

AN INVESTIGATION INTO ABET CURRICULUM'S
RELEVANCY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

By

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To my late father who always motivated me to commit to education as it will never let me down. Having him in my memory will always keep me going.



ABSTRACT

The inquiry focused on the relevance of ABET curriculum for community development in Tembisa/KemptonPark area. What motivated this investigation is the high rate of illiteracy and unemployment in the communities in this area. Lack of knowledge or skills turned them into victims of merciless thugs, who take advantage of their inability.

In this inquiry, a qualitative research method is followed to investigate events, processes and the structure of the social phenomena. Interviews with sixteen learners and observations of classroom interaction among learners and their educators were found to be the most effective qualitative data collection methods to study the people within these settings holistically.

During the investigation, sixteen adult learners, four from each of the four centres, Thuto-Ke-Maatla, Kwazini, Norkem Park and Ipontshe were interviewed to determine their motivation to enrol in ABET centres and their initial expectation. The findings of the inquiry determined that the adult learners' needs are not being met through programmes offered in ABET centres. Structural setting, organisation and provisioning were some of the factors contributing to the failure of ABET centres to satisfy the needs of adult learners and empowering them.

The investigation helped to uproot the underlying limitations in the ABET curriculum activities. Its findings could guide curriculum developers with correct principles during adult curriculum design.

SECTION ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Adult education should play a major role in societal development and empowering and guiding adult learners in making informed decisions if their skills and their interests are to be marketable. It should assist unemployed adults to find new foci and direction in their lives (Mac Givney, 1985).

As a response to illiteracy and unemployment, adult education was introduced to ensure that learners can use the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learned through ABET in their daily lives. The aspects of planning programmes relevant to and reflective of adult learner's practical life experiences and socio-economic needs, created a loophole which will still need to be investigated to find a better solution to closing the gap. Irrespective of policies developed to guide the structures, practices and processes, adult education programmes are still characterised by traditional ideologies.

South Africa, as part of the developing world, has adopted certain adult education strategies as part of its education transformation plan. The initial step the country took was to set-up an investigation team for need analysis and to put a structure in place to oversee the restructuring of adult education. One of their findings as stated in the National Education Policy Investigation document, (1992) indicated that the state was not involved or did not fund the night schools. Hence they made sure that ABET practitioners were not involved in implementation of dynamic, responsive and empowering adult education.

Following comments that were made in the investigation policy document, the new democratic government acknowledged the importance of ABET and The

Ithuteng "Ready to Learn" Campaign interim Guidelines for the Provisioning of Adult Basic Education and Training in February 1996. It was for the first time in the history of this country that the state became the delivery agency of provision of Adult Education and Training. The policy of the Department of National Education (1997) emphasised the importance of lifelong learning to encompass both the formal and the non-formal developmental approaches in order to ensure that learners can use the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learned through ABET in their daily lives.

ABET curriculum in Tembisa/Kempton Park centres is not reflective of relevant programmes for adult community development. In their ideology of implementing the policies, these ABET centres are missing the point of integrating literacy into developmental programmes. These centres are teaching literacy to their learners in isolation from adult skills development programmes. Titmus (1981) argued that in most instances laws in terms of policies are prescribing the structured curriculum with limited community development programmes, He strongly feels that this led the sub-system which, in this case will be the ABET centres, astray and might lead to delimitation as far as adult curriculum is concerned. Titmus identified a broad gap between enactment and implementation and Kreitlaw (1981) believes that social policy and legislation can fill this gap. He goes further to state that Adult Education should be relative to social conditions or should constitute a form of social intervention.

An investigation into ABET procedures, methodologies and the entire curriculum activities is needed to gain clarity on the problem. Based on findings, recommendations could be made on what needs to be done for effective implementation of relevant ABET programmes.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Gauteng Department of Education, District N6, is serving ninety-six state schools and eleven ABET centres around Tembisa/KemptonPark. Tembisa is the second biggest township in the province and its residents are employed by heavy and small industries around Isando, Spartan, Sebenza and Elandsfontein.

Despite many industries surrounding this area, fifty percent of the inhabitants of this township are unemployed. The streets are always overcrowded with youth and adults who are just idling away the day with nothing to do. Due to the lack of employment, the crime rate is also high. The provisioning of eleven ABET centres in this area seems not to be addressing the needs of adult learners. At the beginning of every year, the enrolment number is high but these numbers decline during the course of the year as learners drop out in great numbers.

Most of these centres are operating from 08h00 to 19h00 to accommodate both employed and unemployed community members. Even so, the system still fails to attract and retain their clients. To utilise the facilities effectively, matric dropouts from local secondary schools who could not be re-admitted into the formal system are also accommodated. This process changed the functions and organisation of ABET centres in such a way that ABET educators are forced to attend to learners with different needs and prior learning and life experiences, hence the centres have taken on the image of formal schooling. The situation supports Griffins' (1981) statement on lack of identification between aims and ideology of adult education and formal schooling.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Many adult basic education and training programmes are implemented throughout the world with guiding policies to address the high rate of illiteracy and unemployment. It is for these reasons that ABET centres are faced with the great challenge of providing a suitable curriculum to serve the aims and ideology of adult education. In spite of policies put in place to govern adult education, ABET centres are still far from implementing what the policies constitute. The procedures and curriculum activities in Tembisa/KemptonPark ABET centres are still not reflective of what the policies recommend. These centres are still structured in a traditional academic way and curriculum activities are performed in classrooms instead of interactive workshops where learners should be given hands-on experiences.

