

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES ADULT BASIC EDUCATION MAKE? AN ANALYSIS
OF SELF REPORTED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A GROUP OF ADULTS WHO
HAVE PARTICIPATED IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND A
GROUP WHO HAVE NOT.**

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DECLARATION

This dissertation unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is my own original work.

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ABSTRACT

In this study a group of adults who have participated in ABE programmes as learners for two to three years is compared with a group matched for employment position and scores on literacy screening tests who have had no involvement with ABE programmes. The study inquires into

- peoples' work situation, including their perceptions of future prospects at their place of employment, and the degree and nature of their job satisfaction,
- peoples' community involvement, including awareness of current issues, the extent to which they feel they can influence what happens to them, and the extent of their engagement with community issues, and
- peoples' personal situations, including how they use the reading and writing skills they have developed, their involvement with their children's schooling, the sources of information they rely on, their money management, their record keeping and their degree of confidence in using technical means of communication.

The study also investigates people's attitudes towards adult basic education classes, and for those who have participated in them, their own perception of changes effected, gains and sacrifices made, and whether the effort has been, for them personally, worthwhile.

Differences and similarities between the groups in the areas of their work situation, their educational experience and attitudes towards education and in literacy-related practices are analysed statistically and discussed. All comparisons between the groups are explored and discussed in the contexts of the learners' own lives and experiences as described by them.

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Introduction

It is popularly assumed that there is a causal link between literacy and many positive social and economic characteristics. These include high employability, competent job performance, high productivity, economic development, low birth rate, self confidence, positive participation in community life, political awareness, and adherence to esteemed democratic principles.

Internationally, programmes designed to teach literacy to adults have been initiated with the ultimate goal of developing in participants one or more of the characteristics listed above. Malicky and Norman (1994) state that there is an “implicit assumption [in the implementation of many literacy programmes] that participation leads to increased economic well being,” and that the programmes will enable people to “participate more fully in the labour force” as well as “all aspects of life in society”. However, in general, research does not readily support these popular assumptions. On the contrary, in recent years there has been international agreement that many of the aims initially articulated for literacy or adult basic education programmes were over-optimistic. In an overview of a number of studies, Malicky and Norman, (1994) conclude that common assumptions that literacy programmes play a positive role in economic and individual development are questionable. On the other hand, some researchers are now asking whether the effects of participation in literacy classes have been measured in appropriate ways (Lazar, Bean and van Horn, 1998).

There has been no published research of substance conducted in South Africa on the efficacy and effects of literacy or adult basic education programmes. While the body of literature pertaining to the field of literacy and adult basic education (ABE) has grown rapidly, writers have tended to concentrate on the perceived need for ABE (based on literacy rates) and various aspects of its implementation. Scant attention has been directed to the empirically ascertainable effects of initiatives in adult basic education in the South African context; a literature search yielded only two South African publications which actually refer to the effects of ABE (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996, and Harley et al, 1996). No publications of studies

focussing directly on the effects of ABE were found. In spite of this, investment of resources in ABE programmes, particularly in the workplace, continues to grow (Harley et al, 1996, p. 268).

Research on the effects of ABE could be either longitudinal, tracking the development of a group of adult learners over some years, or, as in the case of this study, cross-sectional. In this study a group of adults who have participated in ABE programmes as learners for two to three years is compared with a group matched for employment position and scores on literacy screening tests who have had no involvement with ABE programmes. The study inquires into different aspects of the lives of people selected for inclusion in this study:

- their work situation, including their future prospects at their place of employment and their sense of security
- their community involvement, including awareness of current issues, the extent to which they feel they can influence what happens to them, and the extent of their engagement with community issues,
- their literacy practices in their personal lives, including the extent to which they read (anything), their involvement with their children's schooling, sources of information relied on, how well informed they are in relation to current issues, money management, whether they spend any money on printed material, their degree of confidence in using technical means of communication and record keeping, and
- their educational experience and attitudes towards education.

