar to the facilitation model however mediation additionally "implies a more pro-active and responsive role for the tutor, where the tutor deliberately creates learning opportunities and deliberates them with learners…the tutor 'mediates' learning in deliberative interactions with the learners" (Lotz-Sisitka personal communication 2003).

By describing these models separately does not imply that they are exclusive of one another. There is possibility that a tutor may draw on more than one model, and that tutorial style may change according to learners and over time. However, underlying any teaching technique is a tutor's assumption about the purpose and nature of teaching and learning (Rhys & Lambert 1983: 66). Ideally, most DE institutions require a tutor to be a facilitator or mediator.

These models of tutoring obviously have a great effect on the roles and responsibilities of tutors. Tutoring models may shape roles and responsibilities and these may consequently be recognised as being inappropriate to the context, or misunderstood or simply ignored because of the tutor's assumptions of the purpose and nature of teaching and learning may be different to that of the programme developer's. Whatever the reasons for this divergence, part of the purpose of this study is to work towards supporting the tutoring process of the NEEC by clarifying what is happening with/in tutoring.

2.3.4.2 Tutor management, competencies, roles and responsibilities

Cole (cited in Freeman 1997: 5) states that management can be thought of as non-routine tasks that involve planning, organising, motivating and controlling. Therefore he says that tutoring as an activity does not form part of the management role, however support of tutoring does. In explanation, the support through, and of, tutoring is a process that often requires understanding and this "understanding is both created and transformed" through social processes (Leach 1996: 123). Tutoring is not "a 'provision' to be 'managed'" (ibid.) as there are many variables within the social interaction that can ultimately affect the tutoring process. However to support tutors *with* their tutoring processes through appropriate infrastructure and effective management systems will go a long way towards helping to make tutoring successful. This support begins with recruiting competent tutors.

A tutor lends a human touch to learning and gives the learner opportunities for asking questions and for general discussion to enhance the learning process during real time and space. Hence tutors in semi-distant education courses often provide support both in professional and personal areas. A tutor is one part of the whole educational package. This package may also be made up of planners, managers, administrators, researchers, course developers, editors and instructional designers. The tutor becomes a representative of these parts and is the link between the learning support material and the learning process itself. As such, tutors become a vital part of this process and should be supported accordingly.

There has been much written regarding the competencies tutors *should* have to do their job effectively. O'Rourke (1993: 3) states that there are difficulties in describing competencies because of the rapidly changing field of DE. However examples of tutor competencies are shown in table 3 below.

Rowntree (1992: 80) adds that tutors need to be constructively critical to help learners challenge the learning materials, i.e. they should be able to help learners critique course materials in terms of their own values and experience.

Table 3 Two views of tutor competencies

Adapted from O'Rourke (1993: 3)	Adapted from Oosthuizen (1995: 13-15)
▪ Being at ease with adult learners; aware of particular needs and circumstances of adult learners; ▪ Having expertise in a subject area or discipline, and in teaching that subject area or discipline; ▪ Having knowledge about how distance education works, and about the kinds of resources and timeframes needed for distance education course delivery; ▪ The ability to work as a member of a team; ▪ Knowledge of administrative systems within one's own organisation; ▪ Openess to new ideas; new perspectives on one's discipline; ▪ The willingness to learn new approaches to teaching and learning; ▪ An ability to balance demands of discipline with the needs of learner; ▪ An ability to communicate needs of the learner to the institution and the institution's perspective to learner; ▪ Interpersonal skills in student advising, counseling, and problem solving.	▪ Induction skills: know what and how to introduce the course; to assist the effectiveness of learning by having good interpersonal skills. ▪ Tuition skills: know the course thoroughly, have one-to-one and face-to-face tuition skills, know how to conduct other types of tutorials e.g. telephonically, ability to communicate effectively and clearly in writing, skilful in developing and implementing tutorials, know how to help learners learn e.g. study skills, time management, elaborate course materials, knowledge of different learning styles. ▪ Assessment skills: be aware of the types and uses of, and needs for assessment, know what and how to assess e.g. adopting a friendly style, giving adverse comments without causing demotivation, decide how to mark scripts which are obviously not the students own work. ▪ Record keeping skills: what and how to keep record of learners e.g. personal details, courses being studied, assignment records.

Along with competencies, tutors should have defined roles and responsibilities. Freeman (1997: 49) has summarised the roles of a tutor into five main functions:

- ▪ as a subject expert
- ▪ as a means of access to other resources
- ▪ to give feedback on progress
- ▪ to encourage/assist with personal problems
- ▪ to assess learners

However there may be many more competencies, roles and responsibilities depending on the expectations of the learning institute and that of the learners themselves. Furthermore, what the education institute eventually determines as the basic competencies, roles and responsibilities of tutors may be very much based on whom is available, and what support will be required in relation to these people. As such the basic competencies, roles and responsibilities cannot be taken out of context. (Specific roles and responsibilities for the RUGF and NEEC courses will be discussed in 2.4.1 & 4.2.4.) Furthermore, tutor competencies, roles and responsibilities cannot be expected of tutors without making them official and explicit to all as well as being supported appropriately. Such explicitness of competencies, roles and responsibilities and further development thereof can be achieved through tutor 'training' and professional development.

