SECTION 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND AIM

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The research reported on in this research essay focused upon the engagement of adult learners in classroom activities. Essentially the study undertook to establish how adult learners are engaged with their classroom activities and what may be the hinderances to their engagement. This study is unfolded by first giving the background inclusive of the problem statement and purpose, followed by the review of relevant literature focusing upon the teaching perspectives, principles of adult learning and the educators’ role in learners’ engagement. Then, the research methodology is described and in conclusion the report is given on the findings with recommendations made to supplement the existing body of knowledge.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO PROBLEM AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

The origin of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centres in South African has to be viewed against the educational history of this country, which impacted so much on the nature of the present adult education system as a whole. According to Mda and Mothata (2000: 44), literacy classes in South Africa can be traced back to the 19th century, when missionaries were using the Bible to teach South Africans to read and write. Mda and Mothata (2000: 44) argue that the impact of these literacy classes was very limited as they were meant to Christianize Africans and not to empower them socially, politically and economically. Rather, learners in these classes were to be passive recipients of the learning content, with authoritative methods of teaching unquestioningly used. According to Hutton (1992: 56) soon after the end of the Second World War, night schools were established in South Africa with an intention to eradicate illiteracy. That was done in a manner that Rogers (1993: 20) referred to as the schooling of the unschooled adults, with adults being taught the same content as the children at school, and with the same teaching
methods. The only difference was that children were taught during the day while adults were taught at night.

According to Hutton (1992: 56), although war against illiteracy was declared by concerned organizations such as the church, all the efforts to eradicate illiteracy were undermined by the nationalist government and the principles of apartheid, characterized by practices of discrimination against black South Africans. This problem was worsened by such policies as the restrictive education system created in the form of Bantu education, deliberately limiting the participation of black South Africans in the modern industrial and literate world. The limitations were such that black South Africans should only know how to read and write, so that they could serve their white counterparts. In its restrictive manner, South African education was designed in such a way that black participation in political, economic and social matters was restricted, starting in the classroom, under authoritative teaching methods.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1997: 9), such systematic exclusion from meaningful participation in social, political and economical activities constitutes marginalisation, which is the opposite of empowerment. In 1976, black South Africans revealed their dissatisfaction against this marginalisation with rioting. This heralded the further disintegration of the education system, greatly increasing the dropout rate and creating a new generation of illiterate and semi-literate adults (Hutton, 1992: 53).

Wildemeersch and Jansen (1992: 52) stated that it is commonly assumed that adult basic education can compensate for a lifetime of social marginalisation and educational deprivation, and that both on the individual and social level emancipation will result. Hence, soon after the democratic elections of 1994, the newly established democratic government considered adult basic education to be an important tool in introducing citizens to a culture of learning (Department of Education, 1997: 1). This was further reinforced through the formulation of ABET policy, which is meant to guide the provision and practices of ABET in the country. Again, it aimed to create a just and equitable system, which offers good quality education and training to all adult learners (Department of Education {DoE} 1997:
Democratic principles should be followed and education should not be institutionalized to produce the relationship of exploitation and oppression, as adults are to be equipped with skills and knowledge that enable them to be active participants in social, political and economic affairs. This represents a shift from being a passive recipient of knowledge to being an active creator of knowledge, which starts in the teaching and learning environment, through engagement in the learning activities. Therefore, my argument for this research study is based on the assertion that the goal of empowering adult learners with social, political and economic skills will not be achieved unless the abovementioned empowerment strategies are incorporated into the everyday classroom learning activities through the usage of relevant teaching methods and prevention of hindrances to engagement.

Based on my experience, even though adult learners’ empowerment through engagement and active participation is considered a core principle in adult learning, this has been minimally practiced in ABET centres. This results from the continuous usage of traditional and authoritative teaching methods, which deny learners the opportunities to engage in the learning activities. As Watermeyer and Winberg (1996: 21) state, these methods are authoritative and aimed at domesticating learners through depriving them of active participation or engagement. In addition, this takes place in an authoritative setting, in which the teacher is dominating while learners remain passive recipients of knowledge. Such a setting is also characterized by focusing upon the prescribed learning content without considering the learners’ needs. The teacher, as the main source of knowledge, does most of the talking while learners quietly listen and follow instructions unquestioningly. In this setting learners and the learning process are not areas of focus, rather it is the delivery or transmission of the prescribed content within the stipulated time frames. Meaningful learning is not important here, only whether learners have stored the transmitted content for later retrieval. This approach to ‘banking’ sees teachers as depositors of knowledge, while learners are containers to be filled (Freire, 1971: 83). Against this background, the purpose of this research was to investigate how adult learners in an ABET classroom are engaged in learning activities.
This investigation was conducted at an ABET centre in which the engagement of adult learners was observed among level three and level four adult learners during classroom learning activities.

1.3. AIM OF STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the engagement of adult learners in an ABET classroom and this was done by addressing the following questions:

- When are adult learners engaged in their learning activities?
- Which strategies are used to engage adult learners in their learning activities?
- What are hindrances to the adult learners’ engagement in their learning activities?
- What is the role of the ABET educator in engaging learners?

1.4. ASSUMPTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

Before deciding to conduct a study on the engagement of adult learners at the ABET centre, I assumed that the engagement of adult learners there was limited, and I wondered how social, political and economic empowerment could be achieved. I also assumed that teachers at this centre were not informed on principles of adult learning and therefore their teaching was not as effective as it was supposed to be. These assumptions were based on my observations that traditional authoritative teaching methods were still being used in the ABET classes. Again, teachers at the ABET centre were also teachers of school children during the day, in line with their qualifications, and not trained in the basic principles of adult learning.

1.5. CONCLUSION

In this section, the introduction to the research essay, the motivation for undertaking this research, a statement of the problem as well as the aim was provided. A brief overview of the dissertation was also set out to enhance how all sections or chapters
will be unfolding towards the set argument. The assumptions and presuppositions were also stated.
SECTION 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

As mentioned, the purpose of this research was to investigate the engagement of adult learners in the classroom learning activities. The central argument of this research was that if adult learners were to be equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to be active participants in social, political and economic matters, their classroom activities should demand their deep engagement and active participation. That means their learning events should not be a mere transmission of information or bare facts.

To substantiate my argument, I shall discuss the principles and perspectives underlying meaningful learning as a result of learners’ engagement in the classroom learning activities, as reflected in current research literature. That will be followed by discussing the role of the ABET teacher in engaging adult learners in the classroom learning activities. It is first necessary to clarify the core concepts used in the research topic.

2.2. CONCEPTS CLARIFICATION

2.2.1. ABET

According to the DoE (1997: 5), Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. According to UNESCO (1997), Adult Basic Education and Training refers to all forms of organized education and training that meet the basic learning needs of adults, including literacy and numeracy, as well as the general knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that they require to survive, develop their capacity, work and live in dignity, improve the quality of their lives, make informed decisions and continue to learn.
I consider the above definitions as having a lot in common, as they both clearly indicate the general aim of ABET which is to equip adult learners with skills, knowledge and attitude to be active in various social, political and economic activities, which are directly and indirectly beneficial to the individuals and the communities.

2.2.2. Engagement

Different authors use different terms and concepts to refer to learners’ engagement. For instance: Rogers (1993: 235) refers to engagement as active participation in which learners practice the activity, which is the desired end of the learning process. According to Vella (2000: 35), engagement is the cognitive, affective, or kinesthetic involvement of the learners with the learning content, through which they gain the excitement and creative thrill of being decision makers in their own work as active learners. For the purpose of this study, engagement means participation that enables learners not only to take part in learning but also to practice it as a subject of their own lives (Vella, 1994: 159). Learners learn by engaging in the desired activity itself, and through wrestling with the learning content by means of attempting different tasks that challenge them cognitively, affectively or kinesthetically.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING

Here it is important to briefly discuss the various perspectives on teaching as stipulated by Pratt in Gordon (1998: 6), as well as their educational implications. The teacher’s view on teaching is an important factor in terms of learners’ engagement in learning. This will be followed by a discussion of various principles of adult learning and their application value in ensuring the engagement of adult learners in the classroom learning activities. To direct my concern about adult learners’ engagement, my argument will unfold by addressing the following questions: (a) which teaching strategies can be used to engage adult learners in their classroom learning activities? (b) what are the hinderances to the adult learners’ engagement in their learning activities? (c) what is the role of the teacher in engaging adult learners in their classroom learning activities?
According to Foley (2000: 36), there is a relationship between the way teachers teach and what the learners learn. Whether adult learners will be actively engaged in their learning or not is directly or indirectly related to the teachers’ teaching approach. Teaching, according to Gravett (2001: 17), is a process of assisting people to learn and it is therefore up to the teacher to choose whether his/her assistance will be to help adults to learn superficially or to learn meaningfully. By superficial learning is meant learning of bare facts, with the intention of memorizing them for later reproduction. Meaningful learning means attaining personal meaning from the content, and internalizing and assimilating it for immediate or later use in real life situation.

According to Pratt (in Gordon, 1998: 7), there are five teaching perspectives, which actually direct the level and manner of the teacher’s interaction with the learners. These teaching perspectives are orientations with which the teacher identifies and their characteristics can be seen in his or her encounter with the learners. They are: transmission perspective, developmental perspective, apprenticeship perspective, social reform perspective and nurturing perspective

### 2.3.1. Transmission perspective

According to the transmission perspective, teaching starts with a substantial commitment to the content or subject matter, therefore it is essential for transmission-oriented teachers to have mastery over their content (Pratt in Gordon 1998: 7). In this perspective, teachers view learners as containers to be filled with something (knowledge). This knowledge exists outside the learner, within the text or in the teacher. Learners are expected to learn the content in its authorized format and teachers are expected to take learners systematically through a set of prescribed tasks that lead to mastery of the content. This perspective fits well with the traditional way of teaching, in which learners learn ‘passively’, as passive recipients of the imparted knowledge from the teacher as the main source of knowledge. According to Freire (1971: 83), this approach to teaching is referred to as a ‘banking’ approach, in which learners are viewed as depositories and teachers the depositors.

The disadvantage of this approach is that learners find it difficult to relate the content to everyday life and it therefore remains abstract and not applicable. Here the teacher
is the only one doing the talking, while learners are not given chance to wrestle with the content and apply their life experiences to it, making meaningful learning very limited. Shor (1992: 12) criticize such an approach to teaching, stating that if the learners’ task is to memorize rules and existing knowledge, without questioning the subject matter or the learning processes, their potential for critical thought and action will be restricted. That means learners would only be able to reproduce the teacher’s knowledge or information without internalizing it.

Watermeyer and Winberg (1996) relate the transmission approach to rote learning, which is characterized by learning from books, memorizing and repeating facts. It also promotes learning by conforming. Knowles (1998: 88) considers teachers practicing a transmission approach to be creators of an authoritative atmosphere in which learners are completely dependent upon the teacher, and not actively engaged, or free. They are condemned to feel inferior.

The educational implication of a transmission perspective on teaching is that there is no or little interaction amongst learners or between the teacher and the learners, therefore no sharing or exchange of ideas and experiences. The teacher is considered to be the only or main source of knowledge, while adult learners are treated as containers to be filled. Therefore, the question behind my argument is, how can the application and transference of newly acquired skills and knowledge be prevalent if learners are passively learning and no opportunities for practicing the acquired knowledge were created? Watermeyer and Winberg (1996) consider this to relate to purely theoretical adult education, which is disempowering as it remains an obstacle to adults self-improvement. This perspective on teaching creates an oppressive atmosphere, which deprives learners of meaningful learning, and it is therefore not transactionally sound (Houser and Vaughan, 1995: 26). To emphasize this point, Heimlich and Norland (1994: 104) state that teachers using this perspective on teaching must have mistaken teaching for public speaking, or a nightly news broadcast. Teaching goes beyond content-presentation, and should be based on the notion that people begin life as motivated learners and not as passive beings (Shor, 1992: 17). Therefore it is my contention that learners’ engagement with the learning content is crucial for meaningful learning to take place.
2.3.2. Developmental perspective

According to a developmental perspective, learners use what they already know to filter and interpret new-information. Learners’ prior knowledge is valued and used as they are given chance to construct their understanding of the learning content (Pratt in Gordon 1998: 8). The assumption behind this perspective is that learning brings about one of two kinds of change inside the brain. First, when a new experience fits with what the learner already knows it builds a stronger and more elaborate pathway to that knowledge, and secondly, if a new experience or new content does not fit the learner’s current way of knowing he/she must either change the old way of knowing or reject the new knowledge or experience. A developmental perspective on teaching can be linked to Mezirow’s theory of transformational learning, in which learning is defined as a process of using prior interpretations to construe and appropriate a new or revised interpretation of one’s experiences in order to guide future action (Gravett 2001: 23). This link results from the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning processes, which implies that if teaching encourages an incorporation of the prior knowledge, that will also be incorporated in the learning processes.