With the group of adults who have attended ABE classes, the study also investigates their reasons for attending classes, their own perception of changes effected, gains and sacrifices made, and whether the effort has been, for them personally, worthwhile.

The study will be structured as follows:

Chapter 1

An exploration of literature, with the following areas of focus:

- a consideration of what the terms ‘literacy’ and ‘adult basic education’ are perceived to mean, and the extent to which they are used to refer to the same concept or set of concepts
- the position of mother tongue literacy relative to literacy in additional languages
- an exploration and discussion of the aims of adult basic education programmes both internationally and within South Africa , and the extent of investment of resources in workplace adult basic education programmes in South Africa, and finally
- a discussion of these programmes’ perceived ultimate efficacy in relation to stated aims, and a consideration of the validity of the ways in which they have been evaluated.

Chapter 2 A statement of the research hypothesis of this study and descriptions of the experimental and control group of subjects selected, of the questionnaire developed for this study, and of the interviews conducted.

Chapter 3 Analysis of the data and report of the findings of this study.

Chapter 4 Conclusions and implications.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

Section 29a of the South African Constitution states that each South African citizen has the right to basic education. This statement is a declaration of basic education as a fundamental right and a matter of legal entitlement, and an expression of the conviction that a basic education is essential not only for the people who gain it, but also for the nation, and therefore must be written into the constitution.

The provision of a basic education for adults who as children did not pass through a schooling system (in which currently the stated aim is to make provision for nine years of compulsory education) rests on the basis of this consensual conviction, as expressed in the Constitution: that without education, people are unfairly disadvantaged and that their potential role in society is restricted.

Obvious questions to ask are: What constitutes adult basic education, that renders it so essential? What is expected from ABE programmes? And does the reality of what learners gain from participation in ABE programmes approach the ideal?

Is adult basic education the same as literacy?

Internationally, there is currently general acceptance of the definition of literacy expressed in The Declaration of Persepolis of 1975¹. In this definition, literacy is considered to be not only the practice of the skills of reading, writing and numeracy, but is associated with the development of people's critical consciousness of society and their ability to take the initiative in effecting the development of their communities (Harley et al, 1996 p. 19).

The ideals of the South African National Department of Education for ABE, as expressed in its *Policy document on Adult Basic Education and Training* (1997), are similar. This document states that ABE should ensure that learners acquire basic education and training "that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation" It also states that ABE should introduce citizens to a culture of learning, provide access to further and higher education, training and employment, and provides them with the foundations for acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for social and economic development, justice and equality.²

The ideals for ABE documented by management in the private sector are more oriented to human resource development than those of the state. These include improvements in workplace communication, and worker commitment, productivity and trainability. However, in practice, workplace programmes are seldom designed to lead directly to the ideals articulated by management, since the engagement of managers with ABE programmes stops, in nearly all cases, with agreeing to the budget. The choice of educational materials and the organisation of assessment is done by ABE co-ordinators, who are usually chosen because of their educational background, and whose perception of ABE is therefore likely to be more in accordance with the definition of Persepolis. Nearly all ABE materials that can be bought off the shelf are those developed by organisations such as Project Literacy or the now defunct English Literacy Project, whose business is (or was) entirely adult basic education (as

¹ This definition is quoted in full under the heading **Literacy as adaptation** on p. 16 of this chapter.

² For a more expanded discussion of the state's expectations of ABE, see pp. 29-30 below.

opposed to staff development and training).