2.3.4.3 Recruitment, training and professional development of tutors within the context of DE courses

As has been stated previously, DE revolves around a learner-centred system with teaching activities focused on facilitating (Beaudoin 1997: 15) or mediating learning and responding to learner needs (Walmsley 1997b: 285). Tutors of DE programmes should therefore either facilitate or in the case of the RUGF/NEEC, mediate the learning process, and support learners with their individual needs. Yet many people who become tutors may only have experience in the education subject and/or teaching in standard education but not in adult education or DE teaching and learning strategies. Teaching at a distance requires different skills from teaching in a classroom (Sturrock 1997: 273).

As such Jenkins (1997: 36) suggests a recruitment and development model for tutors (see Table 4). She has presupposed that recruited tutors have subject expertise (Stage 1) and that they are trained teachers (Stage 2). She then sees development occurring in Stages 3 and above, starting with educating them to teach within DE contexts.

However, as stated previously, competencies, roles and responsibilities may be contextually determined and if so tutors may be recruited at any stage of this model. If so the development process will need to be tailored to their particular needs. Nevertheless this model shows that development of tutors should follow a sequence if they are to be competent in delivering and supporting learning within DE situations.

Table 4 The Development Model: Functions, skills and education needs for Distance Education tutors (Adapted from Jenkins 1997: 36)

Personnel Functions	Stage 1 *Basic Experience*	Stage 2 *Educational application*	Stage 3 *Distance Education application*	Stage 4 *Specialised experience*
Tutors	Subject knowledge	Teacher 'training' and adult education	Teaching at a distance	Discipline related teaching techniques

Stage 1: prerequisites: general education to an appropriate level such as first degree at university

Stage 2: basic pre-work training: professional 'training' or experience at the beginning of working life

Stage 3: basic in-work development: essential development in aspects of distance education related to their role

Stage 4: Further in-work development: advanced development in specialist aspects of distance education.

Different models of teaching underpin the teacher's understanding of the nature of teaching and learning. These may need to be explored before taking tutor development further, particularly as most DE institutions require the support of learners by tutoring in a facilitative or mediation style. Taking face-to-face tutorials in the RUGF and NEEC as an example, tutors are responsible for setting up and mediating groups of learners (the tutorial). To appropriately do so tutors need "guidelines by which to operate, and some practice in the process to give them the necessary confidence in their role to carry it out successfully" (Walmsley 1997a: 134). Therefore education and professional development is needed to develop these guidelines with input from the tutors, which can also produce and foster commitment as tutors' "enthusiasm grows as they understand what they do and why" (Jenkins 1997: 34).

The NEEC tutors for 2003, who were participants in 2002, have either indicated their need for ongoing support with tutoring or have alternatively indicated their uncertainty of whether they will require this support or not (Fröhlich 2003). Related to this is the emphasis that support for tutors is crucial if the course is to succeed in its endeavors of producing active, praxis orientated and reflexive environmental education practitioners. In terms of support, Molose (2000: 96-97) in her research on the use of the RUGF materials within the course states that tutors need continuous professional support especially in the course orientation and course management processes to ensure their better understanding of what the course is about and to enhance participants' participation. Specifically, initial tutor training and professional development should also be provided to tutors of DE programmes (Freeman 1997:78-79, Jenkins 1997: 34, Sturrock 1997: 273, Walmsley 1997b: 285). This is especially needed for tutors who have come from a more

conventional teaching background (Walmsley 1997b: 285), or no teaching background at all, to introduce them to adult learning, DE modes of tutoring and specifically to orientate them to the roles and responsibilities associated with being a tutor. 'Training' also provides the frame of reference on which to base tutoring (Jenkins 1997: 34).

Consequently, as an example of professional development at stage four, the tutor (depending on experience) could possibly be introduced and/or extended to:

- course content and materials
- tutor roles and responsibilities
- the learner system e.g. how the learners get materials, what work they do and when it is needed, assessment systems and procedures, support systems they need
- the tutor system e.g. how to contact learners; how to process learners work, general support of learners. (Freeman 1997: 63)
- and on
- specific procedures of the institution such as breech of course agreements procedures for using telephones/faxes and
- interpersonal skills (Sturrock 1997: 273).

The extent of such education and professional development depends on a number of different factors such as funds, and the tutor's time available for such development. Time available is particularly important as such development can be enormously time consuming. No matter how important development is to a programme these limitations must be factored into a development programme as "someone who learns reluctantly usually learns ineffectively" (Sturrock 1997: 273).

