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**Continuity and Dissonance:
Institutional Relations of a South African NGO**

**A Doctoral Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa**

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January 2002



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Abstract

This thesis is a case study investigation of the institutional relations of a South African educational NGO. The literature on NGOs indicates that as institutions they can be problematic. They face three key issues, accountability, partnership and empowerment, which provide them with both institutional coherence as well as institutional contradiction. Most of the existing analysis of NGOs is descriptive and little of it attempts to place an analysis of these key issues within a larger institutional environment. This thesis attempts to do so using the framework of institutional theory. Institutional theory, as articulated by Scott and others, is used to analyze an NGO in order to understand them both from an internal perspective (based on the social constructions of the institutional participants) and an external perspective (based on the environment in which the NGO was situated). According to this theory, institutions are comprised of three inter-penetrated dimensions, the regulative, normative, and cognitive. The analysis of these dimensions was accomplished using the concepts of *continuity* and *dissonance*.

The findings of the study are that while there was relatively high continuity in this institution, related to a large extent to a project of social transformation in South Africa, there was also significant dissonance. The NGO faced contested accountability, tensions around partnership, and contradictions in terms of empowerment. The implications of these conclusions for South African education and NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa are explored as are the contributions of the study to institutional theory.

Dedication

**This thesis is dedicated to my father, Ronald Sauder,
without whose love and support
in so many ways
this project could never have been realized.**

Thank you Dad.

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Glossary

ANC	African National Congress
COSATU	Council of South African Trade Unions
DFID	Department for International Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDO	Education Department Officer
ECNGOC	Eastern Cape NGO Coalition
ECSECC	Eastern Cape Social Economic Consultative Council
EXCO	Executive Committee (at NIPA)
GEAR	Growth, Employment, and Redistribution
IT	Information Technology
JAC	Joint Advisory Committee (at NIPA)
MEC	Member of Executive Council (a provincial cabinet post)
NDA	National Development Agency (Act)
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NIPA	(the pseudonym chosen for the NGO case study)
NPO	Non-Profit Organizations (Act)
NPP	National Pilot Program
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
QSP	Quality Schools Program
PRA	Participatory Rural; Appraisal
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Program
SABAP	South Africa Book Project
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADTU	South Africa Democratic Teachers Union
SANGOCO	South African NGO Coalition
SDC	Swiss Development Commission
SGB	School Governing Body
TQM	Total Quality Management
USAID	United States Aid for International Development

Chapter One:
Continuity and Dissonance:
Institutional Relations of a South African NGO:
Introduction to the Problem

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a straightforward introduction to an institutional case study analysis. The analysis contains some complex conceptual elements, and it was deemed better to lay them out in simple terms without the added complication of multiple references to the literature. A few references have been included here to guide the discussion, but for the most part the formal literature review is presented in the next chapter.

The persistent political, social, and economic turbulence of sub-Saharan Africa is a matter of serious concern. Economic disparities and social upheaval have become commonplace despite several decades of efforts to address these problems. There is perhaps no area where this is more true than education. With its promise of individual growth and societal expansion, education has been the recipient of much attention from donors and states. There have been many acknowledgments over the years, such as the Jomtien and Dakar declarations, that education is a vital aspect of social development. In a shift from the early years of massive bilateral aid, much of the funding and attention in education has moved to the use of non-government organizations (NGOs) to promote its ends.

NGOs have become prominent because of their reputation as specialized service delivery organizations which can counter-balance fragile states and remain accountable to local constituencies. NGOs must themselves confront many of the issues which plague sub-Saharan Africa such as a lack of accountability, fragile civil society partnerships, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. These issues often place NGOs in difficult and contradictory situations as they attempt to be accountable to diverse interests, to partner with disparate actors, and to empower groups in a volatile environment.

Although there is substantial descriptive literature on NGOs, there is a need for case studies that examine how NGOs actually cope with the demands which derive from these issues. In particular, there is need for a dynamic portrait of NGOs which illuminates the wider pressures bearing on them and which consider the influence of local social, political, and cultural factors. One theoretical framework, *institutional theory*, has the potential for such an investigation. It posits three interpenetrated dimensions of an institution, the *regulative*, the *normative*, and the *cognitive* (Scott, 1994, 1995). These dimensions can be examined to learn how NGOs manifest consistent ideals and actions (continuity) or tensions and contradictions (dissonance). This is of special interest for educational NGOs within the agitated context of South Africa as the state struggles to undo the manifold legacies of apartheid.

Institutional theory to date has been used primarily to investigate private and public sector institutions in Northern countries. The present study focuses on the case of an NGO in the mainstream of South African education and seeks to analyze the levels of continuity and

dissonance in its institutional relations. The issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment are examined as themes which may indicate institutional continuity and dissonance. The implications of this continuity and dissonance for NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa are also considered. The study is centred on four research questions:

1. What are the essential characteristics that define the regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions of an educational NGO in South Africa?
2. To what extent are these characteristics continuous across and within these three dimensions?
3. To what extent are these characteristics dissonant across and within these three dimensions?
4. What are the implications of these institutional relations of an educational NGO for educational policy and practice in South Africa?

NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa: Three Critical Issues

The proliferation of NGOs is well documented. In many areas, from agriculture and health to education, NGOs have become significant institutional actors. Although NGOs have existed for several decades, their growing prominence in the past twenty years reveals a shift away from large government-to-government aid and notions of 'scientific' macro management. It has become clear that specialized organizations which have limited association with state governments and large international institutions, may possess significant connections at the local level which are instrumental to social reform. Many NGOs have impressive histories as independent or alternative institutions which have been crucial in nurturing civil society and providing alternatives to ineffective, or at times, oppressive states (Ndeqwa, 1996). NGOs have been associated with the expansion of democratic ideals and the enfranchisement of marginalized groups. NGOs are now widely recognized as important stakeholders by state governments, donors, international organizations, and local communities. Development programs routinely include NGOs for consultation and project implementation. The NGO sector, both in Western countries and overseas, can often be described as crowded and at times competitive. Large bilateral donor institutions such as CIDA, DFID, and USAID maintain specific policies regarding NGOs and have whole departments devoted to dealing with NGOs.

The prominence of NGOs is indicative of new perspectives on the persistence of inequities in the less developed states, and implies a critique of previous development efforts. The early days of independence for many sub-Saharan states were marked by what is now viewed as a naive faith

in macro-level management and bilateral aid transfers. These approaches have been critiqued for, among other things, co-optation by elites, exacerbation of dependency, and exclusion of key stakeholders, the local recipients. Attempts to assist the most marginalized and impoverished groups which do not attend to their expressed needs and reflect an understanding of their cultural orientation have been shown to be inherently difficult.

Parallel to the emergence of institutions which could demonstrate good connections with local people, was the development of techniques for surveying and incorporating local concerns. These have furthered our understanding of how local conditions impact on development efforts. The new interest in NGOs reflects this concern with the expansion of civil society by enhancing local social, economic, and political capacities (Hyden, 1996). NGOs are also thought to be exemplars of democratic values in the way they are managed and the way they interact with others (Chambers, 1995). Ideals of accountability, participation and empowerment therefore figure largely in this perspective, and NGOs are widely perceived to be striving towards these ideals.

NGOs and Accountability

Accountability is a central issue for NGOs. The term¹ is itself is variously defined and highly contested which is an indication of its inherent difficulties. NGOs are accountable to the recipients of their work, but donors, states, and other actors can impose multiple forms of accountability. These can range from fiscal, social or moral, professional, and political accountability. There are many questions about how accountability is measured, reported, and understood by the participants within an NGO and those outside of it (Edwards & Hulme, 1995). Considerable attention has been devoted to designing NGO governance structures and codes of ethical conduct. A working definition of accountability would include: being transparent in the administration of funds, maintaining appropriate and consultative oversight, and establishing clear links between plans and actions (Wallace, 1997). It should be noted that many NGO participants place different emphases in such a definition.

The issue of accountability to donors is a central interest. Donors, quite understandably, want control over how the funds they provide are spent, and NGOs have a professional obligation to account for the money (Charlton & May, 1995). Donors often express a preference for business and marketplace models for institutions, and typically require quantifiable results and

¹The terms accountability, participation, and empowerment must be understood within the varying perspectives of the participants of the NGO. It is within these varying and potentially conflicting definitions that crucial aspects of the institution can be better understood. Hence, a primary interest of the study is to gain an understanding of how the contestation of these terms impacts on the institutional dynamics of an NGO. See the methodology chapter for further discussion of how these terms are used and the findings chapter on cognitive dimensions for details on how the participants understood them.

Western management and administrative practices. Donors can be ignorant of the true needs of local recipients and may favour approaches which may not be useful in reducing poverty (Biggs & Neame, 1995). There are studies which indicate that donors can ignore or inappropriately dominate local governments to the detriment of development needs. However, NGOs usually must compete for donor funding and they often have little choice but to accept the conditions laid upon them regardless of whether it is appropriate to the goals of development. NGOs can be obliged to present institutional profiles which appeal more to donors than to their recipients (Karim, 1995).

These dynamics reveal a paradox for NGOs and donors: NGOs are typically selected because they can demonstrate competence and local connections. However, if NGOs adhere to donor requirements which may erode legitimacy with local people, NGOs may face a crisis of credibility. NGOs also face accountability questions with regard to the state which may exert overt regulatory control over them (Bratton, 1995). The state is typically the main policy maker in education and thereby may set out the parameters for NGO activity in this area. It may be contradictory that NGOs are both accountable to the state but also are alternative institutions to the state.

NGOs and Partnership

Like accountability, partnership is a contested term and has a variety of meanings. In general terms, partnership in NGOs is predicated on modes of activity which emphasize alliances, collectives, consultation, and non-hierarchical approaches. An important feature in the partnership is a balance in power relations. It is argued that great disparities in power and control ultimately doom efforts to encourage local people to find solutions to their problems.

The connection between NGOs and their recipients is crucial to the sustainability of the work of NGOs. It has been suggested that NGOs, often with donor agendas, are much less well connected to local communities than might be expected (Leach, 1994; Brock-Utne, 1996). To possess legitimacy and to have an authentic understanding of what is happening at the local level is not easy to do (Dei, 1995). There are multiple layers in the local culture and politics, and complex ways of interacting with outside parties. Many NGOs have attempted to introduce participatory modes of interaction with recipients and incorporate democratic values into their management practices (Lalaye, 1996). Many questions have arisen about how and when to be collaborative. The dependency of locals on NGOs is an ongoing issue, and there are questions about how to manage the power which seems inherent in the control of resources and jobs. There appear to be no universal recipes for replicating projects which are going to have a long-term effect on development. In many cases, a patron – client relationship evolves which again raises

questions about sustainability. If NGOs are simply providing services to clients whose main currencies to pay for the services are their extreme needs and their willingness to accept NGO programs, there seems to be little evidence that fundamental changes will continue after the service contract is finished.

Donors frequently require that NGOs include the state as a partner in their programs, and also that they work in consortia with other NGOs. This complicates the relationship with locals and may give rise to difficulties in the management of the partnership. It also tends to favour those NGOs which have management capacities regardless of their connections to the recipients, and may promote a contractualized patron-client approach. There are partnerships of all kinds which include NGOs, but issues remain about vested interests and economic viability (Fowler & Biekert, 1996; Gary, 1996). NGOs are often intrinsically competitive in a business sense rather than collaborative. NGOs may also find themselves in competition with the state for legitimacy with the recipients. NGOs by their very nature are non-statal, but are often regulated by the state and usually work in parallel or in partnership with the state. This is particularly true with education, where NGOs often operate as the implementing agencies for donor contributions to state education efforts. If NGOs are to be partnered with the state, but the state is discredited, weak, or perceived to be unaccountable, then the partnership may be untenable in the long term.

NGOs and Empowerment

Empowerment, another highly contested term, is often associated with NGOs, particularly those which support education. Education is understood not just as a primary route for social mobility, but as a foundation for the growth of civil society. Empowerment through education then, is not just the acquisition of marketable skills and knowledge, but also includes the development of critical values, knowledge, and attitudes which would enhance participation in civil society (Garilao, 1987). NGOs emphasize this personal growth within the context of a shift in power relations in order to give voice to previously marginalized groups. But since empowerment in many cases requires the provision of opportunity in political or economic terms, the training and educational programming of NGOs may be fruitless. Questions arise about the role of NGO in promoting education when no substantial opportunities exist, and whether NGOs should also be advocates for political and social reform.

NGOs often take the role of critics of the state and as advocates for marginalized groups. In some cases NGOs have been an important element of political opposition in civil societies which are restricted by states. There are instances where the inadequacy of state support for education or the fragility of a state's civil authority is so high that NGOs may begin to act in a role of surrogate state (Jenkins, 1994). As states lose legitimacy so can NGOs gain it, and thus

heighten the tension between NGOs and the state. In a context like that of South Africa, NGOs have had a long history of resistance to an oppressive state (Ndegwa, 1996). In the post apartheid era, those political and social roots persist. Although there has been a positive relationship between NGOs and the South African state, there are recent indications that NGOs are becoming critical of the state. There is evidence that the political expectations of the public far exceed the resources and political capabilities of the state to meet them. Ironically, these expectations have often been raised by the state for its own political purposes, and were echoed in the early days by civil society advocates such as educational NGOs. If an NGO and the state are to be partners in the provision of education, but the state is perceived as weak or irresponsible, there are questions about how empowering NGOs can be.

Global economic trends, such as neo-liberal trade policies, have relevance to the issue of empowerment and NGOs (Marcussen, 1996). Globalization may have reduced the economic and political influence of many groups which NGOs support. It is also argued that NGOs themselves can be co-opted into becoming business entities, and that their surrogacy for state institutions reduces the responsibility of the state for social programs. If NGOs lose their commitment to social reform or are co-opted by larger interests of Northern donors, then it is doubtful that empowerment can happen on a wide scale. It is sometimes argued that NGOs often perpetuate the political and economic dominance of the West over the developing world. On the other hand, it can be asserted that NGOs are not purely pawns of a neo-liberal agenda, but are simply 'anti-hegemonic' or, at least have a multiplicity of roles (Maclure, 2000).

In sum, NGOs remain institutions with a high potential for contradictory and internal tensions. They experience multiple accountabilities and are pulled in many directions at the same time by donors, the state, the recipients, and their own internal goals and visions. It remains an open question to whom they are, and should be, accountable, and in what form. There is ongoing pressure for NGOs to be run with the business form of accountability, particularly from donors. Despite their reputation for ties to local people, these connections are not easy to establish or maintain. While partnership and collaboration are important ideals for NGOs, the complexities of partnerships can make development efforts difficult to sustain. The state - NGO relationship, for example, although sometimes a partnership, can often be adversarial and contradictory. The impact of efforts at empowerment by NGOs may be hamstrung by internal contradictions and external obstacles.

The continuing popularity of NGOs, coupled with the significance of NGOs for healthy civil societies, indicates that they continue to thrive as institutions. However, that does not mean they are well understood. The literature on NGOs is generally descriptive. There are few portraits of NGOs which attempt to probe deeper into their internal characteristics in relation to the external dynamics of their environment. An examination of the level of consistency in ideals and

actions, as well as the tensions and contradictions within an NGO, may answer questions about how a particular environment affects and interacts with an NGO. An analysis of how the culture and meanings held by the participants within an NGO affect its institutional relations can also render insights into this potentially problematic institutional form. Such a study of an NGO is presented here in the hope that a full and multi-dimensional account will greatly enhance our understanding how NGOs cope with these critical issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment.

Institutional Analysis of NGOs

Institutional Theory

It has been demonstrated that powerful forces in the environment of NGOs have an effect on them. It is also known that elements of culture and meaning for the participants of NGOs (the staff and recipients) also are significant to their institutions. This necessitates the use of a theoretical framework for studying institutions which can accommodate these realities. Institutional theory offers such a possibility.

The history of studying institutions, which stretches back to Rousseau and Weber, has until recently viewed institutions as functional structures through which rational actors played out social roles and worked toward specific social ends. Such rational analyses of institutions however, did not adequately address the role of cognition and non-rational, culturally based interactions between individuals and institutions. It is clear that the assumptions and meanings individuals bring to bear on their participation in institutions can have an important effect on how they and the institution interact. These cognitive aspects of institutions constitute a vital element of what the institution is about. Recent developments in the study of institutions have recognized this concern, and have been elaborated by various institutional theorists. Building on the work of such scholars as DiMaggio, Powell, and Meyer, institutional theory² has been elucidated most fully by Richard Scott. (See Scott, 1995; Scott & Christenson, 1995, Nee & Brinton, 1998).

Scott's model of institutions posits three dimensions, each one distinct but interpenetrated with the others. These dimensions are a way of describing an institution which acknowledges an institution's wider environment as well as its localized cognitive features. The first dimension is

² Some of the names given to institutional theory can be confusing. The work of Scott builds on DiMaggio and others who termed it *neo-institutional theory*. It has also been called the *new institutionalism*. Hall and Taylor (1997) call it *sociological institutionalism*. For the purposes of this study institutional theory will be understood primarily in the way Scott uses it. Namely, it is a view of institutions which includes not just rules and norms, but broadly considers the role of informal systems of meaning and culture which guide an institution. (See Hall and Taylor 1997 p. 947).

the *regulative* one. Here, the institution is viewed in the light of the rules, laws, and regulations which control it and regulate it in a coercive manner. Institutions must conform to these controls for reasons of expedience and survival. The second dimension, the *normative*, is concerned with the practices, roles, and perceived obligations which channel the activities of the institution. The normative is seen as distinct from the regulative because its mechanisms of control are related to appropriateness rather than coercion. The third dimension of institutions is the *cognitive*. The points of interest in this dimension are the perceived meanings and assumptions which act as a cognitive filter for the participants of the institution about what the institution is doing. The primary criterion is conceptual correctness rather than social obligation or expedience.

Continuity and Dissonance

In light of the difficult issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment, the institutional relations of NGOs can be described along a continuum of continuity and dissonance. If there are contradictions, antagonisms, or conflicts among what is required of an institution, what is normal practice at an institution, or what is perceived to be the meaning of an institutions to its participants, this can be labeled a *dissonance*. This term is appropriate because it incorporates the notion of an auditory and holistic perception similar to an individual's actual experience of a discordant social reality. The opposite might be harmony perhaps, but harmony connotes notions of positive artistry which do not really match the moral and political struggles usually associated with NGOs. Dissonance is here defined as inconsistency or contradiction of thoughts and actions across and within the dimensions of an institution in relation to specific themes which characterize the institution's activities. *Continuity*, on the other hand, is evocative of the integration and connectedness seen in effective and well functioning institutions. Continuity is here defined as consistency and alignment of thoughts and actions across and within the dimensions of an institution in relation to specific themes which characterize the institution's activities.

For the purpose of illustration, the following hypothetical situations of continuity and dissonance are provided using the terms of institutional theory.

In an institution which displayed a high level of continuity, there would be a wide consensus among the participants about what the institution was supposed to be doing and what its activities signified. The daily practices and rituals at the institution would reflect the spirit of this consensus, and there would be high legitimacy ascribed to particular roles at the institution. Finally, these cognitive and normative dimensions would be positively aligned with the regulative forces that framed the operations of the institution. The rules would be clear, and clearly followed. In such a case it would be likely that there would be widespread acceptance and even

support for the institution in the larger society. Such institutions would reflect a culturally based consensus about purposes of the institution, a consensus which would extend into its wider society and would likely involve important actors like the state.

At the other end of the scale would be institutions which displayed some dissonances among or within their dimensions. The meanings and values which would underpin their cognitive dimensions would be the site of contested interpretations. The roles and practices of the institution might be contradictory to either the conceptually correct perspective of the participants, or the regulative requirements which impinge upon the institution, or both. Finally, such institutions might be at odds with the coercive demands of their environments, and might be forced to create facades of conformity in order to survive. Such institutions would probably need to resolve these dissonances if they hoped to be sustainable. It may be that the environment of such institutions provides it with contradictory pressures which produce dissonances which are difficult for the institution to resolve.

The terms of continuity and dissonance are relevant to an examination of NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa³. It is in the area of potential dysfunction and dissonance that educational NGOs as institutions in sub-Saharan Africa may find themselves. The multiple accountabilities, the rapidly changing environment, the shifts in funding and NGO regulation, the demands to work in consortia, and the political and economic difficulties of the state in the provision of education are among the factors which may produce some dissonances. It is in an analysis of the continuities and dissonances of educational NGOs that a dynamic and insightful portrait of these institutions can be made. There may be internal dissonances within a particular dimension, or there may be dissonances between and across dimensions. The primary issues which appear to confront NGOs are accountability, partnership, and empowerment, and hence may be seen as themes of an institution around which to focus such an analysis.

NGOs, the State, and Education in South Africa

³ Much of the work to date using institutional theory has been concerned with institutions in the West, such as business schools, hospitals, trade unions, and legislatures. NGOs represent an understudied area for inquiry. Few of the institutional theory cases examine a whole institution from the perspective that its dimensions may be inherently problematic. In fact, Scott argues that there is a need for more research on cases where the dimensions of institutions are antagonistic or not mutually reinforcing. It should be recalled that many of studies of NGOs suggest that the interaction of NGO staff and the recipients as well as the role of locally held culture can have a dramatic impact on the effectiveness of NGO efforts. Since one of the primary contributions of institutional theory is the inclusion of the cognitive aspects of institutions, a study of NGOs which includes an examination of the meanings and assumptions held by the participants may add to that body of literature

The context for any institution has great significance for its activities. This case study was situated in South Africa, where there have been several significant developments which bear upon the study of an NGO. South Africa has been engaged in a particularly dramatic and far-reaching process of social, economic, and political reform. The impact of apartheid, the system of racial exclusion which characterized South Africa until 1994, was deep and far-reaching. Almost unique in the history of colonialism, apartheid represented one of the most entrenched systems of legalized racism in history. The struggle against apartheid was waged on many fronts locally and internationally, and NGOs in various forms were integral to it. Church groups, unions, education NGOs, and media watch groups were but a few of the many which worked for the end of apartheid. There was a strong consensus of the importance of a concerted effort, and many alliances were formed. The fight for unions, education, land, the vote, and rights of all kinds was long and bitter, and the scars from this are still very visible today.

The African National Congress party finally came to power in the first democratic elections in 1994 under the twin banners of reconciliation and social transformation. The government's first comprehensive set of policies, entitled the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), took an interventionist approach to creating equity in South African society. Reforms of all kinds were initiated, particularly in education where a curriculum centred on empowerment and local governance was advocated. Education was posited as the foundation for the social reform of South Africa, and a primary route to empowerment. There were several new educational policies which were seen as explicitly 'transformative'. Donors, the state, NGOs, and NGO organizations were actively involved in implementing of the new programs and partly because the resources of the state, which were acknowledged to be few.

There were several significant developments in the NGO sector associated with the advent of democracy in South Africa which greatly increased the complexity of the environment for educational NGOs. Firstly, there was a sizable migration of people from the NGO sector into the government which laid early foundation for a good NGO - state partnership. Second, donors began to insist upon NGO- state collaborations, and the specific inclusion of local stakeholders. Donors also commonly required that NGOs work in consortia for many projects. The challenges of partnership thereby became a greater concern. Thirdly, NGO umbrella organizations, such as SANGOCO, became well-organized in addressing issues of concern to the state, as well as initiating policies for management and accountability of NGOs. A fourth development was the dramatic reduction in funding for NGOs. Many NGOs were unable to sustain themselves. At the same time there were several infamous NGO scandals related to misuse of money. Donors also began to be much more strict about accountability for funds, as well as making new demands upon NGOs such as requirements to use certain forms of management and to work in consortia. Those NGOs which had developed legitimacy through the struggle against apartheid, were now

forced to re-structure themselves in an era of competition for funding and a business orientation was emerging in the NGO sector.

By the late 1990s, while enthusiasm for expansion of education and notions of empowerment remained high, there were also growing tensions. Worsening social problems like crime and poverty heightened the level of frustration with weak public institutions. The state was experiencing increasing difficulties in fulfilling its promises on education, and more than ever needed NGOs and the donor funds they attracted. For many people the 'honeymoon' period for the state was on the wane. In a move perhaps indicative of the influence of a globalized economy, the ANC replaced the RDP with the policies of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). This marketplace-oriented set of policies was a dramatic shift from the ANC's interventionist past. Faced with a declining currency, a general economic downturn, and reduced resources, the government moved towards a neo-liberal economic approach. Social programs like education began to experience severe budgetary cutbacks. Compounding the political tension was the undeniable fact that South Africa's infrastructure was fraying, and other social problems, such as crime and corruption, were increasing dramatically. Criticism of the government was beginning to increase from many quarters, including the NGO sector. By 1998 there were serious doubts in the minds of many about the ability and willingness of the ANC to fulfill its early promise of the social, political, and economic reform. South Africa has remained a divided society where class differences and opportunities are still largely based on race. In the Eastern Cape province, an area renowned for its resistance to apartheid, there have been signs of progress, but the squatter camps, poor townships, and educational disparities still remain.

Taken together, these developments created an especially complex environment for many NGOs, and therefore provided a opportunity to undertake a case study of the institutional character of one educational NGO. The historical juncture of South Africa was at a unique point when an early consensus about increased accountability, effective partnership, and newfound empowerment, all of which are integral to the activities of an educational NGO, was disintegrating

The Study of an Educational NGO: the Case of NIPA ⁴

To accomplish the goal of examining the institutional continuities and dissonances of an NGO, an appropriate case was required. An educational NGO called New Institute for Professional Achievement (NIPA) active in the province of the Eastern Cape, was identified and it agreed to participate in the study. The Eastern Cape-Transkei region has historically been an

⁴ The names of the institution and the participants are pseudonyms in order to respect confidentiality.

important region in the struggle against apartheid. Many significant figures were born there, including Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela. The homelands system of puppet governments was seen by many as one of the worst manifestations of apartheid because it forced Africans to participate in their own exploitation. The participation of NGOs in the struggle was also prominent and NIPA was no exception to this. Started as a partnership between a white woman and black man who wanted to provide early childhood education to the most under served groups, NIPA was from the outset a strong advocate for equity in education. The “T” in NIPA originally stood for “independent” in order to signal its distinction from the apartheid state’s exclusionary education systems.

With this legacy of participation in the struggle against apartheid through the provision of education to excluded groups in the rural Transkei, NIPA was well placed to make significant contributions to the reformed education system in post-apartheid South Africa. The new educational policies favoured support for early childhood development, lifelong learning, and decentralized educational governance. The themes of empowerment and accountability which marked these reforms came as a natural orientation for NIPA. The general migration of NGO personnel into government after 1994 also benefitted NIPA. It was well networked, had a strong reputation, had close familiarity with education issues, and good capacity for management. It also had acquired some impressive physical assets and attracted a devoted and professional staff. In a period when many NGOs closed due to the drastic reduction in donor funding, NIPA survived. It appeared to have the right combination of professional capacity, active networking, careful management, and ability to diversify all at the right time.

These elements revealed excellent potential for examination of an NGO. NIPA was sufficiently large enough (with a staff of about 40) and well established enough to contain the kinds of complex dynamics suitable for a study using institutional theory as a framework. It was involved in mainstream education with programs in several areas related to empowerment and partnership. As well, its profile was that of a well managed and accountable institution with strong connections with local communities. Its extensive connections with the state and its record of implementing of state programs with donor support made it an ideal candidate as a case study of the continuum of institutional continuity and dissonance.

Outline of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis is presented in seven subsequent chapters. The first chapter is a review of the relevant scholarly work on NGOs featuring the key issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment. The context for the study, South Africa, is examined highlighting developments in NGOs, education, politics, and the economy which are

relevant to the discussion. A review of the salient elements of institutional theory is also provided. Lastly, some background information on NIPA is presented. The chapter provides a more detailed and critical examination of the issues raised in this introduction.

In the second chapter details of the methodology and field work are presented. Information about data collection and descriptive analysis are provided of a complex institution.

In the third, fourth, and fifth chapters, the data related to the regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions of institutions are presented respectively. The continuities and dissonances within each dimension are analyzed. The themes of accountability, partnership, and empowerment are prominent. In the tradition of qualitative research, the reader is provided with an extensive array of data organized by theme to give as complete and authentic a picture as possible. The demands of space and time required that only representative or typical examples could be provided.

There are some notable differences in the presentation of the data for each dimension which should be explained here. For the regulative dimension, most of the data were most sensibly be grouped by source for example, regulative demands from the state, donors and other sources, rather than by theme, for example, accountability. Not all sources are given equal attention for every issue of concern to the institution because the sources varied in influence. There were, of course, commonalities in these demands and these have been noted in the analysis. But for the participants at NIPA, the coercive demands upon their institution were most readily recognized by source rather than at the more abstract level of theme.

The data in the normative dimension are presented using thematic categories (accountability, partnership, and empowerment) because in the normative dimension the basis of compliance is social obligation. According to this view, individuals conform to institutional conventions in a holistic fashion equating to: "that is what we do here". This is rather unlike the strategic, expedient forms for conformity seen in the regulative dimensions where the participants simply follow rules. Therefore it is more appropriate to group the data according larger themes which represent what is done in the institution in a more generalized and abstract sense. Additional information relating to the analysis of the normative dimension can be found in Appendix 3 entitled "Contextual Influences". These are details about environmental influences which contributed to the all encompassing notions of social obligation held by the participants.

The data in the cognitive dimensions are presented in a purely thematic fashion, with sub-sections devoted to the perspective of the NIPA staff and the recipients. The purpose of this method of data organization is give a clear comparison of the views of the two groups and to give a holistic picture of how they viewed the situation in regards to a particular set of issues or ideas.

Here, the analysis is at the most abstracted level and is centred on what is *conceptually correct*.⁵ The cognitive dimensions of an institution may be very significant perhaps, but they also can be at times the least consciously considered. This is the area of underlying assumptions, understood symbols, and “practical consciousness”. On a day-to-day basis, individuals do not often think about the metaphors which guide their consciousness or the un-spoken purposes of their activities. Of course, once their attention is turned to such issues, individuals can be deeply introspective and analytical. At certain points in the field work, many of the participants were quite analytical and this added to the analysis.

The sixth chapter is a consideration of the continuities and dissonances across the dimensions of the case study. This analysis is conducted using the primary themes derived from the literature and iteratively refined in the field. It is in this chapter that the overall continuities and dissonances are most thoroughly examined.

The final chapter presents the conclusions about the case study and discusses the significance of the findings for educational NGOs in South Africa, for NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, and for institutional theory.

⁵ Conceptual correctness relates to the idea of “taken-for-grantedness”, the set of assumptions, identities, and knowledge systems which mediate how institutional participants see their circumstances. As Scott (1995, p.xiii) says, “Cognitive systems control behaviour by controlling our conception of what the world is and what kinds of action can be taken by what kind of actors”.

Chapter Two:
Literature Review

Introduction

This study is an investigation of the institutional relations of an educational NGO in South Africa called NIPA. It is argued that NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, although popular and numerous, have the potential for serious internal tensions and contradictions. They face culture clashes, issues of dependency, and multiple accountabilities. Furthermore, because of rapid political, social and economic change, the institutional environment in South Africa presents additional contradictory pressures for NGOs. Three important issues have arisen which highlight these problems for NGOs: accountability, partnership, and empowerment. There are questions about to whom and in what way NGOs should be accountable. Similarly, the kinds of partnership which are desirable and possible with NGOs have come under scrutiny. Empowerment is thought to be an important role for NGOs, but there are fundamental problems in realizing this ideal. An investigation of how NGOs cope with these issues can produce useful insights into the nature of NGOs.

Much of the scholarly examination of NGOs is primarily descriptive. Few studies have attempted to document and analyze NGOs as institutions in terms of their internal dynamics and their external constraints. Using a case study approach, the investigation here adopts theoretical framework of institutional theory which posits that institutions can be usefully described as multi-dimensional. Information from the regulative environment, the institutional norms, and the cognitive orientation of the participants is relevant to understanding the institution as a whole. The potential tensions and contradictions, as well as the consistencies, within and across these dimensions can be examined to unfold the dynamic nature of an institution within its environment. These *continuities* and *dissonances* are particularly relevant to the critical issues which confront NGOs.

In this chapter, a review is provided of the scholarly literature on NGOs which concludes with the point that the three issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment are central to understanding NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. Next, pertinent information about the context of South Africa is presented. The dynamics of social transformation in post-apartheid South Africa have great relevance for NGOs involved in the implementation of new educational policies. Third, the main tenets institutional theory are reviewed as are the notions of continuity and dissonance used in the analysis. The research questions which underpin the thesis directly refer to these notions. Lastly, background information about NIPA, the case study NGO, is provided.

NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa

The proliferation of NGOs in most sectors of development work has received much attention in scholarly literature. NGOs currently number in the thousands, and they are active in many sectors from education and health to agriculture and micro credit. NGOs are often touted as instrumental in the broadening of civil society by giving voice to disenfranchised groups, modeling democratic practices, and empowering people by providing social services like literacy training. However, the appropriateness and efficacy of these efforts is open to question. There have been critiques of NGOs as being instruments of northern economic and social policies. Further, there have been studies to show the inherent complexities and limitations of NGO influence and effectiveness. While NGOs are very popular with donor organizations, the role and effects of NGOs have increasingly been critiqued as being co-opted by the state and international donors.

Three critical issues are pervasive in these discussions of the merits and problems of NGOs. First, there is the issue of accountability. NGOs have emerged as being primarily accountable to local people, an alternative to the state and other large institutions which were perceived as doing little to help ordinary people. However, various political, economic and social dynamics have been documented which indicate that NGOs are often caught between conflicting accountabilities to various groups. Furthermore, it is difficult to be sensitive and accountable to local groups when donors⁶ derive so much power by virtue of controlling funding.

Second, the issue of partnership emerges as critical to the operations of NGOs. While in theory NGOs tend to be collaborative, consultative, and balanced in their power relations (especially with their recipients), in reality, ideals of partnership may be displaced by the necessities of institutional survival. True partnership is difficult to accomplish, particularly when partners are unreliable or when business concerns intervene. Partnership with the state or with groups separated by cultural divides can be riven with tensions and contradictions.

Third, empowerment is a goal to which many NGOs aspire, but it is one which can be thwarted by a variety of factors. For example, a business-orientation based on 'patron-client' relations between the NGO and its recipients, or a latent tendency towards dependency, can undermine empowerment efforts made with the best of intentions.

As the following review of the literature reveals, these three interrelated issues are situated at the centre of the tensions and potential contradictions inherent in NGOs. These three issues are reviewed, first, in terms of the reputed merits and advantages of NGOs, and second, in terms of scholarship that offers a more critical perspective on NGOs.

⁶ It should be noted that the "donors" in this study refers primarily to international, multilateral donors such as the Swiss Development Council. Many of the donors for NIPA were also national organizations such as The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

Applause for NGOs

NGOs have become widespread in development work in Africa to large extent because they are seen as accountable to local people. Some analysts argue that they have very good relations with those who directly benefit from development efforts, or at least, a significantly better relationship than with state-sponsored organizations (Korten, 1990; Hulme 1994). Others believe that NGOs display higher probity, greater efficiency, appropriate specialization, and have effective local connections (Fowler and Biekart, 1996). NGOs have been associated with the expansion of civil society by helping to give voice to disenfranchised groups, acting as intermediaries between the locals and those who might help them, and influencing policy decisions (Archer, 1994; Charlton & May, 1995; Ndegwa, 1996; Garilao, 1987). NGOs are likewise viewed as efficient, and strategically situated between the donors and recipients of aid. The mere fact of being non-statal is appealing to some proponents, given the oppressiveness, political fragility, or administrative inefficiency of many African states. NGOs are often specialized and reputed to be more efficient in providing social services. Their small scale gives them 'comparative advantages' which appeal to donors (Stewart, 1997). In many cases they have high local legitimacy, whereas the state often does not, and are portrayed as having flexibility and integrity.

NGOs are often described as "intermediary" (Carroll, 1987) or third sector organizations (Korten, 1987, 1991) because they act as go-betweens among the state, and funding agencies, and the recipients of the services. A more sophisticated version of this overtly political role is that NGOs can act as political exemplars or socialization agents. In such cases, their ultimate goal is to influence the perception and therefore the nature of political processes which lead to positive changes in ordinary people's daily lives (Charlton and May, 1995). This can extend towards Freirean notions of "empowerment" and "conscientization" in which impoverished groups become aware of their situation at a political level and act to change it (Korten, 1990). Garilao (1987) argues that NGOs ought to be viewed as institutions which can strategically manage the relationships among recipients, governments, and donors. In this way, NGOs can be considered to be promoting important partnerships among stakeholders

Many bilateral aid programs, such as those of CIDA or the European community, have taken up the theme of empowerment and emphasize that NGOs have a central role to play in civil society and through "capacity- building" (APRODEV, 1996). NGOs have been particularly active in the development of women's groups. Their "contribution to the democratization process cannot be minimized" (FEMNET 1994, p. 180). NGOs are now often referred to as institutions, or a new institutional form (Fernandes, 1994). As these new institutions, NGOs are not simply conduits for funds or service contractors, but political change advocates, alliance-makers, and

leadership trainers. It is common that NGOs are linked through umbrella organizations which lobby on their behalf and attempt to sensibly co-ordinate NGO activities (SANGOCO, 1998; Kajese 1987) which may act to enhance their empowerment effects. NGOs are often recognized both as social actors and advocates, giving voice to the truly needy. Many NGOs claim to address not just the economic reasons for lack of development but the central fact of political powerlessness (Hulme, 1994).

Critiques of NGOs

NGOs are not without their problems, however, and a growing body of literature critical of NGOs has emerged. Accountability presents several complex challenges for them. The multiple accountabilities of NGOs, particularly to donors, can render them very problematic as they struggle to please too many masters (Smillie, 1997; Saxby, 1996; Powell & Seddon, 1997; Vivian, 1994). Gary (1996), Hanlon (1991), and Powell & Seddon (1997) all make strong cases that NGOs are often co-opted or controlled by Northern donors and states. The influence globalized culture (essentially Western culture) is subtle and powerful, and there are pressures from development organizations to implement reforms along Western cultural lines is of strong interest to scholars (Brock-Utne, 1995; Crossley, 1994). McNeely (1995) documents the globalization of culture and the standardization of theories of development. She describes an "epistemic community" which she defines as a "community of experts sharing a belief in a common set of cause and effect relationships, as well as common values to which policies governing these relationships will be applied" (p.506). The mechanisms of influence and the causality of policies, funding, support, and implementation can be intricate and NGOs may be inadvertently part of the process of cultural domination. Using NGOs to expand civil society may create artificial institutions which are not sustainable because they are derived from Northern historical and social forces (Marcussen, 1996; Klees, 1998).

The over-control of NGOs by donors who seek to reduce overhead costs in the name of efficiency can seriously undermine the effectiveness of the NGOs (Smillie, 1997) and increasing accountability and formality that may cost the NGO its natural legitimacy (Tripp, 1994). Over-accountability to donors can severely undermine grassroots support (Sogge & Zadek, 1996; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Najam, 1996). Too much reliance on donor funding can have the effect of reducing the independence of NGOs and ultimately lead to weak sectoral policy-making (Kihato & Rapoo, 1999). A common problem of NGOs is that they are often staffed by highly committed individuals who are well-motivated but lack sound administrative practices (Mufune et al, 1996). A more formalized work protocol may be needed, but this might be brought in to the detriment of the charismatic individuals who flourish in a less formal environment. Wallace (1997)

argues that there is a tendency for NGOs to use managerial concepts like “logical framework analysis” in order to satisfy the requirements of evaluations from donors. This effectively negates the participatory style for which NGOs are valued, and raises serious questions about power and knowledge in the development process (Cohen, 1996). If the form of the relationship comes to resemble a ‘patron-client’ relationship, then the NGO may drift to a business orientation, as a contracted service provider (see Schon, 1983). Fowler and Biekart (1996) note that NGOs can be less than transparent in their reporting.

Another significant issue is the accountability of NGOs to the state. There have been cogent analyses which portray NGOs as actually delaying the expansion of civil society because, under a neo-liberal agenda, they work to weaken the state (Stewart, 1997; Marcussen, 1996). Maclure (2000) argues that this perspective is reductionist, however, and that in fact, NGOs are often engaged in surreptitious “anti-hegemonic” processes that belie the appearance of co-optation by the international donors and the state. Other influences from donors, Western governments, and transnational cultural pressures complicate the relationship between states and NGOs. Influencing public policy is a complex task and there are many difficult political dilemmas to manage (Bratton, 1990; Shaw & MacLean, 1996; Clark, 1995; Ndegwa, 1996; Brautigam, 1994; Charlton & May, 1995; Hadenius & Ugglä, 1996; Desai & Howes, 1995). The state remains a powerful actor, particularly in the provision of education (Vivian, 1994; Fuller and Bradshaw, 1996; Ntiri 1992). NGOs frequently need some connections to the state, but this often puts them in difficult positions vis à vis other actors in the development process (Kihato & Rapoo, 1999).

Understanding the relationship between the state and NGOs is crucial to understanding the difficult positions in which NGOs often find themselves in South Africa. The political environment in Sub-Saharan African countries is frequently turbulent and marked by the politics of charisma, authoritarianism, and ‘patron-client’ networks (Berman, 1998; Ndegwa 1996; Clapham, 1993). African states, economically constrained and beset by disparate political pressures, often struggle to maintain legitimacy (Fuller, 1990; Fuller and Bradshaw, 1996; Weiler, 1990; Hyden 1996). As Maclure (1993) argues, global capitalism has had a profound effect on African states’ abilities to set their national policies. In this context NGOs have emerged as both surrogate social service providers and as political change agents concerned with expanding civil society (Charlton & May, 1995; Fatton, 1995; Shaw & MacLean, 1996). This can leave NGOs in a paradoxical role as both partner and critic of the state. Prevailing political attitudes from the state about levels of permitted criticism, social control, and relations with external actors like Western funding organizations often constrain NGO activities. Such paradoxes appear to be emerging in South Africa (Turner, 1998; SANGOCO 1998).

Partnership issues also confront NGOs, particularly in their relationship with their

recipients (Leach, 1995; Chambers, 1994; Mosse, 1994; Najam, 1996; Sizoo, 1996; Saxby, 1996; Howes, 1997; Hawes and Kealey, 1985; Rahnema, 1993). There are concerns about power balance among the stakeholders, cultural clashes, economic dependency, and accountability. Fowler (1992) describes a variety of difficulties in the idea of NGO partnerships which mirror the cultural problems identified by Sawadogo (1995) and Leach (1995). He mentions that not all partnerships are balanced, nor is there necessarily a consensus about the value of the results or contribution that each side may bring to the partnership. His findings are supported by Robinson and Gfeller (1997) and Harding (1994). Since an important comparative advantage of NGOs is their close connection to local people, which is reinforced at best by an emphasis on participatory decision-making, collaboration, and articulation of local needs, this is a critical problem for NGOs. Edwards, Hulme, and Wallace (2000) also advocate a shift in NGOs towards clear accountability and legitimacy with local people.

These issues raise questions about the potential for empowerment by NGOs. If accountability is confused and partnership problematic, then it may be difficult to know whether empowerment is occurring. It is a complex task for NGOs to remain connected to their local communities (Howes, 1997; Sizoo, 1996; Rahnema, 1993). Since NGOs are frequently drawn from groups of committed individuals who share a social vision, or who may have simply recognized a project potential and applied for funding, questions of NGO board composition can be poorly addressed. Most of the people involved are expected to be devoted to the cause and local members are selected, quite sensibly usually, because they are also devoted. Real feedback and oversight by grassroots recipients can be seriously limited because of this power imbalance (Tandon, 1995; Brett, 1993). Empowerment from NGOs may depend on dramatic shifts in management style and decision-making (Chambers, 1995). It may be difficult to be highly democratic and inclusive in NGOs (Lalaye, 1996). The work of NGOs, especially in impoverished rural areas, can represent a boon to the local economy. They tend to pay their workers well and provide many perks such as vehicles, travel, and access to knowledge and technology. NGOs are great users of the internet and telephone, both rarities in poor areas, and their local counterparts tend naturally not want to disrupt the relationship by questioning priorities or program decisions. Therefore, issues such as local dependency on NGOs can emerge (Maclure, 1995). Even where sincere efforts are made to determine local preferences using such methods as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), the results can often be misleading (Mosse, 1994). These problems can render empowerment by NGOs difficult, especially if these are complicating factors such a weak and unreliable state, rapid changes in NGO funding or regulation (see Streek, 2001), or worsening economic conditions.

Summary: Three Critical Issues

Accountability, partnership, and empowerment are therefore key thematic issues with regards to the tensions and possible contradictions within NGOs as institutions. Within each, there are several important questions to be addressed.

First, with regards to accountability, there is the question as to whom NGOs are ultimately accountable, and in what form their accountability is measured and signified. There are doubts about whether NGOs can be simultaneously and authentically accountable to donors, the state, the recipients, or other actors like NGO groups. How can NGOs be independent when donors force them to be accountable to a state whose programs they are trying to provide an alternative to? Are NGOs accountable purely in a business sense to donors, and does this conflict with accountability to recipients? Also of concern are questions of transparency, probity, and responsibility. The different definitions of accountability among different groups may well be affected by factors such as local politics and by perceptions about the flow of power and resources.

Second, in terms of partnership, there are questions of inclusion, power relations, systems of management and decision-making, and potential cultural and social clashes. These issues are concerned with who exercises power, how power is exercised, what resources can be accessed, and what networks are required for change to occur. There is the question of control and credibility in association with an often discredited actor (the state) which still plays a dominant role in education. Is it possible to be successfully partnered with a party which is unreliable and not of your choosing? There are questions about the multiplicity of roles of the NGO as critic of the state, an intermediary between the state and the recipients, a capacity-builder of the state, or even a surrogate state. The donors may require inclusion of the weak state, but since the state typically has an important regulative function for NGOs, this suggests even more questions of a true partnership with the state.

Third, the issue of empowerment raises questions of how NGOs can, or should, broaden civil society and engender reform by empowering individuals and groups, reducing dependency, and increasing economic potential. How can empowerment work if other contravening factors are at work? For example, the context of the post-apartheid era in South Africa raises issues about the role of education in the process of empowerment. As noted below, the education system of South Africa appears to be in a deepening crisis, as the government struggles to support increased expectations with reduced resources. As with concerns about partnership, some questions on empowerment centre on control and power in a transformed society, and what personal or structural shifts must occur. Are there contradictions in how an NGO tries to empower its recipients?

Any attempt to answer these questions must include some reference to the context in

which an NGO operates, for it undoubtedly has an influence on how it wrestles with these issues. It is important to understand how the internal dynamics of an NGO interact with the realities of its environment. In the case of South Africa, the environment is marked by volatility of all kinds and a highly charged historical moment of social transformation. In the next section, the potentially powerful impact of this context upon an NGO is made clear.

Context for the Study: South Africa

South Africa is undergoing rapid social, political, institutional, and economic changes. Many institutions are being radically altered as the state attempts to address the ongoing legacies of apartheid which were manifested in the form of ethnic, gender, and regional disparities. Issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment are all central to this process. The state is heavily constrained economically and politically, but expectations for social reform are increasing. The NGO sector, a long-time ally in the struggle against apartheid, has been active in addressing some of these social problems and shortfalls in the provision of social services in education. With wide donor support, South Africa is embarking on programs of educational enhancement and reform to a large extent involving NGOs. These reforms included a new national curriculum (Curriculum 2005, based on outcomes based education (OBE)), a new teacher training and qualifications system, and programs in science and information technology. The demands for empowerment through improved education, and for greater accountability both in educational governance and administration, as well as in the management of state and NGO-led development projects, are greatly increasing. South Africa can be described as a deeply divided society which is striving for the “elusive social contract” (Sisk, 1995). The terms of this contract continue to grow more obscure and conflicting as time goes on. In general, the trend has been towards deflated expectations and increasing tension and criticism about the lack of social progress. In this volatile context, NGOs must struggle for funding, legitimacy, workable partnerships, and a coherent policy environment.

The Socio-political Inheritance from Apartheid

The advent in 1994 of majority rule in South Africa after so many decades of institutionalized racism has left development challenges of great magnitude. South Africa was a country where about five million mostly white people enjoyed a modern industrialized society but where about 25 million others, mostly black Africans, lived in undeveloped conditions. Great enthusiasm and solidarity greeted the ‘miracle’ of a transition to democracy, but this has largely been replaced by uncertainty and cynicism as the government struggles with disparate political forces, economic constraints, and worsening social problems. There is a legacy of

regional disparity, ethnic conflict, economic stratification, and political uncertainty (van der Berg, 1998; Habib et al. 1998; Johnson & Schlemmer, 1996). Five percent of the population controls 87% of the wealth (Pilger, 1998). Even after democratic elections in 1994, the government is faced with social divisions still largely based on race and class, with ethnic violence frequently erupting. Problems from the apartheid era still plague South Africa. For example, many white farmers still enjoyed impunity in the mistreatment of their farm workers, and this may have been intensified as they perceived themselves as an embattled community (McGreal, 1999). Racism still exists in many small towns where schools have been set up to use English as the medium of instruction as opposed to Afrikaans, but the school establishment remained predominantly white ("Education: a hard promise", 1999). The old South African cultures are still there, some intact, (Berman, 1998) but others are new and unfolding. Many of the historically advantaged groups had been successful in maintaining their traditional economic, political, and social influence. Awareness of this reality underpinned much of the thinking for social reformers.

The rapid pace of change has been associated with greatly increased expectations from different ethnic, class, and gender groups. These expectations are difficult to fulfil. Crime is a serious problem and the state is vulnerable to corruption (Lodge, 1998). There have been many new calls for equity in sectors such as health and education, but the state has been seemingly too economically and politically constrained to make the needed institutional changes (Chisholm et al. 1997; Motala, 1997; Pape, 1998; Johnson, 1995). The African National Congress (ANC), so long associated with the struggle against apartheid, now governs, but it faces several difficult political problems. Like other states which endured a racially-based political regime, such as Zimbabwe and Namibia, there are many political debts and contradictory expectations which are difficult for the state to resolve (Freeman, 1991). The prospect of ethnic and tribalized violence always looms, to a large extent due to the apartheid regime's strategy of creating factions using the mechanism of the tribal homelands. The 1994 elections gave a strong majority to the ANC but this was not spread evenly among minority groups at all. The ANC support has faded somewhat according to polls and there is a real danger of fragmentation of the black African vote which may ultimately erode the ANC's political base (Uys, 1997). Facing elections in 1999, the government had few choices but to allocate spending which would provide visible changes in urban areas but to the detriment of the poorest rural areas (van der Berg, 1998). This has served to aggravate the underlying social disparities of South Africa.

Political corruption may be another legacy of apartheid or simply a reflection of huge income disparities. For example, there were 843 alleged cases of corruption at the provincial level in 1998 (The Economist 28 Feb. 1998). With the rapid institutional changes that are occurring there may be great potential for more corruption (Lodge 1998). Another set of social problems is related to the disenfranchisement and abuse of women, but the state has not really

moved forward with solutions yet (Dangor et al., 1998). The widespread epidemic of HIV/AIDS in South Africa is also severely taxing the nation's resources as well as exacerbating political conflict around access to health care and drugs. Some estimates are that there are more than 1700 new HIV infections per day in South Africa (Motala, 2000).

Economic Realities

The initial social policy response to the dismantling of apartheid by the ANC-led government was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which aimed funds at a dramatic reallocation of economic equity for housing, health clinics, and education. This strategy was replaced after two years by a much more liberalized economic strategy called Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR). GEAR is based on many of the principles associated with structural adjustment, such as privatization, deregulation, and fiscal constraint. While this pleased foreign investors, it has had severe political costs. Reduced state capacity for social programs deflated and confused expectations for reform. Wages were limited and therefore labour allies were estranged (Habib et al., 1998). COSATU, a powerful trade union group and a long time ally of the ANC, now finds itself in a position of conflicting loyalties, and there have been other complicating political developments for the ANC (Johnson & Schlemmer, 1996; Uys, 1997; Maree 1998; Haffajee & Nkosi, 1998).

GEAR's macro-economic approach has been severally criticized as being favourable to large corporations and the IMF, but doing little to help those in economic need (ANC, 1997; Uys, 1997; Pilger, 1998; Chisholm, 1998). GEAR critics suggest it is an economic strategy which had a false premise of 'trickle down' prosperity which in fact produces 'jobless growth'. Ironically, polls have shown that a large majority feel that job creation should be top priority (Johnson & Schlemmer, 1996). The government proposed a 1 billion rand fund to reduce unemployment but there was widespread skepticism in COSATU that it would not do much about South Africa's 'structural unemployment crisis' (Hossack, 1998). As one analyst reported, "They give us phones, but we want water" (Mkhabela, 1999). There is evidence that political rather than economic considerations have been behind the continuation of GEAR policies (Mangcu, 2000). The impact of GEAR on spending on social programs has provoked a lot of negative reaction. For example, the head of the South Africa Teachers Union asserted: "According to some researchers, inequalities have actually increased since the advent of democracy...Neo-liberal policies pose a direct threat to the delivery of quality public education in South Africa" ("No Equity", 2001).

Meanwhile, economic constraints are growing. For example, the provinces overspent their budgets in 1998 by 2.1 billion rand with the result that the current accounts deficit will grow to 4.3% of GDP (The Economist 28 Feb. 1998). The rand has continued to fall severely

but the government has few options which would not even further worsen its political fortunes (The Economist 4 July 1998). Unemployment has reached 40 %. Johannesburg has the dubious distinction of ‘murder capital of the world’, a fact which had great economic significance as investors become nervous about low term stability.

Educational Realities

The education system, so long a primary vehicle of exclusion, has required complete restructuring, and government rhetoric has been forceful in outlining plans for this sector. A transformational style of education is envisaged (Williams, 1997). However, just as many South African institutions badly needed to be democratized, so the expansion of schooling in general presents serious challenges in terms of equitable distribution of resources (Ogden, 1996; Johnson, 1995). However, despite much rhetoric and policy adjustment since the end of apartheid, little has changed, especially in terms of youth education and training (Chisholm et al. 1997; Motala, 1997). In South Africa there has been a general awareness that many groups had resisted change and many had not enjoyed increased opportunities. Women, for example, have lagged far behind men in terms of education and political and economic power (Baden et al, 1999). The state’s spending on education has been criticized, perhaps in an allusion to critiques of GEAR, as being too concerned with efficiency and out of touch with the personal needs of its students (Porteus, 2000). The 1996 Census data, released in October 1998, painted a bleak picture of economic, educational, and social disparity. For example, 24% of whites had post-secondary education whereas only 3% of Africans did. 62% of the people earned less than R1501 a month and only 11% earned over R4500 a month. On this occasion President Mandela stated, “it will take time to absorb the full details of the intricate picture of our complex society. But the broad outlines should act as a clarion call to re-dedicate ourselves in every sector of our society, to the historic mission of a generation charged with transforming South African society in order to eradicate the poverty and imbalances that derived from our past” (Golsling, 1998).

Commentators are widely pessimistic about the difficulties which lie ahead. For example, in the mid 1990's over 2000 school buildings needed serious repair, class sizes ranged up to 50 and many schools lacked basic equipment. More troubling yet is the disparity between certain regions and groups. For instance, in 1996 Northern province had a 39% exam pass rate while Western Cape province had an 80 % rate (Motala, 1997). The situation may be exacerbated by the threatened flight of elite schools out of the South Africa system altogether in favour of foreign examination systems (Soggot, 1999). In a report released in April 1999 by the South African Human Rights Commission, serious problems of racial prejudice and inequity in the education system were documented. One of the authors of the report said that the Department of Education had been, “paying very little attention to social relations at the school

level. The department spends so much time on technical issues. But the human side is missing”(Garson, 1999). The seriousness of these problems is demonstrated by the fact that a thorough policy review has been undertaken (Motala, 2000).

The fact of slow reform in education is not just a social problem that quietly continues. After years of political activity by students in the apartheid years, violence has become common at schools and the demands for change are intense (Pape 1998). While some progress has been made on several fronts, the transformation and integration of the education system have suffered budget cutbacks, shortages of all kinds, and a general resistance to change (Chisholm, 1998). Pape summarizes the situation well: “The current reform process is characterized by lots of policy documents written by experts, a few small-scale changes and widespread demoralization among students, teachers, and the fewer reform-minded bureaucrats who have entered the system since 1994” (1998, p.266). The government was also criticized for embarking on new initiatives without proper preparation and implementation strategies. For example, one commentator stated: “While teachers’ unions, associations, expert groups, political parties, and civil organizations have welcomed the new system, ordinary teachers, book publishers, parents, and pupils are in a state of near panic” (Williams, 1997). Other reports detailed serious problems such as overspending, communication gaps, staff shortages, and lack of discipline, all of which were hampering the introduction of the new education policies (Duffy, 1997).

Because of all these problems inherent to the public education system, education has slipped from being a largely state function, to one which includes substantial NGO involvement and widespread donor support. In 1994-999, out of US \$4.7 billion in international donor assistance to South Africa the largest portion went to education (Bratton & Landsberg, 1999). Both national and foreign donors have become active in supporting a variety of educational activities including teacher training, science education, community school governance training, library resource programs, and even some infrastructure.

NGO Activities and Policies in South Africa

The status of NGOs in South Africa seems to be in a state of flux. NGOs were for a long time involved in the struggle against apartheid, but with democratic elections, their role shifted considerably and there was a marked reduction in funding from donors. Bigger NGOs which showed efficiency and fund-raising ability survived where many smaller ones have not (Turner 1998). Nevertheless, there are still many hundreds of NGOs active in South Africa and several extensive networks and umbrella groups. NGOs have been specifically recognized by the state as key stakeholders and education service providers (White Paper on Education 1996). The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to which South Africa is signatory, has a treaty (Article 23) which commits members to include NGOs in the development process.

The South African National NGO Council (SANGOCO) is the most prominent NGO umbrella group. It has been actively involved in lobbying the government on a wide variety of social issues. It was a participant in the legislative drafting process for a 1997 Not-for-Profit Bill (NPO) and the 1998 National Development Agency Act (NDA). The NDA has some noble aims that are consistent with many NGO efforts such as the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of civil society. However, the Act also confers fairly strong powers to the relevant minister to register and control NGOs. Most significant perhaps is the requirement that NDA must control and co-ordinate funding from the state *and* from international and foreign donors (Government of South Africa 1998). The state thereby holds potentially great power over NGOs. The South African government has passed other legislation which affects NGOs, including labour regulations in the Employment Equity Act, and tax and governance regulations in the Non-Profit Organizations Act. Some of these have regulations have been changing and NGOs have had trouble coping (Streek, 2001). A drastic drop in funding for NGOs over the last five years has given these developments more pronounced significance.

Despite these constraints, the NGO sector is becoming more active in lobbying for needy groups and critiquing government policy. For example, in 1998 NGOs held a series of poverty hearings and prepared alternative budgets ("The Nations", 1998). Whether such developments would set the NGO sector up as an oppositional force is not clear, but it does indicate some tensions between the state and NGOs. SANGOCO was quite dismayed to learn of the comments of President Mandela at a December 1997 ANC meeting in which he strongly rebuked foreign NGOs and castigated other NGOs for "militant opposition to the government" (SANGOCO, 1998). There continue to be underlying fears that the NDA and NPO would become an attempt to control NGOs, as was seen in Kenya and Zimbabwe, by means of restrictive registration legislation (Sello, 1998). There is evidence that NGOs may have little influence over state policies (Kihato & Rapoo 1999). The effects of this legislation and other developments on NGO relations with the state, donors, and their beneficiaries are still unfolding, but they constitute a general trend towards more state control of NGOs. This trend has been documented by Bratton and Landsberg (1999) who argue that the South African state has effectively controlled donors priorities in several ways since 1994. There has been a wariness about the government's level of tolerance of criticism, but a basic foundation of partnership with the state still seems intact with many NGOs (Turner, 1998).

Local Context: Eastern Cape Province

The Eastern Cape was the local context for the case study. It has had a unique history in terms of apartheid. The Transkei area, which is encompassed by the Eastern Cape, was a 'homeland' run as a puppet state for purposes of political manipulation and economic

exploitation. Its economic fortunes have consequently been very low as it struggles to rebuild its infrastructure and reinvigorate its economy when all of its former institutions were collapsed with the advent of democracy. Compared to other provinces it has fared worse in several ways including economic growth, educational achievement, and government mismanagement (MacFarlane & Pillay, 2001). Unemployment in the province sits at 46% (Naki, 1999). Violent crime has become a serious problem (Ramsden, 1999). Several municipalities have been in political chaos over questions as mismanagement and accountability (Piliso, 1998). A report about the bleak conditions in the Eastern Cape schools by the Human Science Research Council painted a discouraging picture of terrible infrastructure and poorly supported teachers (Hartley et al, 1998). A sign of the weakness and dependence of the state in funding education could be seen in the fact that budget shortfalls were not addressed by increase but by seeking out donors. In one case the Japanese, the European Union, and local corporate donors injected R60 million into the budget of the department ("EU Injects"1998). In the Eastern Cape there has also been a significant history of activism that continues to this day, perhaps fueled by the awareness in civil society organizations that the disparities there are severe. Several important leaders in the struggle against apartheid such as Biko and Mandela came from this region.

