



# Supporting Tutoring Within a Namibian Environmental Education Course: Challenges and opportunities

Georgina L. Fröhlich  
Desert Research Foundation, Namibia

Cheryl le Roux  
University of South Africa, South Africa

## *Abstract*

*This paper is based on a case study of tutoring in the Namibian Environmental Education Certificate (NEEC) Course. In order to support tutoring, the National NEEC Coordinator investigated the way NEEC tutors are supported and the kinds of challenges faced in the tutoring process. The case study was framed within a naturalistic paradigm and the grounded theory approach was used to analyse data. Hence theory is built on data generated throughout the research process. Data were collected from 11 NEEC tutors/support tutors using interviews and questionnaires. Document analysis provided further data and a means of triangulation. Significant challenges to the tutoring process emerged from the data analysis. The most significant challenge was the tutors' lack of experience in, knowledge of, and enthusiasm for environmental education and distance teaching. Moreover, restrictions on time and communication (i.e. access to work sponsored telephones) caused by the working environment and a lack of adequate financial incentive emerged. Recommendations regarding the improvement of the infrastructure and management, particularly in the areas of recruitment, induction and ongoing professional development support, are made as a way of overcoming the challenges.*

## *Introduction*

The NEEC is developed, implemented and coordinated by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia as part of the Supporting Environmental Education in Namibia (SEEN) project. The course attempts to support the professional development of environmental educators. The overall aim of NEEC is to develop a community of critical, reflexive and active practitioners who work towards solving environmental problems (NEEC, 2003). The NEEC is based on the South African Rhodes University/Gold Fields Participatory Course in environmental education (hereafter abbreviated as RUGF), which has similar intentions. Because of the particular context of Namibian needs, experiences and support of the course, the National NEEC Coordinator (hereafter referred to as the coordinator) is adapting ('Namibianising') the RUGF course. During the 2003 NEEC course, the coordinator conducted research into tutor support as part of the requirements of the University of South Africa for the MEd degree with specialisation in environmental education. The coordinator specifically conducted research in the area of support of tutoring as, in terms of the NEEC, it has been identified as crucial to the

sustainability of the course in Namibia. Moreover, the research is pertinent as Namibia has limited numbers of available and appropriately experienced and qualified environmental education practitioners (Van Harmelen *et al.*, 2003). This paper focusses on the process of investigating the support of tutoring in a semi-distance and part-time context with a view to strengthening the course and contributing to its sustainability.

### *Development and Implementation of the NEEC*

The broader SEEN project was developed to help implement 'good education' as advocated by Namibian education policy and, in particular, Namibian environmental education policy. Consequently one of the main foci of this project was the professional development of environmental education practitioners. The SEEN project undertook the development of the NEEC to help Namibian environmental educators understand their practice better in relation to their own and others' theories and particularly in relation to the current national education and environmental education policies.

The NEEC is a part-time, semi-distance professional development course that runs over a year. It is accredited through a partnership between the Polytechnic of Namibia and Rhodes University (South Africa). The NEEC follows a RUGF guideline that allocates 24 credits and hence recommends 240 notional study hours for the course. Face-to-face workshop sessions comprise 144 of these hours. Unlike the RUGF, the NEEC accepts people without any environmental education experience as long as they have potential links with and wish to know more about environmental education.

The NEEC orientation, much like Namibian education policy, is based on social constructivist principles and follows a learner-centred approach that encourages learners to participate in the learning process. The course is also framed on learning as a process, which regards learning as historically and socially situated. It sees assessment as learning (rather than as a way of allocating grades or marks) and encourages critical reflection and reflexivity.

Due to the limited number of people specialised in environmental education, a number of SEEN project Technical Advisers helped to tutor the NEEC (among other SEEN activities). However, the assumption was that the course will be run independently from these technical advisors by the end of 2004.

To make the best use of project funds while at the same time trying to reach people who could make a powerful impact in educational sectors, the NEEC initially enrolled formal education sector Advisory Teachers, some Teacher Educators and NGO personnel from non-formal education sectors as participants.

### **Delivery of the NEEC**

The NEEC 2003 course contact sessions consisted of three national workshops (approximately three days each) and a minimum of three regionally based tutorials (approximately two days for each tutorial) spread over the course year. All participants attended the national workshops together. Participants could choose to attend the regional tutorial closest or most convenient to them. The format and fundamental nature of these contact sessions gave the participants

opportunity to make comments, pose questions and suggest ideas for further deliberation. Thus, opportunity for participants' ongoing professional development was accommodated.