Teachers’ aligning themselves with this perspective on teaching allows participants to articulate their existing assumptions and/or presumptions in a non-threatening, yet challenging environment. Hammond and Collins (1991: 77) refer to such a conducive learning climate as ‘cooperative learning climate’, that is which is democratic, open, collaborative, challenging and non-threatening. This is often done by first establishing norms of interaction in which the adult learners and teachers engage in dialogue and negotiations. Storage of the acquired knowledge is not the issue in developmental perspective to teaching, but rather the core issue is the change that comes as an indication that learning has taken place (Pratt in Gordon, 1998: 8).

The educational implication of a developmental perspective on teaching is that learners’ experiences have to be seen as foundations and frames of reference for learning to take place (Taylor et al., 2000: 25). To access learners’ experience, the teacher engages them in their learning through the usage of such methods as learning tasks, group-work and debates. This perspective emphasizes the importance of learners’ experience without which meaningful learning would be impossible. Learning through experience is referred to as ‘experiential learning process’,
whereby people, individually and in association with others, engage in direct encounters and purposefully reflect upon, validate, transform and give personal meaning to seek to integrate their different ways of knowing (Wildemeersch & Jansen, 1992: 90). During this experiential learning, learners are engaged using the following techniques: group discussions, simulation exercises, problem solving, case methods and laboratory methods (Knowles, 1989: 66). That is further explained by Jaques (1991: 10), when stating that knowledge acquired through experiential learning techniques is significant and developmental as learners exhibit their initiatives and insight through engagement with the learning content. Therefore ABET teachers who align themselves with this developmental perspective on teaching cannot achieve this developmental aim without the engagement of learners in various classroom-learning activities. An inclination to developmental perspective is impossible without learners’ engagement.

2.3.3. Apprenticeship perspective
From an apprenticeship perspective, learning is facilitated when people work on authentic tasks in a setting of application or practice (Pratt in Gordon, 1998: 9). Based on this perspective on teaching, the teacher’s responsibility is to ensure that learners work on tasks that are meaningful and relevant to the community of practice. Learning content should relate to learners’ everyday lives. This authenticity of the learning tasks is related to what Brown et al. (1989: 6), state, that authentic activities are most simply defined as the ordinary practices of the culture and therefore increase the learners’ ability to practically apply the learnt skills outside the learning spectrum. That implies that apprenticeship is the evidence of the learners’ engagement in authentic activities during the learning endeavor. Again, the importance of engagement in apprenticeship is revealed in the three central tenets of this teaching approach, namely: learning is a process of enculturation, knowledge is socially constructed through participation in a social group, and the product of learning is of two kinds: competence and social identity in relation to the community of practice (Pratt in Gordon, 1998: 10). For instance, enculturation in an ABET classroom can be explained in terms of diverse cultures that adult learners exhibit during their interactions with each other. Cultural practices are then exchanged and adopted through application in real life situations. An apprenticeship perspective on teaching relates to a praxis principle of adult learning, which is explained by Vella
(1994: 159) as doing with built-in-reflection. For praxis, to take place learners are to be engaged with the learning content through interacting or wrestling with it because adult learners learn by doing. Therefore according to Brown and Duguid (2000: 121) learners are to be given the chance to assimilate and make sense out of the learning content, and that requires engagement.

2.3.4. Social reform perspective

Teachers, whose perspective on teaching is social reform, seek not just to interpret the world, but also to change it in ways that correspond to their ideals (Pratt in Gordon, 1998: 13). They do so through classroom discussions, which are not only knowledge-based but also invite critical questioning and insight. These teachers focus their teaching on how the knowledge had been created, by whom and for which purpose. In this way knowledge is not only passed on but it is interrogated. The purpose of teaching according to a social reform perspective is to encourage learners to take social action to improve their own lives. That is considered the main aim of adult education according to the critical theory of adult learning. This theory emphasizes that adult learners are to be conscientized about their living conditions and should critically identify any form of oppression which they are to challenge or question with an intention of emancipating themselves and others (Merriam 2001: 11, Mezirow 1990: 27). That is further emphasized by Freire in Watermeyer and Winberg (1996: 30) stating that learners are to be encouraged to drive their own education by finding solution to problematised generative themes.

Learners’ engagement is crucial for social transformation, as is effective participation in a discourse and in transformative learning, which result from transformative teaching. Both transformative teaching and learning are impossible without a specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of justification of an interpretation or belief (Mezirow, 1990: 11). Discourse indicates that learners are engaged as they are involved in identifying agreements, differences, trying other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictions, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis and reframing. Therefore, teachers in support of this theory and the social reform of teaching, encourage learners’ participation through dialogue, debates and discussions around their daily life issues. This gives learners an opportunity to be engaged in
probing and challenging learning tasks through which they reflect on their life experiences.

2.3.5. Nurturing perspective
A nurturing perspective of teaching assumes that motivation to achieve comes from the heart (Pratt in Gordon, 1998: 11). For instance, when the learners’ self-concept is under threat or diminished in any way, learning will be blocked, diverted or halted altogether. Therefore, the teacher has to balance between caring and challenging by promoting a climate of caring and trust, by helping learners to set reasonable but challenging goals and by supporting effort and achievement. According to Gravett (2001: 41), it is the teacher’s responsibility to establish a nurturing learning environment in which learners feel positive about what they are learning. That environment is characterized by safety, trust, acceptance, respect, support, connectedness and satisfaction. The DoE (1997: 14) emphasized that effective learning is directly dependent on the social and emotional well being of the learners, in a climate that enables learners to engage with the learning content without being threatened or feeling insecure.

2.3.6 Different perspectives: conclusion
Teachers’ inclination to one of those perspectives on teaching does not guarantee good or effective teaching, but their combination in a particular teaching and learning situation can enable educators effectively to play their roles of deeply engaging adult learners in their classroom learning activities. Various perspectives accommodate learners’ varying learning styles, capabilities and interests, if learners are afforded the opportunity to engage with the learning content, cognitively, kinesthetically or aesthetically. If needs-based knowledge is shared in a non-threatening, yet challenging environment and learners are engaged with authentic learning tasks, the goal of social, political and economic participation can be achieved by adult learners. Because teaching perspectives play an important role in learners’ engagement in ABET learning activities, it is imperative to consider the role of the teacher in fostering or enhancing learners engagement in the learning activities.

2.4 THE ROLE OF ABET TEACHERS IN ENGAGING ADULT LEARNERS IN THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES
The role that teachers play in engaging adult learners in the learning activities is determined by the teachers’ understanding of why, what, what for, where, how and when, adults learn. These “W” questions are referred to by Vella (2000: 5) as steps for planning adults’ learning events and are addressed through various principles of adult learning. The principles of adult learning are also discussed by Foley (2000: 35), in relation to research conducted to establish the link between what the teachers do in classroom (the processes of teaching) and the product or outcome of the teachers’ work (learners’ learning). These principles are also based on the assumption that the difference in teaching skills (e.g. clarity of presentation, structuring of lessons, verbal fluency) and qualities (warmth, enthusiasm, confidence) will have different effects on learners’ learning.

According to Gravett (2001: 10), adults learn for various reasons, including as a means of addressing problems, challenges or needs arising from their life roles. Therefore it is of utmost importance that adult learners are involved in identifying their learning needs, which ultimately inform the learning content to be taught. That will instill in them the sense of ownership, as they will be learning the content they consider necessary to empower them socially, politically and economically. For learners to embrace the learning content, it should be relevant and immediately useful, that is regarded by Vella (1994: 121) as principles of relevance and immediacy. Adult learners do not have time to waste; therefore they need to see the immediate usefulness of the newly acquired skills, knowledge and attitude. According to Taylor (et al., 2000) and Knowles (1989), if adults do not see immediate tangible and practical results to what they are learning, they will mentally tune out.

The educational implication of this is that learners’ attention should be drawn to the application value of the learning content in their life-worlds (Gravett, 2001: 15). That can be done by engaging them in the intended learning activity, and by utilizing examples drawn from their daily life activities. Learners will have the opportunity to experience the relevance of the learning content and its immediate application value because they would have practised, analyzed, interpreted, interrogated and assimilated the learning content, using their daily life experiences to address their
authentic life situations. Learners will be using their daily life experiences to wrestle with the learning content and by applying it to address their real life situations (Brown & Duguid, 2000: 131).

According to Watermeyer and Winberg (1996: 8), adult learners learn by doing tasks and not by sitting passively and staring at the text. Therefore it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that learning events are thoroughly planned and include various types of learning tasks which are used variably or interchangeably to ensure balanced and purposeful engagement. According to Vella (2000: 5), learning tasks are an excellent way to present new content, inviting engagement and reflection and action. Learning tasks are open questions posed to learners that prompt them to respond cognitively, kinesthetically or aesthetically. Learning tasks offer them the opportunity to wrestle with the learning content and thereby view themselves as active constructors of their own knowledge. This knowledge construction is enhanced by proper sequencing of the learning tasks, as well as purposeful usage thereof. For instance, learning tasks are to be arranged from simple to complex, or easy to difficult, to be in line with the set learning outcomes.

The adult learners’ engagement and active participation through inputs, contributions and responses has to be acknowledged so as to enhance their learning. Through acknowledgement, learners are motivated and feel safe, secure and recognized. Gordon, (1998) and Gravett, (2001) state that it is the teacher’s responsibility to establish and maintain the conducive learning climate, characterized by mutual respect, trust and support. In such an atmosphere, learners value each other’s inputs and experiences and therefore feel free to engage and actively participate in the learning activities. A conducive learning environment enhances and facilitates dialogue amongst learners and teacher. Burbules (1993: 19) defines ‘dialogue’ as a social relation that engages its participants through willing partnership and cooperation in the face of likely disagreement, confusion, failures and misunderstandings. Taylor et al., (2000: 34) consider dialogue to be an essential feature of learners meaning-making process and knowledge construction because, through it, learners respond to given learning tasks and interact with others as well as the text. Dialogue initiates and maintains learners’ engagement in the learning activities through the use of learning tasks which fulfill various functions, such as
assessing, collaborating, experimenting, performing simulation and reflection (Taylor et al., 2000: 46). These various functions of learning tasks reflect and correlate with the strategies that the teacher can use to actively engage learners in the learning activities. The teacher who uses various types of learning tasks variably during a learning event will also be reflecting on the various strategies or methods of engaging learners in the learning activities.

2.5 STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE ADULT LEARNERS IN THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

This section focuses on the work of Taylor et al. (2000: 46), on strategies to be used to engage adult learners in the learning activities. For the purpose of this research essay the word ‘strategies’ will be used interchangeably with the word ‘methods’. In this context, strategies or methods refer to the ways and means the teacher uses to transmit the learning content to the adult learners, and are commonly called ‘teaching methods’.

2.5.1. Assessing strategy
Assessing strategy is a teaching method characterized by oral or written questions to which learners are to respond so that their level of knowledge or understanding can be determined. This method involves a set of criteria or framework to examine something (Taylor et al., 2000: 46). This can be a base-line assessment in which the learners’ pre-existing knowledge or entry level is determined in advance, or it can be summative assessment, done at the end of a learning event to assess whether learners have learnt what was intended. The assessing method is to be used throughout the learning event because it helps the teacher to realize on time if there is remedial work, enrichment or intervention needed. It also prevents monologue. For the purpose of engaging learners in the classroom learning activities, assessing strategy should be used beyond simply assessing knowledge, to challenge learners in term of critical thinking, application and simulation.

2.5.2. Collaborative Strategy
Collaborative strategy refers to small group interactions in which learners share ideas, experiences and views. Group work is aimed at engaging all learners with their
co-learners and it offers broader participation and support as they can freely share their problems and be exposed to alternative views (Taylor et al., 2000: 78). Collaborative strategy relates to what Jaques (1991: 10) refers to as ‘co-operative learning’, described in simple terms as ‘learning in groups’. According to Brown and Duguid (2000: 137) learning is a social process in which social groups provide resources for their members. Collaborative strategy allows learners to practise the newly acquired skills in a supportive resourceful group setting. Through group-work learners acquire social skills and also learn to appreciate diversity of views, language, experience and beliefs. Group learning enhances learners’ feeling of security and sense of belonging.

2.5.3. Experimenting strategy
In the experimenting strategy of engaging adult learners in the learning activities, the learning content is approached by trial and error, and focus is on the reiterative process of observation, hypothesis and testing the outcomes with the new information gained (Taylor et al, 2000: 90). This strategy provides learners with a common experiential foundation, and the potential to stimulate interest and nurture curiosity. It is also during the experimental strategy that the teacher models various skills and allows learners to practice them in a supportive setting. Through the experimental strategy, learners can engage cognitively, kinesthetically and aesthetically. They think, reason and argue about what they are doing, moving around to demonstrate or model skills and perform an activity, ultimately reflecting on their emotions about the learning content they are engaged with. In that way social, political and economic empowerment can be achieved, as learners are doing something with the content and can realize its application value and authenticity.