Summary

It is clear that NGOs in South Africa at this time face a variety of challenges stemming from the rapid changes through which the country continues to experience. There is a generalized project of social transformation underway in which the role of education and NGOs is prominent. Yet, there is a high level of uncertainty about how the state is responding to the difficult problems of empowering marginalized groups. Worsening social problems of all kinds are bound to exacerbate the political tensions. The poor management of educational reform and the growing dependence of the state on donors raise questions about accountability. The evolving regulation of NGOs by the state and the increasing power of donors also indicate a contested accountability. The state has a prominent partnership role with NGOs, but it is being increasingly criticized for abandoning its early priorities in favour of business interests. These factors act to complicate and deepen the potential in NGOs for internal tension and contradiction.

After this review of the nature of NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, and an examination of the context for NGOs in South Africa, it is now appropriate to consider how to analyze them in order to have full understanding of NGOs' institutional relations in a complex environment. For this endeavour, a framework for analysis will be presented.

Analysis of NGOs as Institutions

The analysis of institutions has many long and often competing traditions, and the scholarly examination of NGOs is no exception. There are several prominent schools of thought about what the important aspects of NGOs to investigate are, and which theoretical lens to examine them through. A brief overview is warranted here.

Many of the early descriptions and analyses of NGOs had a liberal-pluralistic orientation, and focused on NGOs as empowering organizations. The concern was with how NGOs would give voice to marginalized groups and act as intermediaries between those who had resources and those who needed them. Carroll (1987), Garilao (1987), Korten (1987, 1990), and Cohen (1996) were among those whose analysis focused on how to enhance the empowering function of NGOs. Though useful in highlighting the motives and goals of NGOs, to some extent these critiques were idealistic and tended to ignore other concerns such as macro political influences or internal control issues.

Another significant tradition in the analysis of NGOs is one which looks through the lens of political economy. This approach can be sub-divided into two: one which focuses on the role of NGOs in the expansion of civil society and another which focuses on the role of NGOs as part of hegemonic political systems. In both cases, attention is directed towards the political constraints and potential political power of NGOs.

The former approach looks at NGOs as agents in a larger political process usually involving the state. Many scholars have examined NGOs in relation to state power (Hyden, 1996; Ndegwa, 1994, 1996; Shaw & MacLean, 1996; Jenkins, 1994; Maclure 1995) with a view to showing how state power (or weakness) has a powerful effect on NGOs. Many scholars, such as Hadenius & Uggla (1996), have attempted to analyze NGOs as political intermediaries in civil society. It has been shown by such researchers as Vivian (1994) and Bratton (1994) that local politics involving the state can have a powerful influence over NGO activities.

A more strident critique of NGOs evolved out of these political approaches, one which focuses on an analysis of hegemonic political interests. Marcussen (1996), Stewart (1997), and Klees (1998) are typical of this tradition which portrays NGOs as pawns of globalized political and economic interests. Their analytical focus is on how particular political and economic mechanisms function to rob NGOs of their impact as agents of development, or to co-opt them to third party agendas. Significant work has been done in these areas by such writers as Fowler (1998), Gary (1996), Hearn (1998) and Cliff (1993) who argue that donors and other actors with specific economic agendas have come to dominate the institutional life of NGOs.

Both of these politically oriented approaches to NGOs add insight into the complexities of the interface between NGOs, donors, and the state. One drawback of these approaches is that

they do not adequately consider the influence of local socio-cultural dynamics, nor individual agency, on the workings of NGOs. Political and economic factors are not the only significant institutional aspects of NGOs.

There are streams of analysis which do attempt to understand what is happening at the organizational level. Several scholars have examined such issues as organizational practice (Thomas-Slayer, 1992; Wallace, 1997; Brett, 1993, Hulme, 1994) in an attempt to get at how such issues as accountability are played out at the local level. Edwards and Hulme (1995) have done useful work to investigate what affects NGO performance. Chambers (1995) and Lalaye (1996) have also investigated what kinds of internal relationships and governance structures will best suit NGOs. A variant of this analysis is one which focuses on the cultural or gender aspects of NGOs (Leach, 1993, 1995; Sizoo, 1996); Mosse 1994, Brock-Utne, 1996). These analyses also make important contributions to the understanding of NGOs, but they have the limitation of not really considering the wider political and economic influences which bear upon NGOs.

Much of the scholarly work on NGOs is descriptive, and little of it attempts to present a deep analysis of what is happening at the local institutional together with an investigation of how the wider political, economic, cultural, and social environment impacts upon NGOs. The three critical issues for NGOs (accountability, partnership and empowerment) need to be investigated *both* as they play out in the behaviour and thoughts of the NGO staff and recipients *and* as they are mediated by larger forces in the NGOs environment.

It is clear that social institutions do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are the result of particular historical, political, social, and economic events. There is an ongoing dynamic quality to them. Much of the literature on NGOs indicates the powerful influence of various contextual factors, such as global capitalism, donor priorities, and local and national political interests on the outcome of the development efforts spearheaded by such institutions. This multitude of factors in turn has an impact on local realities with which NGOs must contend.

At the same time, it is also clear that the participants of an institution participate in social constructions which also have an influence on their institutions. The systems of meaning, the values and assumptions, the languages, the local biases, the cultural-driven epistemologies, the 'shared logic' of social roles, all of these factors influence and filter the way individuals experience reality. The work of Mead on symbolic interactionism, Foucault on power relations in language, Garfinkel on ethnomethodology, and Giddens on social practice, among other scholars, has provided a strong foundation for the fruitful examination of local social constructions. The effect of symbolism and shared social practices colours and mediates larger social interaction in a critical and powerful way. As Scott (1995, p.129) says, "Symbolism, the mechanism by which meanings are shaped, exerts great social power".

These two social facts, the powerful influence of the institutional environment and the social constructions of the participants, must be considered in an institutional analysis. This is

particularly true in the case of NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. The tensions and contradictions around the issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment clearly relate to both wider contextual factors, such as donor policies, and localized notions, such as perceptions of inclusion. For the purposes of investigation, a theoretical framework is needed which will permit a deep understanding of these dynamic qualities of NGOs as institutions. It should be able to account for the contextual realities while at the same time allow for a critical examination of the social constructions at the very core of NGO activities. In addition, the framework must be able to accommodate the turbulent and rapid pace of social and institutional change as is the case in South Africa. A theoretical framework which offers these features is *institutional theory*.

Institutional Theory: An Overview

Institutional theory ⁷ provides a framework for examining institutions in a complex and multi-layered way, one that considers both the rational forces which regulate institutional activity as well as other non-rational aspects which mediate participation in an institution. It is the inclusion of these non-rational aspects of institutions which mark the most recent evolution of institutional theory and which made it particularly useful for the study of NGOs. It is appropriate to give a brief review of the historical development of institutional theory before an examination of its current status and application to this case study.

The study of institutions has been attempted from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives. There are several traditions which come together under the study of institutions reaching back even to the social contract of Rousseau (see Immergut, 1998), the comparative historical analysis of Weber, and the rational choice theory of scholars such as Parsons. Institutions have been analyzed by theorists like Etzioni from a goal-oriented perspective, which sees them as structured around achieving specific goals. There is also the view of institutions, classically articulated by Getzels and Guba, which sees them from a social systems point of view of acquiring resources for survival. There have been different foci for institutional analysis ranging from the political economist, who looks at the dynamics of the distribution of power and competing interests to the cultural and social critics, such as Marxists and feminists, who focus on social and cultural reproduction. All of these scholarly traditions have added significantly to the study of institutions and added weight to the view that institutions are

⁷ Institutional theory has primarily informed studies of corporations, associations, and workplace situations in Western industrialized countries. As a basis for studying NGOs in the turbulent institutional environments of South Africa, the use of institutional theory is, to the knowledge of the researcher, unprecedented. (See section below on New Applications).

inherently complex phenomena tied their contexts in a variety of ways.

However, a lingering issue with theoretical understanding of institutions has been the tendency to view them through too narrow a lens which does not account for most of the social political, economic and cultural dynamics observed within institutions and their environments. Institutional theory attempts to address this issue. It does have its roots in the rational choice perspective, but with a respect for the importance of culture. The rational choice approaches tended to see institutions in a rationalized way as being structured towards realizing identifiable social ends. The individual participants in institutions were seen as rational actors acting out of self interest or with the specific social outcomes in mind. Institutionalism, on the other hand, draws a theoretical line between purely cultural accounts of social activity and highly rationalistic accounts, such as are found in economics.

According to some scholars, however, there was need to move away from an approach to institutions which focused too heavily on rationalized behaviours. Meyer, Boli, and Thoms (1994, p. 27) argue that there was a “chronic tendency of social theory to depict action as the choices and decisions of purposive rational actors”. From this perspective, it is clear that culture and other factors have a profound influence on the beliefs and assumptions of individuals in relation to social institutions. Meyer and Rowan (1977) have detailed the powerful role of institutions in creating mythological or cultural frames through which to view social action. Institutional theory attempts to account for culture and other local factors which mediate the local social interactions. An important contribution to institutional theory was Powell and DiMaggio’s theory of ‘practical action’ which “establishes the centrality of cognition: it emphasizes the practical, semi-automatic, non-calculative nature of practical reason” (1991, p.24). Given the documented influence of wide variety of social, political, economic, and cultural factors which have influenced NGOs, a theory of institutions is needed which can accommodate many, or all of them. Of particular interest are the local cultural factors because NGOS are meant to be valued partly because of their connection to the local realities.

Institutional theory provides for an examination of the non-rational, culture- and situation-bound aspects of social interaction in institutions. Many of its adherents favour an approach to institutions which does not focus too heavily on rationalized behaviours. Nee and Brinton (1998, p. 11) argue that institutional theory allows for the incorporation of context and rationality far beyond

the narrow bounds of older rational choice theory wherein all actors were supposed to have a clear sense of choices and self-interest. Clearly, established routines, myths, and symbols all have influence on actors whether they are aware of the consequences or not. Thus, key concerns in understanding institutions, such as legitimacy and conformity, can be “clearly consistent with the mutual dependence of action and structure that is central to the idea of context-bound rationality”. As Immergut (1998, p. 9) explains, “Institutions do not determine

behaviour, they simply provide a context for action that helps us to establish why actors make the choices they do”.

Institutional theory is centred on “cultural frames [to] establish approved means and define desired outcomes” (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, p.28). This is possible even where radical cultural and political changes are causing the “cultural frames” to shift considerably, such as in South Africa. Institutional theory is able to deal with this because it acknowledges that there are institutional networks which can consist of mutually supportive or antagonistic parts. In fact, as Friedland and Alford (1991) argue, “institutional contradictions are the bases of the most important political conflicts in our society; it is through these conflicts that the institutional structure of society is changed”(p. 256). Contradictions among the symbols and shared institutional logics in themselves may constitute a feature of an environment. Institutional theory does not assume that institutions are static, but rather acknowledges turbulent environments as part of the analysis. This is the case particularly in relation to the state as an actor in times of ‘fragmented rationality’. As Jepperson and Meyer (1991) argue, “formal organizing is a sort of manic outburst of rationality created under considerable competitive urgency, and for the same reason, unlikely to work as chartered”(p. 209). Even in times of change there is a natural impulse to organize, if simply for the sake of stability. Therefore, institutional theory appears to be suitable for a study even in the volatile local cultural and political environment of South Africa.

Institutional theory facilitates understanding a complex environment, such as that of South Africa, because it seeks to incorporate a wide set of factors in the analysis of institutions. These factors would include local culture, historical circumstances, and distant technical systems. Scott and Christensen (1995) argue:

the institutional approach calls attention to a wide set of environmental influences. Organizations are recognized to exist in wider fields that can include influences not only in the near vicinity but also operating at distant locations. Organizations are recognized as being affected not only by present influences and pressures but also by past circumstances. Organizations are seen to exist not just as technical systems, exchanging resources, inputs, and outputs, but also as social systems, incorporating actors and relationships. Organizations are seen as being constructed and shaped by cultural systems embodying symbolically mediating meanings(p.310).

In addition, institutional theory highlights the phenomenon of *isomorphism*, the tendency of institutions to resemble each other and to share beliefs. Lant and Baum (1995) argue that it is useful to study the role that cognition and interactions of institutional participants play as a source of isomorphism.

Institutional theory is, therefore, an appropriate theoretical framework for the examination of NGOs. It permits a consideration of a key aspect of the institution, the cognitive frames of the participants, as well as the larger environment in which institution is situated. This is particularly useful if there are conflicts, contradictions, and dissonances within the institution, as well may be the case of an educational NGO in South Africa. Within institutional theory, the work of Richard Scott stands out as one of the most comprehensive descriptions of institutions. His multi-dimensional model suits the purposes of this study well.

Scott's Three Dimensional Model of Institutions

Scott is one of the foremost proponents of institutional theory. He proposes an integrated theory of institutions based on a continuum of elements which are interconnected or layered. He terms these three elements "pillars", or interpenetrated dimensions of institutions which can be examined categorically. They are labeled *regulative*, *normative*, and *cognitive*. Scott differentiates these dimensions of institutions in several ways, including the basis of compliance, mechanisms, logic, indicators, and basis of legitimacy. Each dimension can be described using distinct yet inter-related data sets from a wide variety of sources. This feature of the theory is instrumental in constructing a detailed and comprehensive analysis of an institution, such as is required in this case study. The basic elements of this description of institutions are described in Table 1. There are several parameters by which the dimensions can be differentiated.

Table 1: Scott's Three Dimensions of Institutions

The Three Dimensions of Institutions			
	Regulative	Normative	Cognitive
Basis of compliance (the essential rationale behind the conformity of the institution to specific pressures)	expedience	social obligation	taken for granted
Mechanisms (the causal system of conformity)	coercive	normative	mimetic
Logic (the internal character of the basis of compliance)	instrumentality	appropriateness	orthodoxy
Indicators (the significant manifestations of a dimension)	rules, laws, sanctions	certification, accreditation	prevalence, isomorphism
Basis of legitimacy (the source of the basis of compliance)	legally sanctioned	morally governed	culturally supported, conceptually correct

Source: Scott (1995, p. 35)

Regulative dimension

The first dimension in Scott's model is the description of an institution at the widest level of its context. The regulative dimension is concerned with rules, sanctions, and other coercive mechanisms which impinge upon the institution. These are typically legislated laws and policies, but can also be unavoidable requirements imposed by other actors, or pressures to which expedience demands conformity. Sanctions and controls can be self-enforced but they also frequently involve a third party, including the state. The basis of compliance in the regulative dimension is *expedience* and its logic is instrumentality. In other words, institutions respond to regulative pressures for strategic and purposive reasons. Mastery of certain technical outputs, for example, reporting procedures or management systems, may be a reflection of these regulative dynamics. There can be overt punishments for rule breaking as well as more subtle technical controls of outputs.

The regulative dimension of institutions does not consist only of formal rules, but also includes informal rules which are tacitly understood. As Scott (1995 p. 36) states, "Force and fear and expedience are central ingredients of the regulative pillar, but they are tempered by the existence of rules, whether in the guise of informal *mores* or formal rules and laws". From an economic and political point of view, discussion of the regulative dimension almost always involves some analysis of the role of the state as the predominant political actor. States often enjoy technical legitimacy in regulating non-state institutions, although frequently conformity to state policies is mediated by factors such as anticipation of future policies or subjective interpretations of policies.

There are also regulative requirements stemming from institutional environments. Some institutional analysts argue that organizations experience "isomorphism", i.e. the tendency to resemble other organizations in their environments, through mimetic, coercive, or normative pressures (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991b). Institutional theory posits a series of important connections between organizational form and the organizational environment. It argues that the formality of institutions is a result of the existence of powerful cultural rules in the form of cognitive and normative frameworks. These frameworks can act to regulate the forms institutions may take. Rationalized components such as accounting, legal representation, and personnel systems, which are evident in formal organizations, can increase legitimacy (Scott & Meyer, 1994b).

Normative dimension

The second dimension of institutional theory encompasses patterns of accreditation, and social and moral expectations. The basis of compliance here is *social obligation* and its

logic is appropriateness. Institutions are described at the normative dimension in terms of social coherence and consistency as well as ritualized practices. There may well be indirect strategic thinking behind conformity to external pressures, but, unlike the regulative dimension, there is a perception of choice rather than coercion. Within the normative dimension there are informal, even unspoken, rules for behaviour or routines. Behind these rules are values which are defined as, "conceptions of the preferred or the desirable together with the construction of standards to which existing structures or behaviour can be compared and assessed" (Scott, 1995, p.37). These values are linked to embedded cultural and social constructions which can be described in the cognitive dimension, discussed below. A key element in this dimension is legitimacy. Within institutional theory, legitimacy is not just a resource to be possessed, "but a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws" (Scott, 1995, p. 45). These informal rules allow for stable systems of social interaction. Whereas the formal rules in the regulative dimension are usually legally sanctioned and coercive, the informal rules in the normative dimension are more morally governed.

Any institution, large or small, must be considered in light of its environment. Every environment contains a "variety of sources and types of symbolic or cultural systems... [Organizations] exercise some choice in selecting the systems with which they connect" (Scott, 1991, p.181). Hence, an institution may be confronted with conflicting pressures which may produce disputes about the appropriateness of various rules and practices. These normative rules can be the result of bargaining and ongoing negotiation among various parties. Knight and Ensminger (1998) have shown that even among groups with asymmetrical power relations there is a complex process of bargaining that occurs, and it can be affected by ideological commitments. "Thus, when ideological beliefs enter into consideration of the relative merits of possible norms, they will complicate the task of assessing the costs and benefits of the different alternatives. In so doing, ideology can alter the bargaining process in many ways, the most important of which involves the willingness of both the powerful and the powerless to maintain existing commitments and accept proposals for change" (p.108).

Analysis of the normative dimension reveals how social practices shape individual behaviour and processes by which choices are morally legitimated and isomorphically reproduced. It is not always a rational process. As March (cited in Scott 1995b, p.xvi) describes it: "The criterion is appropriateness, rather than consequential optimality. The terminology is one of duties and roles rather than anticipatory decision making." In other words, the rational choice orientation emphasized in the regulative dimension is replaced by an interest in social artifacts such as routines, roles, and perceived obligations, which may or may not have an overt strategic character. From an institution's environment flow many values and notions of behaviour which may or may not be internalized and reproduced depending on such factors as their source, frequency, intensity, and resonance with the regulative and cognitive

dimensions of institutions.

Cognitive dimension

The cognitive dimension refers to the social constructions which mediate individual perception and participation in institutional activities. It differs from the normative dimension in that its basis for compliance is taken-for-granted and the logic is orthodoxy. The cognitive dimension is focused on individual or group frames of reference and internalized symbolic representations, rather than simple conformity to social conventions. Individuals have shared assumptions about the *meaning* of institutional elements such as routines, goals, roles, rules, and controls. These symbolic representations are derived from cultural sources and social practices with which individuals interact and use to mediate experienced reality and create further social constructions. As Friedland and Alford (1991) argue, "Society is thought as it is enacted, and social solidarity depends upon the extent to which 'classification, logical operations and guiding metaphors' are held in common" (p. 251).

As with the regulative dimension, there is a role for isomorphism because individuals negotiate their self-definitions through others who bring some already formed definitions with them. Individuals engage in social practices which contain shared meaning, but they also bring to social interaction their own unique personalities and moment-to-moment reactions. "A person's self and mind are, therefore, intrinsically social processes" (Layder, 1994 p. 59). Hall and Taylor (1997) also note the significance of the interaction between the person and institutions: "When they act as a social convention specifies, individuals simultaneously constitute themselves as social actors, in the sense of engaging in socially meaningful acts, and reinforce the convention to which they are adhering. Central to this perspective is the notion that action is tightly bound up with interpretation" (p.948).

The cognitive dimension of institutions underscores the fact that individuals work with many "taken for granted" assumptions, and that belief systems and cultural frames comprise a process-oriented "structuration" wherein social structures are viewed as both product and content. "Structures are the result of past actions—social products— as well as the content or medium within which ongoing action occurs" (Scott 1995, p. 52). Giddens asserts that individuals have a *practical consciousness*, a partly unconscious level in which individuals tacitly know but cannot articulate conditions of their actions (Bryant & Jary, 1991). Giddens emphasizes that the micro reality of an individual's actions and beliefs and the macro reality of social structures are interconnected. There is a duality of structure in which human beings creatively and intentionally find personal meaning in everyday experience, but also that everyday experience produces unintended but very real social structures (Layder, 1994). As Scott (1995b) summarizes it, "institutions are not so much bundles of regulations or collections

of norms, but knowledge systems... Social categories and typifications help us to determine what things and people are similar, and thus are to be treated according to one set of rules, and what other things and people are different, and are thus to be treated differently" (p.xviii).

From the cognitive perspective the focus is on how individuals assign meaning to what they are doing, how symbolic elements are collectively held (or not), and how they are "carried" or repositied. Many of these cognitive processes can be traced to the larger institutional environment which would include dominant and 'sub-dominant' cultures. As Powell and DiMaggio argue, the environment of an institution has subtle influences. It penetrates the institution, "creating the lenses through which the actors view the world and the very categories of structure, action and thought" (1991a, p.13). As innovations gain legitimacy and symbolic power over time, they begin to act as filters and markers which guide subsequent perceptions. This diffusion of symbols is important in understanding an institution as a whole (Strang & Meyer 1994). As Scott (1995) argues, it is important to privilege the role of cognitive processes: "Environmental stimuli must be cognitively processed by actors — interpreted by individuals employing socially constructed symbol systems—before they can respond by taking action" p.xiii).

One aspect of studying the cognitive dimension that is particularly applicable to institutions like NGOs, which tend to be peopled by individuals who are committed to certain social visions or moral imperatives, is the focus on identity rather than just roles. As Scott argues (1995 p. 44), "the cognitive framework stresses the importance of social identities: our conceptions of who we are and what ways of action make sense for us in a given situation. And rather than focusing on the constraining force of norms, cognitive theorists point to the importance of scripts: guidelines for sense making and choosing meaningful action." This more accurately describes the participants at an NGO than would be the case if description ended at the normative level. The participants are better defined in terms they would recognize, such as "a liberator" rather than "a person who gives workshops". Identity is inherently more complex than role. The metaphoric lens that an identity confers gives us a much better idea of the inter-relationship of the participants and the significance of shared meanings they hold. For instance, the metaphor of being a friend or a haven can tell us a lot about the assumptions of the participants about the nature of the environment for the institution, and their role in it. The work of Leach (1995) on host-counterpart consensus also supports this conclusion that it is vital to understand the world view and identity of the participants in the development process.

Summary: Continuity and Dissonance Across and Within Dimensions

Scott's three dimensional model of institutions provides for three distinct and manageable arenas of investigation, while at the same time allowing interesting investigations

across dimensions (Baum 1998). The notion of a layered model presents an opportunity to examine the documented complexities of institutions like NGOs with their multiple accountabilities and roles, and their potentially conflicting relations with other key actors like the state. There are two basic foci for examinations of dissonance: within dimensions and across dimensions.

It is possible to investigate tensions and contradictions within the dimensions of an institution. However, if there are practices which are mutually exclusive or self-contradictory, this may produce an dissonance. For example, if an institution was designated as a non-profit, community organization, but its members behaved as if it were a profit-oriented business designed to give them jobs, this might be contradictory. Another example might be if there were competing interpretations of the rules or obligations impinging on an institution among its participants. If they defined critical terms in different ways, this conflict might become a serious dissonance over the long term.

It is also possible to examine an institution in terms of whether there is antagonism or tension across its dimensions. Any institution will naturally have themes which characterize its activities based on its goals and essential functions. If the themes which run through the institution show continuity, especially the conceptually correct and culturally support social constructions held by the participants, then the effectiveness of the institution is likely to be enhanced. But this might be the case if there are contradictions among the dimensions which may come in several forms. If an institution had practices which contradicted the values of its members, there would be potential for dysfunction and ineffectiveness. For example, if the participants strongly believed in the value of shared decision-making and balanced power relationships, but implemented management systems which were hierarchical and deferential, this might reduce morale and erode consensus among the participants about the ideals of the institution.

The emphasis of Scott and others on the cognitive dimension will allow consideration of the intricate systems of meaning and assumptions behind the activities of NGOs in Africa, and permit an examination of the conflicts, dissonances, and dysfunction highlighted in the literature. In particular, inquiry into the interaction of the three dimensions of NGOS in South Africa may be instructive. As Scott asks, "Do normative and regulative structures operate within cognitive frames?" (1995 p. 145). Given the social turmoil in South Africa, and the constraints and contradictions affecting NGOs, this study presents an opportunity to examine a case where the dimensions may not indicate continuity. A related issue is concerned with how and when are all three dimensions are mutually supportive and reinforcing. Scott also calls for more assessment of how individual institutions cope with complex institutional pressures by such strategies as manipulation, defiance, or avoidance (1995 p. 129-132). The concept of mutually reinforcing (or antagonistic) institutional relations also may allow a deeper

understanding of how NGOs might cope with multiple roles or accountabilities, or bridge cultural and social gaps. Stone (1996) argues that there is a need to study institutions which exist in multiple environments with clashing institutional logics. This may be the case with NGOs and their multiple accountabilities.

The present study may fulfil two purposes: deepen our understanding of NGOs and break new ground for institutional theory.⁸ Through this investigation, it will be possible to better understand the evolving character of NGOs in South African education, and by extension, sub-Saharan education in general. The three issues discussed above which confront NGOs, accountability, partnership, and empowerment, appear to have great potential for both continuity and dissonance. Scott's model of institutions provides a wide avenue for analysis of how NGOs cope.

Research Questions

1. What are the essential characteristics that define the regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions of an educational NGO in South Africa?
2. To what extent are these characteristics continuous across and within these three dimensions?
3. To what extent are these characteristics dissonant across and within these three dimensions?
4. What are the implications of these institutional relations of an educational NGO for educational policy and practice in South Africa?

New Institute for Professional Achievement (NIPA)⁹

⁸ Institutional theory has is part of a historical tradition of the study of institutions whose subject matter has mostly been concerned with western social institutions such as parliaments (Immergut, 1998). Recent applications of institutional theory have continued in this direction, and have generally been confined to the study of large scale formal institutions. For example, it has been used in studies of the Manhattan hotel industry (Lant & Baum, 1995), hospitals (Rue & Scott, 1998), community colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1991), and schools of business (Borum& Westenholz, 1995). Only a few studies, such as Stone (1996), have focused on the non-profit sector, and none, to the knowledge of the researcher, has focused on NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. As noted above, there exists a need for full and wide-ranging analysis of these prolific but problematic institutions which goes beyond description.

⁹ A pseudonym.

To investigate the institutional relations of an NGO, a case study which would encompass the institutional dynamics of interest was required. The case selected was a medium-sized educational NGO operating in South Africa. NIPA is run by a management board overseeing several executive staff. It is a national NGO with about 40 staff. NIPA runs programs in diverse areas that include teacher training, science promotion, early childhood education, school governance, information technology training, community policing, and resource centre support.

The history of NIPA should be situated within the history of NGOs in South Africa. NGOs had a prominent place in the struggle against apartheid. Like many political parties such as the ANC, and labour groups such as COSATU, NGOs had to operate in a political environment that was volatile and often repressive. Donor money for NGOs often had to be routed through channels which would not attract the government's attention. Through the 1970s and '80s, violence, tribalism, and adversarial political relations made it very difficult for basic institutions like schools to operate outside of white areas. These institutions were vastly under-supported to start with, and had few resources to fall back on. NGOs concerned with such issues as human rights, education, and health had to rely on their own fund-raising to a large extent, and operated under difficult circumstances. NIPA was typical of many (initially) small NGOs which started to address the effects of apartheid on education out of local resources. Other examples would include the Get Ahead Foundation and the Community Law Centre. There were perhaps hundreds of such NGOs.

By the early 1990s, and especially with the un-banning of the ANC and with the imminent dissolution of apartheid, donor aid began to flow. The EU was a major contributor, as was the US, Sweden, and Switzerland. Most of the reconstruction effort was executed through NGOs. There were also some active private foundations including the Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation (which is still a funder of NIPA today). Some local corporate donors, such as Mercedes-Benz, also began to be active. Many NGOs which had been instrumental in the provision of services during apartheid became very active in the extension and reformation of social programs in the post-apartheid era. The sectors included education, health, legal services, community development, childcare services, and agricultural programs, among many others. There was also a concurrent migration of NGO personnel into government with the result that many NGOs were highly networked. The government undertook many reforms under the interventionist policies known as Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). These policies reflected many of the traditional concerns of NGOs such as the extension of social services and the improvement of social equity for disadvantaged groups. RDP was the main channel for the flow of donor funds.

NIPA was formed in 1987 as a partnership between a white woman (Gayle) and a black man (Stan) who were interested primary level teacher education and early childhood

development. It was lucky to be well-endowed from the beginning, perhaps due to the business community connections of the founders. But it was also clearly aligned with the opposition. For example, Stan was questioned by the security forces because of his association with the ANC. The activities of NIPA expanded quickly after 1990 as it began to work in the local township and rural areas where there were few services. It also diversified into many program areas with different donors for each. Donors tended to spread their resources across provinces. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation in 1999 had 12 ECD and other education projects throughout South Africa.¹⁰ Therefore institutions like NIPA often had to piece together support for programs and general administration costs from many sources.

It was typical of many medium-sized NGOs in education and other sectors that they sought to consolidate their positions. There was a general fear, later shown to be well-founded, that once the 'new' South African state was launched, donors would direct their resources elsewhere. NIPA was not immune to this trend and had suffered a 10-person retrenchment (from a staff of about 50) in 1998. Many NGOs actually failed to survive the drastic reductions of funding. There were also many who were not prepared for the high levels of accountability demanded of NGOs after 1994. NIPA had the advantages of strong legitimacy based on its early pre-apartheid work and the high quality of its programs, as well as useful networks in donor, government, academic, and corporate circles.

Currently, NIPA has several established partnerships with other NGOs as well as a role for policy advice with the provincial Ministry of Education. NIPA's approach to development emphasizes networking and community participation. Its mission statement (1997) described it as a "community based development institution which strives to build capacity and empower communities through the provision of holistic educational programs, addressing needs through access to skills, training, and resources." Its funding is from a variety of sources, including trusts, private business, and USAID, with in-house fund-raising making up about 30% of the total budget (1995). NIPA has been very successful in winning contract tenders, and diversifying its funding in an era which has seen the demise of many similar NGOs. The recipients of NIPA work are quite varied, ranging from teachers, student teachers, education workers, and adult learners. NIPA is also partnered with other NGOs in consortia on many of its projects. NIPA's management board is multiracial and includes representatives from business, unions, and other institutions such as the local university. Like many other NGOs which attempt to promote consultative, non-hierarchical approaches, NIPA uses a 'participatory management' system.

NIPA fits very well into the category of an NGO with multiple accountabilities and paradoxical relations with the state. It has powerful networks and institutional relationships and

¹⁰See: <http://www.rbf.org/sagrant99.html>

a diverse group of recipients. It has many different donors, but many overlapping and thematically connected programs. NIPA's programs put it in the mainstream of state and donor efforts to reform education in South Africa. Its goals are primarily related to support for education, but include explicit notions of social transformation. NIPA appears to be a successful and progressive institution at a key historical juncture of educational change and NGO restructuring in South Africa. Therefore, an understanding of its complex institutional relations will permit significant insights into the role of NGOs in South Africa's evolving educational system.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the pertinent literature on NGOs, South Africa, and institutional theory. It has presented NGOs as institutions with a character that is inherently complex and potentially contradictory. In the context of South Africa's efforts at social transformation through education, NGOs have had a pivotal role, but one which may be marked by dissonances related to the difficult issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment. It has also been argued that institutional theory provides an excellent framework for the investigation of NGOs that function in the complex and turbulent institutional environment of sub-Saharan Africa. NIPA may be a typical example of just such an NGO and therefore would make a good case study. In the next chapter, the details of the study methodology are presented.

Chapter Three: Study Methodology

Introduction

The methodology used in this study is commonly used with qualitative research. Document analysis, observations, and informal and formal interviews were conducted in an effort to describe and analyze the institutional relations of one South African NGO. The research design contained pre-ordinate elements, although allowance was made for the use of data which would emerge in the course of the study. The themes of accountability, partnership, and empowerment were derived from the literature. The literature also provided some useful starting points related to the functions and nature of NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. As the data were collected, they were categorized into regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions using Scott's institutional theoretical typology. A process of initial coding was also begun, drawing on concepts from the literature and emergent concepts which were designated as significant in the study. As much as possible, efforts were made methodologically to understand what this NGO was doing in its own terms, and to establish the continuities and dissonances of the institution. The notions and perceptions of the participants informed the study, and attempts were made to triangulate the data. The analysis for continuities and dissonances, begun in the field, was completed over the succeeding months using various methods of coding, diagrams, notes, matrices and charts. This chapter provides details of the research design, field work, data collection, and data analysis as well as discussion about reliability and authenticity.

Research Participants

In terms of formally arranged and tape recorded interviews, there were 25 interviews with NGO staff, five interviews with outside personnel, and 20 interviews with recipients. In addition to this, there were very many informal interviews. There were many opportunities to discuss new NIPA and its internal and external activities, for example while traveling out into the field with NGO staff, while visiting Ministry offices, and while attending workshops. As well, there were many social occasions during which NIPA activities were discussed.

NGO Staff Sample

The sample of those formally interviewed for the NIPA staff had 25 individuals. This included nearly all the senior staff, all the trainers, most of the curriculum department, and most of the administrative group. There were 38 staff in total including two receptionists, a computer manager (who was interviewed informally), four house cleaning and maintenance staff, and some financial administration staff. Although I came to know these support staff

informally and to partly understand their views on NIPA and its work in general terms, they were not formally interviewed. The rationale for this decision was that both their interaction with the recipients and their participation in the programming and conceptualization of NIPA were very low. The administrative staff were already well represented in the sample.

Focus Group

Near the end of the field work a focus group for the NGO staff was conducted. A purposive sample of two men and two women consisting of a trainer, a resource person, a curriculum designer and a senior staff member was selected. It also represented different ethnic groups (two were Xhosa, one Afrikaans, and one English). A series of questions¹¹ which were designed to produce a synthesis of views was developed and each member of the group was given these beforehand to fill out if they wished. The focus group process itself was loosely structured around these questions, though it was fairly digressive. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances one Xhosa man and the English women were unable to participate at the last minute, although their written responses were obtained. With permission, these responses were shared verbally with the other two during the discussions.

Other focus groups for the NGO staff were unfeasible because many of the staff were out on training. For logistical reasons it was difficult to arrange a focus group for the recipient group because most of them lived in isolated rural areas and were only together for the purpose of the NIPA workshops. To conduct a focus group there would have seriously interfered with those workshops.

Key Informants

Key informants are introduced in order that the reader may have some understanding of proportions and relative importance of data. There is relatively less information presented about the recipients for the simple reason that there were not very many opportunities to gather more information about them. Most recipient interviews took place at workshops or out of town, and generally this was the only opportunity to get to know them. There was by contrast, frequent access to staff participants over a period of over six weeks. Although I saw many of the NIPA staff on a daily basis, most of these interactions were simply social, and I had no significant opportunity to discuss NIPA. However, there was a group of key informants with whom I had the chance to discuss and review what I was learning about NIPA.

¹¹ These questions also formed the basis of a formal interview with the director, with whom I enjoyed a lot of informal access over the course of six weeks.

The most informative individuals were Janey, the resource centre manager, Doris the deputy director, Roberta, a finance director, and Gayle the executive director. Also informative were Bruce, who managed the IT school in Umtata, and Ali, the IT manager. These informants' views in the analysis are given some greater weight because they held influential positions at NIPA; their comments were useful in triangulating the data. For purposes of clarity here is a brief description of key informants and their roles:

Janey— the popular librarian who had a desk across the room from me. She was a middle ranked manager, but she had a high level of responsibility as she was one of the few trusted to use the electronic security system. She was sharp and critical in her outlook, but very generous to everyone. She had a wry comment on nearly everything, and was by no means a sycophant for NIPA. She was English, but also spoke Afrikaans and Xhosa. She was a trainer as well as the resource manager, and was quite comfortable in variety of cultural settings. Jenny often was able to provide insights into issues like the motivation for new NIPA activities, personnel changes, logistics, and networking. She was able and willing to explain the comments of both recipients and staff. Jenny became integral to the iterative processes in the fieldwork.

Doris—the Afrikaans deputy director, and sometimes acting director due to the frequent absences of the director. She was just completing her MBA studies, and was responsible for many of the administrative changes at NIPA in recent years such the TQM approach. She was intelligent, helpful, and articulate, and had a strong no-nonsense personality. She was well-liked, but many found her to be intimidating. She was a strong leader, and tended towards a practical, forward-looking approach. She was helpful to me in explaining the environment of NGOs, and was very forthcoming in the provision of documents about NIPA. She was interested in the research project as a learning opportunity. I had access to her less frequently than Janey, but I conversed with her at least every couple of days. We also met outside of business hours for social reasons, and because her schedule was very busy.

Roberta— the senior administrative manager and a member of the executive committee. She was also a close friend of the director and had been a founding partner. Soft spoken, highly competent, and very warm-hearted, she was popular and efficient. She was highly capable of looking after details. She was very honest and helpful in relating to me the details of NIPA relations with donors and other groups. I saw her a couple times a week at NIPA, as well as a few times socially.

Gayle— the director of NIPA. I had the opportunity of interacting with her episodically, but also for extended time periods. Her husband was in Cape Town, and she was away frequently. Therefore she offered me her home to house-sit. I was at first worried that this might compromise the study, but our relationship proved to be professional and mutually

informative. Gayle was warm, honest, charismatic, and very eager to learn. She was a strong hard-working leader who mastered details quickly. NIPA in her eyes was a successful organization, and she was therefore quite open about its achievement and difficulties. I had many chances to discuss what I was learning about NIPA with Gayle when she was in town. She was very respectful regarding issues like confidentiality.

I also had the chance to discuss at length some of the issues facing NIPA with NIPA staff such as Brian, with whom I shared several long car rides, and Ali, with whom I discussed IT issues quite frequently. They also provided a balance to my perspectives as they were men in an institution dominated by women.

Recipient Sample

The sample of those formally interviewed for the recipient group consisted of 20 individuals. In addition, there were some five or six recipient interviews conducted informally without tape recording or a script of questions, though in some cases the interviews extended for 15 or 20 minutes. The recipients were selected on a subjective basis for typicality and familiarity with NIPA programs. As well, four main programming areas of NIPA were selected and representatives were chosen from these areas. These were information technology classes, the school governance body program, the outcomes based education program, and the diploma in education upgrading programs. Although NIPA had over 30 different projects big and small, these four were quite prominent in terms of size and NIPA's avowed core mandate. Almost all of the recipients were teachers at the primary level.

The sampling was not meant to provide an exhaustive description of every participant's viewpoint. Rather, it was meant to obtain streams of data in delineated areas, and to investigate these for patterns related to the institutional dimensions of NIPA. The recipient sampling was also supplemented by data from such sources as workshop evaluations, and by informal interviewing.

Supplementary Sample

Several other people were interviewed, including a board member (Tom), a representative of the regional NGO coalition (Susan), another NGO worker formally associated with NIPA (Manji), a donor representative (David), and someone from the university faculty that was partnered with NIPA in a teacher education program (Mary). Informal interviews were also had with two other donor representatives, and several teachers, principals, and Education Ministry personnel. These people provided a wealth of additional information, and in many cases useful documents.

Portrait of the Institution

Descriptions of the physical layout of the NIPA buildings are given in an effort to describe the iterative process of the fieldwork. The main facilities at NIPA in East London consisted of two medium-sized buildings situated across the street from each other. The main office building was formally a church and had a large front room which was a library and resource center. Adjacent to this was a reception area. At the back of this building was a very large hall capable of seating perhaps one hundred fifty people. There was also a computer lab with 25 computers, the kitchen area, and several other offices. The director, deputy director, another senior manager, and the IT manager all had offices in this building. There was a receptionist and switch board operator. The director had her own secretary. There was a senior resource and library manager, and a few library and IT support staff. Because it was not originally an office building, the traffic flow was a bit jumbled but the end result was most people had access to most offices; there was limited privacy.

Only the director had a truly private office with a secretary at a desk between that office and the rest of the people. I was given a desk in a corner of the library hall from which I was able to see all the traffic coming in through the front door. I was able to speak directly to the library manager, as well as speak to the director whose office had another door right beside my desk. Visitors to the director usually passed right beside my desk and if I were there, she would introduce me.

The library hall was the center of many activities at NIPA. It was open to the public and frequently students would be there reading books, viewing videos, or checking into the career guidance materials which were available there. The front reception and main switch board were adjacent to the library. A logbook for private telephone calls was also kept there. This meant there was a lot of traffic and activity in this area. Many of the staff would come to the library to write their fortnightly reports, use the photocopier, or access the Internet. The IT staff, one manager and two teachers, were in a space nearby, and there was a fair amount of congenial interaction. For example, if someone were to go to the kitchen area to get coffee, typically they would take orders and bring the coffee back. It was a warm and convivial place.

The library resource manager, Janey, soon became one of my key informants. Across the street from this main building was another smaller building which held several adjoined offices, which housed the curriculum department, the trainers, the finance department, some clerical staff, and another reception area. There were also some meeting rooms in this building. There was a fair amount of traffic back and forth across the street and some friendly

competition for status between the two buildings. For example, a thank you card had to be sent twice, one to each building, so no-one would be left out. This building also served as a reception area, though the visitors were few because most visitors met with the senior staff across the road, or they were there for classes or library access. I was often able to use the spare rooms for interviews in the smaller building, and to observe what was happening there.

Research Design

Hybrid approach

The methodology for the study had both pre-ordinate and emergent elements in its design. It had four research questions to be answered through a case study analysis with specific starting points from the literature to guide the analysis. At the same time there was an emergent element to the research design in which the social constructions at the interface of the NGO staff and recipients were inductively examined. As themes and patterns emerged, they were explored under the general parameters of what the NGO's programs were supposed to be about and the meanings and assumptions of the participants. As Tom (1996) argues, it is important to be open to the idea that research plans will evolve in the course of a project.

The epistemological framework was therefore a hybrid of constructivist and traditional positivistic approaches. This is the primary reason for using a constructivist approach. On one hand, an authentic examination of social constructions in a local context demands that they be described primarily in their own terms, and not forced through a rigid process aimed at generalization. Therefore, the data collection and analysis, particularly in relation to the cognitive dimension, was designed to be open to the potential for uniqueness in local social constructions. Allowance was also made for themes and concepts which would emerge in the field.

On the other hand, the literature did provide some useful starting points, notably the three critical issues facing NGOs. It was assumed that context is an crucial aspect of the study of institutions. The importance of establishing a context for locally constructed knowledge is founded upon the possibility of treating knowledge as accessible and describable in a larger sense. The institutional dimensions, particularly the regulative ones, may have been unique to the case study but they were also possibly applicable to other similar cases. Therefore, the research was conducted with a view to conceptualizing the social constructions at the NGO - recipient interface while at the same time assuming that this knowledge may have usefulness elsewhere. This quasi-deductive approach is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994) who argue that it is possible to move systemically beyond the data related to one unique case. Creswell (1998) describes a continuum for case study research related to the question of

whether theory precedes the research or issues from it, as would be the case with “grounded theory”. This investigation lies placed halfway along that continuum with the framework of institutional theory guiding the research and with clearly identified issues derived from the literature. But, at the same time allowance was made for emergent themes and evolving interpretations.

Case Study Features

An instrumental case study approach was chosen for this research because it was hoped that it would shed some light on the context for education NGOs in South Africa at this time (Stake 1995). While extensive generalizations may not be possible, it may contribute “generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or from applying it to a population of cases” (Creswell 1998 p.154). Therefore the sampling was purposive. The choice of studying only one NGO was predicated on the idea that the research was aimed at examining a fertile source of data, the social constructions at the local level concerning education and NGOs. The NGO was chosen because it was working in the mainstream of education in South Africa and therefore have some measure of typicality. For example, the NGO had to have significant institutional relations with the state, a key area of interest identified in the literature.

This case study also made use of data from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations and documents. They were analyzed in a holistic manner in an effort to describe the unique story of this NGO. Stake (1995 p.44) relates this approach to the notion that phenomena are “typically related to many co-incidental actions and understanding that requires looking at a wide sweep of contacts: temporal and spatial, historical, political, economic, cultural, social, and personal. Thus the case, the activity, the event, are seen as unique as well as common”. The presentation of the data is organized so as to include vignettes, interview excerpts, and narrative. The findings chapters reflect the three dimensions of institutional theory in progressive layers of abstraction using the framework of the institutional themes, accountability, partnership, and empowerment. The goal was to tell the institutional story of NIPA, culminating with the critical cognitive dimensions. In each dimension, the analysis was oriented towards an examination of the three critical issues, and what continuities and dissonances were contained within them. At the end of this accumulative process, a global analysis of continuities and dissonances across dimensions was made possible. Iterative procedures were used to refine the analysis.

Before the fieldwork, intensive document analysis was undertaken to learn specific information about education and NGO activities in South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape province. This included reviews of the scholarly literature and reports in the popular

press, as well as information about NIPA itself. The document analysis continued in the field with materials which were only available locally. After an orientation phase, about 45 formal interviews were conducted as well as several informal ones. Observations also commenced. Towards the end of the field work opportunities arose for iterative processes of triangulation. Member checks and informal conversations were important elements of this process. Initial data analysis was begun in the field with particular interest in gaining data from the participants about possible dissonances.

Selection of the Case Study

As may be gathered from the literature review above, it was necessary to find an NGO which suited the purposes of the study and which was willing to participate. A search was conducted through mostly electronic means to find suitable NGOs in South Africa. NIPA emerged early on in that process, and it was soon apparent that it would be suitable. After initial referrals and contacts were made from Canada, negotiations about the scope of NIPA's participation were successfully completed. The general requirements for the NGO to be selected were the following:

It had to be a well-established NGO with the staff larger than a few people but not so large as to provide an overwhelming task in understanding its institutional relations. A very small NGO might not have had enough history or diversity to produce the rich data which would be appropriate. It was necessary to select a larger, more mainstream NGO with historical connections to education in South Africa. Such an NGO with longer term relationships also ought to have a significant number and variety of recipients to survey.

The NGO would have to be working in the area of main stream education, and be engaged with the significant other stakeholders such as donors and the state. This was necessary if questions of multiple accountability and dependency were to be examined. This would also permit insights into some of the realities surrounding South African education.

The relationship between the researcher and the NGO would have to be such that reasonably open access to data was possible, and that possibility existed for a cooperative interchange about the findings of the study. This would allow for richer and more authentic data sources and open up the possibility of triangulation.

NIPA fulfilled all of these requirements very well. It was a well established NGO with a solid service record dating back ten years. This was significant because it meant that it had long term relationships from the apartheid era and a reputation for high quality programs. It was started as a partnership between a white woman and a black man, which was fairly unusual for

that time. Presumably at least, it might mean a high level of legitimacy and mutual understanding between the NGO and the recipients. In addition, an historic relationship with the state, ranging from oppositional to partnership, would permit an investigation of this key aspect of NGO institutional relations.

Field work occurred from October to December 1998. From the very first face to face contact, the staff at NIPA were open and welcoming. They appeared to be confident that the institution was well-established and seemed very willing to be candid about what they were attempting and achieving.

Data Collection

Gaining Entry

During the field work phase of the research, I was very fortunate to be able to have excellent access to NIPA staff, activities, and records. The staff at NIPA was particularly welcoming and they provided me a desk in the large resource room where I could work. I was able to attend many meetings including board meetings, staff de-briefings, planning meetings, and official receptions. On the whole, people were friendly and anxious to be helpful. I was conscious of the importance of maintaining a professional distance from the participants and was very sensitive to cues about trust, relationships, and roles. At the staff meeting at which I was introduced I had the opportunity to explain about the purpose of the research and other issues such as informed consent and confidentiality. Arrangements were made for me to have access to the Internet and other services such as photocopying. It was agreed that these things would be done on a per cost basis. The director's secretary was very useful in connecting me with NGO staff who were going out into the field and I was able to go along on many trips.

It would be fair to say that I had a warm relationship with the NIPA staff. Some of the senior staff including the director had read my actual research proposal. They appeared to be intrigued and were interested in the findings of my research about NGOs. It was repeatedly emphasized that I was not here to evaluate NIPA nor was I to write a confidential report which would be submitted to the senior staff. This appeared to be readily accepted. In the back of my mind were the thoughts of Limerick *et al* (1996) who emphasize that the interview is a gift to the interviewer. At the end of my fieldwork in East London the staff had a small picnic for me in a nearby park and we parted on excellent terms. I had agreed to provide a "Memo of Insights" to NIPA at the end of the field work as part of our agreement about participation in the research. I did fulfill this agreement about the memo and the Director seemed quite grateful when she read it. NIPA appeared to be self critical and very open to comments which would serve to make the institution more effective and durable.

Interviews

The goal of the interviewing was to provide the participants the chance to reflect deeply on what guided their participation, under what assumptions they were working, what symbolic meanings they assigned to key items, what roles they saw for themselves, and other deeper concerns. This was an attempt to get at what Giddens calls *practical consciousness*, the underlying logic and metaphors that guide an individual's actions, and which mediate the regulative and normative dimensions (see Bryant & Jary, 1991). The interviews were semi-structured, with a script of questions from which the participants were free to deviate. There was an attempt made to be careful about predisposing towards certain answers or bringing in what Scheurich (1995 p. 249) terms the interviewer's "baggage".

The interviews were generally conducted during business hours in a private setting away from work or other activities. They were arranged by mutual consent with an emphasis placed on not interfering with other duties or events. They lasted on average around 40 minutes, though some were longer. Usually, there were discussions before the interview which centred on the purpose of the interview and the research project in general. Many of the insights and data used in the study were obtained during these informal discussions which were not recorded as part of the formal interview. These informal discussions also provided an opportunity for establishing a comfortable rapport between the researcher and the interviewees. The interviews content varied somewhat from one to the next as points were clarified and individual differences were accommodated. Sometimes questions were answered inadvertently or indirectly, and so not all of these questions were actually asked in every interview. Each of the NIPA staff who were interviewed signed a waiver of informed consent, although for many of the recipients it was decided that verbal explanations and agreements would be less intimidating, but still would be acceptable in terms of informed consent. It was decided in consultation with the thesis supervisor that for many of the recipients bringing out a long legalistic-looking consent form and asking them to sign it was too intimidating. Perhaps this was a reflection on the historical realities of apartheid in which visitors with white faces were treated with some suspicion at first. Therefore, informed consent was obtained verbally from most of the recipients

The setting for the staff interviews was usually the NIPA offices. For the recipient interviews it was either at the NIPA offices or perhaps in an unused classroom at a school. For record-keeping purposes actual names of participants were used in the transcript of interviews, but these were kept securely. A system of pseudonyms was instituted for the analysis.

Many efforts were made to signal that I was a separate party from NIPA and that I was not there to evaluate NIPA or had any role such as being a donor from overseas. Typically I

would arrive with NIPA staff to attend a workshop. I would be introduced as a visitor or researcher from Canada who was interested in education in South Africa. I usually spoke for a few moments to explain what I was doing and how I intended to be an observer. Then I would quietly take an unobtrusive spectator position, participating only if asked. On the whole, the recipients, who were mostly teachers, were very friendly and happy to explain what they were learning and what was happening in South African education. I used this time to try to select a typical recipient who would be willing and able to meet with me for a private taped interview. I never had a refusal. Sometimes the NIPA staff who knew the participants well suggested one or two people whom they knew to be articulate. There was never any sense of being given preselected candidates who would only give a favourable view of NIPA. My primary goal here was to select recipients who were typical in terms of their age, teaching experience, relationship with NIPA, gender, and other relevant factors. In general, this goal was achieved. For example, they were almost all female which was usual for NIPA programs. Through the NIPA trainers it was anecdotally confirmed that I had typical sample of recipients.

The taping of the interviews was done with a small battery-powered tape recorder. Usually a small test of whether the tape was picking up sound was conducted and this frequently offered the opportunity for a smile or a laugh which further put the participants at ease. In general there seemed to be very few concerns about confidentiality expressed by the participants. A couple of times during the staff interviews the participant asked, "Is this confidential?" when he or she was about to make a critical remark about another staff member. But this was not a frequent occurrence and the NIPA staff appeared to be quite trusting, given the fact that they sometimes expressed some serious dissatisfaction with the organization or their superiors. The sound quality from the tape recordings ranged from adequate to good, and batteries failed only once; in that case notes were taken. The interviews themselves were transcribed using dictation software. Only occasionally were there difficulties in understanding and these were usually related to questions of accent.

Question Development and Starting Points

Operational research questions were created and data frameworks were developed, mostly in the form of charts. These questions and a series of 'starting points' were produced based on an extensive literature review of NGOs and institutional theory, and in consultation with experts in the field. These experts included the thesis supervisor, a couple of people in the development field in Ottawa, and latterly, some new acquaintances in the NGO field in South Africa. Based on these operational questions, a series of interview questions for both NGO staff and the recipients was drawn up (See Appendix 1 on Master List of Questions). These questions were related to the three institutional dimensions as well as points of departure from

the literature such as Chambers (1996) on power reversals and Lalaye (1996) on indicators of democratic practice.

Once in the field the questions began to evolve which is indicative of the iterative processes in the research. For example, at the beginning there was a tendency to assume that there was conflict and tension within the institution and various kinds of gaps of understanding between the staff and the recipients. The field experience did not bear this out and the questioning was modified. Once the initial round of observation and adaptation to the field situation was completed, the interview questions and data collection frameworks were further developed and modified to suit the information which was prominent. While the questions for the recipients and the staff were not identical, they were intended to address the same underlying issues. It was a working assumption that the most interesting and authentic data would emerge after a positive working relationship with participants was established and as the context was better understood through first-hand experience. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize this triangulation of the data on the principles of credibility and confirmability within the locally constructed context.

Observations

There were many opportunities in six weeks to observe the activities at NIPA, as well to collect information about it from other sources. I enjoyed relatively unfettered access as an observer and I was pleased at the level of confidence into which I was taken. Over time naturally I began to understand more of the subtleties of the relationships and activities that I was observing. I also developed a circle of confidantes among the NIPA staff who were able to explain to me how things really worked behind the scenes. Here is typical instance of how this was helpful: one of the senior staff members was treated politely and with friendliness by everyone. However, it emerged over time that she had a legendary temper and could be manipulative and ambitious. My observations of her began to confirm this. So when she was making claims, for example, that a certain idea was widely supported by the staff, it was also possible to assume that they were conforming to her will but not necessarily completely supporting her ideas. My informants were able to help me (in confidence) to understand this staff member better.

There were several occasions in which simple observation provided an excellent source of data. These included events such as school openings, meetings with donors and teachers, and monitoring visits by NIPA staff to recipient sites. The NIPA staff seemed genuinely interested in demonstrating all aspects of their work and of the situation in schools in Eastern Cape province, and there was no indication that they were seeking to present exclusively a positive example. For instance, on one trip to the Butterworth area with a donor

representative, we were shown a school which had implemented some NIPA programs extensively, a school which had seen modest implementation, and a school where the NIPA workshops had had little success. It was clear there was no obvious attempt to hide 'failures'.

Extensive notes were taken during or immediately after all observations, and these notes formed the basis for further analysis and investigations. Care was taken to make sure that the note taking was done when appropriate to the situation and with consideration for possible influences on the people and events being observed. For example, if it were clear that individuals might change what they were saying if someone were writing down what they said, then note taking was done after the fact. Wherever possible, and in most situations, consent was obtained verbally regarding the taking of notes.

During these workshops I also had the opportunity to chat informally with other key actors such as ministry officials, school principals, and local community members. There was also a chance to visit the classes and observe the physical implementation of such programs as outcomes based education. On the whole people were excited to have a visitor at their school, particularly one from far away Canada. People seemed to be very forthcoming about the situations they experienced in their school, such as under-funding or implementation of a new curriculum. The details of the numbers and the locations of the observation opportunities given in Table 2 indicates there was a wide and varied range of data sources available during the fieldwork

Table 2

Summary of Observation Opportunities

Observations	
Number of days at NIPA offices:	18.5
Number of workshop days:	4.5
Formal NIPA staff meetings:	5
Informal meetings	10 +
NIPA meetings including donors:	4
Schools visited:	10
NIPA IT classes visited:	4

Documents

It was possible to obtain many useful documents in the field such as news clippings only available in East London, ministry documents, NGO coalition documents, NIPA reports, memos, workshop records, teaching materials, and project evaluations, among others. After an initial reading and note-making routine, the documents were sorted and filed by kind. Any points of interest were written down and a file of “thinking points” slowly accumulated. These points were then explored further in discussions with participants where possible and appropriate. Occasionally follow up documents were obtained. The news clipping file time frame extended from approximately 1996 to 1999, though there were a few relevant articles outside of this time frame. Searches were mostly completed electronically drawing from the main local newspaper, as well as some regional and national publications.

The value of these documents was two-fold: they were useful sources of data in themselves, and they assisted in the development of lines of inquiry that emerged in the field. For example, NIPA had undertaken an extensive exercise in the Development of Code of Ethics a year or so before. The code itself was quite revealing in its reflection of important values such as accountability, transparency and community inclusion. In addition the historical accounts of the staff members indicated that they perceived the exercise of creating the Code as something of a top-down process which had been imposed upon them by the senior staff. This informed the understanding of the participatory management system at NIPA. Although it was clear from other sources that the staff did accept many of the values in the code of ethics, there may have been some facade conformity. This provided a useful starting point for discussions and interviews on such issues as accountability and empowerment.

Withdrawal from the Field

Using the principle of *saturation*, the data collection was carried on until a sufficient sampling had been completed and the identified key categories and relationships had been apparently exhausted. As the data began to appear to reveal nothing new and initial analyses were being repeatedly confirmed, iterative processes, such as member checking, were wound down, and preparations for exiting the field were made. The member checking was done informally using the key informants. A typical instance was a conversation with Janey where interpretations of recent events were put forward, such as the meaning of accountability as related to a visit of donor representatives. Another example of member checking would be a review with the director of certain things she had mentioned about fiscal responsibility: did it indicate that social transformation was dependent upon NGOs being fiscally progressive or conservative, and whose values did this reflect?

