

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL



**ADULTS IN THE MAINSTREAM: FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF LESOTHO**

BY

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Abstract

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has as one of its components and the world call to achieve education for all has led to a number of countries' introduction of Free Education. In Lesotho the call was heeded with the introduction of the Free Primary Education Programme in phases as from the year 2000. It was with the advent of the Free Primary Education Programme that a number of adults who never had formal schooling and or who had very little schooling took advantage and enrolled in the mainstream of primary education.

This study therefore investigates the teaching and learning processes of adult learners in the mainstream of primary education where the curriculum is designed for the school age learners. It consists of the in-depth investigations of three primary schools in the Southern districts of Lesotho namely Moyeni Primary and Zibandayo Primary in the district of Quthing; and Naleli Primary in the district of Mofale'shoek; This study also investigates how these schools handled the education of adult learners while still not compromising the tuition of the school age learners. It also tried to find solutions as to how best the tuition of the adult learners could be handled so as to benefit them and the country as a whole.

Acronyms

CEO	Chief Education Officer
FPE	Free Primary Education
JC	Junior Certificate
LDTC	Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
MoE	Ministry of Education
NSCET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NCESS	National Commission on Education Support Services
NCDC	National Curriculum development Centre
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that **Adults in the Mainstream: Free Primary Education Programme in the Southern Districts of Lesotho** is my work and that all sources consulted and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references. In the event of failure to comply, I did not do it intentionally.

Signed

Date

Thabelo Ramagele

The statement by the supervisor:

This mini-dissertation is submitted with / without my approval.

Signed

Elda Lyster

INTRODUCTION

The Free Primary Education Programme (FPE) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced in the year 2000 to “alleviate poverty, and illiteracy” in Lesotho, has brought about a new unanticipated phenomenon that is not reported anywhere. While the Free Primary Education Programme was intended to cater for thousands of children at school going age that would otherwise be excluded from education because of poverty, it is baffling to learn that many adults also took advantage and joined mainstream primary schools instead of traditional adult centres and or distance learning, as they would have been expected to do. The curricula and resources in primary school education are designed for children aged 6-12 years, and not for adult learners who could be labelled intruders into the territory not meant for them.

In the light of this unusual phenomenon of adults in the mainstream of primary education this study was undertaken to investigate the teaching and learning processes involved. This study therefore investigates how these adults who have joined the mainstream of primary education deal with the demands of curricula not designed for them but for school age learners. It also investigates how the teachers presumably not trained for adult education manage to teach the combination of two groups of learners of diverse age, experience, motivations and aspirations. The purpose is to come up with the best ways to provide tuition to the adult learners, still not undermining their school age counterparts for whom this tuition was initially intended.

The study explores the provision of tuition to adult learners in the three primary schools that enrolled adult learners in the Southern districts of Quthing and Mophale'shoek since the launch of the FPE programme in the year 2000. The study tries to answer the following questions:

- What motivates adult learners to go to school?
- How do adult learners deal with curriculum demands designed for school age learners?
- What are the criteria that schools use to admit these adult learners in the same classroom with school age learners?

- What are the major mismatches between the primary school curriculum and the needs and or aspirations of the adult learners?
- How do teachers manage to give tuition to learners of such diverse age groups?
- What strategies if any, do schools and teachers adopt to cater for adult learners?
- How does the performance of adult learners compare with that of school age learners?

The assumption is that this dissertation will be submitted as a report to the Ministry of Education. It is with the hope that this project will come up with recommendations that may be employed elsewhere in the country if situations like this occur. It may also become useful internationally to the countries that may want to follow the route taken by Lesotho in the indiscriminate provision of free primary education where adults may join the mainstream of primary education.

This research paper consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1 discusses the background to Lesotho's weak economy and factors that led to unemployment and poverty. This chapter highlights the education system of Lesotho from the Primary phase up to the Advanced Level. It also provides the background to the introduction of the Free Primary Education programme.

Chapter 2 explores the literature relevant to the study. This chapter deals with the rationale for adults learning, the theoretical framework related to the study as well as the conceptual framework of adults learning.

Chapter 3 explores the methodology employed in the collection of data

Chapter 4 deals with the findings and the analysis of data

Chapter 5 has the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE: RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

1.1 Background to Lesotho

Lesotho is a country of 30 355 km² situated between Latitude 28° South and Longitude 29° East. The country has a population of 2.143 million as at 2000 (Lahmeyer 2001). The country is landlocked and completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa, a position that has socio-economic and political bearing on Lesotho. Lesotho like many other African countries has a colonial history, which was shaped by Britain as the former colonial master. Hence the use of English as the first official language while Sesotho¹ though not the only language spoken, is the second official language.

The other languages spoken by significant numbers of people are Zulu in the North while Isiphuts'i and Xhosa are spoken in the South. These other languages are not used as a medium of instruction at any level of education. Learners from those communities have to struggle with two second languages Sesotho and English. It is a phenomenal struggle for learners from those communities, especially those speaking Isiphuts'i which has no orthography, thirty six years after independence.

Lesotho as a third world country is classified amongst the least developed because of its poverty which is influenced by the unavailability of most natural resources of economic significance. What it has in abundance is water that is harnessed and sold to South Africa to supplement the meagre national income. Other than water, human resources are of economic value to Lesotho because Basotho² labour (cheap and unskilled) has for years been sold outside Lesotho with the largest chunk of it in South Africa.

As early as 1976 the then Prime Minister of Lesotho when asked about the economic prospects of Lesotho said: "It is true that Lesotho has not been endowed with some of the resources and commodities which command international respect like gold, cocoa and tea. However...we believe that we have...water and manpower resources

¹ One official language spoken in Lesotho and the medium of instruction for grades 1,2,3 and 4.

² Basotho are citizens of Lesotho.

to improve the quality of life of our people (Ministry of Education 1978:42). In reality Lesotho does not have an industrial base dependent on natural resources which may include minerals. The country has to depend on its abundant water resources as well as its people; and has already embarked on the improvement of these important resources to sustain its weak economy.

The economic situation in Lesotho is so peculiar that Ramsamuj (1995) in his MA dissertation on Adult education in Lesotho reiterates: "The Government of Lesotho and donor agencies are increasingly recognizing that, as the country's natural resource endowment is severely limited, Lesotho must emphasize the human resource development as the key to its future economic growth. This means that the government of Lesotho will need to formulate and implement policies and programs to educate and train Basotho in a cost-effective manner for future employment opportunities at home and within the Southern Africa region" (Ramsamuj 1995:108-9). This explains why the government of Lesotho has embarked on provision of education on a large scale to the population of Lesotho.

1.2 Lesotho's education system

Schooling in Lesotho is as old as the arrival of missionaries who arrived as early as 1833. It was after their arrival that they started teaching the locals the basics of reading and writing. But the classical example of what attracted Basotho² to western education is that given by Baholo (1978): "The ability of one missionary at Morija...to be able to communicate with another at Thaba-Bosiu, through a piece of paper which could tell how many peaches were missing from a basket conveyed between the two places in spite of elaborate precautions... that it 'saw' nothing" (Ministry of Education 1978:27).

The story is that of a missionary who sent one of the locals to convey a letter and a basket containing peaches to another missionary at Thaba Bosiu, roughly forty kilometres away. On the way the messenger got hungry and decided to eat some of the peaches. He then hid the letter under the stone so that it could not see him eat some of the peaches. This piece of paper had in the past "told" the missionary about the missing items that the messenger had kept for himself or used without authority. After eating, the letter was picked up from under the stone and delivered together

with the basket to the missionary who read the letter and found that some peaches were missing. The messenger could not understand as to how the letter could see him when it had been hidden under the stone so that it could not “see” him eat the peaches. The messenger, who spread the news and attracted many people to be interested in literacy, could not understand such “wizardry”.

As the country was a British colony, its education system was based on the British model and is still influenced by it up to the present. There are twelve years of formal schooling divided into three phases thus:

- The first seven years after early childhood are devoted to the primary phase, which takes seven years to complete. The entry age for the first year of this phase has for a long time been between six and nine years. But the over age issue has been relaxed since the introduction of the policy of Free Primary Education³. At the end of the seven years, learners sit for the national Primary School Leaving Examination administered by the Examinations Council of Lesotho.
- The first three years of the post-primary level are spent in the junior secondary phase. Learners in this phase are also expected to sit for a national examination to determine those who can proceed into the next phase. At the completion of this phase learners are awarded a Junior Certificate so that those who cannot proceed to the next phase may use it for employment purposes wherever required.
- The high school phase is completed in two years after the Junior Certificate and the learners sit for an examination administered by the Cambridge Overseas Examinations Syndicate. Those who complete this phase are awarded an Ordinary Level certificate known as Cambridge Overseas Schools Certificate, which is a gateway to tertiary education.
- The A levels are offered in only one school: Machabeng International High School which caters for children from a certain class of people especially those from expatriate families (Malie 1982:4-5).

³ Free Primary Education will be dealt with in detail later.