Therefore when time and money are a factor, 'on-the-job' professional development can be an alternate option over that of professional development workshops. However, as other studies have shown (Freeman 1997: 78-79) training and professional development that occurs mainly 'on-the-job' can be disadvantageous. Such disadvantages include the lengthy time needed for tutors to gain good understanding and skills regarding the tutoring experience, and the chance that tutors work, and continue to do so, inappropriately. However gaining experience 'on-the-job' can often be advantageous once it is teamed with development activities. For example, 'on-the job' development activities can help tutors learn through experience rather than theoretically and it can help to cut down costs and loss of time such as that associated with attending multiple training or development workshops. When 'on-the-job' development is combined with other forms of professional development, opportunities are created for fruitful learning from within a teaching-learning process.

2.3.4.4 Locating the professional development of tutors within the orientation of the DE course

It is important to recognise the need of supporting the tutor (and indeed learner) development process along the same lines as the ideology that the course espouses. In this case the NEEC is based on a social constructivist epistemology and promotes reflection, critical thinking and action taking. However, as Le Roux (2000: 11) points out, competency *in practice* is based on knowledge, understanding and the ability to reflect *on practice.* Based on this framework, applied competence will result with educators developing competence in the roles defined for them (see Figure 2).
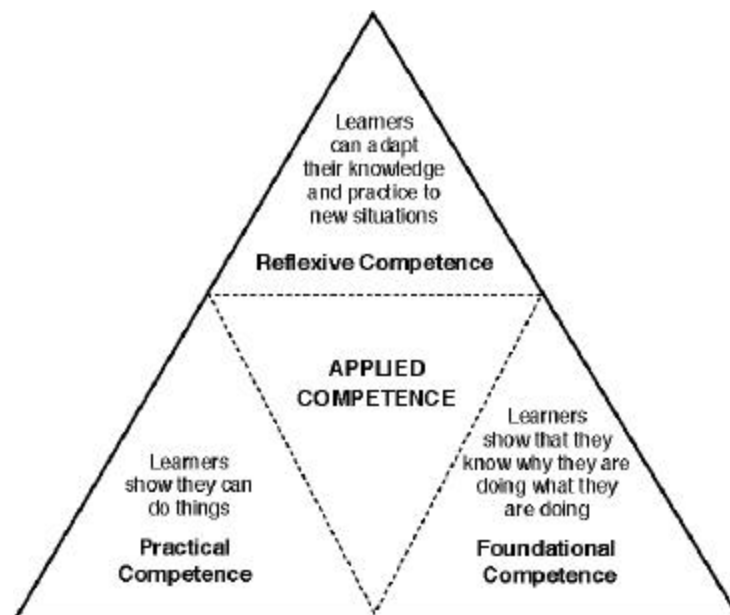

Figure 2 Applied competence (Source: Le Roux 2000: 11)

Displaying applied competence means that practitioners will be able to perform certain tasks (practical competence), understand what they are doing in these tasks and why (foundational competence) and are able to connect what they know with what they do thereby learning from their actions and adapting to changes (reflexive competence) (ibid.). Accordingly, tutor development should take into consideration the need of addressing applied competence processes. In doing so Van Harmelen (in Van Harmelen et al 2001: 145) proposes that development model reform and transformation ideals should include:

- grounding practice in a theoretical framework that is made explicit
- modelling practice within the selected theoretical framework
- a process of "apprenticeship" and
- meta-cognition situated in reflexive practice.

This, as Van Harmelen et al (2001: 145) points out, will enable the 'tutor-in training' to participate in the developmental process, as their prior learning and cultural capital will be considered valuable whilst still encouraging them to engage critically with, in this case, environmental learning. This model should also explicitly mediate the learning process and provide scaffolding for tutors to understand their own practice better; understand where new thinking has originated and why and in the process open doors for tutors to learn new processes and change practice based on critical thinking. However such a process relies heavily on "a cadre of educators who are able to support [practitioners] at source" (ibid.) and supposes that the tutor must be appropriately qualified and/or experienced to do so.

2.4   LINKING CONTEXT AND THEORY TO PRACTICE

The above theory has given the framework from which the RUGF and NEEC courses have developed. In this section, the context and theory behind the RUGF course will further link how the views of tutor and learner support influence its implementation.

2.4.1   Delivery mode and tutoring processes of the RUGF

In its original form, the RUGF course is intended for environmental education practitioners already working in environmental education, and thus is a 'professional development' course. Consequently, the RUGF course is developed with the expectation that its participants will already have some experience in this field (Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux 1997). Additionally, as was discussed in 2.2.3, the need of supporting course participants *in* their work (as professional development) and to allow the course to open up to a diverse number of participants, necessitated the RUGF course to be delivered in a semi-distance mode. Also, the RUGF course promotes interaction of learner and course, such as that outlined in 2.3.2 & 2.3.3 during which the participant becomes an integral part of the course helping to decide on course processes. In this context face-to-face contact time is extremely important. Accordingly the RUGF course runs part-time throughout one year (at the time of this research the most recently completed course ran from July 2002 to July 2003) and consists of a number of face-to-face contact sessions. These are conducted as two national workshops (where all participants come together), each two days long, and another 14 days of regional tutorials. In total, there are 18 days of contact time, all of which occur over weekends. The national workshops are developed and facilitated by the course National Coordinator and other environmental education practitioners (including tutors) as identified by the National Coordinator. Participants attend regional tutorials within their own provinces or as close to that province as possible. Contact sessions are interspersed with reading, activities and assignments, all of which are done in the participant's home and work environment.

