

CHAPTER FOUR

Emerging Research Understandings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the support structure to, and processes of tutoring and the associated challenges experienced within this tutoring process. The results given in this chapter are based on data gathered through various interviews and questionnaires with tutors and support tutors, on observations of several regional tutorials and by investigating documents such as SEEN reports. From the study it emerged that a number of challenges associated with DE tutoring requirements affect the tutoring process. These challenges most commonly involve issues to do with tutors' working environments and the need for further professional development and guidelines for tutoring, especially in DE situations.

The chapter will at first describe and explain how tutoring is structured and supported and the process of tutoring. The chapter will also briefly outline where the NEEC differs from the RUGF course and in some cases how this difference has come about. It will also attempt to describe some of the challenges that tutors have experienced in the NEEC that have affected the tutoring process. An analysis of these results is discussed in Chapter Five, although some explanation of the challenges is briefly mentioned in this chapter to orientate the reader to the challenges mentioned. The first section however will set the scene leading to the discussion of the actual problems that are encountered.

4.2 THE STRUCTURE, SUPPORT AND PROCESS OF TUTORING IN THE NEEC

In this section both the infrastructure and processes of tutoring and its support will be discussed as these will give an overview of how learner support persons, in particular support tutors and tutors, operate within their roles and responsibilities.

4.2.1 The structure of tutoring

The role of the SEEN project TAs is to support the start-up and implementation of the NEEC course with the aim of building capacity within Namibia to take over the tutoring roles and responsibilities. The ultimate aim is to have a sustainable course housed in an established educational institute before the end of the project so that this institution can take over the administration and running of the course. To help in establishing the NEEC, because of a lack of capable people within Namibia that could tutor (see 1.2 & 1.3), the SEEN project TAs tutored in the 2002 course. The aim of the 2002 course, apart from achieving course outcomes, was to

develop a number of participants in tutor roles for the 2003 course. Participants were aware of this and agreed to participate in the 2002 course with the aim of them possibly being required to tutor in 2003. Additionally, in 2002, the SEEN TAs gained experience and developed professionally in tutoring roles and responsibilities as well as generally becoming familiar with the NEEC. Once the 2002 course was completed several participants of each region who completed the course successfully and were considered competent were approached to become tutors. Unfortunately Caprivi and Khorixas did not have any participants in their regions that completed the course successfully. However the Caprivi region did have a regional AT that had recently completed a Masters in environmental education and therefore he was approached to tutor there.

At the end of 2002 the SEEN TAs and Chief Technical Adviser made a decision to use the SEEN TAs to support the incoming tutors with their roles and responsibilities (see 4.2.3 & 4.2.4). In those regions where there were no prospective tutors, a decision was made that SEEN TAs were to tutor again. Originally six 2002 participants (in total) were nominated and appointed by SEEN TAs to be tutors in 2003. Two tutors were nominated and placed in each of the Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West regions, and one tutor each in the Khomas and Caprivi regions. The Ondangwa nonformal education sector regional tutorial group did not have any person who participated in the 2002 course, or available and competent people to tutor, thus leaving the tutoring to the TA responsible for that region. In the Khorixas regional group the TA acts as a tutor as, although he had ATs in the 2002 course, they did not complete it thus making them ineligible to tutor. During the year, due to work constraints two tutors, one each from the Ondangwa East and West regions (see Section 4.3.1.1) dropped out. This left the Ondangwa East, Ondangwa West, Khomas and Caprivi regions with one tutor per region (Figure 4, Chapter Two).

There are also four support tutors as part of the NEEC infrastructure (the SEEN project TAs), who provide support to the tutors of the Ondangwa East, Ondangwa West, Caprivi and Khomas regions by helping to plan, develop and implement regional tutorials and assess participant assignments amongst other tasks (see also Section 4.2.4). The NEEC National Coordinator provides general guidance and coordination to all SEEN TAs and tutors in the NEEC. The NEEC National Course Coordinator is also one of the SEEN TAs (and author of this study) and a support tutor for the Khomas region and tutor for the Ondangwa nonformal education sector group (Figure 4).

Apart from the two SEEN TAs mentioned previously, the tutors of the NEEC are composed of ATs, TEs and an NGO environmental education centre staff member. In all but one region

(where there are both support tutors and tutors) support tutors ideally work with tutors to fulfil their roles and

responsibilities (see 4.2.3 & 4.2.4). In the other region, due to the tutor's competence and efficiency in environmental education, the tutor prefers to work only periodically with her support tutor.

Formal education sector tutors and support tutors are responsible for their formal education sector participants. Formal education participants of the NEEC are comprised of TEs and ATs. Nonformal support tutors and tutors are responsible for nonformal sector participants, which includes Ministry officials, NGO staff members and also teachers within the MBESC (see Section 2.5.1). However, in Caprivi and Khorixas formal education tutors and support tutors take on some of the responsibility for nonformal participants as these live closer to the formal education regions. (Figure 4). The TAs responsible for these regions take over the responsibility for the nonformal participants in their tutorial sessions. However, only the Caprivi TA also assumes full responsibility for these participants i.e. for their regional tutorial sessions, for the assessment of assignments and portfolios and for the writing of 'warning of disqualification' letters¹. The Khorixas TA indicated that, although he was willing to support nonformal participants in his regional tutorials, he did not wish to take responsibility for the nonformal education participant assignments, portfolios or 'warning of disqualification' letters. Therefore the NEEC National Coordinator/Ondangwa nonformal education sector tutor took over these particular responsibilities.

At the end of the course, there was a tutor/participant ratio of approximately one to six (formal sector participants) in the Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West regions, one to seven (nonformal participants) in the Ondangwa nonformal education sector region, one to six (three nonformal and three formal sector) in the Caprivi region, one to four (three nonformal and one formal) in the Khorixas region and one to seven (all nonformal sector) in the Khomas region (see figure 4).

As has been previously outlined, the SEEN TAs, some of whom are support tutors and/or tutors, are employed through the project and are therefore required to tutor. Additionally, in the case of

¹ These letters are those that are given to participants at risk of being disqualified because they have not handed assignments or portfolios in on time (or not at all) and/or missed regional tutorials or national workshops (all requirements of certification).

the formal education sector SEEN TAs, they have other tasks to cope with. One TA, also the NEEC National Coordinator/support tutor/tutor, is employed solely to support the NEEC. Therefore the appointment and payment of SEEN TAs is not an issue in this study. However the appointment and payment of ‘volunteer’ tutors are, as they will be the ones who will contribute to the sustainability of the course. This appointment and payment will thus be discussed below.