Lesotho schools are classified into four categories which are based on their proprietorship as follows:

- Government schools which are wholly owned by the Lesotho Government
- Church schools which are subsidized by the government
- Community schools which are subsidized by the government
- Private schools which are owned by individuals, groups of individuals or organizations and not subsidized by the government

About 90% of the schools in Lesotho are owned by religious organizations while the remaining 10% are shared unevenly among the other three proprietors (The Education Act 1995:643). Adult basic education is also provided by a number of institutions some of which are subsidised by the Ministry of Education such as Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre. The Department of Adult Education of the University of Lesotho and NGOs are sponsors of other adult basic education institutions (Ramsamuj1995).

1.3 Background to Free Primary Education

Before the year 2000, primary and high school education in Lesotho was only accessible to the learners who could afford payment of nominal school fees charged by the proprietors, while tertiary education is highly subsidized by the government to make it almost free for anyone who qualifies. With the advent of the economic recession of the 1990's and the discovery of cheaper to access gold deposits in West Africa, which led to the closure of mines and related industries in South Africa, many Lesotho citizens both in Lesotho and South Africa lost their jobs through retrenchments. The loss of jobs meant a loss of income for the families of those who worked in South Africa and also a loss of income for those industries in Lesotho, which depended on the buying power of the migrant workers; as well as a loss of income for the families of the employees in the Lesotho industries that depended on the buying power generated by remittances from South Africa. "Since 1990 the number of Basotho mineworkers has been on a downward trend due to a number of factors, namely:

- The decline in the price of gold;
- Escalating production costs; and
- High mine wages which now attract black South Africans in larger numbers than before.

In the long run education proved unaffordable to an increasing number of learners who depended on the incomes earned in South Africa and industries that depended on it.

The political disturbances of 1998 in Lesotho, which led to the burning of the capital city and other towns, compounded the already volatile socio-economic situation. Many foreign investors left the country and the prospective investors lost interest, thereby increasing the already chronic unemployment and escalating poverty. Certain unexpected events have tended to compound the unemployment situation. Among these are the destruction and loss of some businesses and infrastructure that took place in Lesotho during the political crisis of 1998 and the massive retrenchment of mine workers in the South African gold mining industry which has been exacerbated by the fall of the price of gold otherwise called the "Gold Crisis". (Ministry of Employment and Labour 2000:1)

The potential human resources were wasted as a result of poverty and could not be harnessed thereby plunging the country into crisis. With the escalation of poverty, the decline in school enrolments was inevitable and required attention and/or intervention. The country was to face a problem of an increasing number of illiterate people as more and more potential learners stayed out of school, yet it had previously ranked higher than many in Sub-Saharan Africa on literacy (Malie 1982: ix). To maintain the international image and the endeavour to solve the socio-economic problems, the government of Lesotho introduced Free Primary Education Programme in the year 2000 in fulfilment of its obligation as a member of the United Nations that: Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary stage and fundamental stages, Article 26 of UDHR cited in (Haggis 1991:1).

The policy of Free Primary Education was implemented throughout the country in the year 2000 starting with class 1. It was introduced in stages to cover the period 2000-

2006 when the first intake will be doing class 7, which is the last class at primary level. The introduction in stages was done after studies in Uganda and Malawi where learners in all primary classes were accepted at once, and the governments could not cope with such a huge influx of learners (Ministry of Education 2001:11).

This year 2002, the Free Primary Education Programme has covered classes 1,2,3 and the remaining classes of 4,5,6 and 7 will be covered one after the other in the subsequent years until 2006. The objectives of Free Primary Education policy according to the Ministry of Education (2001:11) are:

- To make basic education accessible to all Basotho
- To ensure that all Basotho have equal opportunity to basic education
- To ensure the provision of quality delivery in all centres of basic education in Lesotho
- To ensure that learners are provided with life skills relevant to their context; and
- To forge appropriate linkages for Lesotho's primary education system.

So as to make access easier, a number of regulations that operated prior to the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy were relaxed. According to the Internal Circular No 1 of January 2000 (Ministry of Education 2000:3):

- The issue of over-age which was discouraged in the old dispensation was repealed and replaced with one which had no age limit after pre-school. It was the policy of the Ministry of Education before the launch of the FPE programme not to admit learners who were above nine years of age in grade one because they were over age.
- The policy on uniform was relaxed saying that uniform should not be a condition for admission, as it was and is still unaffordable to some households;
- The admissions quota based on the learner teacher ratio of 50:1 was also relaxed. No prospective learner under FPE would be denied admission on the grounds that the school had admitted enough learners.

According to the Ministry of Education (2001:13), in the year 1999 the enrolment for class 1 was estimated at 67 000 learners countrywide. In the year 2000 when the

policy was launched 118 843 learners enrolled, almost double the 1999 class 1 enrolment. There had been an anticipated increase of approximately 30 000 learners, constituting 44.8% of the previous year's enrolment countrywide to make the total of 100 000 learners that was budgeted for. But the actual increase of new learners in class 1 for the year 2000 was 51 843, which was 77.4% of the 1999 enrolment and a surplus of 18 843 which constituted 62.8% of the expected increase was realized. There was therefore a budget deficit of 62.8%.

Among the newcomers into the schools were the ostensibly least expected learners who happened to be adults. Some of these adults enrolled in the three primary schools in the Southern districts of Quthing and Mhaleshoek instead of in the adult centres and or through long distance learning, both of which are available in the country. The three schools are:

- Zibandayo Primary and Moyeni Primary in the southern district of Quthing
- Naleli primary in the southern district of Mhaleshoek

It is important to mention that from experience the attendance in the classes 1,2,3 affected by the FPE programme has improved as a result of relaxation of some policies such as that on uniform, although this view still has to be authenticated through research. Quite a significant number of learners previously dropped out because they could not afford to purchase school uniforms as a result of poverty that is so rife in the country. Another factor that many people assume has contributed to the improved attendance is the feeding scheme, which provides the learners with a relatively decent daily meal that some cannot afford as a result of poverty. Perhaps some learners go to school not necessarily to get educated but to secure a meal, and get taught in the process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Rationale for adults learning

Lesotho with its meagre natural resources but rapidly increasing socio-economic and political demands that are associated with the increasing population is no exception to other third world countries with regard to deficiencies of the education sector. Among many of its problems was and still is illiteracy, which is associated with many problems that include poverty at the helm. One of the strategies prescribed for the reduction of poverty and other aspects related to underdevelopment has been the development of human resources through education. The observation by (Townsend-Coles 1977: 2-3) bears testimony to this view: "Rising populations have demanded accelerated school building programmes... Each year there may be more children in school, but each year also there are children uncatered for... For more children out of school today means more adults needing education and training tomorrow". Hence a need for investment in education of the children so that when they reach adulthood, they will have the necessary skills or education that will enable them to actively participate in the development of their communities and the country. So that when these children reach adulthood, it should not be the beginning but the continuation of the education they had acquired during their youth.

The reasons for not accessing education may be many although poverty tops the bill; together with all the other aspects associated with it such as illiteracy. This situation therefore calls for government intervention to develop its human resources with the purpose of fighting poverty. There is a growing consensus that human development must be at the core of any development process; that in times of economic adjustment and austerity, services for the poor have to be protected; that education – the empowerment of individuals through the provision of learning – is truly a human right and a social responsibility (Haggis 1991:2). In the Lesotho context the Prime Minister observed: "Poverty alleviation in Lesotho can be achieved through investing in human development: strengthening education and training to make the workforce more productive and responsive to national and regional labour requirements and emerging market opportunities" (Ministry of Education 2001:1).

The current optimism by the members of UNESCO about basic education is not founded on naïve assumptions that education is the sole determinant of individual or societal change: “various prerequisite and concomitant changes are required in general political, social and economic structures and processes” (Haggis 1991: 2). People should be warned not to be complacent about literacy to be an automatic vehicle to development because: While illiteracy holds back development, literacy is no way synonymous with development. It may help to give an impetus to the creative energy of the masses or may restrain it (Cisse 2001:130). Literacy alone is no vehicle to take society to development but just another tool among many that is necessary for societal change. Literacy does not automatically lead to development or economic improvement on a national or individual level, although it helps when related to other structural changes (Lyster 1992:28).

If the capacity of people to shape and improve their own lives is the measure of development, then basic education is surely a necessary condition – as well as a human right” (Haggis 1991:xi). The notion that many people have about education as an agent of development answers the question why there is a need for provision of free primary education for the population with diverse socio-economic backgrounds where a few people can afford the basic needs, let alone education. The Free Primary Education Programme is dual purpose in its endeavour to address the problems facing Lesotho. It is intended to alleviate poverty both in the short and long term through the creation of employment opportunities for the qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, the caterers, as well as the primary producers of foodstuffs like farmers; thereby injecting development into a country where the economy is so volatile. It is also meant to satisfy the education needs of the people in need of the acquisition of education. “There is now strong evidence of ways in which education, through its influence on attitudes and behaviour and its positive impact on health, productivity, protection of the environment, family planning and childcare can transform the cultural, social and economic life of people and communities (Haggis 1991:2). Governments like that of Lesotho are therefore compelled by the demand for education and the benefits derived from its acquisition to make up means for the population to acquire it.

