

**ABET LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING IN A LANGUAGE OTHER  
THAN THEIR PRIMARY LANGUAGES**

**BY**

**NORMA VUMILE PRINCESS MLOTSHWA**

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**SUPERVISOR: MRS N.F. PETERSEN**

**CO-SUPERVISOR: MR W. VAN RENSBURG**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite the many changes socially and politically in our country, particularly in the educational sphere, large numbers of learners in further education still face disadvantages like a legacy of inferior education and studying in a language other than their primary language, all of which impact on their learning. Recent literature on the experiences of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) learner's experiences of learning in language other than their primary language identifies a number of problems that impact negatively on students' performance and learning.

The research explores the experiences of ABET learners, learning in a language other than their primary language in order to interpret and arrive at an informed understanding of such experiences. The research strategy in this study is grounded within the interpretative paradigm as the aim is to understand how participants make sense of their realities. i.e. how students make sense of their experiences from their own perspectives. For the purposes of the study, a sample of ABET learners were interviewed. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from diverse languages to serve as "information-rich cases". Semi-structured interviews aimed at encouraging the respondent' to engage in conversation intended to elicit respondents' construction were conducted. The data were analysed using the constant comparative method of data analysis.

The main findings of the research is that the ABET learners experience problems when taught in a language which is not their primary language. They feared that they ran a greater risk of being labelled as underachievers. They also cited that they have difficulty in manipulating the language in an academic situation. The choice of teacher pedagogy and pace of teaching which exacerbates difficulty in using English was also mentioned by the learners. Another challenge was that they find it easy to use the language in informal context, but struggle with the level of sophistication required for an academic level.

There is a need for closer links to be made between learners' life experiences and lesson content and structure. The curriculum must address the real experiences that adult learners bring with them into the classroom and offer to learners the conceptual tools which they need to make sense of and interpret their experiences in the society.

Awareness of students' experiences could enable educators to exceed guidelines for creating an environment which fosters language learning and to choose relevant course materials and select appropriate teaching methods as well as introduce measures to redress the impact of the legacy of inferior schooling in order to enhance quality learning.