Data Analysis

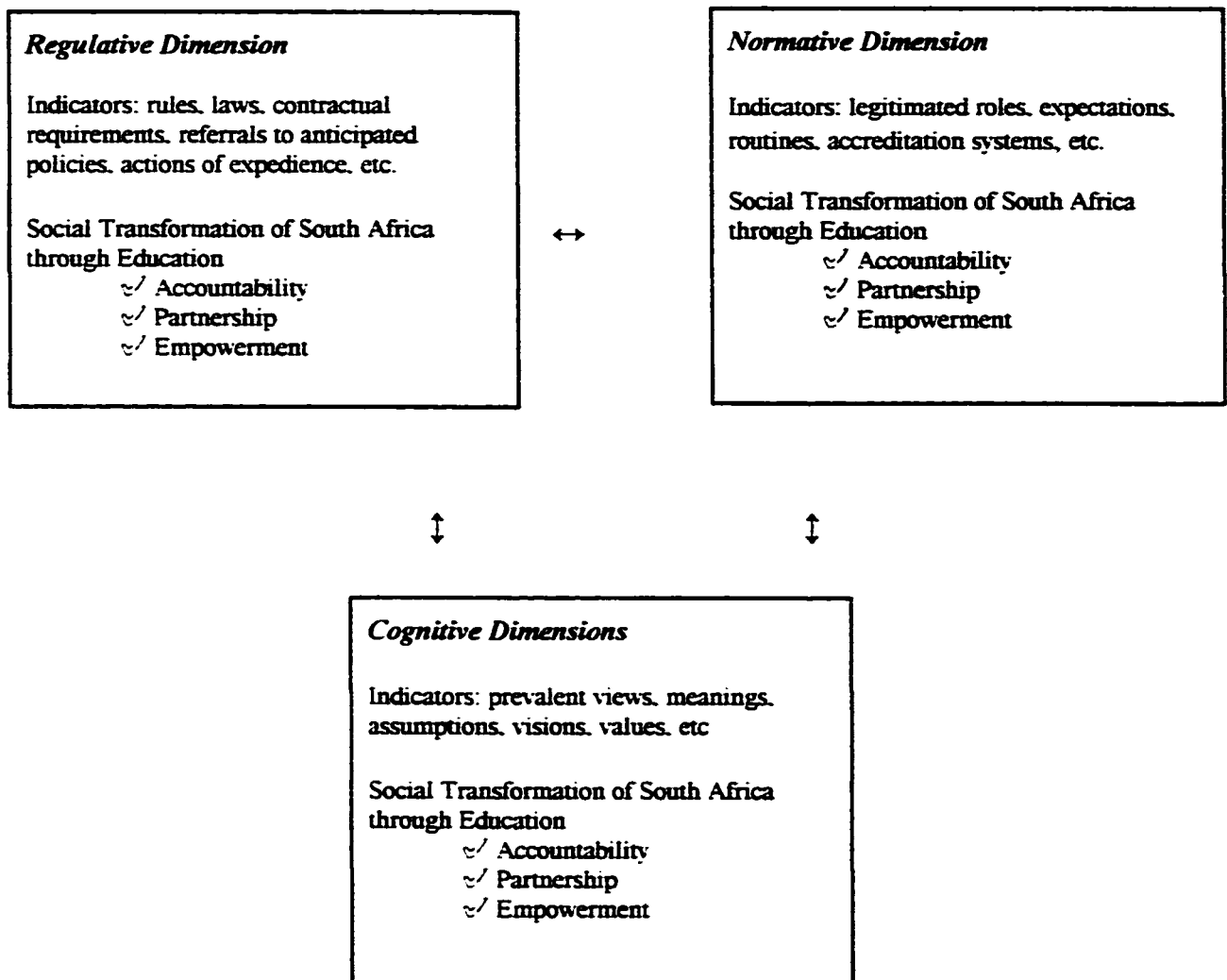
Introduction

The analysis of the data commenced while still in the field. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, it is useful to begin to examine the data for similarity and category assignment almost immediately upon collection. A basic set of codes had been devised and these were supplemented as shades of difference and new categories emerged. Daily logs and notes were integral to this process. Iterative processes were launched in the field to refine this initial analysis.

The data were thoroughly reviewed in two separate processes: one for thematic assignment and one for institutional dimensions. As noted earlier, the formal presentation of the data in the first three findings chapters varies, which was a reflection of the analysis. The chapter on regulative dimensions examines the data by source because this most closely resembled the way the participants looked at the regulative forces bearing upon NIPA. It indicate a more externalized perspective equating to ‘This is what we have to do according to the [donors, etc.]’ Thematic patterns were of course also noted in this process. The normative and cognitive data were grouped by using thematic categories because this reflected the participants’ holistic experience of NIPA. It equated to ‘This is what we do here’ or ‘ This is how we look at it’.

Once the basic coding was done using charts and notations in transcripts and documents, a prose narrative analysis was written. This was refined through a series of revisions with special attention paid to gaps, inconsistencies, and typical instances. Lastly, a global level of analysis, beginning with charts, was done centred on continuity and dissonance. (See summary tables at the conclusions of the findings chapters).

Figure 1. Analytical Framework



This figure graphically illustrates the main critical issues in the study of NGOs (accountability, partnership, and empowerment) which were conjoined within the ‘project’ of social transformation in South Africa. These issues are to be analyzed through the lens of institutional theory by examining the indicators for each dimension of the institution.

Iterative Processes of Field Work

Although this study had a general pre-ordinate design, in the field revelations naturally occurred which were incorporated into the analysis. Several issues arose for which it was deemed worthwhile to gather more data. For example, the network of people in and around NIPA was a very good source for data in the cognitive dimension on issues like accountability. These individuals had not originally been targeted for interviews. Since many of these people came from a range of ethnic groups and positions in other organizations, it was appropriate to obtain a deeper understanding of their viewpoints and history together. Other significant revelations included the fact that the regional NGO coalition was very active, and that NIPA was a prominent member of it. This appeared to enhance the normative pressures on NIPA from other NGOs; it was perceived as a leader in the field. The complexities of dealing with the state, and the widely held negative feelings towards the state's performance in education, were also an emergent reality. Questions about the possible effect of this as an institutional dissonance began to arise.

Another significant aspect of the relationship between the staff and the recipients also became clear once in the field. This was that the recipients commonly viewed NIPA very positively in terms of their subsequent empowerment of them but at the same time they showed indications of dependency upon NIPA. The recipients spoke in terms of feeling empowered, but acted, at least in the eyes of some staff, in a very dependent manner. This was a significant irony to many of the staff of NIPA who took a negative view of some of the recipients, but it did not appear to be consciously perceived by some of the recipients. Therefore it became clear that sometimes, rather than having shared meanings or assumptions, the social constructions around some issues were asymmetrical, though perhaps not antagonistic. In the analysis, then, consideration was made as to whether there was a lack of consensus or mutual understanding between the staff and the recipients, or whether it was asymmetrical but not antagonistic. Another factor in the analysis were the cultural differences which distinguished the recipient and staff groups. These had required slightly different approaches to interviewing. Judgements were made to allow for these differences.

Finally, it was possible to engage in a process of member checking in the field, generally with key informants. There were many opportunities informally to discuss insights into NIPA as an institution. Normally the data were captured in field notes. At appropriate moments, discussions would be initiated about observations and input was solicited. As a result, many insights were refined. A typical example was a discussion of some observations of a computer class group assignment to design money-making projects like greeting card designs. I thought it was an indication of a focus on partnership, but an informant told me it was intended to be about empowerment and economic self-sufficiency. The focus group also was a chance to present an initial analysis of NIPA. A "Memo of Insights", written as part of the agreement for NIPA's

participation, was a good discussion document, particularly with the director of NIPA. It was discussed very near the end of the field work.

Definitions and Codes

The coding of the data was begun in the field, as mentioned above, with notes being made in daily logs about issues that had arisen or quotations which were particularly relevant to certain issues. Similar to the notions of Miles and Huberman (1994) of 'clumping data', a list of 'thinking points' based on the issues of accountability, partnership and empowerment was initiated and developed over the course of the field work. A system of letter codes was devised in the review of the data. For example, for the main three issues, accountability, partnership, and empowerment, this included the letters A, P, and E. For the three dimensions R, N, and C were used. Once the interview transcripts, documents, observation notes, logs, and notes were annotated in this way, a outline into which to place the data was developed.

The three main issues soon appeared to have sub-issues, for example, networking emerged under partnership. A process of refinement and re-classification occurred as the data were reviewed to see if they were correctly placed or had multiple placement. The sorting of data by dimension was accomplished more or less concurrently. There was always an effort to find highly typical or representative data which could be used to vividly demonstrate a particular point. Once the basic shape of the outline was there, an attempt was made to tell an analytical story in prose. Early drafts of this 'story' were informally reviewed by a few others for coherence and readability. The comments of the thesis supervisor were also of great assistance in the process of getting the data understood and presented in a clear analytical manner. Finally, a review process was used to compare the prose and the raw data for gaps and any other emergent categories.

The coding for continuity and dissonance was mostly accomplished after this first round of coding, sorting, and presentation of the data was done. Naturally, points of contradiction and convergence were noted as the data were analyzed, but it was not until afterwards that this level of analysis was attempted. Analogous to putting together a picture puzzle, it only after the task is complete that you will know whether a pieces are missing or what the image really looks like. Logically, it is only possible to see if there is a dissonance or a continuity once the data are sorted, compared, and analyzed.

All three of the primary issues for NGOs were fraught with varying interpretations. Therefore it was appropriate to be open to a wide variety of definitions so that important distinctions (especially to the participants) were not missed. The main operational definitions included:

Accountability - this term was variously defined by the participants and there was significant contestation of it. For initial coding purposes, it was taken to refer to any system which

involved actions which were thought to be tied to reporting, feedback, or consequent responsibility.

Partnership - was defined as any grouping made for purposes of sharing decisions, responsibility, resources, and knowledge. There need not be equality of power in the roles of the partnership, but this was generally preferred by the participants and advocated in the literature (see Chambers, 1995; Lalaye, 1995).

Empowerment - this term was defined as any gain in politically, socially, economically, educationally, and psychologically by individuals and groups. Indicators of this change were primarily taken from the perceptions of the individuals and groups, and secondarily, with reference traditional measures such as spending power, access to decision-making, or access to education.

Continuity - was defined as consistency and alignment of thoughts and actions across and within the dimensions of an institution in relation to specific themes which characterize the institution's activities.

Dissonance - was here defined as inconsistency or contradiction of thoughts and actions across and within the dimensions of an institution in relation to specific themes which characterize the institution's activities.

There were also codes (symbols like check marks) related to frequency of reference, emotional intensity, and congruity of reference.

Analysis of Themes

The data were first categorized on three main issues which were identified in the literature and then secondly subdivided by issues which emerged in the field. The multiple data sources were useful. Often a theme would emerge from a series of documents, and then it was further investigated through interviews and observations. Creswell (1998 p. 154) describes this process as categorical aggregation when the researcher examines a "collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge". The list of the major themes (with the sub-themes which primarily emerged in the field) included:

- accountability

- transparency, probity, governance, reporting;
- efficiency, measurability, business orientation;
- accountability of the state;

- partnership and participation

- networking, collaboration, community inclusion;
- multiculturalism and participatory management;

- problematic relations with the state;
- *empowerment*:
 - personal empowerment;
 - empowerment at the community level;
 - inferiority and dependency;
 - modernization;
 - resourcefulness and self-sufficiency;
 - cascading;

It became clear in the course of the analysis that *within* the institutional dimensions of NIPA there were some thematic dissonances and inconsistencies. The thematic meanings of the data were noted using a system of codes and informal definitions. The transcription of the interviews was a useful exercise in this process. Key points of information, meaning, and underlying assumptions were identified and highlighted for later consideration. Since there was a delay of several weeks between the end of the fieldwork and the transcription of the interviews, a good balance was struck between the details of recent memory and the intellectual distance required for a global overview. As Stake (1995 p.12) argues, good case study research is “patient, reflective, willing to see another view of the case. An ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretation”.

Quite naturally there were some themes which emerged more prominently in some dimensions than in others, and with different significance. For example, accountability in the regulative dimensions generally was more related to the issues of reporting and measuring, but in the cognitive dimension it was more connected to professionalism and inclusion. However, it assumed that these concepts were not mutually exclusive. There were also natural differences which emerged between the NGO staff and the recipients because of their different situations and roles. In some cases the issues, concerns, values and meanings were more central to staff, or in other cases, the recipients. For example, participatory management was a theme contained in the school governance body program which many of the recipients were involved in. However, for NIPA staff, participatory management was strongly connected to the day-to-day administration of their organization. It had a history highly specific to them. So, although both groups had a connection to the theme, quite naturally its meaning was different for both of them. This was not necessarily an indication of disagreement or contested meaning. With other themes though, such as personal empowerment, there was substantial common ground of shared experience and meaning.

Asymmetry of interest was analytically important on some issues, for example, participatory decision making. This issue was a great concern for staff members working within NIPA and it was directly connected to pressures from its environment. However, for the

recipients, the process of participatory decision making had a different meaning because it applied within the workshops that were not part of a larger institution which encompassed their professional life. It was NIPA's intention to create a circle of learning and a network of professional development based around participatory modes within teacher groups that ideally would continue after NIPA's role was finished. Within these social groupings, participatory decision making was supposed to be the norm. However, this was not the same thing as having a daily, institutionalized interaction as the staff would experience working at NIPA. The result, in analysis terms, was it had to be accepted that some concepts would have different significance for the staff and recipients simply because of their individual situations. Adjustment were made to account for these differences.

Analysis of Dimensions

Upon returning from the field, a second review of all of the data was undertaken, and the data were identified as they applied to the three dimensions of institutional theory. The theoretical framework of institutional theory was revisited, and the markers indicated by Scott and others for differentiating the three dimensions of an institutions were used to consider the data. These included such aspects as the basis of compliance, internal logic, mechanisms, indicators, and basis of legitimacy (Scott 1995, p.35). (See summary table in chapter two). Although the three institutional dimensions were assumed to be interpenetrated, some information could be clearly linked to some dimensions more than others. For example, legislated regulations about tax status or labour standards were clearly in the regulative domain, although the assumptions and values behind them could be investigated in the cognitive dimension. The sources of data were also relevant to this categorization. For instance, written requirements from donors were classified as regulative while beliefs by the staff about the underlying dependency of recipients were considered as cognitive.

It was a working assumption during this process that the data obtained did have a basic coherence related to the fact that they were derived from a single institution within an specific context. South Africa's political, social, cultural and economic history, as well as the identifiable networks and institutional connections, among many other factors, gave NIPA and its participants a basic continuity. In other words, the social constructions described in the cognitive dimension were not considered to be completely unique and localized. It was assumed also that social constructions which underlay the regulative and normative dimensions did have some coherence with the surface manifestations of those dimensions.¹² This is not say that continuity was assumed

¹² It was also considered likely that the cognitive dimensions of other institutions which bore upon NIPA did have some continuity with NIPA. For example, the meanings, values and orthodoxy of those individuals who

to extend beyond a basic level, only that the dimensions were interpenetrated. In fact, the extent and nature of the continuities and dissonances of NIPA was a specific focus of research.

The sorting of data into the three dimensions also revealed that some of the data were relevant mostly in one dimension. For example, tax laws about auditing procedures acted coercively on the institution's accounting practices, but were of little concern to the recipients. It could be argued that within the theme of accountability, for example, financial reporting could be connected to a teacher's responsibility for collecting for students' fees. However, common sense indicated that they were likely somewhat distinct phenomena. In the layered model of institutional controls, Scott (1995 p.145) suggests that regulative systems may work at a somewhat more superficial level than cognitive frames. In general, whenever it was possible to identify a manifestation of a control, a practice or a belief system in more than one dimension, this was done in the pursuit of fully understanding the coherence of the institution.

Analysis of the Data by Theme and Dimension

The data were analyzed in a process which plotted the data under the main themes against their placement in the regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions. The purpose was to clarify the significance of the data, and build towards an overall understanding of the 'project' of NIPA. The themes were then used as a framework for categorizing the data within the structure of three institutional dimensions. This was a form of cross referencing aimed at clarifying the significance of the data. Again, Scott's framework was used to help place the data. For example, if a donor required that NGOs work in the consortia, and that partnership must include state officials and community representatives, then the basis of compliance for this was expedience and its mechanism was coercive. This was clearly in the regulative dimension. By contrast, notions of partnership could be identified as a typical and normal way of proceeding among various NGO people working in the community. For example, for the creation of a resource center for teachers, students, and the members which would involve many stakeholders, it was considered appropriate to consult with people such as head masters, school council members, and NGO people active in the region. Here the basis of compliance was social obligation and its logic was appropriateness, which identified it as being in the normative dimension. Finally, if partnership was seen as perfectly natural in cultural terms and was widely observed to structure the participants' view of the world, then its mechanisms could be considered mimetic and its basis of legitimacy was conceptual correctness. Therefore this would fit into the cognitive dimension. A sample form

wrote regulations and exercised coercive control of NGOs, such as legislators or donor policy-makers, could be judged to have some connection to their laws or policies. It was outside the scope of the research project to investigate all the social constructions of all the groups involved, though this might be the subject of further research.

(Table 2) is given below to give an idea of the process of this analysis. Data, such as requirements to work in consortia, were examined in regard to the basic parameters of Scott's typology, as well as parameters like source, frequency, and target. This process then concurrently helped in the consideration of the importance of the data in the overall description of NIPA as an institution.

Table 3.

Sample Analysis Form: Data by Theme vs. Dimension

(SAMPLE Form) Theme: partnership				
<i>Data</i>	<i>Dimensional elements (e.g. compliance, logic, indicators, etc.)</i>	<i>Notes on Origins or Manifestation</i>	<i>Reference Frequency and Target</i>	<i>Placement into regulative, normative, or cognitive</i>
Requirement to work in consortia	coercive, expedient, sanctioned	Documents and interviews; donor policies, noted in contract tenders, staff comments	- aimed at NGO policies - very prominent	regulative
Group work at debriefings and workshops	socially appropriate, ritualized, morally supported	Observed; perhaps derived from TQM team approaches, normal mode of meeting at NIPA	- staff and recipients in meetings and workshops - common	normative, perhaps cognitive
Statements by senior staff about the necessity to partner with the state	socially appropriate to the point of orthodoxy, conceptually correct	Interviews, perhaps stemming from donor policies, as well as personal conviction	- aimed at NGO policies, staff - common but often moderated	mostly cognitive but perhaps normative

These data reviews were very useful in setting up the last level of analysis, the consideration of continuities and dissonances.

Analysis Across Dimensions: Continuities and Dissonances

It is recognized that among the institutional dimensions of any institution there are quite naturally contradictions, mis-alignments, conflicts, and dissonances. Not all rules and policies are obeyed, and moral and social obligations are certainly open to individual interpretation. Commonly, individuals see the world in a variety of ways and beneath the surface of social harmony one often finds tension and conflicts. Institutions have histories which can be interpreted individually. It is normal to find that there is variation among individuals about what is happening in a given situation due to such factors as personal history, character, culture, and other biases. At different times in those institutional histories, individuals or groups have more or less power over the policy directions and activities of the organization. This in turn may lend their own biases credence and give them currency with others, or the reverse may be the case. One of the central reasons for using institutional theory as a framework was to have a useful perspective from which to understand the level and nature of these conflicts and dissonances, and to be able to relate them to a larger context. If no credible connection could be made to the larger context or there were some *prima facie* explanation for a conflict such as a personality clash, then this dissonance was given less weight.

An important process in the analysis of the data was determining the relations among the various institutional dimensions in terms of their continuity and dissonance. The assumption from institutional theory is that the dimensions are layered or interpenetrated, but there is also the possibility that there may be incongruence or conflicting logics. For example, at the regulative dimension there may be overt or subtle demands for certain kinds of technical accountability, but at the cognitive dimension these demands may be filtered down or understood in ways which contradict their original intent. Once the data analysis described above had been completed, a global examination of the data was accomplished. The main process was a comparison of the continuities and dissonances within each dimension to look for similarities and differences. A review of the subsection summaries and the conclusions in each of the findings chapters using charts and matrices assisted in this process. The following chart provides a sample of the kind of techniques used:

Table 4

Sample Table: Analysis for Cross-Cutting Themes: fiscal accountability

(Sample) Theme: <i>fiscal accountability</i>				
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Regulative dimension</i>	<i>Normative Dimension</i>	<i>Cognitive dimension</i>	<i>Continuity or Dissonance</i>
<i>Accountability</i>	<i>- demands for fiscal transparency</i>	<i>- strict auditing and other management system e.g. TQM</i>	<i>- belief in careful management and honesty (most participants)</i>	<i>moderate to high</i>

In the cognitive dimension there was differentiation made between staff views and recipient views in order that these be more clearly understood for their differences and similarities. The primary methodology used here was one of comparison and contrast. What was of interest at the level of individuals were clusters of difference, when one or more groups appeared to have a fundamentally unique set of perceptions. Along with this process, there was an examination for the proportions of the data. For example, if there were extensive manifestation of certain themes in the regulative and normative dimensions, especially for one group of participants, but little evidence of these themes in the cognitive dimension, this also hinted strongly at a dissonance. For example, the theme of empowerment was clearly identifiable in the regulative and normative dimensions of NIPA, and it appeared to be a powerful element in the consciousness of both the NIPA staff and the recipients. Therefore it was categorized as having a strong influence on the institution. By contrast, the data indicated a heavy influence on partnership at the regulative and normative dimensions, but at the cognitive level this appeared to be played out at times in contradictory ways. For instance, many recipients and staff scoffed at partnership with state officials, and NGOs were often competitive rather than collaborative. Therefore the influence here was categorized as moderate or even low.

The continuities and dissonances of the institution were generally described in terms of their particular qualities and features, and this analysis is found at the end of sub-sections and chapter conclusions. There was also a consideration of the level of consensus among the main participants about certain issues. In the regulative and normative dimensions, this assessment was necessarily conjectural given the limitations of the study. From this consideration of consensus, together with an overview of the continuities and dissonances in each dimension, a summary chart

was produced. The last column of the chart is entitled "Potential Impact of Dissonance". It indicates a speculation about the extent to which the dissonances for a particular theme in a particular dimension will have an impact on the institution. These interim conclusions were used to build the conclusions, particularly in answer to research question #4.

Lastly, there was a process of analysis regarding dissonances related to apparent causality. The data were reviewed in an effort to identify such elements as key actors, events, trends, and policies, and to determine if any of these key elements were ignored, inexplicable in terms of institutional theory, or explained in a contradictory way, or if these elements could be linked or connected to others in the institutional relations of NIPA. This was similar to the idea of axial coding favoured by Strauss and Corbin (1990) when an attempt is made to document the connections between data already coded into categories.

An unusual event at a NIPA staff meeting serves as an example. A senior manager had asked a Xhosa trainer to quickly compose a song in Xhosa which would be a ritual for their meetings. This was done and it was quickly learned, though it was seen as odd and somewhat artificial. Many of the singers were non-Xhosa speaking. But everyone joined in as best they could. The words of this song meant, 'we are all special stars shining together.' It was then sung the next day at a meeting with some donor representatives from Europe, and the intention was that it would be sung at each of the trainers' debriefings. It could be argued that this event was simply one manager's impulsive attempt to impress some donors. However, there was a wider context into which this event could be fitted. There was a widely reported and easily identifiable pressure at the regulative and normative levels to be seen to be "working together" in a multicultural way. An argument could be made that this pressure had significant causal effect on the composition of the song. This kind of causality analysis was carried out for all the data.

Reliability and Authenticity

The questions of reliability and authenticity of the data for this project must be considered within the framework of qualitative research. Notions such as replicability and generalizability were less emphasized because of the epistemological approach in the research design. Some of the data which related to the regulative and normative dimensions may have some generality though, for example, the legislated policies for NGOs and certain donor requirements. In these cases attempts were made to establish patterns among data sources. For example, the codes of principles and ethics from such diverse sources as legislation, donor policies, contract tenders, and NGO coalition documents were compared for consistency and variation.

Although there was no opportunity for involving other researchers in the fieldwork stage, consultations with various informed individuals were conducted afterwards. As stated above, the researcher - participant relations were to be very warm and there was no sense of holding information back or a lack of confidence which would inhibit the flow of information. In general

the emergent design elements in the research appeared to function well. There was a clear focal direction as cues and suggestions emerged and developed into themes which became the basis for the analysis. Some leads which looked promising did not produce interesting results, while others unexpectedly did. For example, one recipient interviewed early on spoke glowingly of a “NIPA spirit” but subsequent interviewees produced quizzical looks when this idea was presented to them. By contrast, references to self-sacrifice and disinterested professionalism did find great resonance among the participants, though they did not use these precise terms. There was also the process of learning the cues and terms which were meaningful to the participants themselves.

Attempts were made to engage in a cycle of consultation and incremental shifts of focus based on feedback received from the participants in the field around emerging themes. This was carried on to the level of apparent saturation. There were few key individuals at NIPA to whom I had nearly daily access, and with whom I could discuss ideas. Within the clear bounds of confidentiality, as data came in from interviews and other sources, I had the opportunity to ask for explanations and other research leads. Therefore an iterative approach was used, culminating in the focus groups and the final interviews with key individuals such as the director.

In sum, the reasonable sampling, the wide range and the number of sources of data, and the iterative processes all ought to speak favourably to the issues of reliability and authenticity. However, the study did have some limitations which should be acknowledged.

Limitations of the Study

This research project has some limitations which should be acknowledged. First, it is a case study of one NGO, which may limit its generalizability. While a single case study can provide useful and detailed analysis, it may or may not be comparable to other cases.

Second, the sample of participants in this case, while more than adequate, could have been wider to include some participants such as legislators, donor officials, officials from institutions such as the World Bank and UNICEF, and more representatives at the community level. Limitations of feasibility did not permit this.

Third, there were some cultural limitations, such as language, which, if overcome, might have permitted a deeper understanding of the participants’ social constructions. Everyone spoke fluent English but a different result might have been obtained if the researcher could speak Afrikaans or Xhosa. There may have been some limits placed on the study because of ethnic differences between the researcher and the participants, always a concern in a context like South Africa. Added to these limits were the limitations related to the fact that the fieldwork was done in Africa but the researcher was based in Canada. This hampered communications and highly restricted the possibility of follow-up fieldwork.

Fourth, the reliability of the data might have been enhanced by the use of inter-raters. This was not attempted in the field due to practical and financial limitations, though it might

have been done later for some of the document and interview analysis. A decision not to do so was made affected by various concerns. These included the fact that some of the interview and observation data were collected in person by the researcher in the field, and any subsequent reviewer might emerge with an incomplete and less accurate picture. But some of the other data, such as interview transcripts, could have been reviewed by others, and this remains a weakness in the study. It may have rendered the data less trustworthy and opened the possibility that the identified patterns were less pronounced. Against this concern, it can be argued that the data came from multiple sources, there were iterative processes used in the field, and that the 'story' of the data was informally reviewed by others on several occasions.

Fifth, there is always a question of completeness of the data collection in a study like this. The primary indication that the whole story was emerging was that the data started to provide the same insights as the known sources of data became effectively exhausted. However, the 'saturation' might only be superficial, and more useful data might have been obtained. As well, some information is not anticipated in the research, and only comes to light while in the field sometimes out of chance and good luck, an example being referrals to useful informants. Chance may or may not have provided serendipitous data. The use of institutional theory does not mean that the picture of the institution under scrutiny is necessarily complete. While it appears that most of the key actors, events and trends have been addressed in the analysis, it is difficult to know with absolute certainty that all of these have been considered, or to a satisfactory degree. There were also the cognitive dimensions of adjoining institutions, particularly those which exerted a regulative influence over NIPA, which might have had an impact on the participants at NIPA.

Sixth, there may have been factors at work which influenced the data but which were impossible or difficult to account for in the present study. For example, there was evidence that some recipient groups worked with several NGOs, often on similar programs, but in order to maintain the flow of resources, kept this secret from each of the NGOs. How this might have affected meanings and assumptions found at the cognitive dimension is difficult to assess. A larger study might attempt to develop a more intensive and detailed description of these realities at the community level.

Summary

This review has explained how the research study was designed and how the data were collected and analyzed. In each of the following chapters, the data relating to the regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions of NIPA are presented. In keeping with the case study approach and the traditions of qualitative research, a fairly high level of detail is provided. The purpose of this is to present as complete a portrait of the NGO as possible and describe the experience of the participants of working within its institutional boundaries. In the centre of this

description are the social constructions of the participants themselves. As much as possible their words are presented to give the reader a sense of how they experienced their institution. In each findings chapter, internal continuities and dissonances are examined. This is followed by a chapter on continuities and dissonances which cut across dimensions.

Chapter Four:

Findings: Regulative Dimensions

Introduction

Data in the Regulative Dimension

A brief review of what is meant by the regulative dimension will help to clarify the analysis which follows. The regulative dimension of institutions is concerned with rules, legislation, and other pressures with coercive power which impinge upon the institution. There is a spectrum of coercion, ranging from the possibility of mild sanctions and disapproval which might imperil future relations, to a strong certainty of sanctions and abrupt severing of contractual arrangements in the near future. The key conceptual points from institutional theory are that at the regulative level the mechanism is *expedience* and the logic is *instrumentality*. In simple terms, the focus is on what the institution must do, or appear to do, in order to survive. For most institutions, the key perception of the severity of these sanctions at the senior levels of leadership¹³ is a useful place to focus investigations of regulative pressures, and NIPA was no exception to this. Since threats and sanctions are by definition only real if they are perceived as credible, but often are not actually tested because they are avoided, it is difficult in some cases to describe the intensity of some regulative pressures because no action flows from them. However, there were often indications of anticipation and patterns of conformity at NIPA which demonstrated expedience (in relation to certain trends or rules). These were distinguishable from ordinary adherence to prevalent norms and obligations, which indicated they were regulative and not normative in terms of the theoretical framework for the study.

To clearly describe the possibly conflicting forces which bore upon NIPA, this chapter presents the regulative controls by origin, starting with the most influential, the state, and moving from there through the donors, NGO coalitions, and ending with regulative effects from the socio-political environment. This progression is a reflection of the accumulating requirements which were new and still changing for NIPA. This situation reveals many institutional continuities but also hints at some dissonances which may merge over time. This method of presentation is also more appropriate to the way the participants of NIPA perceived the regulative dimensions impinging upon NIPA, as set of rules from a particular source to which they must conform.

The data which pertain to the regulative dimensions are from diverse sources, a fact which

¹³ In general, the proclivity at NIPA, especially at the senior management level, was to be strict and scrupulous about rules and policies. The environment was too harsh for many NGOs to survive, and the personal style of the director and the senior staff was oriented towards conservative conformity. There were many former NGO people in government who served as a network for NIPA and perhaps there was a tendency to try to live within the policy constraints which affected everyone in the network, rather than to rebel against them. These personal connections appeared to deepen the pressure towards conformity, perhaps because it appeared that eventually all of the actors in a network would have to live with new regulative controls. The senior staff at NIPA showed themselves to be quite insightful about trends and threats in the organizational environment, and there was plenty of evidence that they passed these perceptions onto other staff members.

also speaks to the potential for contradiction and dissonance in an institution. There are data stemming from laws and policies set out by the state, specific requirements by donors, and codes from NGO coalitions. In addition, there are data drawn from sources such as news reports, participants, politicians and officials, all of which may reflect the regulative effects from the socio-political environment. If there is a strong consensus around a particular issue, then the effect on an institution moves beyond a normative obligation to conform to an expedient demand to conform. Therefore, these data should not be seen as merely casual opinions, but rather as part of a matrix of regulative controls which impinged upon the institution. In the case of NIPA, the collection of these diverse data was guided by the comments of the participants themselves.

It should be made clear that regulative pressures are not simply normative or indicate a general obligation to behave or think in certain ways. Rather, these are pressures which are so strong that expedience demands conformity. As Scott (1995, p.35) argues, “regulative processes involve the capacity to establish rules, inspect or review others’ conformity to them, and as necessary manipulate sanctions – rewards or punishments... These processes may operate through diffuse informal mechanisms...” Elsewhere he suggests that legitimacy, however shallow, and informal codes, can have as powerful an effect as fear and force. What this means for the institutional relations of NIPA is that the institution could respond significantly to these understood, though not explicitly expressed, rules and pressures. Additionally these pressures acknowledge the influence of actors like the recipients and the general public who do not assume formal rule making roles. The regulative pressures described here include the need to be very diversified, the need to appear accountable to the recipients and others, and the need to be flexible and highly professional when partnered with a discredited state that provides only weak support for education. Failure to respond to these requirements would have imperiled the survival of NIPA.

Features of the Regulative Dimension of NIPA

In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the role of educational NGOs was in a state of transition. The project of social transformation was begun, but was by no means complete. New regulative controls from the state, donors, and NGOs coalitions had emerged by 1998, but many of these were in the early stages of implementation. Many of these rules and laws stemmed from the state’s efforts to regulate, and perhaps politically control, the sizable NGO sector in South Africa. New educational policies also controlled the NGOs, as did the reductions in donors and state funding. Powerful popular sentiments related to the containment of corruption and mismanagement, and the slow pace of expanding equity also acted to regulate NGOs. Although in the early years after the state had pursued an interventionist set of economic policies to re-structure South African society, by 1998 it had turned to a much more pro-business approach. The emphasis was on the market place, self-sufficiency, and accountability to the bottom line. The

donor community had also shifted its emphasis towards measurable impacts and transparent accounting, a contrast with the previously strong but less scrutinized support for NGOs. Taken together, these controls signaled a forceful shift towards greater systems of accountability in NGOs, and an enhanced influence for the state and donors over NGOs.

The balance of these regulative forces was in flux, and NGOs like NIPA were left in sometimes unpredictable circumstances with often changing demands made of them. A key element in this volatility was the state. The emerging consensus among the NIPA participants, that the state was not doing enough to reform education, appeared to be reflective of the general public's view, and it placed educational NGOs like NIPA in a difficult position. NIPA was required to partner with the state and to implement state initiatives, yet the state itself was an unreliable partner. At the same time the state regulated NGOs directly through legislation and indirectly through influence with donors. These institutional complexities laid the foundation for the dissonances of NIPA.

Thematically, the regulative dimensions of NIPA featured concerns with accountability, partnership, and empowerment. Accountability was a powerful touchstone for many of the participants and it resonated with demands that South Africa society be transformed into one in which money was handled efficiently and appropriately. These demands were also evident in pressures from the NGO coalitions and the socio-political environment. The general model for this was a business approach, with codes and controls were devised for transparent accounting. Rationalized management and oversight had been put in place which indicated a deference to those dispensed funds. Parallel to this was a shift in accountability in educational governance towards local political interests. These changes tended to reduce the power and self-control of NGOs, particularly in favour of the donors, and were indicative of contested definitions and spheres of influence under the name of accountability.

Partnership was a theme which had appeal to both the state and donors. Many of the new requirements explicitly laid out conditions for NGOs to work in consortia, to partner with the state, and to work with local partners. Many of these partnerships were contractualized, which again elevated the need for capacities in NGOs to operate in a business-like way. The perceived weakness and unreliability of the state as a partner for NGOs was reality which complicated the situation for NGOs. The notions of contractualized relationships and competition for business were at odds with requirements for collaboration and power-sharing.

Finally, empowerment was a theme derived to a large extent from the new educational policies of South Africa. Educational NGOs like NIPA acted to some extent like executing agencies in state and donor agendas aimed at instilling capacities in individuals and communities to participate in the life of the new South Africa. Empowerment was also meant to be fostered through partnership through the means of collaboration, networking, and cross-fertilization of ideas. Unlike partnership and accountability, it was more complicated to demand of educational NGOs that they be empowering. Empowerment was probably more difficult to measure, and was

a more long-term outcome, much as one would expect in the education sector. Education and other social-political changes take time to have an effect, and these effects can be measured and noted from a variety of viewpoints. This also complicated the situation for NIPA because the requirements for empowerment activities and approaches tended to lag behind the expectations of the participants.

State Controls ¹⁴

It is important to know the general facts of the legislative and policy controls from the state¹⁵ because they are the foundation for the regulation of NGOs. The history of collaboration between the current South African state and the NGO sector, aided by the migration of many NGO personnel into government positions, meant that there was a tendency for NGOs to conform to state policy. The controls emanating from the state were centred on the project of social transformation in the form of new education policies, a project which was of critical importance to educational NGOs like NIPA. These policies emphasized new forms of participation in educational governance as well as critical pedagogy aimed at empowerment. There were also state policies which featured highly increased demands for accountability and control of NGO activities. Yet, as the evidence revealed, NGOs and the state appeared to be near the end of the 'honeymoon period' in which partnership was still the primary feature, but which showed signs often of tension.

Education policies: towards social transformation

The three themes of accountability, personal empowerment (through holistic and critical pedagogy) and partnership with community in education formed the requirements for the new

¹⁴ The regulative activities by the state regarding NGOs were extensive. The programs of any NGO working in education were channeled by the policies laid out in the 1996 South African Schools Act (SASA), and the national and provincial policies on education, such as were described in the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training. In the case of NIPA these were primarily the Curriculum 2005 which was the basis for the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) approach, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and teacher training programs which regulated and directed Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs. The education programs of the Eastern Cape government also controlled NGO activity. NGOs were controlled by two principal acts of legislation, the 1998 National Development Agency Act (NDA) and the 1997 Non-profits Organizations Act (NPO). NIPA was affected by the tax laws and labour standards. In the wings were other laws not yet passed but very likely to have a direct effect on NGOs. These were the Employment Equity Act and the 1997 Public Procurement Program Green Paper.

¹⁵ The term "state" is used in this study in a broad sense to signify the institutions of both the provincial and national governments in their roles as policy-makers, instruments of the public political will, and managers of bureaucratic institutions like the Ministry of Education. Most participants in the study perceived the state to be synonymous with government, and did not generally differentiate between provincial and national governments. The domination of the ANC party at all levels of government appeared to re-enforce this view.

programs in education. The primary program requirements of the early childhood development (ECD) system were that it be based on a “transformative and emancipatory model allowing access to lifelong learning”, that it “offer a holistic and integrated approach to learning and development” and that it recognizes “the importance of parents, family members, and the community in the education and development of training” (Government of South Africa 1997, p.1). A teacher training manual for ECD stated, “ we must allow democratic participation in the setting of standards and policy-making” and “education and training must be relevant to economic, social, and political development”. Elsewhere it was stated that education, “ must involve learners showing their ability to bring together and apply a range of related skills to problems. We want them to be challenged by a real-life situation with its variety of demands” (National Educare Forum 1996, pp.7-8).

The control and direction by the state of educational policy were among the basic regulative influences on educational NGOs. The new national qualifications framework (NQF), the new ECD policies, and school governance training were just three examples of state requirements which function to regulate educational activities as they relate to NGOs like NIPA. Several conditions were stipulated for NGOs including directions in terms of the policy vision, training confidence, well-established financial systems, and cost-effectiveness (National Educare Forum 1996). Also under the ECD program there was an accreditation body set up to certify practitioners. Curriculum 2005, which is based on outcomes based education (OBE), was piloted by the provincial education ministries starting in August 1997 in a National Pilot Project. In the ECD policies it is explicitly recognized that NGOs would be doing most of the training. NIPA was one of the pilot projects. Much of the activity in the program department at NIPA was involved in producing materials and training programs to be used under the auspices of the NQF. The teacher training with a local university, the Imbewu program, the Whole School Development Program (funded by the Swiss), and the Mooiplas Whole School Community Development Project (funded by an insurance company) were all examples of programs that fell within the ECD program at NIPA.

The new educational policies in South Africa were to have a social transformation function. The White Paper on Education and Training stated, “It is now the joint responsibility of all South Africans who have a stake in the education and training system to help build a just, equitable and high quality system for all citizens, with a common culture of disciplined commitment to learning and teaching”(Government of South Africa 1996, 3:13). Elsewhere it stated, “there must be special emphasis laid on the redress of educational inequalities (Ibid, 4:7). It explicitly required that established actors like NGOs will be involved in this process of transformation, particularly in teacher education. For example it mentions that there is a “necessity for co-ordination across levels of government, and different departments (as well as with NGOs)...”(Ibid 3:34; see also 13, 37). The inclusion of NGOs in the transformation of South African society was a central tenet of government policies. Minister Fraser Moloketi said, “ the

government is serious about creating a positive environment in which NGOs can flourish. We realize that the government alone can never deliver the RDP and a partnership which draws on resources within civil society is critical”(cited in SANGOCO website 1998). The policy documents from the Eastern Cape province also stated that NGOs must be involved in social and economic change. This vision included, “ the integration of social and economic policy processes... building the capacity of all constituent bodies...[and] participation and consensus among all stakeholders” (Eastern Cape Government 1996, p.13). It also required that, “ we must invest in education and skills training today to ensure less dependency tomorrow” (Ibid, p.26).

The School Act of South Africa (1996) also contained references to values like social redress, holistic learning, and partnership. It was a basic tenet of the Act that education was fundamental to “ democratically transform society, combating racism and sexism, and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance; and eradicate poverty and improving the economic well-being society”(Government of South Africa 1997b, p.1). The Act was to be based on cooperative governments and partnership. It required that all schools be run by local community committees called school governance bodies (SGBs). The teacher training conducted by NIPA also reflected these requirements. For example, it is stated among the principle underpinnings to the higher education diploma that, “ families and teachers are co-educators of children. Enabling parents, families, and communities to foster care and development of their children is an aim of primary schooling programs”(Rhodes University 1998, p.12). Elsewhere it stated that it is important to understand that, “ the world is a set of related systems and problems do not exist in isolation” (Ibid, p.4).

As an institution, NIPA was not obligated to participate in these education activities but the state’s educational policies effectively dictated in what areas NIPA would work. This trend was reinforced by NIPA’s long history of working in early childhood development and primary school teacher training, where its core mandate and expertise lay. Another factor which encouraged NIPA’s participation stemmed from the immensity of the task and the scarce resources available to accomplish it, meaning that donor funds would be needed. There was little money for teacher training despite the fact that there were many under -qualified teachers and the government was in the midst of overhauling the education system. The Eastern Cape education department put aside only 2.4% of its budget for teacher training (Naki,1999b).As a result of the state’s lack of resources or it unwillingness to devote resources, donors such as the Swiss and the Metlife insurance company were the primary supporters of the teacher training at NIPA. For example, the Swiss granted R240000 to a school governance project and Metlife granted R150000 to a community development project both of which were based on outcomes based education and school governance policies.

There were state policies which regulated NIPA, and these were mostly centred on governance and accountability. The legislation set out in the Non-Profit Organizations Act (NPO) (1997) and National Development Agency Act (NDA) (1998) constituted much of the primary regulatory controls of NGOs. Both of these acts were developed through a consultation process which included major representation from NGO voices, such as the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). This process included consultative meetings, a white paper, draft legislation, and final legislation.

The Non-Profit Organizations Act established what was termed an “enabling environment” for nonprofit organizations. It established administrative and regulatory frameworks, required standards of governance and accountability, and promoted values of cooperation and shared responsibility with the government and other actors (Government of South Africa, 1997, 1:2). All nonprofit organizations were required to register with a National Director for Nonprofit Organizations, and to submit regular financial and narrative reports about its activities to the director for scrutiny on a regular basis. The director had the powers to determine whether an organization was complying with the provisions of this constitution, lay other conditions upon it, and determine the requirements of the act regarding accountability (Ibid, 18:2). The Act also stipulated that there be high standards of financial accounting and the submission of the narrative reports, together with financial statements and accounting officers. Reports had to be within nine months of the end of any financial year (Ibid, 17,18). The Act also created a directorate for registration and control of nonprofit organizations which would answer directly to a minister of the government. Specific standards of financial accountability and reporting to the government were stipulated. Codes and models for good practice were to be produced from the directorate. The Act required that any and all documentation submitted to be directors should be open to the public for access of information.

The director was to be appointed by the minister. It was stated that an object of the act was to promote, “a spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility within government, donors and among other interested persons in their dealings with nonprofit organizations” (Ibid, 2e). It was not stated in the legislation that all organizations must register. However, the fact that the names of all registered organizations were published yearly and all the records of organizations, which were be submitted to the director, were available for public scrutiny, suggested that nearly all NGOs would be registered. The question of tax status, although unclear at the time of the study, is very likely to be tied to registration with the NPO. An explanatory memorandum stated that a voluntary system registration “facilitates the attraction of donor confidence and legitimacy” (Ibid, 1997b, 11:4).

The National Development Agency Act also provided specific standards of accountability. For example, it stated, “in respect of each financial year of the organization, a comprehensive

narrative report containing – an analysis of every project or program in respect of which that grant is made and the description of all other activities of the organization; and – an audited financial report must be submitted not later than the date prescribed by regulation in terms of section 13” (Government of South Africa, 1998, 4b). One of its main purposes was to control funding and governance in civil society organizations, such as NGOs, whose main purpose was the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of institutional capacity in other civil society organizations. Most significantly, the Act established that the National Development Agency created under the act would “access the key conduit for funding from the national government of the republic, foreign governments and other national and international business and development work to be carried out by civil society organizations” (Ibid, 4:1a). In addition, the Act specifies that the NDA must utilize any money from, “any donation or contributions ... in accordance with the conditions imposed by the donor or contributor in question” (Ibid, 10:2c). Control of the NDA is supervised by its board, which is composed of six members appointed by the government and nine members from civil society organizations, also appointed by the government from a short list declared in consultation with experts on the development field.

In essence, this gave to the state significant regulatory control over two key elements of institutional independence: accreditation and funding. This was not insignificant. At the highest political levels there is evidence of some tension concerning NGOs and their criticism of the government. In January 1998 Nelson Mandela said, “we will have to consider the reliability of the NGOs. Some of them lack the issue-driven mass base that is a defining feature of any real NGO and therefore unable to raise funds from the people themselves. This has created the possibility for some of these NGOs to be instruments of foreign governments and institutions would find them promoting interested external forces” (cited in Financial Mail, 23 January 1998). In addition, there was evidence of increasing criticism and skepticism about the partnership with government from the NGO sector as a whole regarding government programs and budget priorities. For example, an editorial from SANGOCO stated that, “SANGOCO continues to be concerned about the insufficient engagement with people on identifying priorities and needs... we believe that the reorganization of the budget needs to be people-driven...but the draft statement only allowed for limited access” (NGO Matters, 2 February 1999). Once again, the theme of accountability was apparent, with the state using its legislative power to orientate accountability towards itself.

Also part of the regulative dimensions were state regulations like income tax law. Although some donors can claim that their support for NGO activity is a business expense, NGOs themselves do not have tax-exempt status. The Katz Commission was organized to investigate the question of new tax provisions for non-profit organizations. In its recommendations institutions like NIPA would be able to avoid income tax for an entry period of up to 10 years, as well as conduct trade, and own property. This would allow them to get new resources of income. Not surprisingly given the widespread emphasis on accountability, under the recommendations there would be stringent provisions about conflicts of interest, the client spending of net revenue,

and control of salaries ("Tax Proposals" 1999). However, most recent indications about the tax position for NGOs were that the government was not going to open the door to the tax exemptions. The government feared that extension of tax benefits would cause abuse and corruption. The minister of finance said about the Katz commission, "we must avoid a situation where South Africa becomes a tax haven for all kinds of footloose individuals and quasi-industries" (Clayton, 1999). In July 1999 the commission released a statement which said it recognized "the extremely difficult conditions that are currently being experienced by nonprofit organizations, many of which are compelled to seek alternative funding sources and means of generating donations and earned income" ("Tax Proposals" 1999). This decision not to give tax breaks appeared to increase the dependence of NGOs on donor funding, which in turn increased the regulative power of the state through the NDA. The state seemed to be increasingly able to impose its own ideas about accountability and transparency.

Tendering and Management

The state also provided regulative controls, which affected NGOs like NIPA, by requiring them to implement affirmative action programs within their organization and in the submission of contract tenders. Neither of these policies had been fully implemented at the time this research was done, but they were imminent. The Employment Equity Act was launched in August 1999 and as of July 1999 the Delivery of Targeted Procurement policy was at the green paper stage. The effect of these policies was to increase state control of NGO operations, and shift them towards a role of business entities whose management was regulated by the state. NGOs were controlled by a strong preference among state policy makers for efficiency and business orientation. Examples of this emphasis can be found in the state policy for ECD wherein cost-effectiveness is frequently mentioned (National Educare Forum 1996). In the words of a local cabinet minister, "NGOs need to become more competitive – there's little doubt about that. Only those organizations that can deliver skills and services efficiently and creatively enough to compete with both the government and the private sector can and will flourish in this phase of transition" (Eastern Cape NGO Coalition 1998b, p. 5).

It was indicative of the prominence of the requirement for good business management that tendering for contracts was now required. There existed a Tender List through subscription to the government's Tender Bulletin for any institution doing business with the state, which NIPA was (SANGOCO 1999). Tendering for contracts required a specialized set of skills and knowledge in which language and cultural idioms were important. A good example of the competitiveness of the tendering process was the contract for voter education prior to the general elections held in 1999. There were over 15 tenders to do the work in the Eastern Cape province, and over 200 at the national level" ("200 Apply" 1998).

A look at a typical tendering document reveals the high level of detail and scope required.

The ECD Pilot Project Tender document contains accounting details, descriptions of work in the field, understanding of prevailing conditions ECD [in reference to local area], demonstrated expertise... , results of work in the ECD field, demonstration of knowledge of NQF and ECD policy guidelines, evidence of internal and externally moderated assessment procedures to measure the confidence of ECD practitioners and program impact, networking ability details, support infrastructure required to produce reports for the Department of Education, and assessment moderation procedures, among many other categories of information (NIPA, 1998). Some of the details extend for many pages, and it was clear that each individual category has highly specific requirements. The impact of these requirements can be seen in the comment of staff member: "The DFID Tender has become a swear word around NIPA" (Doris, 1997).

The Employment Equity Act was a basic affirmative action program aimed at reducing historical inequities in upward mobility. It targeted Africans, coloureds, women, and the disabled, as well as those who were HIV positive. It required that organizations with more than 50 employees implement various measures such as employment equity plans. The Minister responsible said, "The Employment Equity act will enable the adoption of positive measures to redress social imbalances and is a necessary step towards the achievement of our goals" ("New Equity" 1999). NIPA had less than 50 employees and was heavily dominated by women, so there appeared to be little regulative impact on it so far. However, several of the senior staff expressed the view that it was an issue they would have to face, and it was possible that the requirements of the act would be changed to affect them. This thinking partly explained the hiring of a Xhosa chief accountant at NIPA.

There were similar socially transformative goals behind the new Delivery of Targeted Procurement policy which required that there would be a recognition of historical inequities in the awarding of government tenders. There was to be a new accreditation system in place, with larger organizations required to have a trained consultant on staff to implement the new affirmative action quotas ("Accreditation", 1999). The requirements that NGOs engage in tendering and progressive management practices meant that NGOs had to have a high capacity for writing, statistics, graphics, and oral presentations. In addition, they were required to be well informed about current policies, and to seek opportunities to understand future policies. For example, NIPA staff were attending workshops on targeted procurement as early as August 1997 where new 'mind-set-change exercises' were presented. An ironic comment from an NIPA staff member was, "It was interesting, but unfortunately of little value to NIPA's future sustainability" (Roberta). Institutions like NIPA appeared to have little choice but to participate in such workshops, given the potential for state policies to impinge upon them.

Flexibility and Professionalism in Dealing with the State

A powerful regulative reality for NIPA, though not one connected to formalized rules and

laws, was the unavoidable difficulty in being partnered with the state. The state was seen by many participants¹⁶ and in the public media as the epitome of mismanagement (and perhaps corruption). It was also perceived as failing to provide even the minimum level of support for education. This negative perception of the state was reinforced by other factors such as the rising crime rate, high unemployment, and decline of infrastructure. The poor examination pass rate was also the focus of criticism. It still followed closely the pattern of contrasts from the apartheid years. Many of the former white schools had 95 - 100% exam pass rates, but many of the black schools had rates as low as 30%. Many of the white parents were able to subsidize the teachers' salaries.

This had important implications for NIPA. First, it created powerful pressures for the NGOs to be well managed because of the unpredictability of dealings with the state on such issues as volatile funding, bureaucratic resistance, and problematic relationships. NIPA as an institution had to be flexible, patient and resilient. Second, it brought about the situation where NGOs were elevated to the level of being the 'true friends' of the education system, in contrast to the 'hypocritical' state which promised and demanded a lot but did little. High levels of probity and professionalism from NIPA were demanded by the recipients and the donors as disdain for the state grew. NIPA was able, to a large extent, to fulfil these expectations, but as it did so the contrast between it and the state became even more stark. Yet the state remained a key actor in education, and NIPA was thus caught between the two parties as they appeared to be drifting further apart. A lot of evidence was available to show that these state weaknesses were obstacles to progress that NIPA, like many other NGOs, were forced to work around.

Instances of government mismanagement were commonplace. For example, the Eastern Cape Auditor General found "utter shambles" in the financial administration of the province. Revenue could not be traced, pay-outs could not be accounted for, and proper procedures were not followed (Dickson, 1999). In another case, the Eastern Cape government was actually being sued for R50 million as a result of the government trying to back out of a lease it had not been properly tendered (Botha, 1999). The Eastern Cape government debt was above R750 million and the Premier's office alone overspent by nearly R400, 000 (Naki, 1999c; Zifo, 1999). In another case which directly affected the recipients of the NIPA program, 300 teachers who were to be given a study leave to upgrade their qualifications, and who had paid deposits for courses, were potentially denied a right-of-return they had been promised by the Department of Education. In another instance, the Department of Education head office had no paper for its fax machines for several months (Dickson, 1998). The head of finance for the Eastern Cape Legislature was dismissed for mismanagement and corrupt money lending schemes (Naki, 1999).

The Ministry of Education chose to blame teachers and students for the problems in education rather than address fundamental questions about infrastructure or governance. The

¹⁶ For a more detailed portrait of participant views of the poor performance of the state in education, see the section on accountability in the chapter on the cognitive dimensions.

national Minister of Education promised to crack down on teachers: "If teachers produce a zero pass rate, I don't see why we should keep them". He promised to use the Employment of Educators Act to "deal with those few teachers who do not see fit to conduct themselves in an accountable manner" ("Bengu" 1999). In another instance, the Transkei education director commented that he was "extremely disappointed" to hear that there were still teachers acting irresponsibly despite last year's shockingly poor matric results. His comments were echoed by the teachers union representatives (Ngxukumeshe, 1999). Politicians joined the chorus of critics as well. The NNP party whip Billy Nel said, "It's got to do with how effectively the teachers teach. It's now time for the Education Department to get rid of useless teachers in the system. We've been promised that there would be a performance audit on the teachers and the schools. The exam results is a true result of how good or bad the teaching institutions are" ("Billy Nel", 1999).

There were critics outside party politics, however, who did focus on the under-funding of education. Criticism of the government's lack of financial support for schooling was widespread. As one critic put it, "The education policy may be very progressive, but the redress is just not happening...It's not just a question of throwing money around—but you can't deny that resources in schools are a problem" (Vally, 1999). Other critics added that the government was abandoning its basic social transformation agenda [the RDP budget priorities]. For example, combined national financial education spending was predicted to drop by 0.7 percent in real terms in 1999-2000 (Everleth, 1999). The appalling state of South African schools intensified the critics' claim that not only was the government failing to facilitate social transformation, it was even failing to maintain the standards known under the apartheid regime. For example, 1998 57 % of schools had no electricity, 73% had no learning equipment and 59% had no learning materials. "These statistics are a real indictment on our society. Current estimates suggested that addressing this problem would require an additional R3 billion per year over the next ten years" ("Hearings", 1998, p.1)

These events indicated a larger pattern of mismanagement seen at all levels in the government¹⁷ and had the effect of intensifying the pressure on all associated institutions, like

¹⁷ Mismanagement in education was widespread. Many examples can be cited to support the idea that NIPA and its participants were in the midst of a deepening and multifaceted crisis in education. For example, the fact that the provincial government was not paying bills to municipalities for water and electricity resulted in some schools being cut off. In Umtata there were unpaid bills of over R500000 and 12 schools were cut off. One pupil said, "I don't understand how they reach that figure. First of all our meters have been out of order over the last two to three years and they're supposed to have been checked by municipal officials. When we send an account to the Department of Education they refuse to pay, saying that the figures are ridiculous. We are angry about the state of affairs" (Daily Dispatch 28 January 1999). In another instance, eight schools were cut off in Grahamstown at the start of the school year in January. The same thing was occurring six months later and schools were cut off again (Daily Dispatch 25 June 1999).

There were also other serious problems hanging over schools such as overcrowding and lack of textbooks. For example, in the township schools near East London there were 900 students but only 26 teachers. Many classes had more than 80 students (Daily Dispatch 22 January 1999). Another problem was the lack of textbooks. The state had promised that new textbooks would be provided for the start of the school year, but there were

NGOs, to be accountable and competent. These perceptions of mismanagement¹⁸ fundamentally changed NIPA's relationship with the recipients because they were perceived to be highly legitimized and trustworthy, whereas the state was perceived as incompetent and hypocritical. This placed NIPA in a paradoxical position. On one hand, it earned the trust of the recipients by providing programs which were relevant and meaningful for change, but on the other hand NIPA's programs were derived from policy originating from an apparently uncaring and incompetent state. Complicating the situation even more were requirements that Ministry officials be included in NIPA training when these same officials had little credibility with the recipients. They frequently did not show up for the workshops. This rendered the long-term plan for the Ministry officials to take over the training from NIPA somewhat problematic. From NIPA's point of view, it was difficult to build relationships and enhance capacity in an institutional partner (the Ministry of Education) which was on the verge of administrative chaos. The NIPA director wrote,

despite many attempts and suggestions from ourselves and others over the past four years there is still very little evidence of provincial coordination or maximization of external projects with the national and provincial government funding and no planning to ensure that available money is strategically planned to invest in the crises facing the department... with the 1.6 billion debt it is obvious that the situation is not going to improve in the near future... until a more coordinated and better planned approach happens we're never going to see major changes or even small pockets of excellence in our educationally disadvantaged province which houses over 25 percent of the nation's schools. Our own strategic planning will need to take these trends into account...

Taken together, these problems with the state regulated the activity of the NGO by forcing it into paradoxical positions with the donors and recipients. In essence it required that the

problems of delayed delivery related to the failure of the government to pay or even to order the books on time. The president of the South African Booksellers Association said many orders for OBE books had only arrived in late December or early January even though the school year began in January (*Daily Dispatch* 23 January 1999). Sometimes teachers were not paid on time. In one instance, only 330 of 3000 teachers who were owed money were paid on time (*Daily Dispatch* 3 July 1999). The workloads of teachers were increasing but their pay was not. For example, in a budget policy statement the Finance Ministry recommended keeping teacher wages below inflation but increasing class sizes. Teacher morale was also highly affected by a scheme to redeploy teachers to reflect real need and to balance the inherited inequities from the apartheid years. In many cases this meant that teachers who had taught for many years in one school were being forced to go to another, sometimes quite far away. In addition many schools were losing teachers.

¹⁸ The perception that the state was under-funding education and administering it incompetently was very widely held. Nearly every single person consulted in the conduct of this research project asserted that the state was doing a poor job of providing for education or implementing new policies. A couple examples suffice to show the larger pattern, though many others could be found. For instance, one recipient stated that there was not enough support for the Foundation phase projects or school infrastructure and that only through NIPA's efforts were changes happening at all in her school (Yoni). Another teacher declared that there was never enough resources for education and that her classes were always larger than 40 students despite government promises (Henny).

organization become highly flexible, resilient, and dedicated. It became difficult for teachers to put new curricula and systems into place if the department of education did not have the resources to implement them. In fact, so impoverished and mismanaged were some branches of the Ministry, that NIPA workers were seen as very well off and much better qualified than local education officers.

This paradoxical relationship between the state and NIPA made the primary mode of action for NIPA to be one of expedience and the building of political networks, rather than the rational implementation of a clear policies and programs. People and promises could not be depended upon. This in turned forced NIPA staff to deal with only those official who were reliable, professional, or well supported in terms of resources or administrative sponsorship. The regulative effect of this was that NIPA had to become a flexible, resilient, well-managed institution which was able to ignore or bend its own rhetoric on accountability when it came to dealing with the state.

Analysis: state controls

The regulative impact of state controls on NIPA was significant. The theme of accountability was quite apparent. There were funding controls directly through the NDA and the directorate of the NPO, as well as codes about financial accounting and institutional management. The demands for tendering and progressive management necessitated requirements for institutional capacities related to accountability such as report-writing and evaluation. The new educational policies were founded on principles of accountability, although this was more in the direction of increasing local responsibility for educational governance. There underscored a clear requirement for partnership with local communities and the participation of civil society groups like NIPA in the reform of education. This also dovetailed with demands that education now be conducted in a manner that was transformative and empowering both for individuals and communities. Compared to the pre-apartheid era, NGOs now were much more burdened and constrained by state regulation, and it could be argued that the cost of conformity to the new array of demands, in itself, taxed NGO resources and reduced its independence.

In terms of regulative pressures, these state controls indicated a shift in power that centred on the theme of accountability which was tilting in the direction of the donors. Since the NDA Act specified that donors channel their funding through the National Development Agency and required that there be full reporting in the government Gazette, NGOs which wanted to work in the mainstream of education had little choice but to work with donors active in this area. The state requirements for accountability and good management were naturally appealing to donors which wanted value for their investment. The demands for tendering and other management practices tended to favour institutions with strong internal capacities. This shifted the donor - NGO relation towards a contractualized, service provider orientation. The principle of multi-

stakeholder consultation in state policies further enhanced the prominence of donor participation in NGO activities, as did the low level of state support for programs like teacher training.

The perceived weakness of the state in supporting and managing education was a significant regulative reality for NIPA. It required that NIPA be flexible and highly professional in its dealings with the state. It also had the effect of increasing tension between the recipients and the state, both of which were key partners for NIPA. This dynamic is explored in greater detail in the chapter six on cognitive dimensions. Since the donors were assuming an increasing role in funding education as the state struggled to provide the barest minimum, NGOs were further forced to contend with donor preferences, which will now be considered.