2.5.4. Imaging strategy
Imaging strategy involves visioning at a deeper level than reflection, and might include re-experiencing something that happened earlier (Taylor et al., 2000: 96). For instance, projecting into a particular situation trying to ‘be there’ and work with what one finds. Imaging calls for one’s past experience, because no one can imagine something he/she does not know. To form images of whatever phenomenon, pre-existing knowledge is required; hence Knowles (1989: 88) maintains that adequate existing experience is necessary to permit the new content to be learned. If the
The teacher is using imaging methods to engage adult learners, tapping on their experiences is necessary. The use of experience as a foundation for learning is called ‘experiential learning’, and includes techniques such as problem solving. Engaging learners using imaging strategy broadens their learning opportunities as it goes beyond the learning content and brings daily life experience and life challenges into the learning. In this teaching strategy, adults’ life experience forms point of departure for effective learning to take place and allows the adult learners to experience the relevance of the learning content.

2.5.5. Inquiry strategy
Inquiry strategy centres on pursuing a question and emphasizes something to be investigated. It focuses on exploring and discovering (Taylor et al., 2000: 130). In this strategy, learners are to be active creators of their knowledge by researching and bringing about new insight into learning. For instance, the teachers can engage learners in an action research in which learners are to bring about change in their lives and communities. According to Vella (1994), Taylor et al. (2000), and Gravett (2001), change is the major reason why adults engage in learning. Therefore, through this inquiry strategy, learners can be engaged in learning activities to be agents of change in their societies. For learning to take place through inquiry strategy, learners are to be engaged, that is allowed to do something with the learning content, to the point where the outcomes are beneficial to them and others. This is one of the strategies that can be used if emancipation is the ultimate goal of that particular learning event. Through inquiry strategy, adult learners are given a chance to be active participants in addressing their social, political and economic affairs directly. This allows the learners to realize the immediate application and relevance of the learning content.

2.5.6. Performing and simulation strategies
Performing strategy is about performing a task, such as doing something in the field; while simulation is doing something that is as close to real as possible (Taylor et al., 2000: 182). These methods of engaging adults in learning are based on the fact that learning programmes should give the learners an opportunity to try out the desired behavior, first in the context of a supportive group before doing it alone in their respective societies (Rogers, 1993: 40) Performing and simulation strategies are
brought together by their mutual aim of addressing or confronting real issues of life. During the use of these strategies, the learning content is selected in such a way that it reflects real life and also the learning task about what learners are experiencing in their lives. In these strategies, learners’ engagement is imperative and, without it, implementation of the acquired skill is impossible. Performing and simulation strategies are focused upon the notion that adults learn by doing and therefore without doing something about learning content the learning is minimal.

2.5.7. Reflecting Strategy
According to Taylor et al. (2000: 242), reflecting strategy is closely related to inquiry strategy. Here the learner goes deeper and asks himself/herself: “what does the question mean and how am I interpreting it?” This strategy requires the learners to do personal inspection in terms of the learning content. The teacher using this strategy probes learners to realize their personal growth or development that results from the meaningfulness of the learning content. In the reflecting strategy the learning content is used to conscientize learners about life issues that directly and indirectly affect them and interpret them for their own development. This can be related to what Freire (1971: 74) referred to as conscientisation of learners through the learning content for their own emancipation. This demands learners’ engagement, as they are to wrestle or do something with the learning content by interpreting it and relating it to their daily lives.

Though there are various strategies or methods that the teacher can use to engage adult learners in the learning activities, it is important to realize that choice of teaching strategy depends upon various factors, such as the purpose of the learning event, and learners’ needs and experience (Heimlich & Norland, 1994: 176). ABET teachers are to be careful when deciding to use any teaching strategy, bearing in mind that, according to the constructivist theory, learning is a social process of meaning-making through interaction with the environment (Gravett: 2001). Interaction and activity are core aspects of learning and can only be actualized through the use of well-planned learning tasks.

2.6. LEARNING TASKS
Learning tasks are activities given to learners or posed as open questions to allow them to engage cognitively, kinesthetically and aesthetically with the learning content (Vella, 2000: 3). Through these learning tasks the teacher can determine learner entry level, their cognitive abilities and application capabilities. Learning tasks permit learners to enhance their learning. The importance of learning tasks is emphasized by Vella (2000: 3) when stating that engaging adult learners through learning tasks enables them to be accountable for their learning. These learning tasks are to connect with what the learners already know and with their unique context. This calls for learners’ use of their pre-existing knowledge and experience, which serve as a foundation on which the new learning content will be laid. The importance of experience is emphasized by Tight (1996: 22), when stating that learning is the process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience. This according to the constructivist theory promotes meaningful learning, as learners will integrate their newly acquired knowledge to their pre-existing knowledge. It is through this connection of the new and the pre-existing knowledge that the teacher has to determine the adult learners’ entry level and expectations and therefore make some necessary adjustments. All these can be done by engaging learners in learning tasks that demand the incorporation of the learners’ pre-existing knowledge and experience.

Learning tasks are very important in ensuring learners’ engagement and in inviting them to practice dialogue with one another. The word ‘dialogue’ is from the Greek word *dia* and *logos*, meaning two, across or through and, respectively, word, speech, thought, reason or judgment. This implies that dialogue involves two parties, who are reciprocally active either in giving a word, speech or thought, or receiving that word, speech or thought. Therefore in a teaching-learning situation, dialogue is considered an important vehicle used to carry the facilitative, guiding and mediating roles of the teacher and also the engagement of learners in their learning activities. That means dialogue is used as an indispensable tool during the adult learners’ engagement in their learning activities, as they will be interacting with one another and also with the teacher. According to Houser and Vaughan (1995: 25), this is called ‘co-learning’, as the teacher values the learners’ inputs and experiences and also become a learner. To emphasize this, Vella (in Gordon, 1998: 83) explains how dialogue in a cooperative learning climate ensures engagement of all learners in
small groups interactions. That implies that even if the learning tasks given to learners are engaging, if the learning climate is threatening and learners feel insecure, their engagement will be hampered.

2.7. CONCLUSION

According to Vella (2000: 134), Gravett (2001: 7) and Jaques (1991: 77), adult learners learn best when they are engaged in their learning activities. Therefore classroom learning and teaching activities are to be planned in such a way that adult learners’ engagement is enhanced. This can be done through effective application of principles of adult learning and also integrating appropriate teaching approaches and strategies or methods, within a secured and non-threatening atmosphere. It is therefore under such conditions that learners’ engagement and active participation can equip them with the skills necessary for active participation in social, political and economic matters.
SECTION 3

RESEARCH STRATEGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to present the methodology and design of this study, discussing and giving a clear exposition of methodologies employed to research the engagement of adult learners in the classroom learning activities. The section will include the research paradigm, research approach, sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical issues.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Glesne (1998: 5) a research paradigm is a framework, which determines the key concepts, methodological rules and related epistemological questions. For the purpose of this study the research paradigm employed is constructivist as opposed to positivistic and critical. The constructivist paradigm holds that multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals and the researcher’s task is to understand how various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. A positivistic research paradigm, meanwhile, assumes that a fixed and measurable reality exists external to all (Glesne, 1998: 5). Also, whilst in the constructivist paradigm, Glesne (1998: 6) argues, variables are complexly interwoven and difficult to measure, in a positivistic paradigm variables can be identified and relationships measured. From these definitions, this research study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, as it aims at understanding and interpreting meaning people have constructed of their situations and experience (Merriam 1998: 6).

3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative approach is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the adult learners’ engagement in the classroom activities. The reason for using this research approach is based on the assertion by Merriam and Simpson (1995: 98) and Glesne
that the overall purpose of qualitative research is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, and to delineate the process to meaning-making and description of how people interpret what they experience. To emphasize this, Patton (1990: 44) defined qualitative research as an effort to understand real life situations in their uniqueness, within a particular context and relating to the interactions prevalent there. This understanding is gained when the researcher goes into the natural setting (field) with the intention of discovering the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved. Hence, Merriam and Simpson (1995: 139) considered the researcher in a qualitative research to be the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, as he/she physically goes to the site, the group of people or the institution (the field), to collect data in a natural setting, using observation, interviews and document analysis. Data in a qualitative research is richly descriptive, which means words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learnt about the phenomena (Merriam 1998: 8).

According to Glesne (1998: 31), qualitative research depends on a variety of methods for gathering data, so contributing to its trustworthiness. Hence, for the purpose of this research, observation, interviews and document analysis were used.

### 3.4. SAMPLING

Sampling is a process of selecting a few from a larger group to form the basis for estimating or predicting a fact, situation or outcome (Kumar 1989: 148). A sample is a subgroup of the population of interest in the research study. Qualitative researchers tend to select each of their cases purposefully because the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth (Patton, 1990: 46). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was used, in which the researcher’s judgment is used to decide who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives (Kumar 1989: 162).

As a researcher, I only go to those people who in my opinion are likely to have the required information and who are willing to serve it. For the purpose of addressing questions guiding this research, eight teaching and learning events for level three and four adult learners were selected to reflect on the engagement of adult learners in the
classroom activities. This sample was considered relevant and appropriate on the following basis: ABET level three and four teaching and learning events are attended by adult learners having a reasonable classroom experience. In addition, they must have adapted to the classroom atmosphere, and since they are not on the basic levels of ABET their language must have developed to allow them freedom of expression so that they can interact with one another and their teacher. As Patton (1990: 58) and Glesne (1998: 26) emphasize, the researcher must select a purposive sample from which the most can be learned, and the selected participants must add value to the research.

Therefore, selection of my sample was based on the belief that the learning events chosen would assist me in exploring the engagement of adult learners in the classroom learning activities. This was also ensured by using maximum variation sampling, which according to Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 56) and Glesne (1998: 29) refers to selecting participants of a research study in such way that they represent a variety of views on the issue under study. Participants of this research study were adult learners in ABET level three and four classes. The observation in these classes was done during the eight learning events/periods of various learning areas. That means four ABET level three periods and four ABET level four events were observed. Eight ABET teachers whose learning events were observed, were selected as participants for interviews. This was done with the intention of gaining an understanding of a variety of approaches to teaching and learning, which include a variety of strategies to engage learners in the classroom learning activities.

3.5. DATA-COLLECTION

3.5.1. Observation
The study used observation as the primary method of data collection, coupled with interviews and document analysis. According to Glesne (1998: 47), observation is used when one or more persons observes what is occurring in a particular real life situation, and then classifies and records pertinent happenings according to some scheme. That means during the observation the researcher observes everything that is happening, makes notes and jots down thoughts without narrow specific regard for his/her research problem. This is done by using all the senses, to capture how the
setting sounds and smells, as well as how it changes, and when. In an observation, the researcher can assume a role of a participant observer or non-participant observer. As the former, the observer becomes part of the activities under observation while as the latter the researcher assumes a very neutral position in which he/she only observes, without taking part in the activities under study.

For the purpose of this study the researcher assumed the role of a non-participant observer, not participating in what was happening at the research site but rather assuming the status of an onlooker. Because not everything can be observed, such as the teacher’s intentions, feelings and motives, those observations were complemented with interviews held with teachers whose learning events were observed and also analysis of documents related to classroom engagement. Only those behaviors specific to the adult learners’ engagement were observed, and some keywords were identified, to be used as topical issues during the interview with teachers whose learning event was observed. To ensure adherence to the purpose of the study, prior arrangements were made that included determining who was to be observed, the conditions under which observations would occur and the behaviors, to be classified and recorded. Firstly, this was done by contacting the district official responsible for ABET centres, so as to get information on their location and also the contact details of centre managers. Then, after identifying an ABET centre where the research was to be conducted, a letter was send to the manager to request permission to observe level 3 and 4 ABET learners’ engagement in the classroom learning activities. In this letter the purpose of the research was clarified and explained (See Appendix: A).

During the observation, field-notes were taken. According to Glesne (1998: 49) field-notes remain the primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher, and are filled with the description of people, places, events, activities and conversations. They are to be both descriptive and analytic, and should portray the context in which more focused observations and interactions take place. They should also include analytic notes, which reflect the researcher’s views (Glesne, 1998: 53). In this research recorded field-notes included the observation number, date, time and physical setting (See Appendix: D). In describing the actual happenings, direct quotations of what people said was recorded, to give a clear picture of the ABET learners’ engagement
in that classroom. That also helped to focus on words frequently used or unique to the setting and also helped in wording interview questions. According to Lofland in Merriam (1998: 105) the usefulness of the field-notes is essential, along with rigorous recording soon after the observation.