The curriculum activities in these centres are not flexible enough to allow effective provisioning for skills development programmes, which can give learners a career choice path and competency to deal with problems they experience within their local communities. It is for this reason that more research on the relevancy of ABET curriculum in community development is needed to identify what the underlying problems might be and what recommendations can be made towards solutions.

What motivated this investigation is seeing some of the community members in this area still battling to read and write their names at financial institutions. The role that adult education centres is supposed to be playing in the life of these people is not visible enough, hence the investigation will focus on identifying the programmes offered by ABET centres in this area and their relevance in upgrading the lives of the adult communities. The views of different researchers related to the study will be reviewed to guide and inform this investigation.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

An investigation into the structure, organisation and curriculum planning of ABET centres in Tembisa/KemptonPark will be undertaken to determine the relevancy of ABET curriculum in these centres. The study will focus on the adult learners' needs and socio-economic problems in this area.

Given the situation in Tembisa/KemptonPark, with its high rate of unemployment and crime, it is expected that ABET centres should offer programmes that will attract unemployed adults and empower them socially and politically. This study hopes to guide planning and design of ABET programmes to consider problems experienced by local communities and respond to them. The literature related to this problem will be reviewed to inform this investigation.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This investigation will be guided by the following research questions:

- What are the factors influencing program planning in Tembisa/KemptonPark ABET centres?
- Are programmes offered in these centres sufficiently relevant to address the local adult communities' problems?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For observation of an interactive event in a social setting, the current investigation requires a qualitative design. Data will be collected through observation of classroom practices, interviews and artefacts with the purpose of informing the study.

Learners from four ABET levels will be interviewed to determine their views about the structure, procedure and activities in their centres. Learners' opinions will be elicited on what benefits they gain from participating in programmes at the centres. This process will determine the relevance of ABET curriculum activities in addressing the local adult communities' problems.

Through class visits in each level from four selected centres, observation of classroom activities and curriculum offered will be made and documented. The outcomes of these observations will assist in determining curriculum activities and classroom practices.

All data collected through the interviews and classroom observations will be analysed, discussed and interpreted. Recommendations based on findings will be made as a contribution towards curriculum development.

The research essay will consist of four sections. The focus of section one is the introduction of the research topic, background to the research problem, the purpose of the study, the formulation of a claim, identification of the research questions and the research methodology.

In section two, related literature on adult education will be reviewed to inform the problem under investigation, which is the relevancy of ABET curriculum for community development. Section three will deliberate on methods, tools and procedures used to collect data. In section four, the collected data will be analysed and findings thereof will be discussed and used in concluding the essay and making recommendations towards further research.

1.7 SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

The aim of this section was to give an overview of the study. The section provided a brief background of the research problem and what motivated the investigation of curriculum activities at Tembisa/KemptonPark ABET centres. In section two, related literature will be reviewed to guide the investigations.



SECTION TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Adult education is a crucial issue which has been debated for many years. What raised concerns about this issue is the outcome or end products of its processes, which are related mainly to the curriculum, aims, policies, procedures and provisioning of ABET centres. This inquiry will critically analyse existing research on the above issues to gain clarity on the problems around Adult education implemented in Tembisa/KemptonPark ABET centres.

The first section of this chapter will review how different writers defined adult education hence reviewed literature will assist in guiding the investigation and its relevancy. It is the aim of this study to identify the gaps in policies and curriculum practices in the centres under investigation. It will also assist the investigation with the brief of the previous recommendations and attempts made to bring about changes and close the loopholes for further development of Adult Education as a life long learning process for our disadvantaged communities in their political, social and economic empowerment.

2.2 DEFINING ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education has been a complex and general concept used to describe various programmes and activities planned for adult learners. The definitions of adult education depend on people's interests, objectives and experiences of the phenomenon. The purpose of defining it is to establish a separate identity from other education (K – 12 and higher education).

Adult education was conceptualised from the night school concept and later influenced by the Peoples' Education movement in 1994 with the vision of bringing some transformation within the education system. Different philosophers defined adult education according to the way they understand the scope of its activities and there is still no commonly accepted definition.

Morphet (1981) defined adult education as follows:

A concept of educational provision has a history of somewhat more than a century. In origin the concept embraced the idea of non-formal education offering for adults, a broad range of educational programmes, though typically without providing certification. Much of the early provision was compensatory in character. In emphasis though its more recent development has stressed that it may be formal or non-formal. The strength of the compensatory character and its non-formal flexibility is not clear.

Merriam (1997) defines adult basic education as instructional programmes for adults whose basic skills are assessed below the ninth-grade level. It usually includes adult literacy education which focuses on adults whose basic skills are fourth-grade level or below. To add on the above definitions, literacy for fourth-grade level and below needs to be focused on the social, economic and political context to make the adult learners functional in their communities. The non-formal aspect of adult education, which will be action-orientated and problem solving, should be reflected in the curriculum activities.

The present practices and implementation of adult education curriculum shows little evidence of non-formal education, a situation that is not advantageous to community development. For adult education's relevance to community development, there should be a link of ABET courses to the workplace. Hence if what adult learners are doing in terms of their work experiences is incorporated in their ABET courses, ABET will make sense to the communities they aim to serve.

2.3 AIMS AND GOALS OF ADULT EDUCATION

The aims of Adult education should be clearly defined, as they are fundamental in distinguishing adult education from other education (K-12 and higher education). According to Merriam (1997), the goals and purposes of adult education should assist in aligning the activities with specific content whilst avoiding delimitations and contradictions. She further commented that by looking at the overall goals and purpose, practitioners could be helped to determine what counts as adult education. Adult education will become an agency of progress if its short-time goal of self-improvement can be made compatible with long-time policy of changing the social order. This view clearly outlines the purpose of adult education and the role it should play in community development.