Donor Requirements

The regulative pressures from donors were pervasive, and unlike the state, the donors were much more likely to engage in monitoring and evaluation. Funding was getting scarcer, and NGOs like NIPA were extremely conscious of providing what the donors were paying for. Since NIPA had a diverse set of donors and a wide variety of programs, this greatly added to the complexity of the demands. Adding to this complexity was the nearly universal requirement from donors that NIPA work in partnership with other groups, usually in consortia, as well as with the state. Relationships with donors had both formal and informal aspects. Formally, NIPA worked on a contractual basis, competing for tenders and managing its affairs along business lines. Informally, a lot of efforts were required for NIPA to anticipate trends, network with key actors, and enhance its profile. There were many requirements from donors which resonated with those from the state, NGO coalitions, and the senior staff at NIPA, such as improved accountability in NGOs and community consultation. Unlike the state which laid out regulations for all parties, the donors and NGOs developed long term relationships built on an acceptance of certain requirements by the donors and demonstrated competencies by the NGOs. Expedience demanded that NGOs develop reputations and nurture networks in order to win contracts. A successful NGO like NIPA would have to a significant level of resources doing research on contract possibilities and developing the capacity to manage the myriad details of tendering and relationship building. It also required that NIPA be very familiar with preferred management styles and contract language, policy trends, and local politics.

However, there were some potential dysfunctions. While on the surface, there was substantial rhetoric about collaboration, community empowerment, and sustainability, deeper down there were some potential dissonances for NIPA as it courted donors in an effort towards long-term survival. Many at NIPA were aware that some donor demands were not appropriate to development, but there was little they could do. As one NIPA staff member said, “if they say they may want to go and empower the people and Duncan Village, the grade one teachers, you must go into it within the fashion they want to...They tell you exactly that [but] they don’t know

what is going on in this context that we are in here” (Alice).

Accountability and Transparency

Transparency and accountability were presented as fundamental requirements for NGOs in the new South Africa. One donor representative summarized it this way:

before talking about creating a new society, a democratic society, a society that is transparent, that takes the idea of accountability seriously, then NGOs who operate in our schools, who operate in various communities, these NGOs have to reflect that. It must operate democratically, it has to operate in consultation with the community structures. [It must be] willing to promote those values which we feel as a society are going to help the development of our society” (David).

To a large extent, many of these demands stemmed from disenchantment with the mismanagement and corruption. For example, South Africa’s largest literacy NGO was closed down due to mismanagement after more than R7 million was unaccounted for (Gledhill, 1998). As one NGO director put it, “scandals involving NGO staff never seem to leave the minds for the media. We are regarded as less professional, adhering to lower financial standards, than- forgive me for laughing-the private sector. One Boesak-type scandal stains us all for years. The phrases like ‘straggle accounting’ stick”(Everatt, 1997). Another example of how serious the problem was can be seen in the withdrawal of the Danish government and the European Union from funding a project in which NIPA was involved, because R6 million was missing due to mismanagement by the provincial government (Roberta). Donors had ongoing concerns about how money was spent. For example, Clare Short, the British secretary for international development, complained that a R75 million grant for schooling in Eastern Cape had only resulted in “planning”. As a result, a new joint monitoring system with both British Department for International Development (DFID) and the state government was being implemented (Dickson, 1999b).

The emphasis was on strict record keeping and systematic management towards stated objectives. For example, the funding criteria for the Nelson Mandela Children’s fund stated that there must be “established financial management systems” as well as an established governing structure. In addition, it required annual reports, the latest audited financial statements, budget information, and detailed reports twice yearly (Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, 1998). The DFID policy on education states, “We will explore with other donors the scope for co-ordinated sector approaches ...with particular stress on financial management by the national and provincial Departments of Education” (DFID 1998, p.9).

Another indication of the seriousness of accounting can be seen in the story of one NIPA finance staff who related that one year USAID had actually sent two auditors from Kenya to audit NIPA’s auditors (Kris). The comments of NIPA’s deputy director reflected the seriousness of this

requirement for accountability: "If we want to be taken seriously we have to appear and act professionally. We are now an institute, a business, and it should be reflected in our structures, systems, services, and delivery" (Doris). A recent impact evaluation noted that one of the most appealing features of NIPA was an "entrepreneurial spirit that responds to opportunities such as government interest and services" (NIPA Impact Evaluation Report 1996 p. 6).

Along with the careful monitoring of finances was the requirement that organizations like NIPA have the ability to complete their projects in a professional and enthusiastic manner. The tendering process included an appraisal of an organization's track record and commitment to the project. Institutions like NIPA which had a large staff, paid for premises, and diversified programs were much more able to project the image of a capable and effective organization. A strong reputation can be developed and relationships can be nurtured which greatly increased the likelihood of winning contracts from donors. One NGO staff member related the story of a representative from the Rockefeller Fund: "She has been coming here for six or seven years. She comes here [to NIPA] about twice a year when she visits the related projects. She always asks everybody what they think of everybody else and who would be good....because funders are always trying to find who or what is going to really make a difference and who would really fit with their philosophy" (Roberta). As one NGO expert summarized, "donors...want value for money and I think the NGOs have struggled to adapt to that new situation in which donors are just not satisfied with simply an annual report being posted once a year. They actually want to see impact being made and so they have fairly stringent criteria and outputs, and all those kinds of things are required. [This] requires a management style and level of effectiveness that NGOs have not quite come to terms with in a lot of cases" (Susan).

There were clearly benefits of increased business to NGOs like NIPA which had a strong track record of being able to successfully manage projects. For example, NIPA was selected for a national program to promote science because of its training and facilitation experience (Latigan, 1998). In another instance of the success based on a strong reputation, NIPA received R75,000 from an anonymous donor. A spokesman stated that NIPA was chosen because people had "confidence in what they came to achieve in the community, as well as the manner in which [it] carried out [its] development work" ("Training", 1998). Another example can be found in an evaluation of NIPA's role in a science education program. It was noted that there was no bookkeeping system, asset register, donor records, inventory controls or other control systems. Normally this would be completely unacceptable, but it was "considered unnecessary given NIPA's credibility and track record of consistent good quality control" (Kramer, 1998, p.3). A lot of resources were invested in pleasing donors with a mastery of the details. One typical comment illustrates this: "the amount of time spent on various tenders, and more specifically the DFID tender during the past three weeks, is an indication of the importance of these exercises...I am sure you understand why we are unavailable (and tearing our hair out) at times" (Doris).

Measurability and Efficiency

Accountability could be variously defined, but donors demanded that measurable and quantifiable indicators were used. This appeared to be more-business-like and easier to process. Precise format and attention to numerical details were required from a wide spectrum of donors. For example, a discussion document on DFID policy stated, “more detailed quantitative indicators of development, drawn up collectively by the World Bank, the development assistance committee, and the U.N. have now been agreed upon. DFID played an active part in this exercise” (DFID 1998, p.13). Another example of the requirements for quantitative evaluations can be found in a letter from USAID funding to NIPA. There were demands for 13 different numbers on subjects such as the number of policy reports published, the number of innovative models implemented with learners, the number of curriculum materials distributed to schools, and the number of training workshops held. Another instance is found in a report to a European donor which contained a very highly detailed LOGframe chart of results. It included such categories as outcomes, methods, needs verification, verifiable indicators, identified problems, reasons for problem, responsibilities, assumptions, and target groups. There was also information about financial accounting, log sheets, attendance registers, completed plants, numbers of handouts, and dates. It was meticulously done and based on a total quality management approach (TQM) (NIPA Report 1998.) A typical comment from a NIPA staff member about this need for detail was: “most of my time has been spent awaiting data for MDP evaluation instruments. It’s a time-consuming, picky business that demands accuracy... if we do this sort of surveying game, we really need either a statistical program, or a thorough knowledge of Excel’s statistical capacity” (Bassy).

Other donors, such as the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, specifically require similar kinds of information which used the TQM style approach of verifiable indicators, objectives, and measurable impacts, future planning, and so forth (Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, 1998). Another example of a project based on TQM was the Quality Schools Program in which NIPA was participating as part of the South African Book Aid Project. The framework which underpinned this project was derived from the theory of learning organizations and TQM. In its framework for evaluation were terms such as “logical fit” and performance descriptors such as “quantifiable and measurable” (University of Fort Hare 1998, p.6). The NIPA director wrote the NIPA board: “We frequently use the acronym TQM, but the concept of TQM still needs to be embedded in every aspect of what we do in order to ensure quality delivery” (Gayle). An indication of how these kinds of requirements had been internalized was found in a new format for the staff reports at NIPA. They must include, among other items, statistics like the numbers of training days or monitoring and ‘measurable indicators’.

Donors appeared to equate the use of quantifiable measurements with business efficiency, and they clearly expected it in NGOs. For example, in one project evaluation assessing NIPA, one

of the two central conclusions was that there was high-cost efficiency: "On the basis of the performance indicators and critical assumptions, the expected outputs were not only achieved at a higher rate but also obtained at a reasonable cost" (University of Fort Hare, 1998, p.13). Another instance of this demand for cost-efficiency was in the contract requirements for NGOs doing early childhood development training. NGOs must "show that they are cost-effective" (NIPA report 1996, p.6). A typical concern of many donors was with the long-term effectiveness of the money they had invested. For example, it was reported by an NIPA staff member that some visiting Danish donors, although impressed with the work of NIPA, were very concerned about what would happen to the project after the funding came to an end (Roberta).

Another requirement from donors which was related to cost-effectiveness was the use of *cascading* for dissemination of knowledge and skills. Since it was impossible to reach all those in need, the idea behind cascading was that recipients would be trained in key centers and that they would facilitate further learning in their areas. For example, in the Imbewu project literature: "In light of the magnitude of educational needs on the project, however, it is our hope that its impact will grow or branch out or "cascade" into all the schools in the province" (Imbewu, 1998). Cascading was also integral to a NIPA project funded by the Swiss whose purpose was, "to develop a pool of leader teachers who will assist and supervise the skill development of teachers to supplement and complement the work of the facilitators from NIPA and these are not immediately available" (NIPA report, 1998, p.3). However, the system cascading appeared to be a source of facade conformity and quiet opposition on the part of the NGOs staff and perhaps the recipients.¹⁹

Tendering

The business orientation of NIPA - donor relations was also predicated on the practice of tendering for contracts. Typically there would be informal discussions leading up to actual bidding for contracts. The context for this was the drastic decrease in funding available for NGOs. For example, it was recommended in an evaluation of NIPA to its board that NIPA should, "play a stronger and more pro-active role in policy formation, fund-raising, public relations and accountability, particularly since NGO fund-raising has become an ultra-competitive activity"

¹⁹ For example, one NIPA staff member said.

I do use the cascading model but I'm not a great believer in it because my experience is that people I'm not willing to share....there are a lot of factors which would inhibit the cascading effects. For example there is time. If I'm a teacher and I wanted to do training, is my time away from my work, and I must find some time to train the other people, and must find time to monitor those of the people and monetary those other people and what if I didn't understand the concept properly? I am going to do improper training.

(NIPA report 1996,p.6). This ultra competitiveness was reflected in the tendering process for contracts which places high value on price above other considerations. In the opinion of one NGO coalition officer, “the NGO sector has particular advantages over other sectors, but these are not taken into account in the current tendering processes. Tenders are awarded on the price and quality, legitimacy, and community involvement” (A Bingle as cited in Hudson, 1997, p.10).

Partnership

Despite the trends towards competitive business approaches, donors also required of NGOs various forms of partnership. In this period of dismantling of apartheid, many corporate donors had allocated certain budgets for social responsibility donations. Given the emphasis on partnership and the state’s limited resources, it was politically wise to be seen as a partner in social development programs. An important development in the pressure to work in partnership came in 1996 when USAID, one the biggest donors in South Africa, announced that there would be no more individual funding of NGOs. Other large funding sources such as the Dutch and British overseas development funds have adopted similar policies (Roberta). The deputy director of NIPA wrote, “Consortiums/Partnerships/Joint Ventures are vital for the transformation of education. I am referring not only to working with other NGOs, but also very importantly with the Government and with the communities” (Doris).

Much of the donor literature and rhetoric explicitly required partnership approaches. A DFID strategy document on South Africa stated, “we will establish partnerships with government, civil society, and business which match DFID resources to the achievement of jointly agreed outcomes” (DFID, 1998,p. 13). The Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund grant making policy guidelines stated, “We strongly encourage the funding of projects jointly with others” (Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund 998, p.17). The USAID South Africa policy vision stated that the components of development must include “ government officials who were capable of managing participatory development; and an expansion of innovative partnerships among government, civil society organizations, and private sector to supplement additional government service” (USAID 1999). Another example can be found in the literature of the International Fund-raising Consortium (INTERFUND), an organization which supported education and organizational effectiveness and NGOs and their community partners. “INTERFUND places greater emphasis on the formation of development partnership with local NGOs. Other commitments are made on the basis of agreed objectives, activities and the mutual purposes and obligations of the parties. INTERFUND also prefers to fund on a co-financing basis of the donors” (NGO Matters June 1997, p.15). A publication on organization development read at NIPA noted that, “It has been recognized that NGO survival in the current environment in South Africa, that is, the winning of contracts, is usually greatly enhanced by the partnership” (ABEL, 1996, p.4).

NIPA was a significant partner in several joint ventures, for example, the Whole School

Development Project, and the South African Book Aid Project in the Eastern Cape. A prominent example of NIPA operating in a consortium was the R55 million Imbewu project to improve schooling of the primary level in the Eastern Cape. The other partners include DFID, Department of Education, and the Joint Education Trust ("Imbewu Brings" 1999). NIPA was also involved in a multi-partner housing project sponsored by a Dutch donor which includes several local and international partners (Piliso, 1999). There was strong pressure to work in networks²⁰ with other NGOs. Not only were there opportunities to win contracts for which the single NGOs might not possess the complete capabilities to fulfill, it was recognized that fund-raising and other proposals could be done in consortia. As one NIPA staff member described it, "that sort of thing has been forced on us by funders more than would have happened naturally. There is a natural sort of independence about NGOs" (Roberta).

As well as partnerships with the other NGOs and the state, donors also required partnerships with communities. There were widespread demands from donors for community support in NGO activities at many levels. For example, in the criteria for funding from the Mvula Trust, an organization dedicated to increase access to safe water and sanitation, projects "must be executed and managed by representatives and viable local level organizations which are accountable to the beneficiaries....the trust will consider applications from local, regional or national NGOs with a proven mandate from local communities" (NGO Matters July 1997, p.17). Another indication of this requirement that communities be involved could be found in the evaluation criteria from USAID. Under the heading of "Impact and Effectiveness" it stated that they were interested in assessing the "effectiveness in establishing political credibility in disadvantaged communities, maintaining out reach with the disadvantaged communities, and sustaining consultations" (personal communication to NIPA 1994).

There was an open agenda in the donors' demands for partnership and local connections. Many donors were quite open about their underlying business goals when they donate money. For example, "BP Southern Africa stresses that its corporate social investment program to focus on work related to the objectives of our business and will be carried out in those areas where BP Southern Africa has a significant presence" (NGO Matters June 1997, p.17). Another example of this requirement that working with an NGO would have benefits for a company can be found in the comments of the evaluator for Metropolitan Life, a key donor for NIPA.

²⁰ Evidence of the requirements to have partners and to achieve results through a networking mode can be found in the tender documents which NIPA produced. For example, under the category of "networking ability" in one document it was specified, "State the networks with which the tendering service provider works at present, structures it has in place to do this, [and] describe expertise and experience to go beyond its own structures to perform the tasks of the project" (NIPA staff, Tender no. PTB6 - 1998/99 - 835 Duncan Village Presidential Project, Eastern Cape Province - Central Region). In response, NIPA described ten different networks including details on the structure, expertise, and experience as well as features of physical infrastructure. The emphasis was on a wide range of networks and having access to a variety of expertise. Some of the partners are other NGOs, some are NGO coalitions, and others are institutions such as university departments.

The company like MetLife has certain requirements. Obviously what I'm doing is helping to build an image for the company. The other thing that would I would look at it is the kind of publicity that the company would get. How many people would be reached by this project. I look at the possibility of networking and what possibility does it open up. And also we look at the issue of how it will help our marketers in the field they operate in. For example, we operate in the field of education, and that is where we get quite a lot of business (David).

The Need for Diversity

The pressure to diversify from the volatile environment for educational NGOs was very strong. According to the President of SANGOCO, "Commercially, NGOs are worse off than during apartheid, a lot of NGOs are having to look at alternative sources of funding to survive" (Africa News Service 6 March 1998). One NGO director summarized the situation: "The good times are over, and we know that we cannot rely forever on continued donor funding. So we have to diversify our funding base, tender for work, seek new partnerships and opportunities, refocus our energies on delivering measurable results and high-quality work, review our budgeting and financial procedures, and empower and train our people" (Orleyn, 1996). Another headline says it all: NGOs Fight for Survival as Funding Dries Up" (Mail and Guardian 6 March 1998). Delays and bureaucratic obstacles worsened the situation. For example, there were delays in passing the legislation and the establishment of the opening of the National Development Agency. In the meantime funding had run out for many NGOs and there was a large backlog of applications for funding. Several large NGOs had closed and many training programs were cut back (Everleth, 1989). Another indication of the seriousness of the funding problem was the formation of a new partnership including SANGOCO, the South African brand-makers association, and United Kingdom's charities. The purpose of this new organization was to assist cash strapped NGOs. "Recent announcements by funders that they would begin considering withdrawal from South Africa at the end of the millennium and the small amount of start-up funding allocated to the National Development Agency have forced many NGOs to explore more creative ways of raising funds in their work" ("Partnership", 1998).

NIPA reflected this trend of diversification in its consideration of applying for business outside of its own core area in ventures like voter education or AIDS awareness programs. The director wrote to her senior executives: "I propose we consider applying for about R200000 [for AIDS awareness program] being a way we could continue to circulate and disseminate through our training- and get further human resource development and work closer with AIDS groups to get the message out and get paid to do it (Gayle). The fact that it was expedient to diversify funding was seen in the fact that NIPA had recently undergone some serious funding cutbacks and

retrenchment. Several new schemes of accountability in the finance department of NIPA had been introduced. For example, in June 1998 NIPA was waiting for funding payments owed to it by no less than five donors. A sixth payment owing was from the government for a pilot program, in which NIPA eventually ceased participation (NIPA report 1998). This introduced a kind of funding chill in the institution which exerted a strong coercive influence. Staff became keenly aware of their tenuous positions and of the importance of saving money. For example one staff member said, "this is not good because now we have had 10 people retrenched because there was no money to pay them. It also has an impact on us because we wonder if I am next? In an NGO they can tell you to go anytime" (Alice).

Commenting on the apparent success of NIPA surviving in the tough times for NGOs, one senior staff member summed up the three components as sheer hard work, a large amount of desperation, and very capable people. "As I said before, and I'm sure [the director] has said this as well, we have diversified more than we ever intended to do out of desperation. We were talking this morning about getting back to our core business of NIPA eventually" (Roberta). Another example of the imperative on NIPA to secure funding and to seize opportunities for contracts can be found in the directors' notes to the executive management committee. She is quite critical of a middle level staff member who failed to follow up on a potential contract. She did not follow up "an R700000 MRU project with BP"; or after a meeting with Arts and Culture officials: "Janey did very little talking and yet there are opportunities to work together which could/maybe lead to funding or led them to working with us and thereafter jointly sending in proposals for us to work with gov't.." Later in the notes the director questions whether Janey got "the big picture" or was up to being a senior project co-ordinator (Gayle).

As a result of these funding realities, NIPA was a very diversified institution, offering up to 30 different programs. Although NIPA was primarily an educational institution it had become involved in voter education, community policing, and science promotion, just to give a few examples. NIPA had been praised by an independent evaluation team for its diversification and its reduction of dependency on single donors. It had also begun a cost recovery program along with income generation schemes and user fees (NIPA report 1996). Again, this reflected a new market orientation towards fee for services and contractualized relationships. Further evidence of this pressure to diversity was found in another evaluation of NIPA: it stated that a feature in NIPA worth replicating was the fact that it had a budget of at least 1 million Rands and that 25% of this came from non-donor sources. Other instances of the diversified approach needed can be found in the project lists for NIPA. There were 29 ongoing projects but also another 29 "contract possibilities" listed with 19 different donors (NIPA director's report 1998).

Analysis: donor requirements

The regulative impact of the donors on NIPA was high and it was reinforced by the

demands stemming from the state. It was clear from NIPA's management systems, investments in networking and contract tendering, program features, and general business orientation that donor demands were taken very seriously. The accountability and transparency requirements centred around fiscal controls and quantifiable indicators. Institutions like NIPA had to be able to master the details and concepts of complex contracts and financial control systems. Western business practices were requisite and it was clear that donors valued efficiency and professionalism. These demands placed a burden on NIPA but were recognized as a necessity for survival. The requirements from donors for NIPA to work in partnership with local communities and to operate in consortia were also strong. This served to further consolidate the need for tendering and management skills, and reinforced a business-oriented approach with NIPA as a service provider. This demand resonated with state requirements to be consultative and responsible to those receiving service and those providing funding. These principles of collaboration seemed to be fundamental requirements which were thematically connected to the values of social transformation espoused by the state. But at the same time the 'contractualization' of these social transformation efforts were becoming clear.

NGO Coalition Requirements

A third set of regulative pressure which impinged upon NIPA was derived from NGO coalition organizations, the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) and the Eastern Cape NGO coalition (ECNGOC). Membership in them was voluntary, but it was highly advisable to be a member in order to have a voice with these influential organizations, and because non-membership would have reduced mainstream legitimacy with donors and the state. Both SANGOCO and ECNGOC were involved in the drafting of the state legislation pertaining to NGOs. Their primary concerns revolved around accountability, transparency, ethics, and governance. Their controls added to the general reduction of independence of NIPA issuing from state and donors requirements and their thinking on many issues was often in line with donor and state objectives. Indirectly this added to the influence of donors and the state over NIPA, and complicated the institutional relations of NIPA by adding another layer of accountability. Ironically, the process of developing the coalition codes of ethics was, "underpinned by the principle that the more NGOs agreed to regulate themselves, the less would be required in terms of external regulatory mechanisms" (*NGO Matters* June 1997, p. 17).

Accountability and good business practice

Accountability was a prominent theme of the coalition demands, and many of the codes of practice centred on transparent and accessible recording-keeping. For example, the ECNGOC of which NIPA was a member, had recently passed a new code of conduct aimed at effective NGO

management, accountability, and transparency. The Code stated that, “the management practices of member NGOs should be of a high standard and aim to strengthen institutional capacity and sustainability. Management practices and NGOs should include established procedures for... the planning and effective management of activities project programs, accountability and transparency; continuous monitoring and review of activities, projects, and programs carried out with the participation of beneficiaries wherever possible...” Elsewhere it presented as a central value, “maintaining high ethical standards at both an organizational and personal level” (ECNGOC 1998, p.7). Similar statements are found in the SANGOCO code of ethics: “our commitment to promote democracy is to enshrine civil participation and complete accountability within our organizations. Transparency in all the work we do is key” (SANGOCO 1997).

It is also significant that the ECNGOC code is to be congruent with any national code. Conformity to the SANGOCO Constitution and its values was a requirement of membership in ECNGOC. In the governance section of the SANGOCO Constitution various systems of accountability were required including frequent and open communication of information, accountable and effective boards of government, and high standards of management with particular emphasis on continuous monitoring of NGO activities. As well, there were strict guidelines on financial management which specify sound administration, sustainability, and monitoring (SANGOCO 1996). It required members to comply with business accounting and auditing practices, conduct annual audits for incomes exceeding R50,000, devise explicit policies for loans and purchasing systems, and other financial oversight policies (SANGOCO 1996). NIPA had been an active partner in ECNGOC and a member of SANGOCO.

These demands for accountability were extended in an editorial in the ECNGOC news which argued that to be sustainable, NGOs must emphasize legitimacy by representing the interests of their constituency. In this way dependence upon governments and donors can be reduced by attracting resources from local communities (ECNGOCO 1998b).

Relations with State

The resonance of these codes with donor and state notions about accountability and transparency was clear. Given the documented problems with mismanagement and corruption in both the NGO and state sector, it was obligatory NGOs show an interest in ethical and professional standards. Yet, NGOs by definition were not part of the government, and there was a long history of being an alternative to the state. Therefore, despite the appearance of consensus on these issues, there were signs of tensions between the NGO sector and the state. An interesting although unscientific indicator of the NGO - state relations in the Eastern Cape was a worksheet assessing 32 NGO - state relationships. Of the 32, 15 were described as “good” or “cooperative” and the other 17 ranged from “good but...” to “adversarial”(ECNGOC Annual Report 1998, p.17) The situation had the potential to greatly complicate the regulative dimensions of NIPA.

Although the two legislative acts which pertained to NGOs, the National Development Agency act and the Non-Profit Organizations act, appeared to heighten state control of NGOs, to date it seemed that the NGO sector was not too worried about state control. There was an awareness that this could change. For example, the president of SANGOCO described the NDA bill as being “informed by policy proposals developed by SANGOCO consultation with a broad NGO community. The NPO bill was aimed at creating an environment in which NGOs would operate freely with minimum state interference. While SANGOCO is excited about this envisaged dispensation, we’re also concerned that those without approval would seek to take advantage of these positive changes to defraud the public” (Ramashia as cited in “NGOs Fight”, 1998, p.1). There was no question that the state would have increased control in the future as the National Development Agency directorate began to operate. A spokesperson for the Eastern Cape NGO coalition described the NDA as more like a “broker of funding. It will work in a similar way to normal donors. [Each] organization will submit a proposal and it will have criteria and strategic focus areas similar to the ones that the RDP had, and the organizations will be given funding” (Susan).

One NGO coalition observer concluded that a positive relationship with the government is desirable but not at the cost of NGO independence. His strategy to this end revolved around accountability. He emphasized that NGOs must be transparent, financially accountable, morally beyond reproach, and consultative with government. “NGOs should consider various aspects of their own management and activity in order to ensure that they are not responsible for negative government reactions. Thus, NGOs should monitor their own internal governance and accountability to ensure that they meet the standards of the government and public. This will help avoid any unnecessary regulation (ECNGOC 1998b, p.13). The director of NIPA also recognized this balance in the role of the state and NGOs: “We don’t see ourselves as activists anymore. We see ourselves as contributing to education so we are not non-government in the old sense but what we still have to do is to retain the right to question when the government is not delivering without making enemies on the way because you have to do it in partnership” (Gayle). These sentiments were also echoed by SANGOCO. Its program director, while advocating strong action to eradicate poverty, did not see the NGO community as an oppositional force to the government but rather a collaborator. “It’s not an antagonistic process. It will be solution-oriented and looks at what’s working” (J. Bouille as cited in “Nations Poor”, 1998).

Analysis: NGO coalition controls

An important aspect of the regulative dimensions for NIPA was the response of the larger NGO sector to issues such as relations with the state and accountability to key actors. There was significant continuity with state and donor demands on such issues as accountability, transparency, and good management. At the same time there was an awareness that the state was increasing its

influence over NGOs at a time when relations between NGOs and the state were mixed. Given the general concern by the NIPA participants and the general public about weak performance of the state in education, this may have been an indication of future tension especially in light of the fact that the donors emphasized inclusion of the state in development efforts. As one observer at the local university described it, “the state needs the NGOs in some ways to carry on programs that the state is unable to carry out, and even donors who have bilateral programs in which they want both the state and the NGOs involved” (Mary). There appeared to be a recognition of mutual need and shared political space. As will be seen in the chapter on normative dimensions, NIPA appeared to have internalized these requirements for accountability quite readily, and was collaboratively engaged with the state and donors in a variety of programs with explicit goals of social transformation. Yet, the potential for conflict between the NGO coalitions and the state over disappointing state efforts at reform and control of funding lingered. It may ultimately lead to a serious dissonance for educational NGOs like NIPA.

Table 5**Summary Table for the Regulative Dimension**

Regulative Dimension				
Theme	Points of Convergence	Points of Divergence	Level of consensus²¹	Potential Impact of Dissonance
Accountability	-strong interest in systems which would increase transparency and permit measurement of impacts - political accountability was favoured in such areas as school governance; - ethical conduct codes were seen as necessary in the face of corruption and mismanagement; -contractualized, business-oriented approaches were favoured;	- accountability to the state may be difficult if the state was unreliable; - there was potential for conflicting accountabilities for NIPA between donors and the state; - the prevalence of contracts and business relationships does not appear to leave much room for recipients views;	moderate to high	low-moderate
Partnership	- multi-stakeholder approaches and consortia were favoured; -collaboration and consultation with local actors was strongly advocated; - consortia management capacities and internal;	- partnership with the state was mandated but not easily accomplished; - the preference of donors towards consortia may subtly promote NGOs with high management capacities as opposed to those with strong local connections; - partnership is sometimes pushed by donors for business reasons rather than development priorities;	moderate	moderate
Empowerment	- empowerment was implicit in many of the policies which impacted on NIPA; -education was favoured as a primary route to empowerment with many new participatory roles and a shift towards 'transformative pedagogy'; - increased accountability was equated with enhanced opportunities for empowerment (e.g. new roles for parents in school governance);	- unlike accountability, empowerment was a term more open to interpretation. It was accepted as given but it was somewhat vaguely defined;	moderate to high	low-moderate

²¹ *Level of consensus* here refers to the level of agreement among the main actors in NIPA, primarily the study participants, but it also includes some acknowledgment of the views of others such as donors. These other views have been inferred mostly from documents and it is not implied that there has been a systematic study of their views.

Conclusions

The regulative dimensions of NIPA revealed that there was a moderately high degree of consensus among the actors which issued regulative controls of NIPA. As Table 5 indicates, there several points of convergence in what was required of the institution. The state controls showed a strong interest in making NGOs transparently managed and accountable, and this was echoed clearly by the donor and NGO coalitions. There also appeared to be general agreement that partnership was the required approach. Lastly, there was moderately high consensus requiring empowerment to be implicit in the NIPA activities. Taken alone, these convergences might have built a foundation for a high level of institutional continuity at NIPA, depending on the level of the institution's conformity. However, there were also points of divergence, as noted in Table 5, and these were the basis for some of the dissonances which were more fully apparent in the normative and cognitive dimensions.

In terms of conformity, NIPA appeared to accept a variety of regulative demands by the state, donors, NGO organizations, and from coercive pressures from its environment. There was a necessity to incorporate them into its programming, tendering and contractual activities, and management systems. The regulative dimensions of the institutional relations of NIPA were dominated by a powerful climate of demands for accountability, transparency, and business-like orientation. Contractualized relationships and an emphasis on measurable impacts also greatly affected NIPA. NGOs had to be diversified, well-networked, and flexible in order to survive in an era of volatile funding. The state exercised legislative control over NGOs but this was in the initial stages of implementation. Donors in fact had more influence over details such as management, partnerships, and program features. NGO coalitions also regulated NIPA to some extent in terms of ethics and managerial style.

The weakness of the state as a supporter of education and as a manager of social change put strong pressure on institutions like NIPA to be highly professional and accountable. NGOs like NIPA had no option but to embrace a problematic relationship with the state. NIPA was required by donors to partner with the state on projects and even to work to enhance state capacities. They were forced to cope with its low levels of capacity and erratic management, and accept that its policies directly informed NIPA's programming. But in order to ensure their own legitimacy with their recipients and to maintain solidarity with NGO coalition partners, some form of independence from the state was also required. There was a danger that organizations like NIPA would perhaps even become a surrogate for the state (There is evidence presented in the chapter on cognitive dimensions that some recipients did view NIPA this way.)

The basis for the thematic continuity of the institutional relations of NIPA was laid out here in the regulative dimensions. The heavy requirements for *accountability* were multifaceted. Conceptually, they ranged from financial record keeping and realization of stated objectives to being ethical toward, inclusive of, and responsible to, all stakeholders. The requirements for

measurable indicators, good internal governance, and a business orientation also supported this interest in accountability for NGOs. *Partnerships*, such as NGO consortia and joint ventures, are explicitly required by donors, as was community representation. The state, whose participation was often demanded by donors, was also implicitly a partner by virtue of its control and regulation of the NGO through the NDA and NPO directorates. It is also clear from the goals and values of the current education policies that community and personal *empowerment* themes were prominent, particularly in the ECD and school governance areas in which NIPA operated.

Despite these continuities, there were also dissonances apparent in the regulative dimensions. The points of divergence noted in Table 5, such as the lack of accountability in a state which required accountability or partnership for business rather than development reasons, indicated contradictions which might prove troublesome for the institution in the long run. It is probably normal that there is some tension in the varied demands placed on any institution, but in the highly charged world of educational reform in South Africa, these dissonances were more significant. It indicated that there was either a contestation of regulative control among the key actors or contradictions within their environment. For example, if empowerment is required but there is weak consensus on what that means or how it will be achieved, this is a significant dissonance for an NGO in the field of education.

It seemed apparent that at this stage of social transformation in South Africa, the role of NGOs was in transition. The regulative environment for them was fairly new and untested. The task of dismantling apartheid's institutional legacies appeared to be over, if judged by the drastic decline in donor funding, though for many actors the story of reform was just beginning. The new relationships among donors, NGOs, and the state were in a state of flux, but the tendency was towards state and donor control.

Chapter Five:

Findings: Normative Dimensions

Introduction

Data in the Normative Dimension

A review of what is meant by normative dimensions will help with understanding the data presented in this chapter. The normative dimensions of an institution are concerned with rituals, social obligations, moral norms, and other pressures which affect day-to-day practices. They are generally connected to the regulative pressures which impinge upon an institution, but are complicated by local factors such as culture, personality, historical trends, and even geography. They are also mediated and interpreted by the social constructions manifested in the cognitive dimensions. The logic of the normative dimension is appropriateness and its basis of legitimacy is morally governed. This means that consensus and social trends related to the themes of the institution are significant, and that it is important to sort out outlying or non-typical data from larger patterns. This is what has been attempted here.

The data presented below show that there were a variety of strong and weak pressures bearing upon the norms at NIPA. It should be recalled that in normative terms the participants in an institution do not typically receive overt or succinct demands for certain kinds of behaviours, as they might in the regulative dimension. Rather, there is an collective accumulation of perceived obligations derived from diverse sources. These obligations are also the result of interpretation and negotiation by the participants. Therefore, to give as complete a picture as possible of the institution, data which relate to the general context as well as from the institution have been collected. These are available in the Appendices chapter and provide a useful background to understanding the activities at NIPA. The data which refer to institutional norms at NIPA itself are drawn mostly from interviews, observations and NIPA documents. The inclusion of data such as vignettes and interview excerpts is intended to permit the reader to have a direct impression of the day to day situation at NIPA. However, in the name of readability, examples have been restricted to those which can be described as typical or as critical incidents. In the tradition of qualitative research, the intention is build up a picture in which significant patterns are identifiable, and as such, data such as the personal opinions of participants can be quite relevant.²²

Features of the Normative Dimension of NIPA

The themes of accountability, partnership, and empowerment were clearly identifiable in the normative dimensions of NIPA. The legitimacy of increasing accountability, acting in

²² Please note: unless otherwise indicated, the source of all direct quotations is cited by a participant pseudonym in parentheses at the end of the quotations. All vignettes and observations are drawn from field notes, unless otherwise indicated.

partnership, and striving towards empowerment, was clear in the words, actions, and programming at NIPA. However, there were signs of potential dysfunction and contradictions among these institutional themes. These dissonances appeared to be reflective of the conflicts within NIPA as an institution but also of the contradiction within the larger sphere of educational NGOs. Many of the thematic features of the regulative dimensions of NIPA were also found in the normative domain but they were in a weaker form. The regulative dimensions contained rules to be followed generally without exception, but combined with other factors, these rules provided the basis for some normative themes, where conformity was variable. There was evidence of partial conformity; some policies and practices were not followed to the letter but their general spirit and principles did form the basis of obligation and moral legitimacy.

The norms regarding accountability at NIPA were centred on routines and roles related to business-like management and fiscal transparency. To a large extent accountability was defined in terms favourable to donors. At the same time notions of accountability related to moral, political, and professional behaviour were visible, and these had the potential for contradiction and dissonance. More dissonant relations were in evidence with regards to partnership. There were many activities at NIPA which were predicated on a model of collaborative partnership and consultative approaches. However, there was a clear trend towards competition rather than collaboration. In addition, an important partnership for NIPA, with the state, showed signs of dysfunction. Empowerment was a significant theme at NIPA, and many institutional activities indicated adherence to goals of empowerment as part of the project of social transformation of South Africa. At NIPA, for example, there were undertakings towards participatory management, affirmative action, and multiculturalism, and new roles in education. Unfortunately, there was evidence of façade conformity to these programs and potential for serious dissonance in the long term. Much of the rhetoric about empowerment originated with the state, yet questions were being raised by most of the participants about the accountability and true commitment of the state to social transformation. As well, there was evidence that some of the empowerment activities were a business response to the pressure from donors, rather than the result of deeply held convictions. Taken together, these aspects of the normative dimensions of NIPA indicate an institution shifting to a ever more complex and contradictory position.

Accountability

The regulative requirements detailed in the preceding chapter imposed powerful demands on NGOs to be transparent and well-managed. They also had the effect of creating strong normative pressures to be accountable, measurable, and responsive to the demands of donors and other actors. The general public's disgust with corruption and mismanagement added to perceived obligations to provide a high level of professional service, and to be responsible with entrusted funds. In addition, there was evidence of norms which equated accountability with taking personal

responsibility and accepting criticism for actions. There were several sub-themes associated with accountability, including business orientation and fiscal and management controls. The business orientation to the accountability norms at NIPA was also the source of a dissonance because it shifted the routines largely over to a form of accountability defined by the donors. By contrast, other forms of accountability, such as moral and professional responsibility, and accountability to recipients, were reduced in their importance.

Accountability: having a business orientation

There was a greatly enhanced expectation that educational institutions be soundly administered and be made accountable to their 'constituencies', whether these constituencies were donors, recipients, or other institutions. This expectation was translated in a way which was cognizant of the interests of external actors, in a marketplace sense of giving them what they wanted and what they were willing to pay for. Some at NIPA argued that mismanagement scandals had produced a problem for NGOs: "I would think so because of the reporting system now to the funders, they have tightened up a lot. And also for money to come in from the outside, they are a bit skeptical about it. And I would think rightfully so if it has become tougher to get money, rightfully so because there is a lot of corruption and mismanagement" (Daphne). In other words, NGOs should be run in a business-like way. This trend is reflected in the Code of Ethical Conduct at NIPA. It states that "communities and agencies contracting the assistance of NIPA shall receive high quality service," and that "NIPA will be fully accountable for all funding received" (NIPA Code of Ethics, 1996). The deputy director of NIPA stated:

South Africa is moving into maybe a different era, in economics and management, but in the international sense in a market. If we want to compete in that we would have to be like all the other competitors and we take it from business and we have to move in that direction where business has already made great strides (Doris).

Evidence can be found that NIPA was clearly moving in this direction of funding self-generation and business-like approaches. For example, the 1997 Annual Report (p.20) stated:

In 1994 NIPA took a specific decision to focus on developing self generated income activities while simultaneously continuing the never-ending search for a donor base. The past three years have proved the wisdom of this decision as we are currently operating off our strongest and biggest financial base yet. The introduction of the tender process insured that we were able to tender for work, and although this has been a real learning curve for NIPA staff, it has also contributed to ensuring that our programs are becoming more and more cost-effective. Staff are continuously made aware of the individual unit cost of training and material in order to ensure that we retained an economically competitive edge

in the market. This focus on self generated income was also proved successful. In 1994 only 13 % of our total income was self generated but by the end of 1997 it had risen to over 35%, a vital factor in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the institution.

Among the staff there was evidence that pleasing donors and finding business were considered key aspects of being accountable. One NIPA manger and trainer put it:

That is very difficult to say. There is a general feeling that we are not appreciated. Even within NIPA there are times when we feel that the only good we can do is to get out the door and work so that money can be paid into the organization. That is it. The general well-being of individuals is of no concern to anybody. That is something we feel quite a lot, that we are just here because of how much money we can bring in.... I think we are so funding determined at this time that it is all about how many contracts we can get and we take for granted that people will go out there and do the job. It is almost like a chase for money (Daphne)

Another member of staff had a similar view: "There is also this business-like thing...they actually said we must become like a business. Like the director explained, we are all sitting on the shelf and now we are like groceries, and they come and buy, whoever wants what" (Alice). A member of NIPA's board confirmed the centrality of competing for business in the NGO sector:

I think only NGOs understand the importance of networking and collaborating with one another but when the chips are down it is a case of trying to catch a portion of whatever funding is out there. There is no doubt that competition rears its ugly head but we have seen the collaboration start to fall apart a little bit. I have seen that. It is happening in the formal sector as well as between universities and technikons. It is just a fact of life (Tom).

The appropriateness of developing business for NIPA by any and all of its employees can be noted in the following vignette:

Observations at an NIPA staff meeting

At an NIPA staff meeting, NIPA's director provided a review of projects that were underway, and that were forthcoming. She made a special point of praising a staff member whose networking and follow-up had produced a contract recently. There was a round of applause. The director strongly encouraged everyone to use personal contacts to develop more business for NIPA. Most people were taking notes, and at this juncture everyone wrote something down. The director paused to let them do so.

There was a general view at NIPA which held that a business-like approach was needed in the education sector. For example, one NIPA trainer said, “From the point of view of educators, their commitment is getting worse. There is no proper monitoring or evaluation of their performances. It seems as if it is nobody’s business” (Pasha). A ministry official who used to work at NIPA also described the importance of being business-like: “A lot of companies out there send in their social responsibility budget. There are those who just sent the money assigned for conscience but there are those who are asking a lot of questions. There are those who are asking for business plans. There are those who are saying we want money but we want to know where this money is going. We want to see it being used for a collaborative effort” (Nori).

Responsiveness to Donors: the Case of ‘Cascading’

Another indication of the bottom line of business was the adherence to the various demands by donors that inexpensive approaches to development be used, regardless of their effectiveness. One example of this was the dissemination method called cascading, the practice of training recipients in congregated workshops and sending them out to disseminate the training in their own communities. There were many complaints²³ that cascading did not provide enough monitoring to have a sustainable effect. The following interview excerpt demonstrates some typical views:

Excerpt from an interview: cost-effective “cascading” demanded by donors

Kate: ...And the whole cascade [system], well there are a whole series of question marks about that.... There are so many problems and such things but it seems to be the way that everybody is going at the moment. So we just followed them.

Robert: So that is the current trend or fashion?

Kate: It is the most cost-effective and that is the bottom-line.

Robert: How is it cost-effective?

Kate: Instead of having workshops for different people in different areas, you can have just one workshop and hopefully that will impact on 10 other people. Suppose we have 20 people who can [do it]. They will teach another 10 people and so it will cascade down. In that way it will reach more people.

Robert: I sat in on a trainer de-briefing and this was one area where they were quite openly self critical. They wanted to improve the cascading.

Kate: It is something new as well.....at the moment we grab anything new like that because we want to be relevant. Anything that comes out we want to study it and look at it and go through it.. And we have to change, for example, the new cascading thing. We have had to change our approach because of the cascade model because that is what funders wanted.

²³ For more information on staff views of cascading see the section on accountability in the chapter on cognitive dimensions

Fiscal and management controls

At NIPA there were well established norms around fiscal controls and being economical. For example, the 1995 Annual Report (p. 6) boasted of an external evaluation which read: "The unit cost comparisons show that NIPA is economical and NIPA is pursuing admirable strategies to ensure sustainability and is at the forefront of South African NGOs in adapting to the changed funding environment." It was clearly observable that pennies were counted very carefully with systems such as photocopier counter boxes, telephone logs, highly detailed expense account forms, and sign-in and out sheets being widely used.²⁴ Strict accounting was seen as a paramount function at NIPA. One finance manager said:

On the accounting side we do account for every cent... one of our big funders [from the EU] was unhappy about some projects in South Africa. They actually hired Price Waterhouse to re-audit everything in the country... Even at that stage we were only 52 cents out. The auditors actually came in three years retrospectively and the project started two years before that, and they were able to get every cent accounted for. I think that this is crucial and that makes such a difference to the whole confidence of NIPA, that every cent can be accounted for and always has been (Kris).

This fiscal conservatism can be seen in the comments of the NIPA director about knowing how to handle money. She laments the trend towards individuals over-extending themselves through retail credit schemes like hire-purchase:

[The problems of South Africa are] contributed to by the total lack of financial understanding of a huge majority of our people and exacerbated by this amazing amount of hire purchase we have in this country. And the solutions are all there. I mean you see it in the advertisements we spoke about the other day, the 13th cheque advertisement from Edgars²⁵, don't worry about the 13th cheque just come and take up an account with Edgars. There is a moral responsibility I think of the major companies in South Africa to actually begin to address how we get

²⁴ Other evidence of this was found in the negotiation for the participation of NIPA in this research project. One of their primary concerns, which they repeatedly expressed, was that NIPA would in no way be accountable for any expense related to my research. Any arrangements they made on my behalf were carefully and promptly accounted for and I was invoiced to the penny, although they were extremely generous to me in terms of time and rapport.

²⁵ Note: Edgars was a large department store chain, and the 13th cheque was a traditional Christmas bonus pay cheque.

people to have some kind of financial understanding (Gayle).

Along with the orientation towards a business footing for NIPA, there was a clear set of norms and obligations to produce accounts of their activities which were measurable and systematic. An indication of how NIPA had to respond to the pressure to be accountable in an objectively measurable way can be found in the directors report to the Board in September 1998. She recommended for consideration a system from KPMG Management Assurance Service. "In 1994 the King report issued standards on corporate governance which corporations which should strive to achieve and by which they should to be measured. Obviously this is aimed at big corporations but it is possibly a process by which we could measure ourselves" (NIPA director's report, 1998, p.4).

It was clear from staff comments that this advice to focus on corporate accountability was heeded. For example, a NIPA manager commented about the success of NIPA in being accountable and transparent:

[When] I started working here, I was made to understand that this was how NIPA operates. It was pure transparency and accountability. But even after three months I saw the benefits of transparency. No one had anything to hide and decisions were taken collectively. Responsibilities were assigned properly, in the open, there were no hidden agendas and so people felt free to perform duties knowing very well that nothing is hidden nothing is to be feared. And I think it is a good thing. I would now go out and preach this anywhere! I am converted! (Brian).

NIPA's approach was to use western industrial management approaches which signaled an appeal to 'scientific' administration and logical transparency. Evidence of this was NIPA's Total Quality Management (TQM) style Career Development Review form. It asked the respondent to set objectives for the next work period, to have performance indicators, and a rating system. Similar systems are used for the NIPA Project Evaluation Forms which had blanks for project outcomes, action plans to reach objective/outcome, a rating system, comments, performance indicators, and revised outcomes. One NIPA manager stated, "So far we have not had any problems with donors and I do not see us having any problems because NIPA has got a strictly laid down procedure for achieving results. It is called the TQM procedure" (Brian). Again, the role of obligations to donors is prominent in this trend. As one senior manager at NIPA described it: " Funders are also looking at the structure of the organization... They want to see if NIPA as a model could be replicated. They looked quite specifically at our funding and management systems, and the involvement of our board"(Roberta).

Accountability as responsibility

Connected to this orientation towards business outcomes was another moral norm related to being responsible for one's actions. The emphasis was on a rights-and-privileges approach to interacting with others, based on the South African constitution. References to the constitution in NIPA workshops highlighted these values. For example, one trainer said:

The first thing that springs to mind is that you can have a constitution, a written constitution, but it doesn't mean anything until it is put into practice. We often refer to the constitution in the governance and management project, and in the foundation phase program. It is almost the lynch pin to everything we do. We see it as an example of an ideal way of living, and that these ideas will trickle through so that we begin to act on the constitution, and not just mouth these ideas of equality and so on (Bassy)

The recipients also appeared to have internalized this emphasis on personal accountability. For example, one teacher complained about her students losing a sense of individual accountability:

they are confusing [the new] discipline with freedom. That is why I say we must teach them because they're still learning about democracy. They must also know that although they have rights, the right is not there just by itself. There is responsibility and accountability and all those things so they can say yes, I'm right to do this, but also this is my responsibility. I have to be accountable (Tendai).

There was other evidence that accountability (as responsibility) reflected an obligation to participate more responsibly in educational affairs, as can be noted in the following vignette:

Observation notes from a workshop

At a workshop on school governance, the issue of accountability was a key topic. The NIPA facilitator asked, "What does accountability mean?" and a discussion ensued in small groups. In the debriefing after the discussion, the facilitator kept driving towards the notion of self-discipline which was taken to mean things like punctuality and full participation. All of the participants answered enthusiastically "Yes, yes!" to the facilitator's questions such as "Isn't it important to be on time?" The concept of *self* was explored and the participants volunteered that it meant humility, taking responsibility, and not giving up when confronted with problems. The facilitator concluded with the idea that accountability means accepting criticism and 'owning' what you say and do. She reminded them that this meant they should "discuss issues, not people". The values of democratic criticism and persistence were very clear here.

Analysis: Accountability

The normative manifestation of the theme of accountability at NIPA appeared to have four distinct components. First, there was a set of financial and management practices in place at NIPA which reflected an emphasis on transparency and auditing. Careful management of money and fiscal conservatism were the primary values, and these appeared to signal demands from donors and other actors along these lines. In addition, the general dissatisfaction with mismanagement and corruption resulted in even higher valuing of good financial systems. Second, accountability also seemed to signify deference to the importance of being business-like. NIPA practices were clearly moving to a market footing, with the emphasis being on generating income, pleasing donors, and being competitive. There were clear obligations and routines centred on cultivating business opportunities. Third, in conjunction with the management systems, there was emphasis laid upon using measurable, quantifiable indicators to address accountability concerns. Fourth, the accountability also implied a moral obligation to take responsibility for one's actions and not depending on someone else to solve your problems. These norms appeared to be connected to obligations towards empowerment and social transformation because they equated accountability with new forms of power sharing and personal rights.

In terms of institutional relations, the obligations for accountability seemed to elevate the status of donors with their preferences for measurable outcomes and economic approaches. The trend towards business systems like TQM gave advantages to NGOs which possessed or had access to the education, technical knowledge, and social contacts where these systems have found favour. Although in itself, this enhanced management capacity at NIPA did not appear to be problematic, it did raise questions about what other influences might come from donors such as a shift towards NGOs being viewed as a service business. It was apparent that some NIPA staff felt uncomfortable with the pressure to be business-oriented and NIPA's response to it, but senior management took it as a fact of life for educational NGOs in post-apartheid South Africa. They took what they might have called a strategic long-term view which permitted them to ignore some dissonances in the short-term.

There was a dissonance related to a conflict among various forms of accountability. On one hand, there was a form of accountability which emphasized responsiveness to the marketplace, with very little questioning about the contents of its demands. Accountability was based on acceding to the wishes of the donors because as the funders they enjoyed particular rights to dictate. On the other hand, there was a form of accountability which valued debate and taking political responsibility. The emphasis here was on collective social interactions and an exchange of views. In the long term, these two versions of accountability suggest widening contradiction. The first form of accountability is fairly unidirectional while the second form is consultative and not based on the power relations inherent in financial transactions. If the demands from the marketplace (i.e. the donors) are at odds with the norms of political

accountability, then this may produce a severe dissonance for NIPA.

Partnership

If accountability at NIPA implied new routines and roles for shared responsibilities, then partnership was a necessary element. Among the most prominent normative pressures was the shift towards relationships which featured equality among the stakeholders and inclusion of all relevant parties, such as community groups. Not only were these ideas cognizant of the social transformation away from the inequality and exclusion of apartheid, but also of the larger pressure from development thinkers in the West which sought to avoid the top-down, ethnocentric approaches of the past. Donor policies, state policies, and NGO coalition policies, among others, strongly indicated that multilateral approaches were appropriate, all the way from the macro level of economic influence and decision-making down to the micro level of workshops and teacher-student relations.

These influences were identifiable at NIPA. Many practices such as community involvement, networking, and participatory management were designed with partnership in mind. The state was also a notable partner for NIPA. Unfortunately, in all these areas there was evidence of potential for dissonance. While significant efforts were made at NIPA to be collaborative, often the relations among NIPA and its partners were contractualized and business oriented. Networking was just as often a synonym for an increasing business profile rather than sharing. There was evidence of skepticism among the staff about the real purpose behind participatory management schemes. The partnership between NIPA and the state had several inherent difficulties related to the weakness and unreliability of the state.

Collaboration and Community Involvement

A prominent norm at NIPA was respect for the idea that communities must be included in activities that affected their future. It was also accepted in NIPA that no form of development was possible without valid consultation with the local community. A NIPA staff member described this obligation: “It must be funding grassroots, it must have the bottom. They must see and realize our values and our norms. I believe in from the bottom upwards rather from the top-down and, appreciating things, and respect to and for all the things” (Alice). Evidence that this was fundamental to NIPA’s development ethos was found in the diploma in education courses run by NIPA for Rhodes university. In the study circles methodology it was stated that an important outcome was to, “work effectively with others as a member of the team, group, community” (Rhodes University 1998, p.7). The NIPA Code of Ethical Conduct reflected this emphasis on being on an equal footing with all stakeholders: “Our responsibilities to the community include: showing respect to community members as colleagues of equal standing” (NIPA, 1996). This

credo was manifested in many practices such as showing respect for local cultures by the trainers. Many staff members explained that they would have to act differently out in the field. For example, one female trainer said, "You can see today that I am wearing jeans today, but I cannot go to them[into the field] wearing pants. I have to go and change and wear something like a skirt. Because in the rural areas they are very traditional people....I speak Xhosa to them and they are comfortable"(Benisha).

NIPA's programs in such areas as school governance training were based around community involvement, and NIPA was proud to showcase this to donors. For example, it cited the following comments from a Swiss evaluator: "The consciousness of participants has been raised in respect of community 'ownership' and responsibility for schooling. There are also impressive examples of parents teaching crafts to pupils during school hours, community fund-raising drives, and of parents renovating school buildings" (NIPA Annual Report 1997, p.19). The staff at NIPA appeared to adhere to this obligation quite readily. For example one trainer said,

We go to where the communities are. People are more comfortable when they are in their own surroundings. So training in that way is better received. You get a better response because one can relate with one's immediate surroundings. It would be familiar, just like in nature...We also encourage that whenever we go into a new program, we do a needs analysis which means that we go into the communities and find out exactly what they want, and how they would like this to be delivered. You have to find the right level which can be pitched taking into consideration the whole question of age, culture, the gender sensitivity, and all the hierarchical structures that are in those communities, especially in rural communities (Petros).

There was evidence that the recipients of NIPA's programs also supported community participation:

Excerpt from an interview with a recipient

Robert: I was wondering how you see the training today affecting the school governance committee. What changes do you think these workshops are going to make?

Sindisa: It will make a very very big progress in the schools if we do implement what we are being taught here. There is a lot that can be changed at schools because personally when we were at this school governance body, we did not know what to do, what we are supposed to do. But now we are being taught our responsibilities and our parents who are in our communities who do not know, because they were never involved in school activities before, is empowered to school activities. If we can implement it correctly I think it is going to be very very successful. It will make a great change.

Robert: In the long-term, maybe five or ten years from now, what are the things that you think

you should see at the school that will reflect that great change. What are some things that will indicate to you that things have changed for the better?

Sindisa: you know, what I really want to see in our communities is the parents. If the parents can't know exactly [what's going on] and feel at home when they're at school, that is the main problem. I want to see [this involvement] when we go home from here. Because now they tend to retreat a little bit and they don't seem to understand that they own the school. They are the people who are responsible for whatever is taking place in the school. So if the parents or our communities can be able to know that this school is theirs, that they are free to see whatever is happening in the school, and contribute a lot in the school.

The inclusion of different parties in development work and in the building of civil society appeared to have the power of a strong social obligation. This was manifested in the norm of inclusive personal behaviours. At NIPA planning meetings, training sessions, and events like consortia meetings, many rituals of welcoming and recognition were observable. There was also a tendency towards formal introductions and flattering speech-making which made a public show about the legitimacy of the team approach. Values like commitment and sharing were often mentioned. It was expected that people would be given a warm welcome and courteous treatment. This became part of the definition of professionalism and devotion to service in the social environment around NIPA, and one which many at NIPA took seriously.²⁶

Even if collaborating was difficult it was widely legitimized as the way forward. For example, it was widely discussed at training workshops:

Observations from a workshop in Tabankulu

At a training workshop for SGB the participants were discussing who should be included in the SGB meetings. (The question of a power shift away from principals was a central issue in these discussions, especially if the principal was corrupt or incompetent.)

Recipient 1: "Can there be an SGB meeting without the principal?"

Local EDO: "There ought to be some guidelines about that."

Recipient 2: "We dealt with this. We must work hand in hand with the principal. Otherwise there is no transparency"

Facilitator: "The principal is automatically part of the SGB."

Recipient 3: "The SGB has a constitution."

Recipient 1: "Is this constitution the same as the South African constitution?"

The discussion concluded with the acknowledgment that all stakeholders should be included in decision-making, at the very least, for constitutional reasons. It was this template of inclusion which would make the school governance body accountable.

²⁶ More evidence of the pressure to be inclusive can be found in an evaluation report of NIPA participation in a science week: "The NIPA organizing team appeared to function well as a committed team. Communication with exhibitors, national organizers and others appeared largely to have gone well and had been of a friendly and assisting nature and underpinned by an inclusive philosophy rather than one of turf protection." (Kuiper *et al.*, 1998, p.13). (Italics in original)

There was evidence that community participation could sometimes bring results, as was indicated in conversation with a teacher at a school where the NIPA training was well-received:

Observations on a visit to a new school

A visit to a newly expanded and rebuilt school provided a stark reminder of the difficulties some schools faced, and the potential for change if the right factors were in place. The school was an NIPA 'success' story in its establishment of an active school governance council, pro-active administration, and implementation of outcomes based education systems. The school had recently been renovated; in fact, the workmen were still there putting finishing touches in place when we arrived. There were two rows of neat brick buildings with good porches and finished interiors. Some of the teachers were just moving into their new classes. Down near the end of the school quadrangle was a decrepit pole and mud building with no windows or doors. I investigated it and inside I found rough dirt floors and bundles of cinder blocks hanging from wires from the tin roof. As I poked around a young teacher came in and we talked about the school and what was happening there. He told me the blocks were to hold the roof down when the wind blew hard, and that until last week this had been a classroom in which exams were written. This was in fact the old school. I asked how they had been so lucky as to get a nice new school. He said it was mostly the lobbying of the parents council and the school's vice principal. Many other schools in the neighbourhood still had facilities like the one they were currently vacating. At the end of the conversation, the teacher asked me if I would like to make a donation to their prize day fund, which was a reminder of the school's ongoing poverty in spite of its recent good fortune.

Networking

Collaboration with other stakeholders at NIPA was meant to be advanced by the practice of networking. Networking was a strongly accredited approach to professional and social activities at NIPA, and it dovetailed neatly with norms of community empowerment and partnership. Throughout many NIPA documents and observed social interactions at NIPA, there were many references to the importance of being connected to disparate groups and to harnessing the resources of those groups. For example, in the course manual for the diploma in primary education the principle learning outcomes for the workshops included, "working effectively with each other in the group and with the participants on the course and with their school communities," "organizing and managing the partnership and courses responsibly and effectively," and, "understanding that the world is a set of related systems and that problems do not exist in isolation" (Rhodes University 1998, p.6). A list of important institutional partners in NIPA's network identified 10 different groups (NIPA Annual Report 1997, p.10).

There were so many examples of the energy devoted to networking that only a few will be cited. One instance can be found in the director's report in October 1998. Under the title of networking she wrote,

USIS: United States information services; excellent luncheon with three reps from USIS, and other local NGOs. They included two NIPA board members, and a CBO lady who had driven all the way from Mount Fletcher for the luncheon. USIS offers all sorts of possibilities such as bringing out speakers, training staff and internship opportunities. I now need to get together with other local at lunch and follow-up – will raise at board meeting(Gayle).

Another senior staff member at NIPA asserted that it was important for NGOs to educate and socialize donors, and for NGOs to develop long term relationships with key individuals:

There is a big role there. I think how time-consuming it is, and when you have changing faces and new individuals who are in a decision -making position, it is more difficult. But sometimes it is very worthwhile. Some funders put a lot of emphasis on this. For example, a woman from the Rockefeller fund, she has been coming here for six or seven years. She comes here about twice a year to visit NGOs and she visits the related projects. She always asks everybody what they think of everybody else and who would be good (Roberta).