### **Support of learners: tutor recruitment and definition of roles and responsibilities**

The NEEC participants were supported by four regional course tutors and five support tutors (see Figure 1 for an overview of the NEEC infrastructure). Course tutors consisted mainly of Advisory Teachers and Teacher Educators employed by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training and Employment Creation. There was also one course tutor from a non-governmental environmental education organisation.

The Technical Advisors selected the course tutors from the previous year's (2002) course participants. There were no formal requirements for being a course tutor other than, in the technical advisor's view, the potential course tutor's willingness to and capability of tutoring. Thus, in the NEEC, besides having previously completed the course, two course tutors had adult education experience. Two other course tutors had general teaching experience, and another had environmental education experience. One course tutor had not done the NEEC but had postgraduate environmental education qualifications and general teaching experience. No tutor had distance education teaching experience.

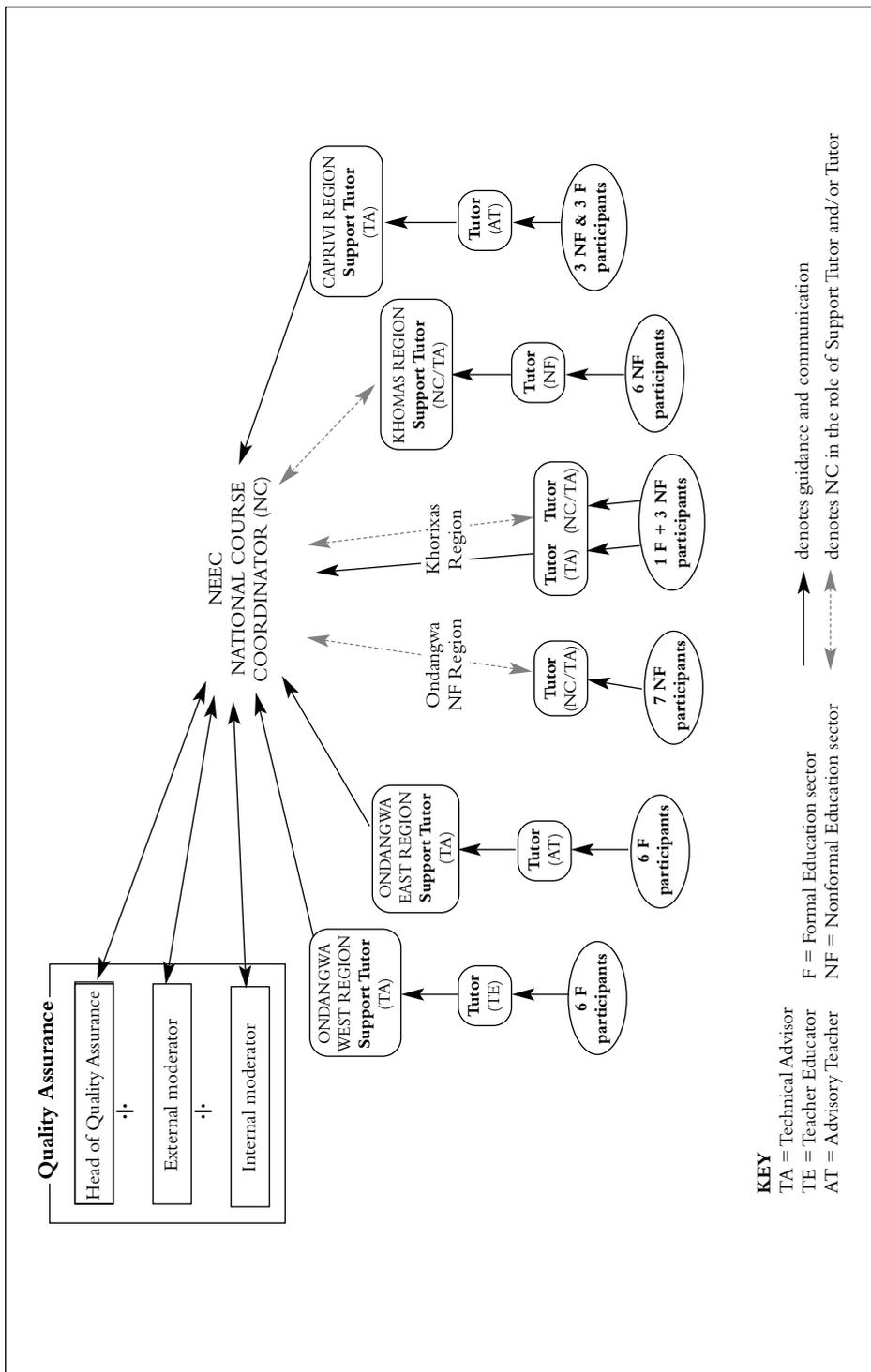
Course tutor roles and responsibilities were developed with the support tutors at a tutor development workshop held at the beginning of the course year. These roles and responsibilities (SEEN, 2003a) include being able to:

