

**IS THE CURRICULUM USED AT TWO LADYSMITH NGO SITES RELEVANT TO  
THE LIVES OF THEIR ADULT LEARNERS?**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education in  
the Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this study the researcher investigated the relevance of the curriculum used at the two Ladysmith NGO sites to the everyday life experiences of their adult learners.

This study falls under a qualitative interpretive research paradigm where semi-structured interviews with the ABET Level 1 learners were used as tools to elicit data. The techniques and participants used in this investigation enhanced the validity, reliability, objectivity and authenticity of this study.

The key research question that was used to elicit data is:

- How is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites relevant to the lives of their adult learner?

The research sub questions are:

- ✓ What constitutes the ABET Level 1 curriculum at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites?
- ✓ What are the adult learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn, to their everyday life experiences?
- ✓ In what ways do adult learners think they have been able to apply and transfer what they have learned to their everyday life situations?

The reasons to undertake this study are that the black people, particularly those in the deep rural areas, in the past were denied equal access to educational experiences and the accumulation of skills and certain qualifications. The black people's illiteracy affected their everyday life experiences, since they could not be on par with other racial groups. Moreover, many black people have not had opportunities for choice of work, personal development and political decisions. The national statistics reveal that about half of the South African adults have less than nine years of schooling and about two to three million have no schooling at all (Baatjes, 2006 and UNESCO, 2007).

From this study emerged that the curriculum used at the two Ladysmith NGOs is relevant to some of the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life needs. The findings also indicated that some ABET Level 1 learners were satisfied and happy about the additional subjects such as crop growing and vegetable gardening, income generation life skills and many more others that were introduced to expand their curriculum. Almost all the ABET Level 1 learners stated that they have gained a lot of knowledge, skills and self-confidence after being part of the ABET Level 1 classes. These findings are supported by Openjuru, (2008).

## **DECLARATION**

I, the author hereby declares that the contents of this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary are my own work and that the dissertation has not been submitted simultaneously or, at any other time for another degree or diploma.

This dissertation was undertaken under the supervision of Zanele Buthelezi, who was my supervisor for the whole process until the completion of this dissertation.

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Signed *MTNDLELA*

Monicah Thandiwe Ndlela

**JANUARY 2012**



03 December 2010

Ms M T Ndlela  
School of Adult and Higher Education  
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

Dear Ms Ndlela:

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**ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER:** HSS/1385/2010 M: Faculty of Education

In response to your application dated 03 December 2010, Student Number: 972166431 the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

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Yours faithfully

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- My family and friends, for being so generous and supportive in various ways.
- Participants, such the ABET Level 1 learners, who willingly shared their experiences with me during the interviews administered for this study.
- Everyone not mentioned above, who contributed significantly to the successful writing of this dissertation. I sincerely appreciate your assistance.

## **DEDICATION**

I am gratefully dedicating this dissertation to:

My late parents, Bongekile and John Mvunga Ndlela, who both played an essential role to my well-being. Unfortunately their lives were snatched before they enjoy the ripe fruit they have sowed.

Thank you very much “*Madida amahle.*” If it was not for your belief in me, I would not be where I am today.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ABE.....Adult Basic Education

ABET.....Adult Basic Education and Training

AE.....Adult Education

CSOs.....Civil Society Organisations

MTL.....Mother Tongue Language

NGOs.....Non-Governmental Organisations

NPOs.....Non-Governmental Organisations

NQF.....National Qualification Framework

SAQA.....South African Qualifications Authority

UNESCO.....United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In this chapter, a description of the study and an outline of the justification for undertaking this investigation are provided. The purpose, focus and the motivation for the study are explained. Also highlighted are the definitions of the important key terms that will be used throughout the study as well as an overview of the dissertation. Literacy has tremendous power to bring about positive change in people's lives, and according to Rogers (2004a); there is a strong correlation between literacy and development. A large number of people in a community need to be literate in order for development to take place, either at a personal level or community level, and if people are not literate it becomes difficult for them to engage in development initiatives. Literacy therefore serves as an eye opener. Access to information in books, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of media illuminates people's minds. If they read with understanding, they might start to think deeply about how they can effect positive changes for their wellbeing and the enhancement of their communities. Freire (1998) and Dawson (2010) claim that every human being, no matter how ignorant or submerged in the "culture of silence" he or she may be, is capable of learning and has a right to be taught. Each and every individual has therefore, the right to equal opportunities. Society in turn depends on the full contribution of every person to all fields of work and aspects of life.

Black people in South Africa have been denied this right and were discriminated against for decades. As they have been deprived of equal access to educational experiences and accumulation of skills and qualifications, to me these aspects have impacted negatively on their daily life experiences. I concur with Chili (2007) who argues that the previously disadvantaged people have not had a chance for personal development, the capacity to influence political decisions as well as the choice of work.

## **1.2 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The focus of this study is to investigate the relevance of the curriculum used at the two Ladysmith NGO sites to the lives of their adult learners, and what is taught in the classrooms of adults in these two non-governmental organisation sites (NGO). As a researcher, I was interested in establishing how relevant and suitable the curriculum is in meeting the everyday life needs of adult learners from different environmental backgrounds in modern society. The reason for undertaking this study was that as a researcher, I have realised that a large number of black adult people in deep rural areas lack basic education. I also wanted to investigate the adult learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn in their classrooms, to their everyday lives.

The study was conducted in order to recommend to the government, department of education and non-governmental organisations knowledge and understanding of what is taught in adult classrooms and how effective this is in terms of being able to assist adult learners to transfer and apply the knowledge, information and life skills learned to meet their daily life challenges. The study also focused on establishing whether the recently used Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) curriculum equips and empowers adult learners with appropriate basic life skills and information that enables them to function and cope easily with the needs of rapidly developing and challenging modern society. Further, the study sought to establish whether adult learners think they have been able to apply and transfer knowledge they have acquired in the classrooms to their life situations. This is necessary as it will determine how relevant the ABET Level 1 curriculum is to the life experiences of the adult learners. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to government, its department of education, non-governmental organisations and the private sectors in developing curricula and learning programmes that could cater for the enhancement of existing adult literacy development programmes in line with the challenges and demands of adult learners.

## **1.3 THE MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

The rationale for undertaking this investigation arises from my involvement with many community members in the rural area where I work as a primary school educator. While I am involved with very young learners, often the children's parents, grandparents, and guardians

visit the school to seek for assistance in various aspects related to their everyday life experiences. Most of their queries are related to their literacy skills development needs. Most of these community members attended public schools but left school before they could finish the nine years of schooling. Some have attended ABET classes in the public adult learning centres, and others attended adult classes in the NGOs, but almost all of them left classes after finishing Adult Basic Education (ABET) Level 1 and before finishing ABET Level 2. This is what prompted the study as it will assist me as a researcher to discover some reasons why these ABET learners did not finish their ABET classes. It will also assist me to realise if the ABET Level 1 curriculum used in the ABET classes is relevant to the adult learners' everyday life experiences.

Some of the reasons why these individuals did not finish schooling are attributed to environmental conditions they lived in that were not conducive to effective learning. Seemingly, the adult centres in which they attended ABET classes were not effective enough to cater for their immediate needs. I have realised that there is still no public ABET centre or NGO centre available for adult learners in this community. Therefore, there is a vital need for an ABET centre to be established to assist these needy illiterate or semi-literate people educationally. When I visited the other nearby Adult Basic Education and Training learning centres outside of this community, I realised that very few adult learners attend these classes although illiteracy remains the highest in rural areas. I have also noticed that although these ABET classes are accessible, they are not full and very few educationally deprived adult learners in rural areas attend these classes. Many of these rural adult learners who do join ABET classes, drop out. Those whom have gone beyond ABET Level 1, and before finishing ABET Level 2, struggle a great deal to cope well with the challenges and demands of the rapidly developing modern society.

The importance of this study was to determine what is taught in the classes of adult learners and the efficacy of what is taught, in terms of applicability and transferability to the everyday life experiences of adult learners. Since there seems to be very little empirical research about ABET learners in the South African contexts, the development of the potential of ABET learners has not been sufficiently identified. This warrants further investigation. The study was undertaken with the aim of striving to discover the knowledge and understanding of the relevance of the ABET Level 1 curriculum used in adult centres with reference to two non-governmental organisation ABET sites, to the everyday life experiences of their adult

learners. It was undertaken to investigate how the curriculum assist the ABET Level 1 learners to meet their everyday life challenges. The study also strove to establish whether the current ABET curriculum system is able to equip and empower adult learners with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable them to cope effectively with the demands of the highly developing modern society.

## **1.4 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key research question is:

- How is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites relevant to the lives of their adult learners?

The research sub-questions are:

- ✓ What constitutes the ABET Level 1 curriculum at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites?
- ✓ What are the adult learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn, to their everyday life experiences?
- ✓ In what ways do adult learners think they have been able to apply and transfer what they have learned to their everyday life situations?

## **1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

In this study, I investigated the relevance of the curriculum used at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites, to the everyday life demands of their adult learners in the developing modern society. Terms related to the curriculum of adult literacy were used in this study.

### **1.5.1 Adult Education (AE)**

The definition relevant to this study sees adult education not only in the context of the educational processes but also in the developmental processes in society. This definition was adopted and recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) at a conference in Nairobi, Kenya (1976), and by Buthelezi (2006), which states that adult education is:

*the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in the apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their professional or technical qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic, political and cultural development.*

Lauglo (2002) believes that adult education removes some barriers to entrepreneurship and can improve livelihoods. Barriers to entrepreneurship include lack of basic accounting skills and business language, as well as communication skills. Adult education should therefore play a vital role in the alleviation of poverty. According to Young (2004), one of the most important things adult education can do is to help people to find a source of income in some market niche. Jarvis (2004) has an operational definition, viewing adult education as the institutionalised processes of teaching and learning that exist for those individuals who are regarded as adults, irrespective of the sector of society in which it occurs. Such a broad and imprecise definition suggests that the boundaries of the concept are blurred, which reflects the social reality. As societies have become more complex through the growth in technological knowledge, the division of labour, and the subsequent creation of pluralism, so, adults education has expanded to include education related to diverse functions and requirements of society.

### **1.5.2 Adult Basic Education (ABE)**

Adult Basic Education (ABE) refers to the provision of adult education, including basic literacy and numeracy to adult learners. This term was used mainly with reference to adult education prior to 1994, as set out in the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (2002). ABE is the basic level of learning offered to adult learners aged fifteen and over who have not had the benefits of formal schooling up to grade nine. ABE has moved away from an informal, non-standardised system towards a formal standardised and certified system with equivalence to primary schooling. ABE is aimed at adults who have had no or very little formal schooling, those who do not have the equivalent of a school leaving certificate, and those who only require specific sections of ABE to meet their particular needs. ABE is viewed as the basic education phase in the provision of lifelong learning. The final exit point in terms of certification from ABE should be equivalent to the exit point from

compulsory education, which is grade nine (Department of Education, 2002). Instrumentalist ABE argues that education systems should concentrate on developing people's competencies, their skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to enable them to move freely across jobs from one sector to another and even from one country to another. Emancipatory ethic ABE is viewed as a collective educational activity which has, as its goal, social and political transformation (Rule, 2006).

### **1.5.3 Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)**

Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), as defined in the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (2002), is the general conceptual foundation undergirding lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts (Isaacs, 2008). ABET is therefore flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences. Ideally, it provides access to nationally recognised certificates. ABET is a new national integrated approach to adult education, which aims not only at promoting literacy, numeracy and life skills, but also designed to prepare adult learners for income generating skills and activities. ABE and ABET are two terms that are usually used interchangeably (Bhola, 2003). According to Adult Basic Education and Training Act No. 52 (2000), and Isaacs (2008), ABET refers to all learning and training programmes for adults from Level 1 to 4, where Level 4 is equivalent to grade nine in public schools or the National Qualification Framework (NQF) level as set out in the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act No. 52 (1995).

The Department of Education (2002) views ABET as lifelong learning that is aimed at personal development. ABET entails more than just providing learners with literacy and numeracy skills, but rather emphasises generic knowledge and skills, of which numeracy skills as well as literacy are components. ABET curriculum is intended to be more flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audience. Ideally, it should provide access to nationally recognised certificates. These definitions will be helpful in determining whether the curriculum used at two Ladysmith ABET Level 1 NGO classrooms is relevant to the everyday life demands of their adult learners.

### **1.5.4 Adult learner**

An adult learner is defined by Rule (2006) as a “person to be fifteen years and older, not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and with an educational level of less than grade nine”. He states that “many adults who have nine years of schooling still require basic education”. Due to marginalisation from educational opportunities during the apartheid era, millions of adult learners in South Africa never had a chance to attend school, and others did not complete their schooling. All these adult learners deserve the opportunity for adult basic education. In South Africa, ABE is viewed as education provision for people aged fifteen and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and have an average education level of less than grade 9. Dawson (2010) believes that in terms of the South African perspective on ABET curriculum, a person is viewed to be literate and numerate if he or she has already acquired the skills and concepts necessary to function effectively in his or her group and community. Further, people are viewed as literate and numerate if their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics makes it possible for them to use these skills to further their own community’s development.

### **1.5.5 Curriculum**

Curriculum refers to the plan of what should happen in class or what actually does happen in class. Thus curriculum exists at different levels. Curriculum is a blueprint for the teaching and learning plan - it is equivalent to a written prescription detailing that which is intended to happen in education. Payne and Payne (2004) and Bertram *et al* (2004) view curriculum as the content of what is taught in education, how the content is transmitted and the methods used to ascertain whether the content has been internalised and understood.

Grace (2009) views the curriculum as more than syllabi documentation. It refers to all of the teaching and learning activities that take place in learning institutions. Curriculum includes the following:

- ✓ The aims and objectives of the education system and the specific goals of the learning institution.
- ✓ What is taught as the underlying values.
- ✓ What the selection of content is.
- ✓ How it is arranged into learning areas, programmes and syllabi.
- ✓ What skills and processes are engaged.
- ✓ The strategies of teaching and learning and the relationships between facilitators and learners.

- ✓ The forms of assessment and evaluations which are used.
- ✓ How the curriculum is served and resourced, including the organisations of learners, and the time and space materials and resources that are made available.
- ✓ How the curriculum reflects the needs and interests of those it serves including learners, practitioners, the community, the nation, the employers and the economy.

Bertram *et al* (2004) define a curriculum as an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal curriculum into such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice. The clause ‘the essential principles and features of an educational proposal’- is a way of saying that a curriculum will have particular goals or purposes. Another clause ‘a form that it is open to critical scrutiny’- refers to setting out the proposal in clear terms as a policy, so that the plan might be understood and critically appraised. A clause ‘capable of effective translation into practice’- indicates that the proposal curriculum should provide guidelines for implementation where the planners and educators need a set of guiding principles, concepts and procedures to follow. For these reasons, Bertram *et al* (2004) believe that a curriculum must be able to effectively put into practice and lead us on to the way of understanding. This definition by Bertram *et al* (2004) is particularly relevant to this study as the purpose of this research is to find out whether such elements described in his definition are taking place in the classrooms of adults, and relevant to their everyday life experiences.

According to Grace (2009), “the curriculum embodies social relationships and it is drawn up by particular groups of people, it reflects particular points of view and values, it is anchored in the experiences of particular social groups and it produces particular patterns of success and failure.” I agree with Grace when he concludes that as a result, curriculum is always influenced by patterns of power, as this study will look at the curriculum as the actual reality that is experienced by teachers and adult learners. Payne and Payne (2004) view curriculum in general, as a ‘social process’, refers not only to a written document, but also to a product and process. Curriculum as a product is concerned about the end product of education while curriculum as a process is concerned about the nature of the learner and his or her development, rather than a consideration of what knowledge should be transmitted or the results achieved.

Most theorists emphasize the influence of the ‘context’ in which the curriculum is implemented. It is therefore vital to understand the social contexts in which learning takes

place. Payne and Payne (2004) subdivide context into the structural context of the education system and the socio-cultural context of the society at large. The structural context ranges from the immediacy of the classroom and the institution through to the administration and policy-making bodies at national levels, thus involving the hierarchies of power, the established ways of operation, and the beliefs, norms and culture of the education system. The socio-cultural context provides the impetus for educational change, whilst the structural context mediates and shapes the nature of that change.