Many people in the Third world are attracted to the acquisition of education through the notion of benefits derived from it. But the section of the population, which is deemed too old to go to school, is always confronted with barriers such as the age limits and the cost of education that may prove unaffordable, thereby depriving that section of the population of the right to education and self-actualisation. This is the education that although not classified a basic need, is a necessity in the world today for a dual purpose of addressing the reduction of poverty and the unwanted phenomena associated with it such as hunger, disease, and crime. The distinction should be made anyway that education is not a panacea for the ills of the third world but one of the strategies that can be used to address some of its problems.

Lyster (1992:16) explaining the correlation between illiteracy and poverty says: "Illiteracy is a feature of poverty not its cause. People are illiterate because they are poor, they are not poor because they are illiterate." It is therefore the responsibility of governments to reduce poverty within their communities so that more people can afford to pay for education. In the event of failing to reduce poverty the option is that of providing free education so as to realise the global desire of "Education For All".

Curtis (1990: 4) explaining the relationship of poverty to illiteracy says: "Illiteracy is not the cause of poverty, but is inextricably tied to it and the social ills of racism and inequality." Literacy is one starting point for dealing with these social problems. Which then makes the denial of access to education because of age barriers a mockery of the constitution because it is a violation of the right to learn, especially after the proclamation of the World Conference on Education for All (Haggis 1991:87). Exclusion because of age is also the mockery of government policies of development especially when governments are campaigning for the adoption of some strategies in the reduction of poverty of which basic education is one of the priorities. "While not sufficient by itself to resolve the larger social and economic challenges faced by the world's nations, more and better basic education is a necessary part of any resolution of these challenges (World Conference on Education For All cited in Haggis 1991:2).

The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training/National Commission on Education Support Services NCSET/NCESS discovered that there

are ten barriers to learning, amongst which age features quite prominently. These barriers to learning though addressed in the context of South Africa are also prevalent in Lesotho. The NCSET/NCESS observed that "In a country where the education system is premised on the notion of a rights culture, it is imperative that the system is able to not only prevent learning breakdown and exclusion, but that it is also able to promote equal opportunities for effective learning by all learners irrespective of their age "(Department of Education 1997:11).

Adults by virtue of their age and or marital status may be discouraged from going to school by, among others, some barriers that emanate from inflexible plethora of policies that were originally intended to improve education. But in some quarters as in Lesotho, policies on over age were considered to be a hindrance to development when Free Primary Education Programme was introduced, and were therefore revised and or relaxed. These are the policies that have to be removed or relaxed for the sake of achieving the global goal of "Education For All" (Haggis 1991). "Policy that is inflexible regarding issues such as age limits may prevent learners from being able to enter or continue in the education system, thus leading to exclusion" (Department of Education 1997:19). Such policy may also lead to lifelong illiteracy that may perpetuate the unacceptable socio-economic and political state of the persons affected, their communities and the country.

The introduction of the FPE programme was therefore a challenge to the adults to challenge the government to heed their plight brought about by illiteracy. It is commendable that the adults, who missed or dropped out of school before they could be literate, took the opportunity and started all over again for their own development and empowerment that would in the final analysis benefit the country as a whole. As (Curtis 1990:xi) explains it, literacy is connected to individual change; it is a means of "getting ahead" and a route to personal betterment and individual social and economic mobility. The same view on the perception of many people as regard the role of education as an agent of change and personal empowerment is shared by Hinzen (2002:53) thus: "...people look at becoming literate as a process of personal and social transformation and change, not just as the acquisition of academic – or functional – skills."

2.2 Principal theories

This study is guided by two principal theories namely: The theory of andragogy and the theory of critical pedagogy. The two theories are related to this study thus: the Free Primary Education Programme attracted the adults to join the mainstream of primary education where the curriculum had been meant to cater for the educational needs of learners aged between 6 and 12 years not adults. This is the curriculum designed for the employment of pedagogy not andragogy. The theory of andragogy on the other hand is quite relevant because it informed the study as to how best the teaching and learning of adults can be undertaken. It is through the study of this theory that one is capable of considering the critical aspects of adulthood in education such as attitudes, motivations, experiences and aspirations, which had to be taken into consideration when providing tuition to FPE adult learners.

The relevance of critical pedagogy as a theory in the administration of FPE programme and the subsequent provision of tuition to adult learners cannot be ignored. Paulo Freire developed critical pedagogy "when he directed government literacy programme in the North-east State of Brazil...one of the most backward areas in the country, marked by truly appalling social conditions (Taylor 1993:16). The relevance of critical pedagogy to this study therefore is found in the notion that the adult learners in the FPE Programme were from the rural areas of Lesotho where poverty and illiteracy are quite rife as it was in the North-East State. As a theory based on the liberation of the "poor," critical pedagogy informed the study on how best the education of the rural adult learners could be run to their advantage.

The theory of andragogy as advocated by Malcolm Knowles is the art and science of helping adults learn (Jarvis P, 1998:90). In this theory there are five assumptions about what constitutes andragogy:

- ❖ self concept (as a person matures his (sic) self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self directed human being)
- ❖ experience: (as a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource of learning)
- ❖ readiness to learn: (as a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles)

- ❖ orientation to learning: (as a person matures ...his orientation towards learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of problem-centeredness)
- ❖ motivation to learn: (as a person matures the motivation to learn is internal) (<http://www.infed.org/>: 5).

The supporters of andragogy see it not only as a purely academic debate but also a liberatory form of education meant for the adults to free themselves from the problems associated with illiteracy and didactic teaching. "Adult learning' does not...simply signify 'out of school' or 'outside' the formal education institution, the widening and increased incidence of learning opportunities, but more significantly the lessening of the power of the educator to define what constitutes worthwhile knowledge and serious learning..." (Usher et al 1997, 24). In the pedagogic setting unlike in the andragogic one, almost everything learnt is determined by the curriculum designers and developers as well as the teachers as implementers without consultation with the recipients who are learners, but "... andragogy is ...on the side of human agency and the power of the individual to shed the shackles of history and circumstances in pursuit of learning" (Pratt in Merriam 1993:22). The learner freedom in the andragogical setting is also advocated by Usher et al (1997). They see the traditional didactic teaching as a form of oppression because learners who are supposed to be beneficiaries from education do not have control over their education. They argue that the removal of such oppressive practise can only be realised in the andragogical classrooms where learner freedom is recognised and practiced. "The andragogical tradition seeks to remove the restrictions of didactic teachers and formal bodies of knowledge from learning...This is what autonomy means...Learners appear to have control of the learning process" (Usher et al 1997:94).

Andragogy happens to have a strong relationship with the modern curriculum framework in South Africa referred to as Outcomes Based Education. This curriculum framework is widely accepted as an answer to problems associated with traditional didactics of a teacher as authority not facilitator of learning. In OBE for example :

- students should collaborate in learning rather than compete,
- time is used as a flexible resource that allows teachers to accommodate differences in students' learning rates and aptitudes

- students are expected to take responsibility for their learning (Seleti 1997:33),

OBE recognises the importance of learners as does andragogy where adults have to be respected for their maturity and responsibility to make decisions on what they learn. Just like in OBE where students are expected to take responsibility for their learning, "andragogy leans heavily toward learner freedom (versus teacher authority), promoting self-direction and personal autonomy (Pratt in Merriam 1993:22).

The critics of andragogy see it as nothing different from pedagogy and argue that "it is not clear whether this is a theory or set of assumptions about learning, or a theory or model of teaching" (Pratt in Merriam 1993:3). In pursuance of this debate andragogy has been classified "as a theory of adult education, a theory of adult learning, theory of technology of adult learning, method of adult education, technique of adult education, a set of assumptions" (Merriam and Caffarella 1999:273). Edwards et al (1996) see the weakness of andragogy in its prescriptive rather than descriptive nature of how adults learn: "Rather than attempting to describe the various ways in which adults learn, there is a danger of andragogy prescribing how adults should learn" (Edwards et al 1996:102).

There is a marked difference between the way adults learn and the way children learn which is determined by their maturity, motivations, aspirations as well as experience. On the criticism of experience as the determinant of adults and children learning differently Edwards et al (1996:103) argue that reliance on experience to differentiate ways of learning can be misleading: "There is...a danger of accepting a belief that experience is the key difference between children and adults in a learning context...Quantity of experience does not necessarily ensure quality of learning. Experience may even be a block to learning for adults who have become set in their ways. The range of experience of children in certain countries and situations may be far more extensive than for adults elsewhere".

The next theory is critical pedagogy one of whose main proponents is Paulo Freire. Critical pedagogy is the education theory based on the liberation of the oppressed through conscientisation. It is the contention of critical pedagogy that people are illiterate and poor because they are oppressed; that the oppressed people therefore

have to be liberated through education; that the people have to determine their destiny through active involvement in what they learn. Education in the critical pedagogy should not trickle-down from the top but take a bottom-up structure "...the fundamental effort of education is to help with the liberation of people, never their domestication" (Shor 1993:25).