Because of the semi-distance format of the course and thus the large number of contact days, a key supporter of the course is the tutor. The following section outlines the competencies, roles and responsibilities of RUGF tutors.

2.4.1.1 Recruitment of tutors and tutor competencies, roles and responsibilities
RUGF tutors are recruited by the National Course Coordinator because of their competency within the course and/or their experience within environmental education in general and because they are enthusiastic in supporting the course. Tutors in the RUGF course need not have general, adult education or DE experience. This view is supported through the comments of Sturrock (1997: 273) who believes that Distance Education teaching skills are different from classroom teaching skills. In the RUGF the view is that tutors do not necessarily need teacher qualifications (O'Donoghue personal communication 2003). He comments that it is better using people with environmental experience, as they tend to have a broader understanding of environment in terms of methodologies. Further O'Donoghue (ibid.) states that by choosing tutors who are trained in education but not knowledgeable about the environment you often compromise the "passion and enthusiasm people have for environment and teaching children in the outdoors" (ibid).

Tutors both choose, and are encouraged, to participate because of the further professional development and networking opportunities within environmental education that comes with the work. This is also how the tutoring role is 'marketed' to potential tutors. Tutors do not get paid for tutoring. In consequence there are no formalised written terms of reference in place as to the minimum qualifications and experience a tutor should have. Recently however there is acknowledgment of problems with inexperienced and under-enthused tutors used in the past. These tutors experienced various problems which included inexperience or lack of enthusiasm for environmental education and in consequence their associated provincial tutorial groups fell apart (O'Donoghue personal communication 2003). However tutors who possess these qualities seem to be readily available because most tutors in this course tend to tutor over many years (O'Donoghue personal communication 2003 and Chadwick personal communication 2003).

Additionally all tutors are already involved in the environmental education field, which is to a large extent their principal occupational responsibility. Accordingly, tutors have expertise in the specialisation of environmental education. In 2002-2003, tutors were in formal employment through such organisations as the Regional Environmental Education Centre within the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (Howick), Rhodes University, environmental education centres (e.g. Delta Environmental Education Centre), Research Institutes or with the South African National Parks Department. The RUGF course also uses a small number of tutors for limited roles and responsibilities e.g. to provide learners with support in assignment writing or

taking a tutorial if the principle tutor is ill or committed elsewhere (O'Donoghue personal communication 2003). In most cases the less experienced tutors will be paired with the more experienced to encourage relatively inexperienced RUGF participants to tutor, referring to them as student-tutors or 's-tutors (Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux 1998: 98, O'Donoghue 2003: 6 and see Section 2.2.3).

Most face-to-face contact occurs during regional tutorials therefore the tutor is responsible for supporting the learning process mainly during these times. As has been shown generally within DE programmes (see Section 2.3.4.2), the tutor's primary role in the RUGF course is to:

- facilitate the sharing of experiences and ideas amongst participants, and
- support participants' personal and professional development.

However general roles and responsibilities include:

- general administrative duties
- general support for participants
- coordinating and/or facilitating tutorials
- logistical arrangements and planning for tutorials
- assessing assignments and providing feedback to participants
- administrative tasks (e.g. liaison between participants and the national coordinator, financial management of tutorial expenses, managing time frames for meetings) and
- where needed, planning and/or facilitation and/or coordination of national workshops.

(Rhodes University 2003: 1-3) (For a diagrammatic view of the roles tutors play see Figure 3)

Tutors may also provide feedback regarding course texts during tutor meetings or workshops, which may be used by the course developers for updates of the course materials. In all, the tutor is seen as the person who mediates (see Section 2.3.3 & 2.3.4) the bulk of learning within the course, with national workshops organised mainly for networking and facilitating some national group work.

Within the RUGF, it is suggested that tutors are "participants in the course and…*learn with* other course participants rather than *teach to* participants" (Rhodes University 2003). Moreover learners are responsible for their own learning and thus "will only benefit from what s/he puts into the course" (Rhodes University 2003, Introduction: 2). However this process equates more with the mediation model of tutoring as shown in 2.3.3 as tutors are required to direct the learning process through deliberate planning and scaffolding and the involvement of participatory deliberations (Lotz-Sisitka personal communication 2003). They are also expected to do some general administrative work and assess participant work (assignments and portfolio) and hence must also provide some guidance for comparison to assessment outcomes.

