

Street-level Bureaucracy: A Case Study of the Implementation of the Adult Basic Education and Training Policy in the Pinetown Education District of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Declaration

I, Gideon Sibanda declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science (Policy and Development Studies) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Dedication

I humbly dedicate this work to my late mother, Lady Patricia Sibanda and Uncle, Bernard Sibanda. (R.I.P).

Table of Contents

	Page
Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	vi
Abbreviations	vii
Chapter One Introduction	
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Significance of study	2
1.3 Research problem and objectives	3
1.4 Conceptual and theoretical framework	4
1.5 Research methodology and methods	5
1.6 Structure of thesis	7
Chapter Two The Theoretical Framework of the Study: Street-level Bureaucracy	
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Policy implementation defined	8
2.3 Factors that influence policy implementation	11
2.4 Analysing approaches of policy implementation	14
2.5 Lipsky's theory on street-level bureaucracy	19
2.6 Conclusion	30

Chapter Three	The Development of the Adult Basic Education and Training Policy in South Africa	
3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	The background to the development of the ABET Policy in South Africa	31
3.3	The drafting of the ABET Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa	35
3.4	The Adult Basic Education and Training Policy in South Africa	39
3.5	The National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training Policy	43
3.6	Challenges Facing the Implementation of the ABET Policy	
3.7	Conclusion	49
Chapter Four	The Implementation of the ABET Policy by Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District	
4.1	Introduction	50
4.2	Findings and Analysis	51
4.3	Conclusion	73
Chapter Five	Conclusion	75
Bibliography		80
Appendix 1	Questionnaire	
Appendix 2	Geographical Distribution of Education Districts and Circuits in KwaZulu-Natal	
Appendix 3	Letter of Permission to Conduct Research	

Abstract

This research focuses on the challenges of policy implementation. Specifically, the research identifies the challenges that ABET Centre Managers encounter when trying to implement the ABET Policy in the Pinetown Education District of KwaZulu-Natal. The research identifies inadequacy of key resources such as finances, teaching material, time factor as well as lack of commitment and political will from the Department of Education in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal as the major challenges impeding effective implementation of the ABET Policy. In addition, the complexity and dynamic nature of the policy implementation process is delineated.

By using Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy as a framework, the researcher argues that, ABET Centre Managers, despite the multifaceted problems that they encounter, use their discretionary power and autonomy to find ways to perform their functions. In this respect, the Centre Managers use their discretion and autonomy to assist learners, not to further their own self interests. Furthermore, the findings of this study seem to authenticate Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy which takes into account the critical role played by street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation. As such, the researcher argues that the experiences and suggestions of Centre Managers who are the key implementers of the ABET Policy can provide vital information for the further development of the ABET Policy in South Africa. In the final analysis, the research hinges on one of Lipsky's key argument that, the rational top-down model to policy implementation is inadequate to achieve effective policy implementation, but that the actions and decisions of street-level bureaucrats (in this case, the ABET Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District), bear consequences for the policy's intended beneficiaries, the illiterate people.

Abbreviations

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ALP	Adult Learning Project
BALL	Bureau of Literacy and Literature
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DET	Department of Education and Training
ELP	English Literacy Project
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

The democratic dispensation which replaced the racially discriminatory apartheid regime in 1994 opened up a huge window of opportunity for South Africa to review apartheid policies which were designed to reinforce the social, economic and political inequality among the different races. The Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) for example, became a cornerstone on which most policies of the apartheid regime were founded. Black people were severely discriminated against including denying them access to quality education. It became imperative that the democratic government undertook widespread policy reviews. As a result the period between 1995 and 1996 has been described by some authors, such as Brynard (2005:3), as the “White Paper Era” because it represents the period of major policy review and formulation in South Africa. In the area of education policy, for example, the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act (No. 75 of 1984) was amended and replaced with the National Education Act (No. 27 of 1996) which provided a legislative framework to transform the national system of education into one which would serve the needs and interests of all South Africans. The period of policy review and formulation was followed by a phase of policy implementation and service delivery.

The objective of this research paper is to explore and examine the challenges that street-level bureaucrats, (in this case the Adult Basic Education and Training Centre Managers, hereafter referred to as ABET Centre Managers) encounter in their endeavour to implement the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Policy in the Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal.¹ The ABET Policy was formulated in 1997 as an intervention strategy to redress the imbalances of the past. The vision for ABET is clearly outlined in the policy document as the development and promotion of “[A] literate South Africa within which all its citizens have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation” (Department of Education Directorate, 1997:9). The vision recognises and presents basic education and training as a prerequisite for active participation in social transformation and lifelong learning. However, the challenge has been how to translate the vision of the ABET Policy into reality. In this respect, Jones

¹ The Province of KwaZulu-Natal has twelve education districts namely: Obonjeni District, Othukela District, Vryheid District, Umlazi District, Port Shepstone District, Umzinyathi District, Amajuba District, Pinetown District, Ilembe District, Sisonke District, Umgungundlovu District and Empangeni District.

(2011:6) writes: “[T]here are many excellent policies in place to improve the quality of education in South Africa, but they are not implemented properly on the ground”.

The key objective of this study is to critically analyse sentiments such as the above. In this respect, it will focus on the ABET Centre Managers at the Pinetown Education District. ABET Centre Managers are heads of public centres who are appointed by the provincial Head of the Department of Education in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998). The core duties of ABET Centre Managers include the management of resources; supervision of educators; recruitment of learners; and overseeing the delivery of the curriculum. To that end, ABET Centre Managers act as street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats are those workers who interact directly with the public and have to exercise “substantial discretion in the execution of their work” (Lipsky 1980:3). Street-level bureaucrats exercise their discretion to determine clients’ eligibility and they also enjoy considerable autonomy from their top management.

In addition to the exploration of the challenges of implementing the ABET Policy, the study will investigate the circumstances and reasons under which ABET Centre Managers, as street-level bureaucrats, have to exercise their discretion and the coping strategies they employ in implementing the ABET Policy in the Pinetown District. Aitchison and Harley (2006:16) point out that KwaZulu-Natal has “over a million adults with no schooling at all” and that statistical surveys indicate that the number is increasing. In their assessment of poverty in South Africa, based on the household surveys which were carried out in 2008, Armstrong, Lekezwa and Siebrits (2008:19) established that, “persons with low levels of educational attainment were much more likely to be poor than well educated ones. Poverty affected 66.3% of those who had no schooling and 59.9% of those who had not completed primary schooling”. The phenomenon of poverty, unemployment and high levels of illiteracy amongst the black population in South Africa is largely attributed to the deprivations of the past.

1.2 Significance of the study

Authors such as Aitchison (2004) have identified and explicated some of the challenges of implementing the ABET Policy on the ground. These include, but are not limited to, budget constraints; shortage of trained educators; and in some instances, lack of facilities. Aitchison (2004:14) points out that “there is a

very limited South African literature that provides evidence of the actual practice and implementation of ABET”. Since the adoption of the ABET Policy, very few systematic studies have been conducted to explore the challenges that ABET Centre Managers encounter and how they exercise their discretion during the implementation processes. None have been done on the Pinetown Education District.

A few studies have been conducted on the general implementation of the ABET policy. For example, the University of Natal conducted a general survey which focused on learners; international issues; Adult Basic Education policy; and implementation in South Africa between 1994 and 1995. This report was updated in 1999 and 2000. Although these two survey reports provide valuable details on the implementation and failures of the ABET policy, they do not focus on the problems and challenges from the perspective of street-level bureaucrats (ABET Centre Managers) who play a key role in the management and implementation of the ABET policy. This creates a gap which this study seeks to bridge, and makes the research unique.

1.3 Research problems and objectives: Key questions to be asked

Hill and Hupe (2002:43) assert that policy implementation is a complex process which involves multiple actors at different stages. In addition, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:6) argue that, “if policy is a process, then successful policy outcomes depend not simply upon designing good policies but upon managing their implementation”. The implementation of the ABET Policy still remains a major challenge for policy makers and implementers. In this case, the ABET Centre Managers are key players in the management and implementation process of the ABET Policy. This research will explore the challenges encountered by these street-level bureaucrats and the coping mechanisms which they employ to deliver services to their clients in the Pinetown Education District. The following key questions will inform the case study:

- 1) What are the roles and responsibilities of ABET Centre Managers as per the ABET Policy?
- 2) What is the extent of, and how do ABET Centre Managers exercise their discretion and autonomy when executing their roles and responsibilities?
- 3) What coping mechanisms do ABET Centre Managers employ when they encounter policy implementation challenges?

- 4) What factors influence ABET Centre Managers to use their discretion and autonomy in implementing the ABET Policy?
- 5) How do the Department of Education and ABET Centre Management view and respond to the use of discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms, employed by ABET Centre Managers?
- 6) Does the use of discretion promote or curtail the implementation of the ABET Policy?

1.4 Conceptual and theoretical framework

The work of Michael Lipsky (1980) entitled *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, will provide the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. Lipsky has been described by Hill and Hupe (2002:51) as “the founding father of the bottom-up perspective” of public policy management and implementation. In his theory, Lipsky analyses the behaviour of front-line workers in policy delivery agencies which he calls street-level bureaucracies. The examples of such agencies include schools, police and social welfare departments, hospitals and other agencies whose staff interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public goods. Lipsky defined the individual workers in these agencies as street-level bureaucrats. These workers exercise substantial discretion and enjoy a certain level of autonomy from organisational authority in the course of doing their jobs. Such front-line workers include nurses, teachers, police, social workers and many others who interact directly with citizens in policy delivery processes.

Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats usually work under conditions of uncertainties and enormous work pressure. These conditions are further complicated by “inadequate resources and unpredictability of their clients which tend to defeat their aspirations as service workers” (Lipsky 1980:xii). It is under such conditions of work pressure and scarce resources that street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion to determine client eligibility and devise coping strategies which enable them to continue delivering services to their clients. It is apparent that street-level bureaucrats impact people’s lives in various ways as they determine citizens’ access to government services. One of Lipsky’s key theories is that street-level bureaucrats do not only implement policies but that their use of discretion inadvertently alters policy. In this respect Lipsky (1980:xii) writes: “the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public

policies they carry out”. To that end, Lipsky (1980:13) states that street-level bureaucrats make policy in two distinct respects: “[T]hey exercise wide discretion in decisions about citizens with whom they interact. Then, when taken in concert, their individual actions add up to agency behaviour”. To a great extent, street-level bureaucrats determine the quality of service, quantity and who benefits. In other words, they determine the rules of the game. Their role in policy making is reinforced by two key elements namely: the relatively high degree of discretion and the relative autonomy from organisational authority.

The autonomy of street-level bureaucrats from the organisational authority, as well as the use of discretion and coping methods which they use, indicate that these workers do not simply take policies from the “top” and implement them in a straightjacket fashion. However, they remain subject to the rules, regulations and directives of their agencies. It is within the flexible space of their respective agencies that they exercise their discretion and shape policy. They make policy only to the extent that circumstances induce practices that enable them to cope with the pressures they face in the course of delivering services.

1.5 Research methodology and methods

This is an empirical study which used qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyse primary data. Greenhalgh and Taylor (2000:116) assert that qualitative methods are used to “study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. In addition, qualitative methods take into account the complexities of human behaviour. In other words, the researcher carries out research about people’s experiences. The strength of qualitative methods is in validity in the sense that “the objective of the study must be representative of what the researcher is investigating” (Welman et al, 2005:9). Qualitative methods generate ideas through inductive reasoning while quantitative methods generate data through deductive processes. The strength of the quantitative approach is reliability; meaning that the same measurement carried out under the same or similar circumstances should produce the same results. Although it is apparent that qualitative and quantitative approaches are different, they do complement each other in various ways. These two techniques of collecting data will be complemented and enriched by document analysis. The combination of research methods in a study is called triangulation and it will be done to improve the validity of the research.

Sampling

The study was conducted at thirty ABET centres in the Pinetown Education District. Permission to conduct interviews was secured from the Pinetown Education District Officials who oversee the implementation of the ABET Policy in the district. The researcher has established that there are around 107 ABET public centres in the District, each headed by a Centre Manager. Due to the limited time and resources the researcher only interviewed thirty ABET Centre Managers who were selected at random.

Data Collection Method

The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gather primary data from the thirty ABET Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District. A questionnaire with open-ended as well as closed-ended questions was administered during the interviews. Open-ended questions gave room to the respondents to formulate their own responses. During the interview the researcher asked more questions to encourage the respondents to elaborate on the research topic. As De Vos (1998:153) states, “[T]his is to obtain more facts and opinions... from people who are informed on the issue”. Open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data while closed-ended ones were used in order to generate quantitative data. The key feature of quantitative research is that it deals with numbers and statistical analysis. The closed-ended questions in a quantitative research are intended to test certain theories or measure causal relationships between variables. For example, one of the questions in the questionnaire sought to establish whether or not professional experience, education or age impacts on the extent of ABET Centre Managers’ use of discretion and autonomy.

Data analysis

The data collected from the interviews was analysed using qualitative data analysis methods in which similar responses were categorised together according to identified themes in order to facilitate data interpretation. The responses from the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were analysed using the SPSS 15.0 for Windows. The findings of the research were presented descriptively using pie charts to ensure readability and easy interpretation. Variables such as professional experience, education, age and gender were analysed and interpreted to determine their causal effect on the Centre Managers’ use of discretion.

1.6 Structure of the thesis:

The thesis is structured into five chapters as follows:

This Chapter, Chapter One, constitutes the introduction to the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework- Street-level bureaucracy.

This chapter will explicate the theoretical framework which will give direction to the study by conceptualising terms such as street-level bureaucracy and locating this within the theory on policy implementation analysis. The chapter will briefly look at different approaches to policy implementation in order to set the stage for a broad review of the literature on street-level bureaucracy and the imperatives of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation.

Chapter Three: The Development of the ABET Policy in South Africa and its implementation.

This chapter will explore the South African context in which the ABET policy developed since 1994. Documents such as the White Paper on Education (1995), the National Education Act (No. 27 of 1996), the Adult Basic Education and Training Act (No.52 of 2000) will be analysed. The implementation of ABET policy at the National level will be analysed based on the Department of Education's National Multi-Year Implementation Plan.

Chapter Four: Case study.

This chapter will present and discuss the findings of the fieldwork component of this study.

Chapter Five: Conclusions.

This chapter will summarise the major findings of the study and reflect back on the literature on street-level bureaucracy with particular reference to the case study.

Chapter Two

The Theoretical Framework of the Study: Street-Level Bureaucracy

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a theoretical framework which will explicate the main assumptions and parameters of the study. To do this, the chapter will briefly clarify the concept, policy implementation, and delineate factors which affect policy implementation. In addition, this chapter will explicate the major approaches to policy implementation as a prelude to an analysis of Michael Lipsky's work on street-level bureaucracy which constitute the theoretical framework of this study.

2.2 Policy implementation defined

Policy is a central concept in the analysis and processes of how public life is organised. Colebatch (2002:1) asserts that policy analysis helps both observers and participants to make sense of the complexity of governing. This section will briefly discuss the theory and practice of policy implementation by looking at various definitions of policy implementation as delineated by various authors.

According to Parsons (1995:457), the focus on policy implementation marked a paradigm shift from the preoccupation with issues of decision-making in the analysis of policy processes prior to the 1970s. Pressman and Wildavsky's 1973 book entitled *Implementation*,² generated a vigorous interest amongst scholars to focus on the study of implementation as a key component of analysing policy processes (Hill and Hupe 2002:1). According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:xiii), implementation "means just what Webster [dictionary] and Roget [thesaurus] say it does: to carry out, accomplish, fulfil, produce, complete". A survey of the literature on policy implementation indicates diverse understandings of what constitutes policy implementation. Parsons (1995:461), for example contends that "[A] study of implementation is a study of change: how change occurs, possibly how it may be induced". This understanding presents policy implementation as a dynamic and transformative process which must

² Pressman, J. and Wildavsky, A. 1973. *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland*, 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

produce certain outcomes. As a dynamic process, policy implementation involves various organisations which interact with one another to induce change. To this end, Parsons (1995:465) points out that implementation is “the interplay and interaction between politicians, administrators and service providers”. This assertion by Parsons affirms the crucial role that various actors play in the process of policy implementation. To this end, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) describe policy implementation as “a seamless web... a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions to achieving them”.

Howlett and Ramesh (2003:185) have defined policy implementation as “the process whereby programs or policies are carried out, the translation of plans into practice”. These authors understand policy implementation to be a critical stage within the framework of the policy making process whereby policy decisions are translated into action in order to yield the intended outcomes. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:xii) describe policy implementation as “the ability to forge subsequent links in the casual chain so as to obtain the desired result”. This understanding of policy implementation is imbued with elements of a theory of cause and effect whose basic logic is that, if *a* is done at point *b*, then *c* will necessarily result. The underlying assumption of this argument is that, if the original intention of a policy is carried out as it is expressed on paper, then the desired objectives will be accomplished. But if the situation on the ground is essentially different from the set goals, this means the policy has not been successfully implemented. Colebatch (2002:52) asserts that this was in fact the perspective explicated by Pressman and Wildavsky in their book on implementation. Their argument was largely motivated by the observation they made, that policy objectives were not met despite the assumption that if *a* was done at point *b*, then *c* will necessarily result. This illustrates that policy implementation is not automatic or straight forward but rather a complex process.