A director from NIPA's board said that networks and linkages were crucial: "NIPA seems to me to be particularly good at maintaining those linkages. NIPA as an organization understands the value of linkages with people who themselves understand the organization and who have moved into influential positions in other sectors. The inter-relationships wherever you go are really quite fascinating. They are amazingly complicated" (Tom). A significant aspect of NIPA's institutional network stemmed from the fact that it had been established for over ten years and that many people who worked at NIPA at one time had moved into related institutions such as the Ministry of Education, other NGOs, or education institutions. NIPA was jokingly referred to by some staff as a finishing school. "And this place is like an open university. People come then people go. They stay for a two or three-year period....they call it a finishing school" (Alice).

NIPA greatly benefitted from the strong networks that had been built up. For example, a former NIPA staff member moved to a senior position in the Department of Education and was pivotal in finally sending the cheque for the project to NIPA. The project manager of Imbewu (a NIPA project partner) was personally well acquainted with many people in NIPA, and he was also married to the director of the Media in Education Trust, herself a former NIPA employee. The sister of a NIPA staff member, also an ex-NIPA staff member herself, had a senior position in the Faculty of Education at a local university. The dean of this university sat on the board of NIPA as

did the editor of the local daily paper.²⁷

An interview with the Ministry of Education official provided a very detailed picture of the realities of networking norms which confronted NIPA. Notable here was the connection between the importance of multilateral efforts and the socialization process which occurred. It is implied that the actors in NIPA's network shared resources but also engage in political exchanges about the direction and processes of reform in education:

Robert: I see that there are many informal relationships among the various actors in this development work...

Nori: Yes there are, definitely... for example, you could see with the European union or the Danish government. The funders are starting to connect directly to the government but they would prefer their funds to come from a supervising organization because of some problems such as the misuse of funds. They also used NGOs for that purpose. We also have some funders who have been, let's call it empowered, to open a trust fund. So we have a trust fund in the government now. It is administered by... two funders. We have the British government running the Imbewu projects which is huge. NIPA is one of those agents outside the government which is administering that project, the financial part.

Robert: is there a process under way to educate funders?

Nori: Over the years it has evolved. The whole process of going forward in this country has just had to be

in partnerships because of financial [aspects], the government just doesn't have the money to do the things it would like to do... The whole equity thing is there but how do you manage it? You manage it through partnerships. We are expecting business to come to the party because the new vocational and technical educational area. We are providing them with people to work in their companies. That is the way the whole national qualifications framework sees it. We are being forced to work in partnership. Even the OBE forces you because it looks at the question of what can the person do when they leave the formal education system...

Participatory Management

If NIPA was going to work in collaborative networks, then ideally its internal management should be conducted in the same way. There was identifiable pressure that the management of NGOs be conducted in a participatory and 'democratic' manner. There were many examples which indicated that NIPA had integrated participatory management into its institutional routines. The NIPA Code of Ethical Conduct presented NIPA as a "caring, co-operative workplace [that] respects human dignity, promotes professional satisfaction, and models positive relationships" (NIPA, 1996). A new management system recently had been put into place which involved

²⁷ The fact that many people had left NGOs and entered government meant that sometimes there was a huge overlap in terms of professional experience and shared values. It was estimated that up to 60% of the NGO workforce had been absorbed into government since 1994 (*Africa News Service* 6 March 1998).

participatory management and election to committees. An annual report stated:

[NIPA has] created the opportunity for a total of 14 staff, over 27% of the total full time staff, to be involved in top management. In addition all staff have numerous activities to participate in various managerial situations through our system of task teams, portfolio teams, and standing sub-committees.... This participative style of management has proved to be highly successful. In some cases it has been too successful, as we have in the past four years lost some excellent senior staff to top positions in both government and the private sector (NIPA Annual Report 1997, p. 5).

Other staff members had different views about the inclusive practices at NIPA. For example, one reported that in contrast to other NGOs where she had worked, here she was expected to get her own coffee or other menial errands and not ask the domestic staff to do such tasks "And that is just not acceptable here at NIPA because their job is their job and their job is not to run around after the people. It applies in all ways so that everybody is equal. The domestic do things for you. Out of teamwork, yes, and out of comradeship yes, and very often people will offer. But there is genuine respect" (Kris). Observations bore out this assertion almost without exception.

The participatory management approach also had its roots in the active learning and personal growth concepts inherent in the outcomes based education system. In the notes for the Foundation phase training given by NIPA there were found such principles as "Learners are not compared with each other but encouraged to support each and work cooperatively.... A relationship of collaboration and trust is encouraged. Power is shared with the learners taking responsibility for their own learning.... All learners are perceived to have talent and ability" (NIPA Foundation Facilitators notes 1997).

These ideas on participation also appeared to have some resonance with the recipients. For example, in one of the evaluations for the full school development program one participant wrote, "it is more than essential, as the learners involved are still young and still more familiar with their parents – so that facilitators should communicate with their parents now and then" (NIPA report, 1998, appendix).

Another manifestation of the system of participatory management at NIPA was the fact that everyone, from the janitor and the domestic staff to the senior staff, was required to submit written reports on their work every two weeks. Some of these reports, especially from section managers, were very closely read, and if late or too cryptic, revisions were required. These reports were seen by the senior staff as a way of including all levels of staff in the functioning of

the overall organizational profile and direction.²⁸ The behavioural norm was that one could not simply work there answering a phone or doing clerical work. One also had to demonstrate awareness of where NIPA was heading and one's part in it. These reports were taken seriously as a duty by the senior staff. Every two weeks it was possible to observe many staff labouring over their reports at the last minute when they were due. Often they would help each other with ideas and language questions. For example, the main custodian was frequently helped by the library staff because his English was not very good and his work hardly ever varied. However it was necessary that he could show that he continued to 'grow' in his position and that he was planning for growth.²⁹

It was clear that senior staff really supported this management system. One manager described it like this.

When I came onto the staff of NIPA it was very inclusive. There was an election of members onto management committees. It was open and anybody could get on. It was open in the sense that we sat and made decisions with very little consultation and through that structure we began to explore bringing in more people for more consultation, more transparency, I was part of that process. In the last three years we have gone through two management structures, and each has been more open and provides an opportunity for people to come in as observers, and to give feedback. The only thing about it is that even though we have the organizational development and advisory committee, a concern that I have is that the staff did not make enough use of that committee. That committee is there to provide for the needs of the organization and people could start to have an opportunity to discuss their concerns, their fears, their worries, but I don't think people use it enough. I don't know why, maybe people don't have as many problems as we think they do. I don't know. But you do hear things in the corridors and no organization is without this. Yet people don't always bring those concerns to the committee, and that is a concern because that committee is not used as it should be. So the committee is left to address issues that we as management bring up which might not always be the concerns of the people. So that is something we need to work

²⁸ The report form included: 1. Review of the week (include meetings, training, curriculum development, fund-raising, strategic planning, new resource decisions). 2. Observations and Reflection. 3. Forward Planning. 4. Proposals/Concerns. and 5. General.

²⁹ The underlying attitude of many staff towards the reports was that it was at least partly busy work or window dressing. For example, I was given for my perusal and analysis a big pile of reports which had been filed and copied from six months previous. The Director said I was free to copy any that I wanted, but when she had left the room her secretary said that I could simply keep what ever I wanted: no-one was ever going to read them, she said.

on still. (Cathie).

As noted in the comments of the manager above, there were indications of resistance or non-engagement by the staff regarding participatory management. The practice was proudly displayed by the senior staff to donors, but many staff were privately skeptical about it. For example, “the idea of the organizational development committee was originally from top management just to show greater staff participation on management decisions as window dressing. I feel it was a way of showing that NIPA was progressive to the funders because funders ask how much input does the staff have and so on.... I don’t think that the committee is fulfilling the role it was supposed to fill because they don’t have any decision-making powers” (Daphne). Another staff member, asked whether the culture of this organization was participatory, answered, “It is, but it is still lip service” (Nkasi). On a memo, one staff member commented about mentoring: “I’ve never seen any” (Janey). Yet another staff member described the state of participatory management as not perfect but much better than it used to be. “ It has changed in the last two years... and it used to be very much top down. It is much more consultative than it used to be. It used to be window dressing” Kate). Taken together, these data indicate that participatory management practices at NIPA contained contradictions which foretold of a dissonance in the long term. It would be difficult for NIPA staff to implement participatory modes in their interactions with other stakeholders if their own institution was using it for mostly business profile reasons.

The State as a Weak Partner

One the most significant normatively accredited practices at NIPA was that of partnering with the state, usually in an network which included the donors and others NGOs. In principle, this was meant to be participatory and collaborative, with substantial dialogue and mutual capacity building. In reality, the obligation for NIPA to partner with the state contained one of the most prominent potentials for dissonance. Working in partnership with the state was presented to NIPA as a fundamental of the social transformation of South Africa., but there were inherent difficulties in it. As one Ministry Official described it:

I’m happy to say that the NGOs in this province, particularly in early childhood sector, are seeking partnerships when they want to do a project. They connect with the governments and say, what is your big plan, what do you need to. Also the funders won’t fund them unless they are in partnership. The funders are all saying that if you don’t work together with the governments towards the unity of vision, we can’t fund you. It is the bigger picture that you are contributing to. You are contributing towards nation building rather than focusing just on something like say literacy. And it is hard, very hard, working in partnerships

(Nori).

At NIPA, there was open acknowledgment that there had to be a three-way partnership among NGOs, donors, and the state, but that this was difficult to do. A manager described the complexities of the networks and partnerships as follows:

The [donor official] on her last trip here visited NIPA and visited [a contact at the local university who] also used to be at NIPA. She saw that we had built up a relationship and that we had a slight change of focus and that we had done some strategic planning. She wanted to know who are the people that she needed to start talking to, and so she went to the education department and she spoke to them and then she came back in and spoke about the costs of [certain projects] and she said, the department has all these people appointed and half of them don't know what the hell they're supposed to be doing. Do you think we can get together (Roberta)

The deputy director saw a very clear trend towards being partnered with the state. While she acknowledged the state's limitations, she recognized its responsibility for education:

The state does not have the resources, the financial or human resources to do all the work that has to be done, and therefore the NGOs can do their part in support and assisting the state. So this is to me a partnership. Also NGOs bring their parts in a project kind of way so there will be a beginning and an end. The end is where the problem lies because if the NGO pulls out and there is no sustainability for that project then that just falls flat and it will and all the money and all the resources that have been pumped into that project will be to no avail. So therefore the sustainability will then rest on the state. So that is why NIPA has always tried to bring in the officials from the department to all of their training at no cost to the department (Doris).

Several of the NIPA staff reported difficult experiences in their relationships with state officials. One trainer said, "Another problem is with Ministry officials though I can't say exactly what is the problem because those who fortunately come to participate in the training, they become quite involved, they buy into it. So I think it is a matter of not knowing or communicating with them. Perhaps sometimes they fear us coming and doing their work. They feel threatened and do not see us as partners in the work" (Nkasi).³⁰ Other staff acknowledged the difficulties of working with the state. For example, one NIPA manager described the difficulties of poor co-ordination and low government capacities:

³⁰ Another indication of the low capacity of Ministry staff was the fact that an NIPA project was being specifically targeting Education Department Officers (EDOs) for training in OBE. The NIPA director wrote that the project was, "very much in line with our capacity building philosophy. We need to develop EDOs to reach full capacity and do their work confidently in the field" (Gayle).

the fact that we had the former governments of the Transkei and Ciskei to contend with and they had to be brought into government. There were a whole lot of factors. This project initially was supposed to have run parallel with government projects and the aim of this project was to decentralize power. We were introducing decentralized training. Our focus was rural and we want to work with the government. We wanted to bring into the government the concept of community resource centers. Another object of the project was to share their resources and expertise within the province and really the idea was to have government on-board, but as I said that did not happen. It is beginning to happen now and for me it is exciting but it is also a little bit disappointing that government did not actually take up the challenge then to work with us. We would be so much further ahead now. For instance, with the Imbewu project we are linking the consortia and the partnerships that we introduced in the quality schools project. For instance, at NIPA we do our work on the foundation phase where they coordinated their material, their training methodology and content, and actually came up with a combined approach for the foundation phase. Now Imbewu is doing all of this again and it is like reinventing the wheel (Cathie).

Even recipients observed this apparent trend towards the state's abdication of responsibility for education, and letting the NGOs fill the gap:

Excerpt from an interview with two recipients

Robert: What about the role of the government here in South Africa? NIPA is providing an educational service. Do you think the government should be doing this?

Manyana: this is part of what the government has opened up for us to, I mean for the country, for the people to develop. So I don't think a government should, I mean those people should, go down and introduce computers to us. I mean those people who have studied computers should be the ones to introduce it to us. I think there are some people in the government who have studied computers but they have got some other duties to do.

Robert: so, the advantage of an organization like NIPA is that they have specialized, in this case in computers?

Manyana: yes allowing NIPA to work in the country, to participate in the development of the country. I think that is a good thing. It is a great thing government has done [to bring in NIPA]

Robert: Dikana would you agree with that?

Dikana: partly but not exactly because for example, we are doing this course through the Nelson Mandela children's fund. It is not the government as such and the government is actually withdrawing its services in places where people need employment, and places that are supposed to be developing. In many sectors for example, in transport. There is Transnet, the airways, the government wants to privatize all this whereas at least it should have taken quite some time for this to be privatized as such.

Robert: they're withdrawing too much?

Dikana: uh huh, and for that matter, since it is privatizing so early, the majority of the people are

not yet economically free so they are unable to grab some of the spoils that the government is giving over to the private sector.

Analysis: Partnership

Partnership was an integral theme of the institutional dimensions of NIPA, and there was evidence of obligations to conduct NIPA activities in a collaborative and participatory manner. There was wide recognition by many actors that the task of development in education was simply too immense for single institutional actors. This may have been reinforced by practices noted under the theme of accountability which emphasized the efficiency of sharing resources. Being consultative was deemed a highly appropriate approach because it implied a political and policy dialogue which resonated with rhetoric about the post-apartheid social transformation of South Africa. Also connected to partnership were institutional practices like networking and participatory management which were part of institutional survival strategies. The emphasis on consortia and public-private partnerships³¹ also implied funding and business development activities for NGOs. There was a recognition of the appropriateness of the state's role in a democratic system to foster social reform, as well as the fact that the state was the dominant policy and managerial actor in the school system. The institutional norm was triangular arrangement of partners among the donors, the state, and NGOs.

These relations indicated a dissonance in NIPA institutional relations between a competitive model of business survival and a collaborative model of collective efforts at social transformation. Networking as collaboration seemed contradictory to networking as business development. There were other dissonances related to how participatory the practices were at NIPA. The participatory management system was clearly popular with senior staff, who publicized it widely, but other staff expressed some cynicism about it. It was another indication of the penetration of a marketplace mentality into NIPA which was at odds with ideas of balanced partnerships and shared decision-making. Added to this dissonance was the weakness of the state as a partner for NIPA. Being partnered with the state produced a problematic and even a dysfunctional set of norms for institutions like NIPA. It was obliged to include state representatives such as ministry officials and principals, but many of these individuals were unreliable, incompetent, or simply dramatically under-supported. In some cases even being associated with ministry officials undermined NGO credibility. In addition, as several participants have stated, many state officials felt threatened or jealous of NIPA staff, although others tried their best to have a good professional relationship. It was acknowledged that the state was struggling financially, and this trend was worsening. The partnership with the state was therefore

³¹ For an good example of this, see the Bulurha schooling re-building event described in the Appendix on contextual influences for partnership.

at odds with the basic trends towards accountability and probity which existed for NIPA because the state was perceived by many participants to be neither accountable nor trustworthy.

In sum, partnership added many layers of complexity and inherent contradiction to the institutional relations of NIPA.

Empowerment

Implicit in the norms of accountability and partnership at NIPA were routines and roles related to the idea of empowerment. NIPA main program areas were in education, which is, ideally, empowering. Most of the practices at NIPA had explicit goals of empowerment for both the communities with which NIPA worked and individuals within those communities. At NIPA itself management practices were designed to encourage personal growth and to address larger social goals such as multiculturalism and affirmative action. NIPA also endorsed and promulgated new roles for teachers which were meant to have an empowering function for them and their students. All of these activities resonated with the goals of social transformation expressed in the new educational policies in South Africa and the general directions favoured by donors and NGO coalitions.

However, like accountability and partnership, there were some dissonances within the empowerment theme at NIPA. There was evidence of cynicism on the part of some staff about empowerment initiatives, which were seen by some as efforts to please donors. As well, there was a dissonance related to a contradiction between individual empowerment and community empowerment. In a context of state retreat from funding for education and questions about the accountability of the state, rhetoric about community empowerment may prove hollow in the long term. This in turn, may produce a problem of credibility for NIPA within its staff and with its recipients.

Community and Personal Development

At NIPA there was ample evidence that empowerment was a basic norm in its programming. NIPA was described in the daily newspaper as, “instrumental in the development and empowerment of many Eastern Cape communities”(Daily Dispatch 28 March 1998). The notion of empowerment was centered around the idea of positive self-perception and the development of inherent potentials. This was primarily concerned with individuals rather than communities. Strong emphasis was put on providing disadvantaged people with new opportunities and skills to develop self-reliance. It was believed that the recipients had many of the skills, but could not use them. As one NIPA coordinator said, “We believe that students have the skills that need to be polished and encourage”(Aries, 1998). When asked what themes or threads tied NIPA’s diverse programs together, many of the staff had the same answer: capacity building. This

capacity building could take many forms. One senior manager at NIPA said that it included teaching management, such as management of finances, school buildings, school governance bodies, and teaching resources (Cathie).

Many of the NIPA educational materials made references to giving individuals the skills which would make them resourceful and empowered. The underpinning principles for the Diploma in (Primary) Education, Part 1(p.12) stated a main goal to be “Enabling parents, families, and communities to foster the care and development of their children.” In an early childhood development booklet, the authors stated that important principles for South African education included allowing democratic participation, relevance to social and political development, providing equality of access to education. It advocated lifelong learning as a form of empowerment: “Lifelong learning is about improving your action in the world” (National Educare Forum, 1997 p.7).

The personal experience of empowerment was a common theme of discussion for the staff. There were many ‘success’ stories of individuals rising up and taking control, for instance, teachers who managed to get their alcoholic principal dismissed after years of chaos. The systems of participatory management and multi skilling for NIPA staff were also evidence of the appropriateness of personal empowerment.³² Community empowerment was also discussed, but individual empowerment was widely held to be a precursor to it. To the staff, empowerment implied personal growth, perhaps in a psychological sense. For instance, as a trainer said:

Because of all these things the whole school development came out and the message that we sent out every time was the same. This is our message in all our courses that we do, that learning depends on your self and that it is lifelong. Personal development of people. We do a lot of personal development work, all of our training is concerned with capacity building and everything is inter linked. You can’t work in the school governing body if you don’t work in the rest of the school. You can’t work with the teachers unless you work with the managers or the community... It is not just books and so forth, but it belongs to the whole community (Jelena).

The deputy director of NIPA saw empowerment as a central theme in NIPA’s programs. Note the reference to confidence-building as a key aspect of personal empowerment:

There are two words that immediately come to mind. One would be development and the other would be capacity building. Capacity building in the sense of building up people’s knowledge skills and attitudes and as I said the ultimate would be

³²

For further evidence of the deep beliefs of the staff in this form of empowerment, see the section called “Personal Growth” in the chapter on cognitive dimensions.

empowerment. The other would be developments more in the sense of developing a community or developing a certain group of people like we're trying to do with the whole school development where there is not just one person in a community but that community might be a school floor or a village. You're not just touching one person you are actually touching and linking people and therefore touching the whole community... the moment they have more skills more knowledge more experience, the moment that you start making your input, the confidence comes and to me it is the confidence that is lacking. Because there is so much potential there. The experience is there, the knowledge is there it is just for the people to become confident and to say we are going to start using what we have. And confidence, I don't know, sometimes you have to have a sixth sense to know if this person is now getting to be more confident but you can see it sometimes in some actions (Doris).

NIPA's director attributed the institutions's ethos of empowerment to the NIPA staff's professionalism:

One of the key themes in our organization is in our title, capacity building, a new word which we added into our title. It's something I think we have been doing a heck of a lot of. It has become important to understand that we're not just delivering content but that we are delivering skills and knowledge to make sure that the individual can use that and can grow for themselves and that is tied to professionalism (Gayle).

There was an indication in the NIPA training programs that empowerment of children was seen as appropriate and socially valued. Children were not seen to be simply receivers of knowledge but as individuals empowered by rights:

Observation of a teacher training session

At a training session, some teachers were taken through a values exercise based on the principles of the new education policies like Curriculum 2005. They were asked to fit together puzzle pieces in groups. Each piece had a value statement attached to it. Some examples were: "Children need protection from abuse and neglect. Children need a decent place to live. Children need adequate medical care. Children need a secure future." The facilitator then led a discussion about the meaning of these statements, and how these values might be realized through education. The participants responded very actively, voicing their agreement with phrases like "Yes, yes" or "Uh huh". Then there were flip chart notes made based on the question, "How might you do this in your own classroom?" The approach of the facilitator was Socratic but it was clear there was a lot of agreement about the direction in which the discussion was going. There was small talk on the margins of the discussion which contained sentiments implying 'it is about time' and 'that's what education *should* be'. The facilitator explained to me afterwards that in her experience many of the participants in these workshops had thought about these ideas but had either not put them into words, or had not had a forum to discuss them.

NIPA had a readily identifiable internal culture based on sharing responsibility with others and developing the capacity of others share to responsibility. It was a common sentiment among the staff that, 'we can't do it alone'. At NIPA staff meetings the approach to tasks was always to work in groups using shared leadership roles. Observations at debriefings indicated that the NIPA trainers were very quick to assume responsibilities, exchange ideas, take on different roles, and keep on task. They were clearly used to consensual and co-operative modes of operating. On one occasion, when boxes of library materials were to be moved, several people left their desks to help without being asked, regardless of whether their job descriptions included such tasks. When this is connected to the participatory management ethos at NIPA, it was clear that the sharing of burdens was empowering in the sense that it allowed one to appreciate the work experience of others. It seemed in general to be anti-hierarchical.

Multiculturalism and affirmative action

There were several practices at NIPA which demonstrated evidence of multiculturalism and affirmative action. To some extent these appeared to anticipate changes in the face of pending legislation and other policy shifts.³³ Like the data on participatory management, there were indications that some of the practices were instituted by senior management in order to present an attractive profile to donors. At the same time there was evidence that many staff at NIPA took these programs seriously. As the deputy director said, "Yes the fact that there was a new South Africa, the new democracy, definitely played its part in the decisions that were taken" (Doris).

The NIPA Code of Ethical Conduct stated that it was the fundamental goal of the institution to "continue to build and to maintain an organization based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights" (NIPA, 1996). NIPA staff represented at least five or six different ethnic groups. There appeared to be a conscious attempt to be inclusive of all cultures represented on the staff. Some of the white people at NIPA did speak Xhosa as greetings or as emphatic expressions, and Afrikaans was also heard freely mixed in. At meetings, different cultural divides were visible in seating arrangements, but there was a strong rapport and familial warmth that characterized most interactions. At a de-briefing session, the white deputy director commissioned a song in Xhosa which was quite enthusiastically sung, although the African voices were the most audible. The name of the song was "inkwenkwezi" which means 'star' in Xhosa. The analogy was one of the light of knowledge and the contributions of the individual to the collective, i.e. each person was a special star shining in his

³³ For further information on these shifts please see the multiculturalism and affirmative action contextual influences section in the Appendix.

or her own right. Everyone also was given a sparkler to hold. The song appeared to be a bit superficial because it was created instantly at the direction of someone several of the trainers were not fond of. As well, the song was repeated for the representatives of the Swiss development agency when they visited for an evaluation later that week. The meeting was also begun with a prayer, just as the training sessions in the field were, as a gesture indicating social harmony and shared Christian values.

At the senior level there was strong support for affirmative action programs. The deputy director stated:

Affirmative action is something which I really believe in. I also believe in affirmative action, doing it the right way. You can't just give a person who has never had the background or never had the skills, just dump them into a job and then expect them to deliver. That is setting them up to fail, and that is not the way to do it... So therefore affirmative action to me really works if you have the skills given to this person and a lot of mentoring. Then other individuals would really care about the progress of this person. Yes, that was also one of the reasons. I wouldn't say it was only for the affirmative action reasons because affirmative action at NIPA is seen as not only black and white, but also gender, also you know, even a disabled person, must fall under affirmative action, because these are the kind of people who were disadvantaged in a sense (Doris)

Other senior staff concurred with the idea that affirmative action was appropriate practice for NIPA, although it should be done carefully, keeping merit in mind. One senior manager said:

The other thing is that we have tried quite early on to get realistic or fair levels of remuneration, and not to discriminate on the basis of color or even qualifications. Because that is a big issue... some people tend to be better qualified than other people. It is as simple as that. So there never has been the criteria for who got paid what. It has been pretty closely related to responsibility and that is where the changes and the mentoring have come in. I'm sure people have talked to you about the multi-skilling and training people and so forth. And I personally think that is the way to go because I am also not one who supports setting people up to fail. If you put people in high positions with big salaries when they cannot do the job it is also a recipe for disaster because you get resentment and stress and heart aches, and everybody loses (Roberta).

The multicultural approach at NIPA appeared to be appreciated by many staff. An African staff member said, "At NIPA we are lucky because we have two worlds together. Even those who are whites and black in the education department, it does not have our atmosphere. (It is a multicultural atmosphere.) The government does not have that. Also it is a form of hierarchy there and here we are not. That is why an NGO like NIPA is better than the

government to do this work” (Nkasi). Other staff, while proud of the multiculturalism at NIPA, saw it as somewhat sad that it was needed. For example, when asked if NIPA’s multiculturalism enhanced its profile, one trainer answered:

I don’t think that the majority of the people see the multicultural aspects of NIPA because the majority of the trainers are African, they are Xhosa or coloured, in fact really half are colored people, the rest are Xhosa and they do the majority of the training. So it is rather the odd occasion where we will have a mixed group of trainers, not the norm. But what I have personally experienced is when you do have a mixed presentation people seem to think that this has more value, just because you are there you don’t even have to open your mouth, just because you’re there. It is quite sad in a way because it goes back to the sad belief that what the whites did was somehow better. I don’t know. Personally, I don’t like that idea (Jelena).

NIPA’s board of governors was racially mixed. NIPA was started as a partnership between a white woman and a black man in the years before apartheid ended. NIPA was in a paradoxical situation because the vast majority of its employees were women, a group needing support, but its senior management was mostly white women. Among the four senior managers, there was only one African, and this was the source of some resentment among the other employees. One Asian staff member said,

If you look at the past, it is not very easy when it comes to the racial relationship. I would say it as an outsider there is a long way to go before they can build that trust in the relationship between whites and blacks. There is still that barrier there. People are trying and trying, and in general there’s a very good co-operation among the staff here...sometimes if you look at the salary structure, there is a general feeling that whites are paid more than blacks. In terms of privileges like taking flexi-time or taking leaves, sometimes there are complaints about this. Even in terms of accommodation when out in the field, the whites will stay in-house, while the blacks will go out and do the actual training. The whites remain in the comfort zone (Pasha).

Some of the staff felt there was a kind of ‘glass ceiling’ for them, although these were few. An NIPA manager who was “coloured”³⁴ had negative views of the affirmative action at NIPA:

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The term “coloured” in South Africa has a special meaning which is different, for example, from the pejorative term used in the Southern US. In South Africa it means a person of mixed racial heritage, for example, African and Caucasian. Coloured people represent a large, self-identified ethnic group in South Africa whose first language is Afrikaans.

I would say it just looks [multicultural] from the outside... I don't think that blacks—and I always say if you are not white, you are black regardless of true colour—to me in this organization there are only whites and blacks. I understand that for reasons of clarity you have to break down into different racial groups, but there is definitely a gap between blacks and whites....I wouldn't say it is a tension but there is definitely an underlying thing that, I don't know, one could not even point it out...and there is a perception from me since I have day to day contact with the Africans, there is a feeling, especially since I have done the [performance evaluations] but there is discrimination, that there is not the same kinds of policies for each group. The policies get twisted for the white, but they are followed by the book for blacks. So there is that underlying thing as much as the organization would like to project the image of progressiveness (Daphne).

It was clear that there was some tension on these issues for the staff. When combined with the analysis with other points, which indicated that NIPA had a tendency to make adjustments in its practices for business purposes, such as it did with participatory management and cascading, it can be seen that there is dissonance. Inconsistency and a habit of accommodating outside stakeholders (over institutional participants) may in the long term render an NGO more fragile and perhaps dysfunctional.

The Teacher as Facilitator and Role Model

Other notable aspects of the normative dimensions of NIPA related to empowerment were new roles for trainers at NIPA and teachers in schools. Since most of the recipients were teachers in the mainstream education system, these practices were significant because they marked a change which potentially affected many people. Thematically the new roles were connected to notions of personal growth and accountability to self and others. The basic notion was that a teacher or a trainer was more than simply a conduit of knowledge. In fact, all important actors in the education system, such as teachers, community leaders, state officials, NGO people, and even donors, were now perceived to be bridge builders, facilitators, and networkers, rather than the sources of the 'answers'. As with community collaboration and participatory management, routines were built around exchanges between parties that were considered to be equal rather than in a hierarchical or patron-client relationship. These ideals, though, should be considered in the context of the business orientation of NIPA and the indications of dependency among the recipients (which are more fully explored in the next chapter). In addition, there remained a question of whether the ultimate goal of this new facilitation was individual or collective empowerment.

These notions were found in the NIPA outcomes based education curriculum materials,

and in many other places. In the list of principles which underpinned the diploma in primary education, it was directly stated that families and teachers are co-educators of children. It also suggested that parents, families, and communities must be enabled in order to develop and educate the children. The workbook for this course included several progressive definitions of teacher roles including mediator, animator, practitioner, and facilitator (Rhodes University 1998, p.12, 3). This represented a dramatic change from the past and indicated the presentation of new ideas about the appropriateness of including the community and family in education. As one recipient said, “[in the past] we didn’t give the people the chance to do the work, to participate. So now OBE, from NIPA, show us that most of the work should be from the pupils. We should not do all the work, we’re really facilitators”(Dilwani).

Another aspect of this new role for teachers was the idea that education was a holistic³⁵ process rather than a delivery process. These ideas were very much spelled out in the OBE curriculum. The key concepts from this approach were: relevance to economic, social and political change, and the application of learning to all parts of life (National Educare Forum, 1997). The notion was that education is an ongoing, multifaceted process rather than simply the delivery of knowledge. This necessitated that education be viewed as lifelong and meaningful. The teacher, then, was seen as a role model for skills like critical thinking and in values such as self-sufficiency. Teachers were expected to be reflective and evaluation must center on long-term impacts. These notions can also be related to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policies which emphasized that education is “lifelong” and “portable”. Prior learning and personal experience were recognized as having educational validity.¹³²

From the following vignette, it can be seen that it was recognized by many teachers that their roles were changing:

Excerpt from an interview with two recipients

Robert: ...could you tell me what this upgrading course is going to do for you?

Myanda: It is really going to change a lot because we have been teaching in that traditional way, the old way. Our teaching was teacher centered, not learner centered and now this OBE is teaching us to be learner centered and to help the children learn in groups, and that will benefit all of us because we are now engaged in this new democracy. We need people who are critical

³⁵ An example of the history of the development of norms which impinged upon NIPA can be found in the notes taken by an NIPA staff member at the 1995 conference entitled, “The future of NGOs” sponsored by USAID. It states, “impact evaluation needed. Must measure your delivery. Development is not just kits handed out to the teachers. Development is holistic – it builds reflective teachers.” Terms like holistic, reflective, and relevance seemed to permeate discussions of education, especially in the primary area. For example, a funding representative commented that, “NIPA’s holistic approach to school development was the correct strategy to follow, and would help to address the huge needs in teacher development and achieve sustainable long-term results” (*Daily Dispatch* 28 July 1998).

thinkers, people who can do things for themselves. I think this course is teaching us a lot about that, and even for us since it is a new democracy, since it is a new baby, we may be wrongly expecting things from us and not contributing to it, expecting just to get and get and get. You know that this is teaching us to contribute, as well as to get.

Robert: So you see this as connected to the new South Africa?

Myanda: yes yes!

Tendai: I also see this opportunity ... as we're going to transform the new South Africa, as Myanda has said. In the old age in the old education system mainly they asked us to do the theory part and so we learned theory not practical things. That was the way we were taught and also we were teaching that way. So in this workshop I can see we're gaining a lot. So we're helping towards the election and building up our leaders for tomorrow, to make them more creative and have good skills, to do not to just listen.

Robert: Do find in your teaching that you have more confidence and energy now?

Myanda: Yes we're feeling more confident now and we are so eager. Next year we must start early so that we can try to use what we have been given. We have been given an assignment where we have been told to go and ask what are the aims for the children in this new education system. So we did that and the children were so eager and they were just answering very happily. We realize that if we did otherwise we would be depriving them of something, making them passive learners.

Tendai: now they were sharing ideas because before we were deserts of self knowledge, just pouring out empty buckets, and they would just receive from us. That was how we saw ourselves. And now the children can contribute a lot and they know a lot. They're not blank slates like we used to see them.

These new roles implied norms of inclusion and recognition of individual worth, regardless of status or education. Observations at NIPA workshops revealed that they were conducted with warmth, humour, and friendly feelings. There were always introductions among the groups and of guests. It was conventional to tell something about where you came from or of an adventure on the journey to the event. There were always jokes and witty commentary seemed to be encouraged. For instance, at a workshop there was a series of jokes about prejudice against fat people which continued for most of the day. Each of the workshops typically began with a song and a prayer, or a sung prayer. There was a strong sense of togetherness, of a task being undertaken as a group. Many of the prayers would reference to work at hand, for example: "Help us today God, to learn our lessons well and to think about the sharing we will do." One recipient's prayer was "Jesus help us, especially as we don't know yet what we are doing today—it's not clear yet but I do know it will be good information"(Unknown). It was assumed by the participants that this was a Christian prayer.

Often the workshops would have breaks which were introduced by singing (in harmony) songs such as "The More We Get Together, The Happier We'll Be." The typical style of interaction, particularly during Socratic lessons, was the unison response to teacher statements or questions. It had echoes of evangelical church services when the leader might make a

statement and the congregation responded with “It’s true,” or “Yes!” It is the way many classes were conducted in primary school as well. For example, at one workshop the trainer was explaining that the outcomes-based pedagogy included everybody. She said, “it’s really a wide...” and everybody nearly shouted out, “Circle!” (Tuli). This appeared to be consistent with a highly social Xhosa culture.

It did not appear that this unison approach was contradictory to the idea of individual self-sufficiency. Rather, it was more like a public and collective enlightenment as opposed to an individual one. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, beneath an orientation towards collective or community empowerment was a preference for individual resourcefulness and self-sufficiency. Many of the workshop exercises involved making do with local materials, such as using mealie bags for book covers, or developing viable enterprises, such as starting a desktop greeting card business. For many of the trainers, it was about becoming less dependent and doing something for yourself. Their own stories further reinforced this norm. The fact that there were problems with ‘cascading’, that the recipients did not appear to be passing on their learning to their colleagues at their home schools, further confirmed that the rhetoric about facilitating community growth was a little hollow.

Analysis: Empowerment

The obligations which impinged upon NIPA to develop programs and conduct its internal activities based on notions of empowerment were very strong. There was evidence that NIPA practices and philosophy were oriented towards a rights-based approach to change. The goal often appeared to be the inculcation of positive self-perception as an antidote to the negative self-perceptions from the apartheid past. In many instances, empowerment was manifested as the linking of disparate groups to facilitate social transformation. Multiculturalism and affirmative action programs reinforced the routines of participatory management and of collaborating towards the general goals of NIPA. Empowerment also dictated a new role for teachers as facilitators and learning coaches, and the NIPA trainers articulated this in their workshop activities.

The environment for NIPA contained significant rhetoric in support of these ideals. This was reinforced by factors such as state educational policies and anti-apartheid traditions. Learning was presented as a lifelong process, and values such as resourcefulness and self-assertion, were accredited as legitimate. These notions were the basis of a revolutionary style of social transformation compatible with early state social policy, and these appeared to have penetrated the norms at NIPA.

Nevertheless, an area of contradiction (which echoed a dissonance noted under the partnership theme), was the partial conformity to institutional transformation efforts such as

affirmative action. There was evidence that some of the staff were skeptical about these programs. The participatory management system, which was supposed to be a program of empowerment as well as partnership, was also a source of cynicism. The multi-skilling, job-shadowing, and mentoring did have some functionality for institutional survival in a volatile environment. However, the popularity of these programs with the senior staff, and their efforts to show-case them to donors, were in contrast to views of some staff. Given the general institutional orientation towards being accountable to donors and towards business development, it is not surprising that there were some reservations about these practices.

There was also dissonances in relation to differing notions of empowerment. Many practices at NIPA focused on individual growth, but most of the normative rhetoric from the state and other sources was oriented towards broader socio-political empowerment. In simple terms, the disparity was between being a confident, resourceful, self-reliant individual and a collaborative, civic-minded community member. When considered together with the differing practices related to accountability, and growing critiques of the state, it appeared that empowerment may be headed towards the fate of being seen as hollow rhetoric. The state move to the GEAR policies may have reinforced this cynicism. NIPA's advocacy of empowerment was an important theme in its own practices and the new education policies. However, it may ultimately become dysfunctional as more and more people cynically believe that empowerment is really about gaining economic power and being accountable to the bottom-line.

Table 6

Summary Table for the Normative Dimensions

Normative Dimensions				
Theme	Points of Convergence	Points of Divergence	Level of Consensus	Potential Impact of Dissonance
Accountability	- strong obligation to be transparent especially fiscally; - significant pressure to use management systems (including quantifiable indicators) to avoid weak practices and corruption; - business orientation elevates status of funders; - some interest in political and moral accountability;	-awareness that pressures for business orientation may be counterproductive; - interest in different forms of accountability (e.g. business vs. collective) varied by among the participants; - diverse views about how to work with a "less than accountable" state	moderate to high	moderate
Partnership	- agreement that partnership was key to moving forward in an era of scarce resources; - networking, consultation, and consortia were accepted modes of operation;	- partnership with state was problematic; - tension between competitive and collaborative models for NGOs; - hints of underlying suspicion about real levels of partnership;	moderate	moderate
Empowerment	-general agreement by all parties that empowerment was needed; - education policies (e.g. lifelong learning) and NIPA management practices (e.g. multi-skilling) were routes to empowerment; - personal growth experiences were seen as central to social transformation;	- diverse set of views about priorities for empowerment (personal vs. community); - scepticism by many participants about sincerity of some empowerment (e.g. affirmative action at NIPA) especially in light of prominence of donor influences; - scepticism about state's commitment to empowerment;	moderate	low-moderate

Conclusions

As can be noted in Table 6, the normative dimensions indicated a fairly high level of consensus about accountability, partnership, and empowerment. It could be inferred that the key stakeholders, which in this dimension were comprised mostly (but not completely) by the staff and recipients, were in agreement about items such as the dangers of corruption, the usefulness of networking, and the path(s) to empowerment. This consensus was similar to the one observed at the regulative dimension. In the same way, there were also points of divergence apparent which laid the foundation for dissonance. For example, the distinct practices of moral versus business accountability hinted at a disagreement between the staff and the recipients about the importance of each practice. The tension between networking as sharing versus networking as business development was another instance which indicated potential dysfunction and dissonance.

The normative dimensions of NIPA were generally interpenetrated with the regulative ones. The institutional culture appeared to accept and readily incorporate the spirit behind coercive rules and policies laid out by such actors as the state and donors. It was clear that daily practices and personal relationships were imbued with values like accountability, partnership, and empowerment. NIPA staff participated in practices related to participatory management and affirmative action, but for which some of them had scepticism. As the institutional relations were investigated, these potential discontinuities became more apparent. It was clear that in some areas there were distinct dissonances between what was required or obliged by various actors, and what was actually done or supported.

The contradictions and dissonances revolved around three inter-connected sets of conflicts. First, there appeared to be a contradiction between the impetus to please donors and be business-like on one hand, and the pressure to collaborate and be consultative on the other. It was clear that NIPA had adapted to working in partnership, even with the weak state, but that it tended to view alliances from a practical point of view. There were some serious questions raised about the true purpose of networking, about whether it is business development or a collective effort for social goals. Would the relationships among NIPA and its donors, or NIPA and its recipients, simply become 'client-patron' relationships? The recipients expressed serious reservations about the behaviour of the state as a partner in the transformation of South Africa, and it seemed to many of them that institutions like NIPA were doing a far better job.

Second, there was a conflict between the demands of donors to incorporate institutional features such as participatory management or a cascading approach in its training programs, and the real needs of the communities NIPA served. The recipients experienced severe problems in their work, problems which were not going to be immediately solved by new modes of knowledge sharing or the in-house practices of an NGO which was helping them. Over the long

term, there could be a shift in educational practices, but in the near term recipients had to deal with unreliable state officials and shortages of all kinds.

Yet at this juncture these tensions were generally glossed over. It appeared that the task of social transformation acted like a temporary glue of consensus linking the donors, NIPA, and the state. These issues may create a serious dysfunction as soon as an overt conflict between donors and communities emerges. It may be that this is an historical moment in the post-apartheid era, when competition among NGOs for funding, and its negative effects, is temporarily accepted. In the long term, a deeper analysis of what is really needed and how NGOs can help to transform South Africa may be required. The cynicism of the staff about the level and nature of empowerment at NIPA also hinted at the how transformational the activities at NIPA really were. If idealistic shifts towards affirmative action and teaching as facilitation were to become established practices, then more attention will need to be paid to the associated dissonances at NIPA.

Third, there was a conflict between the ideal of working as a junior partner with the state, while at the same time emerging as a superior actor as judged by higher legitimacy with locals and higher standards of accountability and professionalism. From the regulative dimensions, it was clear that NIPA had little choice but to be a partner with the state. If NIPA were required to operate as contractor for delivery of government policy and programs, and it had to struggle to network with donors and ministry officials, and at the same time internalize increasingly discredited state rhetoric in its work, this would tend to erode the collective approach to social transformation. In addition, it added many layers of complexity to the institutional relations of NIPA, and hence instability in the long term. Ultimately, the difficulties of this partnership may prove to be too problematic for NIPA because it will be so complex as to be unwieldy and so politically conflicted as to be dysfunctional.

Chapter Six:

Findings: Cognitive Dimensions

Introduction

Data in the Cognitive Dimension

A short review of what is of interest in the cognitive dimension will assist the reader in examining this chapter. The cognitive dimension is concerned with those values, symbols, and assumptions which underlie and mediate social interactions institutionally. The focus here is on the cognitive filters and “practical consciousness” as Giddens terms it, which provide the lens through which individuals assign meaning to their participation in the institutional activities. According to Scott (1995 p. 35), the basis for compliance is “taken for granted”, the mechanisms are mimetic, the logic is orthodoxy, the indicators are prevalence and isomorphism, and the basis for legitimacy is cultural support and conceptual correctness. Elements of the cognitive would ideally be aligned with the other dimensions of the institutional relations, but this may not always be the case. There is clearly an overlap with the normative dimension in any institution because those routines and roles which become legitimized over time begin to establish an orthodoxy. It is in the cognitive dimension that one may find the essence of what an institution means for the recipients and what guides their perceptions and actions related to it.

The data are presented thematically in this chapter. The description of the views of the recipients on specific themes is followed by a parallel description of staff views. There are two reasons. First, it provides an opportunity for the reader to understand the issues as the participants would, in a holistic and multilayered fashion with a variety of views visible. Second, it permits a direct comparison of the views and gives an indication of consensus or disagreement. This is important in the analysis for dissonance. In some cases, only the staff views are presented because those issues had direct concern for them in relation to, for example, the participatory management system at NIPA. In these cases, it was possible to establish thematic relevance to other issues and gain insights into the cognitive filters through which the staff viewed education and related issues.

It should be remembered in a qualitative study of an institution such as this that the intention is to take the reader as much as possible into the institution as it is experienced by the participants. Their opinions are not therefore simply subjective views, but rather significant information about the accumulation of experience which makes the institution real to them. The data are presented as representative of the range of views expressed.

Features of the Cognitive Dimensions of NIPA

The cognitive dimensions of NIPA to a significant extent exhibited the same patterns of continuity and dissonance seen in the regulative and normative dimensions. A clear picture

emerges of how the activities of NIPA were connected to the project of social transformation through education in South Africa.

Regarding accountability, the participants held beliefs which were quite consistent with the rules and norms impinging on NIPA. There was a general belief in the importance of increasing transparency and oversight, and enhancing the accountability of institutions, including schools, school governance bodies, the Ministry of Education, the state, and NGOs. There was a widespread concern about low levels of accountability giving rise to problems such as corruption and mismanagement. However, there was significant dissonance related to accountability. As was noted in the previous chapter, at NIPA there was a distinct trend to define accountability in business terms, and to put priority on the wishes of donors. In contrast, the recipients tended towards a different view of accountability, one which revolved around personal and professional behaviour. In addition, the staff exhibited signs of conflict related to feelings of multiple accountabilities. They were also troubled by the long term problems of being partnered with a state which was viewed as not very accountable. These dissonances were visible in the other dimensions, but here they were clearly emerging as potentially dysfunctional for NIPA in the future.

Partnership was a theme which also indicted some consensus among the participants. Most of them held strong beliefs about the importance of linking with others, sharing responsibilities, and working together. Following the requirements and obligations noted in regulative and normative dimensions, NIPA staff viewed partnership as central to institutional survival. However, herein lay a significant dissonance. The significance of partnership activities like networking or participatory management were to a large extent dictated by a belief in the primacy of a business orientation for NIPA. This competitive viewpoint was in contradiction to notions of collaboration and shared power implicit in the social transformation project of South Africa. The recipients appeared to internalize only partly the idea that they should share and be facilitators of change within their own spheres. There was also the dissonance mentioned above of the difficulties for NIPA participants to be engaged in partnership with a state in whose rhetoric about transformation (through education) they were losing faith.

Empowerment was significant thematically to the participants at NIPA. There was a wide consensus that empowerment embodied what NIPA was all about. Personal and community empowerment were thought to flow from the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It was agreed that South Africa had to be modernized in economic, technological, and political terms. This last point was generally connoted to mean that the South African constitution would mediate political interaction, even within education. It was held that confidence-boosting and personal growth were transformative, and that ideals of self-sufficiency and resourcefulness were necessary to counter the legacy of internalized dependency from the apartheid era. The new education policies and programs, which NIPA was helping to implement in the province, were considered by the participants to be directly in the service of

these ideals. The participants also demonstrated strong consensus on the weakness of the state in supporting education.

Despite this consensus, there were some important dissonances related to the state for NIPA. There was significant doubt on the part of the recipients, and many of the staff, that the state was actually seeking to empower people. Yet NIPA was seen to have no choice but to work with the state. There were also negative perceptions by the staff of the recipients concerning dependency which may prove dysfunctional in the long term. Also visible were differences in conceptualization between the staff and the recipients on topics such as the meaning of the constitution. Further, there was a dissonance connected the empowerment of individuals versus empowerment of communities.

Taken together, these data in the cognitive dimension indicated that, while NIPA had for the moment a fairly good level of continuity on many points, there was significant dissonance in the long term which may have serious impact in the long term.

Accountability

The theme of accountability was apparent in all of the institutional dimensions of NIPA. There were several forms of accountability for the participants, including responsibility for money spent, responsibility towards one's community or constituency, and fulfilling professional obligations. As is apparent below, there was a divide between the views of the recipients, which focused mostly on moral and professional accountability to one's self or one's community, and the views of the staff which focused on the transparent accounting and business obligations. While both groups were critical of the lack of accountability in the state, the staff were less concerned about it than the recipients because the state was a necessary partner for NIPA. These differences in perspective have the potential to grow into significant dissonances in the long term. An NGO like NIPA needs to maintain a good working relationship with its recipients in order to have effective programs. In addition, it must be able to show donors the strength of its local connections.

Recipient Views: Accountability

Probity and Professionalism

For many recipients, accountability appeared to signify responsibility and fulfilment of professional obligations. There was a general sense among the recipients, who were mostly teachers, that the malaise in the South African education system was directly connected to the low value most actors placed on being accountable. These actors included political leaders, Ministry of Education officials, principals, parents, and colleagues. There was also a recognition

by the recipients that ignorance and confusion partly explained the lack of accountability; many did not know how to be accountable. As one recipient said of the parents at her school:

Because now they tend to retreat a little bit and they don't seem to understand that they own the school. They are the people who are responsible for whatever is taking place in the school. So if the parents of our communities can be able to know that this school is theirs, that they are free to see whatever is happening in the school, and [they] can contribute a lot in the school (Sindisa).

Many recipients, when asked who they felt accountable to, answered: to their pupils. One recipient dramatically expressed it thus: “ today I'm not at work because I have come to a workshop. I always have the picture of my pupils in my mind, and that they are lonely without me, without their mother they are hungry, fighting with each other” (Dilwani).

Financial accountability was an important issue for many of the recipients. As one recipient explained, “It is only those people who are on top who misuse this money” (Zini). Another recipient's attitude was, “ It has been a long struggle over the years. There is a new government in power and of course they must find their feet. And finding their feet boils down to the big C, corruption” (Greg). Accountability was used frequently as the flip side of transparency. Many recipients tied the notion of shifting power to new actors as part of the process of enhancing transparency. It was seen as important that no-one could hide or act in a secret way. One recipient at a workshop said that the school governance body must work hand in hand with the principal because “otherwise there is no transparency” (Fizula).

Many of the recipient views on this theme can also be found in their comments on the inadequacy of state support for education and its tendency for mismanagement. The recipients had daily experiences of the lack of accountability in people like absentee teachers and autocratic principals. Every workshop appeared to have conspicuous absences of ministry officials and principals. Participants frequently commented on the irony of them missing a workshop centred on ideas of accountability. The NIPA staff were often praised by the recipients as the only people who were truly accountable, who showed up on time, and who were honestly concerned about education.

The Weak State (Recipients)

The negative perceptions of the state held by the recipients were many. The state was surely going to continue to run the education system, but it became a working assumption that anything involving the state was problematic at best. Faith in the accountability of the state was low. Many of the participants that were interviewed were sharply critical of the government's role in the transformation of South Africa. “I think things are staying the same as they were

before in all of South Africa. There is nothing changed, I see nothing changed. Like in rural areas, education is not right" (Bona). Another recipient complained that there were schools in the rural areas which had absolutely no facilities and for which the government was doing little (Zelini). Another recipient stated, "Those who are in government must do some good things for the people so that they can feel right. They must keep their promises. This government promised to do this and days after we voted for them, but they have failed to do things. They have done a little bit. They did not satisfy the people of South Africa"(Bona). Another recipient characterized the government as out of touch with the real needs in the school system:

I think they must also need to understand the fact that they must not decide for us. They must do research to find out what we really need to the rural areas. And they must listen to us because we really see things because we know that those children are really going to benefit. There are workshops which are run by the government which are not as good as these [done by NIPA]. You can run something which is going to be good for a lifetime and get good results from people who are used to something else. And now that person wants to change from this thing to that new thing (Myanda).

A major complaint was centred on the under-funding of the education system. One recipient said that it was good that NIPA was providing such courses as information technology training. "It is not the government as such, as the government is actually withdrawing services in places where people are unemployed and places that are supposed to be developing.... It is privatizing so early, the majority of the people are not yet economically free so they're unable to grab some of the spoils that the government is giving over the private sector" (Dikani). Another recipient added, "especially those in the rural areas they're still the same and even communications systems, they're not much advanced they're still the same"(Manyana). At a workshop some recipients complained that although school fees had been abolished as a way of equalizing opportunity, in fact there had been no increase in state funding to make up the difference. Other teachers revealed that often the school fee problem was avoided by the charging of other incidental fees such as for sports or uniforms or 'school supplies', all of which were disincentives for poor families. Also perplexing to many recipients was the apparent inconsistency in funding for schools. Some schools and districts were seen to get funding but others were not. For example, one recipient at a workshop asked the district education official who was present, could he explain why one school got money while others did not. He didn't have an answer but jokingly promised to look into it. It was clear no-one really expected an answer but rather it was an exchange of rhetoric. Many of the recipients drew a sharp distinction between efforts of NGOs and the state. The NGOs were seen as professional, dedicated, and generally competent. For example, one recipient described the motivation of the trainers at NIPA as very professional. "I would say yes because they are

professional. If you say you are professional it means nobody gains from it and that you are doing work partly for the people of South Africa and partly for yourself” (Mahdi). Another recipient described the people at NIPA: “I think they are well dedicated and they are in a high level of working. They know more information [than the average]” (Bona).

Many recipients complained that the courses given by the government were more or less useless. One complained:

During those other courses they started very fast, and we too, we thought that because we were teachers we could learn quickly. This was wrong. When we started working with NIPA we really have proved that. When she started slowly and commonly so that we can be able to gain something in the end. We must also thank God for the vision of OBE that has given us, that NIPA has given us in the last days.... NIPA gave us more power and more spirit. So that we were able to explain what we already knew and were able to do it early in our classrooms (Dilwani).

The following excerpt from an interview gives a good indication of the relative perceptions of NGOs and the government. Note the high levels of professionalism ascribed to NIPA:

Excerpt from an interview

Robert: How about the government doing the [training] itself, not having an NGO?

Preena: No no no

Talisha: It won't work.

Preena: They have tested and it won't work. Most of the officials in the government are not responsible enough.

Talisha: They're corrupt and not responsible enough.

Robert: You don't feel that they would be accountable to you as local people?

All: No no

Robert: Who would they be accountable to?

Preena: It is a big structure, the government, the whole system is...

Talisha: Quite confusing and very frustrating at the end of the day

Preena: It is not as efficient as NGOs because NGOs are smaller, and they have to do the work and they must deliver. You must be accountable to what you have spent on what you have found. You know everything. They have been trained on that. The government sector is not like that. They are still starting to practice to deliver, to show self discipline.

Talisha: Because if it was a government school we might not have had a tutor today. He would have decided now to go and sit in town.

Preena: He will get his pay cheque and it doesn't matter what he does. Unlike here where they must report everything they have done.

Vumokani: It is actually better this way. The government actually sponsors the NGOs and they do the work.

Talisha: Because then you see the progress.

Robert: You know your teachers here at NIPA and your class. Do you think they see the world the way you do?

Preena: They teach us things that we didn't even know about our own area. They have brought us respect and motivation and so it gives us more drive towards our goal now.

Robert: So it gives you confidence and enthusiasm. Why is that?

Talisha: We are all focused around the same point, then we need to go out there and make ourselves efficient. At the same time here we are at this small NIPA place and we all have the same ambition of gaining something at the end of the day. That same vision is there, and it is held by everyone.

Vumokani: I also want to say they help us to see things clearly.

Staff Views: Accountability

Probity and Professionalism

Many of the NIPA staff members saw accountability as an essential part of their projects. This included accountability of NGOs to donors, of leaders to communities, and of teachers to students. There was a general belief that as an historical impact of apartheid, accountability had been abandoned, and that responsibility for development and education had

been given up or abdicated by those who should have embraced it. These were similar meanings to those of the recipients, for example, with high value placed on being professionally responsible, and being transparent in fiscal and political terms. However, for the staff, accountability generally rested on a foundation of being business-like. It was widely believed that proper systems of accounting and monitoring, and awareness of issues of long term survival, were part of the institution. Accountability to donors had deep conceptual correctness for the staff. At the same time, the staff gave indications of experiencing multiple and perhaps contradictory accountabilities.

There were many indications that the staff had strong views on accountability. For instance, the interviewees were asked, if you were given a substantial amount of money for development, how would you spend it? For the staff, a common answer was that they would spend it on some project which would allow an increase in accountability. It might be an increase of responsibility for the most needy, such as street children or, to allow parents to participate in the children's education. The general principle was one of increasing involvement and not surrendering responsibility for education solely to the state. Rather, groups like parents should become involved in the children's education in the same way that all groups in South African society should become involved in its new social contract of the post apartheid era. One staff member said, "You know the community is not aware what is going on in the school. They just dump the kids. I will teach them to come inside and see what they can do to help, and come to meetings. We are making together, practical thingsthat parents must also contribute, they must do that at home..." (Alice).

The staff were keenly aware of the precariousness of funding and the importance of pleasing funders. One trainer said: "I think directly that you do feel accountable to the funders because the project and our salaries come from there in the end...[I also feel accountable] to the communities. I think you have got to" (Kate). Another staff member said she felt accountable to her project co-ordinator, but ultimately that she was "accountable to the funders at the end of the day" (Susini). The fact that NIPA had to have a diversity of projects in order to stay afloat meant that the staff had to undergo re-training often. One NGO staff member complained, "If you come into the new project into this pool [of trainers] now and you have begun that project but immediately you must be multi-skilled for two days and then you must go to work. It is very dangerous because... the people, the clientele, can see. And it is also not good for you, for the trainer" (Alice).

The staff were very sympathetic to the problems of the recipients and felt quite accountable to them as well. It was a common ritual for staff returning from a training session in the rural areas to tell about how bad the conditions were at the schools where they had been. In addition to this, the staff were for the most part experienced enough in development work to appreciate the fact that changes must be meaningful to the recipients, and that local realities were crucial factors affecting success. For example, one staff member said she felt most

accountable to the local people over all. “My aim is to develop them so I think if I am developing them, they must be able to use whatever ideas they came up with for themselves and they can share them with others. [It must be meaningful to them.]” (Nkasi).

There were other instances of this feeling of multiple accountabilities. For example, one said, “Administratively, I am accountable to my director, but morally I am accountable to the people I serve. I have a moral obligation to bring them education, to bring them the services that NIPA is able to offer” (Brian). Many other NIPA staff felt accountable to the senior staff and the leadership of NIPA, but they were not without some reservations. “I am the kind of person who respects people who have been put above as my superiors....I do my duties and I do my reports and I speak out on issues and I really feel that my views on each issue should be respected. And I feel sometimes there is the view that at some stage things are being forced down upon us...” (Aptula). Another staff member admitted that she did have a divided accountability between the funders who gave the money and the community she served (Kate). One coloured staff member expressed anguish about not being able to work more accountably for the coloured community. She said, “I do feel accountable, but do you know what hurts me the most...is my own community. I must do work in my own community. And I have nightmares about that. I feel very unhappy. I don’t work with my own people” (Daphne).

One of the problems with many projects at NIPA was the lack of funding for monitoring to establish whether or not change was occurring. Lack of money for ongoing monitoring and evaluation reduced the level of accountability, and some aspects of projects had to be evaluated by inference or just faith. One NIPA staff member said, “We are having an effect but how big is the effect? I think we would know if we could do a bit more monitoring or we could spread our training a bit further....You need time, you need money...we never had enough to do it adequately” (Janey). Another staff member shared this concern about lack of accountability:

We sometimes concentrate on one particular thing and we get things behind. We need to do a bit more longer planning and preparation. Sometimes we are told that we must [send] the 20 people to 10 districts and to do ABC. If you do it in a short time, the quality is not going to be there. Another point is about follow-up. Sometimes we come back in six months and realize that we did not do something right. We should check continuously instead of waiting for six months. Sometimes we are unrealistic and too ambitious. We want to do a lot of things. We can discuss and discuss but sometimes we cannot reach conclusions about what steps to follow. To me it is just a waste of time (Pasha).

This apparent lack of accountability was a concern, but not to the extent that anyone was going to try to do something about it overtly. It underlay concerns about cascading, but it was viewed as potential problem that would be dealt with eventually. It did not seem to be a pressing issue at that moment.

The Weak State (Staff)

Like the recipients, many of the NIPA staff felt that state programs were generally ineffectual and that the NGO sector's performance provided a stark contrast to the government record. Many of the staff concluded that for election purposes the government had made unrealistic promises and had raised expectations to an unreasonably high level. NGOs, on the other hand, were seen as pursuing the conceptually correct course of nurturing grassroots connections and developing effective program delivery. It may have been assumed by the staff that the NGOs had surpassed the state in understanding and implementing the state's own policies. If this were the case it would mark a strong consensus with the recipients on this point. In the long term, however, it presages a tension for NIPA with one of its main partners. For example, when asked whether it was the role of the NGOs to educate the new government, the resource manager answered:

Yes, definitely. More and more we are going into government partnerships. Whenever possible we're trying to link up with the government. It is not easy. You are talking to people who were supposed to know everything and then along comes a little NGO to tell them what to do; it is not easy. ...they saw us as a threat.... We work with the communities they [the government] are supposed to be working with. And if they see NIPA providing the books in the quantity and providing training, they are going to say why isn't provincial services doing it for us?...The whole relationship has gone out the window (Janey).