3.5.2. Interviews

When it comes to obtaining information about things that could not be observed directly, such as feelings, thoughts and intentions, interviews were used. According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993: 42), an interview is a direct verbal interaction between an interviewer and the respondent with the aim of collecting data. Data collected through interviews enable the researcher to gain a better insight into the respondent’s perspectives on certain issues. According to Merriam (1998: 74), interview can be differentiated as three types, namely: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews consist of preset, or rigid questions, which the interviewer has to ask without changing anything. Semi-structured interviews consist of pre-set questions, which the interviewer can ask variably, depending on his/her discretion. Lastly, the unstructured interviews do not have pre-set questions.

According to Seidman (1991: 4) interviews provide a sufficient avenue of enquiry to enable the researcher to understand the meaning people involved in the study make of their experience. Therefore, for the purpose of this research study, semi structured interviews are used, meaning the questions are open ended and less structured. They reflect flexible wording and are guided by topics or issues to be explored as determined during the observation. According to Merriam (1998: 74), this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.

Open-ended questions allow the participants to construct details of their experiences concerning the issue under study. According to Seidman (1991: 1), it is through these details that participants tell stories from their streams of consciousness, thus giving access to the most complicated social and educational issues. Social and educational issues are obstructions based on the concrete experiences of people. It is through this open-ended questions during an interview that I put the observed behavior in context and gained a better understanding of it. Because these questions
are not structured it implies that they are intended to address certain themes in the study - hence thematic issues are designed as follows:

**Table. 3.5.2: Interview Guide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Themes &amp; open-ended questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you find to be most challenging about teaching adults?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Views on teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe to me how you plan your lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Views of adult as learners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you know if your learners have learned?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview participants are ABET teachers whose learning events were observed. The purpose of this interview was to establish the extent to which teachers consider the learners’ engagement in their learning activities to be beneficial. Prior arrangements were made with the ABET teachers through the centre manager, who through using the existing timetable provided me with a list of learning areas to observe. I thereafter compiled an observation and interview programme (See Appendix: C). Preparatory work, conducted during the staff meeting, included: requesting permission to conduct interviews (See Appendix: B), locating and enlisting the cooperation of the respondents, motivating them and convincing them of the importance of their participation in this research (Trochim, 2000: 78). These interviews entailed tape recording, which was preceded by the permission granted by the respondent. At the end of the interview the respondent is thanked for participating in this research study. The tape-recorded interviews were later transcribed (See Appendix: E)

**3.5.3. Document Analysis**

According to Glesne (1998: 58), documents corroborate one’s observation and interviews, and thus increase the trustworthiness of the researcher’s findings. Documents enrich what the researcher sees and hears by supporting, expanding and challenging his or her portrayals and perceptions. Documents that were examined included teachers’ learning event preparations, examples of textbooks and tests (See
Appendix: F). This was done with the purpose of investigating how engaging the learning materials were, as well as finding out whether the adult learners’ engagement in the learning activities was pre-planned or just something that the teacher decided when he or she was in the class.

Based on what engagement is, according to Vella (2000), Rogers (1993) and Watermeyer and Winberg (1996), I looked for the following aspects in the documents:

- Are the activities engaging learners cognitively and kinesthetically?
- Are the learning activities allowing learners to practice the desired skills and knowledge?
- Are the learning activities allowing learners to be decision-makers and problem-solvers?
- Are the learning activities allowing learners to learn from each other in groups?

From these I hoped to determine whether the learning tasks given to learners are to be purposefully designed and implemented, in order to enable learners to be participants of democratic practices in a conducive atmosphere.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process of scanning and organizing data into meaningful summaries, which are directed at addressing the research question. Data analysis in this study was done using the constant comparative method, as outlined in Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 134), Merriam (1998) and Schumacher and MacMillan (1993: 479). This strategy incorporates inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of units of meaning obtained. Data were analyzed inductively by identifying recurrent themes, which were then organized into categories, allowing one or more patterns to emerge. This whole process of how data analysis was conducted will be fully discussed in the presentation of data.
3.7. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Merriam and Simpson (1985: 101) both producers and consumers of research want to be assured that the findings of an investigation are to be believed and trusted, hence the issues of validity and reliability are important for consideration in any kind of research. Validity and reliability have different meanings in quantitative research and qualitative research. The former is explained in terms of the instrumentation, the appropriateness of the data analysis techniques, the degree of relationship between the conclusion drawn and the data upon which they presumably rest, while the latter is explained in terms of whether the interviews and observation were well constructed, whether the content of the documents was properly analyzed and whether the conclusions of the study rested upon the data (Merriam, 1998: 199).

Glesne (1998: 32) considers validity to be the trustworthiness of the research, which means it is the extent to which the researcher measured what he/she is supposed to measure. According to Merriam (1998: 180), there are two types of validity, namely external validity and internal validity. Internal validity is about the congruency of one’s findings with reality while external validity is the extent to which findings can be generalized to other situation (Merriam 1998: 184). In this research, internal validity is actually reflected in the qualitative research design employed, because qualitative researchers are primary instruments of data collection and analysis. Interpretations of reality are therefore accessed directly, in addition to which, to ensure internal validity in this research study, multiple methods of data collection were used, namely, observations, interviews and documents analysis. This use of multiple data-collection methods is called ‘triangulation’, after a cartographical technique in which measurements made using at least three different points of reference. Again, data was also collected over a long period of time (four weeks), to ensure an in-depth understanding of the adult learners engagement in learning classroom activities.

External validity in this research was ensured by providing a thick description of the observations, acquired by observing various learning events. For instance, teaching
and learning processes in an ABET centre were observed in level three and level four classes during the presentation of various learning areas by various ABET teachers (See Appendices: C)

Reliability determines the extent to which one’s findings will be found again. The notion is problematic in qualitative research because replication of a qualitative study will not yield consistent results, due to numerous interpretations of the same reliability. Therefore, reliability in qualitative study is considered in terms of the consistency of the result with the data collected. To ensure consistency or reliability in this study, I have tried to conduct an audit trail strategy, described by Merriam and Simpson (1995: 102) as a detailed discussion of the research methodology in which full details appear on how data were collected, how categories were derived and how decisions were made. This allows the reader to enter the research context with better understanding (Glesne, 1998: 32).

3.8. ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical issues refer to those strategies put into place by the researcher to avoid the abuse of his/her power against the participants, and also to ensure their protection (Merriam, 1998 and Patton, 1990). According to Seidman (1991: 46), participants have the right to be protected against vulnerability, which can be done by seeking informed consent of participants through giving the details and purpose of the study. I sought permission to conduct a research from the ABET centre manager and also permission for conducting interviews with the educators (See Appendices: A & B).

Due to the fact that, through interviewing, the researcher accesses the participant’s subjective understanding of his/her behavior, it is of the utmost importance that the interviews are flexible enough to accommodate the interviewee’s choice of location, time and date (Seidman, 1991). To ensure this, a consent letter was written to respondents on which the purpose of the study was fully explained and they were to indicate their preferences of the interview’s location, time and date, with a signature. This was followed up with a phone call to confirm the interview.
Although I used pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, Seidman (1991: 47), Patton (1990: 356) and Merriam (1998: 217) illustrate how difficult it is to protect participants as the identity, even when disguised, is potentially discernable and that can lead to the participant being potentially vulnerable. Therefore I have tried to present the facts with as little distortion as possible, and by carefully disseminating the results. Participant observation could cause changes in the normal behavior of educators and learners, or the they might be embarrassed about something that was done or said. Hence, as Seidman (1991: 49) emphasized, the researcher must do everything in his or her power to protect the physical and psychological welfare of the participant, and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied. In summary, I tried at all times to be sensitive to the ethical implications of the research.

3.9. CONCLUSION

In this section the methodology and design of this research study was explained. That included the explanation and purpose of qualitative approach employed to gain an in-depth understanding of adult learners’ engagement in the classroom learning activities. The sampling procedures and data collection methods were also explained. All these were backed up by the explanation of procedures used to ensure reliability and validity of the research procedures and findings. Ethical procedures observed to protect participants were also explained.
SECTION 4

ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Merriam (1998: 178), data analysis is a process of making sense out of the data and includes, among other things, consolidating, reducing and interpreting what is observed, heard and read during data collection. For the purpose of this research study, the constant comparative method was used to analyze data. This method involves the construction of categories or themes and subcategories derived from data, which are continuously compared with one another. This was done in order to identify recurring patterns in the data (Merriam, 1998: 179). Conducting data collection and data analysis simultaneously and continuously, as proposed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 123), was advantageous in that I did not have to handle a large volume of data to be analyzed at the end of observations, interviews and document analysis.

4.2. OBSERVATIONAL DATA

In this research essay the observational data is gathered through observation of classroom learning events at the ABET centre. During these observations, field-notes were taken (see Appendices:D) and I therefore used what Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 148) refer to as a more hands-on approach when analyzing the data, rather than computer programmes. What follows is an explanation of an example on how observational data was analyzed, starting from when field-notes were compiled, up to the point of categories being formed.

After making my first observation, I read through my hand-written field-notes, and re-read them twice before coding. This coding indicated the learning area presented
during the observation and the original page number of the field-notes. For example, F/NS-2 refers to field-notes (F) of the observed natural science (NS) learning area and the field-notes page number two (2). During this reading of field-notes I started unitizing data by looking for chunks or units of meaning as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 128). These units of meaning are potentially meaningful segments of data that reveal information related to the research question. To facilitate an easy manipulation of the identified units of meaning, I separated one unit of meaning from the next by drawing four columns labeled on top:

- Unit of meaning,
- Observed learning area,
- Page number, and
- Code.

An example of an extract from the field-notes is: “Then the teacher moves to the front of the class and explains in Zulu and in Sesotho to all learners and ask learners if is there anyone still in need of some help”.

Table 4.2(a). Example of coded field-notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of meaning</th>
<th>Observed learning area</th>
<th>Page number</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ role in engaging ABET learners.</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F/EMS-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each unit of meaning was then rewritten onto a card to facilitate easy handling and thereafter these units of meaning were transferred to a discovery sheet, where the process of linking the emerging words, concepts and ideas and recurring themes began. These recurring patterns formed the basis of the preliminary coding categories. For example in the table below, about 9 provisional categories emerged from the observation of EMS learning event.
Table 4.2(b). Some of the provisional categories from EMS observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provisional Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as a language of teaching hindered learners’ engagement.</td>
<td>Limited prior schooling experience and language comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical classroom setting restricted learners’ movement and interaction.</td>
<td>Traditional sitting arrangement restricted learners’ movement while the teacher occupies the front position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching strategies or methods was limited to question and answers only.</td>
<td>Question and answer method restricted to oral, pen and paper responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose for learners’ engagement was to prepare them for tests and examinations.</td>
<td>Learners are engaged for tests and examinations preparations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ main role was to transmit information or facts.</td>
<td>Teachers are the main if not the only source of knowledge and they are to ensure that that knowledge can be reproduced during testing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having prepared a list of provisional categories, I placed each coded unit of meaning under provisional categories, using the ‘look/ feel-alike’ criteria advocated by Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 137). As I continually used these criteria to compare the data cards with provisional categories, data that did not seem to fit into a particular category were placed elsewhere, with some being tentatively named to represent a new provisional category. When a provisional category contained approximately six or eight unitized data cards, I was in a position to draw up a “rule of inclusion” which, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (in Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 139), should be written in the form of a prepositional statement to convey the meaning contained in the data cards collected under a category name. All the remaining data cards were then included on the basis of rules of inclusion. The same process of data analysis as described above, was employed for the rest of the
observations. Analysis continued until there were no data left. For example, the table below depicts an excerpt of a provisional category and includes rules of inclusion, applicable units of meaning and notes to assist in further exploration.

Table 4.2(c): Excerpts from a provisional category, including rules of inclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and subcategories</th>
<th>Rule of inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Teaching strategies or methods restricted learners engagement</strong></td>
<td>For adult learners to be engaged with the learning content, the teaching strategy or method that the teacher uses should create opportunities for engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1.1. Teaching to ensure knowledge transmission. | **F / NS-1**  
The teacher explains various field of natural science  
**F / LLC-4**  
The teacher explains the notes. |
| 1.2. Questions and answers method used to assess knowledge. | **F / HSS-4**  
After the presentation the teacher orally ask learners the following question.  
**F / LCC-1**  
After reading the comprehension test passage, learners are now asked questions and they raise their hands as an indication that they are ready to respond to the questions. |
| 1.3. Teaching aimed at good tests and examinations results. | **F / NS-4**  
Teacher acknowledged learners’ oral inputs and responses, and thereafter write test on the chalkboard. She then requested learners to write in their test books.  
**F / LLC-1**  
Test scripts were issued out and some learners were not satisfied that they have... |
By exploring, experimenting and constantly checking, I systematically gained a deeper understanding of the categories that were beginning to form. This enabled me to identify ambiguities and overlaps and in this regard the rules of inclusion were refined and adjusted where it was deemed necessary. The refined rules of inclusion for each of my categories were then compared with others, written up as “outcomes propositions” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 144), which formed the framework of the findings to be discussed in section 5.