Notwithstanding the above perspectives explicated by various authors, Brynard and De Coning (2006) present a synthesised definition which brings key elements together. They write: “implementation will be regarded as the conversion of mainly physical and financial resources into concrete service delivery outputs in the form of facilities and services, or into other concrete outputs aimed at achieving policy objectives”(Brynard and De Coning, 2006:183). This definition presents policy implementation as a dynamic process which involves translating resources, both physical and financial, into concrete outputs in order to achieve the objectives of a policy. The complexity of the process of policy implementation cannot be underestimated, it is well articulated by Bardach (1977:3) when he writes:

[I]t is hard enough to design public policies and programmes that look good on paper. It is harder still to formulate them in words and slogans that resonate pleasingly in the ears of political leaders and the constituencies to which they are responsive. And it is excruciatingly hard to implement them in a way that pleases anyone at all, including the supposed beneficiaries or clients”.

It is apparent from the above discussion that to develop a clear-cut definition of policy implementation is a complex matter. It is clear though from the various definitions that the policy making process does not end when policy decisions have been approved. The objectives and goals of the policy have to be converted into concrete outputs which will effect positive change. However, the problems that are inherent in policy implementation have not discouraged researchers from making suggestions of what would be defined as what constitutes successful policy implementation. A survey of the literature on policy implementation indicates a lack of consensus among scholars regarding a specific definition of successful policy implementation. Several definitions of successful policy implementation have been suggested. According to Matland (1995:154), these include, but are not limited to the following: “agencies comply with the directives of the statutes; agencies are held accountable for reaching specific indicators of success; goals of the statute are achieved; local goals are achieved, or there is an improvement in the political climate around the programme”.

A closer look into the above definitions indicates that measuring the success of policy implementation is not straight forward or a simple exercise. For example, there might be contexts in which policy goals are clearly stated and easily understood by implementers, and therefore, success can be measured in terms of the extent to which these goals have been achieved. In this respect, Matland (1995:155) argues that implementation success can be measured “in terms of its ability to execute faithfully the goals and means present in the statutory mandate”. In other words, the standard of measuring implementation success in this case would be loyalty to the prescribed goals. However, there may be contexts in which policy goals are not explicitly stated, or where it is not possible for policy implementers to faithfully adhere to the stipulated prescriptions. In this case it would be difficult to measure implementation success in terms of loyalty to the stipulated goals. Moreover, there might be key factors which influence the success of policy implementation. Authors such as Weimer et al (2005) and Brynard et al (2006) have identified some of the factors which influence successful policy implementation. These will be discussed below.

2.3 Factors that influence policy implementation

A survey of the literature that has developed so far on the study of policy implementation is full of prescriptions and suggestions on how to achieve successful implementation. However, as Matland (1995) rightly points, due to the complexity and dynamic nature of the process of implementation, the success or failure of implementation is largely determined by the specific situation or context in which the policy initiative is to be put into practice. Therefore, a broad knowledge of the situation or the environment in which a specific policy is to be put into practice is paramount for effective policy implementation. In general, most authors agree on some of the key factors such as: the logic of the policy; commitment; cooperation; resources; skills and abilities; trust; and role delineation. This section will discuss some of these factors.

Weimer and Vining (2005) emphasise the importance of the logic of the policy. By this, they mean that there must be a logical connection between the policy and the intended outcomes. This means that every activity that is carried out in the process of policy implementation should increase the prospect of achieving the intended outcomes. To that end, Weiner and Vining (2005:275) assert that “we should think of the logic of a policy as a chain of hypotheses”. For example, a chain of hypotheses for the education policy in South Africa could be that, “the apartheid education policies promoted illiteracy and poverty amongst black communities in South Africa”. Secondly, “if the education policies in a democratic South Africa are implemented in black communities, illiteracy and poverty will be reduced in these communities”. Thirdly, “there are enough resources to implement reformed education policies in a democratic South Africa”. Fourthly, “illiteracy and poverty in these communities will be eliminated”. As Weiner and Vining(2005:275) point out, any of the hypotheses in the chain “could be false or at least not universally true”. This creates a predicament for policy implementation because if the hypotheses are false, it implies that there is less likelihood that the policy implementation process will be successful. Weiner and Vining (2005:275) further clarify the issue by arguing that:

“[T]he characteristics of the policy, and the circumstances of its adoption, determine the hypotheses underlying implementation and the likelihood that they will be true. In general, the greater the legal authority the adopted policy gives implementers, the greater their capacity to compel hypothesized behaviour. Similarly, the stronger the political support for the adopted policy and its putative

goals, the greater the capacity of the implementers to secure hypothesized behaviour”.

Based on their argument, a policy that fails to inspire and develop a hypothesised behaviour which can lead to the desired outcomes will be viewed as illogical.

Another important factor is policy content. According to Brynard and De Coning (2006:196), a policy is characterised “as either distributive, regulatory, or redistributive”. Distributive policies are explicated as those policies that create public benefits for general welfare while regulatory policies are those that specify rules of conduct as well as penalties for failure to comply, and “redistributive policies attempt to change allocations of wealth or power of some groups at the expense of others” (Brynard and de Coning 2006:196). In this respect, the education policies in a democratic South Africa can be viewed as distributive in character because they seek to provide equal education opportunities for all South Africans. The content of a policy is considered paramount not only because “it determines the means to achieve its ends, but also in its determination of the ends themselves and in how it chooses the specific means to reach those ends”(Brynard and de Coning 2006:196). Having said that, the literature has come a long way to highlight the complexity of policy implementation and delineated many factors that influence what would be regarded as successful policy implementation. Table 1 below gives a summary of the factors that would influence successful policy implementation.

Table 1: Summary of success factors

Success factor	Defined as...
(Effective) Approach	A well-researched and structured process to implementation. characterised by clarity of vision, through attention to detail and fast decision-making.
Commitment	A tangible and visible political and administrative will to deliver policy.
Cooperation	Collaborative behaviour between stakeholders to a policy, characterised by goal alignment, the development of strong personal relationships, and a high willingness to share skills and information.
(Effective) Resourcing	The focused deployment of skilled and motivated resources in quantities sufficient to provide a critical mass.
Leadership	The ability to develop and command a following, characterised by clarity of vision and a legitimate mandate.
Location of political Responsibility	The power emanating from a place or position that holds political ownership for policy, and its ability to command authority over the deployment of resources.
Management style	The enthusiastic and optimistic behaviour of management, and their ability to adapt to prevailing circumstances.
Ownership	A perceived state of belonging to, and responsibility for, a policy implementation programme.
Role delineation	The clear demarcation of responsibility between individuals, Particularly between politicians and civil servants.
Skills and abilities	The capability and resourcefulness of individuals involved in implementation characterised by qualities such as extensive experience, adequate training and qualification, and a practical approach to policy management.
Stakeholder involvement	Broad and active consultations with persons or entities likely to affect, or be affected by, the policy.
Trust	A high degree of confidence in persons involved in the implementation initiative, characterised by belief that individuals will not sabotage the initiative, or cause deliberate harm.
(Use of) Networks	Utilizing one's personal-informed relationship with others to gain access to, or control over resources.
Values/beliefs	People's conviction of the 'rightness' or 'goodness' of a policy initiative, because it is consistent with their personal values.

Source: Giacchino and Kakabadse, 2003:144.

According to Brynard (2009), the factors that are listed in Table 1 have varying degrees of importance and their large number indicates the complexity of the subject matter. Some of the factors can be controlled by implementers to increase the chances of achieving a successful outcome but others cannot be controlled. For example, the environment in which policy implementation is to be put into action affects the

implementation process, and the implementing organisation may not be able to control that environment. This means that the success factors consist of the elements that can be controlled by the implementers and those that cannot be controlled. The degree of importance of each factor will depend on how successful policy implementation is defined. Brynard (2009:558) for example, defines successful policy implementation “as a strategic action adopted by government to deliver the intended policy decision and to achieve the intended outcomes”. Success in this case implies achieving the expected functionality which can deliver the intended outcomes. In this respect, Brynard identifies commitment and co-ordination as core characteristics of successful policy implementation. While commitment is regarded as the core construct of policy implementation, it is directly dependent on the co-ordination of all the stakeholders involved. Commitment is, in this case, viewed as the ability to take ownership of a policy initiative and maintain it until the intended outcomes are achieved. To this end, Brynard (2005) argues that a government may have the most logical policy imaginable; the policy may pass cost benefit analysis with honours, and it may have the most impressive bureaucratic structure, but if those tasked with policy implementation lack commitment, little will be achieved. It is evident from the literature review that the factors which influence successful policy implementation are numerous and varied. The recognition and degree of importance of each factor or variable seems to depend on the perspective of the author.

2.4 Analysing approaches of policy implementation

The issue of approach is critical to the success of policy implementation and is linked to the expectation that policies passed are supposed to “produce outcomes or lead to improvements in citizens’ lives” (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002:3). According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:3), failure to produce the expected results has been partially due to the fact that “development policy has been the domain of economists and sectoral specialists” who seem to have confined their focus on the “what” question and ignored the “how” question. The “what” question is concerned with the content of the policy while the “how” question focuses on the broader question of implementation. In other words, the “how” question embodies the approach through which the policy decisions are translated into action. A theoretical shift from the focus on content of the policy to the process is what Parsons (1995:457) refers to as “the within-puts, outputs and outcomes” which emphasizes policy implementation and delivery of policy goals. The focus on policy process shows that policy making does not end with the approval of the policy by decision makers. As Parsons (1995:464) argues, policy implementation is essentially an “interplay and interaction

between politicians, administrators and service providers”. This view recognises the critical role played by different actors, including those who deliver services to the target groups at the grassroots level.

Much of the literature on policy implementation identifies two distinct approaches to policy implementation namely, the top-down rational approach and the bottom-up approach. The exponents of the top-down approach see the policy implementation process as flowing down from the top structures of the state to the lower levels. The supporters of bottom-up approaches argue that the role of the target groups and those who deliver services should be seen as central to policy implementation processes (Matland, 1995). An analysis of the early literature on policy implementation clearly indicates that the top-down view of implementation dominated the phenomenon of implementation studies. The main focus of the proponents of this approach was to examine the policy decision and “the extent to which its legally mandated objectives were achieved over time and why” (Sabatier 1986:22). The starting point of this approach is clearly posited as the policy decision made by the top officials of government and handed down through various administrative structures for implementation. To examine the extent to which the objectives of the specific policy were achieved, Sabatier (1986) suggests that the following key questions be asked:

- To what extent were the actions of implementing officials and target groups consistent with (the objectives and procedures outlined in) that policy decision?
- To what extent were the objectives attained over time, i.e. to what extent were the impacts consistent with the objectives?
- What were the principal factors affecting policy outputs and impacts, both those relevant to the official policy as well as other politically significant ones?
- How was the policy reformulated over time on the basis of experience?

The above features clearly exhibit the hierarchical nature of the model and its underlying assumptions. In his analysis of Pressman and Wildasvky’s work, Parsons (1995:464) observes that these earlier writers viewed a policy as “a hypothesis containing initial conditions and predicted consequences. If X is done at time t1, then Y will result at time t2”. This line of reasoning is synonymous with the principle of causality which stipulates that, if action ‘A’ is executed under certain conditions, then ‘B’ will result. In this sense, implementation is viewed as “a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them” (Parsons 1995:464). The difficulty which emerges from this train of thought is that the

actions involved in the implementation process might have to come from various actors or agencies with varying interests and values, and this would minimise the prospects of achieving the intended goals. In other words, the involvement of various agencies in the implementation process is bound to “form implementation deficit” (Parsons 1995:464). Consequently, the interaction between goal setting and actions aimed at achieving the goals is viewed as a weakness rather than strength. The main argument of the top-down perspective is summed up by Parsons’ (1995:464) own articulation which states that, in order to achieve the intended outcomes of the policy “[G]oals have to be clearly defined and understood, resources made available, the chain of command be capable of assembling and controlling resources, and the system able to communicate effectively and control those individuals and organisations involved in the performance of tasks”.

The model is clearly prescriptive and assumes that compliance to authority and availability of resources would necessarily lead to successful policy implementation. Failure to achieve the intended outcomes would imply that policy implementers did not comply with the regulations or that the sources were inadequate. The model also places more emphasis on controlling resources, including individuals and organisations that are involved in the implementation process. Some of the proponents of the top-down rational approach such as Hood and Gunn (1993) went a step further and envisioned a model which would define what “perfect implementation” should include. They proposed the following five conditions to achieve perfect implementation;

- that ideal implementation is a product of a unitary ‘army’-like organisation, with clear lines of authority
- that norms would be enforced and objectives given;
- that people would do what they are told and asked;
- that there should be perfect communication in and between units of organisation; and
- that there should be no pressure of time.

These conditions further reinforce the argument of the proponents of the top-down approach that perfect implementation can be achieved when there is a strict system of control, effective communication and adequate resources. As Parsons (1995:466) observes, this approach is “imbued with the ideas that implementation is about getting people to do what they are told, and keeping control over a sequence of stages in a system”. The model fails to take into consideration the logical relationship between input,

process and output. In addition, it fails to take into account the role played by other actors such as the private sector and civil society. Sabatier (1998:280) also argues that top-down models “are difficult to use in situations where there is no dominant policy or agency, but rather a multitude of governmental directives and actors, none of them prominent”. The top-down models also tend to ignore the mechanisms that are used by front-line workers and other policy groups to get around policy or to divert it to their own purposes. It is weaknesses such as these which led to scholars developing a bottom-up approach to policy implementation which recognises and emphasises the central role played by those who implement policy.

Lipsky whose work informs the theoretical framework of this research is regarded as the founder of the bottom-up approach (Hill and Hupe 2002:51). The key advantage of the bottom-up approach is that it takes into account the informal and formal relationships of the various sub-systems involved in the making and implementation of policies. It recognises the crucial role played by key private and public sectors as well as front-line workers in all stages of the policy process (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:190). The main difference between the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach is that the latter “begins at the other end of the implementation chain of command and urges that the activities of the so-called street-level implementers be fully taken into account” (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:190). What the bottom-up approach points out is the fact that policy outcomes cannot be determined entirely by the policy makers at the top but by street-level bureaucrats who operate at the micro-implementation level. A comparison of the two approaches is presented in Table 2 below as articulated by Sabatier & Mazmanian, and Hjern, Porter, Hanf, & Hull.

Table 2: Comparison between top-down and bottom-up approaches

	Top-down (Sabatier & Mazmanian)	Bottom-up (Hjern, Porter, Hanf, &Hull)
Initial focus	(Central) government decision.	Local implementation structure (network) involved in a policy area.
Identification of major actors In the process	From top down and from government out to private sector (although importance attached to causal theory also calls for accurate understanding of target group's incentive structure).	From bottom (government and private) up
Evaluative criteria	Focus on extent of attainment of formal objectives (carefully analysed). May look at other politically significant criteria and unintended consequences, but these are optional.	Much less clear. Basically anything the analyst chooses which is somehow relevant to the policy issue or problem. Certainly does not require any careful analysis of official government decision(s).
Overall focus	How does one steer system to achieve (top) policy-maker's intended policy results?	Strategic interaction among multiple actors in a policy network.

Source: Hill 1998: 282.

The two approaches compared in Table 2 are not necessarily contradictory to each other, but can be used to complement each other depending on the policy issue and context. It is my contention that when it is feasible, a situation of mutual cooperation between different layers of government and other key actors such as the private sector and street-level workers would be more beneficial to policy implementation. On the other hand, there may be conditions in the policy environment under which each of the approaches is

more appropriate than the other. For example, the top-down approach might produce better results in situations where there is a dominant policy or implementing agency while the bottom-up perspective might work effectively where “there is a multitude of governmental directives and actors, none of them pre-eminent” (Hill ed 1998:280). To this end, Brynard (2005:9), points out that implementation research has reached a stage where “most theorists agree that some convergence of the two perspectives exists”. This position is also supported by Matland (1995) when he argues that in the actual practice of policy implementation, the macro-level variables of the top-down model are tied with the micro-level bottom-uppers. This means that in the practice of policy implementation, positive results might be achieved when there is cooperation and mutual understanding between advocates of the two theories of policy implementation.

2.5. Lipsky’s theory on street-level bureaucracy

Lipsky’s book entitled *Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of Individuals in Public Services* informs the background of this study. In his work, Lipsky gives an analysis of the behaviour of front-line workers in policy delivery agencies (Hill and Hupe, 2002:51). Policy delivery agencies are defined as public organisations which are complex and “characterised as rigid and slow, with effective action hampered by red tape” (Hill, 1984:197). Lipsky refers to the front-line workers in these agencies as street-level bureaucrats. They include public servants such as teachers, nurses, social workers, those in the police force and others whose daily tasks bring them into contact with the public. Some authors such as Hill and Hupe (2002:51), present Lipsky as the founding father of the bottom-up perspective due to his focus on the behaviour of front-line workers in policy delivery agencies which is in contrast to those arguing in favour of a top-down approach.

Lipsky (1980: xii) argues that “the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out”. Lipsky’s argument implies that citizens or the policy target groups do not encounter public policy in its original form but in the form that has been determined by street-level workers. This means that there are two ways of understanding public policy. Firstly, the original or official way in which policy has been authored by policy officials at the top; and secondly, the way which is determined by street-level bureaucrats in their struggle to deliver services to the public. To that end, Lipsky (1980: xii)

argues that, “public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers”. The key point that Lipsky is highlighting is that the process of implementing public policy induces practices which help street-level bureaucrats to cope with the pressure of their work.