In the social milieu where adult learning takes place, there are many facets. Socialisation in the societies in which we live encompasses all forms of cultural beliefs and traditions, relationships within the workplace and also social roles and personal experiences that people share with others. These all form part of the learning situation (Nzimande, 2007). ABET practitioners should therefore not forget that learning does not occur in isolation from the real world in which the adult learners live, but rather, it is intimately related to those world experiences and affected by them. Wilson and Sperber (2002) and Bhola (2003) posit this by stating that “learning of all kinds begins with direct perception of something in life”.

Bhola (2003) illustrates how different conceptions inherent in the definition of curriculum will determine what and how literacy is taught. He notes that a definition of curriculum as a social practice will lead to a completely different curriculum, as compared to a definition of literacy as a technical skill only. Bhola (2003) believes that literacy curriculum practices differ across history as well as communities. All definitions therefore vary greatly in terms of the purposes and subject content they propose – be they cultural, civic, critical, functional or political. Bhola (2003) discusses different components that need to be integrated into a curriculum, such as functionality, mother tongue, and basic literacy courses. The functionality component consists of skills such as reading, writing and numeracy, up to a level so that these skills can be retained after the course. The basic literacy course component concerns awareness about civic rights and responsibilities, race relations, peace, media control, women’s issues and whatever other issues are identified in every society. The mother tongue component is an expanded conception of functionality. It includes knowledge and skills of production that can be applied to generate income in rural or urban settings; the science on which these economic skills are based; management skills; socio-political skills to ensure full participation in society life; life skills to take care of the family and the environment; cultural and spiritual development as desired (Bhola, 2003).

There are some suggestions given by Oxenham *et al* (2003) concerning the integration of components of an ABET curriculum, such as those delineated by Bhola above. They suggest that when people are learning to read, integration should be achieved through the way programmes are organised such that literacy, functionality and awareness are taught as two or three separate streams. This suggests that the political, literate educator and extension worker teach as a team. While learners learn to read, integration should be thematic and can be contained in the learning materials so that learners apply their own skills in the 3-Rs in learning economic functionality and issues of awareness. Oxenham *et al* (2003) also suggest that curriculum developers should identify what is needed for each literacy paradigm, such as: functional literacy, literacy for social change, literacy and community change, technical skills and many others. Each paradigm will therefore dictate what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. As soon as all this is set and done, curriculum developers can then integrate and sequence the different knowledge appropriately for the particular adult learners they would like to teach- for example, bricklayers, farmers, plumbers, designers and many others.

Oxenham *et al* (2001) and Bhola (2003) finally suggest that creating an emancipatory curriculum calls for more than negotiation with adult learners, as it requires careful preparation and intensive discussions about what emancipation means in each particular learning experience. Bhola's (2003) views about the ABET curriculum are relevant to this study as it tries to determine whether those developing the South African ABET curriculum are working within these paradigm components in addressing adult basic education. These definitions will assist me as a researcher in examining how is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites relevant to their adult learners' everyday life experiences. The findings of the study will assist me as a researcher to verify if the curriculum content as described in the definitions above, used in the classrooms of ABET Level 1 learners empowers the adult learners with knowledge and information that will assist them to face challenges in their real life experiences.

### **1.5.6 Literacy**

Street (2006) provides two models of literacy. These models are autonomous model of literacy and the cultural model of literacy. The autonomous model of literacy emphasizes the cognitive consequences of literacy acquisition, the implications of literacy for social and economic development and, in reference to teaching and learning, focuses on individual

problems in acquiring the written code. The cultural model of literacy is a more socially oriented view of literacy and, in reference to teaching and learning, focuses on an associated shift in teaching method from basics towards more learner-centred and culturally sensitive methods. There are many debates and questions around the commonly accepted definition of literacy. The most common understanding of the meaning of literacy is that any person who can read and write is literate. In recent years, the definitions of literacy have changed from the common sense understanding of the term literacy learning to read and write. The changes in definition are in accordance with the changing social and cultural conditions for the acquisition and use of literacy (Buthelezi, 2006). Most definitions indicate that literacy involves more than just learning the three Rs of Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic – they include consciousness rising.

Lyster (2003) notes how definitions of literacy based on the three Rs have become inadequate:

*There is no simple line to be crossed from illiteracy to literacy, as literacy can no longer be seen as just about mastery of the alphabet. Literacy should be seen as an extended process involving a complex set of communicative practices, all of which have an impact on people's ability to assert their rights or actively engage with the external world.*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) emphasises that the definition of literacy should be in relation to its uses and purposes. UNESCO suggests this definition of literacy:

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

Baatjes (2003) defines literacy as “the ability to read and write, not only by adults but by children and youth as well”. Literacy is a continuum of reading and writing skills. The term literacy is often also used to include basic arithmetic skills. Some definitions of literacy, other than these already mentioned, also include the ability to read in any context. However, it is generally accepted that real literacy must be functional and in accordance with one's needs. Functional literacy can be defined as literacy that is beneficial to the individual and his or her environment. Functional literacy is also seen as the ability to use literacy skills for

specific purposes in the home, community as well as in the workplace. On the other hand, functional literacy is viewed as the ability to derive meaning from the codified knowledge specific to a particular context (Buthelezi, 2009). Openjuru (2008) believes that functional literacy is an achievement of a level in reading, writing and numeracy that enables adequate or effective participation in the life of one's community. It can be defined in terms of the skills and abilities required to use print, in order to function in everyday life. Thus, it can also be called pragmatic or conventional literacy. Lyster (2003) sees functional literacy as a "generic term to refer to the direct and practical application of literacy skills in the world outside of the structured learning situation". It can also be worth mentioning that this change in definition from minimal literacy skills to the provision of a broader, more functional adult education has led to the change in name – from literacy programmes to adult basic education (ABE) programmes (Buthelezi, 2009).

Openjuru (2008) believes that a literacy programme only succeeds if it is adapted to people's needs and requirements. Adult learning therefore needs to be oriented to the needs and aspirations of the learners as this might encourage them to attend literacy classes. People like to engage in things that have immediate benefits to their lives and so, poor people in particular, are most interested in learning activities that will enable them to put food on the table for their families and community. The definition of literacy that befits this study is one that demonstrates literacy as more than just as the ability to read and write. It includes the process of conscientisation, empowerment offered with the delivery of information, knowledge and skills, attitudes and values, as well as literacy that contributes to the liberation of people and their full development (Freire, 1998). I therefore believe that a basic education programme for adult learners should strive to give adult people the skills, knowledge and information they need so that they are able to participate in building the new democracy in their societies. Adult literacy programmes also need to be relevant to adult learners' real life experiences, and to give adult learners more than mere reading and writing. Adult literacy programmes need to be broad and must draw on a range of sources.

### **1.5.7 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**

According to Jarvis (2004), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are just one group of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). However, they are rarely found in significant numbers in the deepest rural parts of the country. It is believed by many observers that the NGO

sector in the South African context of Adult Education has its genesis in the civil society organisations that played a vital role in countering the apartheid state of adult education. In post-apartheid South Africa, the advent of democracy created new challenges and CSOs have had to redefine their identities and roles within a legitimate constitutional democracy (Jarvis, 2004). The non-governmental organisations ABET centres are formally constituted not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) that work in a range of development-related areas. The NGOs are therefore viewed as proponents of community empowerment. The NGOs are understood to be the NPOs that provide some kind of professional service to community group members. Jarvis (2004) believe that there are three distinct strains of NGOs; firstly, those that were almost exclusively committed to the anti-apartheid movement but are now struggling in the post-apartheid era to develop new positive roles; secondly, the service NGOs that were mainly independent during the apartheid era; and lastly, those NGOs that co-operated with the apartheid state, either by free will or because of the threat of constraint to their welfare efforts. The NGO that was used in this study is one of those that were mainly independent during the apartheid regime and are still independent even in the post-apartheid era.

## **1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION**

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2** presents the literature review and the theoretical underpinnings of the study by examining relevant literature, and different learning theories, models and frameworks which illuminate some aspects of adult learning.

**Chapter 3** is a description of the research design and methodology. It gives a theoretical justification for the methodology chosen for this study. It also gives a description of some small scale aspects of qualitative methods used in the study. The research methods of data collection and analysis are also described in detail in this chapter.

**Chapter 4** is a presentation of data.

**Chapter 5** deals with the discussion of findings and conclusion. This chapter considers the conclusions of the study and its implications.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the researcher has provided the focus and purpose of the study. The researcher highlighted the rationale of the study. The key research questions, as well as research sub questions were stated. The researcher also outlined the key concepts used in the study in order to give the reader a contextual understanding of their use in the dissertation. The overview of the chapters in this study was also outlined.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The researcher, in this chapter discusses the literature review and theoretical framework. The literature and theoretical underpinnings that are related to adult education are reviewed with an attempt to cover the nature of Adult Basic Education and Training curriculum in South African NGOs and its relevance to the lives of adult learners. The researcher also looks at the local and international literature that surrounds and supports adult education literacy. Since the study is about adult education curriculum, in this review the researcher offers a brief summary of the background of Adult Education in the Republic of South Africa. Adult literacy and livelihood is reviewed. A brief historical background of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and adult literacy in South Africa is outlined. The researcher will also discuss the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) curriculum, the everyday life demands of adult learners, and the theorists' views on Adult Basic Education and Training.

#### **2.2 BRIEF BACKGROUND OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Adult Basic Education is a constitutional right in South Africa which is enshrined in the constitution. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) enshrines the right of all citizens to a “basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education, which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible,” (Department of Education, 2002). Adult education is regarded as a significant vehicle for socio-economic development in our country. South Africa is faced with social and economic challenges, technological innovation, unemployment, racism, poverty, crime and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These are also challenges to adult learners' life experiences. An adult learner is defined by Rule (2006) as a “person to be fifteen years and older, not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and with an educational level of less than grade nine.” Rule (2006) further argues that the quality of adult education should be given much attention because of the appalling standard of apartheid schooling. He states that “many adults who have nine years of schooling still require basic education”.

The Department of Education (2002) describes Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa as “the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are required for social, economic and political participation and transformation that is applicable to a range of contexts.” It also states that this should be “flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and provides success to nationally recognised certificates” (Department of Education, 2002). The new adult education and training policy in South Africa emphasises that the adult learners’ lifelong learning should include both the formal and non-formal or informal developmental approaches to lifelong learning where learners can use the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that they have acquired throughout their lives and experiences. These emphases of South African education are of vital importance to this study, as I investigate adult learners’ perceptions regarding the relevance of the curriculum - used at two Ladysmith NGO sites - to their everyday life experiences.

According to Jarvis (2004) and the National Qualification Framework (NQF), basic education means the “educational programmes that are devised to provide learners with language proficiency, numeracy and literacy for everyday life.” Adult Basic Education (ABE) in South Africa, especially KwaZulu-Natal, refers to the provision of education, including basic literacy and numeracy to a level equivalent to the General Certificate of Education to adults who have had little or no formal schooling.

Rule (2006, p.113) believes that:

*The government of democracy in South Africa has scandalously neglected the constitutional rights of adults to basic education over the last fifteen years of democracy. The government’s under spending on adult basic education and its failure to cater for adults for whom the formal ABET system is not accessible. A constructive note was handed to the government by the concerned group of individuals to call for a comprehensive approach to the challenges of ABE, outlined the key principles that may inform such an approach and alternative model of ABE provision.*

Rule (2006) also believes that if “Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the stepdaughter of the education system; ABE is the poor sister of the education system.” Rule argues thus because he believes that the South African democratic government has failed to meet its constitutional obligation in providing adult basic education. Aitchison (2003) posits the close association between adult education and the political transformation of South Africa. He feels a ‘pervasive sadness’ concerning the failure of the ‘hoped for adult education

renaissance in the apartheid era.’ Baatjes (2003) expresses a great concern over the ‘marginalisation and exclusion’ of the poor people in South Africa. He argues that an “instrumentalist tradition in ABE contributes to this marginalisation of the poor adult people against their constitutional right to basic education.” As a researcher, I agree with the insights of Rule, Baatjes and Aitchison, as I have also realised that a large number of black adult people in deep rural areas lack basic education. There are also few adult learning centres that are functioning and accessible to illiterate people. Therefore, I saw it necessary to investigate whether the education offered in these centres is able to cater for the current everyday life challenges of modern society.

Bhola (2003) believes that adult education programmes need to provide adult learners with new knowledge and skills in income generation, food production, and health needs in order to empower adult learners through education to imagine and envision a new world. Through training, adult education should enable learners to participate in the processes of implementing their vision. They should be instructed about the benefits made possible by maintenance of intermediate technology, renewable energy and environmental protection. Adults need to participate in constructing a new world, even though they cannot return to the school house to learn what they need to learn urgently and immediately. Adults therefore need to be enabled to participate in changes that they encounter in the modern and future world, if they are willing and able to do so.

### **2.3 ADULT LITERACY AND LIVELIHOOD**

According to Rogers (2004b), the purpose of adult education is to liberate people from restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency. This implies that adult education needs to increase people’s mental freedom. Adult education therefore needs to increase people’s control over themselves, their own lives, as well as the environment in which they live. Jarvis (2004) feels that the knowledge that people acquire from adult education should include ideas and skills that liberate them from slavery and powerlessness. The implication of this statement is that adult literacy needs to enable people to examine possible alternative courses of action and to make choices between those alternatives in keeping with their own lives. In addition, it needs to equip people with the ability to translate their decisions into real life situations.

I believe that adult learners attend classes because they want to be empowered in one way or another. I think that adult education has to contribute to the development of people's lives, be integrated with life, and be inseparable from their context. Oxenham *et al* (2003) argue that this could be evident if adult education does not just deal only with one aspect of life such as literacy, skills or health. Rather all the separate aspects of people's lives need to be incorporated into the totality of life that each person is living. Adult education therefore has to encompass the person's whole life and build upon what already exists in that person. This would be evident in an adult education programme that is designed to promote changes in people, as well as in society, and at the same time assist people to control changes impacting upon them (Openjuru, 2008).

Oxenham *et al* (2003) further argue that adult education should put more effort into combining livelihood training with adult literacy education, either by incorporating livelihoods into primarily literacy programmes or incorporating literacy into primarily livelihoods training. During this adult education process, the livelihoods or income-generation activities will determine the literacy content. Adult education needs to integrate programmes that have included livelihood skills as part of literacy education and literacy skills as part of livelihoods training. Oxenham *et al* (2003) believe that livelihood implies the knowledge, skills and methods that are used to produce or obtain the food, water, clothing, and shelter necessary for survival and well-being, irrespective of whether the economy is subsistence, monetary or a mixture of both. Livelihood can include more than one set of knowledge, skills and methods. I feel that adult education for livelihoods and literacy is appropriate for this study because the majority of rural illiterate adult people who participate in programmes with literacy components in South Africa, especially KwaZulu Natal, derive their living mainly from subsistence agriculture and from exchange of goods and services rather than from employment wages and salaries.

Bhola (2003) believes that different components of adult education need to be integrated. The functional component should consist of skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The component of the conception of functionality, knowledge and skills of production can be applied to generate income in both rural and urban settings. The livelihood skills in adult literacy need to include management skills, socio-political skills to ensure full participation in community life, life skills to take care of the family and the environment, cultural and spiritual development that is desired, and the science on which the economic skills are based.

The last component to be incorporated in adult literacy, according to Bhola (2003), is awareness about civil rights and responsibilities, race relations, peace, media control, women's issues, as well as whatever other issues are experienced in every society. Since livelihood is defined to include both wage and self-employment, I think adult education should therefore empower adult learners with the knowledge and skills that will enable adults to acquire that which is their right to receive as citizens of the nation and of the world. It is also important for adult education to aim at teaching adult learners literacy that will enable learners to convert that literacy into their literacies. This will help learners to contextualize literacy to particular uses. This implies that when learners are taught literacy they end up developing different literacies (Rogers, 2004a).

## **2.4 BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NGOs AND ADULT LITERACY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

There have been various kinds of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that offer different types of adult basic education and training development programmes in the adult education system in South Africa. There are those that offer adult basic education (ABE) for democratic citizenship, ABE for social movements, ABE for livelihoods as well as ABE for family literacy. Due to marginalisation from educational opportunities during the apartheid era, millions of people in South Africa never had a chance to attend school, and others did not complete their schooling. All these people deserve the opportunity for adult basic education. ABE should be delivered to both urban and rural poor people, and unemployed people in the whole of South Africa. This could contribute to personal and social development of a strong, inclusive and participatory civil society (Oxenham *et al*, 2001). Below are some of the different types of adult literacy NGOs, offering different types of adult literacy.