In line with Maykut and Morehouse’s (1994: 158) suggestion, outcomes were prioritized according to the outcome propositions, their importance in contributing to the focus of this enquiry and their prominence in the data. Units of meaning or categories that were recurrent among all the observed events were indicators of their importance.

4.3. **INTERVIEW DATA**

Interview data was collected from interviews with teachers whose learning events were observed (Appendice:D). I thoroughly read and studied interview manuscripts
to identify units of information, which will serve as the basis for identifying categories. According to Le Compte and Preissle (1993: 237), after the researcher has established categories within which data will be organized and has sorted all bits of data into relevant categories, patterns emerged. This patterns can be seen as a way of establishing which categories are related and grouping the categories, in order to make data more accessible for interpretation.

After the first recorded interview with Bongi, it was transcribed verbatim into a dialogue format. I coded the dialogue form indicating the name (pseudonym) of the participant and the page number of the transcript. For example, T/B –1 refers to a transcript (T) of the interview with Bongi (B), page one (1). I started the process by reading through the transcript of my interview with Bongi. As I read through for the third time, I began to “unitise data” by looking at “units of meaning”. I separated one unit of meaning from the next by drawing a line using a pencil, and writing a word or phrase carrying the essence of this unit of meaning in the margin. I also clearly marked the transcript and the page number, which this unit of meaning comes from. For example, Bongi’s response to my question on her greatest challenges in the ABET classroom, “Teaching learners of various age groups and different educational level. For instance most of these learners are placed in ABET level 4 because the claim to have attended school up to grade 6, 7or 8 but, working with them daily show me in different ways that some of them lack even the basic reading and writing skills. The problem is that they are admitted into ABET centre without any proof of former schooling”. The code T / B-1 was also written in the margin to mark that this unit of meaning is from the transcript of the interview with Bongi on page one. Each unit of meaning was then cut out off the original transcript and pasted onto a card to facilitate further handling. These units of meaning were then transferred to the discovery sheet, where I began the process of linking the emerging words, concepts and ideas to find recurring themes that could form the bases of the provisional categories

From the interview with Bongi about 10 provisional categories emerged. Some of these categories are listed below.
Table 4.3(a): Some of the provisional categories from the interview with Bong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners could not understand English.</th>
<th>English is used as a medium of instruction.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of teaching was to ensure that learners pass tests and examinations.</td>
<td>Learners must pass tests and examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed learning content inhibited creativity through engagement.</td>
<td>Textbooks are followed page by page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers continued to teach even if learners exhibit some knowledge gaps.</td>
<td>Rushing for completion of tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question and answer method dominated the teaching and learning transaction.</td>
<td>Ensuring knowledge transmission.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having prepared a list of provisional categories, I now placed each unit of meaning under the provisional categories, using the “look/feel-alike criteria”, as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 137), comparing the data cards with provisional categories. Data that did not seem to fit into a particular category were placed elsewhere. Some of the data that did not fit into a particular category were tentatively named to represent a new provisional category.

When a provisional category contained approximately six to eight unitised data cards, I was in a position to draw up a “rule of inclusion”. A rule of inclusion as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 139) should be written in the form of a prepositional statement which conveys the meaning contained in the data cards were then included on the basis of rules for inclusion. The same process of data analysis as described above was used with the rest of the interviews. This continued until there were no data left, and the table below indicates
an excerpt of a provisional category, which includes the rules of inclusion, the applicable units of meaning and notes to assist in further exploration.

**Table 4.3(b). Excerpts from a provisional category (Tests and examinations are the main focus)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category and subcategories</th>
<th>Rule of inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Tests and examinations are the main focus.</strong></td>
<td>Adult learners’ engagement in the learning activities is mainly focusing upon achieving good tests and examinations results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1.1. Lesson presentations are guided by tests and examinations questions. | **T / J-2**  
“You know I discourage the use of vernacular because these learners will not be writing their exams in vernacular”.  
**T / R-1**  
“I make sure that what I am teaching will be part of the test”. |
| 1.2. Learners’ activities prepare learners for the tests and examinations. | **T / L-2**  
“It is important for learners to participate in class because these activities help them to be ready for the tests and exams”.  
**T / R-1**  
“Most questions I asked in class are from previous question papers and that helps them for exams”. |
| 1.3. Effective teaching is reflected by good tests and examinations results. | **T / J-3**  
“When they are able to answer questions correctly and pass tests and exams, I know that they have learnt”.”|
1.4. Good tests and examination results are the teacher’s responsibility.

| T/P-1 | “Excellent exam results make me feel fulfilled and confident about my teaching”. |
| T/B-1 | “It is teaching that produces results”. |

Tests and examination results determine the learners’ empowerment.

| T/B-2 | “They move to the next level or they get certificates that will help them get promotions or if they are unemployed they will be able to get jobs if they are lucky”. |
| T/R-3 | “Some of the learners are send to this ABET centre by their employers, and they expect excellent results from those learners at the end of the year”. |

As I have done with the observation data, by exploring, experimentating and constantly checking, I systematically gained a deeper understanding of the categories that were beginning to form. This enables me to identify ambiguities and overlaps and in this regard the rules of inclusion were refined and adjusted where it was deemed necessary. The refined rules of inclusion for each of my categories were then compared with others. These were written up as “outcomes propositions” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 144) and formed the framework of the findings, to be discussed in section 5. In line with Maykut and Morehouse’s (1994: 158) suggestion, outcomes were prioritized according to the outcome propositions, importance in term of contributing to the focus of this enquiry and their prominence in the data. Units of meaning or categories that were recurrent among all the observed events were indicators of their importance.

4.4. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS
Due to the fact that ABET teachers were not planning learning activities, except following the activities as they are in the textbook, the only document I accessed for analysis was tests and written class work question papers (See Appendix F). In these documents the adult learners’ engagement was restricted to knowledge retrieval. That was not sufficiently engaging as learners were only cognitively challenged. In those tests and written class works learners were not challenged to apply their life experiences and even to practice the skills they have acquired. Their engagement was limited to pen and paper and no performance or demonstration of any sort was shown.

4.5. FINAL CATEGORIES

As I have already indicated, the outcomes were prioritized according to my focus of enquiry and their prominence in the data. By the end of the data analysis process, I identified a number of categories and subcategories. These serve as a basis for the findings of this research and are listed in Table 4.5 (a) and Table 4.5 (b).

Table 4.5. (a) Observation categories and outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and subcategories</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Teaching and learning transaction</strong></td>
<td>Transmission perspective is used in which learners are to follow content in its authorized format and the teachers are systematically guiding learners through a set of prescribed tasks or learning content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmission of information is the main aim of teaching.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning content is prescribed and followed as it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ role is to authoritatively guide learners through the learning content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Learning Tasks
Learning tasks are not planned in advance. Learning tasks are only used for assessing learners. The outcome of the learning tasks is limited to test and examinations results.

Learning tasks are not pre-planned or adjusted by the teacher but they are followed just as they are in the prescribed book and assessing learning tasks are mainly used for preparing learners for tests and examinations.

3. Learning Environment
Physical setting prohibited free interaction. Learner to learner interaction was limited. Learner–teacher interaction was authoritative.

Traditional sitting arrangement in which learners are sitting one behind the other while the teacher dominate the front part of the class as an authoritative figure and the source of all knowledge.

Table: 4.5(b) Interview categories and outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and subcategories</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Teachers’ personal classroom challenges</td>
<td>Limited teaching time, use of English as a medium of instruction and lack of teaching and learning material were the greatest challenges that were facing teachers and lead them to the point of hopelessness in terms of engaging adult learners in the learning activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching approaches and effective learning</td>
<td>More focus was on covering a lot of content and ensuring that learners’ participation is aimed at helping them to be able to reproduce that learning content later as required during tests or examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Adults as learners</td>
<td>ABET teachers were of the perception that adult learners find it difficult to learn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
background / experience. Adult learners’ age limited their active participation.
through participation and engagement because of their limited schooling experience and age.

All the above-tabulated outcomes from both the observation categories and interview categories were integrated, as there were some elements of over-lapping. This integration resulted into the following final categories, which form a framework of the final findings to be discussed in section 5.

Table.4.5(c) Final integrated categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers’ role in engaging learners in learning activities was limited to transmission of facts</td>
<td>Transmission perspective is used in which learners are to follow content in its authorized format and the teachers are systematically guiding learners through a set of prescribed tasks or learning content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learners were only engaged through prescribed tasks during assessment</td>
<td>Learning tasks are not pre-planned or adjusted by the teacher but they are followed just as they are in the prescribed book and assessing learning tasks are mainly used for preparing learners for tests and examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Restricted learning environment hindered learners’ engagement in the learning activities</td>
<td>Restrictive traditional sitting arrangement in which learners are sitting one behind the other while the teacher dominate the front part of the class as an authoritative figure and the only source of all knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the process of data analyzed using the constant comparative method was explained. This was done in conjunction with data collection through
observation of the learning events, interviews with teachers whose learning events were observed and document analysis related to classroom teaching and learning transaction. The above-presented integrated categories from observation data, interviews data as presented in table 4.5 (c) will serve as basis for the following discussion of findings.
SECTION 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate the engagement of adult learners in their classroom activities. Based on the observations of the adult learning events, interviews held with the ABET teachers and the documents analyzed, I came to a realization that the transmission perspective to teaching was the most commonly used perspective, as the ABET teachers’ role was limited to transmitting bare facts to ABET learners and ensuring that they could reproduce those facts during the tests. Again, I also realized that the commonly used strategy to engage adult learners in the learning activities was assessing strategy, as ABET learners were only engaged through question-and-answers method during the assessment process. All these were taking place in a non-conducive learning environment in which ABET learners engagement and interaction were restricted. It was therefore on those grounds that I came to a definite conclusion that the engagement of adult learners in the learning activities was limited or restricted and that adult learners were more cognitively than kinesthetically and aesthetically engaged, and that was done only for the purpose of assessment.

In the discussion of my findings I draw on extracts from the observation field-notes and interviews manuscripts to illustrate and substantiate these findings. This discussion is backed up by the applicable research literature, as outlined in section 2. This is followed by a conclusion, which constitutes a summary of findings, and recommendations.

5.2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section, I discuss the final findings as outlined in the integrated categories tabulated in section 4. Again in my discussion of each ‘finding’, I draw on excerpts from the observations and interviews, to illustrate and substantiate the discussion, and inter-weave this with the applicable research literature from section 2. This is
done with the main aim of addressing the four research questions guiding this enquiry, namely:

Which strategies are used to engage adult learners in the learning activities?
When are adults learners engaged in the learning activities?
What are the hindrances to adult learners’ engagement?
What is the role of the teacher in engaging adult learners in the learning activities?

In this discussion of findings the integrated categories as depicted in the previous section will serve as a framework of the findings as derived from the process of data analysis.

5.2.1. Teachers’ role in engaging ABET learners in learning activities was limited to transmission of facts

From the observations and interviews I held with ABET teachers, I noticed that most teachers were using a transmission perspective to teaching and that was to a certain extent limiting adult learners’ engagement. From transmission perspective, this is because teachers are dominating the teaching and learning transaction and, consider it their responsibility to ensure that learners understand the learning content. For instance in one interview one teacher remarked: “…while I am teaching, I make sure that learners understand what I am teaching”. That implies that the ABET teachers consider their teaching act to be a determining factor for effective learning. That was also captured during my observation of a learning event in which the teacher was doing more of the talking while learners were sitting passively staring at the teacher. That indicates that learners’ engagement was restricted to being passive recipient of the imparted knowledge, while the teacher was the main source of knowledge. Freire (1971: 98) referred to this teaching approach as a ‘banking approach’, as learners are considered to be depositaries while teachers are depositors of knowledge. That approach is also characterized by defining successful learning in terms of the learners’ ability to produce the teacher’s knowledge without attaching any personal meaning to it or internalizing it. In that way learners are not given a chance to do something with the learning content, except storing it for later retrieval, for instance writing tests or examinations.
Meaningful learning is minimal if not lacking at all, as learners are expected to go through a set of prescribed tasks aimed at mastery of the learning content, without linking it to the adult learners’ daily activities or life experiences. For instance, during an observation there was an instance whereby learners were given a task as follows: “Discuss in your groups the format of a letter”. Without deeper analysis of that task it is evident that the activity was given to learners simply to pass time. I personally consider that to be an insult to the adult learners’ intellect, because they were not adequately challenged cognitively. I think that task would have been an effective learning experience if adult learners were given a chance to show each other or talk about letters they have received or written in real life. That would have demanded the incorporation of their life experiences, which would have served as a rich learning resource for other learners. Instead, it was a purely theoretical learning activity characterized by rote learning and restricted to learning bare facts strictly from the books. That is opposed by Shor (1992: 17) when stating that teaching goes beyond content presentation and Heimlich and Norland (1994: 121), who emphasize that teaching should not be mistaken for public speaking, but should incorporate the learners’ accumulated life experience. According to Brookfield (1986), Merriam and Caffarella (1991), Rogers (1993) and Knowles (1989) the accumulated life-experience of adult learners is a key factor in differentiating adult learners from child learners, and since it enhances their learning it should not be ignored.