Generally, street-level bureaucrats such as teachers, nurses, social workers and the police have to deal with large numbers of citizens (or clients) and high case-loads while often facing “inadequate resources combined with uncertainties of methods and unpredictability of clients to defeat their aspirations as service workers” (Lipsky 1980:xii). It is under such conditions of pressure and uncertainty that street-level bureaucrats adopt certain behaviours. Lipsky identifies a number of defining characteristics which he regards as influential in how street-level bureaucrats implement (and indirectly make) policy. These are: discretion, autonomy, goal ambiguity and scarcity of resources. Each will be examined below.

2.5.1 Street-level bureaucrats and discretion

Lipsky does not explicitly define what he means by discretion. However, Davis (1969:4) writes: “[A] public officer has discretion wherever the effective limits on his power leave him free to make a choice among possible courses of action and inaction”. According to Hill (1997:181), some authors such as Bull (1980) and Donnison (1977) have drawn a “distinction between judgement, where the simple interpretation of rules is required, and discretion, where the rules give specific functionaries in particular situations the responsibility to make such decisions as they think fit”. Hill (1997:181) asserts that in any administrative system regulated by law, discretion is embedded in a rule structure in a form which specifies circumstances under which officials can do as they like. According to Lipsky’s observation, it is the conditions of work and inadequate resources which compel street-level bureaucrats to use their discretion in order to cope with the pressures and uncertainties they encounter. Their work environment forces them to adjust their work habits to reflect lower expectations of themselves and their clients.

Lipsky (1980:181) states that in general, street-level bureaucrats see themselves as restrained by the bureaucracies within which they work, “yet they seem to have a great deal of discretionary freedom and autonomy”. They determine the nature, amount and quality of services provided by their respective

agencies. In this respect, Lipsky (1980:15) lists three reasons to justify the use of discretion. Firstly, the work of street-level bureaucrats is by nature too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats. Secondly, street-level bureaucrats work in situations that often require responses to the human dimensions of situations; and thirdly, discretion is not likely to be eliminated because it bears more on the function of lower-level workers who interact with clients than with the nature of the tasks. In the final analysis, clients are at the mercy of street-level bureaucrats whom they believe hold the key to their well-being. To that end, the role of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation cannot be underestimated. In many respects, street-level bureaucrats determine the rules of the game and they constitute an essential link between government and citizens, especially the needy. Their tasks impel them to evaluate the needs of each client in order to render effective assistance. This requires them to retain considerable discretionary freedom and autonomy.

2.5.2 Street-level bureaucrats and autonomy

Autonomy is another key element of Lipsky's theory on street-level bureaucracy. It refers to the right to self-regulate or act independently. Lipsky (1980:16) explains that street-level bureaucrats enjoy relative autonomy from the authority of their agencies. This implies that there are situations in which street-level bureaucrat acts independently from the authority of their agencies as they deliver services to their clients. Such situations occur when there is poor communication between management and street-level bureaucrats, or when there is disagreement with organisational goals. However, Lipsky clarifies that difficulties which arise due to disagreement with organisational goals or poor communication between management and street-level bureaucrats are easily overcome because street-level bureaucrats "for the most part accept the legitimacy of the formal structure of authority, and they are not in a position to dissent successfully" (Lipsky, 1980:16).

In addition, Lipsky's analysis reveals that, in most instances the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in public organisations can be perceived as cooperative. To that end, the issue of street-level bureaucrats' autonomy should be understood in the context of the efforts they make to deliver services to their clients under conditions of pressure and scarce resources. That means that within the formal structure of authority and policy guidelines, street-level bureaucrats have the space to act independently and exercise discretion without upsetting the formal authority of their agencies. Lipsky's analysis indicates that the nature of the

work done by street-level bureaucrats requires that they have and retain autonomy as well as discretion as tools with which to manage the complexity of their work. In other words, without discretionary freedom and relative autonomy, the work of street-level bureaucrats would be extremely difficult to execute.

Lipsky's analysis of the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats contends that, to a large extent, street-level bureaucrats comply with the objectives of their agencies. However, the problem arises in situations where the "workers' interests differ from the interests of those at higher levels, and the incentives and sanctions available to higher levels are not sufficient to prevail" (Lipsky, 1980:17). In these instances of conflict of interest between street-level bureaucrats and those at higher levels, street-level bureaucrats can withhold cooperation within their agency. They may also employ strategies such as excessive absenteeism, deliberately waste of or even stealing resources, and may adopt a negative attitude which impacts negatively on the organisation (Lipsky, 1980:17). In this respect, street-level bureaucrats require autonomy not only to make decisions about their work but advance their own personal interest as well. In the final analysis, Lipsky asserts that discretionary freedom and autonomy are the main source of power at the disposal of street-level bureaucrats, and they would resist any attempt by the top management to curtail it. In this regard, street-level workers use collective power such as workers' unions to strengthen their positions considerably and reduce managers' capacity to induce or enforce compliance (Lipsky, 1980:23).

2.5.3 The issue of goal ambiguity

Besides the significance of discretion and autonomy, Lipsky's analysis also reveals that the jobs of street-level bureaucrats are generally characterised by ambiguous goals which impede effective implementation of policies. For example, questions whether the goal of "public education is to communicate social values, teach basic skills, or meet the needs of employers for a trained work force?" (Lipsky, 1980: 40). In addition, some policy goals tend to be too idealistic, a factor which creates confusion and complications for street-level bureaucrats whose task it is to translate such goals into action. Lipsky's argument suggests that ambiguity in policy goals causes stress and makes the job of street-level bureaucrats more cumbersome. To that end, Lipsky (1980:41) delineates three sources of goal conflict and ambiguity, namely: (i) client-centred goals conflict with social engineering goals; (ii) client-centred goals conflict

with organisational-centred goals; and (iii) goals conflict because the roles and functions of street-level bureaucrats are generally communicated through multiple conflicting reference groups.

In his explication of the three sources of goal conflict and ambiguity, Lipsky (1980:40) asserts that sometimes street-level bureaucrats' concern for clients, conflict with the social role of their agency. In this case Lipsky (1980:41) talks of "client-centred goals versus social engineering goals". For example, in the case of education agencies such as public schools, teachers may promote the type of education that is oriented towards individual achievements while the social expectation is the type of education that is oriented towards citizenship and discipline. The tension in such a case may arise due to street-level bureaucrats' failure to balance individuals concerns with social expectations. Street-level bureaucrats are closer to clients as they deal with them directly and can sometimes use measures such as control of resources or in extreme situations they may use force to gain clients' compliance. This means that in instances of goal conflict and ambiguity, client-centred goals are likely to take precedence over social engineering goals. Again, this demonstrates the crucial role that street-level bureaucrats play when they use their discretion in determining eligibility.

Street-level bureaucrats also experience conflict and goal ambiguity when they encounter "tensions between client-centred goals and organisational goals" (Lipsky, 1980:41). Lipsky (1980:44) states that "[T]he ability of street-level bureaucrats to treat people as individuals is significantly compromised by the needs of the organization to process work using the resources at its disposal". The biggest challenge for street-level bureaucrats is how to use limited resources in order to provide quality services to a large number of clients. Limited resources can reduce the capacity of street-level bureaucrats to be more effective in their work and this may cause conflict in bureaucracies within which they work. However, in some cases, street-level bureaucrats may become more efficient as they try to do the best they can with limited resources. Lipsky (1980:45) argues that, while resource limitations cause tension within street-level bureaucracies at the operational level, it is the responsibility of "street-level bureaucrats to find a way to resolve the incompatible orientation towards client-centred practice on the one hand and expedient and efficient practice on the other". This means that street-level bureaucrats have no choice but to "muddle through" and do the best with the little resources at their disposal.

The third source of goal conflict and ambiguity emanates from what Lipsky (1980:45) calls “the contradictory expectations that shape the street-level bureaucrats role”. In this regard, Lipsky (1980:45) delineates three sources from which role expectations arise namely: (i) “in peers and others who occupy complementary role positions; (ii) in reference groups, in terms of which expectations are defined although they are not literally present; and (iii) in public expectations where consensus about role expectations can sometimes be found”. These different role expectations create goal conflict and ambiguity to the extent that they throw the primary role of street-level bureaucrats into confusion. A lack of clarity in regarding their specific roles and functions may limit street-level bureaucrats, personal actions and effectiveness. To that end, Lipsky (1980:45) argues that “role ambiguity affects individual performance as well as organisational direction”. It is apparent that the issue of role expectations is one of the challenges that street-level bureaucrats have to face when executing their tasks. It is likely that street-level bureaucrats would be influenced by role expectations from their peer groups who “appreciate the pressures of work and the extent to which street-level bureaucrats experience the need to have goal orientations that are consistent with resolving work pressures”(Lipsky, 1980:47).

2.5.4 The problem of resource limitation in policy implementation

In addition to the challenges of goal conflict and ambiguity, street-level bureaucrats have to contend with limited or scarce resources. Limited and a scarcity of resources have been identified as critical constraints that street-level bureaucracies have to deal with in their efforts to deliver public services. Lipsky contends that, in general, street-level bureaucrats have to make decisions about providing services to people under conditions of limited time and information. Limited resources in the work environment, amplify the pressure and stress levels of street-level bureaucrats. Such conditions create high levels of uncertainty due to “the complexity of the subject matter and frequency or rapidity with which decisions have to be made” (Lipsky, 1980:29). As a result, many street-level bureaucrats act without reliable information which in many instances would be too costly and difficult for street-level bureaucracies to obtain. In addition, Lipsky (1980:29) asserts that “street-level bureaucracies characteristically provide fewer resources than necessary for workers to do their jobs adequately”. Lipsky cites an example of a situation where teachers are expected to teach overcrowded classes despite limited resources such as teaching materials and time. Situations of high student-teacher ratios mean that a teacher will spend more time maintaining order and

less time on learning activities. It would be difficult for a teacher to achieve desirable outcomes under such conditions.

Apart from limited resources such as information and time, street-level bureaucrats may lack the required skills and experience to do their work. In this respect, Lipsky (1980:30) writes: “street-level bureaucrats often experience their jobs in terms of inadequate personal resources, even when part of that inadequacy is attributable to the nature of the job rather than rooted in some personal failure”. This means that there is a close relation between variables such as the level of education or qualification, work experience and job performance. In other words, a street-level bureaucrat who is adequately trained and has more work experience is likely to handle the work pressure better and produce better results than one who is less qualified and less experienced. This argument suggests that street-level bureaucrats who are better equipped in terms of skills and long service are likely to cope with job related problems better than the less skilled and inexperienced ones.

The problem of limited and scarce resources experienced by street-level bureaucrats is exacerbated by the phenomenon of demand and supply. The demand for public services tends to increase when new or more resources for service extension are made available. In other words, providing more funding does not necessarily lead to an alleviation of resource limitation. It can, in fact, lead to an increase in demand as more people apply for services. A high demand for services is likely to continue, and resources will continue to be insufficient. Therefore, street-level bureaucrats will continue to have to use their discretion to determine who should receive what service. In other words, who do they regard as eligible for services. They have to make hard choices about how best to spend available resources in an environment of limitless needs. To that end, Hill and Hupe (2002:53) conclude that for Lipsky, “implementation of policy is really about street-level workers with high services ideals exercising discretion under intolerable pressures”. The conditions of pressure, goal conflict and ambiguity compel street-level bureaucrats to develop mechanisms to ration scarce resources in order to cope with their work. Some of the coping mechanisms employed by street-level bureaucrats will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.5 How street-level bureaucrats cope with their work pressures

The theory of street-level bureaucracy directs our attention to the daily routine of people whose behaviour is often unexplained. The essence of Lipsky's argument is that street-level bureaucrats have significant power. A crucial source of power is their exercise of discretion which is inescapable because their work requires them to make decisions about other people. As argued in the previous section, the discretion exercised by street-level bureaucrats is brought to bear in the rationing of resources in situations where demand for services exceeds supply. Lipsky delineates various mechanisms which street-level bureaucrats employ in allocating resources between competing clients, mostly non-voluntary ones. Such mechanisms help street-level bureaucrats to cope with pressure by bringing control over a difficult and ambiguous work environment. Lipsky identifies three broad coping mechanisms through which this control is achieved: (i) modification of client demand; (ii) modification of job conception; and (iii) modification of client conception (Hill, 2007:395).

Firstly, Lipsky's analysis of the modification of client demand presents various forms of demand control which are at the disposal of street-level bureaucrats. These forms include instances whereby delay is deliberately perpetuated, such as withholding information, or stigmatising the delivery process (Hill, 2007:395). This demonstrates street-level bureaucrats' ability to ration the distribution of scarce resources and control their work environment. Lipsky (1980:90) asserts that clients experience the withholding of vital information in two ways, namely: "they experience it as favouritism when street-level bureaucrats provide some clients with privileged information to manipulate the system better than others; they also experience it as confusing jargon aimed at creating barriers to understanding how to operate effectively within the system". The presumption is that service demand will decline if people have no knowledge of the service.

The modification of job conception occurs when street-level bureaucrats change the objectives of the job in order to match their own ability to perform. For example, this entails re-engineering their own job description. One of the ways how street-level bureaucrats modify their jobs is what Lipsky (1980:93) refers to as "psychological withdrawal". This results in a situation in which street-level bureaucrats are not "bothered" anymore by the discrepancy between what they are supposed to do and what they actually do. Such situations tend to discourage innovation and promote mediocrity amongst the workforce.

The modification of client conception seems to occur in a subtle fashion. It happens when street-level bureaucrats are unable to deliver services to all their clients and they devise conceptual mechanisms to divide up the client population and rationalise the division. The common mechanism in this respect involves “creaming off those clients who seem most likely to succeed in terms of bureaucratic success criteria; or it may simply involve differentiating between those clients deemed to be deserving and undeserving”(Hill, 2007:395). In this case street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion to determine eligibility, even in situations where there are formal requirements to provide clients with equal opportunities.

It is clear from the above explication that street-level bureaucrats wield substantial power in policy implementation processes because of their relative autonomy and discretion associated with the nature of their work. Their role in policy implementation is critical in that, as they control scarce resources, they also make policy in circumstances which impel them to devise strategies which enable them to maintain order in their environment. Hill and Hupe (2007:53) point out that Lipsky has been criticised for creating “heroes of street-level bureaucrats, because while they are caught in situations that are fundamentally tragic in the original sense, they still try to make the best of it”. It is apparent that street-level bureaucrats play an essential, yet paradoxical role in policy implementation. Their discretionary power to determine clients’ eligibility and ration resources accordingly seems to pose a challenge to street-level bureaucracies. The question that comes to mind is: how does management cope with the independent behaviour of street-level bureaucrats? What measures are put in place to ensure that the activities of street-level bureaucrats do not contradict the goals and intention of the policy? These questions draw our attention to the issues of control and accountability which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.6

How do authorities manage street-level bureaucrats’ discretion and autonomy?

While it is evident that street-level bureaucrats play a significant role in policy implementation, their activities seem to be difficult to control from a managerial point of view. In this respect Riccucci (2005:1) points out that administrators and managers of bureaucratic systems have less impact on street-level bureaucrats. The fact that street-level bureaucrats possess a great deal of discretionary power and

autonomy makes them difficult to manage and supervise. As a result, managers of bureaucratic systems find it difficult to “change the direction, nature, or culture of their organizations” because of their critical role as front-line workers, with the capacity to influence the direction and outcome of policies (Ricucci, 2005:1). However, this does not imply that the activities and discretionary freedom exercised by street-level bureaucrats is totally unrestricted. There are rules and control measures that public organisations put in place to guide and limit discretionary freedom and autonomy.

Some authors such as Baldwin (1997:364) suggest that the activities of street-level bureaucrats can be controlled through various systems such as inspection systems; schemes that give effect to clients’ views; managerial decisions; disciplinary bodies; contracts which are designed to enforce accountability; monitoring and evaluation systems which focus on the performance of individual workers. However, Baldwin is quick to caution that the concept of discretionary freedom is narrow if it is only seen in the context of rules and regulations. A broader context of processes and constraints experienced in policy implementation provide a wider scope to understand discretionary freedom of street-level bureaucrats. Rules and regulations that are rigid in nature are likely to cause more stress and frustration for the workers who are already under conditions of immense pressures of inadequate resources. To that end, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003:173) assert that, in general, jobs of street-level bureaucrats require discretion, and this phenomenon “cannot be reduced to following rules and procedures because such workers are involved in face-to-face contact with citizens”. This makes discretion inevitable in the activities of front-line workers who go on to decide which rules or procedures to apply and in what context. In this respect, Lipsky (1980:161) asserts that the nature of services that street-level bureaucrats provide “calls for human judgement that cannot be programmed and for which machines cannot substitute”. It is the inevitability of human judgement at the street-level that makes it difficult for managers to control street-level bureaucrats particularly in a direct way. However, Lipsky (1980:147) argues that street-level bureaucrats see themselves as professionals and as such, they are governed by occupational or professional values. As professionals they expect their managers to trust that they will use discretion to deal with their tasks in an adaptive way. In this regard, Hupe and Hill (2007:282) write:

The combination of discretion, rule application, and the principally undetermined character of what the professional will be confronted with, presupposes a degree of trust in his or her competence to produce desired responses, and to deal with situations that may be exceptional in a sensible and creative way.