### **2.4.1. ABE and Democratic Citizenship**

According to Rule (2006), this type of adult basic education offers adult education literacy, democratic education, income generation and tutor development to adult learners. An example of this type of NGO in KwaZulu-Natal is the Thembaletu Community Education Centre that offers ABE classes in and around Pietermaritzburg. NGOs of this type offer ABE programmes that address the aspects of entrepreneurship and environmental education in order to equip ABE learners with literacy life skills and business skills that may help to

combat poverty. Buthelezi (2009) believes that literacy needs to portray adult literacy not just as the process of learning to read and write. Rather, it should include a process of conscientisation, empowerment offered in conjunction with the delivery of information, knowledge and skills, and literacy that contributes to the liberation of people and their full development. An adult basic education programme therefore should aim to give people the skills they need so that they are able to participate in building new democracy. Literacy needs to be made relevant to people's lives.

#### **2.4.2. ABE and Social Movements**

Other types of NGOs are those that address social development organisation, and community structures that offer literacy programmes with development imperatives. The social movements such as the disability movement and the HIV/AIDS movement are able to mobilise people. Other ABET NGOs could collaborate with these social movements in order to develop literacy programmes that address the adults' development needs. In KwaZulu-Natal, examples of such NGOs are Enable Education, Training and Development Initiatives. These link disabled people's organisations, welfare organisations and literacy organisations in an effort to provide appropriate ABE programmes for adult learners with disabilities, to poor people in rural and peri-urban areas. The state works together with these NGOs to make the ABE programmes sustainable through the payment of educators and provision of materials (Rule, 2006).

#### **2.4.3 ABE and Livelihoods**

There are also NGOs that offer ABE initiatives dealing with livelihood. ABE programmes in this ABE sector focus on skills training and income generation incorporated in literacy and business development education. ABE programmes in this sector link literacy and numeracy to business skills, craft skills and access to credit facilities, as well as employment, income, solidarity and community upliftment (Taubman, 2009). There is a belief that the organisations that are more concerned with livelihoods and other aspects of ABE developments in the African countries seem to be better at designing and delivering effective combinations of livelihoods and literacy than organisations that are more focussed on literacy. An example of an organisation that offers this type of ABE literacy in KwaZulu-Natal is the Ikhwelo Poverty Relief Project (Rogers, 2004b).

#### **2.4.4 ABE and Family Literacy**

Other NGOs offer literacy to caregivers with the purpose of improving the literacy levels of the caregivers while giving them information and support on how to help young children to develop early literacy skills. An example of this type of NGO is the Family Literacy Project. There is a belief that mothers who attend the literacy programmes of the Family Literacy Project were able to build the pre-literacy skills of their small children (Rule, 2006). This process could also assist in the development of a culture of literacy within the family, and it strengthens the education relations between caregivers and children. Family literacy befits this study, as I explained in the rationale earlier that I had experienced a problem with young children who do not get assistance and support from their caregivers and parents. This is because the children come from homes where illiteracy is prevalent and there are little or no reading materials and other learning facilities available at home. This is related to this study as the key research question tries to verify how ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevant to the lives of adult learners' real life experiences. I believe that for ABE literacy programmes to be successful, ABE organisations should offer education that would accommodate a variety of modes and purposes of delivery that are suitable to learners' contexts and resources, in order to recognize that one size does not fit all. I think that integrative ABE programmes should offer literacy and numeracy practices that are effectively and appropriately integrated with aspects such as income generation, democratic participation, family health and nutrition and so on.

#### **2.4.5 ABE and Empowerment**

Lauglo (2002) believes that Adult Basic Education empowers and can also help build broadly based civil society. He further states that if education is to serve as a means of empowerment for the disadvantaged then it is essential that adult learners be reached with a type of education that helps turn subjects into citizens, and equips prospective leaders with appropriate skills and networks. When considering Lauglo's point of view, it becomes clear that the success of the implementation of an ABET learning programme depends on careful planning. For ABET practitioners' training to be effective, analysis of adult learners' needs is required. Only if such needs are known, can suitable Adult Basic Education learning programmes that appeal to adult learners be offered. Understanding the needs of ABET

Level 1 learners determines the success of ABE in general, as well as the fruition of the adult education's objectives.

Dawson (2010) believes that learning to read and write does contribute to social progress, to personal improvement and mobility, perhaps to better health, and most certainly cognitive development. Empowering the communities through ABE can assist in social upliftment, development of the economy, as well as the national stability. This empowerment can also help in ensuring that ABE learners become independent. It is therefore clear that some of the adult learners depend on literacy mediators such as their young children to read for them. This is affirmed by Openjuru (2008) when he states that literacy helps a person to move around independently, read his or her own personal documents and look for jobs in big offices without fear. The researcher in this study is investigating if the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is able to empower adult learners with knowledge and skills that they are able to apply and transfer to their everyday life experiences.

Torres (2003) also claims that it may be productive to think of initial literacy learning for adults as oriented towards extending and consolidating their everyday practices rather than orienting them towards schooling. This therefore suggests that ABET learning programmes should draw on learners' lives and provide life skills. If people are positive towards literacy they can improve their education as well as the country's economy by assimilating new ideas essential for the development of the economy, such as those concerning entrepreneurship. An improvement in the economy could lead to national stability and the improvement of the standard of living. Some kinds of crime could also be reduced. It is believed that some people resort to crime because they want money to buy food and support their families.

#### **2.4.6 ABE and Development**

Rogers (2003) views development as the unquestioned improvement in certain key indicators such as health and housing, especially economic indicators. Development is seen as referring to the state or process of developing, growth evolution, gradual process, and expansion. Both these definitions capture the essence of what development is. Development has to do with the process of moving from one state to another. It is not static but it is dynamic. It entails improvement or growth in various spheres of community life and not just a single aspect.

Adult basic education and development are closely interlinked. In South Africa, ABE is viewed as education provision for people aged fifteen and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and have an average education level of less than grade 9.

Rule (2006) believes that adult basic education has a tremendous influence on social, economic and political development of a country. He says:

*ABE has a key role to play in building and sustaining South Africa's new democracy. This role includes not only voter education but a broader focus on participative democracy in order to enhance learners' capacities as active citizens and to strengthen local structures of governance and delivery (Rule, 2006).*

Without adult basic education it is not easy for development to take place. This serves to emphasize the need for people to engage in adult literacy programmes. It is therefore important that literacy programmes are designed in a manner that focuses on practical uses of literacy, such as income generation. Rule (2006) state that there is evidence that literacy has a beneficial effect on the ability of people to initiate and develop livelihoods and co-operatives. Such a focus should include context-specific skills such as budgeting; costing and pricing; developing curriculum vitae; banking; applying for employment and keeping records. For development to come about, a country needs more than an efficient, scientifically based educational system. A conducive political culture supported by the majority of the citizens; responsible leadership coupled with the political will; a highly motivated population and the availability and appropriate utilization of the much-needed financial resources, among others, must be taken seriously (Rule, 2006).

## **2.5 THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULUM**

Adult Basic Education and Training Act 52 (2002) of South Africa state that the ABE curriculum is equal to nine years of schooling. It includes two fundamental learning areas of Language, Literacy and Communications, as well as Numeracy or Mathematical Literacy. A number of other core learning areas and electives are designed to provide a basic general education that intend to make Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) more relevant and linked to income generation processes. These include core areas such as Natural Sciences, Human and Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, as well as Technology.

Learning areas in the elective category include Small, Medium and Macro Enterprises (SMME), Tourism, Agricultural Sciences and Ancillary Health Care.

The National Qualification Framework (NQF) views ABE as all learning programmes for adults from Level 1 to Level 4, where Level 4 is equated to grade nine in public schools or Level 1 on the NQF. ABE is equated to nine years of schooling (ABET Act No 52, 2002). In KwaZulu Natal, learners at ABET Level 1 are offered only isiZulu as a mother tongue language (MTL), English as first additional language, and numeracy (Aitchison, 2002). This implies that there are no direct links with training until that adult learner is at ABET Level 4. Since Level 4 is equivalent to grade nine, that is clearly beyond basic education. Therefore it is apparent that no skills training are offered in adult basic education.

The Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training of South Africa (2002) state that there are 12 broad categories for organising fields of adult learning, as adopted by SAQA (2008):

- *Agriculture and nature conservation*
- *Culture and arts*
- *Business, commerce and management studies*
- *Communication studies and languages*
- *Education, training and development*
- *Manufacturing, engineering and technology*
- *Human and social studies*
- *Law, military science and security*
- *Health science and social services*
- *Physical, mathematical, computer and life sciences*
- *Services, and*
- *Physical planning and construction.*

In my opinion, if the above categories of Adult learning organising fields have any chance of succeed, a great deal needs to be done on the government side regarding the development of

adequate human, physical and material resources for the proper functioning of the adult learning centres. Adult facilitators need to be trained in all these categories. Adequate resource material need to be developed to suite all the needs of adult learners. Physical resources need to be availed to cater for the needy learners.

Dawson (2010) believes that in terms of the South African perspective on ABET curriculum, a person is viewed to be literate and numerate if he or she has already acquired the skills and concepts necessary to function effectively in his or her group and community. Further, people are viewed as literate and numerate if their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics makes it possible for them to use these skills to further their own community's development. The Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training of South Africa (2002) points out that the curriculum for ABET learners in the new dispensation is described in terms of critical outcomes and developmental outcomes that underpin learning in South Africa. These reflect the abilities which it is hoped that learners in the new system will acquire, as well as unit standards that describe the outcomes of learning and training for the core and the fundamental learning areas.

In South Africa the ABE curriculum is currently:

- ✓ A national curriculum that is developed by the government where national standards could be developed, laying down the credits a learner needs in order to go on to further education and training.
- ✓ Based on the possibility of drawing up themes that needs to be covered in each module, based on the competency-based education (CBE) approach (Aitchison and Harley, 2006). The themes revolve around adult learners' lives. I believe this was done in order to encourage learners to join ABET classes.

The Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training of South Africa (2002) states that the new curriculum for ABET learners is described in terms of critical cross-field outcomes and developmental outcomes. The ABET Level 1 curriculum currently does not offer adult learners the opportunity of learning work-related skills. It only focuses on literacy and numeracy. For this study to be in line with the emancipatory adult education tradition of conducting needs analysis, this study will spend time finding out from adult learners what they actually learn and what their perceptions are regarding whether or not their learning is relevant to their real life experiences. ABET Level 1 curriculum needs to be multivariate, changing with each new context, and should involve layers of curriculum content. It should include firstly, cultural and humanistic content, giving attention to adults' life roles such as

being a family member, community participant, citizen, member of religious institution, and user of leisure. Secondly, it should include scientific literacy that would enable adult learners to understand the basic science of food production, health and hygiene, water cycles, energy cycles and environment, the scientific explanation of diseases and particularly HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and many other opportunistic diseases.

A third layer should include the operational knowledge-attitudes-performance skills for all the areas listed immediately above in the first and second layers of ABET Level 1 curriculum (Bhola, 2003). In addition to the curriculum content layers of adult education, another layer should involve globalisation, deconstruction of race, ethnicity, gender sensitivity and religious tolerance. The ABET curriculum agenda should also involve education of adult facilitators themselves to engage them in team teaching and apply teaching methods and materials for appropriate adult education at its core in a combination of study, reflection and discussion. Reflective practice, participative, open-ended teaching and learning should become areas of adult education pedagogy and instruction. Adult learners have to be responsible for their own learning while adult facilitators should have various leaderships and teaching roles to assume (Openjuru, 2008).

## **2.6 THE EVERYDAY LIFE DEMANDS OF ADULT LEARNERS**

The everyday life demands of adult learners are an important consideration when designing the learning programme in order for the effective adult learning to take place. The adult learners' everyday life demands have to be gauged in terms of what learners need in order to function more meaningfully in a particular context. The adult learners have to participate actively in their society in order to cope fully with the changing world. According to Kavanagh (2007), demands are "pressing requirements" and circumstances in which someone's needs lack or require some course of action. Some adult facilitators identified various demands that adult learners experience in their everyday life situations. Rogers (2004b) posits that the adult learning programmes must have a direct link with the daily expectations of adult learners and he highlights various reasons that motivate some adult learners to attend adult literacy classes. The same sentiment was shared by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) with the Australian trade unions who proposed that the ABE system should have links with training and with career path. They propose that there should be a national system of ABE with clear national standards, so that learners could

get nationally recognized certificates. Furthermore, the ABE curriculum should provide a generic basic education that would equip people with knowledge and skills (Aitchison and Harley, 2006).

I believe that what people experience as ‘functional’ in the sense of serving purposes important to them goes beyond teaching the three Rs. Lauglo (2002) argues against a narrowly utilitarian interpretation of ‘curriculum relevance’ for ABE that excludes important parts of peoples’ lives. It should address socio-economic challenges and include other activities such as music, religion, story telling, handicrafts and popular theatre. I believe that there is an evident demand for flexibility. It should be demand-driven in choice of contents. I think a step in the right direction would be to adapt literacy programmes to local conditions and learners’ demands of their everyday lives.

The following are some of the needs of adult learners identified (Dawson, 2010):

- ✓ Real needs – refer to the gap existing between present performance and desired performance
- ✓ Felt needs – mean those needs that are identified by the learners or anything that people consciously lack or desire. An employed adult learner, for example, may need to learn and acquire a certificate relevant to a certain job because he or she has been doing that work for a number of years. Thus, felt needs are most valuable to the adult educator as they are very strong motivators for some adult learners to join ABET classes.
- ✓ Ascribed needs – are the needs that are developed through observation where the observer may identify the discrepancy between certain behaviour and the desired behaviour of the person observed.
- ✓ Symptomatic educational needs – can provide a clue to the identification of real needs. For example, an illiterate adult person may confuse manifestation of a need, such as the inability to fill in certain forms with the real need of becoming literate.
- ✓ Esteem needs – refer to the needs of adult learners for a feeling of importance. The importance of esteem needs in education has been documented as a strong motivational force, though they are not considered as strictly educational needs.

Rogers (2004a) posits that adult learning programmes must have a direct link with the daily expectations of adult learners. He highlights various reasons that motivate some adult learners to attend adult literacy classes. The following are some of the examples of the demands of adult learners identified by Rogers (2004a):

- Adult learners attend ABET classes because they want to be some of those people who have higher status. The reason why they want this status is because in some societies around the world illiterate

people are regarded as ignorant, powerless and inferior. As a result some adults tend to join ABET classes because of such social demands.

- Other adults join ABET classes in order to utilise the opportunities that the course might offer, such as job opportunities, promotion to senior positions and many others.
- Adults also attend these classes with hope of getting access to further and higher education, and
- Lastly, they join adult classes because they want to succeed in adult literacy classes in order to be able to read newspapers, magazines, children's school reports, Bibles, hymn books, as well as whatever they encounter in their real life that need to be read (Rogers, 2004a).

In the discussion of the needs of adult education in the new South Africa on International Literacy Day in September 1990, adult learners stated that there must be a syllabus for adult education that is different from that of the children. The adult education syllabus is going to address different learning areas and have different standards to measure progress. Dawson (2010) believes that the basic needs and goals of adult learners need to be identified and achieved, if any individual adult learner is to achieve any other goal. These needs fall into two pairs, which are survival or health, and autonomy or learning needs. There are also four preconditions or basic societal needs without which individuals cannot satisfy their basic individual needs, and which are:

- ✓ Production
- ✓ Reproduction
- ✓ Culture or communication
- ✓ Political authority

The use of the word needs falls into two categories that are sometimes kept separate and sometimes conflated. Need is used to refer to a particular category of goals that are related to all people. It can also refer to strategies which are believed to provide successful routes for the achievement of any goal, whether these goals are regarded as needs or wants (Dawson, 2010). The degree to which individual needs are met will therefore depend on individuals who are healthy, autonomous and educated enough to know what is expected of them. This therefore necessitates the acquisition of relevant education by adult learners. The material production need implies that all the activities that are performed by the adult society must be directed towards material production of things such as food, clothing and shelter. Biological reproduction entails infant care and socialisation. This then highlights the importance of effective socialisation as far as the division of labour is concerned. For communication,

language plays an important role as it helps people to understand and accept issues that are presented to them. Techniques and rules play an important role in communication. Obeying rules enables society to survive and it also enhances effective political authority.