Despite the fact that teachers were aware that there are many other teaching strategies that can be used to engage adult learners in their learning activities, teachers were only using a question-and-answer method. One teacher commented during an interview that: “… I know methods like role playing and debating but I do not use such methods because of time and space”. That shows that teachers are much more concerned about teaching than helping learners to learn. They are focusing more on teaching activities and neglect the importance of learning activities during the learning process. This denies the learners the opportunity to engage with the learning content.

5.2.2. Learners were only engaged through prescribed tasks during assessment
The restricted engagement of adult learners in the learning activities revolves around the learning tasks given to learners. According to Vella (2000: xiii), learning tasks are ways of ensuring learners engage with the learning content by making use of an open question put to groups or individuals who have the resources necessary to carry out that learning task. These learning tasks are to be planned, and be used purposefully, that is towards the realization of a particular outcome. Unfortunately, all these aspects about the learning tasks are neglected by most of the ABET teachers whose learning event I have observed.

In one of the interviews I conducted, one teacher commented that: “… to be honest I do not plan as such but I normally follow what is in the textbook and that is all that I use”. This statement reveals what is taking place in most of the ABET classes; hence I battled to use document analysis as one of the data collection strategies in this research. ABET teachers could not show any evidence of lesson or learning activity planning. If this is a common practice, what is one really expecting in terms of learners’ engagement in the learning activities? According to Vella (2000: 119) planning of learning tasks is crucial as it allows proper sequencing that enhances safety, for instance, from easy to difficult, from simple to complex, from group to individual. That implies that planning adult learners’ learning activities involves a great deal of effort, including the recognition of the following aspects of planning a learning event: who? (learners), what? (content), how? (method), why? (purpose), where? (venue), when? (time), what for? (outcomes). Vella (2000: 134) refers to those questions as seven steps of planning an adult learning event. If learning tasks are not planned, adult learners’ engagement can hardly take place. The common practice of not planning learning activities was discouraged by Vella (2000: 98), when stating that the ‘one size fits all’ principle does not work in helping adult learners to learn. That means learning tasks are to be adjusted to fit a particular group of adult learners and also individual learners respectively. For adult learners to be appropriately engaged, proper planning is imperative, otherwise lack of planning retards and minimize learners’ engagement in the learning activities.

The common practice in most of the adult learning events I have observed is that learning tasks are given to learners to test knowledge and also their memory capabilities. That means most of the learning tasks are used to check whether adult
learners are able to reproduce the learning content, which became evident in some of the comments made during the interviews. For instance one teacher commented: “… I ask them questions. It is when they are unable to answer question that I will realize that I need to repeat that lesson presentation”. In that instance the learners recall ability is tested. That is also reflected in the emphasis put upon the tests and examination results as an indication of effective teaching and learning. For instance one teacher remarked this way during an interview: “… it is only when you have learners passing your tests and ultimately exams when you feel like your teaching was really effective”. From the above extracts it is evident that learners’ engagement in their learning activities is restricted to the goal of preparing them for tests or examinations.

This contradicts what Vella (2000: 3) considers to be the main purpose of using learning tasks, namely to ensure that learners are engaged and held accountable for their learning. For the mere fact that the teacher considers himself or herself to be the one who has to make it a point that learners are capable of reproducing the learning content during tests or examinations, shows that the teachers’ perspective to teaching is mainly from a transmission perspective which is characterized by rote learning and teacher domination (Watermeyer & Winberg; 1996, Knowles; 1989). Again, that shows that the function of the learning tasks is limited to assessing knowledge only while other functions such as collaborating, experimenting, performing simulation and reflection are neglected.

Restricting learning task to assessing function, compromises the application and practical value of the learning content. That is because learners were not given the chance to practice or apply the learning content to the real life situation. During one of the observations of the adult learning events I observed the teacher giving learners a practical example to explain a learning activity, which learners were to respond to, in writing. Subsequently, during an interview with that teacher, I wanted to understand why that was done and the teacher responded: “… I wanted them to understand, so that they can be able to respond to the written activity accordingly”. To me that implied that the teacher did not use that practical example to show learners the practical value or implication of that particular content, or its relevance to their daily lives. Instead he wanted them to respond to the assessment task

Learning tasks given to adult learners were knowledge-based, and they were intended to ensure that the knowledge was transmitted. That inhibited the interrogation of the acquired knowledge as was evident during the learning event I observed, when one learner was given a task to read and summarize what she has been reading about under the topic: “South African women who played a leadership role during the march to Union building in 1956”. Thereafter the teacher followed that learning activity with questions, which were simply meant for reproduction of bare facts. Those questions were: (1) “which four women played a leadership role when women marched to Union building in 1956?” (2) “What do you understand by the concept ‘wa thintha abafazi wa thintha umbogo?o?’” These questions were barely knowledge-based, even though the content provided an opportunity for learners to be engaged interrogatively. Learners might have seen that content as encouraging them to challenge some of their prevailing community conditions and improve their own lives and those of others. In that instance, the learning content demanded the shift from transmission perspective to social reform perspective, but the teacher denied the learners the opportunity to reflect on their life experience or find solutions to problematised generative themes, as discussed by Freire in Watermeyer and Winberg (1996: 30) when emphasizing that social transformation as the main aim of adult education.

It is of utmost importance to consider the relevance of the learning content as imperative in the adult learning endeavor, because adults learn only what is appropriate to their purpose. In support of that, Taylor (et al., 2000:5) stated that if adults do not see an immediate tangible and practical result to what they are learning they will mentally tune out. Gordon (1998: 73) also maintains that the energy manifested during the engagement of adult learners emanates from the relevance and immediate application of the learning content.

According to Apps (1991: 70), my knowledge becomes your information and your knowledge my information, until we both have wrestled with it, analyzed it and attempted to apply it. It is through the usage of learning tasks that learners are engaged in the learning activities. Therefore the engagement of adult learners is to be
preceded by thoroughly planned learning tasks, through which the desired outcomes are realized without neglecting adult learners’ characteristics and the importance of a conducive learning environment.

5.2.3. **Restricted learning environment hindered learners engagement in the learning activities**

According to Hiemstra (1991: 9), the learning atmosphere is all of the physical, psychological, emotional and social or cultural influences affecting the growth and development of the adult learners. Therefore it is of great importance to ensure that those aspects are addressed before learners’ engagement can be envisaged. The physical setting in all the classes in which I observed the learning events, was still reflecting the traditional teaching setting in which learners are seated one behind the other, while the teacher occupied the front part of the classroom. That depicted the kind of relationship that existed between the learners and the teacher as well as amongst learners themselves. Learners’ interaction was minimal while the teacher occupied the dominant status of being the only source of information to which all learners were to pay attention. According to what one of the teacher said during the interview, the physical setup was beyond their control: “Sometimes, not always, I allow them to form groups and discuss with one another but that always waste time because we first have to change this chairs and tables around and to return them back to their original position at the end of the period. That is a big problem”. That shows that the prevailing physical setting was inhibiting learners’ free interaction, and although the teacher was aware of it, she felt very helpless. According to Brown and Duguid (2000: 137), learning is a remarkably social process in which social groups provide the resources for their members to learn. That means group interaction is an important aspect of adult learning practice, allowing as it does learners to share ideas and experiences, and therefore learn from each other.

From the observation of the adult learning events, learners were not freely interacting or even not free to respond to the teachers’ questions. There were in some instances, moments of frightening silence after the teacher has posed a question to the learners. It was unfortunate that most teachers I interviewed attributed that kind of learners’ behavior to the fact that they could not understand or speak English, but to my surprise that was evident even when the question was also posed in the vernacular
During an interview one teacher commented that: “To most of them language is a problem. For instance, in most cases they request me to translate the learning content into vernacular and that is very much time consuming”. This indicates that the teacher was too concerned about time to complete the prescribed amount of content, neglected giving learners time to learn what she was teaching, and used any language that would enhance their learning. This also shows that the influence of cultural aspects such as language in the learning environment was overlooked. According to Hiemstra (1991: 9), cultural influences within the learning environment determine to a larger extent the effectiveness of a learning event. Language forms part of that cultural influence, therefore it is important that learners are not excluded from engaging in the learning activities by using language they cannot understand. If they do not understand, they cannot be engaged in learning activities, and the question arises: why then are they there? That exclusion can be eradicated by using small groups, establishing some norms about language and participation. Therefore, allowing the usage of their home language in the learning environment will enhance their learning, and give learners an opportunity to incorporate their learning content with their pre-existing knowledge and life experiences in general. These serve as a foundation upon which the new learning content is to be laid.

Feeling of insecurity was also reflected in one of the observed learning events, with one learner feeling very offended by others in the class, laughing when her name was mentioned by the teacher requesting her to participate in a particular learning activity: “I hate what my classmates are doing, they are not treating me well. Always when I am about to do anything in this class, they are laughing at me as if they know better, and I want to believe that we are all here to learn and no one is better than the other. I am not a stupid, I am here to learn just like them”. This shows that this learner was emotionally affected by the prevailing atmosphere in the class. That also reflected the lack of mutual respect amongst learners and the nurturing learning environment was absolutely lacking. According to Gravett (2001: 41) the establishment of this nurturing learning environment is the responsibility of the teacher. From the extract above it is unfortunate that the learner had to loudly demand the restoration of her dignity and respect after the teacher had unsatisfactorily addressed that situation. According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg
5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The engagement of adult learners is imperative for effective learning to take place and that can be possible if the teacher can adopt a dialogic approach to teaching. In a dialogic approach the teacher does not dominate the teaching and learning transaction but rather he/she considers dialogue to be a medium through which learners can be engaged with the learning content. In a dialogic approach the teacher is not the only source of information and does not assume an authoritative status, but instead her/she assumes a stance of a co-learner. For instance, the teacher allows learners to exhibit their knowledge and share it with both the teacher and other learners, and it is therefore in that set up that the teacher becomes a learner of his/her learners.

Dialogic teaching involves teaching and learning activities in which dialogue is used as a vehicle to carry the facilitative, guiding and mediating roles of the teacher and also the active participative role of the learner. During a dialogic teaching, learners question, argue and interrogate the learning content through dialogue amongst themselves and the teacher. Hence I consider dialogue to be an indispensable tool during adult learning. It is also through dialogue that the teacher acts as a mediator between the learner and the learning content. As a mediator the teacher facilitates the learning process by allowing learners to construct their own knowledge by incorporating their daily life experiences to an extent of even using their home languages. In that way the teacher does not view the usage of the home language as a
barrier but instead he/she views it as a learning resource to help learners to learn. During this mediation process, the teacher bridges the gap that exists between the learners and the learning content by simplifying and contextualizing it. In this way learners can be engaged through demonstrations, role-playing, debating, discussions and experimenting. This interaction is enhanced by the teacher’s consideration and acknowledgement of the fact that adult learners bring with them their life-experience to the learning environment. Adult learners learn for a reason and adult learners are adults per definition.

During dialogic teaching the teacher’s role is to facilitate the learning process by presenting or introducing the learning content in such a way that learners learn. The teacher provides support, guidance and a model that is to be learned. As a mediator he/she is responsible for ensuring that the non-threatening learning environment prevails. This non-threatening environment is characterized by clearly defined roles and sound relationship to enhance co-operative learning. Again by encouraging co-operative learning in this secure environment adult learners freely interact and the teacher assume the role of a co-learner as he/she learns from learners’ experience and inputs.

In a dialogic teaching, learners play a crucial role in determining the learning contents by voicing their learning needs prior to the learning event. These needs are also communicated during their dialogue with their teacher when they state their expectations of the learning event. These needs are to be analyzed and considered in ensuring the relevance of the learning content. That implies the teacher does not unilaterally decide upon the content but he/she listens to the learners. That is very important, as stated by Vella (1994: 5), that if the course does not meet the learners’ needs they will vote with their feet and simply walk out. Relevance of the learning content guarantees the possibility of praxis, in which adult learners’ needs are met by practicing the newly acquired knowledge, skills or attitude, and they also reflects on their learning experiences.