In other words, in situations where it is not possible to control street-level bureaucrats directly, managers have to trust that such workers will be guided by their professionalism in executing their tasks. Issues such as trust, organisational culture and professional norms into which street-level bureaucrats have been socialised become important in shaping their behaviour. This seems more appropriate considering that much of the tasks performed by street-level bureaucrats occur in places that are inaccessible to their managers and supervisors.

There are many other factors which can influence the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in a positive way. Riccucci (2005:68) points out that factors such as professional interests and norms have a salient effect on the behaviour of front-line staff. In addition, work norms, shared knowledge and beliefs regarding work routines and outcomes is presumed to form part of the organisation's culture which ultimately guides the work of street-level bureaucrats (Riccucci, 2005:68). Other authors such as Brehm and Gates (2005:68) concluded that street-level bureaucrats "behave in certain ways because they embrace the norms of public service and these norms are shared and reinforced by their co-workers". This means that the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats is also controlled by their work environment. In a similar vein, Lipsky (1980:13) points out that "the work environment of street-level bureaucrats is structured by common conditions that give rise to common patterns of practice and affect the direction these patterns take". Again, this indicates that street-level bureaucrats "internalize the culture of the organisation which, consciously or unconsciously guides their day-to-day activities" (Riccucci, 2005:69). Formal policy directives offer little help to managers and supervisors to cope with the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats, but factors such as trust, professionalism and organisational culture seem to have more impact. In the last chapter of his book, Lipsky proposes the enhancement of professionalism as a way of managing street-level bureaucrats. At the same time he warns that professionalism also has its own shortcomings because professionals sometimes develop a tendency to work in isolation (Lipsky, 1980:203).

Other factors which are likely to win the cooperation of street-level bureaucrats are open and participatory styles of management. Riccucci (2005:87) points out that, such features of management have the capacity to induce positive responses from street-level bureaucrats and promote cooperation with management. Education is also identified as a critical factor that develops a sense of work ethic and influences how street-level bureaucrats perform their jobs. In this respect, street-level bureaucrats who are not formally

educated can be trained on the job and socialised into the culture of professionalism. In addition, workshops can be set up with managers or supervisors and staff to discuss the consequences of various behaviours of street-level bureaucrats. Such workshops can help street-level bureaucrats see the broader picture of the actual services delivered by their organisations and promote consensus building (Ricucci, 2005:87). These workshops can also provide an opportunity for managers and supervisors to redirect the behaviours of their staff. Such workshops could also serve as an occasion for managers and supervisors to give feedback to street-level bureaucrats regarding how their practices affect service delivery and clients alike. This indicates that street-level bureaucrats are not malicious and cunning functionaries who take advantage of the power they have over the poor to do as they please. Rather, they use their discretionary freedom and autonomy to make policy to manage the dilemmas of their work environment.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the concept of policy implementation and the different factors that affect its implementation. The framework of analysis is constructed on Lipsky's theory on street-level bureaucracy. Key elements of the theory were extracted from the work of Lipsky and analysed. The key theoretical assumptions discussed above will be considered in the case study component of the research paper which focuses on the challenges facing the implementation of the ABET Policy. But first, the next chapter will provide a contextual background to the development of South Africa's ABET Policy.

Chapter Three

The Development of the Adult Basic Education and Training Policy in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the context in which the Adult Basic Education and Training Policy (ABET Policy) developed in South Africa. Attention will be given to key documents such as the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996), the White Paper on Education (1995), and the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58 of 1995) which informed the formulation of the ABET Policy. In addition, the policy document on ABET and the National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Basic Education and Training will be analysed. In the final analysis, the chapter will review the literature on the implementation of the ABET Policy and the challenges that have been identified.

3.2 The background to the development of the ABET Policy in South Africa

This section will briefly review the background of the ABET Policy and the problems it seeks to address. This is important because it gives the context in which the ABET Policy was formulated. Researchers such as Dansay (1996) have identified the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) as one of the key instruments that helped to entrench the apartheid ideology in South Africa. The Group Areas Act was designed to reinforce the social, economic and political disparities during the apartheid era. It promoted racial segregation and legally defined the boundaries of interaction between the four race groups namely: Whites; Blacks; Coloureds; and Indians (Dansay 1996). The Act ultimately determined the manner in which resources were distributed amongst the four racial groups: Whites, Indians, Coloureds, and Blacks.

The National Policy for General Education Affairs Act (No. 75 of 1984) was formulated to promote the apartheid government's agenda of racial segregation. As a result, Black schools were under-funded and under-resourced, a phenomenon which was deliberately designed to ensure that Blacks received inferior education, which was popularly known as "the Bantu Education" (Naidoo, 2007:2). In this respect, Bonner and Segal (1998) point out that the frustrations of Black students with inferior education reached the stage of rupture which culminated in public uprising in Soweto on 16 June 1976 and spread to different parts of the country. In addition, Naidoo (2007) asserts that many Black students sacrificed their

education in the interest of the struggle against apartheid and many others were simply deprived of decent education by the apartheid system. The result was that a large number of the Black population were illiterate and unable to participate meaningfully in the socio-economic development of the country. Anderson, Case and Lam write: “[e]ducation lies at the foundation of many issues in South Africa today. It is impossible to analyse issues such as racial differences in income, trends in unemployment, or intergenerational transmission of inequality without looking at the role of education” (Anderson et al, 2001:14). This shows that the problem of illiteracy and inequality in South Africa today are largely a result of the apartheid policies.

However, efforts were made by various stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector, and later on (but only due to domestic pressure) by the apartheid government itself to address the issue of illiteracy in South Africa. The project of adult literacy in South Africa is alleged to have been initiated first, and kept alive by a diversity of NGOs in South Africa. A specific example is the Bureau of Literacy and Literature (BLL) which was established as a body in the 1960s (Hutton, 1992:59). This organisation is said to have developed teaching methods and material, and also offered teaching courses on the management of literacy programmes. It became the major supplier of literacy services aimed mainly at mine and industry workers. Although it continued to supply literacy materials, its activities declined drastically in the 1980s. According to Hutton (1992:59) the decline of the activities of the BLL in the 1980s include, but are not limited to the following:

- The trustees of the BLL were conservative and cautious. In an unsupportive environment this reduced the organisation’s capacity to be innovative and respond creatively to needs and new possibilities.
- The size and influence of the organisation meant that it tried to please too many constituencies and the resultant diffusion of focus and principles lessened its impact.
- The weaknesses of the economy coupled with the social turbulence of the 1980s made it difficult for the BLL to run its programmes.

Another key reason for the decline of the BLL’s activities seems to have been the lack of funding from local businesses. In this respect, Hutton points out that the BLL received most of its support from the

Anglo American Company but when this support was cut off in the late 1970s it struggled against bankruptcy and eventually collapsed.

There are various other initiatives which developed from the grassroots level such as the Adult Learning Project (ALP) which targeted mass organisations such as the trade unions.³ It promoted a radical commitment to democratic action at the grassroots level and it is said to be the first literacy organisation to establish a controlling committee on which learners had representatives (Hutton, 1992:69). Other local grassroots community literacy organisations include the LM Literacy Foundation which worked mainly with the Zulu speaking migrant workers in Soweto hostels and the Rising Sun, which worked with the African Independent Churches in the 1980s (Hutton, 1992:70).

It is beyond the scope of this research paper to identify all actors from the NGO sector who contributed to the promotion of adult basic education in South Africa in the apartheid era. The objective is to illustrate that there have long been some form of development programmes in place with a diverse set of participants. The role played by the private sector cannot be underestimated in this regard. Lyster (1992:44) points out that the industrial and commercial sector is responsible for the provision of a considerable amount of literacy in the world. In this case, the private sector conducted literacy classes as part of their own internal training programmes aimed at developing skills among their workforce. In some cases, classes were conducted by the private sector organisations in order to fulfil their social responsibility programmes. For example the English Literacy Project (ELP) which specialised in skills and resources development initiatives also conducted development programmes of English courses for industrial workers (French, 1992:68).

The ELP worked closely with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) to promote literacy amongst the workforce (French, 1992:68). Its significant contribution was “its influence in persuading major trade unions to put literacy on their agenda” (French, 1992:69). The literacy programmes seem to have focused largely on numeracy, reading and writing skills in the mother tongue and English language. In this respect, Sinclair (1990:75) argues

³ According to Lyster (1992:39) Adult Learning Project (ALP) is one of the learning projects which used Paul Frere’s vision and methods of effecting liberatory learning amongst oppressed people. Frere’s vision and methods became popular in different parts of the world in the 1980s, and also became influential on the South African resistance strategies. A number of organizations, including the ALP tried to implement Frere’s ideas on the ground, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s.

that this type of literacy services lacked an essential component of “practical and technical skills to equip blacks to participate fully in the productive sector of the economy”. In addition, Sinclair (1990:76) points out that most literacy programmes were directed “towards the urbanized and already socially mobile sectors of the population” rather than the majority of the rural poor and uneducated. His argument is that a sufficient education base could help the poor to “make a psychological transition needed to escape poverty” (Sinclair, 1990:76). In other words literacy programmes have the capacity to empower the marginalised groups to make a positive contribution to the development of their communities.

The academic world also made its contribution to the development of adult literacy in South Africa. In the late 1970s, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) is said to have done “extensive work in adult literacy, publishing surveys, evaluations, some resources and running a number of conferences on literacy” (Hutton, 1992:71). In the 1980s, various universities established departments for adult education and encouraged academics to do further research and explore the field of adult education. The work done by academics in the field of adult education involved developing resources such as publishing materials for learners, training initiatives and developing materials for teachers.

The apartheid government is identified by French (1992:58) as a late comer to the field of adult education in South Africa. Through its Department of Education and Training (DET) at the time, the state is said to have “designed a literacy curriculum which allowed either for instruction in mother tongue literacy skills, or for a programme which followed through into Afrikaans and English literacy, and then into preparatory courses in which learners were initiated into formal education for adults” (French, 1992:75). In this respect, the state assumed the leading role for promoting adult education and consolidated its position by installing the DET as the only body permitted to issue accredited certificates in adult basic education. Practising teachers were recruited and given basic training to manage adult education centres which operated four nights per week. These centres were commonly known as night schools because classes were conducted in the late evening by teachers who were paid for doing extra work. Those learners who passed the required tests at the end of the academic year obtained “literacy certificates and certificates equivalent to lower primary school standards at the time” (French, 1992:76). The night schools run by the

DET had a significant advantage over others because learners found the prospects of formal certification more attractive in terms of the prospects of future employment.⁴

The delineation of the history of adult literacy during apartheid sets the stage for the drafting of the ABET Policy in the democratic South Africa. It demonstrates that adult literacy is not a new phenomenon but that various stakeholders took the initiative to address the problem in the face of unjust policies of the apartheid regime. The contributions which were made by various stakeholders as it has been shown, serve as a foundation on which the ABET Policy was developed. The next section will discuss the drafting of the ABET Policy in the democratic South Africa.

3.3 The drafting of the ABET Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa

In 1994, South Africa emerged from a long struggle against apartheid and ushered in a new democratic dispensation which provided an opportunity for new policies and practices to be developed (Walters, 1997:1). Education was recognised as a key component in the endeavour to reconstruct and develop a new South Africa. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996) enshrined the right of all citizens to “basic education, including adult basic education...” Bloch (2011:207) emphasises the importance of education in the process of economic development and social transformation when he writes:

Education provides the skills and competencies that allow individuals to perform productive roles within the economy and society. It helps individuals achieve their economic, social and cultural goals and helps society to be better protected, better served by its leaders and more equitable.

It became apparent that the democratic government had to commit itself to reform education policies of the past and provide equal opportunities to all its citizens to access to education as one of the essential tools with which to strengthen democracy and promote social transformation. As it has been pointed out in the previous section, inadequate education and lack of skills made it hard for the poor to ameliorate their conditions. Another consequence of the policies of the apartheid regime which limited the Black people’s access to decent education, was a legacy of about 9.4 million adults with less than nine years of formal

⁴ It is not the objective of this research paper to assess the success or failure of the various literacy programmes undertaken by various actors, or whether such programmes made any significant improvement in the lives of the poor and illiterate.

education which was inherited by the democratic government of 1994 (Department of Education Directorate, 1997:2). The Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1997:2) states that the socio-economic realities reflect extreme inequalities in the level of income, employment rates and overwhelming levels of poverty amongst the Black population. The ABET Policy was therefore developed as part of the endeavour to reform education policies of the past. The drafting of the ABET Policy was essentially informed by three policy frameworks which had been developed by the Ministry of Education in the democratic South Africa, namely: The White Paper on Education (1995); The National Education Act (No. 27 of 1996); and the South African Qualification Authority Act (No. 58 of 1995) (SAQA). The role which these documents played in the development of the ABET Policy will now be examined briefly.

The White Paper on Education (1995) set the tone for the development of a new vision for education policies in post-apartheid South Africa. It integrated the ideas, suggestions and aspirations of various stakeholders and the public for the kind of education policies which would provide equal opportunities to all South Africans. It guided the national debate on the development of new education policies. Furthermore, it recognised and emphasised the importance of an “integrated approach to education and training, and saw this as a vital underlying concept for a national human resource development strategy”. The intention of the debate seems to have been to do away with the type of education policy which fostered a rigid division between theory and practice, which was associated with the past. The vision of the White Paper (1995) was to provide appropriate education and training which would empower all South Africans “to participate effectively in all the processes of democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression, and community life, and help citizens to build a nation free of race, gender and every other form of discrimination”. The White Paper (1995) states that the development of education policies in South Africa has been “a process of learning that has evolved on the basis of a variety of academic, professional and consultative sources of critique and advice”. In addition, the development of education policies in the post-apartheid era is viewed as a transformative mission aimed at establishing a national and non-racial system of education that seeks to improve equality, equity, productivity and efficiency.

The National Education Act has played a key role in the development of education and socio-economic empowerment of the previously marginalised groups in South Africa. The Act amended the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act (No. 75 of 1984) and provides a framework for the determination of policy on salaries and conditions of employment of educators and other matters related to

education in South Africa. The intention of the Act is stated in the preamble as a necessary step “to facilitate the democratic transformation of the national system of education into one which serves the needs and interests of all the people of South Africa and upholds their fundamental rights” (Preamble of National Education Act, No. 27 of 1996). Section 2 of the Act clearly delineates its objectives in the following manner;

- The determination of national education policy by the Minister in accordance with certain principles;
- The consultations to be undertaken prior to the determination of policy, and the establishment of certain bodies for the purpose of consultation;
- The publication and implementation of national education policy; and
- The monitoring and evaluation of education.

The above objectives spell out the parameters and job expectations of the Minister of Education in South Africa. Any policy for education has to be guided by the intention and objectives of the National Education Act which seeks to provide equitable education opportunities in order to redress the past inequalities in the provision of education. The Act also seeks to promote lifelong learning, the cultivation of skills, disciplines and capacities necessary for reconstruction and development. In a nutshell, the Act provides principles for the formulation of the ABET Policy which must take into account the aptitudes, abilities, interests, prior knowledge and experience of the students who were formally disadvantaged. Bloch (2011: 208) writes that since 1994: “[a] raft of policy papers, reports, legislation, implementation directives and institutional development shows progress across many branches of education from higher to vocational”. Notwithstanding the achievements made in reforming education policies since 1994, the education system is still faced with many challenges in South Africa. In this respect, Ndlovu (2011: 4) points out that “ [A] group working for equality in the education system has threatened to sue the Basic Education Department for failing to adopt regulations which specify the minimum infrastructure standards schools should meet in order to function properly”. This indicates that the education system in South Africa is still faced with many challenges on the path of transformation. Some of the challenges include, but are not limited to, the shortage of skilled personnel as expressed by Jeffery (2010: 328) when he writes:

..., hundreds of thousands of vacancies for skilled jobs go unfilled every year. Yet without more skilled managers, professionals, and administrators, the country cannot expect to attain an economic growth rate of 5% or more: the minimum required to start mopping up unemployment among those with limited skills.

Despite the many challenges that still confront the development and transformation of the education system in South Africa, there is no doubt that the National Education Act opened up education opportunities for all citizens to advance their career paths. To that end, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) provides the framework within which the quality of education and training, as well as the full development of each learner in the context of socio-economic development of the nation can take place. The objectives of the National Qualifications Framework are delineated as follows:

- To create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- To facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
- To enhance the quality of education and training;
- To accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and thereby
- To contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

In order to translate the above objectives into action, the Minister of Education was mandated in terms of Section 2 of the Act, to establish a structure of authority whose task would include “the formulation and publishing of policies and criteria for the registration of bodies responsible for establishing education and training standards or qualifications”. In addition, the function of the established structure of authority would be to oversee the full implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and monitor all accredited bodies to ensure compliance with provisions for accreditation and that all registered qualifications are internationally comparable. To that end, article 7 of Part 1 of the White Paper on Education (1995) states that:

An integrated approach to education and training which is linked to the National Qualification Framework would open doors of opportunity for people whose academic or career paths have been needlessly blocked because their prior knowledge has not been assessed and certified, or

because their qualifications have not been recognized for admission to further learning, or employment purposes.