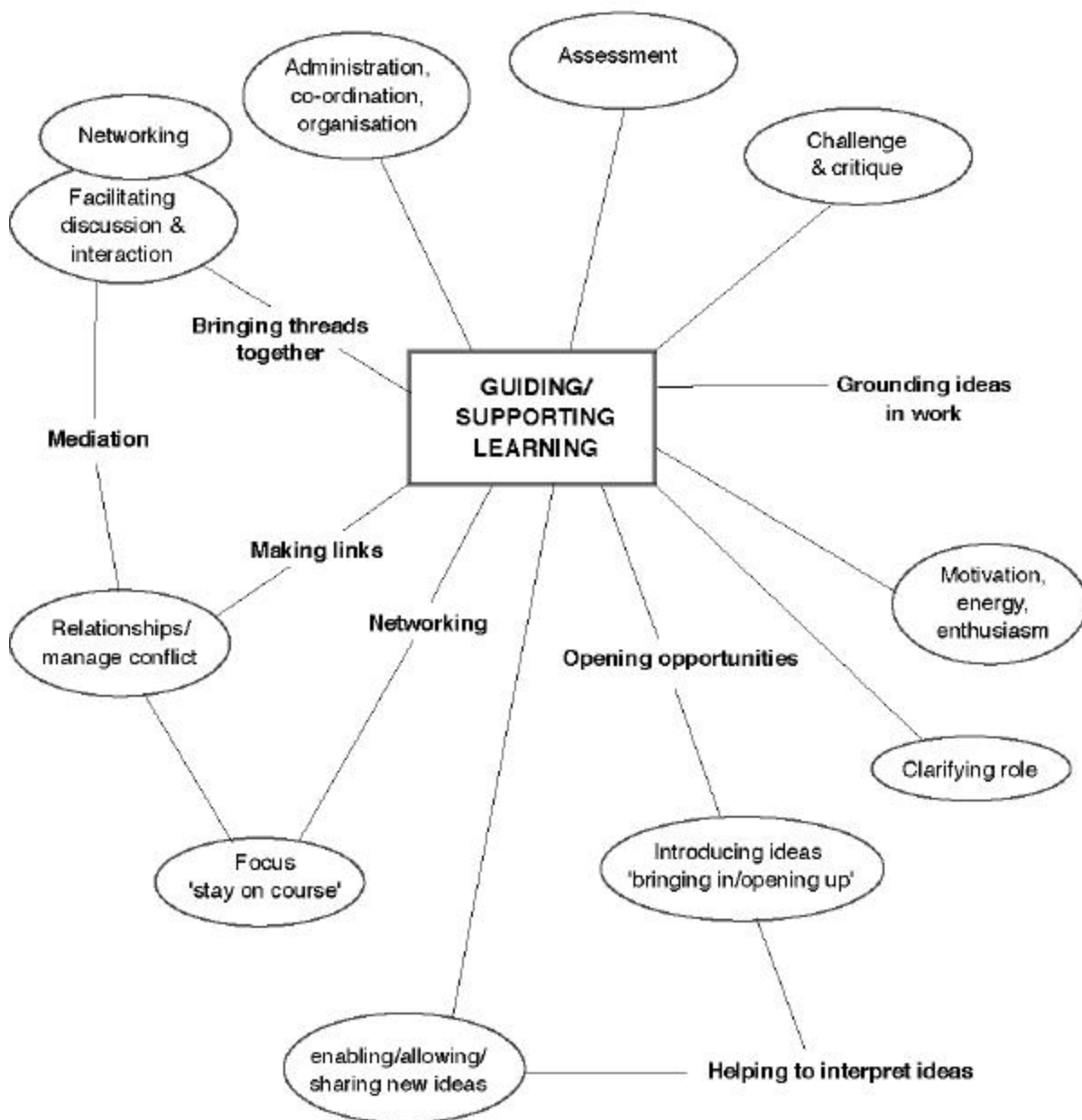**Tutoring - relational processes around learning**

Figure 3 Tutoring roles in the 'Rhodes University Participatory Course in Environmental Education' (Rhodes University 2003)

2.4.1.2 Tutor 'training' and professional development

The RUGF regional groups usually have more than one tutor per tutorial group. This allows for newer tutors to come on board as assistant tutors and the experienced tutors act as mentors. The more experienced tutors within South Africa are well versed in course orientation, aims and processes, know the course content inside out and are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities. Because of this and as most tutors repeat their roles, tutor 'training' and professional development is not an extensive event. Many tutors attend an informal two-day tutor workshop before the beginning of each academic year. They are quite informally arranged in that there is no formalised structure that is followed from year to year. Rather, the needs of the tutors govern what is discussed each year. In 2002, the workshop revolved around editing the Tutor Support Booklet (Rhodes University 2003) as related to experiences and new situations arising from previous years. This Tutor Support Booklet gives broad outlines of:

- Part 1: Introduction to Tutoring.
- Part 2: History of the course, aims and structure, expectations of participants by tutors and, of the course by participants.
- Part 3: Course orientation- course outcomes, orientation.
- Part 4: Course materials-core texts, readings.
- Part 5: Assignments-Introduction, working with readings, presenting assignments, assignment drafts, technical details, pre-course assignment
- Part 6: Assessment and accreditation- developing and working with frameworks for assessment, accreditation.
- Part 7: Workshops and tutorials- structure, programmes, logistics, tutor meetings.
- Part 8: Administration- liaison with participants, coordinating and planning regional tutorials, managing attendance and assignments, financial management.