According to Spring (1994:157): "The major goal of Freire's educational method is to free the consciousness of all people and to change necrophilic personalities into biophilic ones." Where the necrophilic personalities are patriarchal and condone control and dependency, the biophilic personalities are liberal in their thinking. "The necrophilic teacher treats students as inanimate objects, which in turn, prepares students to view other humans as objects." The biophilic personalities on the other hand are motivated by the desire to be recognised as humans in their own right without patriarchal favours and love their freedom. "The biophilic personality is nurtured in a family and school...where children are treated as living beings with their interests and knowledge utilised as a source of learning for both students and teachers". The necrophilic personalities initiate as well as enjoy oppression whether it is the oppressor or the oppressed, while the biophilic personalities initiate and enjoy freedom. "In this pedagogy, students experience education as something they do, not as something done to them (Shor 1993:25).

Therefore, learners especially adults as in the case of those who joined the FPE programme, should not just be passive recipients of what may not be of interest and or benefit to them, which Freire refers to as 'banking'. Instead, they should be actively involved in the decision making of what they are to learn. The teacher on the other hand should be the facilitator of the learning process not the dictator of learning procedures. Freire (according to Shor 1993) suggests the problem posing strategy where both the teacher and learners are involved to facilitate critical pedagogy. "Instead of banking education which domesticates students, problem posing offers a search for knowledge. In this mutual search, the teacher and students develop 'co-intentionality', that is, mutual intentions, which make the study collectively owned, not the teacher's own property. This mutuality helps students and teacher overcome the alienation from each other developed year by year in traditional banking classrooms, where a one-way monologue of teacher-talk silences students" (Shor 1993:26).

Freire insists on consistency between the democratic values of this critical pedagogy and its classroom practices, not the 'do as I say not as I do' philosophy. "The critical teacher must also be a democratic one. If the critical teacher criticizes inequality and the lack of democracy in society, and then teaches in an authoritarian way, she or he compromises her or his credibility" (Shor 1993:27).

2.3 Adults learning

The separation of learners according to age is a practice ostensibly accepted in the primary schools where it is a new phenomenon. There is the notion that adults should not be taught with the so-called school age learners by virtue of age difference, experience, cognitive development and maturity. But my experience is that some of the learners in the post primary schools are by virtue of age and marriage already in the category of adults. The following characteristics have been identified as those that adults bring with them to learn and children do not:

- Experience
- Motivation
- Individual aspirations and
- maturity

The importance of treating each adult learner on individual ability is the basis for the success of adult education programmes (Merriam and Caffarella 1999, Usher et al 1997). It is important to note that even though adults have reached the stage where they no longer grow, their cognitive capacity as well as their motivations are not the same, in as much as their experiences are not the same; and therefore need individual attention. "Some adults appear to learn with brilliant speed and depth; others make slow and uncertain progress; some grasp the deep structures of knowledge; others are caught in surface imitations; there seems to be no way of explaining these differences" (Morphet in Hutton 1992:87).

Unlike children whose learning can be predicted from the studies of educational psychology and their curriculum developed on such findings, adult learners on the other hand display different abilities which have made it difficult to develop a curriculum meant specifically for them; thereby making it difficult and or too demanding to teach. Morphet (in Hutton 1992:87) argues "...if it were possible to state

psychological laws governing the learning of adults, then it would become relatively easy to design curricula which would produce the most effective learning in the least possible time and with the least wasted effort.” However difficult it is to develop a curriculum that would satisfy the needs of adult learners, a balance should be struck, that will enable the adult learners to acquire education they so desperately need. The enrolment of adult learners in the mainstream of primary education in Lesotho was supposed to call the attention of the policy makers to take positive action that would meet the curriculum needs of the adult learners. But the need to design a relevant curriculum for schools that enrolled adult learners was imminent because adult learners were already in the schools and had to be provided with tuition.

Usher et al (1997: 95) in their discussion on the respect and consideration of the experience and cognitive development of adult learners reiterate that “adult learners are not to be seen as empty vessels to be filled with formal knowledge through didactic teaching, but rather as coming to learning situations with valuable resources for learning and with the attributes of self-direction, i.e. knowing their own learning needs, a knowledge not possessed by children.” The respect for adult learners is propounded by Fingeret (in Curtis 1990:xi) thus: “old stereotypes of non-readers as incompetent “blank slates” must be shattered and replaced by a more complex, respectful understanding of the dignity and the power non-reading adults bring to their participation in literacy instruction.” The non-reading adults have been through a myriad of experiences that warrant a different approach to their teaching learning processes, which should be different from that of children.

Adults through experience have learnt to be independent of other adults while children are always dependent on each other. Usher et al (1997: 95) observe: “children’s experience is denied a status because it is supposedly less ‘authentic’ than adult’s experience, the assumption being that the child cannot have a self, free from otherness. If adult learners are subjected to didactic teaching and a curriculum based on formal knowledge rather than their experience...they revert to being children with a self still dependent on otherness”

This section reviewed the literature on the literacy/development debate in the education of adult learners in relation to FPE programme. A number of reasons for

adults learning which included self-actualisation and economic upliftment were discussed. The theories of andragogy and critical pedagogy as they relate to adult education and particularly Free Primary Education Programme in Lesotho were also revisited. It has once again been established that the way adults learn is different from the way children learn. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology that was employed in the gathering of data for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Case Study

In order to fully comprehend the processes and activities that take place in the schools selected for research and understand how adult learners cope at their respective schools a case study methodology was used.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin 1988: 23).

The case study is most suitable for the proposed study because it allows the researcher to focus on a specific situation and attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work (Vuliamy, Lewin and Stephens 1990, Bell 1999). The appropriateness of this method of data collection is also found in Cohen et al (2001) who argue that case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. Case studies can establish cause and effect...one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects. (Cohen et al 2001:181). The nature of case studies characterised by the instruments used is reiterated by Merriam (1988:) who states that "case studies get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings and desires)."

Although case studies have been recommended for this study, their weaknesses are not to be overlooked for the purpose of research validity. The suggestion is that the following precautions can be employed to help overcome possible shortfalls of case studies:

- The methods used must be described so that inferences can be tested.
- A natural history of the research must be included to make clear where and when the data was collected.

- Values must be made explicit so that the researcher can be aware of the bias.

The case study method of enquiry although so well recommended has its own weaknesses which have to be taken into consideration in its employment:

- The results may not be generalisable except where other readers/researchers see their application.
- They are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective.
- They are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity (Cohen et al 2001:184).

3.2 The Sample

There are two main methods of sampling namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In a probability sampling every member stands an equal chance of selection into the sample, while in a non-probability sampling only those who are deemed to be relevant to serve the purpose are chosen and included in the sample. Non-probability sampling is therefore referred to as purposive sampling because the researcher decides as to who to include in the sample. In this study the researcher employed non- probability sampling.

The researcher identified three schools in the South of the counter that enrolled a significant number of adult learners namely:

- Zibandayo Primary and Moyeni Primary in the Southern district of Quthing.
- Naleli Primary in the southern district of Mhales'hoek.

The reason for their choice was because they were the only schools known to the researcher to have enrolled significant numbers of adult learners. The researcher happened to work as Education Officer in the district of Quthing when Free Primary Education Programme was launched in the year 2000. The third school in the neighbouring district of Mhales'hoek had enrolled adult learners in the year 2001, a year after the launch of free primary education. The research followed the teaching and learning processes, which were observed for the duration of one week per unit of analysis and the unit of analysis for the study was each school.

The sample included interviews with the following informed participants so as to ensure their participation and avoid non-response as sometimes happens in the use of questionnaires:

- One class 3 teacher per school in the sample;
- One Director: National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC);
- One Chief Education Officer: Primary Section of the Ministry of Education;
- One Director: Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC)
- One Director: Adult Education Department of the University of Lesotho.
- Four adult learners per school

3.3 Research methods

The research methods used in the collection of data for this research are those widely accepted in the case study research namely:

- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews
- Observations: Direct classroom observations and
- Documentary Analysis: Analysis of government policy documents on education

3.3.1 Interviews

As Merriam (1993:72) says: "The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective...It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in the past events that are impossible to replicate." Interviews were conducted to collect data on various aspects related to adult learners in the FPE Programme. Interview questions were semi-structured to allow flexibility and freedom to ask modified follow-up questions that would be suitable to the responses, which in turn would give a thorough insight into the study. Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view (Cohen et al 2001:267).

The researcher had intended to carry out interviews with four adult learners from each of the three schools in the sample because amongst others the adult learners

could not be relied upon in the use of questionnaires, as their literacy was deemed not yet enough for that method of data collection. Interviews for both learners and other informed participants were tape-recorded where interviewees felt comfortable and transcribed thereafter, while notes were taken where interviewees especially those in the employ of government, did not approve recording. Some of them had a fear that tape-recorded material could fall into the hands of their superiors and jeopardise their jobs.

3.3.2 Observations

The importance of observation in a case study is explained by Bailey (1978) who observed: "Observational data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from live situations. In observation studies, the investigators are able to discern on-going behaviour as it occurs and are able to make appropriate notes about its salient features" (Bailey 1978 quoted in Cohen et al 2001:188). As each school was a unit of analysis, direct classroom observations of all class 3's were undertaken in the schools that were in the sample for a period of one week per unit of analysis. An observation is supposed to be a cornerstone of a case study through which an entity under investigation can be thoroughly studied and understood in its different forms.