4.2.2 The appointment, initial volunteering and eventual payment of tutors

The decision to source and use volunteer tutors was made by the SEEN project TAs and management. This decision in turn was based on the volunteer system followed in the RUGF course. At the end of 2002, during a SEEN project meeting, the SEEN TAs at first individually and then collectively made the decision of who to ask to be tutors (see Section 4.2.3). During this meeting the SEEN TAs and management suggested that tutoring, as part of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture (MBESC) contribution (as part of the SEEN project), could form part of the ATs’ normal jobs and thus should be negotiated with the MBESC. The director of the MBESC “National Institute for Educational Development” (the MBESC SEEN project manager) sent a request to all participating MBESC regional directors outlining the requirements of tutoring and requesting it be made part of their official duties (Appendix 6). Unfortunately only the Caprivi region officially acknowledged the request and agreed in principle during a meeting held with the SEEN project Chief TA. However this agreement was never officially recorded, and soon afterwards a new regional director was appointed. However the NEEC still engaged ATs as tutors and presumed that tutoring could form part of the AT’s job. In terms of TEs, their role in the course was explained as being essentially voluntary. The main incentive given to College of Education Rectors to allow their TEs to tutor was that they would provide support (professional development opportunities) to other TE participants and ultimately to their Colleges of Education. Note was also made of the TE’s role in supporting participants as a whole. However, again no official letter of support was received from the Rectors, although the Chief TA asserts that they did agree in principle during meetings held between the region’s TA and Rectors (Murray, personal communication 2004). Consequently again the SEEN TAs and NEEC management presumed that TEs could tutor and that they understood their voluntary role in the NEEC.

For the nonformal education tutor, no official agreement was signed, however the tutor, being the director of her organisation was able to make decisions governing the use of official working time, so there was no problem. The nonformal education sector tutor was chosen because she indicated her interest in tutoring and the professional development it affords. She was further encouraged to do so by the SEEN TA of this sector. A small honorarium (N\$1,500 in total) was offered in return for her tutoring service, and an informally arranged system organised for paying additional tutoring expenses such as photocopying, telephone calls to participants and conducting

regional tutorials. This is over and above support she gets in terms of accommodation, food and travel expenses, which is paid by the project and/or participants' fees. The decision to give a small honorarium was taken at the initial NEEC course planning session (November 2001) due to the view (from the participants of this workshop) that people would not tutor without some financial support (DRFN 2001).

In terms of payment, ATs originally did not receive any additional pay or honorarium from the SEEN project for tutoring, even when working on weekends except for basic travel and subsistence. Instead ATs were asked to tutor as part of their usual job, and as premised on the support of regional directors in use of this work time. However, in terms of TEs, the situation is quite murky. Although they were asked (and agreed) to volunteer their time, they were not expected to tutor (as ATs' were) as part of their jobs. They were essentially meant to be treated in the same way as nonformal education sector tutor 'volunteers' and be paid a small honorarium. Unfortunately this payment may not have been communicated well, or at all with TEs as comments made regarding financial incentive (see Section 4.3.2) show and which Nengola, (personal communication 2004) a TE tutor, backs. In brief the researcher believes that because of communication difficulties between some TAs' and the TEs, both had different views of honoraria for their roles as tutors.

As of July 2003 however (during the time this research was carried out), because of certain constraints to the tutoring process (many of these outlined in Section 4.3) a decision was made by the SEEN TAs' and management to pay *all* tutors a small amount of money calculated per participant and their submitted finalised assignment and portfolio (SEEN 2003d). Tutors were paid a set amount (N\$100) for each finalised assignment and portfolio per participant. This payment was to replace that of the initial N\$1,500 offered to the NGO tutor and TEs. However this was only brought into effect from assignment two onwards.

4.2.3 The NEEC tutor competencies, roles and responsibilities

When appointing the NEEC 2003 tutors, no formal requirements were specified other than having completed the course and, in the mind of the TA, being a potentially capable tutor. Most of the tutors (four of the six) chosen for the 2003 NEEC did not have environmental education qualifications or experience except having done the NEEC the previous year. One other tutor (the nonformal education sector tutor) had environmental education experience and had done the course but did not have any formal environmental education (or general education) qualification. The remaining tutor had a Masters in environmental education but had not attended the NEEC.

Roles and responsibilities were only officially decided upon during a tutor development workshop, held before the start of the course (February 2003). All tutors and support tutors decided these roles and responsibilities were:

- to prepare, organise and facilitate regional tutorials
- provide guidance and general support to participants
- assess assignments and portfolios
- provide links between stakeholders
- to act as conflict managers and
- to be mentors to participants (SEEN 2003c).

Essentially, the NEEC tutors' roles and responsibilities are similar to the RUGF tutors (see Section 2.4.1.1). The NEEC tutors have the added responsibility for ensuring participant assignments and portfolios are assessed strictly according to the course outcomes and associated assessment criteria, and that assessment is consistent within and between participants' work, both within their own, and other regions. They are also required to give assessed assignments and portfolios to their support tutor, which are only then passed to the moderator (see Section 4.2.5.3). The support tutors ideally helps the tutors in the assignment process, giving their comments and discussing the assignment with the tutors. These measures are employed for supporting tutors' professional development and for course quality assurance.

Tutors are also responsible for recommending participants for certification i.e. if they receive the fully accredited certificate, a certificate of attendance, or none at all.

4.2.4 Roles and responsibilities of the NEEC support tutors

Support tutors were created in the NEEC to *support* and *assist* tutors in their roles and responsibilities as it was believed that tutors might not be able to carry out these as they, the SEEN TAs, had been required to in 2002. Support tutors were envisaged as assisting tutors' capacity building and professional development. Ultimately it was hoped that the tutors could take over all the duties of the support tutor once they had tutored in the course.

During the tutor development workshop (February 2003) the support tutors' main roles and responsibilities were identified as (SEEN 2003c):

- moral support to tutors
- organising regional tutorial logistics
- assisting in the planning and coordination of tutorial programmes
- provide 'on-the-job training' and contribute to professional development
- moderating tutors comments on assignments and portfolios

- general administration of regional tutorials e.g. typing any minutes or documents associated with tutorials
- writing reports associated with the NEEC
- providing access to SEEN facilities such as the telephone and photocopier
- dealing with general financial matters related to regional tutorials and national workshops
- liaising between the NEEC National Course Coordinator, tutors and participants and
- providing general support to the tutors when needed.

Subsequently one other responsibility has been included, that of ensuring warning letters are sent to participants at risk of disqualification from the NEEC (SEEN 2003d and Section 4.2.1).

However, as will be discussed in 4.3, roles and responsibilities for support tutors and tutors changed somewhat due to difficulties experienced with tutoring throughout the course period. This is discussed in more detail below.

4.2.5 The tutoring process

In the next section, the process of planning and implementing regional tutorials and national workshops will be discussed in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the tutors and support tutors. The discussion will begin with regional tutorials, as this is the first contact session of the NEEC.