Consequently the activities and language and literacy exercises that learners do in class are those designed by educationalists rather than staff trainers. The backwash effect of the examinations learners are usually entered for reinforces this trend in ABE classes. In the majority of workplace ABE programmes the ABE examinations of the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) have become generally accepted as the final assessment of learners' progress, and the effectiveness of the ABE programme has become equated with the extent of learners' success in IEB examinations. As a result, co-ordinators and facilitators of ABE tend to focus on the development of the skills recognised by educationalists and tested in the IEB's adult basic examinations rather than on those wished for by management in the companies for which they work. The kinds of skills and knowledge the IEB's examinations aim to test are expressed in '*The fundamental principles of the IEB's examinations*' (Independent Examinations Board: Adult Examinations, 1995). According to these principles, the examinations support curricula which, as well as having currency in terms of providing a basis for further training and economic advancement, emphasise:

- real and important knowledge and skills
- understanding, insight and reflective learning, and
- an ability to use learning effectively

Thus, although the performance of very few state ABET learning organisations approaches the vision expressed in the policy document of the National Department of Education (*Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training*, October 1997), at least as far as the ideals of policy makers go, the goals pursued for learners of adult basic education in both the state sector and the private sector in South Africa are entirely similar to the central aspects of the most widely accepted definition of literacy: that of The Declaration of Persepolis.

Therefore it can be argued that it is reasonable to regard the ABE programmes considered in this study as literacy programmes, and that it is not erroneous to equate the kind of adult basic education offered in these programmes with literacy. It is thus useful to explore the concept of literacy.

What literacy is perceived to be

As Silvia Scribner notes (Kintgen et al 1988, p. 72) the perception of literacy “has neither a static nor a universal essence”. As literacy practices vary in time and across communities and societies, so does the nature, and accepted benchmarks and boundaries of what “being literate” is considered to be, since it exists only in the context of social literacy practices. The range of forms that literacy can take, as well as the wide variety of uses to which skills related to literacy can be put have given rise to what Scribner describes as a “definitional controversy”, in which the question of “What is literacy?” gives rise to a “chorus of clashing answers” (1988 p. 71).

In South Africa, adult basic education as we know it began as the teaching of basic reading and writing skills to adults, which started with Western colonisation. At that time, the attainment of these skills at a very basic level was regarded as sufficient to constitute literacy, and few people developed these skills to any great extent. As society has changed, with progressively higher levels of education losing prestige as their attainment has become more common, so the general idea of what people needed to know and be able to do in order to be regarded as literate has become more extensive and demanding. The definition of literacy has naturally followed the same trend.

Elda Lyster, (1992, p. 29) and Silvia Scribner (1988, pp. 73-76) offer the same three metaphors for the varying purposes of teaching literacy. In offering these metaphors, Scribner notes that any one of the three metaphors gives only a partial aspect of literacy and the complex social and psychological systems on which it rests. It is difficult to imagine practical instances of literacy teaching or adult basic education representing any of these three metaphors purely, yet they do serve to convey broad and important distinctions among the basic motivations on which literacy teaching is based.

The three metaphors are:

Literacy as a state of grace, in which the process of becoming literate is itself seen to enhance people, and to facilitate the transcending of primitive ways of life. In the 19th century, when this perception of literacy was prevalent, the acquisition of literacy implied the adoption of a Western way of life, understood then to be immeasurably superior to cultures existent in technologically less sophisticated societies. Thus literacy was perceived as a form of salvation.

Literacy as power, which expresses the association of literacy with political empowerment and the ability to effect radical political change. In this metaphor, literacy related skills are seen to be central to the development and implementation of political power, in that they give individuals and communities access to the discourse of power. These skills enable people not only to access information, but also to communicate with other people and structures for social purposes and in order to bring the voice of individuals or groups to bear in shaping events and trends in broader society.

Literacy as adaptation, where functional aspects of literacy are emphasised. This metaphor is expressed in definitions of literacy which focus on the uses to which literacy can be put. UNESCO, with which organisation the term 'functional literacy' was originally most closely associated, expressed this functionality of literacy as "a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes far beyond rudimentary literacy. It should lead not only to rudimentary general knowledge, but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civil life and a better understanding of the surrounding world" (UNESCO document in Jones, 1988, p. 143).