The NEEC has closely followed the same framework. However, as was stated in the introduction to this chapter, the NEEC is being adapted in contexts different to the RUGF. Such differences are beginning to affect course processes, especially in the area of tutoring.

2.5   THE STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY OF THE NEEC

In this section, both the structure and delivery of the NEEC course will be discussed to orientate the reader towards how and why the course operates the way it does. Specifics on the support of the tutoring process (the main focus of this research) will be outlined in Chapter Four.

2.5.1   A background to the structure of the NEEC

As discussed in 2.2.2 the NEEC, as part of the SEEN project, was developed to help close the gap between environmental education policy and practice. The professional development of education practitioners within the field of environmental education is seen as an important process to help

practitioners make links between environmental education policy and their own environmental education activities "on the ground". Such associations prompted the development and implementation of the NEEC course (see Section 1.1). Within the SEEN project document (DANCED 2001) the professional development of practitioners within the field of environmental education was separated into formal education and non-formal education sectors, with the DRFN responsible for non-formal professional development and Ibis responsible for formal education professional development. However the project document did not clearly link the professional development of both education sectors.

In terms of project outcomes, the project document noted that after the completion of the project '50% of ATs in all districts and 50% of teacher educators [should have] passed an accredited [environmental education] course' and that '20% of governmental and [nongovermental organisation] based extension officers [should] have completed an [environmental education] course' (DANCED 2001: 66). How this was to be achieved within the non-formal education sector, i.e. through the NEEC course, was clearly suggested in the SEEN project document. However a strategy for professional development of formal education practitioners was not so clearly made. Therefore, for the sake of economisation and because of a lack of capacity and capability within the project to develop a professional development course totally separate from the NEEC, it was decided that the NEEC would be developed to fulfil both education sector's environmental education professional development needs. Hence the two sectors were amalgamated, within the boundaries of the NEEC course, and the two organisations agreed to work together on professionally developing practitioners within the field of environmental education. However, although both sectors fall under the SEEN project banner, formal education operates under the auspices of Ibis (and hence their particular budgetary considerations) whilst non-formal falls under the DRFN. Therefore, in terms of management of the NEEC budget, the formal education sector TAs are responsible within their individual regions for their NEEC budgets whilst the non-formal sector TAs are solely responsible for theirs'.

Although the original RUGF course was meant to be for participants with some experience with/in environmental education, in terms of the NEEC it was decided to open the course to the formal education sector and thus to those who may not have any environmental education experience. The decision to broaden the admission of participants was a project decision based on the view that the original RUGF course needed only slight change (at least initially) to allow those participants who did not have environmental education experience to participate in all areas of the course. However, the changes that occurred were mainly made in the wording of the assignments. The majority of the course content did not change and only small changes as related to the Namibian context (for example inserting Namibian in the place of South African

environmental issues in one section of Module One) were made. Further adaptation of the course in response to Namibian contexts was envisaged to occur through research and as the course progressed.

The SEEN project's TAs approached possible formal education sector participants to participate in the course. These participants were Advisory Teachers (ATs) and Teacher Educators (TEs) only. The non-formal education sector participants formally applied to do the course by responding to an advertisement placed in national newspapers. They were required to submit both an application and a pre-course assignment and from these a small number of successful participants were chosen. Note must be made however that there were many more applicants from the non-formal education sector than places available on the course, whilst in some instances the formal education sector SEEN project TAs struggled to find people to participate. Additionally, formal education sector participants did not have to pay for the course whilst non-formal education sector participants had to pay a fee (N$2000). This was based on lessons learned by the non-formal education sector TA from the 2002 course where it is believed that the non payment of fees may have contributed to the lack of dedication by some participants to successfully complete the course.

2.5.2   Delivery of the NEEC

The NEEC operates on a system of *compulsory* face-to-face contact sessions called national workshops and regional tutorials. In 2002 (the second implementation year of the course) the SEEN project management and TAs decided to regionalise the delivery of the course largely due to the vast amount of time tutors and participants from the different regions spent away from work and home when the course delivery is totally centralised.

However, because it was recognised that there was a lack of capacity and competency for entirely delivering the NEEC within regions, it was decided to partially centralise the course via four national workshops, and to have regionalised tutorials in-between (SEEN 2002b) (see table 5.) The national workshops were when the more difficult concepts (key ideas) could be dealt with by experienced people brought in specifically to do so, with tutors acting as support persons, particularly to their own regional participants. In addition, regional tutorials were seen as opportunities for supporting smaller groups of participants (the participants of each region) in identified issues relating to the course.