Dawson (2010) presented four types of adult learners' educational and developmental needs. These include the following:

- ✓ Felt needs
- ✓ Expressed needs
- ✓ Normative needs
- ✓ Comparative needs

Felt needs are needs that are perceived desires of the individual or community after the community has been assessed. After doing needs assessment, service is then offered to the community. Felt needs are often defined as being what people really want. These types of needs are also felt needs that are outwardly and publicly expressed or demanded (Dawson, 2010). Dawson states that the difference between expressed needs and felt needs is that a felt need may not be expressed or demanded, but it could be articulated in other less obvious ways. For example, if adult learners feel that their needs are not being met, they might just drop out of a class without demanding or expressing their needs in other ways. It is therefore clear that felt needs need to be defined within the community. The programmes offered thereafter become relevant.

Expressed needs, according to Dawson (2010), are also felt needs but the only difference is that expressed needs are publicly expressed or demanded. They are termed real needs - for example, the need for houses or shelter. Normative needs on the other hand, are those needs that are viewed as desirable against a standard proposed by the professionals, experts, bureaucratic administrators and social scientists. For normative needs, a standard is used to determine the level of their adequacy. Then, if the community or an individual demands something, that standard is used to determine whether that community or individual is definitely in need of something. This type of need is defined externally from above because it disregards what the community or the individual really needs. Comparative needs are detected when individuals and organisations are compared with others and are found to be

lacking. Comparative needs are also defined or determined by experts thereby making them similar to normative needs.

Adult learners feel that certificates are needed for adult education. In Australia, (NEPI, 1992) the setting of the adult curriculum in modules as a basis for linking curriculum and qualifications across different education and training sectors- and as a basis for constructing learning and working careers for workers - was supported by the trade unions. The trade unions had a concern with expanding the understanding of competency beyond the restricted notion of performance competency to include the concept of flexible skill development. The importance of transferable and portable qualifications across industries was stressed.

There should be a national system of ABE on clear national standards so that learners could get nationally recognised certificates. That ABE curriculum should provide a generic basic education that could equip people with knowledge and skills (Harley *et al*, 2006). In the South African curriculum the career related learning areas are only offered in ABET Level 4. The vocational orientation at the curriculum level has been expressed in a move towards a competency-based modular approach and the evaluation and certification of measurable outcomes at the level of curriculum. The training system and the schooling system felt these trends. They were having an impact at adult literacy and basic education levels even more than fifteen years ago (NEPI, 1992).

The following are the features of the competency-based approach identified in NEPI:

- ✓ Competencies that are organised into units or modules that can be assessed individually or together,
- ✓ A more explicit focus on what is to be learnt,
- ✓ A focus on observable evidence of learning assessed against performance standards such as criterion referencing, and
- ✓ Learning organised in terms of testable units known as competencies (NEPI, 1992).

In KwaZulu Natal the current ABET Level 1 curriculum shows what is to be learnt in the form of the unit standards in English Second Language, Mother Tongue Literacy and Numeracy. The concept of needs for adult learners must be clearly understood. What is important is for the adult learners' needs to be considered in services that are rendered concerning their education. For adult learners' education to succeed, adult education

curriculum providers should understand the felt needs of the target adult learners. A crucial aspect of this needs debate is how strategies to meet these needs are translated into curricular and learning programmes that are provided to adult learners.

## **2.7 THE THEORISTS' VIEWS ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Walters (2006b) feels that adult learning in South Africa has dramatically changed since 1994 democratic elections. She also states that adult learning is embedded in the political, social, cultural and economic processes of society. The primary social purposes of adult education, according to Walters (2006a) are:

- To enhance possibilities for women and men to survive the harsh conditions in which they live,
- To develop skills for people in the formal and informal sectors for economic purposes,
- For cultural and political education which encourage women and men to participate actively in society through cultural organisations, social movements, political parties and trade unions, and
- To improve the lives of the majority who are poor. This demands a holistic approach that enables inter-sectional strategies across national and local government departments, civil society organisations and those in the economy.

Walters' purposes mentioned above are relevant to this study as it tries to determine if what is taught in the ABET Level 1 classes enables the adult learners to perform all the above mentioned responsibilities. Walters (2006b) witnesses a wide spectrum of activities that are run through many different government departments, workplaces and civil society organisations. These include not only adult learning, but also capacity building, staff development, health promotion, skills training and community development. Walters (2006a) observes that for more than the past decade years of South African adult education, various new educational policies have been developed in terms of adult education structures and institutional frameworks. The following have been instituted:

- South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995 (SAQA)
- National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- South African Schools Act (SASA)
- Higher Education Act of 1997 (HEA)
- Council on Higher Education (CHE)

- Further Education and Training Act of 1998 (FETA)
- Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA)
- Adult Basic Education and Training Act of 2000 (ABET)
- Education and Training Qualification Assurers (ETQAs)
- Skills Development Act of 1998 (SDA)
- National Skills Development Strategies (NSDS)
- Skills Development Levy Act of 1999 (SDLA)

The above policies have been developed to address Adult Education in South Africa during the past years of democracy. Torres (2003) argues that for more than a decade Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa has been struggling behind because of meagre attention, resources and overly ambitious expectations. Rogers (2004a) views the goal of all literacy learning programmes as aiming to encourage learners to use literacy skills rather than only learning them. He sees the success or failure of literacy learning programmes in how far they succeed or fail in getting the adult learners to use their literacy skills in their real daily life situations.

Rogers (2004b) believes that economic and social benefits of adult education and literacy spring from using literacy skills rather than learning skills literacy. He argues that virtually no one has benefited from learning literacy skills. People only benefit by using their literacy skills to achieve some purpose. Rogers (2004b) also believes that the main aims of all adult literacy organisations are to help the learners to transfer literacy skills out of the classrooms or learning centres into their daily life use and to help those adults who no longer attend adult classes to utilise literacy skills in their daily life experiences. Buthelezi (2006) supports Rogers's statement when she states that real literacy should be functional and be in accordance with ones needs. It should include the ability to read in any context. Functional literacy should also be beneficial to the individuals and their environment and it should enable individuals to use literacy skills for specific purposes in the home, community and workplace.

It is important that the needs and aspirations of illiterate adult learners are thoroughly assessed before any provision of adult education programme can be contemplated. Oxenham

*et al* (2002) affirm this by stating that before introducing new literacy skills into the community it is important to understand how people have coped, and in what ways reading, writing and numeracy might help them. In every society there exist traditional practices, which, although they may not involve reading and writing, serve to record, assess or communicate information. This stresses that the needs of the individual community should be thoroughly assessed before literacy programmes can be offered. Oxenham *et al* (2002) believe that enriching a livelihood-led programme with components of calculating, writing and reading can prove to be very successful.

Literacy should therefore, be provided especially to facilitate people's participation in income generation activities and generally in the development of their communities. Literacy classes therefore, should not be to encourage learning for its own sake, but to encourage the use of literacy skills. Rogers (2004a) believes that it is of no use to teach people reading if there is nothing to read or to teach people how to count money if there is no money to count. The kind of literacy programme that should be offered to illiterate people should be relevant to their needs and aspirations. Learning activities taking place in a literacy class should be determined by the purposes for which literacy will be used. Learning should be based on the practices of literacy in real situations so that it becomes easier to see the relevance of learning when activities are placed in the context of the learners' everyday life experiences. Lauglo (2002) believes that if education is to serve as a means of empowerment for the disadvantaged then it is essential that adult learners be reached with a type of education which helps turn subjects into citizens and which equips prospective leaders with appropriate skills and network.

## **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

My study draws on two models of literacy. These two models of literacy are the ideological model and autonomous model. Brian Street is one of the most influential theorists within these two models. These two models fall within the perspective of post modernism. The theorists in this perspective contend that literacy is neither an absolute nor a universally common skill or set of skills.

Street (2006) maintains that there are essentially two models of literacy, the autonomous model and the ideological model. Literacy in the autonomous model is viewed as a set of

neutral, technical skills, used in a common way by all who have acquired them. In the ideological model, literacy is seen as a “set of skills and practices which have meaning only in the context in which they are used.” I believe that adult learners should be taught these skills to be able to use them in their real life situations. Street (2006) regards the autonomous model as invalid because in the autonomous model, literacy is viewed as a set of neutral, technical skills, used in a common way by all who have acquired them. Within this model, literacy was, for some years generally and optimistically regarded as a catalyst with far reaching and profound effects such as economic development, social mobility, political tolerance as well as cognitive changes.

Street (2006) proposed the ideological model as valid, as opposed to the autonomous model. In this view, the way these skills are learnt and used reflects the social structure and power relations of the background community. Its consequences are variable and completely dependent on its context. Street (2006) analyses literacy in terms of practices that are embedded within a particular social and cultural contexts. Street believes that no single perception of literacy has superior validity and that multiple literacies must be acknowledged, as must different domains and genres of literacy. Street’s concept of multiple, equally valid literacies goes much further than what is perceived by George (2008) when he suggests that there are different kinds of literacies such as alphabetical, special, and graphic, mathematical, symbolic, technological, mechanical, and many more others. The view proposed by Street and other authors is that there are some literacies which are competencies, not necessarily involving skills associated with written or printed material at all.

Taubman (2009) believes that these new literacies can be compared with new perceptions of spoken language arising from recent work in linguistics. According to the linguists, it has become outdated and politically incorrect to refer to a ‘standard language,’ - by which was meant the form used by socially or politically dominant and elite sections of its speakers. This is more in keeping with currently accepted thinking in linguistics as well as other spheres. They acknowledge a range of forms of any language, including forms spoken by marginal and relatively powerless groups of speakers. All are equally valid from a linguistic point of view. Regarding multiple literacies as equally valid similarly acknowledges that people in less dominant cultures may interpret experience and use literacy in ways that differ from those that are obvious to people within the dominant Western culture.

For this study, the ideological model is preferred as the most relevant model of adult literacy rather than autonomous model. The ideological model enables those who have acquired it to use what they have acquired in different social contexts in different ways. The reason why I chose these two models of literacy for this study is that ABET Level 1 learners need to learn literacy in a way that will give them information, knowledge and skills they need that are relevant to their lives, in order to participate in their community issues. Literacy needs to give people more than reading and writing. Literacy also needs to be broad and must draw on a range of sources (George, 2008).

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the literature review and theoretical frameworks that are relevant to this research study were presented. The information gathered here will help me in analysing whether the curriculum used at two Ladysmith ABET Level 1 NGO sites is relevant to the lives of their adult learners.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the research design and methodology used in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher presents the research design and methodology selected for this study. This chapter involves describing and exploring the theoretical underpinnings and arguments for the research design, sampling, instruments used to gather data, and the entire process of data collection. The illustration of the research process that, I as the researcher went through, are also highlighted.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH ORIENTATION**

In this study I have used a qualitative rather than a quantitative research approach. This study falls into an interpretive and qualitative paradigm as it aimed to understand a phenomenon rather than to quantify it. Henning (2007) defines a paradigm as a set of beliefs and assumptions the researchers are willing to make that serve as touchstones in guiding their activities. Various paradigms such as positivism, interpretivism and many others are basic belief systems that cannot be proven or disproved as they represent the most fundamental positions that most researchers are willing to undertake (Henning, 2007). Henning (2007) also believes that a paradigm is a philosophical assumption that underpins not only the actions of the researcher, but also the methods used in the research process.

As a researcher, I used an interpretive paradigm where knowledge is seen as constructed not only by observable phenomena, but also by descriptions of people's intentions, values and reasons, meaning making, and self-understanding (Henning, 2007). I also used in-depth semi-structured interviews and additional follow up techniques to validate the ABET Level 1 learners' responses. As a researcher, I focused on listening to the responses of the participants and took consideration of their subjective experiences. Lawson and Garrod (2003) confirm that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach, where qualitative researchers seek to uncover the complexities of real life, look at the intentions and the meanings people create in their natural context, use open-minded instruments and aim for insights into human endeavour. This implies that qualitative

researchers investigate things in their natural settings, with an attempt to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Henning (2007) states that qualitative methods are privileged with a naturalistic approach, and thus do not have the problem of inappropriately fixing meanings where they are variable and negotiable in relation to their context of use.

Qualitative researchers believe that what counts as knowledge in qualitative research is something that can be used to effect change in the lives of individuals. What they look for are power relations and transformation. To them knowledge is useless if it cannot bring about transformation in the lives of the people. I therefore preferred to employ interpretivist paradigm in this study. The interpretivist paradigm fits very well where research aims to explore the subjective experiences of people. Qualitative research interview method helped me to get an overall idea about the feelings and experiences of the research respondents. Maree (2007) supports the above assertion when he argues that qualitative research is concerned with understanding the behaviour of real-life events or situations. It also enables the investigator to ask people their perceptions of their reality and that which they see as important and meaningful in their context. This is confirmed by Cohen *et al* (2007) when they state that qualitative data focuses on smaller numbers of people than quantitative data, and qualitative data tends to be detailed and rich. It is concerned with understanding the behaviour of real-life events or situations. Qualitative research enabled me as a researcher to enquire from participants what they perceived as their reality and what was important and meaningful in their context. This study was descriptive and exploratory in nature.

### **3.3 THE SAMPLE**

Research was conducted in two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites where adult learners attend their ABET Level 1 classes. Indication of the sample size is shown on page 39. The researcher was able to identify 8 ABET Level 1 learners who were willing to participate in this study. These ABET Level 1 learners participated in both the pilot study of the research methods and tools and the actual research process. They were involved in the setting of the interview dates.

#### **3.3.1 The sites investigated**

This research investigated two non-governmental organisation sites in the Ladysmith area. These were used as the sites for data collection. Maree (2007) and Cohen *et al* (2007) confirm this by stating that case studies can be used to describe a unit of analysis or a research method, and that it is a bounded system that does not necessarily mean that one site only is studied. In this way, the researcher builds up a sample that is satisfactory to her specific needs. The particular sample in this study was chosen for a specific purpose.

The following are profiles of the sites investigated. These are ABET sites operated by non-governmental organisation (NGO) at Ladysmith.

**(i) Site A**

The first NGO site is situated 30km north of the town of Ladysmith. The area is semi-urban and consists of a wider community of educationally disadvantaged people in the Ladysmith area. The majority of the people in the area are poor and unemployed. A few of them have a minimum level of literacy. A few of those who are employed work in the farms and most females work as domestic workers in the Ladysmith households. A few of the self-employed people in this area are engaged in vegetable garden cultivation and chicken farming to earn their living. Some of them, including the participants, attend the morning adult classes that take place on the local NGO premises, situated next to the community church. This NGO site is poorly resourced and does not have a library. Besides the learning material supplied by the NGO, the ABET Level 1 learners make use of the local free newspapers, as well as Learn with Echo. This has to be transported a long way about 175 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg to reach the site, some weeks after its publication.

**(i) Site B**

The second NGO site is situated about 65km west of the town of Ladysmith. This area is a deep-rural area where most of the people in the black community have never received formal education. In many households people are very poor, unemployed, illiterate and educationally deprived. A few of those who are employed are males who work far away in the mines and usually only come home during Christmas holidays. Since their earnings are very little, they are forced to send home a little or nothing at month-end. Most female adults stay at home and look after their extended family members and children. ABET classes take place in a house of one of the adult learners' home. In this area, there is no library, electricity

and public transport. A great deal of infrastructure is missing. Even children have to travel a long distance to attend school and it is the same with a crèche. The learning material is supplied by the NGO head office, although it is not enough to cater for all the individual adult learners. Data was collected from these two different sites in order to increase the degree of representativeness of the study. This was done in order to ensure that the findings are, as far as possible, transferable, in that they are able to help to understand other contexts or groups similar to those studied.

### 3.3.2 Criteria for selecting participants

In the study a researcher used a non-probability and purposive sampling where participants were selected because of some defining characteristics that made them the holders of the relevant data needed for this study. In this case ABET Level 1 learners were the relevant sample chosen. This type of sampling was implemented in this study as a technique, in which the data collection indicated which interviewees were needed (Henning, 2007 and Merriam, 2009). The size of the sample is:

| <b>PARTICIPANTS</b>   | <b>SITE A</b> | <b>SITE B</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| ABET Level 1 learners | 4             | 4             | 8            |

The participants were selected according to these criteria:

- Eight ABET Level 1 learners were selected from the ABET Level 1 classes and four selected per site.
- All learners should be doing ABET Level 1.
- All learners should be learning isiZulu as their mother tongue language (MTL).