4.2.5.1 Planning and implementing regional tutorial sessions

Support tutors with the help of the NEEC National Coordinator, currently guide tutors in the regional tutoring process. The National Coordinator provides general guidelines for what each tutorial should cover. Some of these guidelines were communicated with support tutors and tutors during a tutor development workshop at the beginning of the year (February 2003). Other guides and information are provided throughout the process of the course. The support tutor ideally helps the tutor with regional tutorial planning, coordination, presentation and logistics. However it was found that tutors generally leave most of the planning, coordination and logistics to the support tutor (see Section 4.3.1.1). Thus during the year the tutors main roles changed to (wherever possible) assisting the planning of regional tutorials, carrying out some presentations of regional tutorial sessions, assessing participants' assignments and portfolios and providing general support to participants during national workshops, regional tutorials and whenever else needed. The exception is the nonformal education sector tutor who works independently from her support tutor. This tutor does all planning, coordination, logistics and presentation of regional sessions without the need of her support tutor.

In the Ondangwa East, West and Ondangwa nonformal education sector regions both formal and nonformal education sector tutors and support tutors initially worked together in planning regional tutorials. In the Caprivi region the support tutor planned the first two tutorials largely by herself. During the first half of the course year she only had occasional support from her designated tutor in the form of presentations of some tutorial sessions until approximately June when the tutor could commit himself to his role as a tutor. After this, the tutor was more involved in the whole tutoring process, but again, during the final assessment of portfolios, the tutor only took a small role in the assessment process because of other commitments. In the Khorixas region, due to the absence of an appointed tutor, the TA has mainly worked alone when organising and running tutorials, thus carrying out most of the tutor roles and responsibilities.

The support tutor did most of the planning, coordination, and administrative and logistical arrangements for regional tutorials. In all regions that have support tutors and tutors, these have the responsibility for specific sessions and thus individually plan and present these sessions. Ideally, the tutors discuss their sessions with the support tutors (and other tutors and support tutors as in the case of the Ondangwa East, West and nonformal education sector regions) before the tutorial. However indications are that this does not frequently happen (see Section 4.3.1.1). The tutor(s) and support tutor(s) often also have a meeting after the regional tutorial to discuss the tutorial, the positive and negative points and any other issues they wish to highlight.

When planning for regional tutorials, some of the support tutors share their regional programme ideas via the NEEC National Course Coordinator with other support tutors by email. In this way other ideas for what to cover during a regional tutorial are exchanged. Otherwise the support tutors and tutors regional tutorial programmes are guided by the suggestions of the National Course Coordinator and from their own and participants' ideas.

4.2.5.2 Tutoring processes at national workshops

National workshops are planned and mediated by experienced environmental education 'specialists' (see also Section 2.5.2). Usually it is not obligatory for tutors to present sessions at national workshops unless they have volunteered to do so however tutors are required to attend all national workshops. During these workshops, tutors usually provide general support to their participants and are responsible for supporting sessions that are specifically developed for working on regional group problems, e.g. assignments, portfolios, and regional tutorial arrangements. If a tutor cannot be present at the national tutorial, the support tutor is meant to backstop the process and attend in his/her place. Otherwise attendance is not compulsory for a support tutor at national workshops. However as was found, in several national workshops, one

region was left without their tutor (this region only had a tutor and not a support tutor). This caused concern for several participants of this region (Polytechnic of Namibia 2003a).

4.2.5.3 Moderation and assessment in the tutoring process

The NEEC doesn't provide detailed guidelines for assessing assignments, other than referring to the NEEC assessment sheets (NEEC 2003) and the Tutor Support Booklet (Rhodes University 2003). When assessing assignments and portfolios, tutors are therefore guided by the assessment criteria outlined for each module in the course file and, in the case of Module One, an additional assessment matrix provided by the National Course Coordinator. Guidelines for how to assess were not otherwise produced nor were tutors professionally developed specifically in the NEEC assessment.

Due dates for assignments and portfolios, as well as due dates for getting the assessed assignments and portfolios to the moderator, were decided by all tutors and support tutors in the tutor development workshop (held in February 2003). Each assignment requires the submission of several drafts to the tutor, the number of drafts being ultimately decided by the particular tutor. Because of this, the due date of draft assignments was left to the tutor and the participants to decide however the final due date was set as the same date across all the regions. In the process of assessing, tutors are ideally required to pass their commented-on assignments to their support tutor for further comment and discussion. These comments are used as the initial support to the tutor in the assessment process. However several support tutors mentioned that this process was not working well due to their other commitments (see Section 4.3.1.1).

One internal and one external moderator is also part of the NEEC infrastructure (see Figure 4). These moderators, together with the head of quality assurance make up the NEEC quality assurance team. They report back on the progress and performance of the overall course to Rhodes University and Polytechnic of Namibia (the joint accrediting institutes). The "SEEN Formative Monitoring and Evaluation" team, comprising of representatives of the accrediting institutes, generally monitors and evaluates all the activities of the SEEN project including the NEEC. They therefore employ the internal and external moderators, and the head of quality assurance. Specifically, the Polytechnic of Namibia representative acts as the external moderator whilst a representative of Rhodes University acts as the head of quality assurance. The internal moderator is employed independently from the Rhodes University and Polytechnic of Namibia.

The internal moderator monitors the tutor's assessment of assignments. She moderates according to the NEEC assessment criteria and terms of reference as set out in her contract with the SEEN project. Participants' assessed assignments are due at the moderator two weeks after each

assignment's final due date. Moderation reports are produced when tutors sign off each final draft of the three NEEC assignments. Thus the moderator should provide three internal moderation reports to the NEEC management and tutors/support tutors. The moderator provides and ideally discusses these moderation reports with the tutors and support tutors, outlining where and how improvements to the process of assessing assignments could collectively and individually be made. She also comments on the difficulties that participants have had with the assignments generally and offers suggestions on how to improve assessment within the NEEC. Ideally these reports are discussed after each finalised assignment so that tutors can improve assessment for the following assignment. However, many tutors did not get assignments to the moderator by the due dates, in some cases more than a month late, and/or without being peer assessed by the support tutor. The moderation process was thus affected and the report on the first assignment was not distributed until after the third national workshop. During the research for this dissertation, only assignment one had been discussed with tutors, and assignments two and three were in the process of being moderated. Several reasons for the lateness of assignments were given which differed between the tutor and support tutor e.g. tutors tended to ascribe blame to participants' lack of commitment to the NEEC (see Section 4.3.5) but while support tutors agreed that there was some lack of commitment from participants to submit their assignments on time, they also believed that tutors were often also delaying the process.

The external moderator monitors the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process as a whole, by monitoring national workshops, regional tutorials and participant portfolios. The external moderator should also monitor the internal moderation reports. The external moderator ideally produces reports after each of these moderation sessions. However, in 2003 the external moderator only moderated approximately two national workshop days of the total 18 face-to-face contact sessions, and looked at a selection of portfolios twice during the year. No regional tutorials were moderated. Also, because of delays in the internal moderator's report, only one was monitored. From these moderation sessions only one end-of-course moderation report was produced. There were thus minimal suggestions from the external moderator for improving the tutoring of the course.

As can be seen from this section, several challenges have arisen with the tutoring process regarding the assessment process. These will be analysed in Section 5.2.2.4.