There are four forms of participation in observations according to (Cohen et al 2001) namely:

- complete participant,
- participant as observer,
- observer as participant and
- complete observer.

A complete participant is a researcher who takes an insider role in the group being studied. The participant as observer is part of a social life of participants and documents and records what is happening for research purposes. The observer as participant is known as a researcher to the group and has less extensive contact with the group. With a complete observer, participants do not realise that they are being observed, hence this is another way of covert research...as a complete observer there is no contact with the observed so inference is dangerous. " (Cohen et al 2001:310-1). The study therefore warranted the use of observer as participant

because I could not hide my identity to the observed but still I did not have to be an active participant.

Observations were unstructured in order to allow flexibility of thought and adaptation to conditions that would prevail unexpectedly. Cohen et al (2001:305) say, "An unstructured observation will be far less clear on what it is looking for and will therefore have to go into the situation and observe what is taking place before deciding on its significance on the research. An unstructured observation will be hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing". As the research was based on a rare and new phenomenon, there was no hypothesis. Instead the researcher was as eager as everyone else to know what the situation was like in the schools under study. Hence there was a decision to use unstructured observations that would cover a wide spectrum without restrictions.

3.3.3 Document analysis

Merriam (1993:104) observed "Documents...are usually produced for reasons other than research...They are, in fact, a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator". In that way documents are not subject to the limitations that characterise interviews and observations. Documents are more accessible than the other two methods of data collection and therefore very much important.

The following documents were analysed for this research so as to understand the policies that govern education in Lesotho:

- The Task Force Report 1982
- The Free Primary Education Programme 2001
- Ministry of Education, 1978. Report on the Views and recommendations of the Basotho Nation Regarding the Future of Education in Lesotho.
- Attendance registers of the schools
- Log books of the schools

3. 3.4 Triangulation

As Denzin (1970) says "Methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit. The

rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are always the strengths of another" (Denzin 1970 cited in Merriam 1993:69). Triangulation in research therefore refers to the use of more than one method of data collection to ensure the validity of the data. Reliance on one method of data collection may yield a lop-sided conclusion, but employment of more than one method yielding the same results may give confidence to the researcher that the data collected is valid and reliable. Triangulation in research is important because it reduces the bias associated with the qualitative research method. The data for this research was therefore triangulated through the employment of three research methods i.e. Interviews, participant as observer and analysis of government policy documents on education.

3.3.5 The Pilot Phase

Although it is so important to pilot the methods of data collection, the circumstances surrounding the research area did not permit it. It was not easy to pilot the interviews and the observations recommended by Cohen et al (2001: 121 &129), which were intended for the adult learners because the study itself is on something so new and rare that there was nowhere to pilot it. The schools in the sample were the only ones known to me to have significant numbers of adult learners.

3.3.6 Implementation

The aim of this research project was to explore the teaching and learning processes employed in the three schools that enrolled adult learners in the southern districts of Lesotho after the introduction of the Free Primary Education Programme. This section will deal with factors that affected the implementation of this research project and how they were dealt with to suit the circumstances.

3.3.6.1 Permission

Permission to undertake the research was sought first from the education offices of the districts where the schools in the sample were found and it was granted. The district education offices were also requested to seek permission from the schools for the research to be undertaken and that was also granted. The other informed participants in the sample were contacted to make arrangements for interviews which were granted but stretched over a long time to suit the itineraries of the informed

participants, thereby affecting the studies of the researcher who had some lectures and assignments to attend.

3.3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis started together with data collection as it is a norm with case studies. Merriam (1988:123) says, "...collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research." It is advisable to analyse data when it is still fresh so as to guard against the tendency to forget. Thereafter data that had been coded during collection was then decoded for the actual interpretation. Some data that could not be captured in the cassette recorder but written on paper was coded for, amongst other reasons, protecting the identity of some respondents. Actual quotations from the interviews have also been included in the analysis so as to validate the interpretations.

This chapter discussed the case study method of data collection as the one employed in this research. The sample, interviews, observations, document analysis, triangulation, piloting of the methods, implementation and how data would be analysed were discussed in this chapter. The next chapter deals with the findings and analysis of data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Of the twelve adult learners who were supposed to be interviewed, only eight were interviewed:

- Moyeni Primary: two adult learners one of whom is still attending
- Zibandayo Primary: three adult learners all of whom were no longer at school
- Naleli Primary: three adult learners

One class 3 teacher per school engaged with teaching the adult learners was interviewed. And two of these teachers were principals. All principals were interviewed to give the profiles of their schools.

All the other informed participants were interviewed except the Director of the Department of Adult Education of the University of Lesotho. Those informed participants were:

- One Director: National Curriculum Development Centre; (NCDC)
- One Chief Education Officer (CEO): Primary Section of the Ministry of Education;
- One Director: Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC)

4.2 Overview of Free Primary Education

The Free Primary Education Programme was introduced in the year 2000 to cater for the educational needs of all Basotho children in the classes that FPE covered. The programme was introduced because a significant number of Basotho could not afford to pay the school fees charged by those who owned the education institutions namely the churches, the communities, the government and the private sector. But the other portion of the population, namely adults who never went to school or had very little schooling took advantage of free education and enrolled in some primary schools throughout the country.

“There is no definite figure to give because these adults have enrolled in varying numbers in the schools all over the country. Such figures can be found in the Statistics section of the Ministry because schools provide such statistics

every year to that department. Again it is not easy to give you those figures because the word adult is quite subjective.” (CEO Primary Section)

The enrolment of adult learners into the mainstream of primary education was not accidental as many people could think. It was called for in the many national rallies that the Prime Minister and his government held throughout the country in the year 1999 in the mobilisation campaigns for the public to send children to school under the FPE Programme.

“The government anticipated that some adults would take advantage of the policy and join the mainstream. This was no surprise because the Prime Minister in 1999 invited everyone who never had primary education including adults to take advantage of the Free Primary Education policy and go to school. But the Ministry of Education did not expect these adults to go to school in numbers so significant as it happened in the Southern districts.” (CEO Primary section)

Although there was a call for everyone who wanted to enrol to do so, the impression is that the preparations for the enrolment of adult learners were not made. The Ministry of Education (MoE) had the school age learners in mind not the adult learners when preparing for the launch of the FPE programme.

“There were no special arrangements, as the MOE did not expect significant figures, except that we provided infrastructure and learning materials.” (CEO Primary Section)

The other departments within the Ministry of Education were not involved in the preparations but in the implementation, indicating that adult learners’ enrolment was unexpected.

“No! This question makes me feel angry because you know very well that we were not in the picture. We were not involved and or consulted. We could not anticipate something that we were not aware of. You (referring to the researcher) should know better because you are from the department that is responsible for the Free Primary Education.” (NCDC official)

Most of the adult learners in the district of Quthing are of Xhosa origin and speak Xhosa as their first language instead of Sesotho. Many of them could speak Sesotho but with some difficulty. Although instruction in Xhosa is not an option in the Lesotho schools, the team from the NCDC discovered that for the purpose of convenience the adult learners at Zibandayo preferred being taught in Sesotho for the purpose of survival.

"We were amazed to find that these adult learners preferred to be taught in Sesotho and English not their first language which is Xhosa. They mentioned that Isithembu (as they referred to their language) was not a problem because they spoke it all the time at home. They cited the courts and hospitals which use only two languages as the main reason for their preference for Sesotho and English. We therefore developed a survival package extracted from our primary schools curriculum to serve the needs of these desperate adult learners. This syllabus as many prefer to call it, is referred to as a Survival Kit. It embraces all the five subjects of the old curriculum⁴ but specifically those aspects that are relevant to survival such as filling the forms at the border post where many people extort money from the illiterates who cannot fill the relevant forms. As you can see that all this Survival Kit is from the official Primary Schools Curriculum, it is a proof that our primary syllabus is survival oriented." (NCDC official)

4.3 Background to the schools in the last three years

4.3.1 Moyeni Primary

Moyeni Primary is a medium size relatively well resourced primary school (according to the Lesotho standards) owned by the Lesotho Evangelical Church. It is situated in the suburbs of the small rural town of Quthing in the South of Lesotho. Moyeni Primary enrolled six adult learners in the year 2000 when the FPE programme was launched. The six adults enrolled were all women and they were mixed with the school age learners for tuition because of overcrowding caused by the influx of class 1 learners when the FPE programme was launched. In the year 2001 a male adult was enrolled and increased the number of adults to seven. At the time of the study there was only one adult learner left at school for reasons that include:

⁴ The new curriculum for primary schools is composed of ten subjects unlike its predecessor, which had five.

- Maternity obligations
- Employment
- Lack of family support
- "The only male adult learner is serving a term in the local prison. He had been previously sentenced to a jail term, suspended on condition he went to school. He committed another crime and was sent to jail" (Class teacher Moyeni Primary)

On the rationale behind combining school age learners with adult learners, the availability of resources and pressure from the government were cited as the factors that led to that practice.