One of the key objectives of SAQA is to monitor and ensure compliance with the provisions for accreditation and recognition of qualifications attained from ABET providers. SAQA also provides a framework for the recognition of prior learning for ABET learners. This means that ABET providers can assess the “extent to which learners can demonstrate that the competence and skills they have acquired through formal or informal processes are equivalent to measurable outcomes from formal learning programmes” (Department of Education Directorate, 1997:25). The premise of recognising prior learning is that people learn many things outside the formal structure of education, and that such learning, irrespective of where and how it was acquired, can be assessed and recognised. The assumption is that the recognition of prior learning and experience in the context of ABET offers groups which were historically excluded from education and training an opportunity to have their knowledge and experience recognised and certified. This in turn, would help to improve their job opportunities and access to further education and training. The ABET Policy will be briefly examined below.

3.4 The Adult Basic Education and Training Policy in South Africa

The previous section explicated that the White Paper on Education, the National Education Act and SAQA provided the framework for the formulation of the policy for Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa. The ABET Policy was published by the Department of Education in 1997. The ABET Policy recognises the constitutional right of every South African to basic education and sees it as a tool to empower citizens for social participation and economic development. To that end, the Department of Education (1997:5) defined ABET in the national context of South Africa as follows:

Adult basic education and training is the general conceptual foundation towards 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. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and, ideally, provides access to nationally recognized certificates.

This definition presents ABET as a tool of empowerment to enable the previously disadvantaged groups to make a paradigm shift from exclusion and dehumanization to a new world of freedom and

participation. In other words, apart from empowering people with skills to read, write and generate income for themselves, ABET is seen as a liberating process which will free the previously oppressed and deprived to claim their world as free agents. The national definition of ABET in the context of South Africa is closely linked to the vision for ABET which is expressed as follows: “[A] literate South Africa within which all its citizens have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation” (Department of Education Directorate 1997:9).

The vision of ABET is that education “is not just about knowledge and skills but also about values, attitudes, as well as creative and emotional development, all of which contribute to responsible, active and productive citizenship” (Booyse et al, 2011:275). ABET Policy was envisioned to contribute towards the development of a new national consciousness and attitudes in South Africa, and also to improve the quality of participation in political processes. To that end, the ABET Policy was formulated to further the trajectory of the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) which stated that all South Africans should have access to decent education. The development of the ABET Policy was later followed by the creation of the Adult Basic Education and Training Act (No. 52 of 2000) which provided the legislative framework to support the implementation of the ABET policy. The key objectives of the Act are stated as:

- To regulate adult basic education and training;
- To provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public adult learning centres;
- To provide for the registration of private adult centres;
- To provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in adult basic education and training; and
- To provide for transitional arrangements and matters connected therewith.

The Act effectively formalised ABET in South Africa and paved the way for implementation processes and the further development of ABET programmes. In addition, the Act defines the terms of the establishment and operations of both the public and private centres in terms of the law and vision of ABET. The Act defines a public centre as a juristic person who is supposed to occupy immovable

property owned by the state for educational purposes. A private centre is defined as any person who establishes a centre at his or her own cost for educational purposes. In section 1 of the Act, adult basic education and training is defined as “all learning and training programmed for adults from level 1 to 4 where level 4 is equivalent to (a) grade 9 in public schools; or (b) equivalent to national qualification framework level 1 as contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act 1995”. In terms of the Act, ‘adult’ refers to any person who is sixteen years or older.

According to the Act, it is the prerogative of the Head of the Provincial Department of Education to provide facilities for public centres, which can be done by requesting governing bodies of public schools to allow the use of the school by the public centre. Section 4 of the Act states that the Head of the Provincial Department of Education should enter into an agreement with the concerned school governing body and the agreement should specify the following:

- The amount of time, and time of day or night that the school facilities may be used by the public centre;
- The manner in which resources and the costs must be shared between the school and the public centre;
- The responsible authority to be liable for payment of the costs referred above;
- The maintenance and improvement of the school facilities; and
- The relationship between the school governing body and the public centre governing body.

It is the task of the Head of Department to consult with both the school governing body and the public centre governing body before an agreement is finalised. To that end, section 8 of the Act stipulates that every public centre must have a governing body which should consist of:

- Elected members from educators at the centre, members of staff who are not educators and learners at the centre;
- The Centre Manager, in his or her official capacity;
- Co-opted members;
- Any representative of an organisation for disabled persons, where applicable; and
- Any expert in the field of adult basic education and training.

It appears that the Act aims to encourage more participation from the grassroots level and other stakeholders in the governance of public centres. The functions of governing bodies consist of a long list which includes, but are not limited to the following:

- To provide any information pertaining to the public centre and its activities at the request of the Head of Department;
- To be responsible for the budgeting and financial management systems of the public centre;
- To supplement the procurement of the learning support material for the public centre;
- To elicit public for the public centre; and
- To keep proper records of all governing body meetings.

The Act states that public centres for ABET are supposed to be headed by Centre Managers who are appointed by the Provincial Head of the Department Education in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998). A key prerequisite to be appointed as a Centre Manager is that one should have at least one year experience as an ABET educator and be in possession of a post-matric qualification. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the candidate should also “prove retention of learners over a period of eighteen months, with a minimum of two tutors” (Managerial Policy: Guidelines for KZN ABET 2001, Section 5.2). The candidate has to prove through an interview, competence in management and administration functions. The Centre Manager is expected to dedicate eight hours per week to fulfil the functions of the centre. Four of these hours are supposed to be for teaching while the other four are supposed to be used for supervision and management functions.

The Act makes an important pronouncement on the issue of funding for public centres. In terms of Section 21 of the Act, funding of public centres is the sole responsibility of the State. Apart from the funds allocated by the State, public centres can receive donations from the private sector and raise funds on their own initiatives. One of the key functions of the governing body of a public centre is to keep account of all assets, liabilities, income and expenses of the public centre. The governing body is mandated in terms of the Act, to appoint a person registered as an accountant and auditor to audit the records and financial statements of the public centre. The audited financial records are supposed to be presented to a member of the Executive Council of the province in question who is responsible for

education. It is apparent that the Act provides a legislative framework to guide and regulate ABET centres in South Africa. The actual implementation of the Policy is guided by *A National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation*, a document which was published and promulgated by the Department of Education in 1997. The document provides detailed plans and guidelines for the implementation of the ABET Policy and will be briefly examined below.

3.5 The National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training Policy

The National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training (hereafter referred to as the Multi-Year Implementation Plan), is a comprehensive document which provides guidelines for the operationalisation of the ABET Policy. It constitutes the official ABET Policy implementation plan. The idea of a Multi-Year Implementation Plan originated from the National Stakeholder Forum for Adult Basic Education and Training (hereafter referred to as the Forum). At its evaluative meeting held at the end of 1996, the Forum approved the idea of a multi-year planning cycle for ABET and stated:

The experience of the last two years has invoked the need for a multi-year planning cycle with clear targets. A one-year planning cycle without long-term targets has proved not to be adequate. In order to have a successful implementation plan that will have a lasting impact on the levels of literacy in this country a clear multi-year plan needs to be developed.

The idea of a Multi-Year Implementation Plan was endorsed by the Department of Education's Directorate for Adult Education and Training who developed it further into a national action plan. The Multi-Year Implementation Plan stipulates the establishment of key structures and processes to facilitate effective implementation of ABET. To assist in effective planning, the Multi-Year Implementation Plan recommends that an Adult Education Geographic Information System which will determine the geographic location of learners and potential learners be set-up. The assumption is that, such a system would generate essential information to enhance effective planning and provision of ABET according to geographical targets.

In this respect, the Multi-Year Implementation Plan delineates special targets for ABET provision as:

- uneducated women, especially those from rural areas;
- out-of-school youths;
- unemployed people;
- prisoners and ex-prisoners; and
- the disabled people.

The Multi-Year Implementation Plan spells out in detail the responsibility of government to utilise its existing infrastructure and different government departments to effect the implementation of ABET. The government's infrastructure includes public schools run by the provincial Departments of Education and the Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) which fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labour. The Multi-Year Implementation Plan recognises the critical role that other actors such as NGOs, religious organisations, the private sector and local municipalities play in the implementation of the ABET Policy. All these constituencies and others with a vital interest in the ABET are duly recognised as partners in the implementation of the ABET Policy (Department of Education Directorate, 1997:239).

3.6 Challenges Facing the Implementation of the ABET Policy

Aitchison and Harley (2006:91) give an overview of the progress made in literacy and basic education levels of persons aged 15 years and over between 1995 and 2001. Table 3.1 gives a summary of figures from three sources: the 1995 October Household Survey; the 1996 General Population Census; and the 2001 General Population Census.

Table 3.1: Literacy levels for persons aged 15 years and over.

Level of education	1995 October Household Survey	1996 General Population Census	2001 General Population Census
Full general education (Grade 9 and more)	14.3 million (54%)	13.1 million (50%)	15.8 million (52%)
Less than full general education (less than Grade 9)	12.2 million (46%)	13.2 million (50%)	14.6 million (48%)
Less than Grade 7	7.4 million (28%)	8.5 million (32%)	9.6 million (32%)
No schooling	2.9 million (11%)	4.2 million (16%)	4.7 million (16%)

The figures in the table above are not absolute but they serve as an indication of trends. The figures are based on the percentage of the population who have completed a certain number of years of formal schooling. The figures indicate that there was no significant decrease in the percentage of illiterate persons aged 15 years and over between 1995 and 2001. On the contrary, there was an increase in the population with no formal schooling and those who did not go beyond Grade 7. This means that by 2001 the implementation of the ABET Policy had failed to significantly reduce the number of illiteracy in South Africa. Specifically, Aitchison and Harley's (2006:96) analysis of the census figures of 1996 and 2001 show that the numbers of the unschooled increased in five provinces namely: Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Gauteng, while there has been a decrease in the North West, the Free State and Western Cape provinces. They point out that the only province that seem to have had a decrease in illiteracy levels or "actual number of people aged 20 and over with no schooling is the Western Cape". But even then, they subscribe the reason for the decrease to the migration of people out of the province due to the closure of the mines between 1996 and 2001, and not because of ABET programmes. The biggest increase was in the province of KwaZulu-Natal which tops the list of "provinces with the highest number of adults with no education at all" (Aitchison and Harley 2006:96). The differences in provinces, they argue, are due to the legacy of the apartheid regime which created the system of homelands or Bantustands, hence the highest illiteracy rates in Black communities. Another phenomenon is that the growing number of illiterate adults is more evident among Black women who have also suffered lack of socio-economic empowerment as a result of patriarchal bias and sexism (Aitchison and Hurley, 2006: 97).

Also connected to illiteracy levels are issues of poverty and unemployment, which are generally viewed as part of the apartheid legacy of the past. The basic assumption that underpins the ABET

Policy is that “education provides skills and competencies that allow individuals to perform productive roles within the economy and society” (Plaatjies, 2011: 207). According to May and Govender (1998:33), conditions of poverty and unemployment have not improved much in the post-apartheid era. They argue that there is a strong correlation between poverty and education.

Table 3.2, for example, shows that poverty affected 69.1% of people with no education, and 54.2% of those who had completed primary schooling. The poverty rate among those who had completed secondary schooling and tertiary level were 23.7% and 2.5% respectively. The implication is that the incidence of poverty is higher among persons with no education and also those with low educational attainment. The low incidence of poverty among people with secondary education and tertiary qualifications reflects the positive influence that education has on employment opportunities and wages. The argument is that education increases opportunities for employment which can also lead to a decrease in the incidence of poverty.

Table 3.3: Poverty rate according to educational level of head of household

	Poverty rate (%)
No Education	69.1
Primary Education	54.2
Secondary Education	23.7
Tertiary Education	2.5

Source: May and Govender 1998:33

Notwithstanding the progress made in policy development and planning, a survey of the literature on the implementation of the ABET Policy does not give evidence of a decrease in the illiteracy rates in South Africa. In this respect, Aitchison (2004:532) raises the question about “where wrong turnings were made in implementation and to what extent the delusional rhetoric of lifelong learning concealed problems”. The implications of this rather gloomy picture are that the primary purpose of the ABET Policy, namely to empower the poor through education to escape poverty, participate meaningfully in

socio-economic development and political life of the country have not been fully realised. Aitchison (2000:153) makes two important comments in that regard:

- a) On a positive note, the document provides a valuable guide to all the components of an ABET system and , even though much of the document addresses national matters, it would be useful to all people responsible for planning and implementation decisions in the provinces.
- b) On a negative note, the plan may be considered over complex and ambitious with a multiplicity of standing committees and working groups requiring substantial commitment of unpaid personnel time from the various sectors.

The above comments by Aitchison reveal that the ABET Policy as well as the Multi-Year Implementation Plan have the potential to serve as valuable resources for the progressive development and implementation of ABET programmes and as points of reference for researchers. However, their ‘complex and ambitious’ nature pose a serious challenge for implementers. The imminent risk is that scarce resources might be wasted in efforts that seek to untangle and understand complicated plans instead of focusing on practical action. Furthermore, Aitchison (2004:532) points out that, generally, “the implementation of ABET was impressive at the level of policy, systematisation, standardisation and regulations but weak to disastrous on the ground in practice and growth”. Aitchison’s argument indicates the complexity of policy implementation in general, and suggests that good policies formulated by officials at the top do not necessarily translate into positive outcomes on the ground.

Other researchers such as Rule (2006) argue that, although the Multi-Year Implementation Plan has detailed targets drawn up, it has never been fully implemented. Rule cites a number of reasons for government’s failure to effectively implement the ABET Policy. Firstly, the lack of political will is cited as one of the reasons for failed implementation of ABET Policies. In this respect, French (1992:81) argues that “a lack of commitment leads to the reluctant funding of projects and a lack of effective mobilisation of resources”. This indicates that the initial rigor and political will which was demonstrated by government in the development and planning of ABET Policies lost momentum at some point and this adversely affected implementation on the ground.

Secondly, Rule cites a paradigm shift in government economic policy as a major reason for the poor implementation of the ABET Policy. When the government of South Africa changed its economic policy from Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to Growth, Employment And Redistribution (GEAR) approach as its economic strategy, the primary purpose of ABET to serve the needs of the poor and their communities was neglected. The emphasis shifted to the formal and instrumental aspects of basic education to develop an effective workforce for global competitiveness (Rule, 2006:120). This means that ABET became largely situated within the formal sector of the economy as a way of developing the workforce for global competitiveness. To achieve the agenda of developing skills of the workforce, the government formulated two key Acts, namely: The Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999).

According to Nel et al (2008:149) the purposes of the two Acts were to be achieved by:

- Establishing an institutional and financial framework comprising: the National Skills Authority; the National Skills Fund; a skills development levy-grant scheme as stipulated in the Skills Development Levies Act; Sector Educational and Training Authorities (SETAs); labour centres; and a Skills Development Planning Unit;
- Encouraging partnerships between the public and private sectors of the economy to provide education and training in and for the workplace; and
- Cooperating with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Nel et al (2008:149) point out that the primary purpose of the Skills Development Levies Act was to enhance skills development in South Africa. In this respect, the Act provides a legislative framework:

- To regulate the imposition and collection of levies for training purposes;
- To define the role of SETAs and the commissioner; and
- To regulate the distribution of levies, as well as the recovery of levies by SETAs.

The Skills Development Act seeks to promote programmes such as the learner-ships which incorporate the traditional apprenticeships into structured learning and work experience programmes which lead to nationally registered and occupationally linked qualifications. It also seeks to identify programmes that are not learner-ships but meet quality and relevance criteria to qualify for grant payments from SETAs or the National Skills Fund. According to Rule (2006:120), the skills

development programmes are well resourced, but largely cater for people within the formal sector of the economy. This means that most of the illiterate and semi-illiterate adults who are unemployed or informally employed are systematically excluded from these programmes. While the skills development programmes maybe viewed as a positive development, they seem to create a gulf between the workforce and the masses of illiterate and unemployed.

The national skills development strategy seems to indicate a change of focus on the part of the government. It also sheds light in terms of why ABET seems to have failed to make any visible inroads. According to Jeffery (2010:337), in 2005 the National Minister of Education “openly acknowledged that the ABET system had failed and called for a complete revamp of adult education”. The major causes for failure were cited as related factors such as lack of capacity in the field, inadequate funding and the crucial issue of implementation.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored illiteracy in South Africa and the context in which the ABET Policy was developed. The various policy documents such as the White Paper on Education, the National Education Act, and the SAQA were examined and their importance in the development of the ABET Policy was discussed. The chapter also examined the Multi-Year Implementation Plan which constitutes the official ABET Policy implementation plan. The challenges of implementation and a general critique of the Multi-Year Implementation Plan were also addressed by the chapter. The next chapter will focus on the case study which seeks to gather empirical data regarding the challenges faced by ABET Centre Managers as they relate directly with the target groups in their endeavour to implement the ABET Policy. Ultimately, the study seeks to address the role of ABET Centre Managers in the implementation of the ABET Policy and the challenges encountered.

Chapter Four

Case study: The Implementation of the ABET Policy by Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of the empirical investigation conducted to determine the challenges facing ABET Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District of KwaZulu-Natal, and how Centre Managers cope with the challenges they face. The research methods adopted will be explained as well as some of the difficulties experienced during the fieldwork component of this research project. The main objective of this chapter is to present the findings and analysis of the fieldwork. The findings are organised into six sections which correlate with those of the interview schedule (See Appendix 1).

The Pinetown Education District is divided into four circuits, namely: Ghandi, Mafukuzela, Hammarsdale, and Umhlathuze. The Pinetown and Umlazi Education Districts, as well as a portion of Ilembu constitute the Ethekwini Municipal Metro. Each district comprises about eight wards. The researcher established that the Pinetown Education District has 107 functional public centres for ABET, and that four of these centres are at the Westville Correctional Service (See Appendix 2).