Merriam (1997) also presented Knowles' perspective about the adult education mission. Knowles (1980) argues that the mission of adult education is to satisfy the needs of individuals, institutions and society. He further said that it is an adult educator's responsibility to help individuals to satisfy their needs and achieve their goals with the ultimate goal being human fulfilment. What these educators propagate is that the goals and purposes of adult education is laying a foundation for the type of adult education different institutions can offer to their adult learners. It was indicated earlier in this chapter that the understanding of adult education concept depends on one's experiences and ones positioning.

The way in which a medical practitioner understands adult education will be different from how a motor mechanic understands it. When given the task to educate the adult learners, each one of these two people will plan the learning activities, which are in line with his/her field.

2.4 THE SCOPE OF ADULT EDUCATION

From the previous definitions of adult education, it is clear that Adult education should take more than just one form. The goals and purposes for which it is offered determine the form which adult education takes. Adult education can be clustered under different forms depending on its content, which is determined, by its goals and purposes. Five forms of adult education presented by Rachal (1988) from his content–purpose typologies will be discussed in this section. These forms are liberal adult education; work-related adult education; relational adult education; remedial adult education and political adult education.

Liberal adult education, according to Rachal (1988), refers to the study of; humanities; social sciences and natural sciences; its goal is to make an adult learner an educated person. It is a formal form of education as it takes place in a planned way at recognised institution such as schools, colleges, technikons and universities. Clientele for this type of education are adults who missed the chance to acquire higher education hence they are given a second chance to make up for the time they lost.

Demetron (1999) believes that the role adult education should play is to equip potential employees with an increasingly complex set of basic skills in order to assure the state a well qualified work force in a post-industrial economy. Work-related adult education could be adopted in the ABET centres, not only for the relevance of the curriculum for community development but also to ensure that at the end of their learning programmes, the adult learners are well equipped with the necessary job related skills.

Work-related adult education, according to Merriam (1996), refers to job related and skills development courses. It is non-formal education that is given in situations outside the sphere of formal and non-formal education like in-service training in the workplace to promote productivity.

The Marxist philosophers argued against this type of education as they felt that it promotes capitalism and creates inequalities and class divisions; hence the communities will be clustered according to different classes in terms of the qualifications and skills they have acquired. If the training aspect can be reflected in ABET curriculum design, there will be relevancy of what is advocated by adult basic education and training. There should be some type of fieldwork conducted in the workshops or well equipped training centres. This can be done with the involvement of the private sector in this scenario, such as the industries around Tembisa/KemptonPark area and in this manner, ABET curriculum could be more relevant for community development.

Personal development is one of the sixty-six critical outcomes identified for the new outcomes-based education. Relational adult education could be the form of adult education relevant for the achievement of this outcome. This form of adult education is also viewed as recreational education, which is exemplified in programmes in which personal growth is a priority. It provides leadership training, improves self-esteem or self-actualisation and offers learning related to home, family and leisure. It is non-formal education and is community related, hence its focal point is to improve the quality of life of people. It is my contention that local ABET centers are not provisioning enough for this element of education to be outstanding in their curriculum activities. Their instructional methods and institutional structures are more formal than non-formal.

The type of adult education that most ABET centres are implementing is remedial adult education. According to Merriam (1997), this type of education is adult literacy education which focuses on adults whose basic skills are fourth–grade level or below.

Remedial adult education can be defined as compensatory education and it is formal as it consists of adult basic programmes and high school completion programmes which the adult learners never had a chance to acquire in the past. Literacy in Tembisa/Kempton Park ABET centres is taught out of community development context, and seems to be irrelevant to ABET learners. The ability to read and write as the elements of literacy is not enough for community development as it does not relate to a specific context. According to UNESCO (1990), literacy needs to be defined in relation to its uses and purposes.

A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development.

What UNESCO is suggesting in their literacy definition is functional literacy, which will enable adult learners to function in their communities as literate adults.

One of the challenges facing Adult Education and Training institutions is to focus on redesigning their literacy programmes to be more functional for relevance in community development. Remedial adult education taught in community development context could lay a good foundation for political adult education, which will be discussed next.

Political adult education is related to citizenship responsibilities in a democracy by adopting public documents and technical writings to help the ordinary citizens to understand the country's business. Political adult education takes place in an informal or non-formal setting through local public and community-based forums on issues of concern.

Voters' education is one example of political adult education where adults can be taken through the election processes. Through this type of education, adult learners from previously disadvantaged communities will be personally developed and politically orientated around issues they were never exposed to due to apartheid system.

2.5 STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION AND PROVISIONING OF ADULT EDUCATION

When one analyses the present ABET curriculum, he finds that it is more reflective of formal education and is compensatory or remedial. ABET classes are conducted in formal schools structures with an organised curriculum framework. Demetrian (1999) called for a broadened adult basic education curriculum, which should link instrumental knowledge with the life experiences of the learner and meaningful sociocultural knowledge through collaborative methodology. Demetrian's view supports the redesigning of adult education curriculum to ensure its relevancy to its clients.

The omission of non-formal and informal elements in the ABET curriculum framework might be the reason for the failure of the ABET curriculum to address the community needs. Taylor (1981) stated that for the adult education curriculum to be relevant to its clients, we should acknowledge the fact that what is relevant for a child could be irrelevant for an adult learner. It is therefore evident that the knowledge approach to curriculum theory for the two situations should follow different paths.