- Prepare, organise and facilitate regional tutorials.
- Provide guidance, general support and mentor participants.
- Assess assignments and portfolios.
- Provide links between stakeholders.
- Act as conflict managers.

The tutoring role was initially intended to be a 'voluntary' position. However, Teacher Educators and the non-formal education sector course tutors were paid a small honorarium (in addition to the course costs incurred by the course tutor). In contrast, to encourage institutionalisation within the MBESC, it was planned that the Advisory Teachers would tutor as part of their usual job descriptions. All course tutors were aware of the voluntary status of the tutoring position. As in the RUGF course, the incentive given to tutors was the opportunity to further their professional development. However, because course tutors' roles and responsibilities were generally not being adequately fulfilled and because course tutors stated that they wanted more appropriate 'payment', it was decided during the course to pay *all* course tutors a small fee for tutoring. This fee was higher than the honorarium given to the Teacher Educator course tutors and non-formal education course tutors.

Technical advisors also acted as 'support tutors' to the course tutors (see Figure 1). The support tutors role included the assigning and supporting of course tutoring roles and responsibilities. As such, ideally they were to provide (SEEN, 2003a):

Figure 1. The infrastructure of support within the NEEC course (as at the end of the NEEC)



(Source: Frölich, 2004:34)

- Moral support.
- Support in organising regional tutorial logistics.
- Assistance in the planning and coordination of tutorial programmes.
- ‘On-the-job training’ and a contribution to the professional development of course tutors.
- Moderation of course tutors’ comments on assignments and portfolios.
- General administration of regional tutorials, e.g. typing any minutes or documents associated with tutorials.
- Access to facilities such as the telephone and photocopier.
- General financial assistance related to regional tutorials and national workshops.
- Liaison between the course coordinator, course tutors and participants.
- General support to the course tutors when needed.

### **Support of course tutors: induction and professional development**

All course tutors and support tutors were supported by the national course coordinator (see Figure 1), who coordinated all course activities and provided guidance on the requirements and logistics of the course. The coordinator also provided information and resources pertaining to the development of regional tutorials and national workshops. Moreover, before the course commenced, the coordinator organised a two-day professional development workshop (the induction period) for all course tutors and support tutors; at this workshop a number of issues concerning the course were discussed. These included (SEEN, 2003b):

- Activities and assignment requirements related to assessment criteria.
- The what, when and how of assignments and portfolio assessments.
- Moderator and quality assurance reports.
- Requirements of the first regional tutorial.

Owing to the short duration of the workshop, the above areas were only superficially covered (Fröhlich, 2004).

### ***Supporting Tutoring in Semi-Distance and Part-Time Education Courses***

Tutoring is an important part of many courses, whether distance education or full-time study. Tutors thus provide assistance to learners and can contribute to their successful completion of a course, particularly in distance education. With tutors playing such an important role, one would expect them to be soundly supported in their roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately this does not always seem to be the case, particularly when focussing on semi-distance and part-time education contexts. In these contexts, there is not only a seeming dearth of information on supporting the tutoring process (Fröhlich, 2004), but also minimal guidance related to tutor support.

Tutors within semi-distance and part-time courses need as much support, if not more, than those who tutor face to face. This is mainly because semi-distance and part-time tutors do not often meet their course managers, supporters and fellow tutors due to large distances between them. This makes it difficult for tutors to gain advice and support when needed. They also often have other work commitments.