"The school has a roll of 715 learners, a teacher population of 11 and 8 classrooms. What else could we do? Here were these old people who had come to school, They came because they knew the government had given a directive that under no circumstances should people be denied admission on the grounds of over age. But we did not have enough buildings and teachers. We were then forced to admit them in the same class with children, with a promise of a tent or tents to alleviate the problem of overcrowding. But we have not been supplied with even a single tent up to today." (Principal Moyeni Primary)

The current primary schools curriculum in Lesotho is composed of ten subjects namely: Sesotho, English, Maths, Science, Religious Education, Home Economics, Agriculture, Social Studies, Music, and Art. Moyeni primary school as a relatively well-resourced primary school (according to the Lesotho standards) had the basic teaching materials such as chalkboards, notice boards and radios for radio lessons. Other materials such as stationery and text books for both teachers and learners are provided by the Ministry of Education under the Free Primiry Education Programme.

4.3.2 Zibandayo Primary

Zibandayo Primary is also a medium size primary school with 374 learners excluding the adults. The Roman Catholic Church owns Zibandayo Primary. The school is situated in the remote area South of the Town of Quthing and is only accessible by a track during a good weather. Zibandayo Primary enrolled 35 adult learners, two of them male in the year 2000. In the year 2001 and 2002 there were twenty-eight adult

learners, only one of them male. The principal of Zibandayo saw the combination of the adults and school age learners as a compromise of the educative task and separated the two groups.

"We had to separate the adults from the children. I was the one teaching them together for almost two years. None of us here has training on teaching adults. There were many factors such as approach, which had to differ between the adults and children. It was very difficult to prepare for that class let alone teach it. I realised that either of the two groups of learners would suffer and I came to an agreement with my colleagues to separate them. And it worked very well." (Principal Zibandayo Primary)

But Zibandayo Primary did not have the adult learners at the time of the research because many of them had gone out to get means of combating famine that has hit the sub-region.

"Some adult learners left in March but a sizeable number remained up to May. They then left for the harvest promising to be back in July when we reopened, but they never came back. I learnt that many of them had gone to seek employment in the farms in South Africa harvesting maize and oranges. Some of those who remained sought employment in the poverty alleviation projects. It was only in August when their representatives came to negotiate the suspension of classes for this year, requesting that they be readmitted next year. I still consider them to be my students because we liaise in most of the issues pertaining to the school such as condolences, and I am expecting them next year." (Principal Zibandayo Primary).

The school log book at Zibandayo depicts that the Prime Minister even went to the extent of paying a courtesy call at Zibandayo Primary on the 15th April 2000 to motivate the adult learners who had taken a phenomenal step in their quest to be literate. In the speech that he delivered, he commended the school and invited many more adults throughout the country to take the example of those of Zibandayo Primary in the next year so as to acquire some education.

4.3.3 Naleli Primary

Naleli Primary school is situated in the periphery of the small rural town of Mhales' hoek along the main road to the North of the country. The proprietor of Naleli Primary is the denomination of Apostolic Faith Mission and the school had a roll of 320 learners excluding the adult learners. Naleli Primary enrolled twenty five adult learners in the year 2001 perhaps to heed the Prime Minister's plea for people to follow the example of Zibandayo Primary. In the year 2002 there are ten adult learners.

"We entered them in the register when they first came to school in 2001 but stopped taking the daily attendance because of their high absenteeism and dropout rate. Every time there are feasts in the village and neighbouring villages many of them absent themselves from school. Whenever there is a poverty alleviation project in the neighbourhood, many of them leave school and go for employment." (Principal Naleli Primary)

The adult learners at Naleli Primary were separated from the school age learners in order to create a learning teaching environment that would benefit the two groups.

"Some parents came with their children to do class one and we found it strange to have the two in the same class. This situation created discipline problems, and we resolved to separate them so as to provide a proper learning environment." (Principal Naleli Primary)

Naleli Primary did not follow the Lesotho primary schools curriculum for the adult learners. The teachers taught the adult learners individually or in groups of the same subject preference.

4.4 Interviews and Observations

4.4.1 Moyeni Primary School

I arrived on a Monday morning for my observation of class 3 in the school. During assembly at 7:45 almost all children had formed their lines according to their grades and teachers helped with keeping order. I hoped to see the adult learners in those line formations but there was none to my surprise. At 8h00 we were all in class for

the first lesson to start. The classroom was bustling with learners of different ages some in uniform while others were not but all of them were relatively dressed neatly. But still I could not identify the adult learners in the group. Four ladies were seated. One of the ladies I had taken for a teacher was actually the last of the adult learners remaining when the other six learners dropped out during the course of the year for different reasons.

Among the four ladies two are permanent teachers the other one is a student teacher on internship for the term and the fourth one is the last of the adult learners. All of them are seated against the wall next to the door. I am given a chair next to the class teacher who gives me a briefing and introduces me to the class. The classroom is standard but filled beyond capacity with learners whom I learnt later that they totalled 137 in a class meant for 45 learners. There is very little room for the teacher to move around, as the arrangement is that meant for group work.

The adult learner is seated next to the teachers but on a table where she shares the group work with four bigger girls whom I learnt later are 16 years of age and relatively bright, making them the eldest of the girls in the classroom. I learnt later that the reason for sitting the adult learner next to the teachers was for the teachers to assist the adult learner during the lesson.

As (Usher et al 1997) say "If adult learners are subjected to didactic teaching and a curriculum based on formal knowledge rather than their experiences...they revert to being children with a self still dependent on otherness." During the observations at Moyeni primary the teachers taught in a purely pedagogic way, and ignored the presence of the adult learner. For the whole week that I spent with the grade 3 class, not a single oral question was directed to the adult learner and she never indicated an interest to answer oral questions. When I asked the teacher the rationale behind the practice she told me

"Children laugh at each other when one makes a mistake. We don't want to subject her to humiliation by children. If we can ask her questions and she gets laughed at for giving wrong answers she can feel humiliated and demotivated. And that may force her out of school, a situation we don't want to experience." (Teacher Moyeni Primary)

But the respect afforded the adult learner worked against the pedagogic principles of English language acquisition whereby the learner had to try and speak the language in order to learn it. Without oral practice it may not be easy for one to acquire a language especially when it is not a first language.

As Corson (1988:18) puts it "The methods of using language in literacy are first established in oral competence." The adult learner had disclosed that her main problem was English, which she found difficult when she compared herself with her school age classmates.

"I like everything that is taught at school and I don't want to miss any. But English is giving me a tough time. Many of these children cope with it better than me. There are some who make me feel very small. They are just too brilliant." (Adult learner)

The teacher and principal at Moyeni Primary shared the observation that it does not have to take adults and school age learners the same number of years to complete primary education. They agreed that adult learners could take fewer years to complete. But when asked as to why they don't apply it on the adult learners in their school they cited English language acquisition as their main concern.

"We teach all the subjects in Sesotho as a medium of instruction up to class 3 as stipulated by the MoE policy. We shall introduce English in class 4 after which we can consider promoting the learners to class six so that they skip class five. They will be in a position to be independent and used to being taught in English after class four." (Principal Moyeni Primary)

This decision augurs well with an argument by Lyster (1992:103) that...ideally learners should be relatively fluent readers and writers in their first language before they can read and write in the second language.

4.4.2 Learners' Interviews

A person is considered to be motivated when he or she is ready to do something without being told to or having to be persuaded (Bhola 1994:43). In order to understand why the adult learners enrolled this study revealed significant differences in their motives to learn. The team from the National Curriculum Development Centre

(NCDC) visited Zibandayo Primary on the 31st January 2001 to find the curriculum needs of the adult learners. This was in preparation for the syllabus that would meet the needs of the adult learners.

"They were not interested in certification. They needed communication skills and life skills so that they could calculate their livestock production especially wool and mohair sales. There is a general belief that merchants take advantage of the farmers' illiteracy and pay less on the sales of wool and mohair. They needed basic numeracy so as to avoid being cheated with their monies; they wanted to know the payments they have to make for their children's tuition so that their children could not demand more than what the schools have prescribed. They wanted to speak English." (NCDC official)

4.4.2.1 Moyeni Primary

D is a 32 year-old married woman with two young sons. The elder son is ten and attending school while the other son who is five years will be at school when he comes of age. The elder son of D is doing the same class 3 with the mother but in a different school, a motivation for the son to work hard.

"My son is happy that I am attending school; it motivates him to work hard. When we come home from school we show each other our schoolwork and he enjoys competing with me as we are doing the same class." (Adult learner Moyeni Primary)

D is the most ambitious of the learners because she wants to further her studies up to the level where she can become a teacher.

"I want to go up to standard seven. But if possible, if there can be financial means I want to continue up until I become a teacher." (Adult Learner D)

D gets a lot of support for schooling from the family and some community members, while some community members are not supportive at all.

"Some members of the community are supportive while others are not impressed; I have been ridiculed and called names. Their concern is "what does a married woman want at school when school is for children?"

D commands a lot of respect from her classmates some of who do better than her academically. But that is not a deterrent for her desire to succeed.