4.2.6 Tutor training and professional development

Tutors attend a once off centralised and compulsory two day professional development workshop. In 2003 this happened at the beginning of the year (February) before the course started. The tutor development programme covered a number of issues around the course orientation, course

content, sequence of course, basic regional tutorial requirements, assessment and moderation, general administrative and financial matters and research related to the NEEC (SEEN 2003a). This tutor development workshop constituted the major development opportunity provided by the NEEC. Tutor development is organised by the National Course Coordinator who, along with the tutors of the previous year, determines what is covered at the workshop. Tutors have the opportunity to add to or change the workshop programme as they see fit. However because of the short duration of the training workshop, most of the programme content mentioned above is only covered superficially. Reference is made for tutors to read the “Tutor Support Booklet” (Rhodes University 2003) for more information (see Section 2.4.1.2). However this booklet was not thoroughly discussed or overly mediated but only referred to from time-to-time.

This workshop also covered issues of particular interest to the NEEC. These included the discussion of the following topics (SEEN 2003b):

- activities and assignment requirements as related to assessment criteria
- what and how of assignments and portfolio assessments
- due dates for draft and final assignments and portfolio
- research as related directly to the NEEC
- moderator and quality assurance reports
- financial support from the project for the course participants
- the Swaziland course (involving a guest speaker)
- requirements of the first regional tutorial and
- NEEC accreditation.

The workshop was supported by a representative of the SADC-REEC who is also tutor of the RUGF 2002 course and the support person allocated to the NEEC SADC-REEC. The Swaziland Course Coordinator also attended this workshop. Both of these guests were interested in sharing ideas around the 'training' of tutors.

Apart from the once off tutor development workshop, time for meeting informally within National workshops is organised so those tutors can discuss matters that they see as important. However these meetings constitute the only formally organised (by the NEEC National Course Coordinator) professional development activities within the process of the course.

Tutors may attend workshops related to their general educational issues such as assessment and integrating environmental education into the curriculum. These workshops have mainly been organised by the SEEN project. However the SEEN project workshops are not directly related to the NEEC course or tutoring and primarily target formal education sector ATs, including those

who are tutoring in the NEEC. Hence there are very few opportunities for the tutors to attend professional development workshops directly related to tutoring in the NEEC.

Providing on-the-job training and professional development was originally agreed upon by support tutors (SEEN 2003b). However, strategies for this process were not discussed amongst the support tutors or tutors. Neither were any formally organised activities. Thus 'on-the-job' professional development may not have occurred. This may have been because of time constraints experienced by the majority of tutors (see Section 4.3.1.1).

4.3 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN THE TUTORING PROCESS

The tutoring process has been hampered by a number of challenges arising directly from tutors' immediate work and home environment and from the limitations of the course management and infrastructure. Both the tutors and the support tutors have experienced these problems to varying degrees as discussed below.

The tutoring challenges discussed below have been extracted from analysing the research data as outlined in Section 3.5. This first entailed coding collected data and then placing the coded data into similar categories (subthemes). These categories were then grouped into similar themes and an appropriate heading developed for each. In the following section the challenges will be discussed under each relevant theme. Within each theme, (where appropriate) subheadings will be used to distinguish between subthemes. Discussions will then be made under each theme or subtheme. For simplicity's sake each theme and subtheme will be presented separately however in reality most themes are inter-related, with all revolving around a central theme of the need for appropriate NEEC management and infrastructure to counteract those challenges (see Section 5.1). However further analysis and discussion of these themes as related to the theory discussed in Chapter Three will be discussed in the next chapter.

Within this next section, as agreed with the participants of this research, tutor and support tutor identity has been kept confidential. Therefore tutors and support tutors will only be identified through the use of codes. Where necessary, the education sector and region from which the tutor comes has also been held back to protect the subject's identity.

4.3.1 Constraints to tutoring related to tutor's working environment

Two subthemes, time constraints and limited access to telephones, were initially developed after analysing the data. From these subthemes, a main theme of 'Constraints to tutoring related to tutors' working environments' was formed to represent those issues where the working

environment reflected negatively on the tutoring process. Within this theme, all tutors' mentioned work constraints as being a big challenge to tutoring. The following is a more detailed account of such challenges.

4.3.1.1 Time constraints imposed by working environments

From analysing all data from this study it became apparent that time constraints imposed by work environments seem to be the main cause of tutoring problems. As mentioned in Section 4.2.1, two tutors dropped out, one of whom said that he had multiple roles to fulfil within his work and little time to fulfil all roles, especially that of tutoring. He mentioned that his job as an AT and other added responsibilities came before that of the NEEC. He made a decision therefore to drop out of tutoring. The other tutor decided to take a leave of absence from his employment to do a three-month 'Society and Culture' course overseas. Both these and the remaining tutors repeatedly mentioned the negative effect that time constraints had on their roles and responsibilities as tutors. Therefore this challenge seemed to be the biggest concern for all tutors involved.

The lack of time to dedicate to the tutoring process, as represented by tutors (and not support tutors), was equated as due to:

- a full workload (PN, RL, QV, DC)
- other work responsibilities, with certain work activities receiving higher prioritisation than the NEEC (QV, MO)
- work that takes the tutor away from their office and lessening the time available for work on NEEC tasks (QV, PN, RL, MO) and
- a lack of understanding or support from the Regional Directors or immediate supervisors (MO). (Note: The support tutor to MO also backed up this point).

Throughout many interviews and questionnaires, the lack of time to tutor caused by work constraints was therefore a main theme. For example QV mentioned, in response to item 6a Questionnaire Schedule 1 (Appendix 3) that there was no "time for proper planning, because during our planning meetings, not all of us were able to attend all meetings due to other commitments". As DC explained, "tutoring is much more time consuming than I expected. I enjoy it a lot however, it does require me to take the work home with me otherwise I would not be able to cope with my other job responsibilities" (Item 9a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). PN, one tutor who dropped out, noted that "a full workload...makes it extremely difficult for me to execute my tutoring responsibility at least to a satisfactory extent". He goes on to say that "Frankly I should state that I am more swindling or ripping off both participants and my fellow tutors" (Item 9a & b Questionnaire schedule 1 Appendix 3). MO explained that he "felt strongly that I am not doing justice to the course. I don't find time to talk to all the participants before and after tutorials" (Item 6a Questionnaire schedule 1 Appendix 3).