Griffin (1983) acknowledges Knowles' (1978) adult learning concept as a guideline of distinguishing adult education by way of its methods, aims and organisation to provide more secured ground upon which to proceed. Knowles (1978) differentiated adult learning from that of children's learning when he indicated that a child's learning is subject orientated while the adult needs vocational education.

Children learn things because of their relevance to pedagogic assumptions, unlike adults who learn things they need because of the developmental phase they are approaching in their roles as workers, spouses, parents, organisational members, leaders, and leisure time users. For the ABET curriculum to serve this purpose, non-formal and informal education should be integrated in the curriculum's framework.

Lumsden (1977) presumed that Adult Education Institutions have the expertise and means needed to address community problems. Lumsden's presumption can only be reflective if the three types of adult learning, which are formal, non-formal and informal. Learners come to register in ABET centres expecting to acquire skills which will put them in a better position to get jobs or to earn a living through entrepreneurial skills. Inservice training on different job related skills could be facilitated in ABET centres, then ABET will make sense to the community.

The structure and organisation of ABET centres, which resemble those of formal schooling, tend to frustrate adult learners due to the fact that it is not flexible enough to accommodate skill development programmes. Johnston, (1997) argued that for a lot of people education means schooling. He emphasised that if the skills, talents and knowledge adult learners already have can be acknowledged, this will change the attitudes and approaches to adult education to that of a learning exchange approach.

The structure and organisation of ABET Centres should be suitable for adult learning, both physically and psychologically to allow sharing of knowledge, skills and talents. Johnston, (1997) further emphasised that through active participation of both learners and their educators, all participants will share knowledge and life experiences. This will boost their self-confidence and help them see learning not as the preserve of schools, but as their own creation and concern.

The current situation in ABET institutions in Tembisa/Kempton Park area needs to be reconsidered for fully resourcing of the centres and effective administration. The classrooms that adult learners are using for their learning are the same ones used for formal schooling. However, the laboratories and the libraries are not accessible to them. Experiential learning can not take place under these circumstances. It is due to such situations that Graham (1999) argued that both the educator and instructional strategies employed in adult basic education fail to create the climate in which in-class learning and knowledge structures can become connected. He further emphasised that there should be social engagement, instructional activities and outcomes so that the classroom can influence the learners' psychosocial and value orientation component to reinforce their motivation to learn.

2.6 THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Adult education worldwide is faced with challenges due to economic, political and societal changes. It is due to these factors that adult centres should focus in preparing members of a society for these changes and help them cope with a changed social structure or environment. Valadez (2000), indicated that the challenge facing the educational institutions is to contest the understandings that have reinforced social and cultural barriers and, at the same time, take advantage of resources and understanding that would propel adult learners towards action that will lead to constructing a path through poverty. Valadez came to this conclusion after his investigation of the Work Education Program where women rejected the ideology of the program as it could not help them to overcome the structural constraints of race, class, and gender bias. The same applies to ABET curriculum, which should serve the needs of adult learners, instead of them dropping out of the system as a sign of rejection.

This situation poses a need for the type of education and training which will help society to keep up with the new economic demands by producing educated work forces. For adult education curriculum to be relevant to its clientele, it should focus on addressing their socio-economic and political needs through liberal, work-related, relational, remedial and political education. This will be evident when the skills adult learners acquire through ABET programmes put them in a better position to be employed and make changes to their lives. Walshok (1999) recommended that life-long learning should ensure the human capacities and skills required to function as a citizen and a worker in our complex society, which is shifted by rapid changes in technology.

Uden (1987), commented that despite some examples of good practices, educational institutions, which had in the past failed to offer adequate education opportunities to the general adult population would, without a clear lead, fail even more to meet the needs of those whose problems were compounded by unemployment.

To correct the past situation in South African education system, the present Department of Education's vision, as stated in the Policy Document on Adult Education and Training (1997) is:

A literate South Africa within which all citizens have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation.

If adult education can effectively implement the above vision and views, it will have served the needs of adult learners and played an important role in community development.

2.7 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The community colleges were established to redress the imbalances within the communities by offering a variety of programmes at different levels. The Advisory Council recommended the introduction of such colleges for Universities and Technikons and the Educational Renewal Strategy (1993). In his view of community colleges, Strydom (1993) said that:

Community colleges are new and innovative models of provision providing a comprehensive range of programmes in accordance with community needs and providing open access, learner support and lifelong learning.

Lolwana (1995) emphasised that community education has the potential to radically change the traditional concept of education by redressing the legislated inequalities, as well as providing an education that will deal with the acute need for skilling and providing comprehensive education outside the formal system. He also included ABET levels one to three as the three major areas where community education systems needs to be implemented.

The departments of education are in support of community colleges and acknowledge the role they should play in community development. According to Zuma (1994), community colleges could be utilised as a possible mechanism for the provisioning of adult basic and further education and training to adults and youth who were not afforded such opportunities by the past South African education system, that disadvantaged many blacks.

Community centres could also play an important role in community development by serving as a focal point for improving the peoples' quality of life. This could be done through different programmes which are codified into the five types of adult education which were discussed earlier in this section.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this section relevant literature was consulted related to adult education concept and its subsections. Five types of adult education which encompass formal, non-formal and informal forms were discussed to determine what should be integrated in ABET curriculum to make it more relevant for the disadvantaged communities. Reviewed literature supported community colleges and emphasised the role these institutions should play in community development. These centres were acknowledged as the best mechanism for provisioning of adult education as these centres are focusing on the different types of adult education that we discussed.

In the next chapter more data will be collected through interviews and observations to further guide the study.