Learners respect me as if I am one of their teachers or one of the adults at school not as a learner like them. There are some who are just too bright so much that they scare me. At times I feel small when I compare myself with them. They are just amazing.

E is a married woman aged 29 with two children who are not attending school even though the elder son is seven and at school going age. E was not at school during the interview but working "temporarily" as a domestic servant in a village 40 kilometres away from school. E had left school because she did not have enough support from the family.

"I am just away from school for two months August and September because of family problems (holding back tears). I am going back to school at the beginning of October so as to prepare for the examinations. I want to be in standard 4 next year 2003. I left school because my mother in law did not approve my schooling.

My husband is working in South Africa and does not write or send money because he is illiterate, so much that I do not even know his residential or work address. For us to get money from him, he travels home which he seldom does. In July My mother in law refused me permission to use the candles for my schoolwork saying that I wasted her son's money. My husband had allowed me to go to school which my mother in law did not approve together with some family members. Some neighbours are supportive while those who are cowards and jealous despise and ridicule me".

The only male adult learner at Moyeni Primary was motivated to enrol by the desire to avoid a jail term of which he did not avoid for long.

4.4.2.2 Naleli Primary

A is a 71 year old woman. She had three sons all deceased and one daughter. The daughter is alive and literate because she went up to grade 12. A did not go to school at all until she came to Naleli Primary in the year 2001. "My father did not believe in school. To him school was for lazy people and a waste of time." Although A received support from her relatives when she started school, she did not enjoy the

same support from the community who teased her. But the community has since refrained from teasing and is now supportive of her decision to go to school.

"When I started school last year 2001 the community did not support me. Because of famine, I was always teased that I had gone to school for food not necessarily that I needed to. The family members as well as the community are now very much supportive of my schooling. I stay with some grandchildren from my sons and the daughter who are literate, they always ask me to show them my schoolwork and they are a source of motivation. My name is fading in the community because everybody calls me "ngoan'a sekolo" literally translated school child. When I am late like I was today, one of them shouted to my granddaughter "Tell the pupil that she is late, others are already going to school", an indication that they have accepted."

A was motivated to enrol by the desire for her to communicate with her daughter in South Africa

"I came to school because I could not communicate with my daughter who is working in South Africa. Whenever she wrote me a letter or sent me money I had to ask neighbours or grandchildren to read for me. The same happened when I wanted to reply. The worst was when I had to disclose some of the confidential issues to the person writing. Nowadays I communicate with my daughter without assistance. You know what, I take almost the whole day reading the letter. I always tell my daughter to write in a legible way separating the letters of alphabet so as to make it easier for me to read.

B is a 58 year old man with seven children; six girls all of whom attended school and only one son aged 24 years who has never been to school. The allegation is that the son is only interested in tending livestock and initiation not school. When asked why the son never went to school, B explained that he did not want to be oppressive to his son.

"I didn't want to force him to go to school because I was not forced, he will realise the need when it will come. I too never went to school up until I started work. I only went to school when I worked in the mines in South Africa. To us (while still herd boys) school was for Christians and weaklings who could not display their masculinity and we despised it as a result."

Unemployment that is rife in Lesotho has prompted B to enrol in order to learn English. It is the conviction of many people that English makes one to be more marketable in the labour market.

"I came here to improve my literacy but mainly to learn English, which I did not do in the mines. Here at home when one looks for a job he (sic) is required to know English, and I don't want to remain behind when people go out seeking employment." (Learner B Naleli Primary) (The connotation here is that English prepares one to be competitive in the labour market).

B's neighbours and family are supportive of his schooling because he is a role model for the village children except for his only son who does not want to attend school. B did not know how far he would go with school because anytime there are employment opportunities, such as those in the Poverty Alleviation Projects, he takes them and that affects his schooling.

C is a man aged thirty-seven years with six children, three of who are at school, while the other three were not because they had not reached the school going age. C can read and write Sesotho although not very well as he attended evening literacy classes for herd boys when he was still a herd boy.

"I spent all of my teenage life tending livestock up until I got married, and my parents never ever spoke of sending me to school and they did not object when I enrolled with the evening classes. As long as those evening classes did not interfere with tending livestock, there was no problem."

The desire to acquire basic Arithmetic operations of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication that can be used in the building trade gave C the urge to enrol.

"I came to school to improve the little education I got from the literacy classes meant for the herd boys when I was still one. I can read and write Sesotho but not so well because I do not know when to separate or combine the syllables and words. I want to learn Mathematics. I can add and subtract. As a brick layer I always encounter problems when the measurements have to be divided or multiplied. The problem is mainly with the remainders. I don't know

how to divide the remainder. I also want to learn English.” (Learner C Naleli Primary)

C never got discouragement for his schooling from both family and neighbours. His wife who went to school up to Junior Certificate was a source of inspiration because she gave him a lot of support.

4.4.2.3 Zibandayo Primary

F is a married woman aged 34 with four children three of them at school and the youngest not yet at school going age. F had a little background of schooling before enrolment at Zibandayo, she went as far as grade four. F is a dropout who does not intend going back to school because she did not get what she wanted “English”.

“I left school in May this year because I was not taught English. I had gone there for English but I cannot speak it up to now. The teachers were teaching us reading and writing in Sesotho and very little in English. I heard that some will return to school next year but I will not go there again. I wasted my time.”

G is a married man with five children all of them at school. G had no background of school before enrolment and was grateful of the FPE programme that afforded them the opportunity to literacy. G was looking forward to going back to school in the following year to continue with his studies.

“We left school so as to go and harvest our crops. Unfortunately there was very little to harvest, so we decided to seek employment in the South African farms harvesting maize. We overstayed after the harvest accumulating some cash, so much that many of us came back in September. Some of us met and decided to postpone school for next year. Some of us sought employment in the farms where they do wool shearing and will be back in November. I wrote two letters home when I was in South Africa and got the replies, something that I couldn’t do before. I am certain that many of us will go back to school when it reopens next year. Many of us like school.”

H is a married woman with three children two of them at school. Like the other adult learners at Zibandayo H left school in May so as to go harvesting. She had full

support of the family and neighbours for her schooling, so much that she intended going back when schools reopened in January 2003.

"We left school because of famine. We went to look for employment in the Poverty Alleviation Projects after the harvest season. After completion of the employment period we wanted to go back to school, but some of our classmates were not there. We then met the principal to suspend lessons till next year. I had full support of my family and neighbours and I am looking forward to next year. If everything goes well I want to go up to standard 7. Just to have the standard seven certificate I like it."

The desire of the adult learner at Moyeni Primary was to study up until she could become a teacher. The only male adult learner at Moyeni Primary was motivated to enrol by the desire to avoid a jail term which he did not avoid for long. The adult learners at Zibandayo Primary were motivated by the desire to: learn spoken English; be certificated and to have communication skills i.e. ability to write and read letters. The adult learners at Naleli Primary were interested in the acquisition of: functional literacy such as communication through reading and writing; English for competition in the labour market and Mathematics for use in the building trade. The desire to learn English tops the bill among the adult learners who were interviewed.

4.5 Discussion

In all the three primary schools in the sample it has been found that none of the teachers whether qualified or not, ever got training in the handling of adult education.

"The NCDC officials came to my school in January 2001 and promised to design a curriculum that would enable these adult learners to do each standard in one term (half a year). They also promised to provide training to the teachers in the teaching of that syllabus. But they never came back till today." (Principal Zibandayo Primary)

The National Curriculum Development Centre in defence of its non-pursuance of the curriculum to be implemented has this to say.

This package (Survival Kit as the syllabus was called) was supposed to be presented to the Heads of Programs in a meeting that was forthcoming, but that never materialised yet we had worked so hard to develop the document. It

would be after its adoption that we would together with LDTC, present it to schools and train teachers in its implementation. But because the department responsible was not interested, all the effort was in vain. We had been engaged in a futile exercise which nobody except some of us were interested. This was full proof that there was no interest on the side of the primary section in the development of this curriculum, because up to this third year of free primary education, nobody has ever asked about it. (I was given a copy of the survival kit).

The adult learners at Moyeni Primary were taught in a pedagogic way that made the teacher the authority, while at Naleli Primary all learners were treated differently with every one of them doing what is of interest to him or her. The school time at Moyeni Primary is the same for school age learners and the adult learner (7.45 till 13.30 hours). The adult learner received all benefits offered under the FPE programme including lunch. The learners at Naleli Primary school came to school from 10.00 o'clock till 13.00 hours and received all the stationery but no food. The adult learners at Zibandayo like those at Naleli Primary came to school from 10.00 hours till 13.00 hours. Unlike their counterparts at Naleli Primary adult learners at Zibandayo Primary enjoyed the lunch with the school age learners.

At both Zibandayo Primary and Moyeni Primary Adult learners were entered in the schools' daily attendance registers, while at Naleli Primary the attendance register did not have adult learners. The school took the decision not to register them because of high absenteeism and dropout rate.

At Moyeni Primary the adult learner wanted to do everything done in the class not necessarily survival skills as at Zibandayo Primary and Naleli Primary. The pathetic situation is that of some adult learners at Zibandayo Primary who have to grapple with two second languages Sesotho and English. Some of these adult learners have Xhosa as their first language and are not even fluent in Sesotho which is the medium of instruction in the first three classes of primary.