The inadequacy of state capacity in education was widely accepted as a given. The deputy director said:

The state does not have the resources, the financial or human resources to do all the work that has to be done, and therefore the NGOs can do their part in supporting and assisting the state. Also NGOs bring their parts in a project kind of way so there will be a beginning and an end. The end is where the problem lies because if the NGO pulls out and there is no sustainability for that project then that just falls flat, and all the money and resources...will be to no avail. So therefore the sustainability will then rest with the state. That is why NIPA has always tried to bring the officials from the department...at no cost (Doris).

One of the notable problems was that the government was always changing staff roles and re-assigning personnel. One trainer complained, "Every time you build a relationship or

partnership they re-align the whole government. If you build the partnership and they get to know you and know what you are offering and then suddenly they are in a different position or department. Our directorates just changed six months ago and they have just changed again... There were three different ministers of education in the last four years.” (Jelena).

The staff at NIPA also were highly critical of the district education officers. They often did not show up at workshops and were notoriously unreliable. One staff member asserted that district official had absolutely “no plan of action” (Ntini). The staff also thought that many of the government officials felt threatened by the NGO activities because they were the ones who were supposed to be doing the training. One staff member asserted that, “ The government cannot pull together without NGO help. But they don’t want to acknowledge NGOs because they see it as a sign of weakness that they have to rely on other people to do it” (Janey). Another staff member said that often the government people felt intimidated by NGOs. “They are very cautious when it comes to NGO people because they know that we’re the people who go out and go to work, while they’re sitting in their offices. They do feel threatened, because we can be more knowledgeable and we might have better qualifications and experience... There is also the perception that we are earning better salaries than they are, but that is not true” (Daphne). Another staff member gave an example of state officials’ unreliability:

That was one of the reasons the Quality Schools Project did not get off the ground as quickly as we would like....Even though we had been through the whole process from the beginning with the education officials and everybody else, and we went through all of those motions, we did not get their support. They said they would be there and they would assist but when it came to the crunch they were not there. ...I don’t think it is a personal issue as such. It is more a result of the fact that we’re able to deliver and the department is not (Cathie).

NIPA staff were of the view that NGOs were filling a crucial gap for the state. One trainer said:

I think the government benefits a lot by doing it through NGOs because the NGOs have got people with experience in this field. ...What we need are very effective people who are committed to do the work down on the ground, not in Parliament. The government is going to take them to Parliament and when they get there, all they do is direct people to do the work. And those people don’t have the capabilities and skills and commitment...So all that is lost through cascading and delegated duties (Aptula)

Another staff member complained about the government’s lack of leadership vis a vis the ideal of social transformation through the education system. “ It is the responsibility of the government but there is no awareness. [At NIPA] we are lucky because we have been used to having two worlds together. Even though there are whites and blacks in the education

department, they do not have our atmosphere. It is a multicultural atmosphere. The government does not have that. Also it is in the form of a hierarchy and here we are not” (Nkasi). Staff also believed that NGOs were more effective than the state because of NGO flexibility. “But to me one of the biggest advantages of NGOs is that we can reach a lot of people, we have the flexibility that the government does not have because of its structure. So we can adapt more quickly to the situation of the environment and we can find the community’s real needs. But I think the biggest role at base is to keep everything down to earth at the grassroots level” (Jelena). Another staff complaint was the lack of real support for implementation of its new programs: “I can’t say if the government is really making an effort. [For] the foundation phase [of teacher training]...it is alright to get the manuals but it is the implementation as well. To table it is not to implement it and there is no support for teachers” (Kate).

Business Approach (Staff)

Directly related to accountability was the conceptual correctness of having a business-style orientation, which included rationalized management approaches, fulfilled contractual obligations, and fiscal conservatism.³⁶ In general, the NIPA staff as a group very readily accepted the value of sustainability through good management. They saw it as vital for their own job security (a direct product of organizational survival) but also as a key part of the ‘project’ of NIPA. A business orientation signified taking responsibility for one’s actions and making an attempt to use transparent and rationalized forms of social interaction. This may have been in contrast to the highly politicized, inequitable, and corrupt systems of the past.

Some of the notions about business management by the staff were strategic in nature. For example, many made comments like, “We try to instill a more business-like approach to everything...and that is how we built our reserve” (Kris). Another staff member said that because of corruption and mismanagement, “the reporting system to the funders [has been] tightened a lot...and I would think rightfully so” (Daphne). Others, while acknowledging the hardship and work caused by retrenchment and scrupulous monitoring, still viewed the new business orientation as a, “very healthy exercise...it has been a very healthy experience for NIPA to become more businesslike, to negotiate, to draw up contracts” (Janey).

Another example of the business thinking that pervaded NIPA was observed at a general staff meeting. A recent successful bid for a contract was lauded as a result of personal networking. All of the staff were encouraged by the director to search out more work for NIPA

³⁶ In this case fiscal conservatism is taken to mean attitudes and behaviours related to finance which emphasize never going into debt, strict savings regimes, and equity built up through hard work.

based on their own connections in various spheres.³⁷ On the issue of diversifying the institution away from the 'core mandate' of education, many staff saw this a necessary evil of a difficult funding environment. One staff member said, "To me it is the right move for the organization because the funding you get from those initiatives you can add onto your work on education. Otherwise you may die as an organization and you may end up doing nothing for the people out there" (Pasha).

The director of NIPA had very strong beliefs about rational planning and the importance of living within one's means using rational planning. She herself had lived with these values in her personal life and these found resonance among the staff at NIPA. It was the director's belief that the economic problems of South Africa were partly caused by lack of good financial management. "Now it is contributed to by the total lack of financial understanding of a huge majority of our people, and it is exacerbated by the amazing amount of hire- purchase in the country.... There is a moral responsibility. I think most of the major companies in South Africa have to actually begin to address how we get people to have some kind of financial understanding" (Gayle).

Many of the staff thought that the business approach was partly imposed on them by the funders but also by the general trends in South Africa. One staff member gave a good description of this view:

You know South Africa is not only moving into a different era, in economics and in management, but in the international sense in a market. If we want to compete in that we would have to be like all the other competitors and we take it from business and we have to move in that direction where business has already made great strides...the business sense, the business part of it, would have to be your management and your administration. It would only be to the benefit of the participants because there would be better monitoring and better evaluation done, and therefore if you do the proper evaluation and monitoring and better evaluation, then you would discover more of the needs and more of the interest of your participants (Doris).

Another staff member concurred with these points. When asked what his spending priorities would be if he had money for development, he answered, "I would use it on business management skills to assist community uplifting through business development, that is, there would be training for business and setting people up in business" (Aptula).

Another area where strict business style approaches were favoured by the staff was in the area of relations with consortia partners. In general NIPA was a strong organization in the region

³⁷ Even my arrival as a researcher from overseas was noted in a Director's report before I arrived. It "could lead to all sorts of potential work/maybe even funding." Staff were admonished to treat me their "normal friendly way."

and was often sought out by other NGOs because of its management capabilities. However there had been some cases recently where NIPA had been let down by its partners. One staff member explained, "You find that one partner or one consortia member does not come up with the goods, and you have to come to the rescue. Again, it has to be run on tight business lines using a contract with penalties or what ever. It cannot be just a marriage of convenience. If there is no contract there then it doesn't work" (Doris). Other staff pointed out that the harsh realities of dwindling funding and the pressure for partnerships had increased the need for business-like accountability. For example, "We have learned through our partnerships how to handle the finances for instance. We certainly have learned a lot about the pitfalls and what to look for" (Cathie).

All told, the sentiment was that formal business systems were essential to programs and the survival of NIPA, and that ultimately this would be beneficial to the recipients.

Donors versus Recipients: Problems with Cascading (Staff)

The belief in business systems led NIPA to accept from the donors program requirements of questionable effectiveness. 'Cascading' was a good case in point. Among the staff, there was scepticism and resistance to this system of dissemination. Both the NIPA staff and the recipients had tales of how the cascading model was not working or how local actors thwarted the spread of new ideas. It should be acknowledged that some staff did have positive views of cascading. One said, "I believe it is having a cascading effect. The first group of students that passed out, that completed the course, went out in the community and before we could say presto, people were coming back to us to say they also want the same thing you gave to those people" (Brian). But other staff were doubtful about its effectiveness: "I do use the cascade model, but I'm not a great believer in it really because my experience is that people are not willing to share" (Janey). She added that there were a number of factors which inhibited the effects of cascading including lack of time and unsuitable personality styles in some of the actors. At an evaluation meeting at of a NIPA project, a thorough critique of the cascade model was done, and nearly unanimous serious concerns were expressed about the bad timing, poor planning, and inappropriate methods of the cascading system to date.³⁸ The staff saw this as connected to other problems such as the weak participation or absence of education officials who were needed to perform the vital

³⁸ Interestingly, given the finding that cascading was not really working, the interim report to the funders only fleetingly mentioned the problem of "not reaching all the schools." It did identify some related problems, such as poor communication with EDOs, but nowhere were the flaws of cascading really addressed. This was an indication of the power of the donors that NIPA was not willing to abandon a system which was problematic but clearly preferred by the donors.

functions of re-enforcement, support, and follow up. This also hinted at the dissonance related to having the state as a weak partner.

On the whole, the staff had great concerns about cascading. For example, one said, “ I think our monitoring system is far too scattered” (Daphne). Other staff members agreed that the monitoring was far too limited. “We are forced to do monitoring on a hit and run basis. There is limited time to that monitoring and there’s a lot to do within that limited time, a lot of schools to cover... These visits should really be looked at as support visits. We want to go there and support the communities to implement what action plans they have been left with” (Aptula). One trainer blamed the breakdown of the cascading on ministry officials. “We have been working since 1995, but that is why I mention the experience of not having the ministry officers on board at the beginning. We were not able to utilize those people.. It is still a casual thing.... these teachers are complaining that they want to be with us all the time, but if the ministry officials were involved, they could be using them” (Nkasi).

Some staff saw the problem with the slowness of cascading as related to the general problems of under-funding and lack of support for education. One trainer said, “The problem is that in the Transkei we are really struggling. The school doesn’t have money, the community doesn’t have money, so when you go back to monitor, when you are monitoring you go to give advice to the teacher and see how she is doing and also listen to the other two teachers who did not attend the workshop and see how they are coping. You don’t just monitor one teacher but you look at the whole situation...it is moving very slowly...I found that many were resistant to change. I don’t know why. Maybe it was just inside them” (Benisha). Other NIPA staff saw the major obstacle to cascading as the tendency for people who have new skills and training to keep them for their own benefit. “One of the reasons is a bit slow is that people or communities for the teachers still want to keep their new skills to themselves. I wouldn’t call it a power struggle but my sense is that the more they know, the more recognition they get so they do not often share those skills and pass them on. But the understanding of the idea is growing and it is taking off slowly”(Cathie).

The case of cascading was illustrative of the difficulties NIPA, and perhaps South Africa in general, faced in implementing new educational policies with inadequate resources. But for NIPA it also contained a dissonance as it was forced embrace a potentially ineffective system out of deference to donors who continued to promote the cascading model because it appeared to offer an economical method of training dissemination.

Analysis: Accountability

For the NIPA participants in general, the conceptual correctness of accountability appeared to be driven by a variety of cross-pressures including disgust for mismanagement and corruption, demands for democratization in a post-apartheid era, pressures for fiscal

conservatism, and increased donor demands for effectiveness. There was a general belief among all participants that there should be increased accountability in political terms and within institutions related to education. The social transformation of South Africa required new forms of accountability, particularly in state institutions like the Ministry of Education. However, there was a consensus among the participants that promises of increased transparency were yet to be fulfilled.

For the recipients, accountability appeared to signify a personal commitment towards one's community or professional obligation. It was a moral value which they wished more actors in the education sector displayed. The recipients focused on explorations of themselves in new political and professional roles. They were learning how to be accountable to their students and local communities in a less hierarchical manner than they had been traditionally. The recipients expressed serious concerns about the poor levels of accountability of the state. They perceived that the state had not fulfilled its commitments to education and neither was it managing education very well, especially in comparison to the quality of the NGO efforts.

For the staff there was some agreement with the recipients on the importance of being beyond reproach morally and being transparent and accountable in all dealings. In addition to this, the staff felt a strong impetus of accountability towards those who provided their funding. This was expressed in their commitment to a business approach and their advocacy of rationalized and logically transparent management systems. They expressed a belief in rationalized accounting as part of institutional survival and professionalism. The staff also shared some the perceptions of the recipients regarding the lack state accountability, but they ultimately saw the state as a necessary partner needing support. It was even assumed by some staff that part of the role of NIPA was to increase the state's capacity for accountability by exemplifying professionalism and teaching good management.

These varying perceptions of the recipients and the staff also revealed dissonances. First, although the recipients and the staff valued probity and professionalism (which they both saw as lacking in the state) the staff's definition of accountability had a clear business orientation. Their adherence to the problematic system of cascading, which they knew the donors favoured, was evidence of their belief in the importance of deferring to donors. This had the potential to heighten the contradiction between what the staff knew would work with their recipients, and what the donors were demanding of them. These demands of the marketplace, which NIPA appeared to accept, may have conflicted with the idealism and moral impulses for accountability held by the recipients. Furthermore, given the simmering tensions within the staff over issues like participatory management, this contradiction is likely to damage staff morale in the future. Because the marketplace orientation dominated, a patron-client role had emerged that was in conflict with the parallel themes of partnership and empowerment that were inherent in the NIPA ethos. As well, the different conceptualizations of accountability among the participants, such as probity versus business loyalty, had the potential to produce serious rifts.

Second, the staff were much more plagued by feelings of multiple and perhaps contradictory accountabilities than the recipients. The recipients generally felt accountable first, to their students and second, to their local communities, whereas the staff felt accountability to donors, colleagues, recipients, the state and to NIPA itself. Over the long term, these multiple accountabilities were likely to cause conflicts among NIPA staff and a loss of consensus between staff and recipients. A related dissonance for the staff was the conflict between accountability to the demands of donors and their awareness that some of those demands contradicted those same ideas of accountability, for instance, requirements that NGOs use cascading but not providing enough resources to implement it successfully.

A third area of dissonance was related to the partnership of NIPA and the state. The state was losing credibility with the recipients steadily, but for a variety of reasons, NIPA was going to continue to be partnered with it. This clearly contradicted the ideals of accountability expressed by most of the participants, and contained risks of negative associations for NIPA. There was evidence that NIPA was becoming more popular than the state in its performance in education, which could worsen its relations with local state officials. As the historical moment of post-apartheid education re-structuring passes out of the early phase of enthusiasm when implementation problems are perhaps forgiven, a deeper tension may emerge as the pace of reform lags behind expectations. Given the clear orientation of NIPA towards business values and the state's pro-business GEAR policies, NIPA may find itself with a serious dissonance connected to loyalty to its recipients versus loyalty to its funders.

Partnership

In the light of normative pressures, such as working in consortia and implementing shared decision-making systems in education, it was not surprising that partnership was central to the participants' ideas on education. The assumption held by most participants was that resources did exist to support education and to transform South African society. In addition, most participants believed that the historical hoarding of resources and the exclusionary structures of apartheid were a central cause of current privations. Therefore the consensus at NIPA was to act to connect those groups which could help each other and to build the capacity of groups to know and exploit what resources were available.

For the recipients, partnership primarily signified discovering or acquiring knowledge or resources and sharing them with others. For the staff, there was a strong belief in sharing expertise and working in loose networks to avoid duplication, as well as in developing business opportunities. Both groups shared an urge to work with local community groups. There were also some institutional practices under the theme of partnership which related primarily to NIPA staff, namely participatory management and multiculturalism.

Within the theme of partnership there were also some significant dissonances. The lofty

standards for inclusive decision-making and the ideal of collaboration could be contrasted with doubts about how seriously partnership was undertaken and a divergence of views about what partnership was for. For both the recipients and the staff, partnerships appeared to have more pragmatic meanings such as: opportunities for personal or institutional gain. The partnership with the state for NIPA was problematic in that the state often behaved in a manner which was contradictory to the ideals of partnership which all parties appeared to espouse.

*Recipient Views: Partnership Networking*³⁹

For the recipients, networking seemed to be strongly connected to notions of empowerment based on what they could take back to their community. They saw a key role for the NGO in network creation and consciousness raising about what other actors should or could be involved in community transformation. For example, one recipient at a workshop said, "These courses are not run only for [outcomes based education]. There are others for the school governance council, and library, and through all these things you get to meet other people. It is very useful for the management of the school" (Nina). Another recipient said, "We are definitely going to be in contact with people here because we have met people with different skills. Some are in the literacy classes. As [another recipient] commented last week, she needed something for her house and those ladies on the other side were making curtains. So you can meet people you need to be in contact with" (Talisha). Other evidence of this perception was found in the comments of recipients to an [outcomes based education] training session. One said, "I have learned to come out with my problems and how to facilitate my colleagues." Another stated, "We're going to take it back to our schools and do a plan of action by introducing it, consult, and adopt it" (Anonymous).

Many of the recipients were quite enthused with what they could now offer their colleagues. The notion of working in groups, as opposed to as an individual, was a touchstone. As one said,

It is wonderful to be contributing in our groups. When we are in our groups we're sharing and we can benefit by sharing. It is good to be sharing to your own benefits and finding out something so that we can think. It also teaches us to know and to love one another so that we can respect his or her ideas. So that can

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For the recipients, there were less data about networking available than from the staff. As well, networking appeared to have more relevance to the staff because it was an important strategy related to institutional survival. The recipients appeared to place less emphasis on networking because of their personal circumstances (often very isolated).

contribute to South Africa so that we can teach our children to respect each other (Tendai).

For the recipients, being a good networker or embracing new forms of partnership did not appear to figure into questions of institutional survival as they did for NIPA staff. Networking was simply a method of sharing new or better ways of doing things, and accessing resources. Several of the recipients pointed out that they often faced resistance to the new ideas when they returned to their home schools. It was clear they assumed new forms of partnership to be an ideal that would be a long time in coming. In the meantime, they would do what they could on a limited local basis.

Another element in the recipients' beliefs about networking was that there were few actors in their local situations with whom were worth networking. This contained a significant dissonance for two reasons. First, it contradicted the principle of networking for the purposes of consultation. Second, it suggested a self-interested motivation which viewed networking as only a method of gaining resources. This was, perhaps not coincidentally, partly how the staff viewed networking (see discussion below), and it indicated a tendency towards dependency on the part of the recipients.

Working with Local Partners (Recipients)

Closely related to networking was the importance of working with the local community, as was the intention of the outcomes based education and school governance programs. The recipients expressed a desire to increase the involvement of local people, particularly parents, in the activities at school stemming from NIPA. There was high value placed by the recipients on connections to the local community. For example, one recipient said, "I also feel accountable to the community because I think that you should involve the community in education, in education, in the school [because otherwise] we don't know what they can show us" (Nina). Another recipient stressed the importance of awareness and understanding in the community, even beyond that of building infrastructure: "This is most important because it means that if we get to have that knowledge and then there will be less people who are victims because they have know how. If you only have the infrastructure, they won't know what to do" (Talisha).

There were some success stories in mobilizing local communities, and these were touchstones for the recipients involved. For example, the principal and deputy principal at one school had experienced great success while working with the involvement of the school council. They had begun to involve members of the local community in the problem of teacher absenteeism at the school. They even requested more training for more of the people in the school community and it was clear that they had really begun to change. It was something organized by the whole school, not just something done by the principal or by ministry officials.

At another school there was a similar success story. The principal, the teachers, and community members were all very enthusiastic about the program. One particular success was that some local parents had managed to win the contract to provide bread for the school feeding program. The parents were very pleased with the fact that they were getting paid for their efforts and that they were baking bread for their own children. They felt self-sufficient and resourceful. There were also successes with other issues. For example, the deputy principal claimed that school discipline had really improved and that school events now involved the whole community, such as prize-winning days. They were also using local materials to construct teaching aids (and these were on display). All of the school accounting was now done in the bank account administered by the school governing body, as was prescribed by the school governance training. The school had recently been renovated and was attracting students from neighboring school's catchment areas. A final illustration of the success of this school community was that they were able to deal with the difficult issue of the principal who was very sick with cancer. The entire local community was involved in deciding what to do about this problem. All of these developments were proudly displayed and enthusiasm was high. Local parents who were at the meeting were treated with respect and warmth, and most of the proceedings were conducted in Xhosa.

However, there were also many complaints about how difficult it was to work with the local community. For example, one recipient said, "As you know with OBE we are supposed to work with the parents and the parents have also got to help their children. It is difficult for them because of the high rate of illiteracy in the districts in our rural area, it is difficult for them to meet with us. The parents seem to be intimidated, or maybe they think the teacher is not doing her work" (Myanda). One recipient lamented that, "in our area the parents are not involved in the children's education... maybe because they are illiterate. That is the main cause" (Dilwani). Observations at the workshops and training session corroborated this. The parents were noticeably quiet and non-participatory. The fact that some of the workshops were conducted in Xhosa helped a little but not too much. Also quiet and tentative for the most part were the education officials. For example, in one workshop at Tabankulu the local education officer was frequently asked by the teachers about one policy or another, but he always deferred to the NIPA trainer. The material was clearly very new to him.

Another aspect is the resistance of the community based on traditional perceptions of the role of the teacher. For a teacher to ask a parent for help would seem like admitting he was lazy or incompetent. One recipient said, "The parents are not used to helping their local teachers. When the children go to school the teacher will do their job and that is the end, and then they go back to their parents" (Myanda). One recipient gave a good description of the typical problems:

Another problem is that they were never involved in these things like school governance committees, or into school activities, so they don't know what is

taking place ... when you are in a meeting , they decide to keep quiet, and that makes it very difficult to progress....
and if you keep on, you seem like you are driving them. The other obstacles that can be there is maybe if we have principals or teachers do not accept the change, because there are a lot of changes that are happening according to these workshops. Because in the previous regime the decisions were usually made by one person who was the principal and so if the teachers and the principal do not want to accept change, that will give a really big problem. That can be an obstacle in itself. That is why you find some places that the school governance committee and some of the members of the community who are in the committee, meet separately. It is because they don't agree with each other and they do not want to accept each other according to how it should be done (Sindisa).

While there was a lot of emphasis put on inclusion of many local actors, very commonly there were stories of how these efforts were ineffective, because of indifference, lack of communication or deliberate resistance. For example, one recipient reported that the head of her community council had resisted the new program because he did not want the new responsibilities (Yoni). Another teacher reported being undermined by a power struggle between a principal and the members of the school council. The principal wanted a new council elected because they were "irresponsible" for not allowing an R2 rise in school fees. But in fact the reverse accusation seemed to be true and she herself may have been the lazy or corrupt one, according to the district official. This was not an uncommon occurrence. According to one staff member, sometimes the trainers would clash with the local school principals or local education officers. "And then sometimes the teacher does not know what to do then. So if we can, we really try to develop the whole community and also just the community at large" (Benisha).

It is difficult to assess whether these problems were part of the implementation of a new program, or whether they indicated a set of obstacles which would grow into a serious dissonance for NIPA. When rhetoric and practice are quite disparate, over time cynicism and resistance can develop which can greatly complicate an institutions' activities.

Staff Views: Partnership Networking

Like the recipients, the staff held that networking was integral to the ideal of partnership, and resonant with the civil society should work in a socially transformed South Africa. Their idealism though, was in contrast to their pragmatic attitudes to networking as a strategy for institutional survival. The staff believed that networking was the key part of the 'project' at NIPA. They saw the interconnection of different groups as an opportunity to learn and share (or exploit) resources. As was noted in chapter five, networking was seen as highly appropriate, both ideologically and practically. The conceptual correctness of nurturing partnerships can be

seen in the comments of one trainer:

at first we were only focusing on the foundation phase [of teacher training] not the whole school development, but we realized that was a mistake. Maybe those people resisted the change or whatever because they were not clear or they needed to be trained. Training only for the classroom and ignoring the whole school was not the way to go. (Nkasi).

Networking was seen as very useful for NIPA as well. As one staff member said, it was good to meet people from other places.

It is really tremendous because if you have a problem you just phone them and say, I am stuck here....and the nice thing is in the past there have been people who don't want to share but since I have been in the NGO world, I have never experienced that myself. People actually will share information, materials, experience and knowledge (Jelena).

One staff member claimed, "All of the NGOs always locate each others' materials to see what they are doing...specifically to find something nice and then they can take it back and incorporate it" (Kate). Another staff member said, "It is very important that we come together and pool resources so that the resources we bring to the coalition could be put to the advantage and the use of the community that we claim to be serving" (Brian). The NIPA staff often represented the NGO role as that of an intermediary in a network. One staff member said of this intermediary role, "We are already doing that in many capacities, but at the national level it has to be furthered and nurtured, because people have different expectations. People need to network and share and commit about all things that come with a price tag, things like literacy. There are organizations that are working on this but it is not a success story at all. Sometimes we have things like National Literacy Week and afterwards there's nothing" (Pasha).

The staff favoured networking and the use of umbrella organizations for the purpose of rationalization of resources and to avoid duplication. Another staff member added that one of the main functions of the NGO coalitions was to avoid duplication, even duplication consciously perpetuated by the local community: "you would get to a community and you would find another NGO working there. The community would not tell you that they had another NGO working there and doing the same thing because they didn't want to lose any opportunity for funding for themselves. From their point of view it is better not to reveal information about other NGOs" (Aptula).

Such negative aspects of NGO competition indicated a deeper and more pragmatic aspect to the staff attitude to networking. For example, consider the metaphor of a carrion eating jackal which one trainer used to describe NIPA:

NIPA is like a jackal. It constantly seeks to survive in a jungle where it is only the survival of the fittest with the NGO world collapsing. But NIPA is still growing and has the largest number of employees whereas most NGOs were closing shop. So in that sense we manage to survive in that world. But also we seek partnerships with other NGOs that are not so strong because we believe they could assist NIPA to gain recognition for the good work that we're doing. We're sometimes connected to CBOs which are community-based organizations or other organizations like SADTU. This in a way works to the advantage of NIPA. But the constant search of the organization is for better life for its people is always there hence the analogy of the jackal seeking to feed its children, seeking to create opportunities (Petros).

Among the staff there was a distinct wariness about the pitfalls of working closely with other institutions in NIPA's network. One senior NIPA staff member said,

There has been the feeling that NGOs should work in partnership or in consortia and thereby spread their expertise resources, and share what is in the pot. The other reason why people are working in consortia is, and this is true of NIPA, we have learned a lot through this kind of partnership. We have learned who to get into bed with and who not to. There are many things which go with partnerships including responsibility, accountability, and all those things which can breed a lot of ill feeling and unhappiness. Who gets the biggest share of the pot and so forth (Cathie).

Also relevant to the issue of networking was the migration of many key NGO people into government in 1994 after the first election. There was a sense that finally there were people on the other side who understood and who shared a social vision. But the relationship had not been exactly healthy at times. As one NIPA manager explained, "A lot of members from the NGO world were taken into government, and personally I think that there was a lot of positioning taking place within the department and a power struggle and a whole lot of things...It is beginning to happen now and for me it is exciting but it is also a little bit disappointing that the government did not actually take up the challenge then to work with us" (Cathie).

Working with Local Partners (Staff)

The recipients and the staff had many commonalities in their views on being partnered with local communities both in their idealism and their awareness of the difficulties. The staff tended towards a more positive view of the potential for local community empowerment perhaps because they did not have to confront problems with it on a daily basis. One staff member offered what was a classic view of community partnership to be found at NIPA:

You know that in the past the schools were seen as the private property of the

government and the principal was in charge of that private property. The parents had nothing to do with the school, and the government made the parents feel that they were not part of the school. The new concept we have now is called whole school development... the notion is to give the school back to the community. It is an asset of the community... The school is supposed to be utilized and is an entity to feed the interest of the people (Aptula).

He added that for many issues such as staff decisions “the community is among the best people to know the conduct of the teachers.” One staff member concurred with these assumptions about development: “to be able to impart or give up the services that you are out to give, you have to see the world in their light. You have to tune yourself in with them....once you go in there and interact with people, and begin to know their problems, to know where the needs are. I see ourselves as doctors who are going to operate on a patient who is not able to tell the doctor what is wrong with them.”

The multifaceted benefits of mobilizing local partners were succinctly summarized by the director of NIPA:

perhaps going with confidence are things like self development. There are all sorts of aspects of self development, whether it is encouragement or confidence we spoke about. Something else that comes through in the kind of training we do is the opportunity to question, to actually have the right to question, I think, the exposure to alternative ideas. Too many people have been steeped in the idea that only this way [is right], this one is right or that one is wrong. Another concept that we focus on in many of our programs is instilling a feeling a desire for sharing. There will never be, with the kind of economics we've got in this country, enough resources for everybody. And so we are instilling [the idea] you can share your knowledge, you can share your facilities, you can share your resources if you're lucky enough to get them. But the concept of sharing is important...if we had the sum up all those things up it comes up under the old buzzword, empowerment. The new buzzword means capacity building (Gayle).

Participatory Management (Staff)

The ethic of partnership and sharing which was thought by the staff to be inherent in NIPA programming for the recipients was manifested at NIPA itself in its participatory management system. It was also indicative a potentially serious dissonance because there was a distinct divergence of views among the staff about what was really being achieved with participatory management and why it was being implemented.

The concept of participatory management was a significant part of the shift towards partnership at NIPA. The institution was supposed to moving away from hierarchical notions of decision-making and towards a team of partners approach. Participatory management was a feature which was mentioned in Annual Reports and looked for by donors. The conceptual significance of this was that it signaled transparency and collaboration. Many staff asserted that

NIPA had become more transparent in recent years. For example, one Xhosa trainer said, “When I came onto the staff of NIPA it became very inclusive...we began to explore bringing in more people for more consultation, more transparency. ...the fact that we have in our joint advisory committee the opportunity to interact with a wider spectrum of people from different cultures and with different perceptions, it is actually wonderful because it allows for a growth opportunity” (Cathie). Another trainer at NIPA also appreciated the participatory structure:

And I have seen from our management, it is almost all white, and most of the black people are trainers. So they stick to it and we do not really have problems here at NIPA. I think that is because of the way it is structured. We are allowed to voice our problems and we have the management and the sub-committees...fortunately the director listens, although not all of our problems are met, but still I would say that it is not like we are really struggling. There are people who do not greet each other in the office, there is still segregation in the toilets, but we do not feel that here (Benisha).⁴⁰

At the senior management level there was naturally a positive view of the new management system. The deputy director said, “It is more on the organizational side so that people could be skilled and eventually empowered...not make the final decisions but as an advisory committee. Again, just like the Joint Advisory Committee, discussions usually lead to a final decision. Only in very rare cases would the Executive Committee intervene. Maybe just alter a little bit but not change the final decision” (Doris). The director’s view was similar. She felt that NIPA offered many opportunities for people to improve themselves and rise up in the organization as far as they wanted to go. She viewed NIPA as being far ahead of other institutions in this way. “And so we are ahead. That’s what we have to do. There is an opportunity for that and if you’re prepared to run with it and try it, you can get the growth there. There are huge opportunities for multi-skilling. You are not stuck in your corner. If you want to stay in your corner, you can, but the opportunity is there” (Gayle).

These participatory management opportunities at NIPA were also seen as part of the affirmative action campaigns currently favoured by the state. The deputy director said, “affirmative action to me really works if you have skills given to this person, and a lot of mentoring. Then other individuals who would really care about the progress of this person... The fact that there was a new South Africa, the new democracy, definitely played its part in the decisions that were taken” (Doris). The director also acknowledged the pressures to have affirmative action in NIPA. “That is a social trend [with] the Employment Equity Bill. We have

⁴⁰ Note: from first hand observation there was no obvious discrimination related to the toilets. All were clean, modern, and open to everyone.

to address that and we believe that we have addressed it within our organization. But the fact remains that we, the senior staff, are mainly white women. We have been contested about that on many occasions and we have had to defend it" (Gayle).

On the other side of the spectrum, there was also the view that the participatory structures of the organization were somewhat of a facade. "Now I think the idea of an organization development committee was originally from top management to just show greater staff participation on management decisions as window dressing. I feel it was a way of showing NIPA was progressive to the funders because funders do ask how much input does the staff have and so on....I don't think that the committee is fulfilling the role it was supposed to have because they don't have any decision-making powers" (Daphne). Some staff members were very critical. After first being reassured that the interview was confidential, one person said,

NIPA has definitely made a change for participatory management but we have a very strong director and a very strong deputy director... and they're manipulating the participatory management system to get what they want in the end...It is a lot of window dressing. I don't think they actually realize it. I'm not saying it is deliberately done. I think they're convinced we do have a participatory management and that it is working very well and that it is a wonderful thing. We have definitely taken steps towards it but it is not really going (Jelena).

Other staff had a similar view that steps had been taken but it was not there yet. One staff member gave an example of a decision about a staff Christmas party which went through all the committees but eventually was overruled by the director. "I think it is difficult for her to let go, but it is much more participatory now" (Kate). Another staff member said, "yes there is interaction and there is exchange, there is participation, but it is not fully there, but only to a certain extent. You cannot have your own way all the time" (Susini).

Observations at NIPA indicated that tension over this issue was not a crisis level. However, it was another indication that donor preferences and outside pressures had the potential to create a dissonance.

Multiculturalism (Staff)

Like participatory management, multiculturalism was concept which had a high level of resonance among the staff as part of a social transformed South Africa. And in the same way, it was a matter of some dispute among the NIPA staff about how far it was implemented and what were the motivations for doing so.

Some staff were very positive about multiracial/multicultural aspects of NIPA. One African trainer related the story of how he and another white trainer had developed a good

working relationship and how this was very beneficial in the field:

Last year I used to go out with Janey in the Transkei and we were together the whole day. We met at 6 o'clock and we went home at 6 o'clock in the evening. Whenever we went to train, the people were very glad to see the combination between me and her and the way I reacted and the way she reacted. And they were glad. And one time Jany said to me, 'what do you think of the people' and I could hear from the people as they would chat and talk about us, and what did they see or think about us. They said, 'Wow, those two!' They wondered how long have we been working together...it was sort of an automatic understanding(Sam).

Another staff member said that compared to other institutions NIPA was extremely multicultural. "I think NIPA is probably different from most business organizations because we at least make an attempt to bridge the gap. When I first came into NIPA it did appear to me like that. After being in the business environment, it was an absolutely marvelous place in multi cultural learning and egalitarianism" (Bassy).

Many staff saw NIPA as a compassionate institution which respected all people and their cultures. "But what I think NIPA is , why it can actually keep these people together, is that they share a compassion for people. Compassion is such a great word, I can't even translate it into my own language (Afrikaans). But compassion links people with their circumstances and there is a flexibility to accept them for what they are at all times. They are all very able and dedicated" (Doris). Another staff member said that despite the tendency to sit with ones friends at staff meetings, there was an underlying openness and acceptance. "There is definitely a far wider acceptance of different people's culture instead of everybody trying to get everybody to be the same, which I think is wonderful. When I first joined, people would not speak [Afrikaans] within NIPA but now it is amazing that some of the black staff will now speak Afrikaans. They would not do it before but now they do. It is a tiny thing but it makes a big difference to me" (Jelena). Another example of the closeness of the relations among staff at NIPA came in the example of comments about a physical re-arrangement of staff due to a new program. This necessitated the trainers being separated from the curriculum designers and many people were sad about this. One person commented, "we work together as a team, we work very well together. It is a pity now that we are separated. Often we go into the field together. It is not a case of *you* go out there [while I stay here]. We're very much together"(Kate).

On the other side there was evidence that the multicultural aspects of NIPA were not yet adequate in the view of some staff. More than one staff member said that there were hidden tensions among the different groups at NIPA. For example, one asserted that there was a general feeling that blacks were paid less and that rules on things like flexi-time were bent

much more easily for the whites (Pasha). Another staff member had a similar view that while there was no overt or intentional discrimination, somehow it was there, "I would say the people are trying very much to be as accommodating and equal as possible. But as I say that, I should also say that some things do not happen intentionally because of us being disadvantaged. It may not be the case, it may not be intentional...there are always that kind of issues such that, you can even see it in the seating arrangements when we have a big meeting in the hall....But it may not be intentional because if you are on the lookout for those things then you will find them"(Aptula). There also staff who thought that the dominance of white educated women at the executive level created a glass ceiling for middle managers of other ethnic groups.

Like participatory management, these conflicts were not at a level which created a crisis at NIPA. But the tensions lurked below, and had the potential to align with other dissonances, such as concern about too much deference to donors, to create problems later.

Analysis: Partnership

Conceptually, partnership was integral to the cognitive dimensions of NIPA and central to the participants' ideas about the social transformation of South Africa. This transformation ideally featured networking, shared decision-making, collaboration, and inclusive modes of operation, particularly in the governance of education. There appeared to be a consensus among the participants that a major role for NIPA was to act as an intermediary and facilitator between the recipients and potential partners, as well as to connect recipients with new ideas.

For the recipients, the notions of partnership were clearly energizing to them. They expressed excitement about their new knowledge and experiences of sharing, but they were also cognizant of the obstacles which stood in the way of the growth of new networks. Their expressed needs were very high, but for many of them within the context of their communities, these new roles of partnership were in the early stages of implementation. Networking and sharing decision-making were reasonable ideals to the recipients but they indicated awareness of impediments to their realization.

For the staff, there was a strong belief in the efficacy and conceptual correctness of these new forms of partnership. However, added to the staff views was the notion that networking was also good for business. Partnership was also reinforced conceptually at NIPA by the use of participatory management and the multicultural practices. Partnership was seen by the staff as central to institutional survival, and connected to the ethos of sharing resources and collaborating on projects. This notion of institutional survival appeared to have penetrated to a significant degree the cognitive dimensions as well. The concepts of participatory management and compassionate multiculturalism also had resonance with the staff, though these were tempered with concerns about the motivation behind them and the level of

implementation.

There were four areas where dissonance were evident. First, there was substantial questioning on the part of some staff about the real level of partnership and shared decision-making which existed within NIPA. If there was skepticism and resistance there, it rendered a lot of the rhetoric about partnership in the field rather hollow. It was therefore problematic and perhaps hypocritical for NIPA trainers to go out and preach shared decision-making, when they themselves participated in the more traditional hierarchical systems at NIPA.

Second, although the recipients did appear to favour partnership, it did not have the same resonance as it did for the staff. The recipients tended to focus on the obstacles and difficulties whereas the staff tended to enthuse about its potential. It may be that the way the staff conceptualized partnership was influenced by the success of NIPA in working consortia and in networking for business contacts. These were economic factors that did not enter the direct experience of the recipients. This finding also dovetails with the concerns the staff expressed about cascading, and indicates that not much was really happening with partnership. A lot of their motivation for participation by the recipients in the NIPA programs appeared to be related to professional upgrading rather than engagement with the larger goals of transforming education. There was also evidence that notions of partnership stemming from the outcomes based education and school governance had not been clear to the recipients, at least not until the NIPA training. This fact tended to undermine the state rhetoric on social transformation and is suggestive that the Ministry of Education had been inadequate in its implementation of these concepts to date.

Connected to the recipients' views on networking was the recipients' perception that lack of accountability was a serious obstacle to social development. To them, partnership ought to signify calling local partners to account, or at least giving local partners motivation to implement the new programs. This perspective of the recipients raises questions about how realistic the goals of partnership and networking were. Many recipients mentioned the obstacles that remained in the dissemination of these new ideas, such as cultural resistance or local politics. The recipients did not seem eager to be networked with state representatives, such as the education officers who ideally were well versed in programs and policies, because they did not consider them accountable.

Third, the distinctly business-oriented approach of the staff suggested a competitive rather than a collaborative model. A question arises about whether the purpose of partnership was to share knowledge and resources, and ultimately transform society, or whether it was to acquire resources only for one's self, community, or institution. On one hand partnership was defined as ideologically correct because it implied collaboration and sharing power. On the other hand it was conceived in business terms as a route to efficiency and marketplace opportunities. Both the staff and the recipients agreed that working with local partners was the most orthodox approach, though it was clearly also within the business interests of NIPA to be

able to display local contacts to donors and to develop reconnaissance networks about what local needs were expressed. In the long term, some recipients may begin to resent their use by NIPA in its business profile. Or, a 'patron-client' mode of relating may begin to emerge.

Fourth, in the light of the problematic accountability of the state, there was dissonance related to the rhetoric surrounding partnership. If a local principal or the head of a school governance body never attended meetings, mismanaged money, or acted in an overtly authoritarian manner, this would contradict the orthodoxy of partnership as it was being promoted by NIPA. Yet this was exactly how the state was seen to be behaving in the view of many of the participants. Since the state is not about to abdicate from its role in the provision of education, in the long term this may prove problematic.

Empowerment

Empowerment was conceptually central to the work of NIPA and provided it with some of its most notable continuity. Yet it also contained some elements of dissonance. A thorough examination of how the participants viewed empowerment can provide insights into the role of the NIPA in the transformation of South African education.

Although empowerment is a term which has been used to the point of meaninglessness in some circles, it had a lot of currency among the participants. There was a fair level of consensus among the participants about the meaning of empowerment. Generally it signified the acquisition of new skills and knowledge related to increased participation in education and the social and institutional structures which supported it. It also signified a new role for teachers as facilitators rather than sources of knowledge. In addition, there was an aspect of empowerment related to gaining confidence and overcoming passivity and dependency. It connected well with accountability notions because of the emphasis on taking responsibility for oneself. It was the one term to which both recipients and NGO staff almost always referred when they were asked, "What is all this NGO work about?" Both the recipients and the staff reported experiencing growth in their skills, knowledge and confidence, and these experiences figured greatly in their views around the future of South African education. Almost akin to a religious conversion, many of the participants reported new energy, added resourcefulness, increased confidence, and rededication to the transformation of education. Their experiences seemed to be symbolic yardsticks for the potential of individuals to grow and become active. They formed the basis of a vital component of empowerment, the motivation to use new skills and knowledge.

Despite this enthusiasm for empowerment, there were also dissonances associated with it. There was a lack of consensus among the participants on some points, as well as some contradiction within staff attitudes to the recipients. Important differences of opinion existed on the concept of modernization and rights-based education, with the staff tending towards more abstract and idealized conceptualizations. Staff attitudes to the recipients at one level were encouraging and supportive but beneath this was a strong conviction that the recipients were very dependent, which was an obstacle to the goals of the NIPA programs. Lastly, there was a dissonance related to a tension between community empowerment and individual empowerment. Although the NIPA rhetoric was mostly oriented to the former, the experiences and values of the participants revolved around the latter. A *de facto* emphasis on individual empowerment seemed to run counter to purposes of wider social transformation, and may have reinforced the more narrow concepts of patron-client and business relations which have been identified elsewhere in NIPA's institutional dynamics.

The end result for NIPA of these continuities and dissonances around empowerment was that over the long term there was potential for serious dysfunction for the institution. A

lack of consensus and differing assumptions among participants can poison relations and drain idealism.

Recipient Views: Empowerment

Personal Growth

The recipients' experience of growth were observable and their comments reflected its significance to them. The acquisition of new skills and knowledge was noted for its intrinsic value but also because it frequently unraveled previously mysterious and confusing developments. The outcomes based education and school governance body programs dictated new roles for teachers, but often these were not clearly explained or their foreign-ness was daunting. Consequently the recipients often expressed a kind of joy as they experienced comprehension and professional success. The data related to the recipients on their experience of growth should also be considered with the data on resourcefulness and dependency because many of the concepts and meanings were similar.

Many of these new roles for teachers, such as facilitator and collaborator, had resonance with rhetoric about new forms of political interaction. For example, one recipient reported "now my pupils are able to cut something from a picture... without me telling them what to do or to cut this one. You see they cut it and now they are able to write a sentence about it on what they have cut from the papers. So they are also empowered with a lot of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to school work. And I think with this OBE our black pupils will be able to have more jobs" (Dilwani). Another teacher said, "we are feeling more confident now and we are so eager. Next year we must start out early so that we can try to use what we have been given.... [After implementing an assignment from this course]... we did that and the children were so eager and they were just answering very happily. We realized that if we did otherwise we would be depriving them of something, making them passive learners" (Myanda).

Empowerment pervaded the views of the recipients. There was lots of evidence available in the written comments from NIPA workshop participants such as: "As from now we will be able to move forward positively and with all the necessary confidence towards our main objectives i.e. quality education." and "At the beginning of the week we were still confused. But now we are gaining confidence and following the trend." Another example was, "that seven critical outcomes have placed me into the light of how to do my best in the class" and "It has been a wonderful day which was educational and untied knots which are in our schools... now I will go to my school with knowledge." (Anonymous). The single most common criticism or negative feedback was actually a plea for more sessions and more time for the workshops.

These comments strongly suggest that the workshops had given them energy and enthusiasm to tackle problems that had previously stymied them. The recipients respected the trainers and left with the belief that the training gave them relevant and needed skills and knowledge. For example, one recipient said, "NIPA is 100 percent! It is also giving us a sense of duty. We must have dedication and discipline" (Nina). The request for more workshops and more time to attend workshops indicated deeper needs for energy and change.⁴¹

The Ideals of Self-sufficiency versus Dependency (Recipients)

It appeared to be held by the participants that the issues of dependency and being 'second class' figured greatly in the project of NIPA and education. It was perceived as a central obstacle to social reform that people had internalized feelings of being inferior. The perceived need for higher self-esteem was perhaps a reflection of the deep internalization of notions of inferiority stemming from apartheid policies. The participants viewed the reduction of dependency as a seminal aspect of social transformation.

Many recipients complained that South Africans had come to be dependent on others, particular those of authority, to make changes. For example one said, "the people of South Africa are still waiting for somebody to do something for them" (Bona). About the workshops one recipient commented, "I like the fact that she is not spoon-feeding us and when we discover these things ourselves, we can be happy when we do that" (Tendai). Another recipient's comment was typical of the concept of learned passivity: "But we are now being taught our responsibilities, [also] our parents who are in our community but do not know because they were never involved in school activities before. They are empowered to school activities... it will make a great change" (Sindisa).

It was recognized by many recipients that they needed to believe that they themselves had something to offer. "They encourage us to have confidence. When we work we must have confidence" (Noliza). Other recipients had similar ideas: "I think it is a wonderful thing that they are doing for us because even the people here, they give a warm atmosphere for us and

⁴¹ There was some observable evidence of these ideas being put into action. Classes which had been workshopped for OBE tended to have more active-learning materials and more use of English at the grade 1 and 2 level. For example, one teacher interviewed near Butterworth was highly enthusiastic about OBE. She was perhaps a model recipient for NIPA. Her classroom was filled with posters, learning aids based on local and re-cycled materials, and there were nearly two full notebooks of English work. The NIPA staff person said that to get through half a note book per year was more the average. The teacher reported that she had observed much higher student achievement since she had undertaken the OBE pedagogy. Yet this school was very typical of the region: isolated, ill-equipped, and suffering from administrative problems like teacher absenteeism. The principal of the school, quite resistant to the new programs at first (by his own admission), was now a convert. He was re-energized and was now actively working on the thorny problem of absent or drunken teachers. This involved fighting difficult battles with bureaucracies and unions.

when they teach us they make us participate in the lesson. We cooperate with them and they make it practical not just theoretical. So we can go on" (Manyana). Notable in this comment is the implication that development has been stalled until now.

Many of the recipients seemed to show a strong faith in the outcomes based education curriculum as an antidote to the racism and inequities of the past. "... this OBE, this new curriculum education this will cause this to come to an end... OBE makes people, even children, to find something for themselves, not to be given by the teacher, to make research for themselves and see how things are done. Not to be taught how to do this. They are more independent"(Noliza). Another recipient had a very positive view of OBE. "Our teaching was teacher centered not learner centered and now this OBE is teaching us to be learner centered and help the children learn in groups, and that will benefit all of us because we are now engaged in this new democracy. We need people who are critical thinkers, people who can do things for themselves" (Myanda).

A strong indication of the centrality of empowerment was the notion of certification. The idea of really being, or finally being recognized was deeply ingrained in the recipients and NGO staff. Many other recipients commented on their appreciation of becoming qualified in an official sense, and of receiving certificates. The courses in such things as computer literacy, school governance training, and OBE training were not being offered in affiliation to a certifying institution like a college or university. The recipients would not receive a raise and pay or change in professional categories, however their interests in actually receiving certificate were very strong. There were often presentation ceremonies and official 'graduations' which were taken very seriously. An anecdotal instance of this was provided by the story of an old man who had received school governance training and who was openly weeping when he was presented with a certificate. The report of this incident at NIPA produced tears among those who were not even there (Kris). The conceptual correctness of certification can be seen in the fact that external evaluators recommended that NIPA continue the practice. Another example of the value of certification was a request by one participant in an teacher in-service training program. Even though it had no official accreditation she asked, " May we please get merit diplomas from the Swiss government or NIPA college for the training we obtained" (Unknown).

For the recipients, notions of becoming self-sufficient and resourceful were very closely tied to the notion of empowerment. Many of the recipients appeared to internalize these ideas. For example, one workshop participant wrote, "They open the mind, so that in whatever I do—I take steps and weigh facts before I make the necessary decisions" (Unknown). One participant in a workshop said, " I was so surprised when I first attended workshops at NIPA because we're from the old regime where we believed that somebody must impose everything on us. I couldn't understand at first because you find hard work is needed from you... it became frustrating in the first place but as we go along I find I'm very enthusiastic because it makes

you believe in yourself to learn that you can do it. You can give your own ideas” (Sindisa). One recipient commented on the participatory style of the trainers at NIPA: “he treats us like individuals who are mature... his training is much better than the others... at school we were spoon fed. Here there is nothing like that. Here if you don’t know something, the teacher will try to help you out. He will teach you something but then you will have to try it for yourself” (Ama). The recipient’s colleague agreed with this perspective: “In our schools we were spoon fed. We were taught how to do things and how not to do it and the teacher can help you do that thing but you came out knowing nothing” (Noliza).

Many of the recipients signaled a strong interest in self-sufficiency, typically in the form of professional upgrading. This motivation was commonly mentioned by IT students. Other objectives included the opportunity to move with South Africa into the modern age and to disseminate important technological developments like computers into their communities and schools. One recipient said that computers were important in the long-term for the community: “like we said, part of our time is spent serving the community, you want to grow with what you have and teach others and recruit more and more people. If that is the case we can look for some fund-raising for those who cannot afford the cost, we may actually pay for them. We can do some fund-raising and then let them have lessons for free. So at the end of the day we have people who are able to create jobs for themselves” (Talisha). Another participant saw the course as something that could build sustainability. “It can be a self-start program. We can start our own businesses at home” (Priscilla).

On a related note, NIPA used to give out its educational materials free but now was charging fees, and many teachers were unable (or unwilling) to pay. Some teachers I met wondered aloud whether something could not be done about that as if maybe I could have some influence or I could buy some for them⁴².

From observations made at workshops it was clear that many of the concepts and

⁴² There was an interesting footnote to the interview mentioned earlier with a principal who had been energized by the NIPA training. He detained me briefly afterwards and asked me to “remember” him back in Canada. This was a euphemism for asking for a handout or donation to the school, or perhaps for me to make some effort to send resources from Canada. This occurred many times on my school visits and it was clear that people in education had become used to seeing visitors as potential patrons. In a friendly way I was shown how serious the needs were and then there was an insistence on writing out full addresses. I was given handwritten letters of appeal on several occasions. These behaviours on the surface were contradictory to the spirit of self-sufficiency which the new education programs promoted, and certainly suggested a form of dependency. As a visitor, I seemed to be given some status, as much as I tried to be unobtrusive. A chair was always brought out and I was often seated in a prominent place. On one occasion a recipient went out of the room, got a tissue and came back and wiped off an already clean table for me which had been used by other recipients all morning. These actions may simply have been courtesy. There was an oblique confirmation of this tendency to latch onto any remote chance for donations or support which occurred in the field research. I visited a township school near East London and met the principal for about 60 seconds. We exchanged business cards. A year later I got an email from the school lauding my support for them and asking for materials and money for the school.

directions were very new and for some very confusing. In any group there were those who quite readily grasp what is being put forward and then others who lag behind. For example, at one workshop in Qumbu there was one very active participant who gave most of the answers and who was very enthusiastic. Over the course of the day long workshop, it became the habit for the other recipients to look to her for cues about what responses were needed. The trainer recognized this and tried to elicit more participation from others, but the other recipients seemed to become more dependent on her rather than less (recipient Mina).

Modernization, Social Reform, and Constitutional Ideals (Recipients)

While individual empowerment away from dependency was an important concept in the minds of the recipients, a more general empowerment process for South Africa as a whole was thought to run parallel to it. A significant element of this was the 'modernization' of South Africa. This was signified by the use of modern technologies, the enfranchisement and acceptance of certain groups, and the establishment of a culture, in schools and elsewhere, based on constitutional rights. Conceptually, it encompassed a shift away from the legacies of apartheid.

Many recipients saw the problems in the education system as being directly related to the apartheid past. For example, one said, "The main problems are actually from the past" Another added, "The struggle against apartheid was even taken to the class, to children, to teachers. There is still a lot of defiance today" (Tendai). Another recipient described the heavy burdens of apartheid as oppressive and confusing. "I would say it is like one big box with everything happening inside it. Everything would be like heavy inside" (Vuyokani). The struggle with the past clearly loomed large for the recipients, and most seemed determined to do something about it. As a participant in an NIPA course stated, "People are more positive oriented, they want to do something about their lives. They are not receivers, they want to do something, they don't want to sit and do nothing" (Priscilla).

To the recipients it was important that individual and different cultural groups become more connected. One recipient described it this way: "we desperately need to learn to appreciate each other as individuals because we have all different cultures all different backgrounds and with all these races around us, we must not base our facts on what we had before. Apartheid was destroying us in every manner" (Talisha). Another recipient added, "if the people, when they come together, they will establish stability... [that is] what is the most important, then they can progress, otherwise if they are still feeling frustrated and if they don't have jobs, they are unhappy and if they aren't happy it will be an unhappy nation and an unhappy nation cannot progress" (Priscilla). One teacher asserted that one of the results of apartheid was that people became selfish and participation in community life became problematic. "So if I include the [parents] in our school things so that if we don't know, they

can show us [the traditional ways]. But the problem is that when they work they also want to gain something. For example, a kind of payment at the end of the day. So I would like to include the community but the problem is that we have to motivate them" (Nina).

Another aspect of the notion of sustainable empowerment related to the idea of modernization. Many of the participants appeared to be keenly aware of the economic and technological retardation of South Africa, particularly for some groups. There was partly a need to modernize and partly a need to more equitably distribute access to technology and modern infrastructure. Many recipients, as well as other actors like Ministry officials, commented that the biggest problem facing South African education was the lack of resources. There was the strongly held conviction that if the resources were there, then important and dramatic differences would be seen. Resources generally were taken to mean educational equipment like books, teaching aids, science equipment, computers, accounting ledgers, more money for teachers (and hence smaller classes), infrastructure such as new or adequate schools, maintenance of schools, and more support for in-service training. A modern, well-equipped school would make all the difference, it was felt.

Many of the information technology students pointed out that computers were everywhere and that they could never hope for a job unless they could learn how to run them. One recipient said that the reason to have computers at school was, "for teaching children not only computer literacy but teaching them about other parts of the world" (Dikana). One recipient stated, "the way that I look at empowerment, the philosophy within empowerment is growth. And by continually keeping up to the new trends and current trends, you are in a sense enriching yourself. So it is a growth pattern" (Greg). A participant in an IT class stated, "I think that computers can make South Africa into a better way. People can learn more. With the Internet people can learn more about what is happening in the world and also more about what is happening in South Africa" (Bona). Another recipient commented that it was important to have modern equipment in South African schools: "Equipment like typing machines. Our pupils are also in a rural area so they would not foresee for something that, when they go to town, they would not [understand because] they would not be able to see it in their school for example, fax machines or computers... when they go to urban areas they would not get frustrated" (Dilwani).

The centrepiece in the struggle for social and political rights in South Africa was the Constitution itself. It was a potent symbol in the minds of the participants and was seen as a blueprint for the processes of transformation that were underway. It was frequently referred to in the workshops as a basis for new power relationships, and processes of interaction. The 1997 NIPA Annual Report contained this affirmation of the importance of the constitution: "Much research has been undertaken to ensure that the relevant aspects of three major South African bills: the South African Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Children's Rights have been incorporated into our training modules so that these rights and principles are entrenched

in the ethos of the training we provide”(p.20).

Much of the discussion for the recipients of the transformation of South Africa was phrased in terms of the Constitution. The Constitution seemed to symbolize democracy and social transformation. Under the Constitution people would now be respected and all the processes of change would be manifested in the Constitution and guided by its principles. For example, one recipient said, “Because whatever NIPA is doing it is referring to the Constitution which means whatever is being done by NIPA is not against the Constitution of the country. They go along with the Constitution of the country so that alone makes a very good impact on the community. The basic community is to be always aware what the Constitution says”(Sindisa). Another recipient had the view that the constitution was a liberating document: “I’m sure in our new Constitution it says the black people must not think they would not able to do things” (Nina).

Although there was in general great appreciation for the democratic rights which were enjoyed under the new Constitution, many of the recipients recognize that this was a time of transition and that there was confusion about what was a right and what was a responsibility. For example, one said, “I don’t think the pupils here in South Africa recognize that education is as effective as it was in past years because of this new Constitution, the pupils’ rights, even at school the people always think of their rights. They did not explain to the pupils here in South Africa how they must know what the rights are and how they must need their rights” (Dilwani). Another teacher was of the opinion that, “they are confusing discipline with freedom. That is why I say we must teach them because they’re still learning about democracy. They must also know that although they have rights, the right is not there just by itself. There is responsibility and accountability and all those things so they can say yes I have a right to do this but also this is my responsibility. I have to be accountable”(Tendai).

Note here that the recipients viewed constitutional rights in a pragmatic way. Like networking, their views were tempered by the practicalities of everyday life, and unlike the staff, not infused with the idealism that donors would like to see. This hints at a dissonance related to a tension between theory and practice.

Staff Views: Empowerment

Personal Growth

Like the recipients, the staff remarked frequently on the importance of personal growth in the overall process of social transformation. To them, empowerment meant the provision of, and access to, opportunity for personal growth, professional growth and social change. This included themselves as well as the recipients. Very frequently in their explanations of why they worked at NIPA, they would use terms of personal growth referring both to themselves and to

the recipients. In this way, they became personal models or exemplars of the kind of changes they hoped to see in the recipients. For example, one trainer mentioned that when she first arrived at NIPA she had a mentor who told her that she would in a few months time “jump out of your skin. And this is exactly what happened to me”(Alice). Many of the other trainers had similar comments about how they had grown and personally developed. For instance, the resource manager stated, “And as for me, I want to be confident and that’s what I impart to the participants” (Janey). Although many staff had some complaints about how NIPA operated, they were nearly unanimous in identifying how they had personally grown. For example, one said, “I have had a lot of interaction at the [senior management level] and I have learned a lot from those people. I’ve had the opportunity to explore many avenues and the freedom to do so with their support. It was actually wonderful”(Cathie).

Many of the NIPA staff members who had left NIPA went on to related and more senior positions in other organizations. As one trainer said, “what keeps me going at NIPA is the fact that I have seen a lot of prosperity in terms of my own development... it was something I gained at NIPA within a few months. To me that is an incentive because most people who leave NIPA get better jobs....the bonus of NIPA is to learn in every corner...there is a lot of sharing and it is not only dealing with content” (Susini). This reinforced the belief that personal growth was possible for everybody and had career benefits as well.

Many of the staff shared the view that empowerment was a two way street and the challenges they threw out to the recipients were in fact opportunities for themselves. A typical comment was given by one trainer: “being an employee, I am also empowered, and to us, everyday we are learning new things and we’re trying to impart things to somebody else. Therefore in that aspect empowerment is the name of the game. We try to help each other and gain something that is new” (Pasha). One staff member said that the questions the recipients asked her were challenging, “and you have to think on your feet and be open with saying that you don’t understand, and need to do more research. So the next time that you go to them you are empowered and therefore we are growing as much as the recipients are”(Nkasi). Another staff member explained, “I have to learn a lot for the workshop that is happening, so I get lots of empowerment personally. Here at NIPA we also have multi-skilling workshops and other workshops that they send us to outside. But I also think now that the teachers are empowered because we target schools that have nothing, especially those in the Transkei, the rural, the deep rural areas” (Benisha).

The director of NIPA saw the great advantage of working at NIPA was not the salaries, but job satisfaction.