### 3.3.3 Pilot study

A pilot run of all the research tools and instruments was done prior to the actual research in order to refine them. Participants from these two sites were involved in this pilot run (Merriam, 2009). I trialled all the interviews after the permission to conduct interviews was

granted. I visited both NGO sites that were selected for this study once. I interviewed the ABET Level 1 learners from each NGO site. These participants were also included in the final sample of the study. I conducted these trials with the purpose of finding out whether I had asked all the questions necessary for the study, whether there were any ambiguous questions and also to eliminate repetition of questions. On the basis of these trials, a few questions were added, some were rephrased and none of the questions were excluded.

### 3.3.4 The units of analysis

The unit of analysis that was used in the study was ABET Level 1 learners. The in-depth semi-structured interviews constituted the primary sources of data. The interviews were conducted with the following participants:

- Eight ABET Level 1 learners, four from each NGO site. The following is a profile of all the ABET Level 1 learners who participated in this study:

| <b>Participants</b> | <b>SITE 1</b>  | <b>Participants</b> | <b>SITE 2</b>   |
|---------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| <b>Learner 1</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• 45 years</li> <li>• Single</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> </ul>   | <b>Learner 5</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• 40 years</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Learner 2</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• 55 years</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Vendor</li> </ul>      | <b>Learner 6</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• 35 years</li> <li>• Single</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Learner 3</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• 70 years</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Pensioner</li> </ul>     | <b>Learner 7</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• 48 years</li> <li>• Widowed</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> </ul> |
| <b>Learner 4</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• 60 years</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Self employed</li> </ul> | <b>Learner 8</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• 65 years</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Pensioner</li> </ul>  |

### 3.4 INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

I selected one of the qualitative research methods to collect data, which entails:

*Qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language, or in the form of observations that are recorded in language and analyse the data by identifying and categorising themes. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study selected issues in depth, openness and detail as they identify and attempt to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data (Maree, 2007).*

I used in-depth semi-structured interview as the technique of data collection. This was the best method of collecting first-hand information that helped me to understand how ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO site is relevant to the everyday life experiences of their adult learners. Mouton (2001) defines interviews as “interpersonal, in-depth, conversational reactions where the interviewer asks the participants questions that are designed to obtain answers relevant to the research study.” Interviews can be held face-to-face or telephonically. Mouton (2001) views qualitative interviews as those that explore specific topics, events, or happenings. Semi-structured interviews administered in this study were very advantageous in that they afforded both the interviewer and the interviewees a greater flexibility. This facilitated the probing, and more in-depth questioning for clarification of information provided. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in this study.

#### 3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is viewed as one of a range of different forms of interviewing commonly associated with qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). During the interview process, the interviewer as a researcher presents himself or herself to the interview process in order to record information. His or her presence may enhance understanding of the research hypothesis and objectives in the recording of the information. On the other hand, an interview may also cause the interviewees to refrain from expressing their real opinions or true feelings (Maree, 2007). I chose semi-structured interviews because they are conducted with a fairly open framework which allows for focussed, conversational two-way communication. Lawson and Garrod (2003) posit that semi-structured interviews have a flexible and fluid structure as compared to structured interviews. They further assert that semi-structured interviews aim at ensuring flexibility in how and in what sequence research

questions are asked, and in whether and how particular areas might be followed up and developed with different interviews. In this form of interviewing, central questions are designed ahead of time. Some of the questions are rephrased during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details and discussion of issues fully (Cohen *et al*, 2007).

#### **(a) Advantages of semi-structured interviews**

During the interview process, the interviewee has plenty of opportunity to explain his or her story in his or her own way. The interviewee is viewed to have an active reflexive and constructive role in the process of knowledge construction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Lawson and Garrod, 2003). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews may be very useful because respondents can also ask questions. Therefore a semi-structured interview works as an extension tool, by which an interviewer can get more information than anticipated because respondents provide not just answers, but also the reasons for the answers. Since this type of a research interview was a kind of informal conversation, (Mouton, 2001), it gave me as the interviewer, the freedom to rephrase the questions anew should they be ambiguous to the respondents during the collection of data. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews provided the researcher an opportunity for more communication with the participants which strengthened the validity of data collected.

#### **(b) Limitations of semi-structured interviews**

Lawson and Garrod (2003) believe that semi-structured interviews might risk overlooking events or experiences that are important from the interviewee's point of view, that are relevant to the research but have not been anticipated, or that are particular to the interviewee's own biographies or ways of perceiving. The semi-structured technique produces data that cannot permit comparisons between interviews as they are not standardised. This technique uses logic where comparison is based on the fullness of understanding of each case, rather than standardisation of data across cases. The semi-structured interviews have limitations. They are not perfect as a research instrument because it is possible to find learners more open in the absence of a facilitator than when he or she is present. To me, this was an indication that the information a researcher might find could depend on other factors, and might not always be a true reflection of reality. There is another potential limitation with administering semi-structured interviews relating to the interviewer.

Other limitations are that interviewers fail to listen closely, repeat questions that have already been asked, fail to probe when necessary, fail to judge the answers and ask vague or insensitive questions. I tried to avoid all these limitations in my study by planning in advance how to handle the interviews in this study.

### **3.4.2 Interviews for the ABET Level 1 learners**

The themes covered in the interviews were as follows:

- ✓ Curriculum content and relevance to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life demands.
- ✓ Needs analysis in the ABET Level 1 classes
- ✓ Empowerment in adult learning.
- ✓ The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.

I conducted interviews with eight (8) participants. The interviews took place with eight (8) individual adult learners who attend the ABET Level 1 classes at the two NGO sites. Eight key ABET Level 1 learners were interviewed to verify data elicited through research key and sub-questions. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ABET Level 1 learners at the two NGO sites. Individual ABET Level 1 learners were interviewed where questions were asked by a researcher and responses given by the respondents. The responses were recorded verbatim with a tape recorder and some body language notes were also taken to back up the verbal responses. Each interview session lasted for about an hour and a half in order to give respondents enough time to think and express his / her views freely with satisfaction. Facilitators were not present when adult learners were interviewed. Interview questions with the ABET Level 1 learners were posed and answered in isiZulu in order for the learners to understand them better and to express themselves freely.

As a researcher, I used prompting as a follow up to the questions when the participants looked puzzled and uncertain, especially the ABET Level 1 learners. Prompting helped both the researcher and the participants to pose and respond to the questions as needed. If prompting was not done, I do not think that I would have elicited the required quality of data from most of the ABET Level 1 learners. As a researcher, I captured and checked data well to ensure that it represented a true and accurate reflection of what the research questions

require and what is taking place in the ABET Level 1 classes at the two non-governmental organisation sites. The interview questions covered the following areas:

- Learning content offered to the ABET Level 1 learners.
- Curriculum relevance to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life experiences.
- The ABET Level 1 learners' reasons for joining ABET classes.
- Empowerment of ABET Level 1 learners.
- The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.

All the interview questions that were used yielded answers to the following research question.

The key research question is:

- How is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites relevant to the lives of their adult learners?

The sub questions are:

- What constitutes the ABET Level 1 curriculum at the two Ladysmith NGO sites?
- What are the learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn to their everyday life experiences?
- In what ways do adult learners think they have been able to apply and transfer what they have learned to their everyday life demands?

Techniques of data collection that were used to gather data were interviews in the form of semi-structured interview schedules and the checklist for the curriculum resource material and other documents. During the interview sessions with all the participants, I adhered to the research ethics that state that the participants in the proposed study have a right to the freedom of choice, participation, anonymity and confidentiality. These assisted me as a researcher to guard against and controlled my own subjectivity during the interview sessions. The conditions of anonymity, choice and confidentiality were also applied in the process of data collection which was done by means of tape recorders and interviews. Permission to use these data collecting instruments was negotiated with the participants, since they were free to reject them if they wished so (Mouton, 2001). As a researcher, I played my vital role of protecting the welfare and the rights of the research participants as part of the research ethical considerations necessity.

All the interviews with participants were conducted at the NGO sites where the ABET Level 1 learners attend their classes. For specific reasons I tried not to be formal in my conversation to make them feel at ease when we communicate. I also shared more jokes with them to keep them at ease. They felt very great about their contribution to my study. During the interview process, the researcher asked the questions from the respondents while the respondents read the questions from their interview schedules. The respondents answered the questions and their responses were recorded verbatim by the tape recorder. As a researcher, I had to rephrase the question if the respondents indicate that they needed clarity and more clarity to the question was made. The interview process for the ABET Level 1 learners was conducted in isiZulu because they were not conversant with English. The responses from the ABET Level 1 learners were translated into English at a later stage. This process was carried out throughout the research process until all the interview sessions were conducted. At the end of each interview session, refreshments were served. The researcher and the participants were engaged in the formal discussion while the refreshments were served. The formal discussion was conducted in isiZulu, since this was the mother tongue language for all the participants where they feel relaxed.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING**

The data collected were organised and classified into categories of meaning. The reasons for doing the coding were to assist me as a researcher to be able to look carefully at the patterns, similarities, differences and correlation in data. These categories were themes that seemed to be major areas into which most participants' responses as I talked to them and analysed what they had told me. Some of the themes seemed to be very important because they helped to answer my research questions and they were crucial to the study. Qualitative data was arranged into themes, trends, patterns and relationships. The categories of meanings were listed under each theme as stated in the next chapter. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded according to the coding methods described below. Neuman (2000) describes three kinds of qualitative data coding methods such as open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In these three kinds of data coding, the researcher review data on three occasions for three different purposes:

### **3.5.1 Open coding**

Neuman (2000) believes that open coding involves exploring the data and identifying unit of analysis to code for meanings, feelings, actions and events. I used this coding process to code up the data and create new codes and categories, as well as integrating these codes where relevant until the coding was completed (Cohen *et al*, 2007). While I was engaged in the open coding process, I was guided by my research questions as well as theoretical framework. In this process, as a researcher, I started reading my transcribed notes with the aim of locating key terms and events which I could develop into themes. Using research questions as a guide, I grouped together related patterns and concepts. This standardised coding helped me to identify themes and condense data into identifiable categories. This was very preliminary and allowed for change in subsequent analysis.

### **3.5.2 Axial coding**

This is the stage in which I, as the researcher, revisited initial codes or preliminary concepts to see if these could be rearranged or improved in accordance with the research questions. In this stage I was able to make links between categories and codes in order to integrate codes around an axis of central categories to create interconnections. This implies that as codes are explored, their interrelationships are examined and codes and categories are compared to existing theory (Cohen *et al* 2007). The focus here was not on data as in the first stage, but on initial coding. I went through initial codes and found that additional codes and new ideas emerged. I think this stage was very important in that it gave me a chance to recognise ideas and codes, and to also think about linkages between existing concepts and themes that emerged.

### **3.5.3 Selective coding**

This type of coding involves the scanning of data and previous codes. In this selective coding I, a researcher needed to look selectively for cases that illustrate themes and make comparisons and contrasts after all the data coding has been done (Neuman, 2000). Selective coding helped me to finalise organisation of themes and confirm accuracy of coding. As coding proceeded I was able to develop themes and make connections between them. Selective coding of data helped me to focus on actual data collected and to assign codes for themes. I was also able to revisit initial codes to check if they could be rearranged and

improved in relation to the research questions. I later looked selectively for cases that illustrated themes and made comparisons and contrasts. Respondents were given codes during data collection and presentation. NGO sites were given code 1 and 2 while respondents are coded as L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6, L7 and L8 depending on how many they are in each category. Four ABET Level 1 learners from NGO site 1 are labelled as L1, L2, L3, L4 and the other four from NGO site 2 are labelled as L5, L6, L7 and L8.

As a result of the above data analysis and coding process conducted in this study, the following themes emerged:

- ✓ Curriculum content and relevance to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life experiences.
- ✓ Needs analysis in the ABET Level 1 classes.
- ✓ Empowerment in adult learning.
- ✓ The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.

These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 after the presentation of data in Chapter 4. For me this was the toughest part of this research. There was a moment where I thought coding was impossible until I read Neuman's (2000) warning that, "coding is the most difficult operation for inexperienced researchers to understand and to master." This assertion inspired me because I began to think that coding is difficult but is not impossible; other people might have gone through the same kind of difficult experience before.

### **3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES**

The vital role of ethical research planning is to protect the welfare and the rights of research participants, even though there are many additional ethical considerations that should be addressed in the planning and implementation of the research work. According to Henning (2007), there are a number of well-known cases of unethical research practice that have led to harm being inflicted upon persons, and that have brought disrepute to the researcher and their field of study. I personally feel that it was essential for me to negotiate consent with all the relevant participants and gatekeepers, in order to acknowledge the ethical principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, as well as beneficence (Mouton, 2001). Written permission was firstly sought from the management of the NGO sites in order to use their ABET sites as

research sites. It was very important for me to find an ethical way of becoming part of the setting so that I could understand it from the inside out. Verbal negotiations were entered into between a researcher of this study and the ABET Level 1 learners in order to arrange how to interview them. Before visiting the NGO sites, I prepared informed consent forms to be read and signed by the ABET Level 1 learners if they agreed to be participants in the study.

The consent document forms were written in isiZulu because this is the language that prospective participants could read and understand. As a researcher, I firstly explained my being a researcher to all participants in isiZulu before negotiations were entered into. I also explained and assured all the participants that data collection would under no circumstances be used for any purposes other than for this study. Permission to record the interviews was sought from the ABET Level 1 learners prior to the interviews. As a researcher, I fully explained to the participants the necessity to use a tape recorder for this study. Cohen *et al* (2007) believe that a tape recorder is useful because it allows the researcher to concentrate on listening and prompting rather than trying to capture detailed data through making notes.

There was also another important issue for the identity of the participants. Researchers often give pseudonyms or codes to participants they have chosen or to institutions in which they have carried out their studies. I as a researcher also did the same for the purposes of freedom of choice, confidentiality and anonymity. During the research process, I acknowledged research ethics throughout. Prior to data collection, access to the relevant NGO sites was requested from and negotiated with the relevant NGO management, as they were free to reject my request if they wished so. When dealing with the participants, I adhered to the research ethics that state that the participants in the proposed study have a right to the freedom of choice, participation, anonymity and confidentiality. The conditions of anonymity, choice and confidentiality were also applied in the process of data collection which was done by means of tape recorders and interviews. Permission to use these data collection instruments was negotiated with the participants, since they were free to reject them if they wished so (Mouton, 2001).

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

I conclude this section by discussing the challenges and difficulties that I encountered during the data collection, transcription and analysis phases of this study. The interview questions were written in IsiZulu and English as the latter is a medium of instruction in the institution where I was studying. This is not the language suitable for the adult learners that were targeted for this study as they were the ABET Level 1 learners. As a result I had to do code switching and code mixing between English and isiZulu. Therefore the responses were either in isiZulu or in both English and isiZulu. Code switching and code mixing posed an enormous challenge to me as I had to hurriedly look at a question written in English but translate it in my mind to pose it in isiZulu. My dissertation is in English and when transcribing data I had to listen to isiZulu responses but record them in English.

The switching from one language to another was a great challenge which I tried very hard to overcome. I had to listen to responses more than once to check the correctness and to ensure accuracy of the translation. Another challenge and difficulty that I experienced was that NGO ABET classes start at nine o'clock in the morning and ends at eleven o'clock. This frustrated me because two hours contact time was not enough for both learning and interviewing. I did feel that I was interfering with the participants' learning schedule and their time to be engaged in their household chores. There were instances where interviews exceeded time requested and that worried me a lot, but the participants were so kind that even if the interview dragged for longer than expected, they stayed until the interview was finished without hurrying me to finish. Lastly, I had to review and rephrase some of my research questions after I had coded data and added some more questions so that the study focused on most aspects relevant to the research topic.

**Chapter 4** is devoted to the presentation of data elicited from the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the presentation of data elicited from the eight ABET Level 1 learners as the respondents at the two Ladysmith NGO sites. The presentation of data is given in a form of a table. The responses from the ABET Level 1 learners are presented according to the key research areas covered by the relevant interview questions that were asked from the ABET Level 1 learners. The key research issues in the table of data analysis include the category of analysis, interview questions asked from the ABET Level 1 learners, the learners' responses to the interview questions asked and the key issues arising out of the analysis. The focus of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of whether the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at the two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevant to the lives of their adult learners.

Below is the key research question and the sub questions.

The key research question is:

- How is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites relevant to the lives of their adult learners?