In Lesotho it is government policy that grades one up to three should get instruction in Sesotho in order to make it easier for them to grasp the basics of primary

education. Instruction in English starts in class 4 when the learners have acquired the basic literacy skills which they can convert into the second language (Thelejane 1990:14). "It is widely accepted that adults and children should be taught to read in their mother tongue first. This is mainly because it is easier to learn the complex skills of reading and writing without having to grapple with the equally complex but different processes of learning a second language at the same time... Ideally, learners should be relatively fluent readers and writers in their first language before they can read and write in a second language" (Lyster in Hutton 1992:103).

The assessment system used at Moyeni Primary is such that all learners are graded equally without consideration of age. In the year 2000, the remaining adult learner got position 1 in the end of the year examination. In the year 2001 the adult learner got position 3 while the first and second positions were taken by school age learners. The adult learners at Naleli Primary did not have a standard grading system.

This chapter discussed the findings of this study which included the overview of the Free Primary Education, the learner motivations, background to the schools in the last three years, observations and interviews. The next chapter deals with the conclusions derived from the findings and the recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

"...a program... is likely to be successful in both sets of its immediate objectives if it is well adapted to the interests and conditions of its participants and – equally important – well run" (Hinzen 2002:32). It is my feeling that the Free Primary Education Programme was not well run or well adapted to the interests of adult learners.

The Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre does not offer any literacy and or distance learning for the primary level. Other than that LDTC does not offer services to five districts out of ten. The five districts, which are not serviced by LDTC, include Quthing and Mophale'shoek. The non-provision of services by the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre in the two districts of Quthing and Mophale'shoek has prompted the non-reading adults to reveal their plight, which has seemingly been neglected for a long time by the departments responsible. They therefore joined the mainstream of primary education.

Although the enrolment of adult learners was not given the attention it deserved, it has been a success story for those who persevered because they acquired the writing skills and reading skills. The adult learner A at 71 who could communicate with her daughter in South Africa, and the adult learner D in class 3 at Moyeni Primary who was doing very well in the mainstream can be considered as a success. The enthusiasm of the adult learners as well as their desire to continue with their studies bears testimony to the partial success of the venture, even though it was not well addressed by the Ministry of Education yet it was its prerogative.

Even though the Chief Education Officer (Primary Section) of the Ministry of Education had claimed the anticipated enrolment of adult learners, the poor preparation and coordination of the programme as regard the adult learners bears testimony of non-anticipation and or malicious neglect on the side of the Ministry. The deduction from the way the programme for adult learners was not given much attention is that the Free Primary Education Programme was not meant for the adult

learners but strictly for the school age learners. The neglect of the adult learners was a ploy to force them out of the mainstream without legislation and or directive that could otherwise put the name of the Ministry of Education into disrepute. The neglect by the Primary Section of the Ministry of Education to follow up the curriculum design is indicative of that section's indifference towards the literacy of the adult learners who so desperately needed education.

The separation of adult learners from the school age learners at Zibandayo Primary and Naleli Primary was a better option for the schools. The inadequate personnel coupled with inadequate infrastructure could not permit the combination of adult learners with the school age learners if the educative task was to be undertaken effectively.

Lack of training for the teachers in the skills of adult education also contributed to the dismal handling of the adult learners in the mainstream of primary education. The non-participation of the adult learner in the oral tasks of the class at Moyeni Primary was detrimental to the adult learner's acquisition of the English language as a medium of instruction. This in turn could make it difficult for the adult learner to deal with the learning areas offered in the English language.

The seating arrangement for the adult learner at Moyeni Primary next to the big girls gave her the chance to feel that she was a learner. In the absence of a teacher to assist her, the adult learner could share some of the tasks with the girls seated next to her. The arrangement was very conducive to learning because she could share ideas with people at roughly the same academic level as her.

The teacher's idea that children might ridicule for the adult learner at Moyeni Primary was unfounded because the big girls who were seated close to the adult learner worked cooperatively with her. The adult learner even acknowledged the respect she got from all her school age classmates.

Moyeni Primary combined the school age learners with the adult learners while the adult learners at Naleli Primary were separated from their school age counterparts. In both schools the adult learners were not critical of the arrangements. They did not

express the need for different ways of providing for their educational needs. This is typical of the rural communities in Lesotho where the teachers' authority is highly recognised. Instead they were appreciative of the government's effort to provide them with free education which they failed to acquire during their school going age.

The poverty affecting most of the households in the surrounding areas where the schools in the sample are situated led to the high dropout rate. The dropout rate may also have been a result of poor motivation because the adult learners were provided with basic literacy not functional literacy yet the latter could address their living conditions in their localities.

Although there is a high dropout rate, there is remarkable progress made by the adult learners in the schools under study. The fact that they are still at school after three years of Free Primary Education, it is indicative that they are relatively satisfied. The satisfaction is a result of the progress which they have made by passing their exams and being promoted from class to another at Moyeni Primary. The capability of the adults to read and write letters is yet another commendable indication of their progress.

5.2 Recommendations

It is quite necessary that the Ministry of Education brings schools closer to the people through the utilisation of such schools by the community of adults as their learning centres. The serving teachers could do this through the provision of tuition, basically functional literacy at schools for an hour extra in the afternoons after school. Government can make provision for an incentive in the form of extra pay to the teachers involved. The adult learners' school calendar can be adapted to the different seasonal engagements such as cropping and harvesting. Although there would be a reduction of learning time on the part of the adult learners who would have only one hour per day compared with the six hours enjoyed in the mainstream, the illiteracy problem would be partially solved.

One of the ways to motivate the adult learners already enrolled and those still to come is to devise a form of certification to acknowledge their achievements in literacy. To achieve the certification for adult learners, there should be a standard

curriculum with a standard evaluation system for all schools engaged in the provision of tuition for adult learners.

It is also important to encourage the institutions engaged in the training of teachers to develop a module that can introduce student teachers to adult education. Such a module can equip teachers with skills necessary to handle the adult learners whether in the mainstream or in the proposed "schools closer to the community project⁵". It will be from the same module that serving teachers can be offered in-service courses so as to be equipped with skills to meet the needs of their communities.

Further research is necessary in the many facets of the Free Primary Education such as feeding, book supply, staffing, and relaxation and or repeal of policies to suit the programme.

The citizens of Lesotho do not deserve a raw deal such as the one bequeathed on the Free Primary Education Programme learners prior to and during the research period. Generally they deserve a better deal than being squeezed in the cramped classrooms without consideration of age, aspirations, experience and motivations as required by both andragogy and critical pedagogy.

⁵ The CEO Primary indicated that the MoE intends opening most of the existing primary schools to the communities so as to offer functional literacy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Adult learners' Schedule

- School and gender
- Marital status
- Number of children if any
- If there are children where do they attend school
- If in the same school does it affect both
- Any educational background before enrolment
- Why did not attend school during childhood
- What is the perception of relatives as regard their enrolment
- What is the perception of the community towards their enrolment
- Do they find themselves at par with the school age learners
- Do they think the curriculum is relevant and why
- How far in education do they intend to go and why
- If they intend going up to class 7 do they intend going beyond if they can secure financial assistance
- Are they aware of the bursary scheme for the provision of basic education up to Junior Certificate

Appendix 2: Teachers' Schedule

- School, gender, qualification, teaching experience
- Profile of the school
- The criterion of combining the adult learners with the school age learners
- The primary curriculum and materials are prepared and meant for the age group 6-12 years. How do you reconcile it with the teaching and learning of adults for which it was not meant? Which curriculum does your school use in classes 1 2 3?
- Is the grading system in the classes with adult learners the same with those without? Are adults graded together with the school age learners?
- Are the adult learners consulted on the material they learn or are they taught what the educators want to teach?
- How do you cope with the behavioural needs of learners of so diverse age groups?
- What strategies if any has your school adopted to cater for adult learners
- Problems if any and how they are dealt with
- Future prospects or vision of the school with regard to adult learners.

Appendix 3: Schedule for Chief Education Officer (Primary Section)

- Did the Ministry of Education anticipate the enrolment of adult learners when free primary education was introduced?
- How many schools known to the department have enrolled adults in the mainstream?
- What preparations were made to cater for them in the advent of their enrolment?
- It is the third year now that the adults have enrolled in the mainstream of primary education, where they are least expected to be, what arrangements has the department made for teachers to cope with this unexpected phenomenon?
- It has been established in some circles that many adults reach the literacy level of grade four after constant tuition of 400 hours, an equivalent of nine months of two hours a day. What arrangements has your department made for affected schools to apply relevant research findings?

Appendix 4: Schedule for National Curriculum Development Centre

- Did the centre anticipate adult learners' enrolment when free primary education policy was introduced?
- What Preparations did the centre make for such a phenomenon?
- Is it permissible to have the same curriculum for adult learners and school age learners?
- If the curriculum for adult learners has been developed, what is/ are the differences with the current primary schools curriculum?
- Is there any liaison between the centre and the Lesotho University's department of adult education in the development of such curriculum?