SECTION THREE

THE FIELD ENQUIRY OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to present the methodology and design of this inquiry. The data related to the relevance of ABET curriculum to adult learners' socio-economic problems in Tembisa/KemptonPark ABET centers will be presented as well as its analysis. This section will give a clear exposition of the processes. The discussion will include:

The description of the setting

Research Plan.

Data collection.

Data analysis.

Section summary.



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3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING

The investigation was undertaken in Gauteng Department of Education District N6 ABET centres around Tembisa/KemptonPark. Of eleven centres established in this area, four ABET centres were selected for investigation to determine the rôle these centres are playing as a means of societal development through their curricula activities. The centres are Ipontshe, Kempton Park, Thuto-Ke-Maatla and Kwazini.

Tembisa is the second biggest township in Gauteng province. Most its inhabitants are working at the nearby heavy and small industries around Isando, Spartan, Sebenza and Elandsfontein. Despite the fact that there are many industries around this area, fifty percent of the communities in this township are still unemployed.

The streets are always overcrowded with youth and adults who are just idling away the day with nothing to do. Due to lack of employment, the crime rate is also high and incidents related to violence are rampant. Twelve kilometres from Tembisa is the central business district called Kempton Park.

The communities of this area not only experience unemployment but there is also a high rate of poverty and illiteracy. To upgrade the communities' standard of living, eleven ABET centres were established to render educational services. The ABET centres are also clustered according to colour in four clusters as indicated in table1.

TABLE 1: Clusters list of ABET institutions

CLUSTER NAME	CENTRES
YELLOW CLUSTER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thuto -Ke -Maatla Adult Centre 2. Moriting Adult Centre 3. Sipiwe Adult Centre
BLUE CLUSTER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tembisa Adult Centre 2. NorkemPark Adult Centre 3. Kempton College Adult Centre
GREEN CLUSTER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ivory Park Adult Centre 2. Ipontshe Adult Centre 3. Ebomini Adult Centre
RED CLUSTER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kwazini Adult Centre 2. St Gemmas Adult Centre

3.3 THE RESEARCH PLAN

In this inquiry, a qualitative research method is followed to investigate events, processes and the structure of the social phenomena. Interviews with learners and observations of classroom interaction among learners and their educators were found to be the most effective qualitative data collection methods to study the settings and the people within these settings holistically. Miles and Huberman (1994) commented that qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's lived experience, are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them.

Participants were selected according to four clusters as indicated in table 1. Four centres were selected, one from each cluster for observation. Four learners from different ABET levels in each centre were selected to be interviewed. Selection of participants was done purposefully to learn about the range of issues related to the research focus. Leedy (1997) commented that in order to gain understanding of the complex phenomena in question, there should be a selection of participants rather than sampling a large number of people with the intent of making generalisation.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION.

Authorisation was obtained from the district office research office, as they need to be notified of all research being conducted in their institutions. I consulted with the heads of the different centres to make arrangements for observations and interviews. Data collection process was done over a period of two months in the four centres. This approach was adopted to gain a clear understanding of all the curriculum activities, the needs, perceptions and expectations of participants as influenced by their social background which

could be analysed for further recommendations, which will help in the educational developments.

I started with participants' observations in the classroom by attending classes with the learners so as not to disturb the process and draw attention to me as an outsider. I chose to start with this activity first because if I had to start with the interviews and later attend the lessons, learners would be aware of my presence as an outsider and be aware that they are being observed. Field notes were taken as a record tool for the events. According to Patton (1987), field notes describe what has been observed. In the field notes one could reflect on the classroom structures, teaching style and learning styles and learner's participation. You could also record questions asked by both facilitators and learners and their responses. Lesson plans and programme planning were evaluated as artefacts to determine their relevance to learners needs according to their social background.

I observed for four evenings at each centre. I attended classes for sixteen days at the four centres before I could start with the interview process. The method followed was guided by Ferreiras' (1988) suggestion that researcher's must actively participate in the social world of the actor in order to interpret the subjective meaning and experiences constructed by actors in social setting. The observation process is supported by Leedy's (1997) description of qualitative researchers as research instruments. He further commented that those researchers' data collection entirely depends on their personal involvement in the settings and interaction with the people within the settings. It also enables us to explore concepts and the people's real life experiences. Educational artefacts related to curriculum planning and implementation were also reviewed.

Following the observations, I conducted the interviews. The procedure followed was the selection of one learner from each level in each centre to be interviewed, which gave me the total number of sixteen learners from the four centres. Interviews were conducted according to the scheduled dates in the

evenings as per arrangements with the centre heads for individual participants from different centres and subjects were interviewed within two weeks of being selected into the study.

An interview guide was designed to guide the interviews and to ensure consistency on questions to be asked to all the interviewees as well as relevancy. Patton (1994) said that the interview guide keeps the interaction focused, while the individual perspectives and experiences are allowed to emerge. Refer to Addendum B for samples of interview questions. Questions were not asked chronologically as they appeared in the guide. In some situations, questions needed to be restructured for clarity and to refocus the discussion when the interviewee deviated from the topic. Where the answers were not explicit, follow-up questions were asked to redirect the conversation.

A tape recorder was used to record the interview conversation for originality and later transcribed into written format. Interviewees were made aware of all the procedures beforehand and their permission to use the recorder was elicited beforehand. Staff rooms and the centre heads' offices were used as venues to conduct interviews. The interviewer first introduced herself to the subject after the greetings to establish a welcoming and friendly environment. I then encourage the subjects to introduce themselves freely, after which the purpose of the meeting was explained to them. The participants were interviewed in their mother tongue, which varied from North Sotho (Sepedi) to Zulu for the majority of the interviewees. Biographical data of the interviewees is reflected in table 2.