The three sub questions are:

- What constitutes the ABET Level 1 curriculum at the two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites?
- What are the adult learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn to their everyday lives?
- In what ways do adult learners think they have been able to apply and transfer what they have learned to their real life situations?

Below is the presentation of data elicited from the ABET Level 1 learners in accordance with the key research issues covered by the interview questions.

#### **4.2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ASKED AND RESPONSES FROM RESPONDENTS**

The interview questions that were asked and the data elicited from the ABET Level 1 learners covered the following areas related to the key research aspects related to this study:

- Curriculum content offered to the ABET Level 1 learners.
- Interesting lesson topics relevant to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life needs.
- Curriculum relevance to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life experiences.
- The ABET Level 1 learners' reasons for joining ABET classes.
- Needs analysis in the ABET Level 1 classes.
- The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.

Below is the presentation of the summary of findings that emerged from the research data.

### 4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings emerged from the elicited data:

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 curriculum content that is offered at the two Ladysmith NGO sites includes income-generating skills, such as vegetable growing, basic and advanced sewing, cooking, baking, food processing, fruit and vegetable drying and canning, knitting, and poultry farming, and business projects. The spiritual revival Bible studies, healthy life styles and health promotion activities are also offered. HIV/AIDS and other communicable disease education programmes are also offered in the ABET Level 1 classes, but the ABET Level 1 learners feel that more issues about this HIV/ AIDS aspect need to be discussed in details because it is one of the problems they experience in their lives.
- ✓ The knowledge, information, life skills, livelihoods and income generation skills that they gained from the ABET classes is used successfully to solve the problems in their everyday life experiences. So, the ABET Level 1 curriculum content used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevance-oriented.
- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners learn how to measure things, use ATMs when they draw or deposit money, and fill in forms inside the bank and whenever they buy household furniture and appliances on hire purchase. As a result of empowerment they obtain from classes, they are now able to use the knowledge, information and skills on their own everyday life situations. The ABET Level 1 learners are now able to apply and transfer most of what they have learned from the ABET Level 1 classes to their everyday life experiences. The learning areas integrate because what they learn from each learning area is also supported in the other learning areas.
- ✓ The learners joined the ABET Level 1 classes because they needed to learn more knowledge, livelihood and income generation skills in order to be able generate income successfully. But there is still more aspects of their everyday life experiences

they would like to be added to the ABET curriculum. Responses showed that need analysis is very important in the ABET Level 1 curriculum programme to ensure that what learners learn in the classrooms is relevant to their everyday life experiences. This makes it easier for the ABET learners to apply and transfer the things they learn from their classrooms to their everyday life needs if it is relevant to their everyday life situations.

- ✓ The learning learners receive from their classrooms is not enough, although what they are taught is useful to their everyday life experiences. They want to learn more computer skills in order to be in line with the modern demands of the new technology in the developing world. Although most of their needs are well-catered for in these NGO sites, learners feel that there are some of the things they want to learn more about in addition to what they are already taught.
- ✓ The NGO sites carry out a needs analysis at the beginning of the ABET Level 1 registration period. They seek to find out the problems experienced by the adult learners in their communities and what they actually want to learn in the classrooms when they join the ABET Level 1 classes, so that these are included in the learning programmes.
- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners used to experience various problems and difficulties in their lives related to their being illiterate. As a result they felt inferior to other literate people and for this reason they felt that they were marginalised. To them it seemed as if they do not fit in the societies in which they lived, because they were illiterate. They even felt ashamed of themselves when they were with literate people. As a result, they were afraid to socialise and get together with literate people. All these fears no longer occur since they attended ABET classes
- ✓ The learners gain new knowledge, life skills, information, income generation and livelihood skills that help them cope successfully with their everyday life challenges. Learners learn to draw and deposit money inside the bank from tellers and outside from the bank from ATMs where good English and reading skills from other languages are required. Adult learners are now able to read, write and speak English because in the workplace, learners are required to have the ability to read, write,

communicate, and understand reports, job cards, written instructions and directions in English.

- ✓ What learners have learned in their classrooms has empowered them with useful and valuable knowledge, information, life skills, income generation and livelihood skills that can be applied to their everyday life situations. They had felt helpless, insignificant, marginalised, excluded, and less informed in a knowledge-rich society that demands certain levels of basic education. They had also been looked down upon and stigmatised because of being illiterate, before getting help by attending adult classes.
- ✓ Learning isiZulu and English are the top priority for the ABET Level 1 learners in this study. The ABET practitioners use isiZulu to facilitate mother tongue literacy and English to facilitate English second language. Learners felt that their learning would be more or less complete with learning English in addition to their mother tongue language, isiZulu. The ABET Level 1 learners really need English language proficiency as it is a language of business and profession. The learners expressed interest in learning English as they can already read and write their mother tongue isiZulu well.
- ✓ Learning English and isiZulu make learners feel proud because that is where they can assure themselves how much they understand the content they learn. The languages of learning used in the ABET Level 1 classes are on par with the level of understanding of the ABET Level 1 learners. These languages make it possible for the learners to start learning from the known to the unknown as well as to relate what they learn in the classrooms to their everyday life experiences.

The above findings for this study are discussed in detail in chapter 5 as well as the following four themes that emerged from this study:

- ✓ Curriculum content and relevance to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life experiences.
- ✓ Needs analysis in the ABET Level 1 classes

- ✓ Empowerment in adult learning
- ✓ The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus of the researcher in this chapter is on the discussion as well as the interpretation of findings, and the conclusion. The discussion and interpretation is based on the summary of findings that emerged during the presentation of data in the previous chapter 4. The aim of this study is to investigate if the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevant to the lives of their adult learners. As the researcher, I wanted to find out how the ABET Level 1 curriculum content offered at the two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites is able to assist the ABET Level 1 learners to transfer and apply the information, knowledge and skills they have acquired to address their everyday life challenges. I was interested in determining the ABET Level 1 learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn from the ABET Level 1 classes, to their real life experiences. The following key research and sub-questions were used to help the researcher to elicit data in order to get responses relevant to the research topic question.

The key research question is:

- How is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith non-governmental organisation sites relevant to the lives of their adult learners?

The sub questions are:

- What constitutes the ABET Level 1 curriculum at the two Ladysmith NGO sites?
- What are the adult learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn, to their everyday lives?
- In what ways do adult learners think they have been able to apply and transfer what they have learned to their real life situations?

During the collection and presentation of data elicited from the ABET Level 1 learners as the participants in this study, the following themes relevant to the study emerged.

- ✓ Curriculum content and relevance to the ABET Level 1 learners' everyday life experiences.
- ✓ Needs analysis in the ABET Level 1 classes.
- ✓ The empowerment in ABET learning.
- ✓ The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.

Below is the discussion of the findings in relation to the research themes:

## **5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The discussion and the interpretation of the research findings are done in relation to the themes that emerged from the study.

### **5.2.1 Curriculum content and relevance to adult learners' everyday life demands.**

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that the curriculum content that is offered at the two Ladysmith NGO sites includes income-generating skills, such as vegetable growing, basic and advanced sewing, cooking, baking, food processing, fruit and vegetable drying and canning, knitting, and poultry farming, and business projects. The spiritual revival Bible studies, healthy life styles and health promotion activities are also offered. HIV/AIDS and other communicable disease education programmes are also offered in the ABET Level 1 classes, but the ABET Level 1 learners felt that more issues about this HIV/ AIDS aspect need to be discussed in details because it is one of the problems they experience in their lives.

The findings revealed that the ABET Level 1 curriculum content at the two Ladysmith NGO sites is derived from the most specific everyday life needs that adult learners experience in their everyday life situations. The curriculum content includes programmes in the learning areas of literacy, numeracy, applied agriculture, agricultural technology, food, and textile and business management. Sustainable Agriculture Programmes serve them with skills related to improving soil fertility, food production, crop, and water storage. Other skills gained include areas of health, spiritual development and basic life skills related to poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases.

Bhola (2003) affirms that ABET Level 1 curriculum needs to be multivariate, changing with new context, and should involve cultural and humanistic content, giving attention to adults' roles of being a family member, community participant, citizen, member of religious institution, and user of leisure. ABET curriculum should also include scientific literacy that enables learners to understand the basic science of food production, health and hygiene, water cycles, energy cycles and environment, the scientific explanation of diseases and particularly HIV / AIDS, tuberculosis and many other opportunistic diseases. Bhola (2003) also affirms that ABET curriculum content should include globalisation, deconstruction of race, ethnicity, gender sensitivity and religious tolerance.

Oxenham *et al* (2003) argue that adult education should put more effort into combining livelihood training with adult literacy education, either by incorporating livelihoods into primarily literacy programmes or incorporating literacy into primarily livelihoods training. According to Oxenham *et al* (2003), livelihood implies the knowledge, skills and methods that are used to produce or obtain the food, water, clothing and shelter necessary for survival and well-being, irrespective of whether the economy is subsistence, monetary or a mixture of both. Livelihood therefore, can include more than one set of knowledge, skills and methods. As a researcher, I feel that the curriculum content offered for the ABET Level 1 learners on livelihoods and literacy is appropriate and relevant to the everyday life needs of ABET learners because the responses from the learners revealed that the ABET Level 1 learners in the two NGO sites derive their living mainly from subsistence farming and from exchange of goods and services rather than from employment wages and salaries.

Openjuru (2008) confirms that ABET curriculum agenda should involve education of adult facilitators themselves in order to engage them in team teaching and apply facilitation methods and curriculum material for appropriate adult education at its core in a combination of study, reflection and discussion. Reflective practice, participative and open-ended facilitation should become areas of ABET pedagogy and instruction. ABET learners should take responsibility for their own learning, and facilitators should maintain various leadership and facilitation roles.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners stated that the knowledge, information, life skills, livelihoods and income generation skills that they gained from the ABET classes have been used successfully to solve the problems in their everyday life experiences. The

gathered responses reaffirmed that the ABET Level 1 curriculum content used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevance-oriented.

Bhola (2003) believes that adult education programmes need to provide adult learners with new knowledge and skills in income generation, food production, and health needs in order to empower adult learners through education to imagine and envision a new world. Through training, adult education should enable learners to participate in the processes of implementing their vision. They should be instructed about the benefits made possible by maintenance of intermediate technology, renewable energy and environmental protection. Adults need to participate in constructing a new world, even though they cannot return to the school house to learn what they need to learn urgently and immediately. Adults therefore need to be enabled to participate in changes that they encounter in the modern and future world, if they are willing and able to do so.

George (2008) and Hiatt-Michael (2008) reaffirm the above mentioned findings because they believe that motivation to learn is likely to increase if adult learners see relevance in the learning content that is presented to them. They also indicate that motivation to learn originates from adult learners' expectations of the usefulness of the content. ABET programmes in the ABET sector focus on skills training and income generation incorporated in literacy and business development education. ABET programmes in this sector link literacy and numeracy to business skills, craft skills and access to credit facilities, as well as employment, income, solidarity and community upliftment (Taubman, 2009).

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that they learned about how to measure things, use ATMs when they draw or deposit money, and fill in forms inside the bank and whenever they buy household furniture and appliances on hire purchase. They stated that as a result of empowerment they obtain from classes, they are now able to use the knowledge, information and skills on their own everyday life situations.

According to Openjuru (2008), a person is viewed to be literate and numerate if that person has already acquired the skills and concepts necessary to function effectively in his or her group and community. He further believes that people are viewed as literate and numerate if

their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics makes it possible for them to use these skills to further their own community's development.

Oxenham *et al* (2003) argue that adult education should put more effort into combining livelihood training with adult literacy education, either by incorporating livelihoods into primarily literacy programmes or incorporating literacy into primarily livelihoods training. During this adult education process, the livelihoods or income-generation activities will determine the literacy content. Adult education needs to integrate programmes that have included livelihood skills as part of literacy education and literacy skills as part of livelihoods training. Oxenham *et al* (2003) believe that livelihood implies the knowledge, skills and methods that are used to produce or obtain the food, water, clothing, and shelter necessary for survival and well-being, irrespective of whether the economy is subsistence, monetary or a mixture of both. Livelihood can include more than one set of knowledge, skills and methods.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that the curriculum content used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevant to their everyday life experiences. The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that they are now able to apply and transfer most of what they have learned from the ABET Level 1 classes to their everyday life experiences. Their responses also revealed that learning areas integrate because what they learn from each learning area is also supported in the other learning areas (Adult Basic Education Act No.52, 2002).

Adult people need to learn to work with and manipulate numbers quickly and accurately. Four Arithmetic basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication as well as division need to be mastered by all people. People also need to master the use of counting, reading and writing devices such as calculators, computers and cellphones in order to be able to use developing modern technology. People can engage easily and with confidence when buying and selling, as one of the valuable income generation activities (Dawson, 2010). Some illiterate people who are engaged in buying and selling usually hire literate people to sell for them and they end up not getting much profit as they have to pay those hired people for their services. Sometimes those hired people cheat by stealing money, knowing very well that the people who hired them do not even know what their profit would be (Dawson, 2010).

Wilson and Sperber (2002) state that any input is relevant to an individual when it connects with the background information available to the learner, yielding conclusions that matter to the learner. Giving valuable information, answering a question in mind, improving knowledge on a certain topic, settling a doubt, confirming a suspicion, or correcting a mistaken impression are relevant examples of Wilson's and Sperber's (2002) observation. According to the relevance theory, a phenomenon is regarded as relevant to an individual when its processing in a context of available assumptions yields a positive cognitive effect. Wilson and Sperber (2002) assert that a positive cognitive effect is a worthwhile difference to the individual's representation of the world. The responses given by the respondents during the interviews underscore Wilson's and Sperber's views on relevance. Rule (2006) and Openjuru (2008) agree that ABET literacy programmes have a beneficial effect on the ability of adult people to initiate and develop livelihood skills and cooperatives. The above information affirms the truth that the needs and aspirations of illiterate adult learners should be thoroughly assessed before presenting them with a literacy programme.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that they joined the ABET Level 1 classes because they needed to learn more knowledge, livelihood and income generation skills in order to be able generate income successfully.

The NGO sites presented them with the learning content and literacy activities that fulfilled their everyday life desires. Rule (2006) and Openjuru (2008) suggest that literacy and numeracy practices need to be effectively and appropriately integrated with aspects such as income generation skills, democratic participation, family health and nutrition. This NGO offers literacy to caregivers with the purpose of improving the literacy levels of the caregivers while giving them information and support on how to help young children to develop early literacy skills. This process could assist in the development of a culture of literacy within the family, and it strengthens the education relations between caregivers and children. All of these aspects mentioned are evident in the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites. This makes it relevant to the lives of their adult learners. An ABET literacy programme that prioritises income generation skills is likely to attract more adult learners. Normally ABET Level 1 learners want to engage in activities where they can clearly see immediate satisfaction of their immediate needs. Illiterate people who live in poverty usually go to literacy classes in large numbers if by so doing their economic conditions will improve.

Lauglo (2002) affirms this by stating that adult basic education is important for an education strategy that seeks to be pro-poor and to redress social injustice.

Openjuru (2008) states that the ABET Level 1 curriculum should enrich livelihood led programmes with components in calculating, writing and reading. This simply indicates the necessity of integrating livelihoods and income generation activities with ABET literacy programmes. Openjuru's suggestion is evident at the two Ladysmith NGO sites, and it has been confirmed by the responses revealed by the respondents. Business skills development is seen as a process of enlarging people's choices including access to income, a healthy life, education, a healthy environment and participation in decision making that affects people in their daily lives. Problems affecting our society such as ignorance, helplessness and backwardness are also tackled by the process of development (Suskie, 2009). The responses from the ABET Level 1 learners revealed that poverty related to unemployment was the major reason why the learners decided to join the ABET Level 1 classes.

In order for the ABET Level 1 learners to participate fully in economic and social development, due to the demands of the changing economy and the rise in the skills requirements of jobs, they needed to develop their skills by attending the ABET Level 1 classes (Taubman, 2009). This is supported by the fact that ABET Level 1 learners have agricultural plots at the sites as well as at their homes where the learners practise modern methods of livelihood farming with the technical help of the supervisors. Products harvested from these demonstration plots are sold to the community and surrounding areas. The income is for the adult learners. Some of the cash obtained from these plots is used to expand livelihood projects, divided among them. It is true that the ABET Level 1 learners are required to be sufficiently literate and numerate to be able to take and record income (Oxenham *et al* 2003 and Taubman, 2009). The learners stated that the lessons based on income generation skills such as vegetable growing and selling, cooking, sewing and poultry farming skills make learners feel happier. Learners have learned these in their ABET Level 1 classes. The skills including bookkeeping, drawing budgets and banking lessons were of great interests to the adult learners.