Written permission from the Head of the Provincial Department of Education (KwaZulu-Natal), was required before any research at the respective ABET centres could be conducted. The process of obtaining permission to conduct research took longer than was anticipated and caused unforeseen delays. The ABET officials at the District level insisted on being shown written proof of permission from the Head of the Department of Education in the Province before they would render their full cooperation. Once such permission was granted, the researcher received full support from the ABET officials at the Pinetown Education District offices.

A random sample of 30 Centre Managers was selected from a list of 107 ABET centres obtained from the Pinetown Education District offices. Appointments were made with each of the ABET Centre Managers prior to the interviews. Each of the thirty Centre Managers agreed to be interviewed. The researcher observed that almost all the Centre Managers who were interviewed are employed as full-time teachers in the mainstream or are doing some other jobs apart from working as ABET Centre Managers.

The interview schedule was a questionnaire that contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions (See Appendix 1). The open-ended questions offered the interviewee to express him/herself and elaborate on the closed-ended responses. In some cases, the interviewees declined to write their responses and asked that the researcher tape-record the interview and transcribe it afterwards. Although the face-to-face interviews tended to be tiresome and time consuming, they gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with the interviewees and ask them to cite examples where relevant or allowed the researcher to clarify some of the questions which were not clear to the interviewees. The interview schedule was divided into six sections, and each section focuses on a specific theme. The empirical data obtained from the interviews will be presented in Tables, pie charts and/or bar charts according to the different themes.

4.2 Findings and Analysis

4.2.1 Profile of Centre Managers

The first section of the questionnaire sought to obtain general background information regarding the age, gender, race and educational qualification of the ABET Centre Managers. In addition, the section established their years of experience as ABET educators and as Centre Managers. Some of the findings are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Profile of ABET Centre Managers

Centre Manager	Age	Qualification	Years of Experience	Race	Gender	Centre Location
CM 1	43	ABET Dip.	5	African	Female	Urban
CM 2	43	ABET Dip.	10	African	Female	Urban
CM 3	42	ABET Dip.	4	African	Female	Urban
CM 4	40	ABET Dip.	4	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 5	40	B. Ed	8	African	Female	Urban
CM 6	43	B. Ed	9	African	Female	Urban
CM 7	38	ABET Dip.	2	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 8	40	BSC Hons.	7	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 9	43	B. Ed.	2	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 10	45	B. Ed. Hons.	9	African	Female	Urban
CM 11	31	ABET Dip.	5	African	Female	Urban
CM 12	44	B. Ed.	7	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 13	40	B. Ed.	9	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 14	37	ABET Dip.	2	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 15	48	B. Ed.	14	African	Male	Urban
CM 16	45	B. Ed. Hons	9	African	Female	Urban
CM 17	40	B. Ed.	9	African	Female	Urban
CM 18	36	B. Ed.	6	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 19	36	ABET Dip.	5	African	Female	Urban
CM 20	42	ABET Dip.	8	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 21	38	ABET Dip.	9	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 22	56	ABET Dip.	12	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 23	33	ABET Dip.	5	African	Female	Urban
CM 24	41	ABET Dip.	8	African	Female	Urban
CM 25	40	B. Ed.	7	African	Female	Urban
CM 26	45	B. Ed.	10	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 27	44	B. Ed.	9	African	Female	Semi-rural
CM 28	32	ABET Dip.	5	African	Female	Urban
CM 29	38	ABET Dip.	5	African	Female	Urban
CM 30	54	ABET Dip.	3	African	Female	Semi-rural

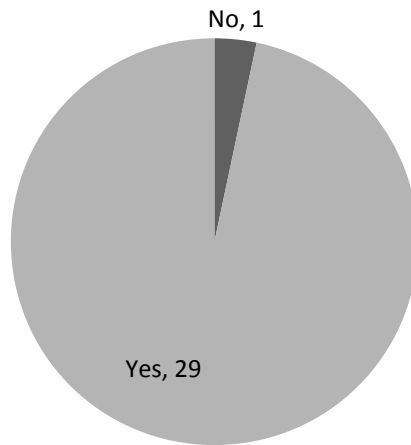
The Table shows that only three of the 30 Centre Managers were between 31 and 35 years old with matric and a post-matric diploma in ABET. There was only one ABET Centre Manager between 46 and 50 years old, and he has a Degree qualification; and two of the ABET Centre Managers were above 50 years old with a ABET Diploma qualification. It is interesting to observe that of the 30 Centre Managers who were interviewed, only one was male. In addition, all the 30 ABET Centre Managers were Africans.

One of the minimum requirements of an ABET Centre Manager is that the candidate should have at least one year experience as an ABET educator and be in possession of a post-matric qualification. The results in the table above show that all the thirty Centre Managers met the required educational qualifications and had more than one year experience as ABET educators.

4.2.2 Familiarity with the Goals and Objectives of the ABET Policy

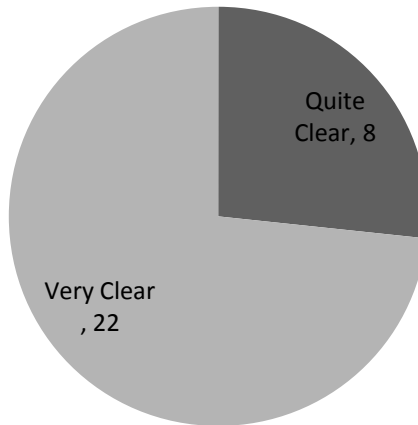
This section sought to establish whether the ABET Centre Managers are familiar with the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy. One of Lipsky's arguments is that when policy goals and objectives are clear, it becomes easier for street-level bureaucrats to implement policy and achieve the desired outcomes. On the other hand, ambiguous policy goals and objectives cause confusion and result in policy failure. The goals and objectives of the ABET Policy were listed in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked whether they were familiar with them. In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the goals and objectives of ABET were clear for them. The results are presented and analysed below.

Question: Are you familiar with goals and objectives of ABET?



The results show that 29 of the interviewees are familiar with the goals and objectives of ABET. Furthermore, the results show that only one person was not familiar with the goals and objectives of ABET. However, after discussing the question further, the interviewee explained that she had misunderstood the question, and that she was in fact familiar with the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy. Taking the interviewee's change of mind into account, one can conclude that each of the ABET Centre Managers is familiar with the goals and objectives of ABET. Once it was determined that each of the Centre Managers were familiar with the ABET Policy, they were asked whether they thought that the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy were clear.

Question: How clear are the goals and objectives of ABET policy for you?



Centre Managers were asked to rate the extent to which ABET Policy goals and objectives were clear for them. Centre Managers were to use the ratings: *not clear*; *quite clear*; or *very clear*. As the pie diagram above illustrates, 22 of the Centre Managers indicated that the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy are quite clear for them while 8 indicated that they are very clear. Of interest is that none of the interviewees rated the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy as being not clear. However, the interviewees were asked whether the clarity of goals implies that they are easy to implement. The responses were varied, some of the Centre Managers stated that the goals are easy to implement. One Centre Manager said:

“The goals and objectives of ABET are clear and easily implemented. I don’t have any problems with them. Maybe it is because I have been involved in ABET for a long time and I have gained a lot of experience” (CM 3).

On the contrary, one Centre Manager explained that, to a large extent the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy are quite clear but not easy to implement due to many challenges. Some of the challenges mentioned include, but are not limited to factors such as poor learner attendance, lack of teaching materials and inadequate time for teaching. When elaborating on the issue of implementation one Centre Manager said:

“The shortfall on implementation is due to lack of capacity from the officials of ABET, for years we had no director for ABET in the Pinetown Education

District until late last year. This means that there was no clear guidance from the officials and this made it difficult to implement the goals and objectives of ABET” (CM 5).

Another Centre Manager explained that:

“It is very difficult to implement the goals and objectives of ABET because our learners are too busy and they do not want to commit themselves in education” (CM 18).

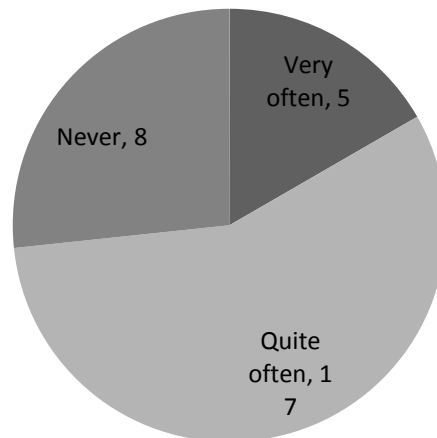
Furthermore, one of the officials explained that the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy are generally clear and easy to understand, but the problem is implementation. He stated:

“The policy is not implemented as it is stipulated in the policy documents. The policy documents look impressive and well formulated but what happens on the ground is different, and this is because there is no political will from the Department of Education, this makes the implementation of ABET a big challenge for those on the ground. For example, there is the issue of governing bodies which are supposed to be formed at each ABET centre to assist in running the centres and provide support to Centre Managers. Those governing bodies only exist on paper, that has not been implemented here in KZN, and I believe it is due to lack of political will”.

The views expressed by this official point to the complexity of different factors that affect the implementation of the ABET Policy. It is apparent that most of the Centre Managers encounter various challenges when trying to implement the ABET Policy on the ground. This indicates that, while they are predominantly unanimous regarding the clarity of policy goals and objectives, this does not easily translate into effective policy implementation on the ground. As shown by the responses of the Centre Managers, there are a multitude of factors which could make the policy goals difficult to achieve.

Centre Managers were also asked whether the goals and objectives of ABET sometimes clash with their own goals and objectives as Centre Managers. The Centre Managers were asked to express their responses in terms of: *not often; quite often; or very often.*

Question: How often do the goals and objectives of ABET clash with your own as Centre Manager?



The results indicate that only eight of the Centre Managers did not have goals that clashed with those of the ABET Policy. However, 17 felt that they did quite often, and five that they clashed very often. The implications of such a phenomenon could be high levels of stress amongst Centre Managers which may amplify the challenge of policy implementation. The issue of goal conflict was further explored by asking these Centre Managers to elaborate on their opinions. Below are some of their responses:

“My goal as Centre Manager is to ensure that the centre grows and has a good reputation, to achieve this goal I have to consider the local situation of the people which the policy does not do. In this way goals clash because goals of the ABET Policy do not consider the local situation of learners. For example, as Centre Manager and educator I deal with old people mostly in level 1 and 2. On Thursdays most of these learners go to church and they do not come to school. I have to be gentle when I deal with them because I understand their situation and I cannot risk losing them. But the ABET Policy does not consider the fact that as Centre Managers we have to deal with these old people” (CM 20).

“My goal is to grow the centre and empower learners with skills which can help them to earn a living. The policy goals focus too much on numeracy, EMS, NS etc, things which are not relevant for most of the learners. As a result, the centre has lost many learners” (CM 28).

“My goal as Centre Manager is to ensure that the centre runs smoothly and has a good reputation. I have to help learners and educators. But sometimes this is difficult because there is also too much paperwork to be done, and time is not enough to achieve good results” (CM 25).

These responses indicate some of the sources of goal conflict and the situation that many Centre Managers are faced with on the ground. Some of those Centre Managers that felt that there is no clash between the ABET Policy goals and their own explained this as follows:

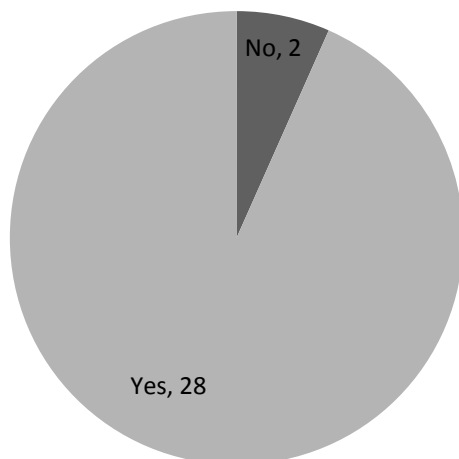
“They do not clash at all because as Centre Manager I am guided by the policy and I do what the policy stipulates” (CM 14).

“They are not clashing at all as they are aiming at empowering the ABET learners with education and skills, hence I as Centre Manager also aim at giving learners more knowledge education wise” (CM 27).

These responses give the impression that a few Centre Managers subscribe fully to the goals and objectives of the ABET Policy. From a cynical point of view, it could mean that some of the Centre Managers have no personal goals, but only perform the tasks that are stipulated by the policy.

The section on goal clarity and objectives was concluded by exploring the challenges regarding the implementation of the “T” aspect of the ABET policy. The “T” in ABET refers to a variety of training skills and expertise such as plumbing, dress making, bead work, dance and poetry. The training aspect of ABET is essential because it aims at empowering adults with practical skills and expertise which can help them engage in activities which generate income. To a large extent, the “T” constitutes an integral component of the ABET Policy.

Question: Are there any challenges that you face when trying to implement the "T" part of ABET?



The majority of the Centre Managers, namely 28, expressed that they encounter challenges when trying to implement the “T” of the ABET Policy. The results show that only two of the Centre Managers do not encounter challenges when implementing the “T” part of the ABET Policy. They say:

“The “T” is regarded as an elective subject. Strictly speaking I do not think it is part of the curriculum. Due to time factor we cannot implement it even if we wanted to because we have only 3 hours per day to teach. So I encourage learners to get involved in community development before they come for classes in the afternoon” (CM 20).

“I have no problems with the “T” because I have not even tried implementing it. There is no support from the Department of Education and there are no funds allocated to implement the “T”. This shows they do not take it serious, so why should I bother about it as Centre Manager. I do not understand how they brought this “T” when they do not provide resources to implement it” (CM 2).

These responses, however, seem contradictory. The responses quoted above reveal a certain level of frustration and despondence experienced by these two Centre Managers respectively. Contrary to their response that they do not encounter challenges when implementing the “T” aspect of ABET, their explication shows that they have ‘given up’ because of lack of resources and support from the Department of Education in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. It is therefore more likely to

conclude that all the ABET Centre Managers face implementation challenges here, which questions the feasibility of achieving the “T” component of the policy. The main challenges which were cited referred to a lack of resources and support from the Department of Education. Given these shared frustrations, the Centre Managers were asked how they cope with the challenges they are faced with in respect of implementing the “T” component of the ABET Policy. In their explications, the Centre Managers revealed that they employ various coping mechanisms. For example:

“For sometime I tried teaching learners basic computer skills, but these did not work out because they were not tested on this and no certificates were given. Learners lost interest because they wanted a certificate which they can use to find work. So, I decided to suspend the training part until the Department provides resources for implementing it” (CM 23).

“We started a sewing club but it is very difficult because we have no recourses like a sewing room with electricity. We are hoping the Department of Education will assist us with funds to buy sewing machines and get a proper sewing room” (CM 13).

“We are trying to get some donations so that we have our own building for us to have a relevant space for our training” (CM 15).

“We have to use our own money to buy the materials that we need for training because we do not get anything from the Department of Education” (CM 11).

“Learners are not interested in the “T” because they know that they will not get a certificate for it. So, I simply ignore it” (CM 17).

The above responses demonstrate that, despite the challenges of inadequate resources and lack of support from the Department of Education, Centre Managers employ a variety of coping mechanisms in order to execute their tasks. One of the coping mechanisms evident in the above explications is the modification of the ABET Policy by choosing to ignore or suspend the “T”.

One official at the Pinetown Education District office explained that the change in the national government structure which has resulted in the creation of two separate National Department of Education namely: the Department of Basic Education, and the Department of Higher Education and Training, could be advantageous to ABET. According to this official, ABET will focus strictly on numeracy and literacy and will fall under the auspices of the Department of Basic Education.

However, the “T” aspect will be relocated to the Department of Higher Education and Training and will be implemented by Further Education and Training (FET) institutions. This development could alleviate the amount of challenges currently facing Centre Managers. The official emphasised that this policy directive is still in its infancy and has not yet been implemented. During the interviews only a few Centre Managers made reference to the proposed development, but were quick to point out that it has not been officially communicated to them.

4.2.3 Functions of the ABET Centre Managers

The third section of the questionnaire focused on the functions of Centre Managers and sought to establish which ones they find *not so difficult* to perform, *quite difficult* to perform or *very difficult* to perform. In addition, the interviews were also aimed at identifying whether the Centre Managers adopted any specific strategy to cope with the functions they find quite difficult to perform or very difficult to perform.

a) The core functions of the Centre Managers

Table 4.2 below summarises the responses of Centre Managers in respect of the core functions they are expected to perform.

Table 4.2: core functions of Centre Managers

	Function	Not so difficult	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Totals
1	Recruiting learners	16	12	2	30
2	Management of resource	23	5	2	30
3	Tuition	27	3	0	30
4	Supervision	29	1	0	30

The results show that all but one Centre Manager did not find it so difficult to perform their supervision functions. This function entails making sure that educators arrive on time and are in class teaching during school time. The results indicate that, in general, the majority of Centre Managers have no serious difficulty with performing their tasks. However, the function of recruiting learners seems to be a challenge for many, especially those in the semi-rural areas. In

this respect, the researcher undertook to establish what strategies Centre Managers employ to cope with those functions they find either *quite difficult* or *very difficult* to perform. Some of the explanations below illuminate the coping mechanisms employed by the Centre Managers:

“The recruitment strategies suggested in the ABET Policy do not always work on the ground because this place is largely rural. So I am forced to do door to door campaign to encourage potential learners to register. Sometimes I also use public gatherings to inform people about ABET programmes, I explain the benefits of learning, being able to read and write, and they come to register” (CM 9).