I think there is definitely a dedication amongst NIPA staff. We expect over and beyond the regular call of duty and we get it. Amazingly so. People leaving in the weekends coming back to work late at night. What results from all this is that you

get tremendous job satisfaction... And many staff have said this, in many staff reviews, that the reason that they love to come to NIPA is that you get the opportunity, and this is something that we promise in interviews, you'll get job satisfaction, and you'll get the opportunity to grow (Gayle).

The senior staff also saw the empowerment at NIPA as a good training for the trends towards a business-like atmosphere in South Africa: it is "empowerment in terms of taking responsibility, accountability, where they actually get to make up their own minds, make their own decisions like we see happening in business. But we're not there yet"(Doris).

The high level of consensus among the staff on personal empowerment was a significant source of continuity for NIPA because it resonated with the views of the recipients as well. The only hint of dissonance was related to the idea that working at NIPA was a career opportunity. This further reinforced the idea that NIPA was more of a business entity rather than an institution of social transformation.

The Ideals of Self-sufficiency versus Dependency (Staff)

Like the recipients, the staff views on empowerment had a significant orientation towards enhancing self-sufficiency. It was a direct corollary of personal growth, and was based on an assumption that the deep social damage resulting from apartheid was a fundamental to any discussion of change in South Africa. Apartheid in many ways promoted the idea that dependency was normal and even necessary. Therefore, the staff held that it was crucial to promote the notion that the recipients were not inferior, that they had potential, that they could make a difference. An IT trainer at NIPA saw it this way: "I think the reason why black people seem to be lazy, I think most people grew up in remote areas and we never got the motivation to do things. We were always told to do this or that, we were never given the chance to be creative" (Tiba). The staff at NIPA had very strong views on this concept of inferiority, and discussions of it crept into many interviews. A senior manager stated:

I think one of the biggest tragedies on apartheid has been a put down attitude which has been inherent in everything everybody did. That you weren't good enough to walk in the same door or to go to the same school or you weren't clever enough to hold the job which held some responsibility. That whole insidious thing which soaks into our culture, it was one of the worst things to happen (Roberta).

It was believed by many staff that NIPA training offered much more than just new knowledge and skills. In fact, it was developing in them resourcefulness and critical awareness. For example, in describing what happens to the recipients, one NGO staff member said, "you can see that person has leadership skills coming out and she started to become creative. She starts

to develop that self-esteem, decision-making, critical thinking, all those things are coming out”(Alice). There was a strongly held belief among the NIPA staff that what they were doing was worthwhile, even though results might not be clearly measurable. To them it was morally satisfying. Many of the staff who did not regularly go into the field as trainers appeared to depend on the cues and anecdotes of those who did. For example, one explained,

But hearing the staff come back and tell us how wonderful they all were, now we thought a little skeptically about that... but the fact is that you can hear the total commitment in the trainers’ voices and reports are absolutely so powerful that sometimes you want to cry about what you read them and it is so humbling to hear the feedback.... and also by getting involved not just the teachers who are already privileged... but working directly with the community who have never had anything before, I think it is even more humbling than for the teacher education (Kris).

A staff member in the science education area said that you could really see a difference in the abilities and attitudes of recipients. He emphasized that more than just content was imparted to them. He said the purpose was to prepare the student for life after school on things like, “time management, teamwork, all these activities which they do not usually get from school, things like goal setting, objectives, how they manage their own time...”(Pasha). Another trainer at NIPA in the IT department also argued that NIPA training extended beyond just the inculcation of new skills and knowledge. She said, “I feel very proud and I always make sure that people understand not just computers....I always tried to motivate people, not only to know the computer but also to learn to use their own experiences so they are able to go to a company and market themselves” (Tiba). Another staff member was of the view that all of the programs at NIPA were about lifelong learning: “learning depends on your self and that is lifelong.... We do a lot of personal development work. All of our training is concerned with that capacity building and everything is interlinked”(Jelena). The empowerment included even ministry of education officials. One trainer explained, “ Yes NIPA does that all the time. In all our programs we have officials attending the training. We work with them. They attend the workshops and they are participants. We are empowering them all the time because eventually we want them to take over the work we’re doing” (Daphne).

The staff at NIPA displayed a strong consensus on the importance of empowerment and confidence building in the recipients.. For example, one trainer said, “When I complete a training I know that I have built up a level of confidence in those people. That to me is far more important than getting concepts across. You can spend your life doing concepts but if you have got people who are not confident in themselves to practice the concepts, you’re wasting your time” (Janey). The trainers typically viewed their work as life-changing. For example, one NIPA staff told a workshop group, “You are developing a curriculum, NIPA is not developing a curriculum [for you]....you are shaping your destiny, not us” (Nkasi).

Many of the stories of empowerment and newly found confidence circulated widely at NIPA. For example, in a science education program, black college students were interacting and demonstrating science concepts to white students. "This was a huge issue for them. Were they capable? Were they brave enough, did they have enough self confidence and actually demonstrate science experiments to white kids? Could they understand them, was the language going to be a barrier?"(Roberta). The science fair turned out to be a great success partly because the black students discovered that they did have enough confidence. Another trainer at NIPA explained that because of NIPA training, "teachers are becoming more confident...and to believe in oneself, that I can do it, I can change. It is change that is such a painful process, to move away from the known...It is a painful process and if you can see that happening, I really do believe that people are then becoming empowered" (Daphne).

For many of the staff, the process of empowering was a very long term process, and they were content to find little signs or indications that it was happening, almost to the point of having a religious faith in something. But almost every staff member, including those administrative staff who did usually get into the field, had a strong feeling that they were having an effect. One staff member expressed it thus: "Personally I have satisfaction. Seeing where those teachers are coming from and then seeing where you have taken them to, you feel so good. You feel like shouting and saying, 'Other people! Come in and see what these people have moved to.'"(Benisha). Another staff member claimed that, "if you interact with [the recipients] and this we do quite often, you can see the joy and satisfaction that they are getting out of the course. So we are believing that we are hitting the right button and they are receiving the type of training that is really necessary to empower them and build their capacity" (Brian).

While these notions of promoting self-sufficiency were integral to the beliefs of the staff about empowerment, they should be understood in the light of the deep belief of the staff that the recipients were perhaps inalterably dependent and selfish. It was a paradox in the staff perspective which contained potential for serious dissonance. Despite a lot of the references to the need for empowerment, and the inheritance of apartheid, the staff often manifested a negative perception of the recipients, and of the recipients' own negative perception of themselves. For instance one trainer said:

they definitely have a different view of the world because they focus only on the problems. For instance they have a tendency of thinking that the changes are out there. It is going to be brought by somebody. They don't see themselves as being the one who does change. They think they are not the ones who they think influences change....They think they are not the right person to do it....They underestimate themselves because we want to conscientize them about what is to be done and all that, and they become better(Nkasi).

Another staff member had a similar view. He said that apartheid drained the people of a sense of direction and that they had lost the motivation to work for themselves.

If we can get up and put our shoulders to the wheel and push, and I mean everyone, this country is not for one group of people but for everyone. If we can have that attitude of making it better for ourselves, then we can overcome a lot of the problems that beset South Africa. Apartheid changed the perceptions of people and culturally some people. Now when you have a people without a culture, you know what that means. You do not know where you're going or where you are from. You are a lost generation (Brian).

Many staff members asserted that dependency was a serious problem. As a staff member explained, "It seems to be a different kind of dependency, a kind of dependency of saying 'I cannot solve this problem'. People see problems and they remain problems...They don't really want other people to solve it for them but they cannot solve it for themselves so it keeps on remaining a problem and they see it in the light of being a problem. The solution never comes"(Doris) Another staff member concurred:

Yes there is definitely a culture of dependency, not just on NIPA but on the government. The reality is that people realize the government is not able to deliver right now so they do depend on NGOs to provide the resources. Often when we go in to do our training and we begin to do an evaluation, one of the first things we get is "Facilities. Classrooms," and they think NIPA is actually going to bring some support for these problems. But that is not our role....NIPA, having been involved with so many of them over the past ten years, is now fairly widely recognized and so they see NIPA as being Santa Claus (Cathie).

It was a widely held view among the staff at NIPA that the old apartheid system contributed greatly to the feelings of dependency and helplessness. "They were spoon-fed and they were never given the opportunity to make decisions for themselves. And it has happened over many generations, not just one generation. It is very strongly embedded into most South Africans....That is why the building of confidence, self-development, and self-esteem is such a big part of our development. It is becoming a higher priority in education rather than the actual physical techniques of how to teach, how to teach reading and so on" (Jelena). Another staff member said, "They are resistant to change because they were spoon-fed...And now they have to initiate so it is not easy for them"(Ntini). Another staff member asserted, "I think teacher training in the past was very much dependency. You got your little package of posters and you stuck them on the wall and that's what you used for the rest of your life. I don't think people were taught to be innovative and to make use of resources in the community"(Kate). Other

trainers shared this perception of the tendency to ignore the past realities and to believe that soon everything will be alright again, despite obvious evidence to the contrary. Another trainer lamented that “unfortunately some people have got that tendency [for dependency]. Once you offer something, then the next time people come to expect that. It is taken for granted that you can get that... There is a general tendency of the people of South Africa if you give them something sometimes as a courtesy, then they will try to exploit the situation” (Pasha).

Many staff members had the view that recipients had come to expect NIPA or others to do it all for them and that these outsiders had access to resources almost at will. The deputy director said.

If you look at the list of expectations at the beginning of the workshop you’ll always find a long list of ‘give me this or give me that’. I think it all comes with the new South Africa. I think people have become aware of certain things they lack and also that the government made certain promises which they are not keeping. And it is an expectation that these things have to be given, it doesn’t matter by who... It is the same if an official from the education department came, they would also be confronted with requests: you should give us computers and cars (Doris).

These negative perceptions of the recipients naturally varied among the staff. Many staff were confident that the dependency of the recipients was a phase which was slowly passing. However, it was also cleared that behind the beliefs of many of the staff was the knowledge that NIPA and they as individuals had had to struggle hard to survive and prosper. This experience had made them harshly critical of those who expected ‘handouts’ or who were not willing to be flexible, resourceful, and determined. This attitudinal paradox of compassion for the recipients together with criticism of them had the potential to create a dissonance at NIPA. The subtle cues of their attitudes may become visible to the recipients over time and undermine their relationship.

Modernization, Social Reform, and Constitutional Ideals (Staff)

Along with the empowering of individuals, in the staff perspective there were substantial interests changes on a wider scale. They saw a lot of the social reform and modernization in terms very similar to those of the recipients, that NIPA was part of a needed wave of modernization in South Africa. The education received through NIP was part of a struggle to empower individuals to be able to exercise their political rights. For instance, one trainer said, “So definitely the work [of NIPA] ...starts the whole process of empowerment, personal growth, and empowerment for the people, because if you can’t read you don’t know. You might share it verbally from somebody else but how the hell do you know if they are telling the truth?” (Janey). Modernization and political reform were a non-negotiable

foundation for the work of NIPA. As one staff member said, "From my point of view, nothing can be worse than what we had. In practical terms maybe the teaching was better quality...but nothing could be worse than the ideology that we laboured under then" (Bassy). Another trainer explained that NIPA,

focuses on transformational issues right now. The unfortunate situation for the people is that most of them are very illiterate and besides that, the people react to anything they don't know. So NIPA takes the responsibility of unpacking it and implementing it at the same time. That kind of situation requires one to have a background of experience as a community person and given that there was no intervention of that kind from NIPA or for any NGO, that is a real challenge. It is a challenge to play a role in transforming the country (Susini).

Education was seen by the NIPA staff as central to the social transformation. One typical view would be this one: "NIPA is an educational institute... But now the world is changing and we're focusing only on education. We are focusing on anything that can improve the standards of South Africa. All the different programs of NIPA are interconnected because they're all part of education. They are to improve standards so everybody can live a better life, with a better understanding of what is happening in the world" (Tiba). Education was also seen by the staff as crucial to the reduction of traditional and divisive ways of thinking. One staff member said, "Today I see one of the biggest problems is compartmentalizing people. You are a black, you are a white, you are coloured, and you are an Indian. For as long as we think and behave in those terms, we will forever have problems. But if we should come together and be colour-blind, then we will have overcome our fears" (Brian).

Part of the modernization was a desire for all communities to catch up and benefit from advances in technology and there was a belief that these advances would make social reform in general faster and efficient. For example, one staff member asserted that NIPA was definitely a force of modernization. "Now we are working into the rural areas and they have never seen a computer before, never mind a fax machine. In this case NIPA was instrumental in getting modern technical equipment, and in the case of computers we used our own IT department to do the training...definitely there NIPA had a greater role to play and the fact that they not only did the training, you could pick up the phone and get some advice. The fact that we had some interaction makes it even more worthwhile" (Cathie). Another staff member saw the NGOs as by definition a modernizing force. "I think NGOs have to be one step ahead at all times because they are dependent on funding. If they are doing exactly what the government is doing, why is there a need to fund NGOs?" (Jelena). The implication was that NGOs were advocates and facilitators of progress. Another staff asked the same question answered quite affirmatively, "yes it is. What I am saying is that our training is training that you can actually use in other fields. For example, financial management. The financial management we're

[teaching] can be used for individuals as a household, for example, or a community. It is the same concept and procedures" (Susini).

Not all staff held these views though. For instance, another staff member, when asked if she thought NIPA was a force of modernization said, "Modernize? I had never thought of it like that, but you are probably right about the computer training. But it does not seem to me to be so. I may be very wrong but what we hope to do is change attitudes. I don't know if attitudes are relevant to modernity or not? I wonder" (Bassy). This thinking was in line with other staff notions that change was essentially an internal process, such as gaining self esteem, rather than the provision of new resources. The provision of resources was believed to increase dependency.

Many on the staff displayed a realism that the pace of social transformation would be slow and that they would often have to be content with small or invisible signs of change. One typical comment would be:

I think the changes are very slow...not instantaneous at all. Often I wonder...if people participate and are very enthusiastic while they're in the workshops but if you go to see them during monitoring visits whether they make the time and effort. We have learned from experience that change takes at least three years (Kate).

Many of the NIPA staff had similar views to the recipients about the significance of the South African Constitution. The adherence to a system of rights-based changes was seen to have the effect of motivating political change. For example, one trainer saw the constitution as the basis for critical thinking. When discussing the OBE "tree" (a conceptual diagram) she said, "Everything is political ...we must walk and talk politics and therefore education must radically change towards OBE...the roots of the educational tree are really the Constitution" (Nkasi). One staff member said the Constitution was important to the work of NIPA because, "It is your right, education, it is your right to a decent life" (Janey). Another staff member said, "In NIPA's area of work...those who are at the receiving end of what we are doing are sure that what we're doing comes out of the Constitution" (Daphne). A science and technology trainer at NIPA asserted that, "in terms of the recipients, we always refer to the Constitution and looking at the real need. NGOs are not for giving service to the rich people...rather, our mission is to support people and assist them and bring them up" (Pasha). Another trainer/manager at NIPA said that the Constitution was very relevant to the work of NIPA. Another staff member said of the Constitution: "I think I would say that they are very careful here at NIPA and they really look at things...in the first place having to adopt or say that you welcome the Constitution" (Benisha). One staff member summarized the consensus at NIPA very succinctly:

The first that springs to mind is that you can have a constitution, a written

constitution, but it doesn't mean anything until it is put into practice. We often referred to the constitution in the governance and management project, and in the foundation phase program. It is almost the lynch pin to everything we do. We see it as an example of an ideal way of living, and that these ideas will trickle through so that they begin to act on the constitution, and not just mouth these ideas of equality and so on (Bassy)

Analysis: Empowerment

The theme of empowerment was quite central to the overall 'project' of social transformation envisaged by the participants in regards to education, and hence was source of substantial continuity for NIPA. Both the recipients and the staff had direct personal experience of growth which appeared to energize them towards a belief in empowerment. The growth of confidence, the enhancement of self-sufficiency, and the expansions of political rights were clearly articulated by the participants. There was significant consensus on the importance of undoing the social, economic, political, and emotional damage of apartheid. Both recipients and the staff indicated that they believed that new skills and knowledge as well as a motivation to use them were critical in the transformation process. The importance of education in the social transformation was assumed by all participants. There was also agreement that empowerment of communities was going to be a slow long-term process, marked by the reduction of a wide variety of barriers. The idea that South Africa needed to be modernized was also relevant to the discussion for the participants. The disparities which existed again reminded them that more accountability was needed, particularly political accountability.

Within the concept of empowerment three areas of dissonance were identifiable. First, while the interest in self-sufficiency and the reduction of dependency was significant for all participants, for the staff the issue of dependency contained a paradox. The staff in general were cognizant of the impact of apartheid in terms of internalizing dependency, but the latter also manifested a negative view of the recipients whenever there was a suggestion they were dependent. The staff perceptions of the recipients, some of which were confirmed by observation, contradicted the supportive, confidence-boosting notions of personal growth and collaboration among peers articulated elsewhere. Over the long term it would seem surprising that this negative view would not be communicated to the recipients by means of subtle cues. The staff were sharply critical of the recipients at times, noting that there was a tendency among them to expect an external resolution to their problems. It may have been easier for the staff to observe these limitations in their learners than it was for the recipients to see it in themselves. This raised questions about the potential for a subtle communication of negativity towards the recipients which over time would spoil their relationship.

Part of the dissonance appeared to relate to the point that the staff viewed

empowerment as signifying an internal locus⁴³ of control and an entrepreneurial initiative. They wanted the recipients to gain confidence and to learn for themselves, as they themselves had in their own career development and institutional survival tactics. Ironically, when the recipients sought out resources for opportunities (for example, asking for free materials or soliciting donations), they were labeled by the staff as dependent. The recipients, on the other hand, tended to be more external. Their strong interest in certification is evidence of this. As can be seen in the recipients' ideas about accountability noted earlier, the problem for the recipients tended to be that others, for example, the education officers or principals, were not fulfilling their responsibilities. This dissonance also had implications about networking. If the recipients were seen as essentially selfish with an external locus of control, then what could really be expected of them in terms of networking and sharing decisions?

There was a second area of dissonance related to modernization. The recipients tended to view the modernization and social reform of South Africa in more technical ways, such as improved access to modern technology. The staff, on the other hand, looked at modernization more in terms of social reform such as rights based education or community governance of schools. Both groups of participants agreed upon the importance of the Constitution and the enfranchisement of local communities as a form of rights-based change. However, there was also a lack of consensus here. The Constitution had different meanings for the recipients than for the staff. To the recipients, the Constitution was simply a validation of their right to participate and a symbol of the new South Africa. The staff appeared to have a much more complex conceptualization of the Constitution. To them it was a blueprint of idealized political relationships, democratic values, and critical thinking. Like some dissonances observed with partnership, the staff appeared to have a more idealistic conceptualization of broad social reform, whereas the recipients were oriented to a more pessimistic, problem-centred conceptualization.

Third, there was dissonance underlying the tension between empowerment of individuals and the empowerment of communities. The rhetoric of empowerment was idealistic, and seemed to centre on community aspects. It celebrated the potential for improved use of resources, effective and sustainable decision making, and the expansion of constitutional rights. However, the empowerment that most participants actually referred to was much more individualized, and was centred on personal growth such as building up one's self-esteem. Both the recipients and the staff never seemed to be too far away from the idea that a key outcome of NIPA training was personal improvement such as professional upgrading or economic skill enhancement. But there was a tension between the staff's advocacy of community

⁴³ Locus of control is term taken to mean person's perception of self-control. An internal locus would mean a person perceived themselves to be in control of their lives, whereas an external locus would indicate a belief that external forces controlled one's life such God, fate, or society.

empowerment and the recipients' prominent interest in individual empowerment. In fairness, it should be said that many of these new skills and attitudes were in the early phases of implementation, and the empowerment of communities was still unfolding. The experience of expanding one's professional and personal sphere figured prominently in the social constructions around empowerment. The significance of this tension may explain some of the difficulties in the dissemination of these new programs and policies. If individual empowerment depended upon a profoundly personal experience of growth, perhaps as a result of gifted facilitation by experienced trainers, then it may have been naive to expect widespread change without it.

In sum, while there were many indications that empowerment was a central concept in the institutional fabric of NIPA, and one which resonated strongly with rhetoric from many actors about the social transformation of South Africa, there were also many hints that contradictions and tensions in the way this process was regarded.

Table 7

Summary Table for the Cognitive Dimensions

Cognitive Dimensions				
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Points of convergence</i>	<i>Points of divergence</i>	<i>Level of consensus</i>	<i>Potential Impact of Dissonance</i>
Accountability	- high need for transparency - moral obligation to fulfill responsibilities - critical of state levels of accountability	- staff more business oriented whereas recipients morality based - staff more concerned with institutional accountability systems	moderate	moderate The different views of accountability are not really exclusive but the business orientation of NIPA may grow to be at odds with recipient thinking.
Partnership and networking	- shared rhetoric on values of collaboration -partnership with the state seen as problematic	- staff much more interested in networking than recipients. for ideological and business reasons - staff concerned about reality of networking and effectiveness of cascading	moderate	moderate to high The staff clearly have serious concerns about how partnership is working for social transformation on two counts: the NIPA-state partnership is problematic and the empowerment envisaged may not work in the present mode of dissemination.
Empowerment	- strong belief in overcoming inherited disparities - personal experience of growth a key motivator - empowerment seen as partly a psychological process - transformation seen as a subtle long term process - belief in value of NGOs	- staff appear to have a more complex and abstract view of empowerment (e.g. views on the constitution) - there may be varying levels of realism among participants. - there are questions about the meaning of resourcefulness and dependence.	moderate to high	low to moderate Empowerment is a central theme. The problematic role of the state, the level of actual dependency, and the tension between rhetoric and progress hold the seeds for potential dysfunction.

Conclusions

The cognitive dimensions of NIPA were dominated by many of the themes apparent in the regulative and normative dimensions, and similarly, revealed both continuity and dissonance. Since the cognitive dimensions of an institution can be said to contain the essence of the meanings which the participants brought to their activities, the patterns indicated here are quite significant. How the participants conceptualized their institution revealed a lot about how the regulative demands were implemented and how the normative pressures were interpreted. The fact that accountability, partnership, and empowerment were so readily identifiable in all three dimensions showed that there was a significant level of continuity at NIPA. However, the evidence of dissonance was also apparent. The cognitive dimensions revealed several aspects of dissonance which revealed NIPA's complex and potentially dysfunctional position.

The concept of accountability was most important to all. The staff and recipients showed a high level of consensus around the issue of increased accountability in institutions in general. Specifically, they believed that mismanagement, corruption, a lack of professionalism, and political indifference were serious problems that necessitated institutional reforms in the state, school governance groups, and NGOs to make them more accountable. There was also a recognition of the growing role of business accountability, particularly in the minds of the staff, in which rationalized management and acceptance of the marketplace were taken as basic assumptions. This entailed new roles for various actors in the education sector and the inculcation of new skills, knowledge, and attitudes. To a large extent, these new forms of accountability were associated with the social transformation of post-apartheid South Africa. This can be tied to the historical moment of 1998 as the 'new' state of South Africa was still engaged in a widely endorsed implementation of reforms meant to address the legacies of apartheid. There was also a concurrent reformation of the NGO sector. At the same time there was growing discomfort with the slow pace of change, and disappointment with the state performance, especially in education. Hence, calls for accountability were being directed towards the state, the school system, and NGOs.

Part of the increased accountability to the participants was signified by greatly expanded forms of partnership. Both the staff and the recipients shared a faith in networking and collaboration as appropriate modes of operation. There was a distinct interest in shared decision-making and working in teams. These were ideals connected to the idea of transforming South Africa through the sharing of knowledge and resources, and the democratization of political processes. Partnership provided opportunities for growth which were appealing the participants. The staff also saw this as useful for business purposes.

Empowerment was also strongly connected to the concept of social transformation. Many participants remarked that empowerment was what NIPA was all about. It signified personal growth in both the capacities and motivation to participate in the 'new' South Africa. It meant the

reduction of dependency and the expansion of the influence of local groups over what was happening in their communities and schools. Much of the rhetoric about lifelong learning, self-sufficiency, critical thinking skills, and individual rights was subsumed under the theme of empowerment. The participants hoped for a modernized South Africa which featured increased equity and access to resources mediated by the ideals of the Constitution.

Despite these broadly held idealistic visions held by the participants at NIPA, nonetheless there was ample evidence of dissonance. With regard to accountability, there were differences in the staff and recipient conceptualizations. The staff tended much more strongly towards accountability in a business sense, with donor preferences having a high priority. In contrast, the recipients were viewed accountable more in a professional sense of having probity and devotion to a constituency. The staff were also burdened by a sense of multiple accountabilities. All the participants had some questions about the accountability of the state with regard to education, but the staff were much more committed to work with the state. The recipients, on the other hand, were highly critical of the state, and were very glad to work with alternative partners like NIPA and NIPA's donors. Over the long term these differences between the staff and the recipients may prove problematic for NIPA. This may be especially true if the trends towards a crisis in education continue and concerns about accountability grow into demands from the recipients for political action. The business orientation of NIPA, combined with the state's pro-business GEAR policies, may serve to further alienate the recipients from the staff.

Partnership also contains evidence of dissonance. Many participants held that if the state is going to be a partner in the implementation of new educational policies, then ideally it should behave in the way that it demands other partners behave: collaboratively and responsibly. There were doubts on several fronts about the real level of partnership. First, the participatory management and multiculturalism policies of NIPA were seen by many staff as simply window-dressing to impress donors. Second, the networking of NIPA was seen differently by the recipients, who viewed it with some skepticism, than by the staff, who viewed networking as a good business development opportunity. Third, the assumptions of the staff indicated that they thought of NIPA as a competitor in a tough new market rather than a collaborator in a wider partnership for social progress. This was a contradiction to the viewpoint which they manifested to the recipients.

A similar contradiction in thinking was seen among the staff with regard to empowerment. While the staff were very supportive of the recipients and appreciated the importance of boosting their confidence, they also demonstrated a negative view of the recipients and criticized them for being dependent. It was as if they wanted the recipients to act entrepreneurially, which is perhaps not surprising, given the business climate which prevailed at NIPA. This dissonance was related to another, which was the tension between the empowerment of individuals and the empowerment of communities. While there was substantial rhetoric about helping communities, most of the programs at NIPA ultimately came down to benefitting

individuals. The method of spreading the empowerment to communities, the ‘cascading system’, was widely acknowledged not to be working. The recipients’ own pessimistic views about the difficulties of sharing their new knowledge and networking in their communities, only served to reinforce the point that empowerment was for individuals not groups.

One final dissonance associated with empowerment was that the staff tended to have more complex and idealized conceptions than the recipients concerning how the ‘modernization’ of South Africa would work, and what the role of the Constitution would be. Again, the recipients seemed to be grounded in the entrenched challenges that they faced in their schools and communities while the staff’s perspective was derived from the rhetoric and idealism of state and donor policies.

This chapter has examined the third of the three dimensions of the institution in terms of continuity and dissonance. The next chapter builds on this analysis with an examination of the continuities and dissonances across and among dimensions.

Chapter Seven:

**Findings: Continuity and Dissonance
Across Dimensions**

Introduction

Within each of the previous three chapters, the analysis has referred to the distinct regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions. The discussion has been centred on continuities and dissonances within those dimensions, with occasional mention made of interconnections among them. This chapter explores the themes of the institution, accountability, partnership, and empowerment, in terms of how continuity and dissonance were manifested among and across these dimensions. It is this level of analysis which gives the most complete and broad reaching portrait of an institution, but one which depends upon a thorough study of the individual dimensions beforehand. Also provided is an analysis of the varying proportions of the three main themes in each dimension.

The level of thematic continuity within NIPA was moderately high, but the dissonances were also plainly visible. Understanding this tension between continuity and dissonance at NIPA gives a clear picture of the complex institutional dynamics which it faced in the volatile environment of post-apartheid South Africa. NIPA was directly involved in several key educational reform initiatives associated with the 'new' South Africa. The resonances of its continuities and its dissonances reveal two main insights. First, that the historical moment of social transformation through education had several powerful elements which were recognized by many actors in the NGO sector and at NIPA. Second, that the role of NGOs in these educational reforms was highly complex. An analysis of the continuities and dissonances in each of the three themes will illuminate this complexity and its potential for dysfunction in the long term.

Accountability

The theme of accountability was pervasive throughout NIPA. It was a general goal of NIPA to increase accountability in its own operations as well as to implement systems and promote values associated with accountability in other actors. Although in general accountability was required, practiced, and conceptually supported at NIPA, there were various definitions of it at work among the participants, some of which were contradictory. In addition, there was a looming contestation about which stakeholders' version of accountability would prevail. At the time of research field work, state and donors perspectives of accountability were prominent. However, there was potential for a shift depending on various factors such as widespread perceptions of state performance in education and the implementation of the new National Development Agency system.

Accountability was the most prominent theme in the regulative dimension for several reasons. First, accountability is to a large extent about measuring and transparency. Therefore, regulative demands which can be satisfied by things like audits, reports full of numerical data, and scheduled points for measuring indicators, are more easily systematized at the regulative

dimension. Bureaucratic systems tend to be the purview of government and corporate actors which were the most influential in the regulative dimension. Both the state and the donors imposed conditions for the NGOs to involve the state and the donors, as well as other NGOs in consortia. This gave rise to the need for contracts and agreements which specified deliverables and which used administrative systems like TQM.

Second, accountability was also a concept that resonates with business values, which the primary actors at the regulative level, the donors and the state, are clearly oriented towards. NIPA was operating in a contractualized mode with donors as well as its consortia partners. The state was also giving clear signals that it was market oriented and that it was incapable of supporting education without donor input.

Third, the recipients, who had somewhat different notions of accountability than the staff, were generally not represented at the regulative level. Although there were demands that local groups be consulted, the main role at NIPA for the recipients was to be the beneficiaries of the training. The recipients' influence to a large extent was filtered through the staff who interacted with them out in the field. Many of the pressures for accountability were addressed by staff actions at NIPA headquarters rather than by bringing recipients into the discussions of systems relating to how accountability would be managed.

Fourth, accountability was prominent at the regulative level because it was a touchstone for social transformation and therefore included as a matter of course for important transformative institutions like NGOs. The theoretical partnership between the state and NGOs, especially given the role for state influence through the National Development Agency, appeared to necessitate the implementation of systems of accountability. History, in essence, demanded increased accountability in all institutions, and so requirements were put into place wherever it appeared to be possible.

Fifth, accountability as a notion appeared to have much appeal at the regulative level, because at the cognitive level it becomes a more abstract and elusive political and moral concept. It is more difficult to measure perhaps, and assumed to be present if regulative demands are obeyed. Accountability at the cognitive level is a way of thinking and valuing, for example, the value of sharing decisions, the moral impulse to fulfil one's duty, or the importance of being fiscally conservative. All of these social constructions were found at the cognitive level.

The Continuities of Accountability

Accountability may be a 'buzzword' to many, but it had great significance for the participants of NIPA who used it frequently. It was a central component of the project of social transformation in which NIPA was engaged. There were three main aspects to the continuity of accountability.

Monitoring and Transparency

First, there was a wide consensus that much better systems of monitoring and control were needed in response to what the research participants regarded as the corruption, mismanagement, and bureaucratic indifference that were eroding civil society and slowing down the pace of educational reform. Many scandals in NGOs and state institutions could be traced to a lack of transparent reporting. The NGO sector, if it was to have credibility among its recipients, and also be a critic of the state, needed to be above reproach. In any case, strict systems of reporting and clear codes of ethics were required by donors, NGO coalitions, and the National Development Agency. Among actors such as politicians, donors, NGOs, and NGO coalitions, there was general agreement that the days of being given funds with the only real condition being that a narrative report at end of the project, were over. This may have been justifiable in the apartheid era when funders were supporting projects from afar and trusting the NGOs to 'do their best' in the face of an oppressive state. But now there was a far deeper interest in detailed, measurable results documented at several points in the project life.

The Efficiency of Business

Second, the influences of donors and others, who wanted NGOs to be run on business lines, were internalized by most of the NIPA participants, although more readily by the staff. It appeared to be reasonable that those who provided funding could expect it to be used in the agreed upon manner. Hence, contracts and business management systems like TQM were acceptable systems to enhance accountability. Both the staff and the recipients appeared to appreciate that money was tight and the needs of schools were great, and therefore the ideal efficiencies of a business approach were appropriate. Further, the fact of the stiff competition for funding put the whole NGO sector into a mode where the demonstration of accountability and measurable impacts were key to business success. Resourcefulness and self-sufficiency were values that emerged, and entrepreneurship was lauded.

Responsibility to a Constituency

Third, accountability as defined as political and professional responsibility was an ideal inherent in many of the new educational reforms and the rhetoric of many actors. The state, donors, and NGOs, among others, portrayed the social transformation of South Africa to a large extent as an increase in political accountability. Politicians were to be accountable to their constituents, school governance bodies to their communities, teachers to their students, ministry officials to their charges, and NGOs to their funders. In theory, the new forms of partnership

which were emerging, and the newly empowered voices which were being raised, would enhance these systems of political accountability.

The Dissonances of Accountability

Accountability as key institutional theme comprised three main areas of dissonance for NIPA.

Less Than Accountable Partners

First, the ideals of accountability as noted in the regulative dimension, such as taking responsibility for ones' actions and fulfilling one's obligations, appeared to be contradictory to participants' experience as noted in the cognitive dimension. Specifically troublesome was the perceived lack of accountability in the state. NIPA expended considerable efforts in its training programs to emphasize being accountable on such issues as professional dedication, punctuality, planning, control of money, shared decision-making, and reduction of dependency. Yet the state was perceived by many, if not most of the participants, as deficient in these areas. How then, could it carry on as its partner? NIPA may be forced to adhere to its own rhetoric (as it conceptualized it for the recipients), and take the side of the recipients and call the state to account. It was clear that for the foreseeable future that state was going to continue to set educational policy and be central in education programs. Therefore, for reasons of business expedience NIPA would likely continue with its current relationship with the state

The fact was that the state was in many ways a business partner for NIPA, setting out the parameters of the contracts which would be funded by the donors. But here again is the same dissonance: if the state was going to viewed primarily as a business partner, yet its performance in this role was clearly sub-standard, would NIPA and the donors simply move to exclude the state from active participation and relegate it to a marginal advisory role? This would involve serious restructuring of the current arrangements, and it was likely the state would be loathe to surrender whatever power and influence it had.

Competing Definitions

Second, as was noted in the tables at the end of the findings chapters, there was not complete consensus about what accountability meant among the main actors and participants at NIPA. One significant example of this were the differing conceptions of accountability as related to quantitative versus qualitative measurement. NIPA staff, as noted in the regulative and normative dimensions, had a predilection for numbers and empirical measurement, mostly

stemming from donor demands and contractualized provision of services. The popular press was full of statistics about issues like pass rates. The cascading approach used a quantitative system as well, assuming that x numbers of workshops will result in the dissemination of the training to y numbers of teachers. Yet accountability was also conceived in ways at the cognitive dimension which were distinctly different from this. These concepts could more appropriately be examined in qualitative ways. These would include having increased levels of confidence in dealing with previously powerful actors like principals, feeling motivated to submit their ideas to local decision-making bodies, being professional, being assertive, and respecting the rights of others. There was little interest expressed in these concepts in the regulative dimension.

Adding to this confusion about what accountability meant was the fact that the staff widely indicated a burden of multiple accountabilities while the recipients tended towards a more clear sense to whom they were accountable. The staff were much more cognizant of the role of the marketplace in determining their accountability; donor interests were clear to them. The recipients, on the other hand, thought more in terms of political and professional accountability, and were more interested in 'calling people to account' and getting various actors to fulfil their duties properly.

Business or Liberation?

A third crucial area of dissonance was the conflict between NIPA's business orientation and its active engagement of donor requirements, and the needs of its recipients. The regulative dimensions of NIPA clearly pushed it towards being highly accountable to its funders. The effect of a volatile funding environment for NGOs and the necessity to network and establish a business profile, as was documented in the normative dimension, reinforced the tendency for NIPA staff to think in marketplace terms. By contrast, in the cognitive dimension the recipients were focused on empowerment, and demanded moral and political accountability. If NIPA's institutional energies were being consumed to large extent with survival strategies, and the demands of its donors were not really serving the recipients well, for example, in the case of cascading, what would be the result? Was NIPA simply going to be a service provider, facilitating linkages among its clients (the donors, the state, and the recipients) for the purpose of its own survival? There was significant emphasis placed on accountability to beneficiaries in the Codes of Ethics and contract tenders, but was it to be a market-oriented relationship or one which emphasized dialogue, collaboration, and personal responsibility?

The rhetoric and practices at NIPA cut in both directions on this point. The triangle of power of state-donor-NGO, particularly as organized through the National Development Agency, might not necessarily result in input from the recipients. The NGOs were nominally required to consult with them but it was clear that this might only be seen as a business necessity. It was an important part of NIPA's business profile that it had long term connections at the local level in the

Transkei, and there was a strong belief among the staff that it was important to pay attention to local concerns. However, the pressure for survival was strong and there was no sign it would slacken. The example of cascading may be evidence of a trend towards being accountable to donors whatever the actual result at the local level. The critiques of the tendering systems which were beginning to emerge were an indication of the potential exclusion of recipients that this business approach entailed.

Discussion: Accountability

What is at issue here is the definition of what accountability means. The disparate political interests in play in South African education at this time, such as teachers' unions, the Ministry of Education (with various internal factions), school governance bodies, other parents groups, NGOs, donors, private industry,⁴⁴ school administrators, and politicians of all stripes, present a series of difficult questions about who will be accountable, and how accountability will be managed. It is clearly a contested area as the varying interpretations of accountability observable in the cognitive dimension indicate. If the confusing social constructions at NIPA around accountability persist, the institution may eventually be forced to re-examine its partnership with the state, and its accountability to the donors.

The question arises: is it possible to measure the new social contract inherent in the transformation of education in which NIPA was directly involved? Are all or just some of the participants interested in getting the numbers right? Social transformation is to a significant extent an abstract phenomenon understood at an emotional as well as an intellectual level. Individuals and groups often have quite variable signs or indicators which tell them what is happening. Many of the participants interviewed spoke of small and subtle signs they saw that change was happening, but most of these were not conventionally measurable. Some examples would be the joy people felt, the energy of students for reading, someone's enthusiasm for certificates or a group's solidarity. This is not to say these things cannot be measured, but rather that there may be a tension between quantitative notions of social change and the qualitative experience of a new or proposed social contract. Implicit in this debate is the question of whose version of the signs of social change will be legitimized? Was accountability is going to be defined in business or moral terms, a divide which characterized the staff versus the recipients.

The issue of devotion to institutional survival versus dedication to a core mandate arises here. Many of the staff accepted that NIPA must diversify into programs like voter education and community policing. NIPA had a substantial capacity for project management, and so was able to accept this work. However, there were questions expressed by many staff about whether the core

⁴⁴ An example of this partnership with private industry can be found in the Bulurha school re-building. Please see the Appendix on contextual influences, section on partnership.

mandate was being lost, and whether NIPA was getting too business-oriented. Many of the recipients admitted that they participated in NIPA activities partly because they were high quality, and inexpensive. The idea of fee paying as an integral part of NIPA programs was accepted partly because of economic constraints, and partly because it was seen as bad to give things away. It encouraged dependency it was thought. If NIPA was to be a service business institution, then perhaps this goal needed re-evaluation.

Partnership

The theme of partnership was also central to NIPA. Partnership had as a backdrop the ongoing shift in thinking away from 'imposed development' towards consultation with the implementors and beneficiaries of development efforts. In terms of social transformation, partnership was seen as crucial to the shared use of resources and the empowerment of previously unheard voices. Partnerships, loosely defined, were everywhere in civil society, and the term was widely used by the participants, although not always in a positive way. Many of the NIPA participants were aware of the hidden costs and problems of working in partnerships. For example, collaboration with a state which was increasingly discredited and unreliable was a problematic partnership. Many of the recipients were supposed to be working with various partners and cascading their learning among their peers, but this was not always happening.

At the regulative level, partnership was straightforwardly and consistently manifested, for example, in requirements to include specific groups in consortia, to consult community representatives and to implement education policies which mandated the creation of local school governance bodies. At the normative levels and cognitive levels, partnership as a practice and an ideal was still visible at NIPA but some varying and perhaps contradictory manifestations of it were emerging. These dissonances were a good indication that tensions between ideals and practice may ultimately prove dysfunctional for NIPA.

Partnership was fairly evenly distributed across the three dimensions of NIPA, although it was slightly more prominent in the normative dimensions and slightly less so in the cognitive dimensions. This was partly because other themes stood out in those dimensions. Partnership was clearly mandated in the regulative dimensions, but most of the activity there was centred on increasing accountability. In the cognitive dimensions it was empowerment which was central. There appeared to be three other reasons for the normative dimension being concerned with partnership.

First, the normative dimensions reflect what is actually done and the perceived obligation to do it, and one set of practices which was central to NIPA were those related to business. Partnership and networking were required, but not just because they were seen as appropriate by donors, NGO organizations and the state. For perceived reasons of efficiency, good management, and the creation of long-term relationships, partnership resonated as a sound business practice.

Partnership was also a feature that NIPA wanted to showcase to donors, and so it was meant to be conspicuous in what they did and said. For the staff this made sense in terms of institutional survival and their views noted at the cognitive level confirmed this. The recipients, on the other hand, had different conceptions of networking and partnership, which was indicative of a dissonance. Some staff were aware of going through an act to please donors but the recipients were more centred on the obstacles to true partnership.

Second, like accountability, partnership was ideologically resonant in the aftermath of apartheid, but it did not appear to have penetrated the local level yet. The reports by all participants of the ongoing burdens of lack of confidence, confusion about new programs, and the many obstacles that remained to community empowerment all testified to the fact that partnership had a long way to go before it was completely orthodox. Therefore, it was less easy to cite examples which showed its high conceptual correctness. Further, there was less likely to be consensus among the participants about how and why partnership should be implemented in NIPA's programs.

Third, partnership was conceptually coupled with accountability because it implied an element of trust, delineated roles, and defined goals and outcomes. Therefore, like accountability, it appealed at the regulative level because in this sense it was measurable. Items like the numbers of consortium partners, the frequency of consultations with community leaders, and the existence of participatory management structures could all be empirically regulated. By contrast, in the cognitive dimensions more abstract conceptualizations of partnership, such as the urge to collaborate or the real sharing of power, were less easy to measure or enforce.

The Continuities of Partnership

Partnership was the preferred mode of operation of NIPA. Beyond the requirements by many of the donors to implement it, the staff appeared to incorporate it readily into daily practices and ideological perspectives. It also appealed to recipients. Partnership provided continuity to NIPA in three main ways.

Collaborative Relations

First, partnership was idealized as a significant shift away from the hierarchical and self-interested political and social structures which existed under apartheid. By including all the key stakeholders in planning and decision-making, democracy was promoted and previously marginalized voices were heard. Under the new education policies, for example, parents were given a role in school governance though they were not to replace the traditional function of the principal. Rather, they were to operate co-operatively in partnership with the principal. Teachers were now perceived in a new role as facilitators of learning working with their students as

partners in their learning instead simply filling them with static knowledge. It was assumed that through partnership, viewpoints would be heard and insights expressed which would otherwise be lost if efforts were made in the traditional segregated manner.

Another key stakeholder was the state. The state was self-admittedly unable to fund education to the extent it would have liked and its administrative capacities were lacking. Hence, NIPA was working to implement the state's education policies and include state officials in their training. There were also mechanisms, both formal and informal, for dialogue between the state, NGOs, and donors to work together to improve education in South Africa. The new National Development Agency was a formal example of this. Informally, donor representatives and state officials worked with NGOs like NIPA to develop projects and pull together consortia.

Many work tasks at NIPA were organized to be done in teams rather than delegated done to individuals. There was a clearly observable ethic of sharing tasks, even manual labour like carrying boxes of books. Partnerships was a source of energy for the participants. Many experienced positive exchanges with others, and there was a new-found ethic of sharing. This was particularly striking to them because in many cases they had not expected it or they assumed that others would not be interested. In some of the 'success' stories which circulated around NIPA, the participants always remarked on the joy they felt when everyone actually co-operated and the surprising things which were accomplished.

Added Value

Second, there were thought to be efficiencies derived from using partnership approaches. Among the staff there was a constant activity devoted to networking and sharing resources among themselves and with other institutions. There were other networks centred on specific themes such as adult literacy as well as consortium partners with whom the staff were eager to exchange ideas and share materials. There was a clear sentiment of "Why re-create the wheel?" among them. Even though NIPA might at times be in competition with other NGOs, in general there was also sympathy with individuals and much informal sharing. The "multi-skilling" or in-service training at NIPA was viewed as a skill sharing which was partnership-oriented. Among the recipients, the NIPA training represented an opportunity to network with other teachers and exchange ideas about what worked in their own classrooms. This was seen as better than having to create your own materials or buying them somewhere. In the same way, in those school communities which had active parental support, there was pride that resources from local partners were flowing to the local school. For example, at one school a parents group had won the contract to bake bread for the school feeding program. This was seen as much more efficient than buying bread at high prices at the local store.

Another efficiency was derived from partnership through the use of consortia. This allowed specialized institutions to make contributions appropriate to their competencies rather

than having to develop a wide range of capacities. NIPA, for example, which had strong management skills, could work with an NGO which had community development capacities.

Business Development

Lastly, partnership offered continuity to NIPA because it was seen by the participants as giving opportunities to access resources and enhance business contacts. For the recipients, learning about what other groups were doing and meeting prospective supporters was a good reason to work in partnerships. For the staff, business development was greatly assisted by liaising with many actors in the education sector. Like with any institution, personal relationships and knowledge of the current trends are crucial to success. This was doubly true in the volatile environment of funding reductions and complex local politics of South Africa.

The Dissonances of Partnership

Despite these continuities, dissonance was most evident in regards to partnership. Although partnership was demanded by donors and others in the regulative dimension, and practiced in the routines and roles at NIPA in the normative dimension, at the cognitive level there were indications of disjuncture, disagreement, and resistance.

The State a Weak Partner

While NIPA was supposed to be partnered with state officials, local communities, and other actors, and present a picture of harmonious collaboration, very often this was only superficial. The ideal of partnership was in conflict with the widespread cynicism about state competence and commitment and there appeared to be a facade inclusion of state participation in development activities. While donors required that NIPA include state officials in the planning and execution of workshops, there were significant tensions around this. Government officials often did not attend these workshops, and even blocked the progress of the projects. There was deep disenchantment, especially among the recipients, about the promises and performance of the state on educational issues. The ongoing problems in schools in the Eastern Cape province were big news to the participants. Many of the staff gave detailed stories of the problems of working with the state. Likewise, the recipients tended to be harshly critical of the state and they perceived many of the state officials as part of the problem, not partners to collaborate with. Yet many significant actors in NIPA's network worked in government, and many of NIPA's programs involved the implementation of new state policies. All in all, it had the potential to render the partnership problematic and potentially unworkable in the long term.

Dependent Recipients

There was also a dissonance related to the paradoxical views of the staff of the recipients in relation to partnership. On one hand, the staff saw them as needing support and confidence building. On the other hand, they sometimes saw them as a bit selfish. The staff saw the recipients as somewhat dependent and looking for outside help rather than looking within themselves or their community. The staff told stories of communities failing to reveal that two NGOs were giving them similar training, or how some teachers refused to share their training with their colleagues. Therefore it did not surprise staff members that some of the recipients were not at all collaborative. The recipient responses to the NIPA training were typically marked by a powerful sense of personal empowerment and professional upgrading, but the recipients exhibited fewer impulses to share with their colleagues or local community. Even in the recipients' views of accountability, this external locus of control was hinted at. They often believed that if only the other actors would act in an accountable manner, then they themselves could act as effective educators. The recipients were also very quick to point out the obstacles to partnership that existed in their situations. All told, this suggested that partnership among the recipients was problematic, and that the mixed view by the staff of the recipients foretold tension on this issue.

Competing Definitions

Added to this dissonance was another related to the different conceptualization of networking and partnership held by the recipients and the staff. There was no question that the staff believed in the concepts of sharing, collaboration, and consultation. They experienced this mode of interaction in their daily work and tried to run the training on the same lines. But at the same time there was a clear trend by the staff to view networking and partnership as opportunities for business development, political influence, and diversification. Although it had some ideological resonance, to some extent, the staff viewed partnership as something which had been imposed on them by donor and state demands and the pressures of a hostile environment. If networking was to be part of a business approach, this suggested a competitive rather than a collaborative model of NGO participation in development.

Staff Cynicism

Related to this issue was the dissonance at NIPA itself regarding the implementation of participatory management and multiculturalism. Many staff complained privately that the participatory management system was just window dressing and that in reality a hierarchal decision-making system was still in place. It was also suspected, though overt accusations were

not made, that there was an exclusionary aspect to NIPA. The senior staff was dominated by white women, who were fairly well paid, whereas most of the trainers were Xhosa, and paid at a level just above a teacher's salary.

Discussion: Partnership

These dissonances raised some serious questions which NIPA may have to answer in the long term. The issue of how to relate to a weak partner may grow troublesome for NIPA if the political tensions around dissatisfaction with education continue to rise. The divergence of opinion between staff and recipients is a danger to any institution whose fortunes rest with claims of close ties to local people. This may be exacerbated by the contradiction in the staff views of the recipients. Negativity and cynicism are usually counterproductive to efforts to energize and empower people. The scepticism of the staff about such practices as participatory management and affirmative action run counter to the project of social transformation which was central to NIPA and South Africa. The question arises, if NIPA could not implement a partnership system within itself, how could it expect to do so in the wider context of its recipients? Once again, the pressure for business development is prominent as source of contradiction for NIPA because many of the new norms at NIPA can be connected to pleasing donors.

Empowerment

The third main theme of NIPA's institutional relations was empowerment. It was both an explicit and implicit requirement impinging upon NIPA. There were also important norms and practices related to empowerment at NIPA. Like the theme of accountability, there was extensive evidence that empowerment was deeply embedded at the cognitive dimension. It was widely discussed by the participants in the study, and it was easy to find signs of it in the materials connected to NIPA activities.

This was important in terms of continuity across dimensions. Empowerment had very strong symbolism for the participants which was an indication of the resonance of the historical moment for NIPA and South Africa. Education, and all of the promise it signified, such as economic growth, political shifts, and increased opportunity, were wrapped up in the post-apartheid transformation, and centred around the term empowerment. This perspective on transformation also denoted a series of expectations about change. The fact that at this historical juncture there were already signs that these expectations were not being met had significance for the dissonances of NIPA.

That empowerment was prominent in all dimensions, but was most prominent at the cognitive level. This may be evidence of the power of the historical moment in South African education. The notions of lifelong learning, support for young students and their teachers in the

most disadvantaged communities, and a restructuring of power relations in education seemed be highly resonant with all participants. Since the nation was undergoing a widespread attempt to reform its education system, it is not surprising that it would have support at the regulative level, with donor and state actors acting somewhat in unison at this early stage. The assumptions behind the demands for empowerment, for example, with school governance bodies and the outcomes based education program, seemed to be that the empowerment would happen in the long term and that changes might not be instantly visible. Because of this and the inherent difficulties in measuring if empowerment was happening, empowerment was less prominent at the regulative level. In the long term, if shifts in power do not appear to produce some of the changes envisaged, it may be that empowerment will get more attention.

The Continuities of Empowerment

Expansion Of Civil Society

As noted, empowerment provided significant continuity for NIPA. First, it resonated with the history of NIPA as an institution which had supported teachers who were the most disadvantaged, namely in the rural areas of the Transkei. Many of the NIPA staff had a personal history of service to this group. The participants were continually reminded in their daily experiences of how great the disparities were in their region and how great the need was for change.

Education as the Way Forward

Second, empowerment was a central theme of the social transformation project related to education. Much of the rhetoric in the new education policies and from donors was concerned with developing individuals and communities to have greater power and participation in South African society. Historically, NIPA saw itself as part of a larger shift in power and access which was long overdue. There was a significant consensus among the participants on this point. There was informal evidence that the consensus extended to other actors such as donors, NGO coalitions, other civil society groups, and politicians of all stripes. Empowerment symbolically was also associated with other developments in South African society such as economic growth, the expansion of modernity, and the use of modern technology.

Personal Growth

Third, conceptually empowerment for the participants was closely associated with the experience of personal growth. Personal growth was typically taken to mean the acquisition of

new skills and knowledge but it is also included feelings of increased confidence and the joy of successful risk-taking. Many of the participants reported that their orientation towards empowerment stemmed primarily from two kinds of experience. First, they described being pushed reluctantly in a certain direction, for example, towards learning something outside their area of expertise, and finding that they indeed could function well there. Second, they mentioned their surprise and excitement when they worked together with others whom normally would not have collaborated with. Some of these 'success' stories became touchstones for empowerment.

The Dissonances of Empowerment

There were several dissonances across the dimensions within the theme of empowerment.

Positive versus Negative

The concepts of personal empowerment visible at the cognitive level were undermined by the awareness of the facades seen at the normative level, for example, about participatory management system. The empowerment which was occurring at NIPA itself had a paradoxical character. On one hand, the staff spoke glowingly of their own personal growth and how it was important to take risks and be lifelong learners. These were the messages which they in turn passed on to the recipients. Their relationships at work seemed collegial, professional, and warm. But they also spoke with skepticism about how participatory and collaborative the management at NIPA was, as well as wondering to what extent they were drifting from their core mandate in order to please donors.

The negative view of the staff towards the recipients was also the source of some dissonance. The staff tended to be very compassionate and supportive, believing that much of the passivity and dependence they saw in the recipients was due to the social damage of the apartheid years. There was the idea embodied in the demands at the regulative level, for example, in the new education policies. Yet, in the cognitive dimension it was clear that the staff also had a disparaging view of the recipients, sometimes seeing them as selfish, naive, and passive. They wished the recipients could be more resourceful and collaborative. This was ironic considering the business orientation of the NIPA staff who looked at many practices, for example, networking, from a very self-interested point of view.

Individual Opportunity versus Community Growth

Another dissonance was related to the issues of empowerment of individuals as compared to the empowerment of communities. At the regulative level, the general rhetoric from donors and the state, was focused on empowerment of communities. These groups were less interested in personal growth and acquisition than in broader social and political shifts. Many of the practices at the normative level reflected this emphasis. However, at the cognitive level, it was also apparent that some of the activities and a lot of the thinking at NIPA focused on the individual. Most of the recipients' comments indicated that empowerment for them was a personal journey. In many cases they believed they were making strong progress and spoke of increased confidence and better responses from their students. There were a few impressive success stories. But in terms of networking, partnering, and community development, the recipients saw many obstacles ahead. This raised questions about how these two objectives, individual and community empowerment, could be realized together at NIPA.

Helping the State

Another dissonance in terms of empowerment was related to NIPA being partnered with the state. At the regulative and normative levels, it was clearly the intention of donors and NIPA staff to help state officials gain capacity and to involve them in the implementation of the new education policies. The recipients, like the staff, saw the poor performance of the state as a fundamental problem in the way of development and wished for a higher level of professionalism for state officials. However, it was clear that the recipients were much more critical of the state than the NIPA staff. Some even wondered they were even included. Yet NIPA was going to continue to be partnered with the state for a variety of reasons, and appeared to be prepared to continue state rhetoric about empowerment. The potential for dysfunction in the long term was that the rhetoric was going to become more and more hollow, and cynicism on all sides would continue to grow. There did not seem to be any effort from as yet to address this growing tension about perceptions of the state between staff and recipients.

Discussion: Empowerment

In terms of the dependency of the recipients, there was some evidence that appeared to confirm the staff views. Many of the recipients viewed the NIPA programs as essentially basic job training, qualification upgrading, or even as resource acquisition opportunities for themselves or their schools. The recipients also saw modernization in more materialistic terms, such as the acquisition of new technology, than the staff, who looked at it as social and political reform. These views of the recipients were in contradiction to other notions of collaboration and

community development. These tendencies also tended to reinforce the notion of a 'patron-client' relationship, a relationship which was not the objective of the requirements seen at the regulative dimension.

The issues of personal opportunity versus community growth raised serious questions about the real future of South African social transformation. When considered in the light of the shift to the GEAR policies and when connected with other dissonances related to NIPA becoming primarily a business entity, it is easy to see a basis for the view on the part of the recipients, that NIPA was only operating in their community for business purposes. Therefore, why shouldn't they get what they could from it? In the most extreme version of this patron - client relationship, the recipients might even become aware that they had the gift of their patronage to bestow on an NIPA which was needy for local connections to showcase to donors. Ultimately, this could be very dysfunctional for NIPA and create ideological rifts among the participants.

The notion of helping the state was generally accepted as necessary among the staff but contained some contradictions. How could an institution help to empower the state when the state was a primary regulator of that institution? Where in all this would be the classic NGO role of advocating for support of under-served groups? If NIPA had a *de facto* business arrangement with the state, financed by the donors and perpetuated by weak state performance, why would it lobby to change it?

Summary

As has been demonstrated, while there was significant continuity in the institutional relation of NIPA, there was also evidence of dissonance. A cross-dimensional examination of NIPA reveals that the dissonances found within each dimension are reinforced and deepened by the interplay of the three dimensions. It is clear that NIPA faces, or will face, some serious questions about conflicting notions of accountability, the true nature of partnerships at NIPA, and the potential for empowerment as it is being currently promoted. The implications of these conclusions for South Africa, and NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa in general are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight:
Conclusions: Continuity and Dissonance

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the analysis of the institutional relations of NIPA in the form of answers to the research questions. This is preceded by a brief review of the study 'problematique' and research objectives. Next, the implications of this case for South Africa, as well as for NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, are discussed. Possible contributions to institutional theory are also presented. The chapter concludes by offering some tentative directions for subsequent research.

Review of The Study

The rationale for studying educational NGOs in South Africa is derived from their growing importance as institutions in the provision of national systems of education. Additionally, there is evidence in the scholarly literature that these institutions face many complexities and contradictions which may compromise their efficacy as institutions. There are concerns about their multiple accountabilities, and particularly their tendency to be overly accountable to donors. NGOs are touted as being well connected to the local context, but often there are cultural gulfs between NGOs and their recipients. There are issues of dependency on the part of the recipients and the emergence of patron-client relationships between the NGO and the recipients. Finally, the issues of relations between NGOs and a weak state have also been the source of complexity for NGOs. These complexities and contradictions in the institutional character of NGOs have been played out through three critical issues, accountability, partnership, and empowerment. These issues provide significant challenges to NGOs and are a source of continuity and dissonance for them.

In order to have a useful understanding of NGOs, it is important to note that NGOs, like other institutions, are affected by factors in their environment. There are significant contextual factors in the social, political, cultural, historical and economic environment of NGOs which have important influence over their operations. Also important are the local social constructions held by the institutional participants which mediate and guide the institution within its environment. The literature on NGOs is primarily descriptive. Few studies attempt to provide an analysis of NGOs as institutions with continuities and dissonances related to both their environment and the social constructions of their participants. Therefore, institutional theory was chosen as a framework for a case study analysis of one South African NGO. It permitted an investigation of the rules which regulated the institution, the norms which prevailed there, and the cognitive structures which were held by its participants. The case could also be situated within the context of post-apartheid social transformation in South Africa.

An important objective of the study was to examine the three critical issues of accountability, partnership, and empowerment in terms of the continuities and dissonances of an

educational NGO. Using qualitative research methods, data were gathered and analyzed in an attempt to answer four research questions. The next section presents a summary of the answers to these questions. The fourth question, however, is given significantly more attention here because it implies an analysis subsequent to the findings of the first three questions.

Research Questions and Answers

The main points of the analysis have already been presented at the end of the findings chapters and in the preceding chapter on cross-dimensional themes. These general summary answers are meant to provide the foundation for the discussion of the wider implications which follows.

1. What are the essential characteristics that define the regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions of an educational NGO in South Africa?

The institutional dimensions of NIPA generally showed a continuity based on a project of social transformation. In a variety of ways, and in all three institutional dimensions, there were indications that the themes of accountability, partnership, and empowerment were integral to these activities. At the regulative level, the programs and institutional practices of NIPA were to a large extent tied up with the post-apartheid reform of the educational system and the consequent expansion of South African civil society. The new legislation and policies for education nationally and provincially were being co-funded by donors and the state. NIPA was actively working in more than a dozen program areas including teacher education, information technology, library resource centres, career counseling, early childhood development, community policing, and voter education. NIPA showed a fairly high level of conformity to the regulative controls which impinged upon it. Part of this appeared to stem from a shared conviction among the staff that the demands for features like transparency and partnership were legitimate and even over-due. Another part of the conformity reflected the drastic necessity to attend regulative demands because of competition among NGOs and the general reduction of funding.