Rogers (2004a) believes that the economic and social benefits of ABET education and literacy spring from using literacy skills rather than learning skills literacy. Rogers argues that virtually no one has benefited from learning literacy skills, but people only benefit by

using their literacy skills to achieve some purpose. Rogers (2004a) confirms that the main aims of the adult literacy organisations are to help the ABET learners to apply and transfer literacy skills out of their classrooms into their everyday life use and to help those adults who no longer attend ABET classes to utilise literacy skills in their everyday real life experiences. Rogers (2004b) believes that the success or failure of ABET Literacy learning programmes lies in how far these ABET Programmes succeed or fail in getting the ABET learners to apply and transfer these literacy skills in their real life situations.

### **5.2.2 Needs analysis in the ABET Level 1 curriculum programmes**

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners' responses revealed that there is still more aspects of their everyday life experiences they would like to be added to the ABET curriculum. Responses from the ABET Level 1 learners showed that need analysis is very important in the ABET Level 1 curriculum programme to ensure that what ABET Level 1 learners learn in the classrooms is relevant to their everyday life experiences. This will make it easier for the ABET learners to apply and transfer the things they learn from their classrooms to their everyday life needs if it is relevant to their everyday life situations.

Analysis of adult learners' needs is required. Only if such needs are known, can suitable Adult Basic Education learning programmes that appeal to adult learners be offered. Understanding the needs of ABET Level 1 learners determines the success of ABE in general, as well as the fruition of the adult education's objectives. According to Nzimande (2007), the degree to which individual needs are met will therefore depend on individuals who are healthy, autonomous and educated enough to know what is expected of them. This therefore necessitates the acquisition of relevant education by adult learners. The material production need implies that all the activities that are performed by the adult society must be directed towards material production of things such as food, clothing and shelter. Biological reproduction entails infant care and socialisation. This then highlights the importance of effective socialisation as far as the division of labour is concerned. For communication, language plays an important role as it helps people to understand and accept issues that are presented to them. Techniques and rules play an important role in communication. Obeying rules enables society to survive and it also enhances effective political authority.

- ✓ The learners also revealed that there are many things that they want to learn more about in addition to what they are already taught. This revealed that the learning they receive from their classrooms is not enough, although what they are taught is useful to their everyday life experiences. They want to learn more computer skills in order to be in line with the modern demands of the new technology in the developing world. Although most of their needs are well-catered for in these NGO sites, there are some of the things they want to learn more about in addition to what they are already taught.

The concept of needs for adult learners must be clearly understood. What is important is for the adult learners' needs to be considered in services that are rendered concerning their education. For adult learners' education to succeed, adult education curriculum providers should understand the felt needs of the target adult learners. A crucial aspect of this needs debate is how strategies to meet these needs are translated into curricular and learning programmes that are provided to adult learners.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners hinted that they would be glad if the NGO could issue certificates for their achievements at the end of each year and organise yearly achievement ceremonies for them so that their children and families would celebrate with them and see their achievements and successes.

Aitchison and Harley (2006) argue that there should be a national system of ABE on clear national standards so that learners could get nationally recognised certificates. That ABE curriculum should provide a generic basic education that could equip people with knowledge and skills (Aitchison and Harley 2006). In the South African curriculum the career related learning areas are only offered in ABET Level 4. The vocational orientation at the curriculum level has been expressed in a move towards a competency-based modular approach and the evaluation and certification of measurable outcomes at the level of curriculum. Bhola (2003) and Openjuru (2008) believe that the emancipatory adult education tradition of conducting needs analysis needs to spend time finding out from adult learners what they learn and what their perceptions are regarding whether their learning is relevant to their everyday life experiences.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that the NGO sites carry out a needs analysis at the beginning of the ABET Level 1 registration period. They seek to find out the

problems experienced by the adult learners in their communities and what they actually want to learn in the classrooms when they join the ABET Level 1 classes, so that these are included in the learning programmes.

It is necessary for the ABET sites to do the needs analysis so that relevant teaching and learning support can be availed, organised and further steps taken for the ABET Level 1 learners to get the curriculum that is relevant to their everyday life experiences. All this effort needs to be realised in order for both the practitioners and individual learners to find solutions to resolve some of their everyday life problems, and to assist learners in satisfying their real life needs as well as achieving their objectives or goals. One of the reasons for assessing the learners' needs is to assist the ABET learners to think about how they have coped without literacy and to explain how literacy skills may assist and empower them in the future. Another reason is to help the ABET programmes to adapt the teaching and learning content so that it is more relevant to the learners' needs, interests, strengths, literacy practices, social and community concerns, circumstances and context. The last reason is to help the ABET programmes to make use of and build on what the adult learners already know (Spurlin, 2008). The ABET officials and practitioners need to put up these individual or group needs analysis issues in their ABET programmes so that they can be re-negotiated and re-prioritised whenever the need arises. Needs analysis is, by its very nature, different for each individual or group and it should therefore be negotiated either before the teaching and learning process begins at the first lesson with individual learners, or during the teaching and learning process itself and throughout. Once the adult learners' needs have been established and negotiated, the practitioners should incorporate them in their daily lesson activities (Openjuru, 2008).

It is important for the ABET practitioners to see the ABET Level 1 learners' needs in context, as the needs of the ABET Level 1 learners always have a context. The ABET practitioners may not be able to understand the learners' genuine needs unless they understand the context in which the ABET Level 1 learners live or work. The context influences the adult learners' needs. The ABET Level 1 learners may understand their context or situation very differently from their practitioners and it is important that the practitioner does not impose his or her understanding on the learners. The practitioner's understanding of what he or she thinks the ABET Level 1 learners' needs are, should be put to the test during the needs analysis process (Buthelezi, 2009). I have deduced from the responses that the reasons that adult learners join

the ABET Level 1 classes include a desire to learn to write, read their own letters and other written texts. Generally adult people from rural areas who visit the cities are expected to cope with street signs, notices, written forms and other printed media.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners reflected that they used to experience various problems and difficulties in their lives related to their being illiterate. They stated that they felt inferior to other literate people and for this reason they felt that they were marginalised. To them it seemed as if they do not fit in the societies in which they lived, because they were illiterate. They also revealed that they even felt ashamed of themselves when they were with literate people. As a result, they were afraid to socialise and get together with literate people.

Baatjes (2003) expresses a great concern over the ‘marginalisation and exclusion’ of the poor people in South Africa. He argues that an “instrumentalist tradition in ABE contributes to this marginalisation of the poor adult people against their constitutional right to basic education.” As a researcher, I agree with the insight of Baatjes, as I have also realised that a large number of black adult people in deep rural areas lack basic education. According to Rogers (2004a), the purpose of adult education is to liberate people from restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency. This implies that adult education needs to increase people’s mental freedom. Adult education therefore needs to increase people’s control over themselves, their own lives, as well as the environment in which they live. He feels that the knowledge that people acquire from adult education should include ideas and skills that liberate them from slavery and powerlessness. The implication of this statement is that adult literacy needs to enable people to examine possible alternative courses of action and to make choices between those alternatives in keeping with their own lives. In addition, it needs to equip people with the ability to translate their decisions into real life situations.

- ✓ The learners wanted to gain new knowledge, life skills, information, income generation and livelihood skills that would help them cope successfully with their everyday life challenges. Learners need to draw and deposit money inside the bank from tellers and outside from the bank from ATMs where good English and reading skills from other languages are required. Adult learners also need to be able to read, write and speak English, in order to get promotion in their jobs. In the workplace, learners are required

to have the ability to read, write, communicate, and understand reports, job cards, written instructions and directions in English.

Bhola (2003) believes that different components of adult education need to be integrated. The functional component should consist of skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The component of the conception of functionality, knowledge and skills of production can be applied to generate income in both rural and urban settings. The livelihood skills in adult literacy need to include management skills, socio-political skills to ensure full participation in community life, life skills to take care of the family and the environment, cultural and spiritual development that is desired, and the science on which the economic skills are based. The last component to be incorporated in adult literacy, according to Bhola (2003), is awareness about civil rights and responsibilities, race relations, peace, media control, women's issues, as well as whatever other issues are experienced in every society.

Since livelihood is defined to include both wage and self-employment, I think adult education should therefore empower adult learners with the knowledge and skills that will enable adults to acquire that which is their right to receive as citizens of the nation and of the world. It is also important for adult education to aim at teaching adult learners literacy that will enable learners to convert that literacy into their literacies. This will help learners to contextualize literacy to particular uses. These are some of the difficult real life experiences that motivated the ABET learners to join the ABET Level 1 classes. This confirms the point that reading and writing are essential for ABET learners and that these aspects should form part of a broader literacy programme for ABE system (Lauglo, 2002).

### **5.2.3 The empowerment in ABET learning.**

This discussion is based on the empowerment that the ABET Level 1 learners received from their classroom experience. The researcher elicited data to find out the ABET Level 1 learners' views about the knowledge, information and skills they acquire in their classrooms.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners explicitly stated that what they have learned in their classrooms has empowered them with useful and valuable knowledge, information, life skills, income generation and livelihood skills that can be applied to their everyday life situations. Their responses revealed that they had felt helpless, insignificant,

marginalised, excluded, and less informed in a knowledge-rich society that demands certain levels of basic education. They had also been looked down upon and stigmatised because of being illiterate, before getting help by attending adult classes.

I believe that adult learners attend classes because they want to be empowered in one way or another. I think that adult education has to contribute to the development of people's lives, be integrated with life, and be inseparable from their context. Oxenham *et al* (2003) argue that this could be evident if adult education does not just deal only with one aspect of life such as literacy, skills or health. Rather all the separate aspects of people's lives need to be incorporated into the totality of life that each person is living. Adult education therefore has to encompass the person's whole life and build upon what already exists in that person. This would be evident in an adult education programme that is designed to promote changes in people, as well as in society, and at the same time assist people to control changes impacting upon them (Openjuru, 2008). I think all of this had a negative impact on their lives and identities. Rule (2006) argues that if adult learners want to learn because they want to be able to generate income successfully, they should be presented with the learning content and literacy activities that address their needs. Rule further suggests that literacy and numeracy practices need to be effectively and appropriately integrated with aspects such as income generation, democratic participation, family health and nutrition, and so on.

According to Bhola (2003), adult education programmes need to provide adult learners with new knowledge and skills in income generation, food production and health needs in order to empower adult learners through education to imagine and envision a new world. Bhola believes that through training, adult education should enable learners to participate in the processes of implementing their vision. Adult learners should also be instructed about the benefits made possible by the maintenance of immediate technology, renewable energy and environmental protection. Adult learners need to participate in constructing a new world, even though they cannot return to the school house to learn what they need to learn urgently and immediately. Adult learners therefore need to be enabled to participate in changes that they encounter in the modern and future world, if they are willing and able to do so.

From the responses that were gathered, I can deduce that attending the ABET Level 1 classes saved the adult learners' lives from a desperate state of powerlessness, indignity, marginalisation and lifelessness. For the information, knowledge, skills and empowerment to

be applicable and transferable to the adult learners' work, their responsibilities and lives, it has to be of value to them. The knowledge, information and skills which they learned from the ABET Level 1 classrooms empowered them with rich knowledge and skills that emancipated them from domestication and poverty (Freire, 1998).

Empowerment in this study, therefore, refers to an act of building, developing and enabling participants through collaborative effort. Empowerment is a phenomenon that does not occur overnight but is a process (Buthelezi, 2006). All the respondents explained that they gained information, knowledge, life skills and income generation skills that were useful to their problem-solving situations in their lives. Buthelezi (2006) maintains that to empower means to enable, to allow, or to permit. Empowerment can be conceived as both self-initiated or initiated by others. Buthelezi also maintains that empowerment is characterised by reciprocity. Empowerment also refers to increasing political, social or economic strength of individual or groups. Most of these kinds of empowerment are achieved at the two NGO sites. Empowerment often involves the empowered developing confidence in the adult learners' own capacity. It is a consequence of liberatory learning. Power is not given, but created within the emerging praxis in which co-learners are engaged. Empowerment is therefore an important element of development, being the process by which people take control and action in order to overcome obstacles. Empowerment especially means the collective action by the oppressed and deprived to overcome the obstacles of structural inequality which have previously put them in a disadvantaged position (Freire, 1998).

Higgs (2009), powerlessness means that people find themselves in a situation where they experience an actual or potential loss of power. People who feel powerless or disempowered feel alienated from resources, and have a sense of distrust and hopelessness. To add to this, I think empowerment as a concept is meaningless if it does not integrate both awareness and action to fight powerlessness, by the participants meant to be empowered. Grace (2009) on the other hand, believes that there are three different levels of empowerment. These are micro, interface and macro-levels. She categorises outcomes of empowerment differently and argues that only if there is evidence of indicators from all the three dimensions of empowerment can one say that empowerment has occurred. Grace (2009), micro-level empowerment includes, inter alia, self-confidence, a sense of the personal responsibility, feelings of self-efficacy and belief in one's capability to perform certain skills.

On the other hand, the interface level of empowerment includes respect for others, caring for the next person, problem solving, individual assertiveness, and so on. Macro-level empowerment is more advanced in that it involves critical reflection, awareness of one's rights and the ability to take action for purposes of effecting change. Chili (2007) argues that empowerment is a process to change the distribution of power, both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society. If people are positive towards literacy they can improve their education as well as the country's economy by assimilating new ideas essential for the development of the economy, such as those concerning entrepreneurship. An improvement in the economy could lead to national stability and the improvement of the standard of living. Some kinds of crime could also be reduced. It is believed that some people resort to crime because they want money to buy food and support their families.

Generic information acquired by ABET Level 1 learners from their classrooms is converted to value added information and knowledge because the ABET Level 1 learners revealed that they are able to apply and transfer this knowledge and information into practical situations for their own benefit. This to me suggests explicit empowerment at its best. This also reflects the inner satisfaction which can be described as implicit empowerment. If being empowered means satisfying all the three dimensions as mentioned above, the term empowerment befits what the respondents in the present study described. This is because most of the ABET Level 1 learners achieved empowerment at all the three levels. I also believe that once the ABET Level 1 learners are empowered with relevant information, knowledge and skills, they become confident and competent adults who can take control of their lives. They learned more than just the specific skills, knowledge and information they came to the ABET Level 1 classes for. The learning experiences they gained assisted them to discover some truths about themselves and their place in the real outside world.

#### **5.2.4 The issue of English and isiZulu MTL in the ABET Level 1 classes.**

I chose to use this theme in this study because the responses from the respondents revealed that the ABET Level 1 learners were very eager to learn a great deal of English and isiZulu in their classes. The ABET Level 1 classes focus on the three fundamental sub-fields of learning that are Numeracy, isiZulu Mother Tongue language (MTL) and English as Second Language (ESL). ABET Level 1 English and isiZulu cover themes such as life skills,

communication, story-telling and writing advertisement, grammar, minute taking, letter writing, filling in forms, curriculum vitae, forms of reading, shopping and society.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that learning isiZulu and English were the top priority for the ABET Level 1 learners in this study. The learners revealed that the ABET practitioners use isiZulu to facilitate mother tongue literacy and English to facilitate English second language.
- ✓ ABET learners felt that their learning would be more or less complete with learning English in addition to their mother tongue language, isiZulu. The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that they really needed English language proficiency as it is a language of business and profession. The learners expressed interest in learning English as they could already read and write their mother tongue isiZulu well. They responded that they felt happier when they learn comprehension passages in English and isiZulu because that is where they can assure themselves how much they understand the content of what they learn.
- ✓ ABET Level 1 learners revealed that the languages of learning, which are English and isiZulu, used in the ABET Level 1 classes are on par with the level of understanding of the ABET Level 1 learners. These languages make it possible for the learners to start learning from the known to the unknown as well as to relate what they learn in the classrooms to their own everyday life experiences.