Table 2: Biographical data of the Interviewees.

CENTRE	INTERVIEWEES	LEVEL	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	Home Language	OCCUPATION
Thuto-Ke-Maatla Adult Centre.	1. Anna	1	64	Widow	North Sotho	Pensioner
	2. Cynthia	2	35	Single	North Sotho	Unemployed
	3. Christina	3	43	Married	Zulu	Unemployed
	4. Jacob	4	29	Single	North Sotho	Driver
Kwazini Adult Centre	1. Kambuli	1	47	Married	Zulu	Painter
	2. Bertha	2	40	Divorced	Tswana	Domestic Worker
	3. Busi	3	33	Single	North Sotho	Unemployed
	4. Gladys	4	26	Married	North Sotho	Unemployed
NorkemPark Adult Centre	1. Themba	1	23	Single	Zulu	Unemployed
	1. Joseph	2	62	Divorced	North Sotho	Unemployed
	2. Mashadi	3	35	Single	North Sotho	Unemployed
	3. Teboho.	4	56	Married	North Sotho	General worker
Ipontshe Adult Centre.	1. Steven	1	43	Married	North Sotho	Carpenter
	2. Lindiwe	2	48	Widow	Zulu	Unemployed
	3. Jacobeth	3	32	Married	Tswana	Unemployed
	4. Sibusiso	4	28	Single	Zulu	Driver


The ages for the participants ranged from 23 to 64. As is clear from the data above, nine of the sixteen adults are unemployed. This is a reflection of the area's high unemployment rate. The possibility exists that these adults have expectations of literacy leading to job creation.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS.

The data that was collected during the interviews by means of a tape recorder was transcribed with the help of an African language specialist. This was to derive clarification regarding specific meanings of terminology. This data was later organised to make it manageable and easier to be interpreted and analysed. According to Patton (1987), analysis is the process of bringing order to the data and organising it into patterns, categories and basic description units. A content analysis was done to analyse data gathered through interviews. This was a verbal conversation later written in text format.

The first step was to break data into smaller segments to determine data belonging to the same categories and then synthesise it into clusters again. Data was labelled with specific codes for coding. The use of codes assisted me in organising and refining the data to be analysed. Data with similar codes were clustered together under the same categories, which led to final clustering of data into themes for interpretation.

The following table is an illustration of coded data and the meanings of the codes.



CODE	MEANING OF THE CODE
R&W	Know how to read and write
SUE	To be able to understand and speak English
KOC	To know how to operate computer
FJ	To find a job
OSB	To know how to operate a successful business
CN	To calculate numbers
AS	To be accredited the skills they already know with certificate.
JP	Job Promotion
BC	To learn building construction and carpentry skills
FDS	Fashion designing Skills

Coded information was clustered in themes according to the frequency in which they appear from different interviewees. The following themes were evident in most of the individual interviews. Their frequency is demonstrated in table 6 below.

Table 6. The frequency of theme during individual interviews.

CODE	Anna	Cynthia	Christin	Jacob	Kambuli	Bertha	Busi	Gladys	Themba	Joseph	Mashadi	Teboho	Steven	Lindwe	Jacobel	Sibusiso	TOTAL
R&W	X	X			X	X		X	X				X	X			8
SUE	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X		11
KOC							X					X			X	X	4
FJ		X	X				X	X	X	X	X			X	X		9
OSB							X							X			2
CN																	0
AS					X								X				2
JP			X	X												X	3
BC									X	X		X					3
FSD			X			X		X			X						4

The frequency in which coded information appears ranged from 0 to 11. As indicated in the above table, eleven of the sixteen interviewees indicated that what motivated them to enrol at ABET centres was know how to read and write. This data also reflect that majority of the interviewed learners' basic need is literacy in English.

The following themes emerged from clustering of coded data collected during interviews as demonstrated in table 6.

- Learners social background
- Motivation to enrol in ABET centres
- Learners desired programmes to be introduced in ABET centres

3.6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The themes that emerged from the analysis and organisation of the data will be used as sub-headings for this discussion.

3.6.1 Learners social background

An analysis of the data from the interviews shows that more than 60 percent of those interviewed are unemployed, which creates a possibility for these adult learners' expectation of literacy leading to job creation. The data also reflect that the learners' basic need is literacy so that they can be able to read write and speak English confidently like other educated people. Lack of these skills makes it difficult for them to go and look for jobs, as they can not communicate with employers as the following raw data reflects:

Angikwazi ukukhuluma isingisi, futhi angisizwa, ngakhoke angikwazi ukuyofuna umsebenzi.

[I can not understand or speak English. Hence I am unable to go and look for a job]

3.6.2 Motivation to enrol in ABET centres

What was clear from the interviews was that the unemployed elderly learners were showing no interest in intense training or higher qualifications. All they said they needed was the ability to read. They need to read the Bible in church and to be able to locate verses on their own without being dependant on their children or grand children. The following raw data reflects one such opinion:

Ke nyaka go ipulela ditemana mo beibeleng kua kerekeng gomme ke kgone le go di boledisa ka sekgoa le Sepedi.

[I need to be able to open verses on the bible at and to be able to read in English and Sepedi]

They also wanted to learn how to write so that they can be able to sign their names at the bank and fill in documents.

Njalo uma ngifika ebhange, ngenza isiphambano emaphepheni ngoba angikwasi ukusayinda igama lami.