Because adult learners learn for a particular reason, with no time to waste, it is crucial that the learning content be applicable to the adult learners’ daily life. They can thus see the immediate usefulness of the new learning content and be encouraged
to stay in the course. That is ensured by permitting learners to practice doing something with the learning content, apply it to simulated situations and reflect on it. That is what engagement means. It demands a lot of participation, involvement and interaction amongst learners and the teacher. Learners are to be given challenging and engaging learning tasks, which are followed by feedback as acknowledgment of their efforts. According to Vella (2000: 5), learning tasks are an excellent way to present new content, invite engagement, reflection and action on that content. Hence I maintain that learning tasks are to be thoroughly planned, sequenced and should incorporate the learners’ life experience so as to avoid unnecessary boredom and confusion amongst the learners. Different types of learning tasks are to be used variably to ensure that adult learners are engaged at various levels. This will also accommodate learners’ different learning styles.

During dialogic teaching, learners interact freely as their views and ideas are respected. Many learning opportunities are created and accessed. In their small groups, team spirit prevails and learners’ viewpoints and inputs are respected, while arguments and differences are amicably resolved by the intervention of a non-partial and non-authoritative teacher. This enhances sharing of experiences, mentoring and constructive arguing, as emphasized by Gravett (2001: 35) when stating that successful dialogue involves a willing partnership and co-operation in the face of likely disagreements, confusion, failures and misunderstanding.

Adult learners in a dialogic teaching are constructors of their own knowledge, and their learning is personalized through internalization and personal attachment of meaning to the learning content. In this regard, their experiences are to be used as a frame of reference. Through dialogue these experiences are shared, and therefore used as learning resources for others. All this takes place when the environment is non-threatening, inviting and challenging, and also when the learning content is relevant enough to engage learners.

5.4. CONCLUSION

The engagement of adult learners in the learning activities is restricted by a dominating monologic approach, which has to be replaced by a dialogic approach for
effective learning to take place. This monologic approach hinders adult learners’ engagement in the classroom learning activities as they are denied opportunities to wrestle or do something with the learning content. Adult learners’ engagement with the learning content was limited to pen and paper and it was used mainly for assessing purposes. That means they were given more cognitively challenging learning tasks, while their affective and kinesthetic aspects of learning were ignored. Replacing monologic approach with a dialogic approach will imply that learners’ engagement is enhanced by a conducive learning environment in which learners freely interact with one another in groups or pairs and also with learning content by applying, practicing and demonstrating the newly acquired skills and knowledge. It is in such engagements that adult learners can be socially, politically and economically empowered.
6. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**


APPENDIX: A
The Educator
Senkgoane ABET Centre
Motse-Thabong
9436

Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH INTERVIEW

I hereby request permission to interview you on teaching and learning processes in the ABET classroom.

This research is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.Ed. degree by the Rand Afrikaans University. For confirmation you can phone Prof. S Gravett at (011) 489-2689 if necessary.

Our interview will be confidential and its contents will not be divulged to anyone. Pseudo names will be used.

I will appreciate if you can afford me the opportunity to interview you and hope that you will directly or indirectly benefit from this research in the future.

Yours faithfully
Mpho Mokhuoa (Mrs)
### RESEARCH OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW PROGRAM

#### 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>ABET Level</th>
<th>Learning Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>HUMAN &amp; SOCIAL SCIENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT SCIENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LANGUAGE LITERACY &amp; COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NATURAL SCIENCE</td>
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<td>25 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LIFE- ORIENTATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 MARCH 2004</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LANGUAGE LITERACY &amp; COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 APRIL 2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISES.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX: D

OBSERVATION: (Number: 1)
LEARNING AREA: HSS & LLC.
VENUE: ABET CENTRE
DATE: 08 MARCH 2004
TIME: 18H00
PARTICIPANTS: ABET LELVEL 3

PHYSICAL SETTING: It is an ordinary classroom with double desks arranged in rows one after the other. The teacher’s table is in front of the classroom while the cupboard, which is widely opened, is at the extreme corner in front of the class.

The centre manager ushers me into the classroom and offers me a chair at the back of the classroom, he also tells me that the HSS teacher will be present soon.

The teacher came into the classroom, greeted everyone and approaches me as am sitting at the back of the classroom. She introduces herself to me and explained to me that, the learners in this class are in level 3 but due to their differentiated levels of understanding and language capabilities, they are treated individually and this period will be for LLC, Literacy and HSS for different groups respectively.

Learners are individually asked to take out their books and seemingly according to their different groupings they were previously given tasks to do.

Learners in the front row (Group: A) were asked to take out their previously given written task, one of them responds and tells the teacher that they do not have those books with them as they were not aware that they will be using those books today. The teacher gives them another activity to do and asks them to continue without any waist of time. She (the teacher) then moves to next group (Group: B), which consisted of three learners. The teacher loudly read words from the workbook in front of them and points at pictures and the learners’ were to read words slowly alphabet by alphabet and also pointing at the pictures. These three learners are asked to sit close one another so that they can be able to use that book together. The teacher gives them instruction to take turns reading words to each other. Then the teacher moves over to another learner (Group: C) sitting alone at the extreme right hand side of the classroom. The learner was looking at map. The teacher pointed some places
on the map and indicates were Pretoria, Soweto, Sharpville and Cape Town are located on the map on the map. The learner was given the task to paste the map newspaper cutting on the excise book. Then the teacher moves to Group B and the three learners who were still practicing letters or alphabets taking turns reading to each other.

The teacher helps them to construct sentences using those words they were reading and some of the words that were difficult for learners were explained in vernacular by the teacher. The teacher also asked these three learners to point at some of the items in the classroom, eg window, table, chair, door and desk. (“Show me a table”) The teacher appraised learners for each and every correct respond learners give. The teacher then gives them an instruction to continue reading to each other and she moved to the group in the front row.

After looking at their books she writes the word “Communication” on the chalkboard and say: “Today we are going to look at the topic: Communication. She then asks learners only in the front row (Group: A) to give her something to clean the chalkboard. One of the learners in that group hand her a cloth and she started cleaning the board. The teacher asks learners to be free and says: Mrs Mokhuoa at the back there is here as a researcher and she is here to learn from you. So relax and be free”. The teacher underlines the word ‘Communication’ and ask learner: What is communication? One learner responds in vernacular saying “Ke go buisana”. The teacher translates that in English and says, “It means talking to one another. Teacher further explained that and asks learners to mention things that people use to communicate to each other. Learners gave answers in vernacular saying : fonofono, lekwalo, radio, tv. Then the teacher translated all answers in English saying, phone, letter, radio and television. Thereafter the teacher asks learners to work in pairs and to discuss the use of one item they will use to communicate and draw it. The teacher gave an example of a cell phone, explained its use and draws it on the chalkboard. One learner asks the teacher: “How many items from each pair?” The teacher responds and says: “FIVE” and she moves over to the learner who was doing map work.

She quietly looked at her book and say: “you are doing well”. The learner just smiled and carried on with what she was doing. The teacher then moves over to Group C,
the three learners who are still reading words and pointing at pictures. She asked them to take turns reading words and pointing at pictures as she is listening. She acknowledges and says to one learner who was not coping well that he must continue to read while others can start now to look at the sentences in which those words were used. She then moves to Group A and looks closely at one of the drawings of communication items drawn by learners. Learners start looking at others drawing and laughed. The teacher moved to the learner doing map work. She gives a very short explanation on the nine provinces and moved to the three learners doing words, pictures and sentences.

In the meantime learners in Group A were still sharing their drawings and laughing amongst themselves.

Three learners in Group C were given chance to take turns reading word, pointing at pictures and the two progressive learners are asked to read sentences also. One learner was requested to stand up and point at some of those items in the classroom while the other two learners were to name them. They loudly say: “door, wall, table, chair. That is done with all the three learners and at the end the teacher points at the items and learners are to name them. Teacher points at the floor and one learner responded in vernacular saying “fluru” and the teacher translated that in English saying: “floor”. After that she instructs learners to use names of those items in the sentences reading in the book. She gives this example: “Is this a door?” and other learners are to respond saying: “Yes this is a door”. The three learners exchanged roles and the teacher helped them to point at the words as they were reading questions and answers in the book. They continued on their own as the teacher moves over to the learner doing map work (Group B).

The teacher asks her: “Can you tell me in short what you have been reading about?”

The learner responds: “I read about the political leaders of South Africa and the roles played by women in the politics of our country”. (The learner sounds very confident)

Teacher: “Great, now tell me, which four women played leadership roles when women marched to Union building in 1956.


Teacher: “Very good, my next question is: what do you understand by the concept ‘wa thintha umfazi, wathintha umbogothe’?

Leaner: You hit a woman you hit the rock.
Teacher: “Ok, continue to read the story further and write a short summary of that story in your exercise book, I’ll come back to you. She then moves over to the group in Group A.

Those learners are still sharing the pictures of communication means they have drawn. The teacher asks them if they have finished and one of them responded, “not yet”. The teacher gives them extended time and moves over to Group C at the back.

Learners there are still busy reading question and answers from the book as they were initially instructed. Two learners who were seeming to be progressive are asked to continue exchanging role while the teacher gives some extra support to one learner who seemed to be battling. The teacher is reading and pointing at the pictures and that learner was doing the same following the teacher. After the learner has done that several times the teacher instructs him to continue doing that and moves over to the learner in Group B who was reading the story from the book.

Teacher: “How far are you with the summary?”

Learner: I have finished.

Then the teacher loudly reads the summary and gives some verbal corrections on the tenses that the learner used then tells the learner to correct them in her book. She then moves over to the Group, one of these learners’ reports that they have finished drawing and sharing ideas on means of communication. Then the teacher asks them to choose one member of the group to give feedback to all learners in the classroom. She also asked all learners to stop doing what they are doing and pay attention to what will be said now. The chosen learner mentions means of communication they have discussed (letter, TV, radio, newspaper and telephone). Drawings are also shown to the classmates. The teacher thanked the group and asked them to discuss in their group a format of a letter as a means of communication. All other learners are now asked to continue with what they were doing. Then the teacher moves over to the learner who was reading a story on politicians.

The learner was asked to read the summary to the teacher and thereafter goes to the front of the class to present to the whole class. All learners stopped what they are doing and listen to the presentation. After the presentation the teacher ask learners some question:

Teacher: “What is apartheid?”

Learner: “It is when people are treated unequally

Teacher: On which date do we celebrate women’s day?”
Learner: “9 August
Teacher: “Good”
After that acknowledgement the teacher moves over to Group A.
She asks learners in that group to give a report back on format of a letter. One learner from that group stood in front of the class and gave feedback. The teacher appraised them.
Then teacher thanked the learners and bid us all bye-bye as the other teacher enters the classroom.
OBSERVATION: (Number: 2)
LEARNING AREA: EMS
VENUE: ABET CENTRE
DATE: 15 MARCH 2004
TIME: 18H00
PARTICIPANTS: ABET LEVEL 3 ADULT LEARNERS.

PHYSICAL SETTING:
It is an ordinary classroom with double desks arranged in rows one after the other. The teacher’s table is in front of the classroom.

I am introduced to the teacher by the supervisor in charge and remind the educator about the meeting discussion in which the purpose of my presence in the centre was fully explained. The teacher now offers me a chair at the back of the classroom. Thereafter the teacher introduces me to the learners and explains that I am a researcher and that my purpose for my being here is to come and learn more about adult education.

Then teacher writes the activity on the chalkboard and ask learners to write it in their books. Thereafter the teacher approaches me and explains that these activities are a continuation of what was treated in the previous lesson. I thank the teacher for informing me of that and she the turns to learners and explains to them the first activity and that it is an individual task while activity two is to be done in pairs. The educator mentions that they will be working in their usual pairs and specifically mentions that Lydia (learner) will be working with Letta (learner). Learners loudly laughed and Lydia became angry and asks: What is a joke all about?” What is funny?” What are you laughing at?”(She appears to be very angry and no one respond to her questions except the teacher:
Teacher: “ Lydia what is the matter now?”
Lydia: They are laughing at me and I want to know why?
Teacher: Class, tell me what is the problem? What was the joke all about?
(No-one responds and the whole class was just quite then the teacher apologizes on behalf of the class and carries on with the activity). Lydia appears to be dissatisfied with that resolution.
The teacher moves among learners to see how they coping with their individual activity.
As she (teacher) approaches Lydia’s table, she (Lydia) continues to complain about the attitude of her classmates towards her.

Lydia: I hate what my classmates are doing; they are not treating me well. Always when I am about to do anything in this class, they are laughing at me as if they know better and want to believe that we are all here to learn and no one is better than the other. I am not a stupid I am here to learn just like them. (OC: She says that in vernacular (sesotho).)

Seeing that Lydia is still dissatisfied the teacher tries to resolve this problem by involving all learners.

Talking to all learners the teacher says: “To ensure that everyone is treated with respect in this class I think I have to suspend learning activities for a while and all of us attend to the problem at hand. Lydia is angry because of our behavior, can we all avoid situations like these by respecting one another. No one is perfect in this class and that is why we are here to learn. Can I have one learner saying something about what happen, so that we can move forward without any waist of time, please?” (OC: She says that in vernacular (sesotho).