“For me recruiting learners is not difficult but the problem is keeping them in school. Some come and when they find that we have no learning material, they give up. Many times learners have to share books because we do not have enough teaching material and this discourages them” (CM 29).

“If a learner stops coming to school I have to make home visits to find out what the problem is, you have to understand that in ABET we also deal with old people, so one has to be patient with them because they do not see things the way we do. This is how I cope, communication is key” (CM 1).

“If I find any function quite difficult to perform or very difficult I ask for help from other Centre Managers or depending on the issue, I refer to the ABET co-ordinators” (CM 3).

“I have to motivate learners every time when they leave after attending classes and encourage them to bring their friends and I praise them for doing that” (CM18).

“I keep contact numbers of all my students so that I can make follow ups when the learner is absent, and this method is very successful. Another one is to encourage those who come every day by giving them something at the end of each week” (CM5).

These responses reveal that Centre Managers adopt different strategies to manage and cope with those functions which they find difficult to perform. Some of the coping mechanisms evident in the responses include, but are not limited to: referring the issue to ABET Co-ordinators; seeking the advice of colleagues on the issue; discussing the issue with the concerned learners; and undertaking outreach visits to learners who stop attending classes or phoning them. The coping mechanisms employed by different Centre Managers seem to depend on the context and the issue to be dealt with. An analysis of the various responses indicates that there are issues which Centre Managers

feel competent to manage on their own or with the help of their colleagues and there are also issues which are referred to ABET Co-ordinators because they are too difficult for Centre Managers to handle. But in general, the information gathered shows that the majority of Centre Managers do not have difficulties performing their core functions, or if so, find their own ways of circumventing such problems.

Centre Managers were also asked whether they perform functions outside those specified in their job description, and if so, why they perform them. The question was intended to obtain more information about the workloads of Centre Managers. 28 of the Centre Managers said that they do perform additional functions. They gave a wide range of reasons for performing additional functions. For example:

“I perform additional functions in order to improve the centre so that it is able to function all the time. So I get involved in the activities of the NGO that looks after old people here. I also participate in the co-operatives where many of my learners are members. In this way I get close to them and I market the centre because the people see that I am interested in what they are doing out there not just here” (CM 21).

“I perform additional duties like visiting learners when they are sick or when there is death in the family. I do this because I am a member of the community but also to show the spirit of Ubuntu. Learners need to know that I care about them and this helps to build the reputation of the centre” (CM 25).

“I see myself as a community developer, so I perform additional functions as a way of contributing towards community development because ABET does not pay me for doing these functions. I do them voluntarily but I know they benefit the community and they attract more learners to the centre as well” (CM 3).

“I have no choice because if I just sit I risk losing learners which is a big problem. So I have to go an extra mile to organize activities that help retain learners and help the centre to grow. If I lose learners the centre will be closed, both myself and educators will lose our jobs” (CM 4).

Although a variety of reasons were given by different Centre Managers as to why they perform functions outside of their prescribed working requirements, they all seem to converge on one common point: the ABET centre. The concern about the success and development of the ABET centre and being able to retain learners seems to be the main reason for performing additional

functions. In a nutshell, the reasons are both strategic and humanitarian in the sense that performing additional functions helps to retain and attract potential learners, and at the same time these functions are humanitarian in the sense that they are seen as contributing to community development. Despite the additional efforts, it is apparent that Centre Managers work under conditions of uncertainty because they have learners whom they struggle to retain since many learners do not consistently attend classes. As one Centre Manager explains:

“One of the major challenges we face in ABET is that the numbers of learners fluctuates; due to poor conditions people tend to lose confidence in the programmes of ABET” (CM 1).

4.2.4 Access to Resources

Inadequacy of resources seems to compound the pressure already suffered by Centre Managers. As pointed out by the literature on the implementation of the ABET Policy in South Africa, adequate resources have been identified as a key requirement for the effective implementation of the ABET Policy. Centre Managers were asked to indicate which resources are adequate at their centres and which ones are inadequate. In addition, Centre Managers were to explain how they cope with a situation of inadequate resources at their centres. The results of their responses are summarised in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Do you have enough of these resources?

	Resource	Yes	No
1.	Finances	1	29
3.	Teaching materials	13	17
4.	Time	13	17
5.	Skilled personnel	25	5

Responses illuminate the severity of the lack of financial resources for most of the Centre Managers. 29 of the 30 respondents indicated that a shortage of funds is the biggest challenge. The shortage of teaching materials and time were regarded as equally lacking. Of interest is that 25 of the 30 respondents indicated that they have enough skilled personnel at their centres. However, in

follow-up questions, some of the respondents explained that, although there are enough trained educators, it is sometimes difficult to rely on them because they do not work at the centre over a long period of time due to poor conditions of service. They indicated that ABET educators are being paid very low wages, and that sometimes, they are only paid after two months. Furthermore, Centre Managers and educators are paid for the hours that they have worked, which means that during school holidays they do not receive any wages. This explains too why most Centre Managers have taken up additional forms of employment in order to subsidise their income. This phenomenon seems to have negative implications for policy implementation as it can lead to high staff turnover, which in turn threatens the continuity of teaching programmes.

Despite the evident shortage of resources, Centre Managers adopt various strategies to cope with this situation and try to find ways to perform their functions. The respondents explained that many of their learners are poor and unemployed. As a result many cannot afford to buy basic items such as pencils and exercise books. As a result, many Centre Managers end up spending their own money to help their learners- who might otherwise withdraw from the ABET programme. In addition, Centre Managers use their money to pay for photo copying. Some explained that they negotiate with the School Principals, many of whom are very supportive and they allow them to use school equipment to photo copy materials for the centre.

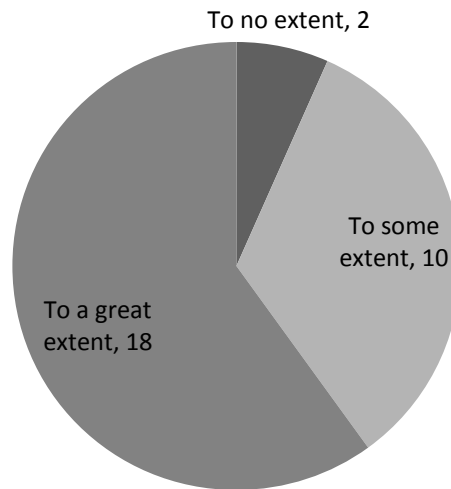
To cope with the shortage of teaching materials, some of the respondents indicated that they do their own research in public libraries or make more copies of the available material. One respondent who is also a teacher at a mainstream school explained that she has opted to use the same books that she uses for her grades 1 and 2 classes to teach ABET to level 1 and 2 learners.

On the issue of time, those who felt that time was not enough explained that they have opted to work overtime though they are not paid for it. One respondent said:

“Two hours is not enough especially to teach level 4 learners, to cope I have to use my own time to finish the work. I am happy that even educators are prepared to sacrifice and work extra hours even though they don’t get paid for doing so” (CM 19).

It is apparent that, despite the shortage of resources which amplify the pressure and conditions of uncertainty, Centre Managers adopt various coping mechanisms which assist them to perform their functions. To that end, the researcher explored the extent to which Centre Managers are guided by the written rules and policy guidelines in the performance of their tasks.

Question: To what extent are you guided by written rules in the performance of your tasks?

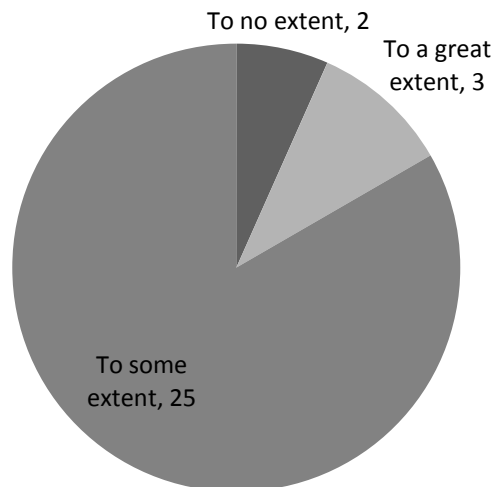


18 Centre Managers claimed that they are guided by written rules to great extent in the performance of their functions while 10 Centre Managers are guided by the written rules to some extent. Only 2 Centre Managers said that they are not guided by written rules. These results show that, in general, Centre Managers comply with the regulations of the ABET Policy.

4.2.5 The use of Discretion and Autonomy

The next section of the questionnaire aimed to ascertain the extent to which Centre Managers use their discretionary power and autonomy to take decisions when performing their functions. Three key areas were emphasised, namely the Centre Managers' (i) use of discretion; (ii) their extent of autonomy; and (iii) what informs their use of discretion and autonomy? The results are presented and analysed below.

Question: To what extent do you use your discretion in the performance of your duties?



The responses show that the majority of Centre Managers use their discretion to make decisions in the performance of their duties. 25 of the 30 Centre Managers stated that they use their discretion to some extent, while 3 use their discretion to a great extent. Only 2 of the 30 respondents said that they use no discretion, which could mean that they are strictly guided by the written rules and will not consider taking action without prior authorisation.

During the interviews, various explanations were offered regarding the use of discretion and situations that compel Centre Managers to use their discretion. For example:

“When you work for ABET you are guided by rules and are closely monitored. But when it comes to the daily running of the centre I do take my own decisions without having to consult the Department of Education. I mean, I am here on the ground and I deal with both learners and educators here, so it is part of my responsibility to make decisions as a leader” (CM 2)

“There are things which do not need to be reported to the officials, like the way I recruit and screen learners according to levels. There I have to use my discretion to take decisions based on the situation at hand” (CM 13).

“I cannot always refer to the Policy document or refer issues to the officials at the district offices, I have to decide on some issues on a day to day basis otherwise I would not be in charge. It is part of my responsibility” (CM 30).

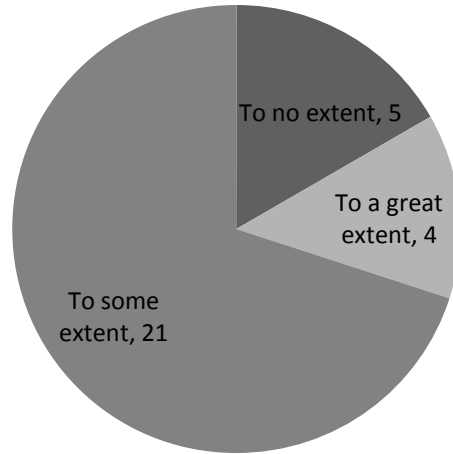
“I deal with people here on the ground and the rules or policy does not help much. I have to take decisions looking at the situation because each case is different and people come from different backgrounds, I have to listen to them and understand their story and sometimes one has to consider the amount of resources like teaching materials and the number of learners who come. So I definitely have to use my discretion to deal with the situation otherwise the centre will not develop” (CM 20).

These responses and explanations reveal that there are different situations which compel Centre Managers to use their discretion. It is evident that many of them see the use of discretion as something that is embedded in their position as Centre Managers. In addition, some respondents explained that the use of discretion is essential for them because they deal with people on the ground and that sometimes rules do not help much. For example, when they recruit and screen learners, the use of discretion becomes imperative.

Furthermore, some Centre Managers explained that they also use discretion when recruiting educators. It emerged during the interviews that according to the ABET Policy, Centre Managers are supposed to recruit those who have been trained as ABET educators, and most of these have a matric qualification and a one year ABET diploma. Some Centre Managers expressed a concern that some of these educators are unable to teach Levels 1 and 2 learners, the majority of whom are old people. As a result, some Centre Managers use their discretion to recruit trained teachers from the mainstream and some even who are retired. One Centre Manager explained:

“Sometimes as Centre Manager you need a more skilled educator like a retired teacher, but because of the ABET Policy it is difficult to recruit them. In level 1 and 2 we need such educators who are more experienced, but the policy does not consider this, so I use my discretion for the good of the centre and the learners” (CM 29).

Question: How would you rate the extent of your autonomy in the performance of your duties?



The Centre Managers were asked whether they thought they had substantial autonomy in performing their functions as stipulated by the ABET Policy. The responses were varied. Five Centre Managers feel that they are restrained in the ways they can perform their functions.

“It is not always easy to act independently as Centre Manager because the coordinators are always on our backs, sometimes they come unannounced, so one is always conscious of this, and I feel that it stifles my creativity as Centre Manager. It is as if they want to find mistakes” (CM 15).

“I am always guided by policy document regarding my duties and responsibilities, and the Department tells us what to do, so I honestly don’t feel that I have autonomy as Centre Manager” (CM 23).

These explications reveal the reasons why some Centre Managers felt that their freedom to act independently is quite restrained. In this case, the Centre Managers feel that their actions are being strictly monitored by their superiors, and this limits the space to be innovative and act independently.

However, 21 of the 30 think that they are autonomous to some extent. They elaborated on their experiences differently.

“I am supervising the centre and teaching at the same time, and we work as a team with the educators. So whenever there is a problem we talk about it and try to resolve it here without necessarily referring to the ABET officials at the district offices. So to some extent I feel that I have the autonomy as Centre Manager” (CM 27).

“As Centre Manager I believe I must be given a chance to run the centre and take decisions without being supervised all the time. This has been my experience as Centre Manager and I believe I have autonomy to some extent” (CM 1).

“I do not feel quite restrained by the authorities I feel I have great freedom to act because I am in charge here. I do their job but when it comes to the running of the centre I am in charge and I cannot do it unless I have freedom to take decisions regarding the development of the centre and other issues which I have to deal with daily” (CM 16).

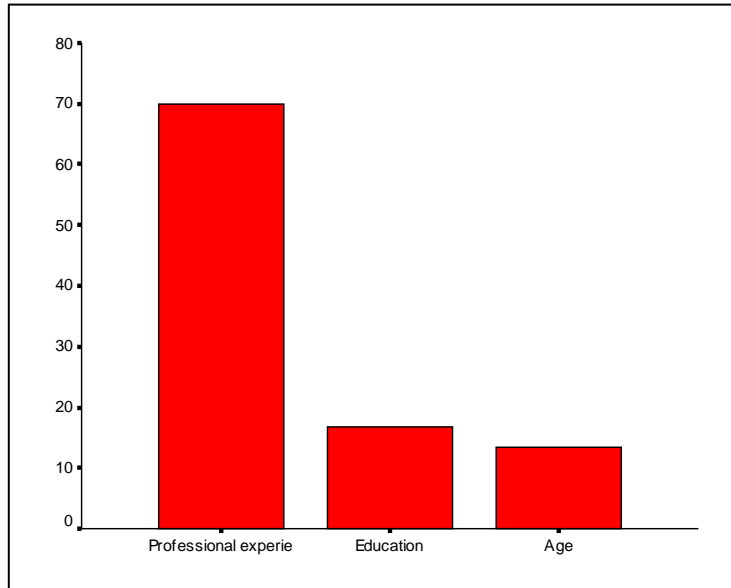
Only four stated that they feel they have substantial autonomy, and that they have the authority to act independently of their authorities.

“Without autonomy I cannot function as Centre Manager, I am here on the ground and I have to deal with people and issues here and take decisions in the interest of the centre and learners. I have been a teacher already for many years and I do not have to run to the officials all the time. But this does not mean that I disregard the ABET Policy and guidelines, no, I am still guided by them but not in a rigid way” (CM 24)

c) What informs your use of discretion and autonomy?

This question follows up from the previous questions because it aimed to determine whether factors such as Centre Managers’ professional experience, level of education or age influence their use of discretion and autonomy. The responses here, are telling. For example the 21 respondents who feel that they have discretion and autonomy feel that this is due to their professional experience. Five of the 30 respondents indicated that education was the reason for their use of discretion and autonomy, while only four cited age as the factor that determines to what extent Centre Managers exercise discretion and autonomy.

Question: what informs your use of discretion and autonomy?



During the interviews it became apparent that the majority of the respondents who cited professional experience as a basis for their use of discretion and autonomy are trained teachers who have been in the mainstream for a number of years. Some of them explained that as teachers they feel that they are knowledgeable on educational issues and their professional experience helps them to take decisions and act independently as Centre Managers. In addition, the professional experience which they have gained indifferent schools becomes an important asset for them as ABET Centre Managers. As one respondent explains:

“I have been a professional teacher for about thirty years and I have been involved with ABET for fourteen years now. As you are in the field you grow and learn good communication skills to communicate with the community and educators. So this experience is important for my job as Centre Manager” (CM 05).

Those who cited education as the driving force that informs their discretion and autonomy explained that education gives them confidence and authority as Centre Managers. In this respect, one respondent explained:

“Education gives me confidence and authority to take decisions when necessary, and when I come across problems in my work I always do my research” (CM 10).

Those who cited age as a factor which informs their use of discretion and autonomy elaborated that most of their learners are old people who are not easy to deal with. Some of the learners have hearing problems because they are old. The situation requires that an educator has to repeat the same thing until they understand. One respondent elaborates and states that:

“Some of ABET learners are old people, grandmothers mainly. If you speak with them you must show some respect, you must also be willing to repeat yourself every time because they don’t hear properly” (CM 11).