Additionally, in terms of the AT tutor's role in the NEEC in most regions, the time to dedicate to tutoring, as part of their usual jobs, was not well secured (SEEN 2002b). For example in the region where the support tutor and tutor indicated that agreement between the regional director and the SEEN project had been reached to allow the AT to tutor as part of his job, did not work in practise. In consequence MO indicated in response to Item 6b (Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3) asking what he could do about the lack of time that "this is out of my hands at the moment. I am not calling the [shots]. I am not convinced that my director understands what should happen or the operational area [sic]". In addition, a support tutor (AB) gave his reason for the lack of time as related to the expectations of tutoring as part of an AT's job when he said

...tutors don't believe that it is part of their job, partly because its not been explicitly [sic] by their immediate supervisor too, likewise and maybe not much provision was made in terms of specific time allocated for the purpose of...it was more like a general acceptance that the Ministry signed up to this and they have to make sure that there is time for ATs and TEs to sorta, make time for this. But in reality they don't see it likewise, they feel, to be honest, they feel that they are appointed within subject boundaries and that's what in the first place expected of them to deliver. All other things come, come later. (Item 1 Interview Schedule 1 Appendix 1)

This difficulty in officially securing time, as part of the AT's normal duties is further mentioned in SEEN project documents (SEEN 2002a, 2002b & 2003e). It is mentioned that (SEEN 2003e: 18):

[although ATs and TEs have] personally committed themselves to the task, and employer institutions agreed in principle to support their involvement, in practice difficulties have emerged related to other regional priorities and the difficulty for the AT to secure the time for this within their current workload...EE as an "institutional/regional" priority automatically comes after existing work.

This has resulted in the AT and TE tutors being unable to fully participate in planning and facilitating regional sessions.

As an additional point, in terms of ATs, mention must be made about the overall management of the Inspectory services which ATs fall under. It is suggested that the working environment the ATs are exposed to contributes to the 'lack of time' challenge, especially in terms of their official role as ATs in the MBESC. In research done on the efficiency of the Inspectory service, McClland (2003: 3) states that ATs' job descriptions are poorly defined² and the staffing incomplete and haphazard. He goes on to say that (ibid.: 8).

no attempt seems to have been made to prioritise the tasks or to quantify the amount of time to be given to different areas of work. In practice, the job seems to work mainly on a day to day basis, set around a framework of fixed duties- committees and working groups, courses and participation in panel inspections (in most but not all regions)....

² McClland (2003: 8) research shows that ATs do not have individual job descriptions and generic descriptions are so broad that they can virtually encompass any professional activity.

Overall, in this study it is not surprising to find that the support tutors mentioned how the resulting lack of time experienced by tutors reflected negatively on the planning and running of regional tutorials. Comments from support tutor AB (Item 2 Questionnaire schedule 3 Appendix 5) illustrate this point. He says that “tutoring as part of their job did not work well” and that there was a “lack of commitment from tutors for collective planning, and feedback on sessions before implementation”. Moreover support tutor FS mentioned that not once did he have all his regional tutors for planning the regional tutorials (ibid.).

Such difficulties may then lead to a sense of hopelessness in the tutor and reluctance to overburden themselves with work, especially as it could be seen as ‘extra’ to their usual duties. For example in response to what support the tutor would have found helpful in assisting them to overcome difficulties (Item 6c Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3), QV said “maybe I could have asked my clerical assistant but it [may not be] an easy task because they could even think [that this is] private and additional work that [pays] extra income”.

Additionally, as a result of having time limitations, two support tutors (who also acted as tutors- see figure 4) (BK Item 2 Questionnaire 3 Appendix 5 & PA SEEN 2003g) and a tutor (MO Item 4 Questionnaire 2 Appendix 4 & SEEN 2003g) said that they were struggling to tutor all participants effectively as they had many people in their group (these groups had a tutor/participant ratio of approximately one to seven).

All these reasons point to the need for appropriate structures within the NEEC to ensure that tutors are dedicated to tutoring, know how much time is needed to tutor and that the place of work is fully supportive of that time. Further analysis of this challenge and suggestions for the way forward are made in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

4.3.1.2 Limited access to telephones for tutoring processes

Some tutors (QV, RL, MO and PN) indicated that they were unable to adequately tutor because they did not have direct access to a telephone at their workplace. This made it difficult to make or receive calls, emails and faxes. For example MO explained that he was not connected to the internet and had to go elsewhere to access emails from the participants with the effect of delaying feedback (Item 9a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). QV also mentioned that she had to use her own phones at her own expense for contacting the TAs or participants (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4).

Generally tutors found it very difficult to maintain sufficient support with participants without having, at the very least, constant or regular access to telephones within their work environment.

RL said that participants need “constant communication with their tutors” and that “something should be arranged for tutors to have access to a telephone so that they can return calls from their [participants]” (Item 12 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3).

4.3.2 Challenges experienced due to lack of financial incentives

It emerged that most tutors (MO, QV, RL, GH,) indicated that they wanted financial incentive in exchange for tutoring services. These comments were predominately made before being offered a small honorarium (implemented from July 2003). Before this implementation, support tutors mentioned how difficult it was to get commitment from tutors regarding their input into the planning of tutorials and for assessing assignments on time (see Section 4.3.1.1). This was seen as a result of the ‘volunteerism’ ethic that often downplayed the need to take tutor roles and responsibilities seriously. This is also reflected in a comment by the tutor RL. She noted that “I think that you have already observed the problem of tutors who are not given any allowances...It led [to tutors] not [being] serious, commit[ed] and eager to assist at all times. It...prevented [the course coordinator] to instruct us (tutors), because [strong instructions cannot be given to those who are] voluntarily helping you” (Item 4 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). Additionally QV (Questionnaire schedule 1, Item 6b, Appendix 3) states “despite the professional growth that we are gain[ing] from being tutors, I think we need [remuneration in recognition of] our effort we are doing for this course”. This desire for payment for tutoring may be for a number of reasons although it may also indicate their limited enthusiasm for voluntary tutoring and/or environmental education. This seems to have been brought on because tutoring is seen as ‘extra’ to their normal duties (see Section 4.3.1.1) and requires them to work outside normal working hours. For example, RL said that they were “sometimes forced to do things over weekends” (Item 9a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). QV explained that there were no “incentives - there is no practical motivation to the tutors. It seems like we are exploited, especially when working during weekend - it is not easy thing working voluntarily till [sic] that extent” (Item 6a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). MO explained that remuneration should be paid as per the labour law and as related to overtime (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). Additionally remuneration was seen as necessary especially when tutoring has financial implications that are not always covered by the NEEC (see Section 4.3.1.2).

However even after payment came into effect, the issue of incentives still arose. In the final questionnaire administered to tutors (Items 2, 3 & 4 Appendix 4), issues such as having to work weekends without incentives, and the need for more incentives as suits the tutoring workload were prominent. As QV mentioned (before payment was introduced)

...the big concern is incentives, because if comparing to other programmes such as the BETD inset, Namcol [and] Unam³, tutors are paid. Even [when] the programme is related to the Ministry e.g. BETD inset programme tutors, who are BETD PRESET⁴ teacher educators are always [paid] for...tutoring the course' (Questionnaire Schedule 1, Item 9a, Appendix 3).

After payment QV said that “I am willing to tutor again, but that will depend on the workload I will have...financial incentives will also be helpful to avoid doing tutoring work at my own cost” (Questionnaire schedule 2, Item 3, Appendix 4).

Incentive was not solely a sticking point for formal education tutors but also for that of the nonformal tutor. This tutor too indicated her concern that the huge investment of time into the NEEC was not good when the tutoring position is essentially voluntary (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3, SEEN 2003g). In this case she mentioned that she would have to be “adequately compensated” for her tutoring (ibid.).