[Every time when I get to the bank I have to put a cross on the documents because I can not sign my name]

They also needed some numeracy training to enable them to count money to avoid being exploited by people who normally take advantage of their illiteracy.

Another common problem identified among employed learners is that they can not communicate properly with their employers because they can not speak English, hence it is difficult for them to follow instructions, making mistakes due to illiteracy. They enrolled in ABET to learn how to speak English as they are afraid of losing their jobs and being replaced due to the mistakes they make.

According to some of the interviewees, their employer – worker relationship also deteriorates due to miscommunication, as the following raw data reflects:

Angisizwa kahle isingisi ngisho no ku sikhuluma kuyala umlungu ungithethisa mehlanamalanga ngoba ngisuka ngi ngazwanga into angilaye yona.

[I don't understand or speak English. My boss always scream at me because I did not understand his instructions]

3.6.3. Learners desired programmes to be introduced in ABET centers

It was quite interesting to learn that there are learners who came to ABET for the purpose of getting certification for trade skills they already have experience in. One interviewee indicated that he is an experienced motor mechanic but he does not have the certificate to work in that field or be remunerated for the skill. All he needed from the ABET centre is to be issued with the certificate which to him will be a ticket to a better job and a better salary. In the previous chapter, Johnston (1997) emphasised that if skills, talents and knowledge adult learners like this interviewee already have can be acknowledged, this will change the attitudes and approaches to adult education to that of exchange approach.

Many of the women I interviewed wanted the introduction of fashion designing and catering programmes while men were interested in building, metal work and carpentry courses. Most of the interviewees were also eager to learn computer skills, as there are few advertised jobs that do not require computer skills. Demetron (1999) believes that the role adult education should play is to equip potential employees with an increasingly complex set of basic skills in order to assure the state a well qualified work force in a post-industrial society.

The general feeling was that life skills should be part of all ABET level courses as most of the learners indicated that in most situations they become the victims of vicious criminals while they battle to use the ATM machines. Some of them indicated that they are even targeted on the trains due to their lack of literacy. They are unable to identify the trains they are supposed to catch, as they can not read. Hence they get directed to wrong trains where they are robbed off their material possessions and all the money they have in their possession.

3.7 SECTION SUMMARY

In this section, I presented the data that was collected on Adult learners' views on the relevancy of programmes they are enrolled for at four ABET centres in Tembisa/KemptonPark area. Examples of the coding process were provided and some themes that emerged were presented. Raw data was presented in during the discussions of the themes that emerged during data analysis. The next section will be devoted to an in-depth discussion of these themes.



SECTION FOUR

DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section is a report of the outcomes of the inquiry based on the data collected and analysed in the previous section. The section will be devoted to an in-depth discussion of the data and its interpretation based on the findings of the investigation. This process is aimed at informing educational practices in ABET provision. According to Taylor (1975), "A report on qualitative research should be a descriptive and analytic presentation of data that have been laboriously and systematically collected and interpreted".

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINAL CATEGORIES

During my analysis of the data collected through interviews with ABET learners, I discovered that learners at level one and two registered at their centres for the purpose of acquiring reading and writing skills which the centres were successfully offering them through literacy programmes, hence their needs were satisfied at this level.

Learners at level three and four, who joined the ABET centres expecting to acquire job related skills were frustrated as their needs could not be met through ABET programmes. Such findings supported the initial claim about the limitations of the curriculum. While observing lesson activities during class visits at these levels, I discovered that the same syllabi offered from grade one to grade five of formal schooling is used for the learners at their equivalent ABET levels.

During the interviews with participants who were enrolled in levels one and two, what was expressed, was to acquire basic literacy skills so that they can be able to perform basic literacy functions such as reading the bible.

During my observation in these two level classes, the educators were using storybooks as a learning support material to teach learners how to read.

The interviewees suggested that they also use the bible as a resource in the classroom. Demetron (1999) supports the usage of familiar materials in educating adult learners in such a way that they function effectively in their societies. The use of the bible as learning support material could empower those who have interest in reading the bible and boost their self-esteem. Learners also indicated that they can not communicate confidently and fluently in English, hence it is difficult for them to look for employment, as the knowledge of this foreign language creates a barrier for them.

Learners at level three and four indicated that they desired to learn job-related skills, which will qualify them for better job opportunities. The four ABET centres I investigated had no skills based programmes in place to satisfy these needs. Some learners came to the centres with some skills. Their expectations were to be certificated for the skills they have acquired through their work experiences so that they can be recognised and promoted at work. These categories of learners expressed their disappointment at the current limitations. Mac Givney, (1985) suggested that adult education should assist unemployed adults to find new foci and direction in their lives but there was no reflection of this aspect in the ABET centres' planning. These learners' needs are not being met at the centres. Furthermore, the ABET curriculum has little relevancy to their real life situation and experiences. There is no process in place for recognition of prior learning and accreditation, as recommended by the South African Qualification Authority standards.

Artefacts such as the ABET centres' learners' databank indicated that there were more learners in levels three and four than in levels one and two, hence this is a reflection that learners who need skills are in the majority. As indicated in table 6, the majority of learners were unemployed. Hence,

enrolling at ABET centres might be because they hoped that it will change their life situations and place them in a better position to be able to find jobs.

The observational data collected on classroom environment indicated that ABET classroom procedures are too formal for adult learners. The current situation is more suited for young learners in a bureaucratic learner-teacher relationship reminiscent of formal school. This situation does not boost the adult learners' self-esteem. Adult literacy classes are conducted in the evening, when the laboratories and the libraries are not accessible. Experiential learning can not take place under these circumstances hence they can not relate the content to real life situations. It is due to situations such as this that Graham (1999) argued that both the educator and instructional strategies employed in adult basic education fail to create the climate in which in-class learning and knowledge structures can become connected. He further emphasised the importance of social engagement, instructional activities and outcomes so that the classroom can influence the learners' psychosocial and value orientation component to reinforce learners' motivation to learn.