Table 5 Progress including month, duration and place of the NEEC activities, and people involved

Month in 2003/4	Event	Approx. duration	Where event is held	People involved in the event	Summary of the major areas covered in the event
February	Tutor Training Workshop	2 days	Okahandja	All support tutors All tutors National Course Coordinator South African RUGF Support personnel Internal moderator	Orientation to NEEC Support tutor & tutor roles and responsibilities Course logistics e.g. administration, Course calendar. (see also 4.2.6)
March or April	*Regional Tutorials*	*2 days*	*Regions*	Regional support tutors Regional Tutor Regional participants Guests	Orientation to the NEEC Module 1 Assignment 1
May	National workshop	3.5 days	Okahandja	Support tutors (when regional tutors not available) All Tutors National Coordinator Workshop presenters All participants External Moderator Guests	Module 1 Assignment 1 NEEC Portfolio
June or July	*Regional Tutorials*	*2 days*	*Regions*	Regional support tutors Regional Tutor Regional participants Guests	Module 2 Assignment 2 Revision of Module 1 and assignment 1 (if needed)
July	National workshop	3 days	Ondangwa	Support tutors (when regional tutors not available) All Tutors National Coordinator Workshop presenters Regional participants External Moderator Guests	Module 2 Assignment 2
July or August	*Regional tutorials*	*2 days*	*Regions*	Regional support tutors Regional Tutors Regional participants Guests	Module 2 Assignment 2 Revision of module & assignment 1 & 2 (if needed)
September	National workshop	3 days	Windhoek	*Support tutors (when regional tutors not available)* All Tutors National Coordinator Workshop presenters Regional participants External Moderator Guests	Module 3 Assignment 3 Portfolios
August or September or October	*Regional tutorials*	*1-2 days*	*Regions*	Regional support tutors Regional Tutor Regional participants Guests	Module 3 Assignment 3 Portfolios Revision of Module and assignment 2 (if needed)
May 2004 National workshop/Graduation Ceremony		1 day	Windhoek	Support tutors (when regional tutor not available) All Tutors Workshop presenters Regional participants External Moderator Guests	Assignment 3 presentation Graduation of successful participants

The SEEN project TAs are currently placed in six regions throughout Namibia, with one TA per region (see below and Section 4.2.1). Each TA works on project activities mainly in their specific region with their specific regional ATs, TEs, teachers and other educational staff. Additionally, as part of their SEEN activities the TAs are responsible for their own regional participants (ATs and TEs only) participating in the NEEC course.

Thus the course operates tutorials in six regions of Namibia. Five of these regional tutorial groups are:

- Ondangwa East
- Ondangwa West
- Caprivi
- Khorixas, and
- Khomas.

The sixth regional tutorial group is a group made up of non-formal education sector participants, including teachers[2], from Ondangwa, and other nearby regions. However for the sake of this study it has been named the 'Ondangwa non-formal education sector group'. A closer look at the dynamics of all the regional tutorial groups can be found in Figure 4.

National workshops run for a period of three to three and a half days for four sessions per year. Contact sessions fall both on weekdays and weekends. All participants from both formal and non-formal education sectors and their tutors attend national workshops.

Regional tutorials usually run for two days in three separate sessions (with an optional fourth session), within the course period. Regional tutorials can occur on any day of the week as decided by the regional tutorial group. Regional tutorials tend to focus more on the specific relevant issues of the separate education sectors. However both education sectors have to base their regional tutorials around the NEEC course curriculum.