These examples clearly show that tutors of the NEEC, unlike those of the RUGF (see Section 2.4.1.1) may not be willing to tutor purely for the professional development and other environmental education incentives of the non-financial kind. This is also backed by the comments made in one of the first NEEC scoping meetings (November 2001) where it was mentioned that there would be difficulty securing tutors without some kind of financial payment (DRFN 2001). This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

4.3.3 Challenges caused by geographical distances between tutors and participants

In the case of the NEEC, many tutors (QV, DC, MO, PN) and the support tutor BK experienced some difficulty with supporting participants who live great distances from them. This section discusses how the actual distance itself poses problems for tutors. For instance DC, living in a fairly isolated region and separated from her participants by approximately 350 kms, mentioned her difficulties in supporting participants through telephone calls (including faxes) and email only, especially because of the high cost of using a satellite phone. She also mentions that “I believe that some of my participants also find it frustrating that I am so far away and that I am not always in the office when they phone me” (Item 10a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). As was mentioned in Section 4.3.1.1, MO mentioned that communication between him and the participants was difficult because in most cases feedback takes time to reach them (Item 9a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3).

³ Basic Education Teaching Diploma (BETD), Namibia's College of Open Learning (Namcol); University of Namibia (Unam)

⁴ BETD inservice teacher's programme (BETD inset), BETD Pre-service Teaching programme (BETD preset)

The support tutor of MO also stated that there were communication problems between him and the distance participants. He mentions that “it has proven to be difficult to keep up a good contact using only ad hoc visits and ‘drive through’ contact sessions” (SEEN 2003i). MO further mentioned in his final questionnaire that there was a need for direct contact when it comes to support of the participant. When this is not possible, a great distance from tutor to participant creates a reliance on other forms of communication rather than direct face-to-face contact for support. Most often this is through the use of telephone for direct conversations or through faxes. However this increases costs associated with tutoring and challenges of supporting participants ‘at a distance’. This challenge will be explored in more detail in Section 4.3.4 below.

4.3.4 Challenges caused by a lack of experience/knowledge of tutoring within Distance Education courses and/or with the NEEC curriculum or environmental education in general

Data collected through this study indicates that tutors are often struggling to tutor effectively because of limited experience and/or knowledge of distance education tutoring strategies. Support tutors also indicated that they thought tutors needed to have more experience in environmental education and with the NEEC curriculum itself. With these points in mind the results associated with this theme will be outlined in more detail below.

4.3.4.1 Challenges of the lack of experience in, and/or knowledge of tutoring within Distance education situations.

In this subtheme, challenges associated with tutoring ‘at a distance’ feature prominently. Unlike the geographical challenges, this section deals more directly with the challenges of supporting participants outside contact sessions, whether separated by long distances or not.

The need for providing support to participants in between contact sessions was seen as important amongst tutors and support tutors alike. For example responses of tutors GH, MO and DC indicated that participants need more effective contact with one another, face-to-face or telephonically (Item 12 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3 and Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). DC explained that more face to face support would be helpful because it would take “less time to try to answer questions etc face to face than over the telephone”. MO mentioned that in terms of support outside of contact time “we have been relying on ‘fax’. One cannot talk to the fax machine, it has to be ‘man to man’ so to say to be more effective” (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). Several support tutors also believe that participants need strong support outside contact time. The support tutors equated the difficulty of home environments being difficult for studying (BK) or because participants did not know how to study effectively within a distance education situation (EG) (Items 2 & 3 Interview schedule 1

Appendix 1). In this last comment EG explained that he felt participants of his region could not work without a lot of face-to-face guidance. A support tutor, BK, also commented that she felt that “some participants still don’t feel responsible for their own learning process and that they expect us, the tutors, to push them” (SEEN 2003i). It was thus felt that the aim of developing autonomous learners was not being reached within the NEEC.

These examples show how support tutors and tutors believe that the participants’ struggle with learning that is ‘distanced’ from contact sessions, specifically from the direct support from tutors and support tutors. This may be because participants do not know how to learn autonomously, and in fact haven’t had a lot of practice doing so because of the behaviourist approach Namibian education has taken in the past (and which is prominent still today). In consequence some tutors and support tutors believed that participants need face-to-face contact for more effective learning. For example DC explained that face-to-face contact time is a necessity because without this, participants do not interact with course materials (SEEN 2003h). This challenge becomes more apparent when face-to-face contact time is not a possibility and leads to tutors having difficulty in effectively supporting their participants and encouraging autonomous learning. This is shown clearly through the comments of some tutors when assessing draft assignments. Both RL (Item 1 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3) and QV (Item 2 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4, SEEN 2003g) noted their difficulty in supporting participants through assignments due to lack of language skills and understanding of the task at hand. QV further explained that she had to write quite lengthy comments to the struggling participants and she felt “uncomfortable” in doing so (ibid.) Such a remark indicates that in the case of QV at least, tutors may not have skills or knowledge about the best ways for supporting learners through the use of written comments.

Additionally some support tutors and participants raised the issue of participants not being adequately or effectively supported outside national workshops and regional tutorials. This revolved mainly around the support of assignments with tutors’ comments often being unclear or limited and with assignments taking some time to be returned to the participant (Polytechnic of Namibia 2003a). This resulted in many participants falling behind in assignments and/or the participant becoming demotivated. As one support tutor (FS) commented “all assignments, more or less, have been handed in late... two of our participants are still [currently] working on assignment 1...therefore I will NOT recommend tutors to be too close to participants. It is better not to know each other personally” (Item 1 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5). In this case, problems associated with tutoring in general arose as tutors did not seem to know how to tutor colleagues and were reluctant to follow up on various tasks within the course. Such issues could also be related to the dedication tutors have or don’t have for tutoring, which has been briefly

outlined in Section 4.3.1.1. It may also have to do with the level of ‘authorisation’ tutors may feel they have in their roles, and linked with Section 4.3.2.

The results as shown above are triangulated with comments from the participants' end of year NEEC evaluations. Within these evaluations participants commented on the lack of tutor enthusiasm, as the following comments illustrate: “the tutor lost interest in this work”, “my regional tutor’s attitude was not motivating”, and “ensure that regional tutors are qualified and interested in what they should do” (Polytechnic of Namibia 2003b). It is also supported by comments of tutors themselves, for example MO says that tutors should be dedicated and show commitment (Questionnaire Schedule 2, Item 4, Appendix 4).

Thus strategies to counteract the challenges associated with supporting participants by means of appropriate strategies seem to be needed by the NEEC.

4.3.4.2 Challenges caused by lack of experience and/or knowledge in environmental education and/or with the curriculum of the NEEC course.