Learner: “Mam, I really feel bad and as member of this class I would like to say to Lydia that we apologies for what happened. It is very important that we respect each other. Lydia, please forgive us that will never happen again. Please class let us behave like real adults”. (OC: She says that in vernacular i.e sesotho)

Teacher: “Thank you Mme Dipuo. (Referring to learner who apologized on behalf of the class). Can we now continue good people, time is not on our side?”

The teacher then moves from one learner to the other looking at how each of them is coping with the given tasks. One learner asks the teacher to explain activity two because she does not understand it (OC: Says it in vernacular i.e zulu). Then teacher moves to the front of the class and explains in Zulu and in Sesotho to all learners and asks learners if there is anyone in need of some help. One learner from the back asks the teacher to explain again using Zulu. The teacher does that (OC: the teacher could have asked another learner to do that) the learner seemed satisfied as she was nodding her head to acknowledge the teachers’ explanation. Then the teacher moves to the next pair of learners sitting towards the extreme right of the classroom, she looks at what have done up to so far in their activities and without commenting she moves over to next pair of learners.
Learners continue to work in pairs talking to one another and the class is now starting to be noisy as the sharing of ideas continues.

Then the teacher asks learners if they have completed the task, and some of them respond, “Yes” The teacher attends to only those who have completed their activities. As she is marking their books she is also giving some explanations and answering some questions learners ask along the way. There was some accompanying laughter as learners were realizing their foolish mistakes they committed in the activities. (The atmosphere is now relaxed and seemingly all learners have completed their tasks).

The teacher calls one learner whose activities were marked first because she has identified a mistake, which she comments, was due to faulty calculator they used. The teacher acknowledged the mistake corrects it immediately.

Learners were freely interacting with one another and they were comparing their answers and also giving reasons for their responses. Some responses were argued and the teacher is called to intervene by explaining why the given response is correct or wrong. (OC: That is now an active interaction amongst learners).

The educator is now attending to individual pairs and asks learners to be involved in doing the activities on the board. She then calls one learner by name and asks him to do the activities on the board. He first read the activity and explained it in Tswana and Zulu. The teacher asks the learner to explain every answer he writes on the board to ensure that all learners are moving along. In some instances the learner admitted that he does not know the answer and the teacher asks the class to help. Some of the responses he writes on the board were argued and through reasoning guided by the teacher’s input final consensus are reached.

Those who got some answers wrong are encouraged to do corrections. Then the teacher indicated that she has come to the end of the period and she bids us all bye-bye.
OBSERVATION: (Number: 3)
LEARNING AREA: LLC (English)
VENUE: ABET CENTRE
DATE: 18 MARCH 2004
TIME: 18H00
PARTICIPANTS: ABET LEVEL 4 ADULT LEARNERS.

PHYSICAL SETTING: It is an ordinary classroom with double desks arranged in rows one after the other. The teacher’s table is in front of the classroom.

I am ushered into the classroom by the principal who briefly whispered to the teacher that I am here to do research as it was discussed in the previous staff meeting. The teacher welcomes me and shows me a chair at the back of the classroom. She then explains to learners that I am here to conduct a research as a student at one of the universities.

The teacher approaches me and explains tome that “today our lesson is basically remedial as we have written a test yesterday”.

I responded “That fine with me”.

The teacher issues out test scripts to learners. As learners are receiving scripts they showed one another their scripts. Some learners appear to be satisfied with their performance while others are very disappointed.

The teacher now asks learners to take out their test question papers and write corrections for all questions they have answered wrong in the test. The teacher asks learners to participate by orally answering questions of which the teacher is going to write answers on the chalkboard. “Please remember your participation is very important and please let us not waist any time,” says the teacher.

The teacher asks one of the learners to read a comprehension passage from the question paper while others are silently reading from their papers. The teacher helps the reading learner with pronunciation of some of the difficult words. After the reading is completed learners are now asked questions and they raise their hands as an indication that they want to respond to the question. Answers are given orally while the teacher is writing correct answers on the chalkboard. Before an answer can be written on the chalkboard the rest of the class is jointly asked whether the given answer is correct or not. Now that all comprehension questions are answered the next activity in the question paper is now attempted.
‘Let us now look at the next question, you were requested to interpret pictures in a five lines paragraph”. The teacher asks learners to take turns giving their interpretations.

Learners are acknowledged for their responses and the teacher identified one common problem to be the learners’ inability to name characters in their interpretations. She (teacher) gives the conclusive interpretation and asks learners to look now at the next question.

In the next activity learners are to write sentences in ‘indirect speech’. Learners take turns writing sentences on the chalkboard and after each sentence the teacher ask the whole class whether the sentence is correct or not. All learners respond and say “Yes” except one learner who raised his hand and points at word ‘food’ on the chalkboard and says: “It is wrongly spelt, it is supposed to be foot”. He corrects it on the chalkboard.

After all questions were answered the teacher announces the name of the best performer in that test. The whole class cheered him up.

The teacher asks learners to quietly go through their scripts and ask questions where they need some clarification.

Individual learners ask the teacher to explain some of the markings on their scripts. The teacher attends to those learners seeking some clarification while others continue writing corrections.

One learner asks the teacher to clarify answer to question 5, the teacher does that and thereafter the learner indicates that she was mistakenly marked wrong. The teacher corrects that mistake and that learner thank her.

After completing remedial work the teacher cleared the chalkboard then writes the new topic. “THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE”

The teacher comments: “Do you still remember we treated this topic in the past”? Learners: “Yes”

Teacher: “Tell me now, what is a verb?”

Learner (sitting at the back of the class): “It is a doing word in the sentence”

Teacher: Yes. Any other answer

Learner: (sitting near the door): A verb is a word that expresses action.

Teacher: Well done. Can we now take out our notes books and write the following notes. The teacher continues to write note on the chalkboard.
After all notes were written on the chalkboard the teacher explains the notes and asks learners to give their own sentences in a singular form and identify the concord and also convert it into plural form. The learners as per teacher’s request also turn those sentences to present continuous tense.

In summarizing the activity the teacher writes five short sentences on the chalkboard and asks learners to take turns writing those sentences in the present continuous tense on the chalkboard.

The teacher acknowledged the learners responses and write homework on the board. “We are going to mark this homework in our next period, see you then”. Says the teacher as she leaves the class waving.
APPENDIX: E

INTERVIEWS: (Number: 1)

These interviews were held shortly after the observation of the leaning and the interviewee is the teacher whose learning event was observed.

Researcher: Thank you for allowing me to observe your lesson presentation and we are now going to have a very short interview to a better understanding of what I observed during the lesson presentation.
Jabu: Ok, that’s fine.

Researcher: As the adult learning facilitator what are your greatest challenges in the classroom?
Jabu: Ehh, it not easy teaching adults. They are having different ages, and others have left school long time ago and it is therefore difficult for them to cope. To most of them language is a problem. Mmm, for instance in most cases they request me to translate the learning content into vernacular and that is very much time consuming.

Researcher: So how do you address this language problem?
Jabu: I truly try very hard to help them with explanation in their different home languages and I also ask some learners to also help with some translations.

Researcher: What is your personal view of effective teaching?
Jabu: Ehh, effective teaching according to me, is when I teach and I am able to come to the level of my learners to help them to understand the learning content. I normally involve the and ask them to participate.

Researcher: How do get your learners to participate?
Jabu: By asking the questions and also allow them to ask questions if there is something they did not understand. Sometimes not always I allow them to form groups and discuss with one another but that always waist time because we first have to change these chairs and tables around and to return them back to their original position at the end of the period. That is a big problem.

Researcher: Do you know of any other methods that you can use to get adult learners involved or participating in their learning?
Jabu: Yes I know methods like role playing and debating but I do not use such methods because of time and space. Sometimes adult learners think like you are treating them like children if you ask them to role-play, so commonly use question and answer method most of the time.
Researcher: There were some times during your lesson presentation when your learners could not respond to your question, what do you think was the cause for that?
Jabu: You mean when they could not answer?
Researcher: Yes, what do you think caused that?
Jabu: Mm, like I said before, language is a big problem. You know I discourage the use of vernacular because these learners will not be writing their exams in vernacular but in English, so the problem is if they can’t do it in English now, in class there is a great possibility that they are going to fail the exams.
Researcher: What do you think prevent learners from participating in their learning?
Jabu: Sometimes adult learners are just too bored to participate, but in most cases I think they are just too scared that others will laugh at them if they got answers wrong. But all the same language remains a biggest problem.
Researcher: What do you think you can do to help them to be involved in their learning activities?
Jabu: Like I said before, asking them questions help them to be involved.
Researcher: Ok, tell me now how do you know if your learners have learnt?
Jabu: When they are able to answer questions correctly and pass tests or exams, I know that they have learnt.
Researcher: Any other thing.
Jabu: Ya, nothing except what the exam result will reflect.
Researcher: Do think adults learn differently from the way children sat school learn?
Jabu: No, I don’t think there is any difference, may be the only difference is that learning content is presented from different textbooks. I don’t think that is a major difference they are all going to write exams.
Researcher: Thank you madam for your time and I believe you are going to benefit from this research.
Jabu: Thank you.
INTERVIEWS: (Number: 2)

These interviews were held shortly after the observation of the leaning and the interviewee is the teacher whose learning event was observed.

Researcher: As an ABET facilitator what are the greatest challenges in the classroom?
Bongi: Teaching learners of various age groups and different educational level. For instance most of these learners are placed in ABET level 4 because the claim to have attended school up to grade 8,7,and 6, but working with them daily show me in different ways that some of them do not even have basic reading and writing skills. The problem is that they are admitted into ABET centre without any proof of former schooling.

Researcher: So, do you think they are wrongly placed into ABET level 4?
Bongi: Yes, more especially most of them could not give any proof of former school experience.

Researcher: What do you think can be done to prevent such problems?
Bongi: I think if this learners can be tested before placed in any class and also their proof of schooling background be demanded.

Researcher: According to you what is effective teaching?
Bongi: It is teaching that produces excellent exam results. That means it is only when you have learners passing your tests and ultimately exams when you feel like your teaching was really effective.

Researcher: So how do you ensure that this effective teaching takes place in the classroom?
Bongi: While I am teaching I make sure that learners understand what I am teaching. I ask them questions. It is when they are unable to answer question that I will realize that I need to repeat that lesson presentation. Sometimes I give them written work tests or class work and if they got good marks I know that my teaching was effective.

Researcher: How do passing tests and exams benefit your learners?
Bongi: They move over to the next level or they get a certificate that will help them to get promotions or if they are unemployed they will be able to get jobs if they are lucky.
Researcher: During the presentation of your lesson some learners asked to explain some of the activities you have given them to do, you explained using a daily practical example, why did you do that?

Bongi: I wanted them to understand, so that they can be able to respond to written activity accordingly.

Researcher: How do you plan these learning activities?

Bongi: To be honest I do not plan as such but I normally follow what is in the textbook and that is all that I use.

Researcher: One learner during your lesson presentation was not happy with the way she was treated by her classmates. They laughed and made joke out of her and she felt really upset. What is your personal feeling about that whole incident?

Bongi: That was very bad, bad it makes that learner and others to be shy to participate in class and even to feel inferior, but I want to believe that that problem was resolved. I must admit that even if the problem was resolved, I am scared that, that learner might be negatively be affected to the point of her dropping out of school. That would be a great negative impact.

Researcher: What can you do to prevent such incidents from happening again?

Bongi: To allow learners to see each other as equals and maybe to emphasize that no one is better than the other as they are all here to learn.

Researcher: Are you satisfied with the way your lesson proceeded?

Bongi: To a certain extent yes, I think I have achieved that which I wanted to achieve and learners showed that they have captured a lot. They managed to do all the activities and I am satisfied and I also believe that If I can give them a test now they will pass it.

Researcher: Ok, thank you madam for your time and I believe you are going to benefit from this research in the future.

Bongi: You are most welcome. Thank you.
APPENDIX: F

ANALYSED DOCUMENT : (Number: 1)

ACTIVITY 1 (individual activity)
You are given an empty receipt to fill in the following details:
Mr Vandla bought a house from Sbusiso on the 23 October 1999, and paid R25000.00 for it on the same day.

Cash Receipt

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ACTIVITY 2 (pairs activity)
Use the following information to fill the details below.
Mr Z Vilakazi bought 72 bottles of coke from Wadeville Suprette. Each bottle cost R3.10 (the price of one bottle of coke is called unit price.),10 packets of Simba chips cost R2,00 , 5 X 5 litres of plascon paints each cost R25,00; 2 loaves of brown bread each cost R4,50; 4packets of peanuts each cost R3,00.

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