Tutoring can be a time-consuming activity. However, tutoring quality cannot be compromised by expecting less of those who are unable to invest the required time. Accreditation demands that a quality course be delivered and supported to uphold the accrediting institution's credibility and to satisfy the needs of the participants. Thus, tutors should be aware of their roles and responsibilities in a course and should focus firstly on how best to support learners. In turn, tutors themselves should be appropriately supported both to ensure that they can support learners adequately and to develop professionally according to the course focus and their tutoring role.

One way to view the provision of support to tutors is through appropriate management strategies. In terms of supporting the *tutoring process*, management involves the areas of recruitment, induction, tutor development, supporting learners and course review (Freeman, 1997:63).

The areas of focus in this paper are recruitment, induction, tutor development and learner support.

### The recruitment and induction of tutors

Recruitment is an important first step in supporting the tutoring process. This importance increases twofold if the course is newly developed. Getting appropriate people to tutor the course is important to secure a firm foundation for it in the institution and to ensure its sustainability.

Jenkins (1997:36) suggests that in distance education courses, tutors with subject knowledge and experience in teaching adult learners (Stage 1 and Stage 2 in Table 1 below) should be recruited.

**Table 1.** The development model: functions, skills and education needs for distance education

<b>Personnel Functions</b>	<b>Stage 1 <i>Basic Experience</i></b>	<b>Stage 2 <i>Educational application</i></b>	<b>Stage 3 <i>Distance education application</i></b>	<b>Stage 4 <i>Specialised experience</i></b>
Tutors	Subject knowledge	Teacher training and adult education	Teaching at a distance	Discipline-related teaching techniques

tutors

(Source: Adapted from Jenkins, 1997:36)

**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.

Recruiting agents should also be aware of the competencies tutors require to fulfil their tutoring roles and responsibilities effectively. Furthermore, O'Donoghue (pers. comm., 2003) mentions that a potential tutor should be enthusiastic about their role and the course subject, in this case, environmental education.

Consequently the tutor has an important role to play and should be knowledgeable not only in environmental education and teaching adult learners, but also about teaching at a distance and the teaching/learning orientation endorsed by the course (Jenkins, 1997). This is supported by Raven (2003:25), who states that the RUGF tutors' 'background and insight into the course orientation, aims and course process appear to shape the support given to participants' and they therefore 'play a significant role in shaping course processes that support professional development'. This may be either advantageous to the course if the tutor and the course's understandings of the orientation are similar, or may cause problems should they differ. Problems may thus arise with tutoring as 'behind any teaching technique is a tutor's assumption about the purpose and nature of teaching and learning' (Rhys & Lambert, 1983:66).

Due to differences in context, not all courses may be able to recruit tutors with extensive experience in adult education, teaching at a distance or the specifics of the course. Therefore, it is suggested that such tutors undergo development within stages 2, 3 and 4 of Table 1, involving development in teacher training and adult education; teaching at a distance and discipline-related teaching techniques (Jenkins, 1997). These areas may be covered during an induction period. Moreover, during the induction period, time should be allowed for recruited tutors to deliberate on their own views of teaching and learning and how they compare with those endorsed by the course. In addition, tutors could be introduced to or extended within the course specifics which include:

- 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 needed.
- The tutor system, e.g. how to contact learners, how to process learners' work, general support of learners.
- Specific procedures of the institution such as breach of course agreements, procedures for using telephones/fax machines (adapted from Freeman, 1997:63).
- Interpersonal skills (Sturrock, 1997:273).

Such specifics of development would, however, depend on the needs of the tutors themselves, the course requirements and the participants. This is discussed in the following sections.

### **Management of tutor development**

Once recruited, it is suggested that the professional development of tutors follow a sequence as outlined in Table 1 (Jenkins, 1997). The professional development of tutors is seen as necessary both to support participants appropriately and to offer tutors the opportunity to develop professionally within the tutoring process itself.

Specifically in terms of the RUGF, tutors are seen as the key supporters of the course with its success often resting on the tutors' shoulders (Janse van Rensburg & Le Roux, 1998; Raven, 2003). This is because tutors 'play an important role in encouraging and supporting the professional development of participants' (Raven, 2003:25). Tutors therefore should be supported accordingly. By doing so, Jenkins (1997:34) sees this support as 'produc[ing] and foster[ing] commitment as tutors' enthusiasm grows as they understand what they do and why'. Again this development may be problematic because semi-distance and part-time tutors may be widely placed and often have work commitments other than tutoring. Hence, it would seem important to explore ways of providing for this development in ways that maximise tutors' desire to participate in their own professional development.