It is for learners at levels three and four who are seeking job opportunities, that the ABET curriculum becomes insufficient. The skills needed for the job markets can not be acquired through the present ABET programmes, hence they get frustrated and some drop out of the courses. Participants of the study indicated that they do not see themselves returning to the centre in the next academic year. One of them said that he is saving money to register in one of the computer centres in town. It is due to its inability to meet the needs of students that ABET centres in future will fail to attract more learners to their centres.

4.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY

The outcomes of the inquiry indicated that ABET programmes that were established in Tembisa/Kempton Park for adults fail to meet the needs of unemployed learners. These ABET curriculum activities are being co-ordinated in formal schools as there are no physical structures allocated exclusively for non-formal education programmes. Adult learners are forced to learn in the same setting as formal school learners, a situation that is not conducive for meeting specific needs.

The educational experiences of these adults never involved any extracurricular activities, hence they can not be involved in experiential learning. In one of the ABET centres under investigation, there was an abundance of resources which could be used to teach technical skills, a much needed job related skill. These workshops are not being utilised, as there are no programmes planned for this purpose. The ABET co-ordinator from the district office indicated that there is no budget to subsidise the employment of practitioners with technical skills to offer such programmes.

There were computer centres in two of the four centres under investigation. Though they offered computer literacy courses, they were offered in the afternoon and not accessible for adult learners who are in desperate need of these skills. The implication of this situation demotivates learners who hoped to acquire skills that could increase their job opportunities.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.

My recommendations based on the discussed findings is that these ABET centres should work towards societal development by introducing skills based programmes. I further recommend that the running and provisioning of ABET centres should deviate from that of formal schools.

As an indication from the literature reviewed, the community centre model could be a possible model to be adopted for community development. Hence it is for this reason that I suggest that ABET centres need to adopt the structure and policies of community centres. In that sense, these centres will adequately serve the needs of the communities they are operating within which they are operating.

These centres can be more effective than the present ABET centres and serve a better purpose if they can be turned into community colleges in operation. An analysis of needs should be done during admission of level three and four learners to identify their interests and motivations for joining the ABET classes. This process will guide the program design relevancy to serve the needs of this community.

There should be active involvement from the economic sector to determine the skills needed in the job market. This could contribute to the planning of relevant programmes to prepare learners for the job market as findings of this inquiry indicated that the majority of registered learners in ABET were hoping to gain skills that would put them in a better position to find jobs. ABET level programmes could be replaced by short intense training courses, which are more market related. These types of courses should be offered to prepare unemployed community members for job opportunities. ABET programmes should be determined and influenced by the economic sector, instead of just by legislation.

Literacy and numeracy programmes should continue, but the review of ABET policy on its implementation is important to encourage functionality of adult learner programmes in their daily life situations. These programmes should be integrated with the learners' life experiences, needs and interests. Lastly, life skills should be part of literacy programmes to empower learners and help them with coping and problem-solving skills.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relevance of ABET curriculum in Tembisa/KemptonPark centres and their success in addressing the needs of adult learners. The purpose was to determine whether these ABET centres are achieving the objectives of adult education through its curriculum. According to the finding of this investigation, the researchers' claim that there are limitations in the ABET curriculum which results in ABET centres failing to meet the needs of adult learners was partially affirmed by level three and four learners. This finding was not applicable for learners in level one and two as their need were met through the literacy programmes offered by these ABET centres.

The role that the ABET curriculum should play in community development is to address the socio-economic problems in the community with skills based programmes in such a way that at the end of their learning programmes, adult learners have acquired skills that will put them in a better position to be employed and become active community developers.



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ADDENDUM B

FIGURE 2: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Biography information;

- Name : Bertha
- Age : 40
- Marital status : divorced
- Occupation : domestic servant
- Level : 2
- Interviewer : where to you stay
- Gladys : In Tembisa at Entshonalang Section
- Interviewer : How long have you been living in this area
- Gladys : For five years
- Interviewer : Where have you lived before moving to Tembisa
- Gladys : I was living in LebowaKgomo in Petersburg with my family, my husband left me with our four children thirteen years ago to look for a job in the mines in Carltonville and never came back. After three years of his disappearance, I decided to come down to Johannesburg to look for him and I found him having another family. I decided to look for a job to support my children, I reported him to the social workers but the money he is paying for maintenance is too little.

- Interviewer : Where do you work now
- Gladys : I work as a domestic servant in Berchley in KemptonPark and my children are staying with me in Tembisa. I went to fetch them from home so that they can attend school here.
- Interviewer : What motivated you to register in this ABET centre
- Gladys : the money that I earn is too little and I can afford to pay for my Children school fees and buy them decent clothes. Life is too difficult and I need to learn sewing skills so that I can make extra income to support my children and give them better education. They should not be like me and depend on marriage have four girls and I want them to become independent women even if they are not married.
- Interviewer : Are they offering sewing classes in your centre
- Gladys : They told us that they are still waiting for sewing machines and at the moment, they are teaching us how to read and write.
- Interviewer : What do you benefit from your classes
- Gladys : Well, I can now read letters and write to my friends at home, but I can not find a better job or make any extra income. I don't know how much longer I can still wait before I can be Able to afford my Children's education costs. I am still looking for a place where I can learn these skills at a low price.