It is apparent that professional experience, education and age are key variables which influence the Centre Managers’ use of discretion and autonomy at different levels. Professional experience features prominently as it is viewed as an important asset by the majority of Centre Managers. However, the researcher contends that in reality, the three variables are intrinsically connected and have a symbiotic relationship. This section has explored how Centre Managers rate their use of discretion and autonomy in the performance of their functions. The basic argument is that discretionary freedom and autonomy give Centre Managers power to perform their functions under conditions of stress and shortage of resources. The next section will explore ways which ABET officials use to manage and control Centre Managers’ use of discretion and autonomy.

4.2.6 How do ABET officials manage Centre Managers’ use of discretion and autonomy?

It is evident that Centre Managers possess various degrees of discretionary power and autonomy which enable them to perform their functions under difficult conditions. As such, they have the capacity to influence the direction of the ABET Policy implementation at the grassroots level. Their activities are not easily controlled by the officials of ABET because they deal directly with learners and communities in the absence of the District office or the Department of Education.

This section focuses on how ABET authorities from the District offices manage and control Centre Managers' discretion and autonomy. In other words, the objective is to investigate the different measures used to monitor the activities of Centre Managers.

a) To whom are the Centre Managers accountable for their performance?

All the Centre Managers said that they are accountable to ABET Co-ordinators for their performance. According to the Centre Managers, ABET Co-ordinators from the District offices visit centres every month to supervise and monitor their performance. Some Centre Managers explained that, although they are primarily accountable to ABET Co-ordinators, they also feel that they are to some extent also accountable to their learners and educators because as leaders they need to set a good example.

In a separate interview with one of the ABET officials at the Pinetown Education District offices, it was pointed out that Co-ordinators from the District are deployed to the centres for support and monitoring purposes. Furthermore, he explained that ABET officials they give priority to those centres which are weak and ensure that Co-ordinators visit them twice a month to render support.

b) What method is used to assess the performance of Centre Managers?

The Centre Managers explained that when Co-ordinators visit centres they check attendance registers, lesson plans and time books. Sometimes Co-ordinators count the number of learners and educators present on a day in question and ask the Centre Manager to sign and stamp it. One Centre Manager stated:

“The co-ordinators visit the centre and count the number of learners present per level in the centre. They also help where there is a need especially with recruiting new learners” (CM 6).

However, some of the Centre Managers expressed dissatisfaction with Co-ordinators who sometimes visit centres unannounced. When Co-ordinators find minor mistakes they shout and threaten to close down the centre. Some Centre Managers felt that Co-ordinators should consider

the situation of the centre when doing assessments. For example, the researcher established that on wet and/or cold days, many of the learners do not attend classes. So when Co-ordinators visit the centre on such occasions, they count the few learners who are present and write a negative report.

It was revealed that educators are paid according to the number of learners per day. By implication this means that in winter and during the rainy season, educators do not get paid much. In this respect, Centre Managers complained about poor conditions of employment in the ABET sector.

The District officials also organise quarterly meetings and workshops for Centre Managers to discuss issues of concern and update them on new policy issues. In such meetings Centre Managers are trained in managerial skills to empower them to manage their centres efficiently. One District official explained that workshops and meetings are essential for Centre Managers because some of the common problems which affect centres are discussed in order to find a way forward for those concerned. However, the challenge is that some Centre Managers who are also teaching at the mainstream schools are often unable to attend the meetings and workshops. This makes it difficult for ABET officials to update all Centre Managers on policy issues and appraise their performance.

Another strategy employed to manage the activities of Centre Managers is the use of contracts. Centre Managers are employed on a year contract which is renewable subject to their performance. In addition to the assessment methods discussed above, Centre Managers are assessed on the basis of the pass rate of their learners. The logic of this method of assessment is that a higher pass rate implies that the respective Centre Manager has performed well. This makes the pass rate of learners one of the key factors to be considered when renewing contracts. One District official commented that, in general, the majority of Centre Managers manage to get their contracts renewed. This could be an indication that, while Centre Managers enjoy discretionary power and autonomy, they also comply with rules and policy guidelines in the performance of their functions.

4.2.7 Conclusion

The main research objective of the case study was to investigate the challenges facing ABET Centre Managers in their endeavour to implement the ABET Policy in the Pinetown Education District of KwaZulu-Natal. The key questions which informed the case study relate to the roles of Centre Managers; the challenges faced by Centre Managers as the key implementers of the ABET Policy; their use of discretion and autonomy in implementing the ABET Policy; the mechanisms they employ to cope with the challenges; and how the ABET officials from the Department of Education manage, control or monitor the actions of Centre Managers.

The case study has helped to identify the challenges that ABET Centre Managers are faced with in the performance of their tasks. Various mechanisms to cope with the challenges were identified and discussed. The case study has revealed that despite the challenges of lack of key resources and lack of understanding by the Department officials of the challenges they experience, Centre Managers are still able to muddle through and produce some desired outcome on the ground even if this happens on a small scale. It was revealed that discretionary power and autonomy are key elements which enable Centre Managers to find ways to cope with their conditions of constraint and resource inadequacy. Finally, the case study explored various methods which are employed by the officials to manage or limit the Centre Managers' use of discretionary power and autonomy. The next chapter will conclude the research paper by summarising the major findings of the study and reflecting back on the literature on street-level bureaucracy.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the research paper by reflecting back on the literature on policy implementation. The study sought to explicate whether the use of discretion promotes or curtails the implementation of the ABET Policy.

The findings of this study (and those of other studies) on the implementation of the ABET Policy that have been reviewed in this study have revealed multifaceted problems that Centre Managers encounter when implementing the ABET Policy on the ground. These problems include inadequate resources such as finances, teaching material, time factor as well as lack of commitment and political will from the Department of Education in the province. Other challenges are related to the recruitment and retention of learners at the centre. These are the key challenges that affect the implementation of the ABET Policy. This study has shown that the clarity of goals and objectives of a policy does not easily lead to effective policy implementation. The literature that was reviewed cites the shift in government economic policy from RDP to GEAR as one of the causes for the poor implementation of the ABET Policy. In this respect, Rule (2006:127) argues that with the shift to the GEAR economic policy, the government of South Africa focussed its attention towards the development of an effective workforce for global competitiveness and neglected the ABET programmes. As a result, ABET failed to make inroads and its implementation has been compromised.

Despite these challenges, ABET Centre Managers seem to have sought ways to manage the implementation of the ABET Policy at their respective centres. This study revealed that Centre Managers employ a wide range of strategies to cope with the challenges they face. This phenomenon is similar to that explained in detail by Lipsky (1980) in his theory of street-level bureaucracy. Lipsky argues that in general, street-level bureaucracies are the major recipients of public expenditure and they represent a significant portion of public activity at the local level (1980:xvi). To a great extent citizens directly experience government through them, and their actions are perceived as the policies provided by government. In this regard, Lipsky (1980:xii) argued that, ultimately, “the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and

the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressure, effectively become policies they carry out". This has been verified with regard to the implementation of the ABET Policy. The decisions of Centre Managers and the various devices they invent to cope with the challenges of inadequacy of resources, the methods they use when recruiting and screening learners have become part and parcel of the ABET Policy.

One of Lipsky's key argument is that, the rational top-down model to policy implementation is inadequate to achieve effective policy implementation, but that the actions and decisions of street-level bureaucrats (in this case, the ABET Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District), bear consequences for the policy's intended beneficiaries (in this case, illiterate people).

This case study concludes that the decisions and resilient efforts of Centre Managers have kept ABET programmes going despite the challenges of inadequate resources, a perceived lack of departmental support and poor conditions of service.

The case study has also shown the significance of street-level bureaucrats having substantial autonomy and the ability to exercise adequate discretion in the execution of their functions. As Lipsky (1980:181) stated, street-level bureaucrats see themselves as restrained by the bureaucracies within which they work, "yet they seem to have a great deal of discretionary freedom and autonomy". By using their discretionary power and autonomy street-level bureaucrats determine the nature and quality of service provided by their agencies. Lipsky justifies the use of discretion because the work of street-level bureaucrats is too complicated to be reduced to programmatic formats. In addition, street-level bureaucrats work in situations which require them to respond to the human dimensions of life in which they interact more with people than with the nature of their tasks. In the final analysis, discretionary freedom and autonomy give street-level bureaucrats the power to withhold and to disperse services. The study has shown how Centre Managers have to evaluate the needs of each of their learners in order to render assistance. Autonomy allows street-level bureaucrats to act independently from the authority of their agencies as they deliver services to their clients.

It is apparent that many Centre Managers view the use of discretion as an essential component in the performance of their functions. Discretion seems to help them to cope with a variety of challenges as they deal with both learners and educators on the ground. The use of discretion seems to be very useful for Centre Managers in situations where the policy is inadequate. These are situations where Centre Managers have to process learners during recruiting and screening phases where they have to consider each case and take a decision in the interest of both the learner and the centre.

The findings of this study have shown that the majority of Centre Managers act independently from the Department of Education when they perform additional functions – but these are not in conflict with the objectives of the ABET Policy. On the contrary, these actions have been beneficial for the learners, and are in line with the principles of the ABET Policy.

The findings of this research also reveal that the use of discretion and autonomy is largely influenced by variables such as professional experience, education and age. While Lipsky (1980:203) presents professional experience as an important factor in dealing with street-level bureaucrats, he also cautions that it has shortcomings because professionals sometimes develop the habit to work in isolation. However, the findings of this study have shown that the majority of Centre Managers (21) regard professional experience as an important resource in performing their functions. Riccucci (2005:87) argues that education helps to develop a sense of work ethic and has a bearing on how street-level bureaucrats perform their work. This study has shown that, in the case of the thirty Centre Managers in the Pinetown Education District, the three variables seem to be symbiotically connected and they all enhance the Centre Managers' performance in various ways.

This study has also identified ways in which ABET officials try to manage and control the actions of Centre Managers, such as executing unannounced spot checks at various ABET centres. As Lipsky pointed out, the activities of street-level bureaucrats are difficult to manage and supervise because of their discretionary freedom and autonomy. Riccucci (2005:1) also points out that administrators and managers of bureaucratic systems have limited impact on street-level bureaucrats. This gives street-level bureaucrats the leverage to influence the direction and outcome

of policies. However, the findings of this study reveal that Centre Managers are subjected to strict and regular monitoring and supervision by ABET Co-ordinators. The methods used to control the activities of Centre Managers include systems such as inspection of attendance registers for both educators and learners, monthly reports about the running of the respective centre which each Centre Manager has to submit to the District officials, monthly visits to each centre which are done by ABET Co-ordinators to give support and for monitoring purposes. In addition, the performance of Centre Managers is assessed on the basis of learners' pass rates. In this case, a higher pass rate is indicative of the Centre Manager's good performance.

The study showed that the Department of Education uses contracts as a control system which is regarded as a way of ensuring accountability. Baldwin (1997:365) argues that the understanding of the concept of discretionary freedom and autonomy should not be confined to the context of rules and regulations because these can amplify the stress and frustration which street-level bureaucrats are already experiencing. To that end, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003:173) argue that jobs of street-level bureaucrats require discretionary freedom and autonomy because these workers deal directly with their clients. This fact was reiterated by different Centre Managers during the interviews.

However, from the Centre Managers' perspectives, these types of control and assessments are irrelevant and ill-informed. For example, a low learner attendance rate may have nothing to do with how the centre is managed but everything to do with learners' own personal problems – such as their lack of finance to purchase something as basic as a pencil.

It became evident from the discussions with the respondents that autonomy plays an essential role in the performance of their tasks. In fact, without autonomy, many of the Centre Managers would find it hard to manage the challenges they face and develop their centres. The nature of their job as Centre Managers requires that at times they have to act independent of the main structure of authority but still remain within the framework of the ABET Policy.

In the final analysis, the study reveals that even with the strict systems of assessment aimed at enforcing compliance, Centre Managers still rely on their discretionary freedom and autonomy and

view these two elements as key to their performance. The findings of the study seem to authenticate Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy which takes seriously the critical role played by lower level officials in policy implementation. The findings of this study indicate the need to take seriously the experiences and concerns of Centre Managers in the evaluation of the ABET Policy. The researcher contends that the experiences and suggestions of Centre Managers from the grass root level will bring vital information in the further development of the ABET Policy in South Africa.

This study highlights the limitations of a strict rational top-down model to policy implementation and reiterates the value of discretionary power and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats for public policy implementation.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for ABET Centre Managers (ID: CM.....)

Kindly complete the following questionnaire. The information obtained is for academic purposes only. Your identity will remain confidential and anonymous. You may withdraw from participating at any time. The objective of the questionnaire is to identify some of the challenges facing ABET Centre Managers such as lack of resources, work pressure – and how you as ABET Centre Managers cope with and respond to these challenges.

Section 1: Personal Details

1.1 Age: _____

1.2 Gender: Male Female

1.3 Race: African Coloured Indian White

1.4 What is your highest educational qualification?

1.5 Total years of experience as ABET educator.

0-5	6-9	10-14	15 or more	

1.6 How long have you been working as Centre Manager?

Section 2: Goal and objectives of the ABET Policy in the province of KZN.

2.1 Are you familiar with the goals and objectives of ABET listed below?

Yes	No

I	Goal of ABET in KZN
	To ensure that citizens in need of ABET have access to effective literacy, numeracy and vocational training provision

ii	Objectives of ABET in KZN
	- To institutionalize and professionalize ABET and ensure effective and efficient management of ABET provision
	- To promote effective democratic governance structures
	- To develop appropriate and enabling policy
	- To continuously plan, monitor, evaluate and reflect to ensure quality service delivery

2.2 How clear are the goals and objectives of ABET Policy for you?

Not clear	Quite clear	Very clear

Comment.....

2.3 How often do the goals and objectives of ABET clutch with your own goals and objectives as Centre Manager?

Not often	Quite often	Very often

Comment.....

2.4 The “T” in ABET refers to a wide range of skills and expertise including the ones listed below. Which ones do you offer at your centre?

Skill and expertise	yes	No
Plumbing		
Dress making		
Management and negotiation		
Dance		
Praise poetry		

Comment.....

2.5 Are there any challenges that you face when trying to implement the “T” in ABET?

Yes	
No	

2.6 If yes, how do you cope?

Section 3: Functions of Centre Managers

The core functions of Centre Managers are listed below. Tick which ones you find not so difficult to perform, difficult to perform, and very difficult

to perform.

3.0	Function	Not so difficult	Quite difficult	Very difficult
3.1	Recruiting new learners			
3.2	Management of resources			
3.3	Tuition			
3.4	Supervision			

3.5 How do you cope with those functions which you find quite difficult to perform?

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3.6 How do you cope with the functions which you find very difficult to perform?

.....

3.7 According to the guidelines for KZN ABET, Public centres are required to draw strategic and action plans at the beginning of each academic year. One of the critical plans is recruitment strategies listed below. Which of these strategies do you use to recruit learners?

Recruitment strategies	Yes	No	?
Media-radio, TV& Newspapers			
Churches, community occasions, celebrations, local schools and civic organisations			
Adult learner week-annual celebrations			

Readathon- annual celebration			
Library week- an annual celebration			
Networking- NGOs, CBOs, Tertiary Institution and Business Sector			

3.8 According to the guidelines for KZN ABET, one of the requirements for an ABET centre to be registered or remain registered there should be a minimum of 20 learners per learning area per level. How difficult is it for you to maintain a minimum of 20 learners per learning area per level at your centre?

Not difficult	Quite difficult	Very difficult

3.9 If you find it quite difficult or very difficult to maintain a minimum of 20 learners at your centre, how do you cope with the situation?

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4.1 Are there other functions that you perform outside of your specified duties?

Yes	No

4.2 If so, why do you perform these additional duties?

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Section 5: Issue of resources

The issue of resources is important for the successful implementation of the ABET programmes. Do you have enough of the following key resources at your centre?

5	Resource	Yes	No
5.1	Finances		
5.2	Facilities		
5.3	Teaching Materials		
5.4	Time		
5.5	Skilled personnel		

5.6 If you do not have enough of any of these resources, how do you cope with the issue?

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Section 6: Discretion and autonomy in the performance of tasks

The questions below seek to determine the extent to which you make your own decisions when performing your responsibilities as Centre Manager in situations where resources are lacking.

6.1 Are your duties and responsibilities specified in an official job description?

Yes	No

6.2 How would you rate the extent of autonomy in performing your formal duties?

To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent

Comment.....

6.3 To what extent do you use your discretion in the performance of your duties?

To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent

Comment.....

6.4 If you perform additional functions, to what extent do you use your own discretion/judgement?

To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent

Comment.....

6.5 Which of the following informs your discretion and autonomy?

Professional Experience	Education	Age	Gender

Comment.....

6.6 If you perform additional functions, to what extent do you have autonomy in performing these functions?

To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent

Comment.....

Section 7: Control and accountability

7.1 To whom are you accountable for your performance as Centre Manager?

.....

7.2 Do you get assessed on how you perform your duties?

Yes	No

Comment.....

7.3 If so, how often do you get assessed?

Not often	Quite often	Very often

7.4 What method is used to assess your performance?

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7.5 To what extent are you guided by written rules in the performance of your tasks?

To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent
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Comment.....

7.6 Is there any system of support to help you cope with or increase your performance?

Yes	No

7.7 Do you have any recommendations to make?.....

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Thank you for your participation