Although tutors did not often mention the lack of experience and/or knowledge in environmental education or the curriculum of the NEEC as being a challenge to tutoring processes, various support tutors did indicate that experience and knowledge in all of the aforementioned areas a necessity. For example one mentioned that the tutor is struggling, not because he didn’t have environmental education experience but because he hadn’t completed the NEEC (BK Item 3 Interview Schedule 1 Appendix 1). MO, one of the few tutors who mentioned difficulties within this theme explained that he had difficulty in supporting the needs of nonformal participants in his group. He believed that his participants also found it difficult to relate to the formal education sector examples he gave, however he could not think of such examples within the nonformal sector (SEEN 2003h).

AB (a support tutor) said that tutors need “some good grounding in the underlying thinking that holds the course together. Our tutors did not have that opportunity but had to learn it as they went” (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5). This is further supported by comments made by the NEEC participants (Polytechnic of Namibia 2003a), with quite a few (approximately 40%) indicating that they found their tutor to be lacking in knowledge related to topics within the NEEC course materials and/or of requirements such as the assignments related to the NEEC.

The lack of Namibian people experienced in environmental education and willing and able to tutor for the NEEC has previously been mentioned as being problematic (see Sections 1.2 and 1.3). This general lack of experienced people led to the first year of the NEEC being a tutor-

training year with the hope that suitably educated tutors could be secured from the 2002 participants, and that the course could provide tutors each year. However, as one tutor mentioned (Paulick personal communication 2004):

I did not perceive 2002's course to be a development year for tutors. If that was the case, then there should have been extra sessions for participants who were intending to tutor in 2003...My overall point is if 2002 was meant to be a professional development year for potential tutors it wasn't. Everyone was just taking the course and as you have stated the newness of EE to most was pretty apparent.

Additionally one support tutor said that potential tutors of her region “don’t get underneath [the key concepts of the course]” and that their understanding of environmental issues was “still superficial” (BK Item 5 Interview Schedule 1 Appendix 1). This region was also one where no one successfully completed the course in 2002 and therefore there were no tutors gained for 2003 from the course.

Much of what has been discussed above is backed by observations of regional tutorials. Tutors in these regions seemed to be limited in pulling ideas together during sessions and often looked uncomfortable with tutoring sessions. Discussions during sessions were also often superficial and tutors did not often elicit in-depth discussion on key ideas of the session. This was especially apparent when the more experienced support tutors did not contribute to the sessions facilitated by tutors. AB mentioned that tutors did not plan well for sessions, which led to poor delivery. He continued “this happened on top of the fact that tutors needed more rigorous planning and more thorough perusal of the course file and other text anyway in order to have that good grounding in the general set-up around the course (sic)” (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5). This remark was supported when data from Items 2a & 2b (Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3) were analysed further. For example many of the tutors’ responses were superficial and tended to confuse methods with methodologies. Most responses from tutors here indicated that tutors grappled with both naming and explaining why certain methodologies were used in their regional tutorial sessions. The impression received was that tutors did not have a clear understanding of why activities were chosen, other than to say that certain activities were suggested by the support tutor or NEEC National Course Coordinator (Response to Items 1 and 2a & b Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). The deconstruction of the NEEC regional tutorial activities therefore seemed not to be understood or properly conceptualised by the tutors. However in defence of the tutors AB said “when the tutors were well prepared, they were capable of delivering some good work...” (Item 1 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5).

Some areas of assessing assignments were also seen as problematic. The moderator stated “it is evident that tutors still need more support and guidance in assessment based on criterion ratings. There are some inconsistencies between tutors, not in the criteria they use to assess the

assignment but only in the way they grade their responses” (Botma 2003:11). In support, AB noted “the quality of marking improved over time [but] tutors did not have a proper consistent tutor development process (sic)” (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5).

Hence it is believed that challenges in this area could be rectified if proper guidelines, course procedures, training and professional development is in place before and during the NEEC course. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.

4.3.5 Challenges caused by lack of commitment from participants

Numerous tutors mentioned a lack of commitment from participants for the NEEC work as a challenge to the tutoring process. This lack of commitment from participants was reflected by such things as a lack of time for the course, other commitments and due to the understanding that completing the course will not bring an increase in salary, that is, it was not until the participants entered the course that they found out that the course would not lead to salary increment, which led to some acrimonious feelings. As the tutor RL noted “some [participants] felt [that] the course is not important to them since it will not bring any changes to their salaries” and that she observed less commitment from her participants because of this (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4).

Such issues generally led to participants having a lack of regard for the NEEC requirements. For example DC stated that she found it hard to have all her participants at her tutorials, even after reminding them of the requirements for attendance (Item 6a & b Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3 & Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). These problems of attendance were also shared within EG’s region (SEEN 2003g). QV mentioned that participants had “other commitments” (Item 10 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). Additionally RL indicated that participants didn’t hand assignments in on due dates, and she stated that “it is difficult to force working adults to submit on [the] due date”. Both RL and MO’s reasoning for participants submitting assignments late were the time constraint that participants faced (Items 9a, b & 10 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3).

However tutors generally felt that the lack of commitment was of concern to their work as a tutor. One tutor said that the “whole process lays with the commitment of the participants” [MO Item 7 Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3]. MO went on to say that participants do not understand that “what you ultimately get out of the course depends on what you put into the course” (Item 8a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3), SEEN 2003g). RL mentioned that she felt some participants do not engage (critically) with readings and core texts or develop their own assignment ideas even after obtaining support from the tutor. This she says is due to lack of

respect for the tutor and the help they are giving them (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). BK mentioned that she had two participants who did not want to work “according to our set up”. She spent a lot of time encouraging and supporting them only to have them drop out of the course without an official reason (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5). She “wondered if they had to pay cash for the course if they [would have made] an effort?” (ibid.). EG also mentioned that he had to “push and pull” his participants to do course work as they were “not disciplined enough to do what is required from them by themselves” (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5). This is supported by the support tutor BK’s statement of having to push participants into doing assignments (SEEN 2003i) and in turn both this and the previous comment are related to the inability of participants to work autonomously.

Additionally, as shown in the end-of-course evaluation (Polytechnic of Namibia 2003a) approximately 33% of participants indicated that their expectations of the course only slightly or did not at all overlap with the expected major outcomes of the NEEC whilst approximately 42% indicated that they overlapped only moderately, and 20% noted that their expectations overlapped greatly with that of the major outcomes of the NEEC⁵. This may have led to a lack of commitment from participants and will be further discussed in Section 5.2.3.

4.3.6 Challenges caused by NEEC course materials

Other concerns were about the academic level at which the course materials are pitched, and the unavailability of a set of complete course materials at the beginning of the course. Tutors pointed out how these issues affected the tutoring process. DC indicated how the lateness of receiving the course materials contributed to some problems with tutoring because when the course began, the participants and tutors only had part of the file with some temporary pages that were replaced after the first national workshop. Both she and the participants of her group had a mix of the old and new pages, which prompted her to say she “did not feel that [she] had a proper overview of what were the right pages and the wrong pages” (Item 6a Questionnaire Schedule 1 Appendix 3). Other tutors also noted the difficulty in having incomplete course materials that caused FS to suggest that the course materials should be finished before actually starting the course (Item 4 Questionnaire schedule 3 Appendix 5). This, he said, “shows that persons responsible for the course are well prepared” (Item 4 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5).