### **Supporting learners**

Adult learners are often expected to take responsibility for their own learning. However, this does not imply that the tutor's role is downplayed or insignificant in this learning process. On the contrary, tutors should play the much more important role of mediating the learning process. Mediation '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, pers. comm., 2003). This is similar to scaffolding learning based on the social construction of meaning (Vygotskian theory). This theory posits 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, 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).

To tutor within this model therefore necessitates high quality tutor development to ensure that tutors not only understand the concept of mediation but also how best to mediate learning. In this way tutors can again model such processes with their learners, encouraging them to learn in the field of environmental education, while also learning *how* to learn.

This theoretical framework creates a basis upon which to design a process to support tutoring. By using the NEEC as a case study, the challenges of supporting tutoring and opportunities for improvement were further explored.

### ***Research Design and Methodology***

The post-positivist case study methodology was situated within an interpretive orientation. It used grounded theory as a framework for interpreting the emergent data. In this way the research data and the conclusions were not pre-empted and challenges to tutoring were allowed to emerge naturally without any interference or coercion from the researcher.

The original six course tutors and their support tutors (five in total) were involved in the research. Interviews (two focus group and one individual) and three questionnaires were used to collect data. All questions, both in interviews and questionnaires, were open-ended. All course

tutors were part of a focus group interview conducted at the beginning of a course. The course tutor focus group interview schedule posed questions mainly related to how they were supported and the challenges experienced. It also asked what further support for tutoring was needed, how well the course could run without support tutors and what alternative models could be suggested for tutoring. Two questionnaires, one at the beginning and one at the end of the course, were completed by all course tutors. The first course tutor questionnaire asked course tutors how they prepared for the regional tutorials and national workshops, what roles and methodologies they used, how participants participated and what challenges and positive experiences were encountered in these contact sessions. It also asked what further support could be offered to tutoring.

The second course tutor questionnaire asked for the positive experiences and challenges experienced with tutoring. It also asked tutors if they would be willing to tutor again, reasons for their answers and their advice for promoting successful tutoring in future courses. Support teachers were interviewed once (either in a focus group or a personal interview) at the beginning of the course, with the exception of one who was not available at the time. The support tutor interview schedule was similar to the course tutors', with the exception that it asked how they supported course tutors. Support tutors also all completed an end-of-course questionnaire. The support tutors' questionnaire was similar to the course tutors'. However, it asked them to describe who would be excellent tutors for future courses and why.

All course tutors completed the initial questionnaire. However, two course tutors did not participate in the research after the first questionnaire as, by that time, they had dropped out of tutoring due to other commitments.

Observation of regional tutorials also formed part of the research data. Observation periods were conducted two or three times. These observations focused on tutoring processes. A number of documents associated with the course and the SEEN project were studied and relevant data incorporated into the research. Such data was also used for triangulation purposes.

Data analysis was guided by Tilbury and Walford's (1996:55) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim's (1999:139) grounded theorising. The aim of the analysis was to find common, recurring categories (core categories or variables) in the data to enable the researcher to focus closely on those categories. Tilbury and Walford (1996:57) describe a core category as one that reoccurs frequently in the data, links data together and explains much of the variation. In doing so the data (observation and interviews) were recorded on data sheets and coded broadly. Challenges mentioned by course tutors and support tutors were coded and similar responses placed into subthemes. Subthemes were then collated into categories and themes were developed that described the subthemes. Each subtheme was investigated as part of the theme, and from this an analysis was made of the theme.

### *Research Findings and Discussion*

After careful analysis, several subthemes emerged from the data. The subthemes of special interest for this paper<sup>1</sup> include:

- The course tutors lack of time to focus on their tutoring roles and responsibilities.

- Adequate financial incentive commensurate with the time invested which caused unhappiness.
- Access to work and SEEN project sponsored telephones.
- Experience and/or knowledge with environmental education, distance education teaching/learning strategies and/or with the NEEC in general.

These subthemes in turn mainly relate to the need for better management and infrastructure within the NEEC. Thus, the theme of appropriate management of tutor support systems was developed. This theme is discussed in more detail by unpacking the subthemes from which it arises.