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[2] Teachers are included as non-formal NEEC participants because of the SEEN project formal education sector direct focus on ATs and TEs only.
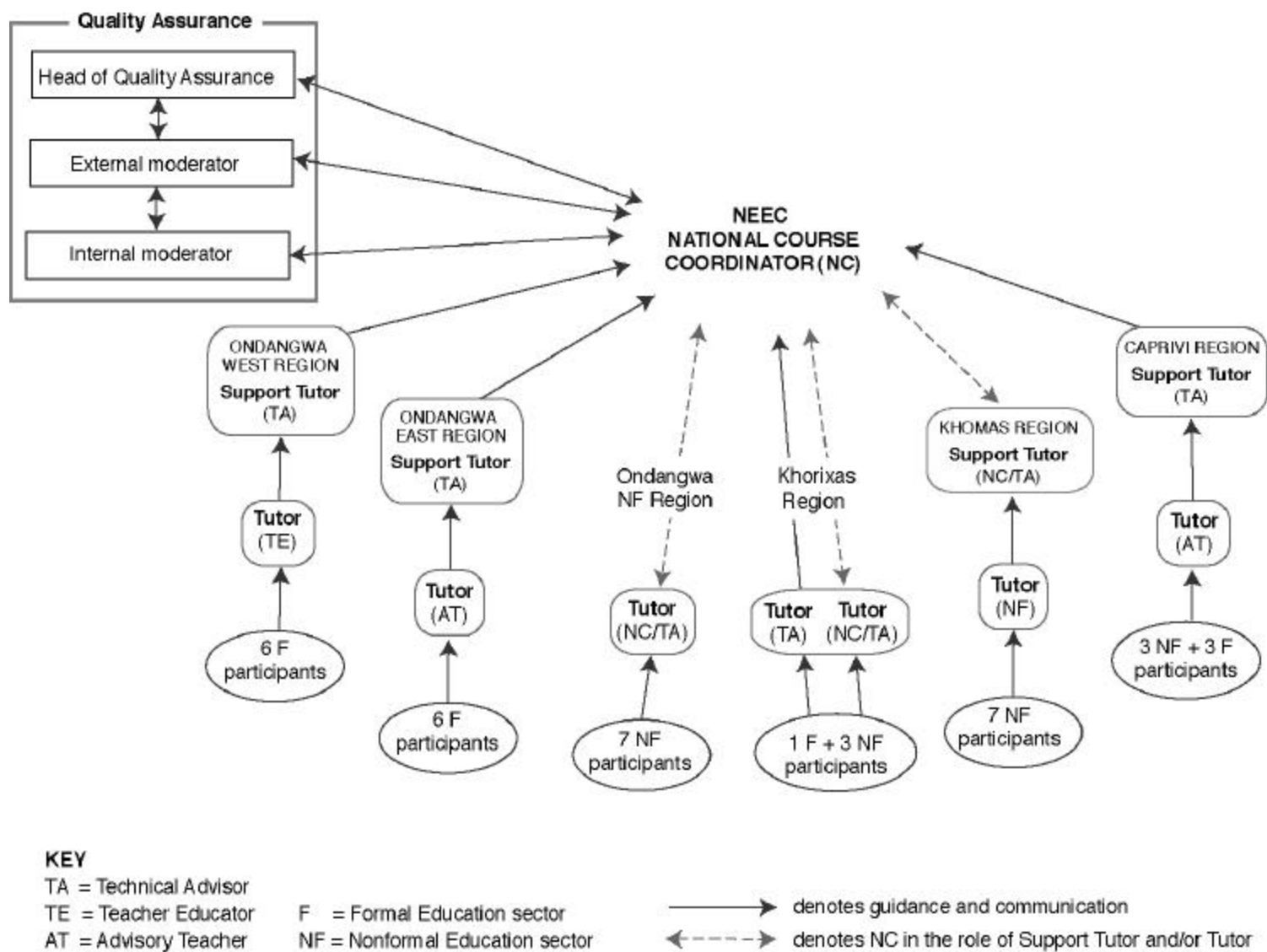
Figure 4 The infrastructure of support within the NEEC course (as at the end of the NEEC course)

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Participants attend the regional tutorial that is geographically closest, or more convenient for them (see Table 5). Contact sessions equal a total of 18 days (minimum 148 hours) official face-to-face contact time. Of these 18 days, a minimum of six are facilitated totally by the support tutor(s) and/or tutor(s) of that region (see Section 4.2).

As part of the DE component of this semi-distance course, in between contact time, participants should ideally scrutinise the course file to make sense of core texts and readings as they apply in their home/work environments. They should also work on assignments and other take home tasks such as activities found in the core texts or other activities as decided by the tutors and participants. By way of comparison, and from which the NEEC bases its delivery, the RUGF course officially constitutes approximately 240 notional study hours, with one third (80 hours) dedicated to contact time and the rest to distance learning (Lotz 2002). However as can be seen above, in the NEEC much more time is spent on face-to-face tutoring (approximately 148 hours). This increased face-to-face time has resulted because of the need to build capacity to deliver the course with both current and potential tutors [3]. Accordingly a decision was made to centralise the NEEC and to spend more days working on the course (SEEN 2002c). In increasing the number of contact days it was hoped that more support could be offered to participants who often struggled with the course requirements, especially whilst studying in DE situations. This structure and delivery of the NEEC has obvious implications on tutoring processes, which will be outlined in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

2.5.3 Background to the professional development of tutors within the NEEC

The NEEC course is not solely a professional development course for participants but potentially also for tutors (who may be considered participants in the NEEC). This is because the orientation of the course enables people at all levels of experience to deliberate issues in social settings, rather than rely on a one-way flow of expert driven information and solutions. However for a tutor to effectively mediate environmental education learning within this orientation they should have sufficient experience and knowledge to base their tutoring on (see Sections 2.3.4.2 & 2.3.4.3). Therefore the main aim of training and professional development for tutors in the NEEC is to build on (but not create) tutor competencies and help develop the effective use of experience and knowledge in tutoring. This extension of tutors' knowledge and understanding is encouraged however it cannot take the place of established experience and foundational knowledge in environmental education.

Given the newness of environmental education to many of the tutors, it was originally hoped by the SEEN project that training and professional development would extend tutor knowledge and

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[3] Potential tutors come from the NEEC participants so those participants from one year have an opportunity to become tutors in years following.

understanding. The professional development of tutors in this course was therefore considered as being two-fold, i.e

a) for professional development of tutors within the tutoring process itself, and

b) to broaden knowledge within the field of environmental education.

In doing so it was hoped that capable tutors could be developed. The strategies for developing tutors in the NEEC were based on a tutor professional development workshop and 'on-the-job' development (see Section 2.4.1.2). These will be outlined in more detail in Chapter Four.