According to Bhola (2003) and Openjuru (2008), learning English is very important since English is the language most used in business and commercial arenas. Most of the written words participants usually encounter in life are written in English more than other official languages, such as road signs and other information signs, forms, medicines and many other things. The research study established that learners usually use their own language experiences as the foundation of their learning. If the facilitators can organise the ABET Level 1 learning activities in a way that uses the language experiences of the learners, the learners would find that the learned skills, information and knowledge are closely connected to their personal needs and objectives. The ABET Level 1 learners learn more quickly when the new material is relevant to their everyday real life needs (Rogers, 2003). Language learning is such a basic part of being human that it must be connected deeply to adult

learners' personalities and feelings. Their feelings and personalities can be very important in language learning because language is closely tied up with an individual's feelings and responses to other people and other stimuli (Daniels, 2007). The research findings revealed that most of the ABET Level 1 learners want to be able to earn a living from the ABET Level 1 classes. Although reading and writing, counting and being able to use the English and isiZulu are important, they however are desperate for participating in the income generation activities.

Open, sociable and relaxed feelings can result in better English learning abilities. Negative feelings can affect adult learners' language abilities. It is therefore important for the ABET practitioners not to raise adult learners' levels of anxiety too high over aspects like errors that make learners reluctant to take risks in using the language (Grace, 2009). Practitioners need to encourage ABET learners and build their self-esteem by managing positive classroom interaction so that when learners learn and produce language they are well supported. This would make them feel free to drop some inhibitions, take risks and respond readily to people they are communicating with. For the ABET learners to learn and use fluent English they have to be open to the language itself and to the people they communicate with. The ABET Level 1 learners need to use language to respond to people and to situations. They have to feel that it is useful and worthwhile for them to do so (Suskie, 2009).

If the ABET Level 1 learners' isiZulu home language is developed and kept going as a language of learning, ABET learners can easily transfer language-and-learning skills from their home language to their new English second language. ABET Level 1 learners can progress faster and do better academically in English than those who learn entirely through English, at the neglect of their home language. According to the Constitution of our democratic country, all official languages are equal and all people have the right to express themselves in languages of their choice (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). In real life situations, however, this is not always applicable. For example, people who do not understand English but want to access help concerning many aspects of life in urban areas, have to wait patiently for the consultant who understands their language. People who are not fluent and proficient in speaking, reading and writing English always feel inferior to those who do. There are many cases where people who do not understand English or Afrikaans are kept out. One of the examples of this case is where most of the Television programmes and advertisements are presented in English or Afrikaans. It becomes very

difficult for people who do not understand English or Afrikaans to access information from such communication media.

Another example related to the above case is where the road traffic and other information signs are also communicated in English and Afrikaans, but never in other official African languages. Some symbols, however, that are used in traffic signs do help road users who do not understand English or Afrikaans, even though they fail to understand what is written on the signs. They are able to know what is expected of them by merely interpreting the meaning of the symbols using their own thoughts. It is true that English is a business and commercial language. At public offices and commercial places people are most often required to fill in forms that are written in English or Afrikaans. This therefore, indicates that even if people can speak, read and write in other official African languages, they are still illiterate in such contexts if they are unable to fill in forms written in English or Afrikaans, and if they are unable to communicate in English or Afrikaans (Buthelezi, 2009).

The life experiences that the ABET Level 1 learners bring to class - such as their skills, the knowledge and the identities they already have - is very important in the learning of English. Learners can develop language for learning abilities quicker if their existing abilities are used and respected. Connecting what ABET Level 1 learners have learned to what they already know, is very important in the learning of English. Using the ABET Level 1 learners' existing language knowledge, especially the mother tongue as a learning resource, can help the learner to transfer and apply vocabulary and language-and-thinking abilities from one language to the other if encouraged and supported. Encouraging the ABET Level 1 learners to think independently about their own learning and to look at the progress they have made and the strategies that have helped them is very important in the learning of English (Dawson, 2010).

In the next section the researcher presents the summary of findings in relation to the key research question and sub questions.

### **5.3 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

The findings in this investigation revealed that Adult Basic Education and Training really opened the doors of learning to illiterate and semi-illiterate adult people in the Ladysmith

surrounding area. The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that they were convinced not to be ashamed of themselves for being illiterate. They were encouraged to join ABET Level 1 classes in order to obtain more valuable knowledge and information that they need to use in their everyday real life circumstances. What I have deduced from the respondents' statements concerning their reasons for joining the ABET Level 1 classes is that the ABET Level 1 learners would like to learn to write and read their own letters and other written literature, understand their wage slips and learn more about living in harmony and peace with other fellow citizens in the cities and rural areas. Adult people from rural areas who visit the cities are usually expected to cope with street signs, notices, forms and other printed media.

The ABET Level 1 learners also need simply to be able to draw and deposit money inside the bank from tellers and outside from the ATMs where good skills in English and other languages – including reading, writing and speaking - are required. Adult learners also need to be able to read, write and speak English and other languages well in order to get promotion in their jobs, where they are required to have the ability to read, write and understand reports, job cards, written instructions and directions. Although reading and writing are essential for the ABET Level 1 learners, they should form part of a broader programme for an adult education system. The learners believed that attending the ABET Level 1 classes was their dream come true. This confirms the slogan, "*It is never too late to learn.*" The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that through ABET literacy programmes they were empowered with effective knowledge, information, life skills, income generation and livelihood skills. They have also received empowerment to deal with illnesses and poverty in their society.

The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that the NGO sites that offer ABET literacy classes around the Ladysmith area always try their utmost to offer the ABET Level 1 curriculum programmes that reach their goals of sustaining ABET literacy in this society. The ABET Level 1 curriculum programmes offered in these NGO sites gratify the adult learners. They know that curriculum programmes can bring light into the dark world of adult learners who could not count, read and write before they joined these ABET Level 1 classes. ABET Level 1 learners testified that since they have been to the ABET Level 1 classes they feel more empowered as they are able to help themselves, their families and other people in their communities with much that is needed in their everyday life experiences. The ABET Level 1 learners at the two Ladysmith NGO sites are happy and satisfied with the curriculum programmes offered in their classes. Most of the ABET Level 1 learners' immediate needs

that are relevant to their everyday lives are attended to in the ABET Level 1 curriculum at the two Ladysmith NGO sites.

Below is the interpretation of findings in relation to the key research question and sub questions.

### **5.3.1 How is the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites relevant to the lives of their adult learners?**

This key research question was answered through the responses gathered with the use of the following research sub questions. The following is the summary of findings according to each research sub question.

#### **5.3.1.1 What constitutes the ABET Level 1 curriculum at the two Ladysmith NGO sites?**

According to Rogers (2004a) and Openjuru (2008), the ABET Level 1 learners attend ABET classes because they desire to become someone with higher status, to have the ability to read, to count, to write, and in order to succeed in any literacy tasks. Almost all of the above reasons were mentioned by the adult learners in their responses.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners' responses revealed that it is not easy to disregard the ABET learners' felt needs, real needs and esteem needs that compelled adult learners to attend the ABET Level 1 classes. The ABET Level 1 learners decided to join the ABET Level 1 classes because they wanted recognition as full members of their communities.

Rule (2006) confirms that ABET literacy has a beneficial effect on the ability of adult learners to initiate and develop livelihoods and co-operatives. This affirms the truth that the needs and aspirations of illiterate adults should be thoroughly assessed before presenting them with a literacy programme. Freire (1998) believes that adult literacy education should aim at emancipating adult learners and not domesticating them, by considering their social and political contexts. This would enable ABET learners to become empowered and be able to transform their world. The adult learners' felt needs were to gain knowledge, information and skills that would empower them and enable them to feel accepted in any socio-economic

and cultural spheres of their communities. Most of the felt needs for the ABET Level 1 learners were used in constructing the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at the two Ladysmith NGO sites.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that the knowledge, skills and information gained by the ABET Level 1 learners in the ABET Level 1 classrooms empowered them in such a way that they are able to transfer and apply the knowledge, skills and information they learned in their everyday real life experiences. The ABET Level 1 learners revealed that they learned how to speak, read and write isiZulu and English as well as how to use Arithmetic's four basic operations to count in their classrooms.
- ✓ Most of the ABET Level 1 learners indicated that through communication using these languages their learning processes have been enhanced. Prior to joining the ABET Level 1 classes they struggled to express themselves fluently, read fluently and write correctly especially using English. They used to rely on other people to read written letters for them. They also learned income generation skills and other things over and above isiZulu and English. The ABET Level 1 learners feel confident that they now have a voice in their families and communities and they are fully respected as dignified citizens of the society.

Freire (1998) and Bhola, (2003) believe that adult education literacy programmes should aim at the development of consciousness that lights up the possibility of individuals to liberate themselves, by challenging and changing the social structures which dehumanize them and by building a new society. Freire (1998) therefore views adult education as a process of conscientisation and seeks practices consonant with this aim.

Below is the interpretation of findings based on the second research sub question.

#### **5.3.1.2 What are the ABET Level 1 learners' personal experiences and perceptions regarding the relevance of what they learn to their everyday lives?**

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners believed that the knowledge, information and skills they have gained in the ABET Level 1 classes have strengthened their relationships with their family members and neighbours in the community. The ABET Level 1 learners

indicated that their family members and neighbours have started to show respect and trust when they communicate with them.

- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners' children now know that their parents understand what is written in their school reports, and it is now easy for the parents to see if their children do not perform well at school. Parents are now able to understand remarks written about their children's learning progress at school. ABET learners revealed that they are also convinced that attending the ABET Level 1 classes has improved the relationships and socialization processes within their families and the communities.
- ✓ Most ABET Level 1 learners indicated that they enjoyed being part of the ABET Level 1 classes. They confirmed that they acquired valuable knowledge, skills and information that enabled them to become self-reliant citizens of the country. Learners also indicated that it was of great assistance to them when more issues pertaining to their everyday life needs and income generating projects were included in their curriculum programmes.
- ✓ Knowledge and skills gained from these empowerment projects enabled learners to manage their own development and promoted self-employment. ABET Level 1 learners stated that in most cases, black families in deep rural areas are headed by women who are also breadwinners. Most of them are unemployed and suffer from poverty. The ABET Level 1 learners even wished that more themes on HIV/AIDS were taught in the ABET Level 1 classes because they have a feeling that these issues need more emphasis as they are part of their everyday life experiences. The ABET Level 1 learners felt that most black communities in deep rural areas have people who are victims that are affected and infected by this killer disease and other communicable diseases.
- ✓ The learners would like to have more knowledge and skills on how to manage and live positively with HIV/AIDS infected and affected people in their families and society. The ABET Level 1 learners felt that discussions about HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in their families, health issues, and spiritual revival discussions enabled them to heal themselves and some people in their surroundings -

emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. Most ABET Level 1 learners stated that they consider the knowledge and skills they have already learned in class to be relevant to their everyday life experiences because the knowledge and skills have enabled them to participate directly in their community's decision-making processes. Additionally, they have developed a very high self-esteem. They now believe that the knowledge and skills they learned in class widened the possibilities of broader job opportunities and self-employment.

- ✓ The knowledge and skills that ABET learners obtained from their classrooms made them aware and conscientised them about changes in the laws that make men and women more equal, such as basic human rights that are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). The ABET Level 1 learners indicated that they gained valuable knowledge and skills about birth control processes; use of contraceptives; dangers of curable and non-curable diseases; sexually transmitted and communicable diseases; drug abuse and misuse; society and domestic violence; sexual, emotional and physical abuse; and many other issues that are vital to human and social life experiences.

It is apparent that most of what they have learned in their classrooms is relevant to their everyday life experiences. I explained in the motivation earlier that I had experienced a problem with young children who do not get educational assistance and support from their caregivers and parents. This is because these children come from homes where illiteracy is prevalent and there are little or no reading materials and other learning facilities available at home. It is evident that this problem is stemming from the fact that the children's parents and caregivers lack knowledge and skills that enable them to offer relevant educational support and assistance that is needed by their children. If the parents and caregivers of these children can be able to attend ABET classes that can cater for their immediate needs, children will be able to get the educational assistance and support they lack. This study tries to verify if the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevant to the lives of their ABET learners. The study also tries to establish if the adult learners are able to apply and transfer what they learn in these ABET classes to their real life experiences. I believe that for ABET Level 1 literacy programmes to be successful, ABE organisations should offer education that would accommodate a variety of modes and purposes of delivery that are suitable to adult learners' real life contexts and resources, in order to prove the point that one

size does not fit all. I think that integrative ABET programmes should offer literacy and numeracy practices that are effectively and appropriately integrated with aspects such as income generation skills, democratic participation, family health and nutrition etcetera.

The next interpretation of findings is based on the third research sub question.

### **5.3.1.3 In what ways do ABET Level 1 learners think they have been able to apply and transfer what they have learned to their life situations?**

- ✓ Most ABET Level 1 learners indicated that they have gained a lot of important and useful knowledge, information and skills. They have been able to use the knowledge and skills to fill in the bank deposit and withdrawal slips, and withdraw money from the ATMs without asking help from other people. ABET learners also indicated that they are now able to fill in hire purchase forms, forms from their children's schools and any other forms with ease and without asking help from other people.
- ✓ Learners revealed that they are now able to read and write their own letters and laugh or cry on their own if that is possible without asking for assistance from other people. The learners stated that they are now able to learn and obtain valuable information out of other books other than those they use in their classrooms about what healthy food they can buy and grow in order to feed their families in the manner of a healthy life style. They also revealed that they are now able to use the best ways they have learned to grow healthy fruit and vegetables at home in order to generate more income and feed their families.
- ✓ The ABET Level 1 learners also indicated that they are able to read any newspaper and magazine written in their MTL and some in English, watch television with understanding and listen to the radio programmes with critical awareness rather than just accepting what the media conveys.
- ✓ ABET learners reflected that they can make their own choices about what is good or not good about the information they obtain from the media. Adult learners also stated that they are able to use the literacy skills they learned to influence what happens around and to understand their world much better. They believed that they can direct

their own lives positively. The learners indicated that they can also detect when and how others trick them through written and spoken words. All the responses from the respondents indicated that the ABET Level 1 learners are able to apply and transfer knowledge, information and skills that they have learned from the ABET Level 1 classes to their everyday real life experiences.

In the next discussion the researcher presents the concluding remarks of this study.

#### **5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The findings of this study reveal that the ABET Level 1 curriculum used at two Ladysmith NGO sites is relevant to the everyday lives of their adult learners. The ABET Level 1 learners stated that they have started income generating projects where they serve their communities with the products they produce. The community members place the orders for the school uniforms and other outfits they sew using the sewing machines in the learning centre. The ABET Level 1 learners ensure that they work very hard to meet the deadlines as they make outfits for their customers, in order to avoid disappointments. They work long hours in order to encourage their customers to have faith in them. They also sell the vegetables and chickens they produce for the market. Most ABET Level 1 learners are very proud of themselves because of the useful knowledge, information and skills they have acquired in their classrooms. Some of them have become self-employed and, I this consider to be a great achievement.

Below is the presentation of recommendations related to the study.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are the recommendations related to this study.

- There is a need to ensure that the needs analysis is conducted when the ABET learners come for registration in order to design the ABET Level 1 curriculum content that caters for the learners' real life experiences.

- A widest process of implementing and supporting the importance of ABET Level 1 curriculum programmes provision is important in the implementation of ABET Level 1 curriculum based on context-specific skills such as budgeting; costing and pricing; developing curriculum vitae; banking; applying for employment and keeping records; etcetera.
- It is necessary to ensure that structures of participation are well placed for the mighty effort that is required to meet the challenges that face the everyday life needs of the ABET Level 1 learners. These structures are necessary in order for the ABET Level 1 curriculum content to be relevant to the adult learners' real life experiences.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: THE ABET LEVEL 1 LEARNERS**

##### ***SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

1. Explain the reasons why you joined the ABET Level 1 classes?
2. Explain the learning areas you are doing in the ABET Level 1 classes?
3. Explain how the language of learning and teaching is used in the ABET Level 1 classroom?
4. Explain the lesson topics that interest you the most in the following lessons:
  - ✓ Mother tongue language, literacy and communication lessons
  - ✓ English second language, literacy and communication lessons
  - ✓ Mathematics literacy lessons
  - ✓ Life skills lessons
  - ✓ Income generation related lessons
5. Explain how the knowledge you gain from the ABET Level 1 lessons assist you to cope with your everyday life demands.
6. Besides what you are already learning in the ABET Level 1 classes, explain what else would you like to learn more about?
7. Explain your views about the knowledge, information and skills you gain from the ABET Level 1 classes?
8. Explain how you think you have been able to apply and transfer what you have learned in the classrooms to your everyday life situations?