### **Lack of time to focus on tutoring roles and responsibilities**

Most course tutors (three of the four) mentioned the limitations time placed on fulfilling their tutoring roles and responsibilities. The lack of time for tutoring is attributed to their full workloads and other work responsibilities, with certain work activities receiving higher prioritisation than the NEEC. Moreover, regular work responsibilities which take the course tutors away from their offices resulted in less time available to work on the NEEC tasks. In addition, a lack of understanding or support from several of the MBESC's Regional Directors or immediate supervisors contributed to tutoring difficulties.

However, a lack of time may not have been the sole root cause for not satisfactorily fulfilling roles and responsibilities. This is discussed in more detail below.

### **Inadequate financial incentive commensurate with the time invested**

Although the course tutors initially agreed to tutor voluntarily, responses from the majority (three of the four) of course tutors showed that they were unhappy to do so. For example, comments emerging from the data often cited requests for payment for tutoring services. Even when a small payment was introduced, these course tutors found it difficult to find time to tutor and this reflected in their inability to fulfil all roles and responsibilities. It is surmised that the large amount of time and energy needed to carry out the tutoring roles and responsibilities (i.e. 18 face to face days plus a minimum of six days for course assessment) were possibly too much to expect from voluntary course tutors. These challenges were seemingly not an issue in the RUGF course in South Africa where there is usually no problem in finding appropriate people to tutor voluntarily (Fröhlich, 2004). In the latter there may be competition for the tutoring roles and thus the successful tutors presumably find the further professional development and the opportunity for networking within environmental education circles sufficient reward.

This reluctance may be partly attributed to the course tutors' enthusiasm for environmental education. O'Donoghue (pers. comm., 2003) comments that enthusiasm for environmental education is often shown by RUGF tutors who are working for environmental organisations. In the NEEC, only one course tutor had environmental education experience (in the context of her day-to-day working environment) and, in this case, this proved to confirm O'Donoghue's view. Other course tutors were not deeply involved with environmental education and these were the ones who wanted more payment for tutoring. Thus, the lesson learned is: when recruiting course tutors, it may seem appropriate to identify tutors who have some experience

in environmental education and/or that they are enthusiastic about tutoring and wish to learn more about environmental education, particularly in a professional development capacity.

#### **Lack of access to work and SEEN project sponsored telephones**

Three formal education course tutors often found difficulty in accessing work or project sponsored telephones. As a result, the course tutors found it difficult to contact participants. Moreover, all course participants commented that participants found it hard to contact them. This problem may have arisen because course tutors were often away from their workplace and hence could not access a phone or be contacted telephonically with ease. No formal arrangements for use of phones outside the workplace in the form of NEEC sponsored calls were arranged for the formal education course tutors. This may have led to the course tutors' reluctance to use their personal phones because of costs incurred. It is therefore necessary to establish and communicate to all course tutors formal agreements regarding the use of telephones and other similar infrastructural arrangements.

Participants should also be able to contact their course tutor readily. Course tutors should supply their work, home and cell numbers to participants and encourage participants to contact them when necessary. This will enable participants to find support whenever needed and avert the impression of learning in isolation, which could prompt some participants to drop out of distance education courses.

#### **Lack of experience and/or knowledge with environmental education and distance education teaching/learning strategies**

Overall, data suggested that three of the four course tutors were struggling with tutoring the NEEC. It is recognised that the NEEC did not have an adequate induction period and was weak in its provision of ongoing professional development (support 'on-the-job'). The outcome may have contributed to course tutors' inability to fulfil roles and responsibilities. This is especially noticeable in terms of comments made regarding assessment within the NEEC, where most course tutors indicated their need for more professional development. This was backed by observations during regional tutorials and the internal moderator's report. This report outlines the need to develop more consistency between course tutors' assessment and a general need for professional development within assessment procedures (Botma, 2003). In addition, course tutors may have been more capable of mediating learning if they had been given specific developmental workshops focussing on these skills (as outlined in Figure 1, see also Jenkins, 1997). However, time to dedicate to professional development within the tutoring process was often a problem exacerbated by general limitations of time as highlighted by course tutors. The limited enthusiasm to tutor voluntarily and the request for payment may have further compounded this problem.