⁵ 4% of the participants responses could not be calculated as the questionnaire was not complete

DC also picked up some inconsistencies in the text and, because of her self confessed limited experience with the course content under study, was unable to fully explain these inconsistencies to her participants (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 2 Appendix 4). Such inconsistencies led to some discontent within her group. These two examples point to the need of having completed course materials in place for tutor training, and well before the course begins.

Analysis of documents also indicated that the NEEC course materials needed improvement. For example detailed guidelines for many NEEC tasks, such as developing portfolios or guides for working at a distance, were not contained in the NEEC (2003) course materials given to participants. Additionally, the 2003 course materials were not very DE friendly (Roberts & Trewby 2003).

Additionally, BK indicated her concerns over the level at which the course is pitched. (Item 4 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5 and SEEN 2003e). She felt the course was “far to [sic] sophisticated” and that the content of all modules needs to change, as it is not contextually relevant for Namibian participants. This concern over the academic pitch of the NEEC was mentioned previous to this study by SEEN TAs who commented on how difficult the course is, especially for those who have not worked in environmental education before.

The assignment tasks of the NEEC were also seen as problematic. The moderator’s report on assignment one pointed to the need to change the first NEEC assignment brief. Her reasoning was that both the participant and the tutor struggled with the scope and parts of the content of the assignment (Botma 2003: 5 & 7). In support DC mentioned that she found the assignment briefs to be confusing, expecting too much and in need of simplifying (SEEN 2003g). Surprisingly however, it was mainly the support tutors who commented on the need to further revise the assignments. EG mentioned that he found assignments generally to be “not easy to understand for participants (and for me)” with the wording being complicated (Item 2 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5). BK and FS also suggested assignment briefs be re-written (Items 1 & 4 Questionnaire Schedule 3 Appendix 5).

With the above points in mind, several areas related to the course materials themselves, management of materials, and course content were seen as problematic. Suggestions for improvement in these areas are certainly a necessity and will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.4.

4.4 POSITIVE ASPECTS OF TUTORING AND FURTHER SUPPORT IDENTIFIED BY TUTORS AND SUPPORT TUTORS

In this section, space will be given to tutors and support tutors comments on the positive aspects of tutoring as well as where they believe further support to the process is needed.

4.4.1 Positive aspects and successes of the tutoring process

A number of different aspects and areas of the tutoring process were mentioned as being successful or positive. Examples include the following comments. A support tutor and tutor (BK Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 5 & DC Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4) mentioned how regional tutorials were very good for further learning, especially as they dovetailed well with national workshops. Tutorials were also seen as times for learning with and from others (MO & QV Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4, DC Item 7, Questionnaire schedule 1, Appendix 3, & Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4,) and or employing various teaching and learning strategies (GH, RL, QV Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4). MO mentioned that he also valued the challenges tutoring brought especially when working with people at different competency levels and with the nonformal participants (as he was from the formal education sector) (Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4). Tutorials were also seen as an opportunity for tutors to professionally develop (DC, RL & QV Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4) especially without the added pressure of doing the course assignments themselves (QV & RL Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4).

Two tutors (QV Item 1 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4, & PN Item 7 Questionnaire schedule 1, Appendix 3) also noted how they found working with others, particularly their support tutor, to plan and implement tutorials advantageous to their tutoring process. DK also mentioned that she found that having broad experience in environmental education helped her tremendously in her tutoring work as she was able to relate to her participants' contexts and enable them to relate to her's (Item 7 Questionnaire schedule 1, Appendix 3). She also believed that having done the course also helped her understand her role better (*ibid.*). A support tutor also supported the value of having experienced the course itself. However he further commented that the tutors of 2003 may be able to do a much better job of tutoring because of the tutor training workshop in addition to having experienced the 2002 course (Ovlisen Personal communication 2003). He repeated this statement within research data collected (Item 1, Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 5).

4.4.2 Further support needed by tutors

As mentioned above in Section 4.4.1, and as mentioned repeatedly by many tutors, having support tutors helped tutors in their roles and responsibilities. For example QV (Questionnaire schedule 2, Item 4, Appendix 4) stated that the support tutors (SEEN project TAs) made tutoring easier through the provision of advice on assignments, and for planning and implementing sessions before and within regional tutorials. GH (Questionnaire schedule 1, Item 11, Appendix 3) indicated that he needed the support tutors so that “we can do better in our tutoring by sharing the working (sic) load”. DC says that she feels that “I as a tutor need to have a course coordinator who can provide help with logistics” (Questionnaire schedule 1, Item 6, Appendix 3). In terms of further support RL mentions that “a close working relationship between tutors and TAs’ will make things easier. That has really been useful in my case...” (Item 4 Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 4). Furthermore RL alludes to her need of more support in the NEEC when she mentions that workshops should be arranged where tutors of all RUGF courses and their adaptations meet and discuss tutoring processes, difficulties and successes (Questionnaire schedule 2, Item 4, Appendix 4). This, she says, would help in sharing ideas about how to tutor in the course. Generally tutors thought that they could fulfill the roles and responsibilities of tutoring, however they indicated their need for support tutors especially for arranging tutorial logistics (QV, PN, GH Interview Schedule 2, Item 5, Appendix 2).

A support tutor, BK, said that she believed that professional development should be an ongoing process and not just a once-off workshop (Item 4, Questionnaire schedule 2 Appendix 5). She also mentioned that specific tutor skills such as assessing assignments should be developed initially and suggested that tutors be part of the overall planning of the course (ibid).

Additionally, the lateness in receiving support from the internal moderator was mentioned by DK. She made the additional comment that face-to-face sessions, whether national workshops or regional tutorials, be monitored regularly by the external moderator (also suggested by DK, Questionnaire schedule 2, Item 4, Appendix 4) to ensure that regular support is given to tutors.

These suggestions about the success of tutoring and further support needed therefore offer some direction for the NEEC course. Such suggestions will be analysed in relation to the results in Chapter Five.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the NEEC has been reviewed and further described in terms of tutor competencies, roles, responsibilities and tutor development and their effects on the current tutoring process. It also considers the effect context has on this process. In general terms it has been found that the NEEC has evolved in a context different to that of the RUGF course especially in terms of the availability of willing, able and competent tutors, prepared to be part of the tutoring process on a voluntary basis. Additionally it is found that the influence of numerous problematic and interfering phenomena on tutoring have effected considerable influence to disrupt the process of tutoring on the part of tutors, and learning on the part of participants of the NEEC. These influential phenomena are not solely a result of the capabilities of tutors themselves but also include influence from external forces such as work constraints and from limitations of the course. Strategies for improving both the support structures themselves as well as the management of the NEEC have become clear. Therefore an analysis of how the management of the course and support structures for tutoring as well as suggestions for improving the tutoring process through better tutor support and management of the NEEC course will be discussed in Chapter Five. These will also be related to the areas where tutors felt their tutoring was successful and where they believe further support to the tutoring process is needed.