At the normative level, the institutional practices of NIPA were characterized by strong concerns with accountability in several ways including moral, political, fiscal, and professional accountability. Partnership was an essential feature of NIPA's institutional activities and rhetoric. Empowerment, a notion central to social transformation, had great significance for NIPA's programs and it resonated strongly with its institutional participants. It was fairly easy to get the participants to identify activities and routines which were designed to be empowering, such as participatory management.

The cognitive dimensions of NIPA tended to reflect the patterns laid down in the other dimension under the general banner of social transformation. Although at times social

transformation was publicly acknowledged as a goal of NIPA's activities, a lot of the time it was more implicitly understood by the participants. NIPA had been established well before the end of apartheid as a partnership between an African man and a white woman, something which was uncommon at the time. The staff at NIPA, many of whom had been with the institution for many years, were well aware of this exceptional history. They spoke with pride at working in remote areas where no-one else would go and of the sacrifice it meant for them personally. There was a strong moral component to their motivation related to addressing the inequities originating in the apartheid system. The staff also empathized with many of the problems of the teachers they worked with, such as dependency, lack of confidence, and lack of resources. They saw these problems as directly connected to the teachers' experience during the pre-1994 years. Although some of the activities at NIPA, such as the efforts put into accounting, tendering contract bids, and managing other projects in consortia or working in diverse program areas, might not be classified as strictly transformational, it was tacitly understood that these things were a price to be paid for the work being done in communities and with teachers.

2. To what extent are these characteristics continuous across and within these three dimensions?

The institutional continuities of NIPA were centred around the themes of accountability, partnership, and empowerment.

With accountability, there was to be a shift towards taking responsibility for money spent, and for producing authentic measurable change. The idea that the management of an NGO should at least partly be accomplished by being business-like, was tied up with accountability. There was high symbolic significance to the participants for probity, professionalism, and responsibility towards one's constituency. As was noted in the previous chapter accountability was most prominent at the regulative level, partly because it was connected with concrete, measurable items like financial reports and contracts. It also had strong resonance in terms of moral and political accountability in a society rapidly moving towards new forms of participation in civil society.

In regards to partnership, new collective and consultative habits and structures were being formed which were seen as critical in the social transformation process, especially in times of resource scarcity. The networks that were envisaged were to be the inverse of the previous regime, which had hoarded status and opportunity. Networking thus had the double value of being collective, and therefore transformative, as well as being a good business practice. The normative dimension held slightly more emphasis on partnership because it was built into so many of the routines at NIPA, mostly for practical reasons like business networking.

One of the greatest continuities related to empowerment. Many NIPA practices and participant beliefs were centred on the creation of a political space for previously unheard voices. Individuals were encouraged to look within themselves for changes and to look outside of

themselves for new power relationships. It was primarily a process of personal growth, although community growth was also envisaged. Education, the central program area for NIPA, was considered to be a primary route for empowerment. At the cognitive level, there was strong symbolic meaning held for empowerment of all kinds which was a kind of institutional glue centred around 'project' of transforming South Africa.

3. To what extent are these characteristics dissonant across and within these three dimensions?

Despite the resonance of the social transformation 'project' at NIPA, there was also evidence of contradiction and potential dysfunction. These dissonances were due a variety of factors ranging from the volatile and sometimes contradictory environment and a lack of consensus among participants to problematic relations with other actors. The continuities of NIPA were unevenly represented among the dimensions, which gave an indication of the underlying dissonances. In some cases what looked to be a continuity was in fact an indication of contradiction such as was the case with networking. Networking was prescribed at the regulative level, and embraced at the normative level, primarily by the staff. But at the cognitive level, at least for the recipients, networking held little resonance.

Within accountability, there were dissonances relating different definitions of the term and different priorities for different actors. The pressure on NIPA to be run as a business in a competitive environment produced some difficult contradictions. This was significant in NIPA's case because it could not afford to abandon any of its multiple accountabilities. The lack of accountability in a key actor, the state, was also a source of dissonance. The fact that accountability at the cognitive dimension was revealed to be a contested and perhaps divisive term is indicative of the subtlety of some dissonances. At a superficial level, all of the participants were in favour of more accountability and welcomed demands for it. But as the analysis moved to a deeper level, dissonances began to be apparent.

For partnership, the weak state also figured prominently as a dissonance, particularly in the light of growing disenchantment with the state's support for education. Again, there were competing definitions of partnership and tensions between partnership as a business strategy and partnership as an expansion of civil society. Cynicism and dependency also were negative aspects of partnership leading to dissonance.

While empowerment was a powerful continuity, it had dissonant elements connected to the negativity surrounding some practices at NIPA, such as participatory management. The privately-held negative views of some staff of the recipients deepened this dissonance. There was a contradiction between empowerment as personal growth and as community development. Lastly, there were serious issues of dissonance related to empowering a weak state. While empowerment was perhaps the strongest continuity, it conversely held the greatest potential for

dissonance. Particularly with regard to dissatisfaction with the state, if it is perceived that the state begins to be a serious obstacle to empowerment, the dissonance for NIPA would sharply intensify.

4. What are the implications of these institutional relations of an educational NGO for educational policy and practice in South Africa?

It might be asked, what relevance does this case study have to a discussion of education in South Africa? The regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions of NIPA seemed likely to have had some commonality with the institutional dimensions of other NGOs. Particularly at the regulative and normative levels, these coercive and social pressures were not exclusively affecting NIPA, but could affect many other NGOs. In cognitive terms, the social constructions which mediated the thoughts of the NIPA participants surely did have some coherence with those in other NGOs. From the policy makers and legislators down to NGO staff and the recipients, the project of social transformation would likely extend into many quarters of the NGO sector. The strong continuity of some of NIPA's institutional themes lends credence to this possibility.

In a volatile environment like South Africa, it might be expected that there are too many rapid changes, so many actors and a variety of conflicting interests to be able to make any clear statements about the environment. However, this research shows that there was surprising consistency in the responses of NIPA staff and its recipients to this sometimes chaotic environment related to NGOs and education. There were widely held beliefs and consistent viewpoints on such issues as support for education, social reform, good management, and transparency. It could be argued that it is precisely because of some of the political, social, and economic realities, as variable and chaotic as they sometimes can be, that this coherence of views emerged.

The other institutions operating in NIPA's region are linked by common regulative pressures, similar normative practices, and probably most fundamentally, culturally based assumptions, symbols, and perceptions found in the cognitive dimensions. Participation in networks such as the ECNGOC and SANGOCO would further serve to connect institutions, share resources and perspectives, and heighten isomorphism. While it is certainly true that there will be unique social constructions among the individuals, within an institution centred around certain purposes and activities, these same individuals would likely share cultural, political, and economic realities with other members of society. Communication and social interaction are a constant. In this case, the proactive staff at NIPA were particularly attuned to what was happening in their context, and it seems likely that other NGOs in a volatile environment would be similar.

Naturally there are some key historical and institutional factors which may underpin the consistency of the environment. These would include the recent transition away from apartheid,

the historical influence of NGO personnel, many of whom were now in government, the proactive leadership at NIPA, the ongoing problems of crime and corruption, and clear policy shifts in donors around issues like accounting and measurable impacts, to name but a few. The fact that NIPA was apparently well adapted to its environment may help to explain this consensus among the participants. A weak or institutionally conflicted institution might reflect a different picture, but NIPA appeared to be operating in the mainstream of education in its area and enjoying considerable support in doing so.

Therefore, while acknowledging that this is an instrumental case study, the following general statements are made about educational policy and NGOs in South Africa at this time:

Business or Collaboration?

There is a definite shift towards business-style perceptions of impact and accountability. There have been clear moves by the state and donors to increase accountability and define it in empirically measurable ways. There are a set of territorial conflicts being played out which are inherent in the current situation related to who will control educational NGO activity. The state has made significant legislative moves to control NGOs, and also shares control of them with donors who exert strict demands over NGO program and management style. The state also exerts a strong normative pressure on issues such as affirmative action. The drastic reductions in funding have put donors into an even more powerful position, and institutions like NIPA must go to fairly significant lengths to network with them, tender bids, develop evaluations, and demonstrate performance. Therefore, the empirically measurable indicators, as well as the business science approaches now in vogue with the state and donors, will likely become even more orthodox in the NGO sector. Approaches which favour more complex and qualitative ways of measuring impact may also lose legitimacy.

This conclusion confirms the findings of Ruef and Scott (1998) that a managerial style can gain or lose legitimacy depending on the nature of its institutional environment. They argue, "The mission of an organization...is particularly important for attracting managerial legitimacy. Its effects depend primarily... on the match between the mission and the logic of the overarching institutional regime within which it operates (p.899)". This can also be seen in the management of NIPA. The emphasis was on the logic of the marketplace and measurable accounting, despite the moves towards a participatory system. There was even evidence that participatory management was at least partly implemented in order to please donors. One consequence of this trend is to reinforce the roles of the patron-client, or even service provider-customer. It suggests a prominent role for the marketplace in education and NGO activities, as might be expected in light of economic policies like GEAR and other user-pay and cost-recovery trends.

The issue of business versus collaboration also highlights a tension or contradiction between two models of relationships among NGOs. On the one hand, there is the collaborative,

consultative, and collective model. This is commonly found among the NGO umbrella groups like ECNGOC as well as in the participation of NGOs in the process of the National Development Agency. Many of the NIPA staff spoke of sharing resources with other NGO people and of networking for the common good. There are extended networks among NGOs and the trend towards consortia reinforces the perception of NGOs of potential partners and shared responsibility.

On the other hand, there is the competitive model in which funding is scarce and NGOs often vie for influence and contracts among donors and even with state officials. There is evidence of a significant chill effect among NGOs as many have dissolved and others have fallen victim to scandal. It was clear that NIPA was a survivor in this competitive environment but that it too had suffered retrenchments. Strong efforts are made to network with donors, to establish relationships with key individuals, and to be constantly on the lookout for new and diverse funding opportunities. At the same time, the relations with the state, while in partnership on the surface, are actually often troubled. Government staff feel threatened or jealous, and often refuse to participate in agreed upon programs. There is a kind of triangular set of actors with the state, NGOs, and donors in each of the three corners. NGOs compete for their place of influence here. There were many stories of NGO program duplication, and of NGO-state competition. For example, several of the recipients mentioned how they had received the same OBE workshops from state facilitators but it was only the NIPA workshops which were really useful. Ultimately the tension between competition and collaboration may prove to be a force of dysfunction.

A more troubling aspect of the competitive model is the dependency of the state on donors to sponsor its education programs. It could be hypothesized that the state and NGOs have entered into business arrangements which are contracted and funded by the donors. The state sets the educational policies and mandates changes will necessitate particular programs, such as teacher training, which the state does not have the resources or capacity to implement. The donors then call for tenders from NGO consortia and the business commences.

Reduced Autonomy of NGOs

The weakness of the state as a requisite partner in educational development, and as a general manager of government and civil society, puts NGOs into awkward positions. It can reduce the traditional arms-length relationship that NGOs cherish, and at times reduce the effectiveness and credibility of the NGO. The new legislative controls enacted by the state also erode the traditional independence of NGOs like NIPA. As has been demonstrated, the legislated structures like the NDA give even more influence to the donors, and donors appear to be increasing demands that NGOs collaborate with the state. Neither the state nor NGO sector have the resources to adequately address the challenges in education at the moment in South Africa. In consequence, NGOs like NIPA are stuck with working with a difficult partner in the state. The

poor support from the state for education is bound to exacerbate the dissonances in the state-NGO partnership. This reality in turn compounds the tensions resulting from the multiplicity of roles in which institutions like NIPA find themselves. As noted below, NIPA has a variety of roles to play in the provision of education and the expansion of civil society, ranging from critic of the state, surrogate state, partner of the state, intermediary between the recipients and the state, capacity builder of the state, and empowering agent for those who will demand more of the state. In itself, this multiplicity greatly taxes the institution's resources and the mythologies which give it coherence. But seen in the light of reduced autonomy for NGOs, the dissonance associated with these many roles is deepened.

Social Transformation or Status Quo?

Social transformation, and especially empowerment, remain powerful concepts in the thinking that surrounds the activities in education and NGOs. The deprivations and disparities which existed under the apartheid system of education begat some of the most bitter grievances held by ordinary people. The fact that the state adopted the outcomes based curriculum, supported early childhood development, and teacher re-training, all of which NIPA was involved in, suggested a vision of social transformation built on a foundation of skilled and critical thinkers. Many of the notions of transformation observed at NIPA activities were predicated on empowering previously disenfranchised groups. All of these elements have been combined with rhetoric from many quarters about social reform and improved life chances through education.

However, the rising tide of frustration with the pace of reform in education and the sinking estimation of the state by the NIPA participants may be indicative of a coming crisis of expectations in education. There appears to be a tendency to preserve the status quo rather than undertake radical changes. Evidence of this would be the continued existence of former all-white schools (Model C schools), albeit with racial integration, the repeated delays of the re-deployment of teachers, and the documented deterioration of education systems throughout the country. There seems to be no political will to risk the backlash that massive restructuring would entail. Meanwhile, NGOs like NIPA which are closely associated with these increased expectations and partnered with the state, may be caught in the middle.

Educational NGOs: Too Many Roles?

The role for educational NGOs does not appear to be singular or definable in a sentence. There was evidence of multiple roles for NIPA, but many of these were contradictory to others (for example, political activist versus business developer). The multiplicity of these roles provides an insight into the potentially dissonant and problematic position NGOs find themselves in. These

roles may be a reflection of the complexity and contradictions within the environment for educational NGOs in South Africa, as the summary table below illustrates:

Table 8

A List of Documented Roles for NIPA

Documented Roles for NIPA		
<i>Role</i>	<i>Functions</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Intermediary (part of recipients's network)	- facilitates new relationships within recipient community and with other actors; promotes access to resources;	This role connects to ideas of networking and empowerment;
Developer of Business (patron - client)	- performs a service function between donors and recipients;	Patron - client relationships are not considered sustainable because of dependency and other issues;
Exemplar of Accountability	- part of training role aimed at inculcating accountability values;	Like other exemplary attributes at NIPA, it acts as contrast to state performance;
Counselor and Social Worker	- helps recipients to work past internalized patterns of dependence, lack of confidence, and non-collaborative relationships;	This role resonated greatly with notions of social transformation. Personal experience of growth was a key dynamic here;
Business Counselor	- helps recipients develop skills, knowledge and motivation to create new economic opportunities for themselves;	This role was more connected to IT training, resource and career training, but was also implicit in many of the teacher upgrading programs;
Political Activist and Critic	- lobbies, networks, and participates in activities which will influence the state and donor policies; urging recipients to find voice and institutionalize democratic structures ;	This role was more of an implied one, but it resonated with social transformation. It held potential for conflict given the widespread criticism of the state in education;
Trainer	- teaches, monitors, and supports acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to new programs like Curriculum 2005, among many others;	This was a mainstay role for NIPA, and it encapsulated many of the others including those related to accountability and networking, all under the theme of social transformation;

For a medium-sized NGO operating mostly in the educational mainstream like NIPA, it may be difficult to avoid many of these roles. They are all necessary at one time or another for reasons such as business development, credibility with various groups, funding diversity, and moral integrity. In essence, NGOs like NIPA seem to have grown into 'full-service' educational NGOs, but must in turn accept the contradictions and dissonances that come with that evolution.

Institutional Dimensions of NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa

The various dissonances at NIPA mirrored the problems of NGOs identified in the literature and hence this case has implications for NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. What seems to be significant in the case of NIPA, though, in terms of providing institutional continuity, was the historical moment. The social transformation project was shared by many actors in the education sectors, the state, the donors, and most crucially, the recipients. In the larger context of NGOs in other sub-Saharan Africa states, historical moments which may create consensus and thereby institutional continuity, such as the dismantling of an apartheid state, are rare. More commonly there are pressing complex problems which, if anything, tend to be divisive. It is clear that the particular historical moments for NGOs must be considered in any analysis of them.

First, the issues related to over-accountability to donors and other actors have been identified in the literature, and the case of NIPA confirms the findings of Smillie (1997), Edwards and Hulme (1996), Sogge & Zadek (1996) among many others. It is indeed difficult to escape from the fact of conditionalities being placed upon the use of funds. NGOs like NIPA have little choice but to move towards a position dictated by those who provide the funding and dominate the regulative environment. As Scott notes (1995), it has been documented that some institutions will bolster their legitimacy by "developing linkages to important sources of power" (p. 131), and NIPA appeared to be no exception to this. It may go deeper than simply spending money in the manner agreed upon. NGOs are in a very competitive environment and must enhance their business relationships with donors. They also must alter their practices and programs in order to please donors. The work of Wallace (1997) about NGOs being directed towards the use of particular styles of management, was confirmed by the NIPA case. The multiple accountabilities of NGOs clearly pull NGOs in many directions and consume important institutional resources.

Another dissonance related to accountability to donors is emergence of a 'patron-client' approach which sees NGOs as essentially business entities. This has direct implications for the work of scholars like Chambers (1996), Tandon (1995) and Sizoo (1996) who have an interest in the imbalance between NGOs and their recipients. A patron-client relationship is problematic in several ways, but foremost because it encourages dependency. It will likely result in a loss of consensus among the institutional participants and strain continuities stemming from the historical moment. The emphasis on accountability inherent in such a business approach can warp the relations among participants, if applied uncritically. It is crucial to have mutual understanding of

the power relations among participants if the development is to be sustainable.

Second, in terms of relations with the state, it seems that a healthy partnership can only occur if both sides adhere to roughly the same standards, share the same goals, and institutionalize contacts at all levels in a productive manner. As Bratton (1999), Shaw & Maclean (1996) and Charlton & May (1995), among many others, have asserted, the relationship between NGOs and the state is crucial but often difficult. There was plenty of evidence of dissonance in the case of NIPA related to the fact of a weak state as a partner. Kihato & Rapoo (1999) suggest that NGOs probably need to have some connection to the state, but this comes with challenges. If an NGO is to have a multiplicity of roles regarding the state, ranging from capacity builder to business partner to critic, then the relations in the long term are bound to be highly problematic. In any partnership, there is an indirect relation between different partners of a single actor. In other words, if one partner, for example, the state, is in a conflict with other partners, for example, the recipients of an NGO project, then there is likely to be tension in all relationships. The case of NIPA illustrates that NGOs can act as an important support and partner for the state, but the relationship can be greatly complicated by such factors as: recipient perceptions of the state, state capacities and weaknesses, personal relationships among key individuals, donor conditionalities, and the historical moment.

Third, if there is a disparity between rhetoric and practice or a divergence in consensus between staff and recipients, there is an increase in potential for dysfunction. As Rahnema (1993), Leach (1993, 1995) and Saxby (1996) argue, it is important to have some critical mass of agreement among all participants. The case of NIPA showed that there was not a serious divergence of views at the moment but that there were underlying tensions and contradictions which may grow into problems later. Different definitions of accountability and partnership have the potential for conflict particularly as the pace of reform in education begins to lag behind expectations. The issue of networking at NIPA illustrates that over time the mixed messages will give mixed results. There may be a tendency to gloss over differences and dysfunctions if it is in the interest of pleasing donors. The use of cascading is a case in point.

Major Contributions of the Study

This study has provided some useful insights into the institutional nature of educational NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, and lays the foundation for further research in four different areas:

First, this study highlights the incredibly complex and often problematic position that such institutions find themselves in. The multiple accountabilities and roles, the sometimes contradictory relations with the state, and the complications of the partnerships of NGOs can bring them into institutionally dissonant situations. Their role as intermediaries requires them to accept coercive pressures found at the regulative dimension, but also to work within the identities

and meanings existing at the cognitive dimension. The recipients are an integral part of the institution yet they are neither 'on staff' nor just 'customers'. Their unique position is worthy of further study given the interest in the literature in the difficulties in bridging the gulfs between NGO staff and recipients.

The three critical issues which pervaded this study, accountability, partnership, and empowerment, have been demonstrated to be tied up with the continuities *and* the dissonances of NGOs. Just as they offer moral coherence and an implicit mission for NGOs, they also introduce complications because of contested definitions and inherent difficulties. The 'non' government aspect of this institutional form is difficult to achieve in world of weak yet prominent states. Accountability nor partnership cannot be defined nor implemented in a simple, straightforward way. Empowerment can take different, perhaps contradictory forms and can be mediated by a variety of external factors. Deeper understanding of what this means for other NGOs is needed, and this study lays the foundation for just such an investigation.

Second, this research makes a strong case for the analyses of NGOs which include an examination of both the external constraints which impinge upon NGOs, from the most global to the most local, as well as an investigation of the cognitive frames which mediate the participation of the institutional participants. It is clear that many of the insights gained here would not have been possible without an informed analysis of how the participants understood their institution and the meanings they ascribed to it. The deeper nature of the dissonances, and the pre-disposing factors towards the dissonances, became much clearer. This suggests that analyses of NGOs which examine only their political, cultural, or economic aspects, for example, may omit a crucial element of the NGOs. Many of the studies of NGOs to date have been primarily descriptive, and few have attempted a detailed analysis of the dynamic institutional relations which constitute their essential nature.

In this way, the use of institutional theory has proven itself to be very worthwhile. The data sources and types available for use with institutional theory are quite diverse: information from political, social, cultural, and economic spheres was incorporated, and the sources included documents, observations and interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews and other data collection methods aimed at understanding the cognitive dimensions, permitted many of the participants to identify key social constructions and give a context for them. The cluster of meanings, values, and perceptions surrounding education and the activities of NIPA was demonstrated to have a good level of continuity with the regulative and normative aspects of the institution. It can be noted in reference to the summary table charts at the end of the chapters on findings that dissonance appears to be more apparent as the analysis progresses towards the cognitive level. This is an indication that a complete description of an institution requires some examination of the non-rational aspects which are found in the cognitive dimension.

Institutional theory permitted the investigation of the problematic aspects of NGOs identified in the literature in such a way that light was shed on both the institution in question and

its environment. Institutional theory can act as a two way mirror, allowing insights into an institution's nature as well as insights out of that institution into its environment. Consequently, one of the implications of the study is that institutional theory should be employed in the future study of NGOs.

Third, the findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the context for educational reform in South Africa. The study suggests that the role of NGOs in the social transformation of South Africa is somewhat problematic. The attempt to address educational reform, and by implication social transformation, with a tripartite arrangement of the state, donors, and NGOs sharing roughly equally in the task, may be undone by imbalances in control and accountability. This is not to say that the work being done by NIPA and other similar institutions has no value, only that it may be hamstrung by too much control by donors and complications from the weak performance of the state. Educational NGOs like NIPA are forced by expediency to move into the mainstream in terms of their programming, business relationships, and management practices. Yet in that shift they may be losing their most dynamic and appealing features: their connections to locals, their independence from external agendas, and their specialization. They become more accountable, but in a complex and ultimately diminished way. The general movement towards accountability in South Africa is beneficial but it may be disguising underlying issues. This case study contributes the understanding of a coming crisis of expectations and accountability in relation to South African education.

If the case of NIPA is typical in any way, it may indicate that the notion of partnership between the state and NGOs may be problematic over the long term. If the trend towards reduction of state support for education continues and disenchantment with the government worsens, it will be more and more difficult for NGOs like NIPA to have the state as a partner in educational development. It would be useful to know if there are similar cases to NIPA in terms of networking and business stance, where there is a distant or even hostile relationship with the state. The state has established some control over NGOs through legislation, and has at times been hostile towards NGO activism. At the current juncture, there appears to be a kind of semi-peaceful alliance among the state, donors, and NGOs, but there are signs of tension. Over the long term, investigations of how the National Development Agency and Non-Profit Organization legislation have affected the institutional relations of NGOs in other sectors might yield insights in the area of state regulation of NGOs with implications for other states. Layered on top of these issues is the overall question of control of NGO funding. Follow up studies of other cases where there is a dominance of donor control in the triangular power relations of NGO-state-donors would provide stimulating comparisons to this study.

Fourth, this study has expanded the range of application of institutional theory, particularly in the use of the concepts of continuity and dissonance. To the knowledge of the researcher, these terms have not been directly applied like this within studies using institutional theory. Scott alludes to the issue of dissonance in discussions of 'antagonism among dimensions',

but no studies have explicitly spelled out these terms. Future researchers may wish to expand upon the use of continuity and dissonance in analysis of institutions which display dysfunction or extreme complexity, or whose survival is imperiled.

This study has added to the uses of institutional theory by studying an institutional type, NGOs, which was apparently not previously undertaken. As Scott (1995 p.144) notes, different institutional forms may have different methods of diffusing rules and external constraints. The mechanisms of cognitive systems may vary widely. It appears in this case that the behaviour and action premises which the participants exhibited were powerfully sustaining, perhaps because of factors like the historical moment. Again, this points to the usefulness of the concept of continuity. Continuity appears to relate to the alignment of a whole series of intersecting political, economic, social, and cultural elements within an institutional form.. Further study of this institutional form using institutional theory may deepen our understanding of these factors in other institutional forms and external constraints. It would be useful to know if the volatile environment of South Africa shows commonality with other sub-Saharan states in terms of its NGO institutional forms.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Questions for NGO staff

1. What is your history with NIPA? When, from where, why? You work as? Any other exp. with NGOs or similar training?
2. What do you see as the significance of the work you do, both at the very local level and for SA as a whole? Is empowerment a key issue here? Are there “critical outcomes”?
3. In your view, what does the work of NIPA mean for the recipients? How does it or might change their situation?
4. What would tell you as an NGO worker that things are changing for the better? What are the indicators?
5. In your view what is the significance of the new SA constitution to the work you do here?
6. What are the most serious obstacles to your work? How are they being addressed?
7. Does the way NIPA is run and the way people interact within this organization fit (or match) the work you do? How would you describe the organizational culture of NIPA? Is it similar or dissimilar to other organizations you know?
8. If you were to pick an image (or a metaphor, comparison, etc) to describe SA today, what would it be?
9. What are the biggest problems facing your recipients?
10. Who do you look up to? Why? (Who has the credibility/ legitimacy to you here at NIPA?)
11. If you won a lottery of R100,000 but you could only spend the money on development work what you choose? Why?
12. Who do you feel accountable to? In what ways?
15. What groups or individuals (networks, other organizations, links, ethnic ties, etc) have an influence on what you do here?
16. To what extent do you feel that the funders (donors, etc) set the agenda here? What role does the government have? Other NGOs? The recipients?

17. Is there pressure for you or NIPA to operate in certain ways or forms?

18. How would you describe your relationship with your recipients? In what way would the ways in which you both perceive the world differ?

19. Is there anything else you would like to say about NIPA or your work that might help me to understand it?

Questions for Recipients

Informed Consent: This is confidential and your participation is voluntary. The purpose is better understand NGOs, etc.; not an evaluation of you or NIPA. OK for taping?

Bio graphical info: name, date, location, profession, etc

1. What is your history with NIPA? When, from where, why? You work as? Any other exp. with NGOs or similar training?

2. What do you see as the significance of the training you have received, both for you at the very local level and for SA as a whole? Is empowerment a key issue here?

3. In your view, what does the work of NIPA mean for the recipients? How does it or might change your situation? Is there such a thing as the "NIPA spirit"?

4. What would tell you that things are changing for the better? (If they are...) What are the indicators?

5. In your view what is the significance of the new SA constitution to the activities here?

6. What are the most serious obstacles to your work? How are they being addressed, if they are?

7. How would you describe the organizational culture of your workplace? Is it similar or dissimilar to other organizations you know? How might it compare to NIPA

8. If you were to pick an image (or a metaphor, comparison, etc) to describe SA today, what would it be?

9. What are the biggest problems facing the NIPA trainers?

11. If you won a lottery of R100,000 but you could only spend the money on development work what you choose? Why?
12. Who do you feel accountable to? In what ways?
15. What groups or individuals (networks, other organizations, links, ethnic ties, etc) have an influence on what you do here?
16. To what extent do you feel that the funders (donors, etc) set the agenda here? What role does the government have? Other NGOs? The recipients?
18. How would you describe you relationship with the NIPA people? In what way would the ways in which you both perceive the world differ?
19. Is there anything else you would like to say about NIPA or your work that might help me to understand it?

Additional Questions for Senior NGO staff

What is the history of NIPA? How has it evolved? What events triggered key changes?

To what extent is NIPA influenced by other forces or bodies. such as other NGOs, govt. linkages etc

How would you the organizational culture of NIPA? How does it compare to other organizations? What are the main influences on it? Is it a business?

Is there a common thread or theme the interlinks various NIPA programs?

What assumptions about social development is NIPA's work based upon?

What are the indicators to you that NIPA is fulfilling its mission goals of empowerment?

How multi-cultural is the situation at NIPA? Does it present some unique challenges?

What are your aims in terms of HRD here? What indicates success or failure for NIPA in this area?

What interactions are there among staff exist for multi-skilling, etc.

Could you describe the accountabilities of NIPA to its funders vs to its recipients?

Would you describe the activities of NIPA or other NGOs as a modernizing force? How might IT or science and technology fit into this?

Please describe the system of “cascading” development? What are the “critical outcomes” that NIPA is or should aiming for?

What is general environment for NGOs in SA right now? What does the future hold? How should NIPA position itself in your view? What are the main obstacles that NIPA faces right now?

How would you describe your relations with the state? What current political realities have an effect on NIPA? Has NIPA ever had to alter its path due to political shifts?

What kinds of partnerships, linkages, or multiple stakeholder arrangements does NIPA have currently, may have in the future? Does private business have a role here, or in SA development in general?

If you were given R1,000,000 to use for any NIPA purpose how would you spend it?

Is there anything you would like to tell me about NIPA that would give me a better understanding of it?

Appendix 2: Memo of Insights for NIPA

To: All NIPA staff and Board

From: Robert Sauder

Date: November 1998

Re: My reflections on NIPA

First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone here at NIPA for all the help, co-operation and support they have shown me in my time here. I wasn't sure what to expect, but as we say in Canada, I have "lucked out big time". People gave so freely of their time and were helpful in many ways in assisting me to understand what is going on here. The trips out to the field were a special treat, and I am grateful to those who let me ride along while they did the driving and answered my endless questions. On top of this, everyone has been so hospitable, and the many lovely meals, explanations, maps, and tours have left me with deep gratitude. South Africans must be among the most welcoming people in the world. I am leaving with very warm feeling for this place.

From an academic point of view I am also very thankful because I have encountered a diverse and complex organization which should allow me to a rich source of data to analyze. The longer I have been here, the more I realize that there is so much more beneath the surface. Answers only produce more questions and the more you know, the more you know that you don't know. I will be touch as my analysis goes on, and I hope to share it with you so you may comment and enhance it. I plan to set up some sort of questionnaire with which I will leave individual stamped envelopes in order that you may send me your comments confidentially. Again, any further assistance is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to share some brief reflections with you about NIPA and NGOs. Most, if not all, of these observations will come as no surprise to you. As a group you have impressed me as intelligent and perceptive people and so most of this will probably be already obvious to you. I hasten to add that I have not been doing an evaluation of NIPA. Of course, I couldn't help but notice that it in fact is doing excellent work. All of the recipients of NIPA's programs that I interviewed were very enthusiastic about NIPA. This view may have been what they thought I wanted to hear, but as I probed and observed, in most cases the positive view of NIPA was borne out by specific behaviours and examples.

Some observations:

- there is strong, visionary leadership at NIPA. The management team is using some very effective methods such as strategic planning, reporting systems, progressive decision-making, good HRD techniques, and precise accounting to keep the organization vibrant.
- everyone in the organization displays a high degree of professionalism, and the result seems to be high program effectiveness and a strong organizational profile. NIPA has a reputation for quality work and for having a diverse, flexible capacities. Donors seem more and more to look to these traits when awarding tenders.
- the environment for NGOs in South Africa currently is one dominated by a business orientation with tendering, contracts, and strict accounting systems being quite visible. The pressure to work in consortia and coalitions is strong it is unclear to what extent ideas of partnership have been supplanted by ideas of competition for scarce funding. Larger questions of credibility, accountability, and performance figure greatly in the environment, perhaps because of the increasing crime, govt and NGO corruption, and general mismanagement of funds. The times are politically volatile, and institutional relationships are highly scrutinized and changeable.
- networking, informal contacts, and long term relationships appear to be central to NGO activities. NIPA has amassed a strong base of these elements, probably based on a history of effective work in local communities. It appears to have high legitimacy with most key actors, but as I said above, the situation appears to be capable of rapid swings. This may be partly a reflection of current historical realities as the government deals with the highly increased and often disappointed expectations of the general public for fast social reform. This is clearly still a period of transition as skills and knowledge of democratic governance are learned, and new political spaces are created. The economic disparities of South Africa seem to dominate every conversation about change.
- there are strong normative pressures on NGOs to resemble each other in terms of their high level of partnering with state activities, Western style business-like administrative systems, needs assessments and local community connections, well-developed relations with donors, and diverse capacities.
- many of the programs of NIPA are based on whole community development (for example the SGB training) and this is quite congruent with much of the thinking in many quarters, most significantly, among the beneficiaries I interviewed. This is an excellent orientation in terms of processes of democratization and reduction of dependency. It seems that once training has been done, it is vital to show ongoing support because morale can flag quickly. The community focus appears to be crucial in the battle against cultures of dependency and unrealistic approaches to change. My impression from being solicited almost wherever I went for “help” (i.e. donation, sponsorship, contacts in Canada, etc) is

that there is definite awareness of the possibility of help from the outside. This may be because of the severe conditions many of the teachers work in, but also that there may be a history of external control and support, however meager.

Some issues (in no particular order) that NIPA may be facing:

- the multi-skilling and HRD systems in use here are an excellent way to decentralize decision-making, and allow mobility within the organization, and there is a desire that more might be done in this area. The multi-culturalism of the organization is impressive but there appears to be a concern from every quarter to go further with this. There is a lot of credibility which can be derived in communities NIPA serves when a multicultural face is presented.
- the sharing, collaboration, comradeship, and caring is clearly visible in the organization, and it appears to figure highly in people's motivation to work at NIPA. Hence, activities which celebrate this might be further encouraged. Also, like everyone in the world, especially Canadians, people would like to be paid more!
- many of the graduates of the "NIPA Finishing School" are now working very effectively in support of NIPA activities. However, this belies an loss of talent and knowledge from NIPA, and some consideration might be made of how to develop and retain staff.
- NIPA has a strong Director who has been with NIPA since its inception, but the loss of her would deal the organization a severe blow, and some thought might be given to development of other senior staff.
- state controls on NGOs may be low now due to bureaucratic weakness and highly constrained budgets. This may change sooner than later as state personnel gain competence, budgets stabilize, and the state may want to derive more political legitimacy by being seen as being active in addressing social problems. As well, close association with state activities may become a partial liability as the window called "the transition phase" closes. States will expend resources where they will garner votes or where they need to defuse social conflicts. This is more likely to be in densely populated and troubled urban areas. Being a partner of the state may become being a proxy of the state, and as such, it alienate NIPA's natural base, the under-served rural areas.
- there exists a paradox between the ideal of collaboration with other NGOs and competition with them, and more investment might be considered in terms of participation with NGO umbrella groups. NIPA is big player here and may have a lot to offer and gain.

- NIPA may have potential to offer more services (and theoretically gain revenue) in managerial training for NGOs, resource services, and IT courses aimed specifically at educational applications.
- work stress appears to be a serious concern for many staff at all levels. This may be partly related to the personal circumstances of individuals and the general pressures of the economy. However, there are steep learning curves for almost everyone as they multi-skill and as NIPA undertakes more and more diverse programing.
- the notion of “cascading” as a method of delivery of services may need more investment and consideration. It is partly born out of a practical and economic approach because it appears to be an efficient use of resources. However, the de-briefing sessions of the programs and the comments of some recipients suggest that more attention is needed here. More and more funder attention may well be directed towards it as well.

Appendix 3: Contextual Influences

The following information refers to the contextual influences which bore upon the normative dimensions of NIPA. An argument can also be made that these also were an influence for the social constructions in the cognitive dimensions. The categories below follow the sub-sections in the analysis of the data in the normative dimensions.

Accountability: Contextual influences

The social climate around education and NGOs contained significant evidence of normative pressures for accountability. A manager at ECNGOC described the general trend for NGOs thus: “[donors] want value for money and I think NGOs have struggled to adapt to that new situation where donors are not just satisfied with simply an annual report being posted once a year. They actually want to see an impact being made and so they have fairly stringent criteria and outputs...which requires a new management style and level of effectiveness that NGOs have not quite yet come to terms with in a lot of cases” (Susan). This perception of the obligations impinging upon NGOs was shared by the NIPA board member who was also the Dean of Education at a local university:

The accountability requirements have grown considerably to be very strong and I believe rightly so. I believe there have been instances... one reads in the newspapers frequently about organizations, even including provincial governments unfortunately, which have misspent money allocated. There has not been proper accountability and it has been a very worrying aspect of the development of the new social order in South Africa at all levels. There has been this huge misappropriation of funding and there has been bribery and corruption. It is quite appalling on a major scale (Tom)

The crisis about poor examination results in Eastern Cape in 1998 also provided indications about the obligation towards accountability in education. For example, at the summit of the Eastern Cape provincial council churches the national deputy education minister stated, “more money alone does not produce quality education – but wise management and careful investment of resources does”(Thulkanam, 1999). He added that there would be careful monitoring and implementation of the new school funding policy. The disastrous examination pass rate was the focus of comments in South Africa media, comments which revealed a business more than a social orientation. One commentator described the 54.9 % failure rate for 1998 as a “waste of money” and indicative of the incompetence of the education minister (“PASO”, 1999). Even the comments of education officials reveal adherence to the norm of shared accountability. Describing the singular success of 12 schools in the context of poor exam results province wide, one official said that they owed their success to “sound administrative practices, parental involvement and dedication to work (Ngani,1999).

Collaboration and Community Involvement Contextual influences

The practice of community involvement was a direct contrast with the traditional pattern of top-down, centralized control under the apartheid regime. The main area where NIPA worked, the former homeland of the Transkei, had suffered under a double historical burden of being within the apartheid regime as well as being within the puppet homeland political apparatus. There were many layers of such control to unravel in the homelands after 1994. An indication of this was the fact that after apartheid ended in the Eastern Cape region there were six Departments of Education which had to be collapsed into one. This in itself was a gigantic organizational task. New municipal political structures were often beset by various groups, legitimate or otherwise, demanding political voices, and economic dislocations often attended this upheaval (Piliso, 1998). The Transkei was also the birthplace of President Mandela, which no doubt intensified pressures to enhance its people's participation. There was strong emphasis from the state, donors and other actors towards considering local community views in the name of integrating them into mainstream society. For example, one commentator on Transkei rural development argued that planning needs to include a well-coordinated integration of new and old groups in the decision-making process. In addition, he saw an important role for NGOs in this: "Many of the issues raised...highlight the increasingly important role that could be played by NGOs in cleansing the policy waters. The past three years have seen an increasing shift of NGOs away from the policy area, into the service delivery arena. While the private sector has increasingly closed the gap, it is doubtful whether they are best placed for this role" (Manona, 1998).

There were many examples of this emphasis on community involvement. The SANGOCO code of ethics demanded that NGOs provide opportunities for evaluation and updates that include stakeholder and community input. It valued "people-centered development (SANGOCO 1998). One of NIPA's donors, the Nelson Mandela fund, required that a project should have strong support of the community in which it operated (Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, 1998). These points were echoed by an NGO coalition manager. She saw a powerful role for NGOs: "This whole process allows us, or in theory, allows for citizen participation. They get to say what they see as their vision of how the community will develop, and the role of NGOs could be to assist the community to work effectively in that process (Susan). In the ECD policies laid down by government it was urged that families get involved to continue the running of the ECD programs either by paying fees or by helping the people providing care (National Educare Forum, 1996). In the Constitution of the Eastern Cape NGO coalition it stated that a central value of NGO should be to work, "involving, wherever possible, beneficiaries as partners." It went on to say that NGOs should display, "a willingness to collaborate and network with other agencies around issues of mutual concern and interest rather than compete with them (ECNGOC, 1998, p.3).

Another example of the powerful norm of collaboration and community involvement can be found in the "Lessons Learned" section of the evaluation of a book project in which NIPA was a major partner. Among the factors which contributed to successful implementation of the

program, the authors mentioned, “close coordination and collaboration among the key role players especially between implementing agencies and government agencies designated to manage the project,” and, “significant community involvement, with members of community-based structures representative of various stakeholders, committed and willing to learn (University of Fort Hare, 1998, p.63). More evidence of the pressure for community involvement was also found in the stated goals of the Imbewu education project. It aimed to enhance community involvement in primary education (“Imbewu Brings”, 1999).

A related norm of involvement of local communities was the notion that the role of NGOs was that of a facilitator or linking agency. Here, NGOs were seen as actors who could empower local people by bringing their concerns to the attention of the state or other civil society actors. As one commentator put it, “the success of the democratization of NGOs, and the service delivery processes of our government in the Eastern Cape, will succeed only if we strengthen our NGO capacity to facilitate it. The poor will remain poor and weak if the NGOs and the rest of society allow them to” (Sizani, 1997, p.13). These ideas appeared to have credence at the highest political level. For example, the premier of Eastern Cape province discussed the special relationship between NGOs and government. “NGOs have a long-standing relationship with community structures. This gives them a unique ability to reach the most neglected parts of our population.... Your local contact and community capacity building skills remain crucial in ensuring that at least some change starts to happen in the rural hinterland” (Stofile, 1997, p.7). He went on to say that NGOs have a key role in monitoring and evaluation for the efforts of all provincial stakeholders in development. They have, “a critical and energetic voice which can keep us on our toes and make sure that the government and its social partners adhere to a commonly agreed upon program and get the job done” (Ibid).

From the perspective of the state, donors, and many other actors, partnership and collaboration were the watchwords. It was seen as normal and desirable that relationships among various actors be nurtured and developed. As the Minister of Local Housing and Government stated, “In order for this relationship to work, however, much needs to be done for the structuring of this relationship. We hope to see this relationship grow through contact between various provincial ministries, local authorities and organizations such as ECSECC [Eastern Cape Socio-economic Consultative Council]” (ECNGOC Annual Report 1998, p.4). Another example of the desirability of collaboration can be found in the comments about the dismal examination pass rate Eastern Cape. The Pan Africanist Student Organization’s solution was to convene a summit of people and teacher organizations to draw up the code of conduct (“PASO”, 1999). Again, the strategy was one of consultation and collaboration. In his address to the Eastern Cape NGO, the MEC for Economic Affairs summed up the government position saying, “there is no doubt that unless all sectors of society – government, business, labour, NGOs and civil society in general – act in partnership, to enable the delivery of meaningful change, we lose the only opportunity that we will ever have to ensure a peaceful future” (ECNGOC Annual Report 1998, p.4). Further evidence of the state predisposition towards partnership can be found in the comments of the cabinet minister Fraser Moleketi regarding the new NPO legislation: “the government is serious about creating a positive environment in which NGOs can flourish. We realize that the

government alone can never deliver the RDP, and a partnership which draws on resources within civil society is critical” (“NGO Legislation”, 1998).

In the corporate world there were also pressures towards partnership and its theoretical byproduct, efficiency. Many corporate donors had concerns about waste and duplication, and saw partnership as a method of establishing oversight. For example, a representative from the banking community proposed setting up a provincial forum. “It would be comprised of representatives from all stakeholder groups (business, community, government, labor, NGOs). It would discuss development priorities, partnership, strategic linkages, how to avoid duplication and misdirected resources... NGOs could provide guidance and specialized skills. The forum would be a place where we put aside selfish sectoral agendas and jointly work to find creative solutions for common problems” (de la Mare, 1997, p.23).

It appeared that NGOs like NIPA had become essential partners in social transformation because of their long history as social reform advocates as well as their strong local connections. The government openly acknowledged their competence in diverse areas and their appeal to foreign donors. It was common practice to include NGOs in any development program in South Africa. One commentator described NGOs as invaluable in rural areas: “people don’t realize that the NGOs out here are essential to regional stability. For example, Ithusheng (a community association) on its own already runs or supervises 60 day-care centers which each accommodate 120 children.... We also fund 77 adult literacy tutors and had trained health workers in more than 30 villages over the past year. When this is added to the work of other NGOs, our contribution to the area is immense” (“Rural”, 1998). In another demonstration of NGOs being considered indispensable, there were great fears expressed that NGOs would not be able to participate in the voter education programs for the upcoming general election (Mati, 1998). The Minister for Housing and Local Government in Eastern Cape, Mr. Sam Mazosiwe encapsulated these notions well in his address to the NGO coalition. “Regardless of the political lives that you may find yourself in, you must always acknowledge and accept the fact that we are in the state of revolution in the country and in the nation. By revolution I mean a process of radical change in transformation, among old to a new order, especially in respect of the quality of life and the democratization of society....[NGOs] now need to work hand-in-hand in the democratically elected government of this day to redress balances and backlog inherited from the past” (ECNGOC Annual Report 1998, p.3). As the following vignette demonstrates, there were some success stories in the cause of partnerships. These contributed largely to the normative pressures towards community partnerships. They provided notions of moral obligation and social opportunity centered upon the extension of education and social reform away from apartheid traditions. Such was the case of the Bulurha Farm School:

Vignette: transformation: observation notes on a school re-opening

The Bulurha school had burned down in June 1998, and the students were forced to have classes in the open or in tents. The school was a farm school, traditionally the poorest and least

supported in the South African education system. Here the students were the children of farm workers and other poor people. NIPA had had a presence at the school because it had trained some of the teachers and also was networked with some of its supporters. Through the lobbying of the principal of the school, media attention was focused on its situation. Quite surprisingly several individuals and groups came forward. The school was miraculously rebuilt in three months.

At the official re-opening ceremony, many key actors in the education system were represented including NGO representatives, local white missionaries, African teachers and students, Afrikaner farmers and businesspeople, the media, and Department of Education officials. Everyone was greeted and elaborately acknowledged. The rhetoric of the speeches was replete with notions of community empowerment, multi-partner and multicultural collaboration, and self-sufficiency. There was the typical self praising which might accompany any such event, but by any standard it was an astounding success. The provincial Minister of Education in his speech said, "The sad part of this is that all these schools belonged to black people who for years were regarded as less than human and did not deserve better." The Afrikaans director of the construction company which rebuilt school, remarking in the rhetoric of the new South Africa said, "The spirit in which we rebuilt this school is that of partnership and building our country together... we have built several hundred classrooms around the country, not as the construction company but as community developers" (*Daily Dispatch* 30 October 1998).

Networking: Contextual influences

There appeared to be a widespread trend towards networking in the NGO sector. Some NGO experts advised that managers in organizations like NIPA should devote time to ensure that it is part of the appropriate networks. "While part of this networking time will be given to developing relationship with agencies that are sources of financing, such as the State Department. Time should also be given to a meeting with other service providers" (ABEL, 1996, p.11). Another instance of the pressure to network could be found in an evaluation report for a science week that NIPA helped organize: "The organization of regional activities include staff of the provincial Ministries of Education, teachers, NGOs and other stakeholders. The creation of this networking – using existing infrastructure and communication channels – must have contributed greatly to making the event known, and creating ownership of it" (Kuiper et al, 1998, p.13). These comments are echoed by the chairman of the Dutch foundation that was a donor for the housing project involving NIPA. He said that East London and his foundation had experienced a close cooperation, and "a way of working together with enthusiasm and respect for one another, enabling both of us to reach our common goals: development, empowerment, housing and training disadvantaged" (Piliso, 1999). One NGO commentator summarized these ideas at an NGO conference: "A single organization is unable to facilitate sustainable development strategies alone. Networking and collaboration of development [actors] with expertise must be encouraged, as must exposure to the experiences of other countries or regions" (Magisda, 1997, p.13).

Participatory Management: Contextual influences

Participatory management was considered to be the antithesis of the hierarchical and autocratic social and political systems which characterized the apartheid era. Decisions were to be made inclusively, and decision-making bodies were to reflect the true nature of South African society. For example, the national South African NGO coalition strongly favored that, “within financial constraint [the NGO] ensures a governance structure that reflects the race and gender composition of South African society and the various target constituencies that the NGO works within, with regard to both their composition and their geographic spread” SANGOCO, 1998). It also advocated policies to, “encourage management to adopt interactive leadership style and an open door policy to facilitate good communication between staff and themselves” (Ibid). The comments of a donor representative provided evidence of the need to be participatory in the name of affirmative action. “If you talk empowerment, you must live empowerment and if you talk about skills transfer, you have to live it. It must be part of your organization, otherwise you not would have credibility” (David).

The State as a Weak Partner Contextual influences

The state was the predominant education policy maker and system administrator, despite the prominent role of donors. It was also the political actor most likely to gain (or lose) legitimacy related to the perceived functioning of the education system. This was clear at the very least from the extensive coverage educational issues received in the media. Given the apparent appropriateness of state participation in NGO activities, such as the consultations for the creation of the NDA, and the donor preference building up the capacities of the state, educational NGOs were therefore closely linked to the state. Yet the state was becoming progressively weaker in its support for education, and less competent as a partner for NGOs. There was evidence that the trend was towards obtaining donor and NGO support for education, rather than increasing educational budgets. An education faculty member at the local university (and former NIPA employee) argued that the state, “needs NGOs to do that work so that says there is a partnership but in another sense that is not. I don’t think the government has any hope of doing anything at all such as early childhood development because I think is too expensive and it is too difficult to do. So ultimately the pressure and political criticism will come from the NGOs” (Mary).

There was plenty of evidence that the state was having great difficulties in transforming education. In many cases it lacked the resources to administer its schools. Many teachers, principals, and even ministry officials commented on the difficulty of enforcing regulations due to such factors as poor communication, resistance and local political factors. For example, one school near Butterworth had a notoriously incompetent and corrupt principal whose main strategy was simply to avoid meeting anybody in authority. He was always absent or suddenly called away. Therefore he could continue to do whatever he liked and the Department of Education lacked the resources to call him to account. These kinds of situations were common. The

government was also criticized for embarking on new initiatives, such as the OBE system of Curriculum 2005, without proper preparation and implementation strategies. For example, one news article stated: "While teachers' unions, associations, expert groups, political parties, and civil organizations have welcomed the new system, ordinary teachers, book publishers, parents, and pupils are in a state of near panic" (Williams, 1997). Other reports detailed serious problems such as overspending, communication gaps, staff shortages, and lack of discipline, all of which were hampering the introduction of the new education policies (Duffy, 1997).

An indication of this weakness of the state can be found in the reaction of the Department of Education to a report about the bleak conditions in the Eastern Cape schools. The report by the Human Science Research Council, painted a discouraging picture of terrible infrastructure and poorly supported teachers (Hartley, et al. 1998). The reaction of the Department of Education was to actively seek out donors for funding, rather than increase education budgets. These efforts were successful and the Japanese, the European Union, and local corporate donors were to inject R60 million into the budget of the department ("EU Injects". 1998).

Community and Personal Development Contextual influences

An important normative pressure that existed in South Africa was the perception that NGOs and other civil society organizations ought to be heavily involved in empowerment for individuals and groups. This might have been partly due to the historical role of NGOs as anti-apartheid organizations. The fact that organizations like NIPA have mainly worked in areas where the need was the greatest, such as in the deep rural areas of the Transkei, tended to reinforce this notion of re-making society and restructuring economic structures. One commentator summed it up like this: "NGOs or CBOs that are born out of years of questioning and criticizing existing social structures and that has developed critical thinking about certain concepts which are thrown at us by different sources... the number of such groups, however, is relatively small, although their contribution to discourse of development organizations is often highly significant. They perceive society in revolutionary terms and analyze social reality in the light of forces that must unfold into profound political change" (Magisda, 1997, p.18).

Government policy documents also created a climate of values and a set of norms towards empowerment which NIPA and other educational NGOs were greatly influenced by. For example, the national government mandated that there should be a national qualifications framework (NQF) and the outcome based education program (OBE) detailed in Curriculum 2005. The Eastern Cape provincial governments set targets for in-service training, provision of more schools, and early childhood development programs. All of these contained value statements which indicated that education should move towards social growth and critical awareness, and not simply be the acquisition of knowledge. Although many of the government documents mentioned here were based on RDP policies, now replaced by GEAR, most evidence supported the conclusion that the RDP rhetoric continued to be prominent. For example, in the overview of the OBE system there were many references to undoing the damage to the education system done by apartheid policies. For example, it said that, "education and training must be relevant to

economic, social, and political development,” and that, “we must allow democratic participation in the setting of standards and in policy making, so that our foundation phase system has legitimacy” (National Educare Forum, 1997, p.7).

The South African Schools Act of 1996 contained clear language that underpins some strong normative pressures. For example, it discussed democratically transforming society, co-operative governance and partnership. The principal of action is to be one of shared responsibility, not solely state responsibility for education. It was part of a larger trend towards democratization led by the state, but also championed by other actors such as NGOs and donors. As the Minister of Education said, “our commitment is to develop real partnerships between education authorities and governing bodies across the land” (Government of South Africa 1997b). The 1995 White Paper on Education and Training stated, “the care and development of young children must be the foundation of social relations and the starting point of human resource development strategies from community to national level. The values and principles guiding this process included: access, redress, equity, quality and democratic governance” (Government of South Africa, 1995, section 1).

The policy documents were full of normative influences that can be readily identified as central to NIPA’s work. For example, at the provincial level an explicit goal in human resource development is to, “invest in education skills training today to ensure less dependency tomorrow” (Eastern Cape Government, 1996, p. 26). This policy envisaged direct social change based on the elimination of past inequities, the redistribution of income and opportunities, and sustainable growth. The language it uses was that of partnership, empowerment and participation. “Effective governance, however depends upon synergy between the action programs of national, provincial and local governments... achieved through a shared vision of development growth” (Eastern Cape Government, 1996, p. 33). Local communities, NGOs, and private economic interests were all mentioned as key actors, and there is an explicit acknowledgment of the need to build up the “capacity of all constituent bodies” (Eastern Cape Government, 1996, p. 13). The new Curriculum 2005 system was also explicitly transformational, with the ANC declaring it was part of the ‘revolution’: the Minister of Education stated: “Our main vision is that of developing a thinking, competent citizen for the 21st century” (Williams, 1997). Locally, the Eastern Cape Schools Education Bill⁴⁵ codified into law the mandatory establishment of school governing bodies and required that every learner was afforded space in a public school. Its main intent was to encourage social transformation and prevent unfair discrimination. It also emphasized partnerships between schools and their communities (Naki, 1999e).

A significant aspect of the empowerment obligations experienced at NIPA was the fact that the state was increasingly criticized as being ineffectual and even hypocritical in its support for social transformation. The regulative effects of this have already been documented. In

⁴⁵ It should be noted that the Bill was not promulgated until February 1999, after the data for the study were collected. However, it can be argued that the normative pressures and institutional obligations were identifiable in the period before it was passed. For example, NIPA had been heavily involved in school governing body training for at least one year.

normative terms, the effects were also clear. The critiques of the state from many quarters appeared to reduce the legitimacy of the state's role in social transformation and conversely heightened the role of other actors, namely NGOs.

There were many strong critiques of GEAR as a set of policies which have produced job losses, high inflation, reduced government revenues for, and increased crime rates. (Gwanya, 1997). Other critics have also derided GEAR for its abandonment of the RDP values. As one labour organizer stated, "The RDP remains a viable framework that means to be given concrete policy/strategy direction. We consider that GEAR is not a viable answer to the questions... the key challenge is meeting the basic needs of the people in a participatory manner" (Mosana, 1997). One of the main criticisms of GEAR was that it de-regulated the civil service and the industrial sectors, which functioned to reduce government spending on social programs and lower wages in general. Hence, the state was less able to undertake programs of economic redistribution. Labor groups, such as the Council of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which are generally the traditional allies of the African National Congress, have been especially harsh in their criticism of GEAR. Others have criticized the abandonment of RDP budgets and policies because social programs undertaken by the government under the RDP program had been effective and low-cost: "the fact that a sound and credible development service operating at low-cost cannot be supported by government that has the money is not only absurd – it is a disgrace" (Bertelsmann, 1998). The main teachers' union, SADTU, was becoming increasingly hostile to the government despite their ideological common ground (Garson, 1997). NGOs like NIPA were therefore facing a variety of normative options, ranging from being partnered with the state and nurturing state capacities to being a surrogate for, and a critic of, the state. These complications appeared to add to the dissonances at NIPA related to questions about what empowerment through education would mean if the state continued to be discredited.

Multiculturalism and Affirmative Action Contextual influences

Given South Africa's history as a multicultural society and the state's ostensible philosophy of empowerment, it was not really surprising that multiculturalism and affirmative action were prominent in the normative dimensions. It could be argued it was an essential element of social transformation. Affirmative action and the redress of historical disadvantages efforts appeared frequently in a variety of places. For example, in the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund list of core values and commitments it was stated, "... [we] support the intention and purpose of the affirmative action process which leads to a demographically related implementation profile and in expanding opportunities for all" (Nelson Mandela Children's Fund 1998, p.21). Various commentators identified NGOs as organizations which are multicultural in the sense that they "take into account people's cultural values and customs and the attitude of communities towards development" (Magisda, 1997). The SANGOCO Code of Ethics also strongly encouraged multiculturalism. It placed high value on, "respecting the rights, culture and dignity of all people within the framework of the Bill of Rights... and enhancing race and gender equality" (SANGOCO, 1998). Overall, development was not seen as a mono-cultural social process.

Rather, there was an acceptance of the large number of cultural groups in South Africa as a reality of the social transformation process. There were significant economic and political disparities among these groups, and it was obvious that any substantial social change must include the rich as well as the poor.

Multiculturalism was also sometimes a euphemism for affirmative action, for which the normative pressures were very strong. As one NGO director put it, "the real issue is not about the credibility of NGOs which have white male leaders... but rather one of implementing real affirmative action strategies which result in a workforce that is increasingly representative of South African society in terms of race and gender profiles" (Orleyn, 1996). For NIPA as an employer there were some regulations which had an impact on the management systems. There were, however, several pieces of legislation and government policy papers which had not been put into practice yet which had resulted in some identifiable normative pressures. The 1995 White Paper on transformation of the public service proposed that 50 percent of the public service be black within one year. (Government of South Africa, 1995) As well, the 1997 Green Paper on public sector procurement performance included affirmative action targets (Government of South Africa). In another government initiative, the department of public works issued some new accreditation procedures for affirmative action programs which applied to all consultants wanting to tender for government contracts ("Accreditation", 1999). The implication was that accreditation would be linked to affirmative action programs at some time in the future.

Although not strictly required yet, these two policies did appear to have an effect on NIPA. For example, sometimes NIPA tendered for the provision of services, such as voter education training, which did require a multicultural organizational profile. Another act, the Employment Equity Act, which was passed in September 1998, although not put into a place until later, made direct requirements for affirmative action measures. These included conducting employment equity audits, revising affirmative action policies, and promotion for disadvantaged groups such as women, Africans, and the disabled. Many organizations had already made affirmative action changes. One survey found that 95 percent of the organizations surveyed already had an affirmative action policy in place, formally or informally (Botha, 1998). All these policies together could be said to create strong obligations upon organizations to implement affirmative action policy and to accurately reflect the demographic makeup of South Africa. This would include participatory styles of management in an effort to promote individuals from advantaged groups.

The Teacher as Facilitator and Role Model Contextual influences

The norm of recognizing and reinforcing the idea that education is lifelong was also promoted in other areas. For example, an NGO called Media in Education Trust was producing a series of newspaper supplements to help teachers who had not "received formal training for the Curriculum 2005, but have heard about curriculum. This supplement is to help teachers understand and interpret curriculum 2005." Another purpose of the supplement was to report on democracy education (Daily Dispatch 9 March 1999). More reinforcement of the OBE system

was found in the special section of the Mail and Guardian called "The Teacher". Curriculum experts were there to answer questions and provide supplementary material (Mail and Guardian March 1999). A teacher training expert described the new system as radically different from the previous methods: "The syllabus will just be a guide...the children will have to learn how to take care of their own learning process, with feedback and guidance from the teacher" (Williams, 1997).

Many of the goals of the projects in which NIPA was involved stated that the recipients were to develop as independent and self-sufficient individuals. For example, a housing project sponsored by a Dutch donor had the philosophy: "if you give a man a fish, he will eat for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, he will eat for a lifetime" (Piliso, 1999). It was widely perceived that the failure to be resourceful and self-sufficient was a widespread handicap of the education system. An indication of this can be found in the comments of the education MEC. He criticized pupils who failed examinations, "for not taking responsibility for their learning and thus not adequately preparing themselves and relying on cheating" (Dickson, 1998). These views reinforced the new role of teachers as those who inspire students to take up their own learning and not just passively permit the teacher to do it for them.