As the NEEC enrolled participants with no / little environmental education experience, this could have made the course very challenging for the participants. Consequently, although course tutors had completed the course, they may not have had the broad understanding of

environmental education needed to support participants in a tutoring role appropriately. For example (Fröhlich, 2004: 106):

... [i]n particular, it transpired that many tutors had difficulty in mediating critical thinking, reflexivity, in producing autonomous learners and in particular grappled with the theory-practice gap. In consequence, tutors should have adequate understanding of the [NEEC] orientation and content, be critical thinkers and able to model reflexivity. Without these basic competencies there may be risk of such competencies not being sufficiently developed by participants.

Additionally, course tutors need to have the understanding and skills necessary to promote participation and in-depth critical engagement with the texts and discussions. They need to challenge their own and others' ideas and practice and promote participatory and process learning. Such skills will help participants develop as independent, critical and reflective practitioners. These skills relate to mediating learning and course tutors should not only recognise their role in the learning process, but should also be able to share these skills with others. Such learning processes should be developed through discussion during an adequate induction period and be related to the orientation of the NEEC. The necessity of these learning processes should be overtly allied to how the NEEC is structured to achieve the intended learning outcomes. By doing so the 'good education' that the course tutors need to model would begin to be clarified (Fröhlich, 2004:108).

As a result there is a real need to ensure that appropriately experienced and qualified people are *employed* and adequately remunerated by the NEEC (Fröhlich, 2004). Inexperienced and under-qualified course tutors struggle to find the time to tutor and have difficulty in mediating learning within a semi-distance professional development course. Experience and qualifications in environmental education, adult education and distance education teaching/learning strategies, are all seen as necessary to fulfil the tutoring role (Jenkins, 1997; Fröhlich, 2004). Consequently, it is recommended that the recruitment process should follow the guidelines mentioned by Jenkins (1997) in Table 1. Once the appropriate people have been found, they can be formally contracted to fulfil roles and responsibilities.

Ideally, payment for tutoring should be market related. However, to conserve payments and to allow the development of a sufficient number of course tutors in Namibia, it is suggested that experienced and suitably qualified course 'convenors' be employed to convene, present and tutor participants. Several 'tutor understudies' (tutors in training) could be employed to support the course convenors with their roles and responsibilities. The course convenors could also mentor these tutors in training with the aim of further supporting tutor professional development. However, the mentoring of the tutor should overtly mediate their learning. In this way it is hoped that the enthusiasm of tutors in training 'grows as [tutors] understand what they do and why' (Jenkins, cited in Fröhlich, 2004:108). Tutors in training could thus aim to become course convenors (hence providing a career path) and in this way ensure course sustainability. Consequently, tutors with fewer qualifications and less experience than the convenor could be employed and less financial incentive given. The attraction of professional

development and networking opportunities as well as a career path could thus be used as an incentive to tutor.

### *Concluding Comments*

The research into supporting tutoring provided insight into how course tutors experienced the tutoring process and the challenges they faced when trying to fulfil tutoring roles and responsibilities. In terms of the course tutor support system, these challenges were seen to be an interrelated web of problems ranging from a lack of proper recruitment, induction and further professional development through to workplace-based issues. It was suggested that if appropriately experienced, qualified and enthused course tutors could be recruited and contracted to fulfil roles and responsibilities, and if they were appropriately paid for their tutoring services, challenges currently experienced may be reduced. Moreover, the NEEC should be restructured so that appropriate course convenors/mentors should be employed to convene, present and tutor participants. The course convenors in turn could provide the support to tutor understudies in the form of a mentorship role. These changes in infrastructure may thus help to provide a more solid framework from which to build the NEEC and its provisioning model.

### *Notes on the Contributors*

Georgina Fröhlich is an Environmental Education Project Manager and Technical Adviser to the Supporting Environmental Education project in Namibia. This project forms part of the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia. Georgina is an Australian who, since coming to Namibia, has been involved with the Namibian Enviroteach project, has served as chairperson of the Namibian Environmental Education Network and is a member of the SADC Course Developers Network. She is interested in environmental education research, particularly in the areas of supporting adult learners and tutors. Email: georgief@drfn.org.na.

Cheryl le Roux is Associate Professor and lecturer in Environmental Education and Science Education in the School of Education at the University of South Africa. She teaches at both undergraduate and postgraduate level in a distance education environment. Her main interests include research in environmental education teaching and learning contexts and INSET training. Email: lrouxcs@unisa.ac.za.

### *Endnote*

1 See Fröhlich (2004) for a full analysis of the six themes relating to challenges to tutoring.

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