Literacy as a state of grace

In this metaphor, literacy is not defined in relation to politics or economics, and its significance is perceived to be that it facilitates access to knowledge accumulated and recorded over centuries, or leads to a higher order of thinking. There is a tendency in many societies to endow literate people with distinctive virtues, gained because of their ability to

engage with literature. Both Western and non-Western religions and cultures have attributed great value and power to the written word. In Islam the ability to read the Qur'an aloud (even if the reader does not understand the language he produces in this way) is regarded as an activity that makes the learner both literate and holy, and as such is seen to be inherently virtuous; for some Hindus the proper study of even one verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* is seen as leading to immortality and eternal peace (Swami Sivananda, 1962).

Christian missionaries taught their converts how to read so that they could read the Bible. In the last decade of the 18th century and the 19th century, known as the "Great Century" of Christian expansion (Latourette, 1945), missionaries followed their perceived calling with extraordinary energy and zeal. They left their homelands, often travelling to where none of their countrymen had ventured before, and lived among people whose cultures were thoroughly dissimilar to those in which they had grown up. Their contribution to the expansion of literacy in countries where it was very rare was enormous. They learned the languages of the people among whom they lived and, using the Western alphabet as a base, invented writing systems for many of them. This done, they translated the Bible into these languages. Some simultaneously developed simplified Bible readings as beginner texts, and used these to give their converts a toe-hold on the way to reading the Bible itself. Frank Laubach was one who invented an entire system of teaching literacy in the course of this endeavour, and for which he worked out phonetic charts in 262 languages, some of which had never been written before (Lyster, in Hutton, B, 1992, p. 31).

In addition to running basic literacy classes that focussed on Biblical texts and messages, missionaries taught modern knowledge as well as Christian doctrine, setting up schools which offered education for children from primary through secondary school. Illiteracy, ignorance and disease were believed to be domains of the devil, and missionaries scattered around the globe, armed with vernacular Bibles, schoolbooks and a doctors' bags launched untiring assaults on the enemy. A printing press, a school and a hospital were landmarks associated with mission stations. The mission schools offered education conforming to the best standards the missionaries could offer, and although their insistence on rigorous discipline and obedience to authority have been deplored in recent years, the soundness of the general

education they offered is acknowledged even by their most vigorous critics.

On a secular level, in the 1970s theorists like Ong, Goody and Olson suggested that there is a “great divide” between people who are literate and people who are illiterate. They postulated that “the thinking of literate people tends to be more abstract, discrete, definite, and articulated, consisting of generalisations, deductions, and inferences.” (D’Angelo, in Bailey and Fosheim, 1983, p. 104). Ong’s choice of words to express the differences between oral and literate cultures evoked, for many, the same nostalgic appeal as had the idea of ‘the noble savage’ in the time of colonial expansion. To illustrate, in the first chapter of his book *Transformations of the Word* (1977, p. 18) Ong writes: “The psyche in a culture innocent of writing knows by a kind of empathetic identification of knower and known, in which the object of knowledge and the total being of the knower enter into a kind of fusion, in a way which literate cultures would find unsatisfyingly vague and garbled and somehow too intense and participatory. To personalities shaped by literacy, oral folk often appear curiously unprogrammed, not set off against their physical environment, given simply to soaking up existence, unresponsive to abstract demands such as a “job” that entails commitment to routines organized in accordance with abstract clock time.”

Ong’s work was widely taken to mean that modern, literate nations or groups of literate people within nations had shifted from a less organised, more natural and intuitive state, in which unsophisticated, illiterate people still lived. This perception thus reinforced the view of literacy as a state to be aspired to, signifying the transcendence of primitiveness. On the other hand, however, internationally his work has also been regarded with suspicion by some scholars, particularly in the context of an acute sense of the potential political danger of broad generalisations based on issues that can be related to race and ethnicity. In this case, since by far the majority of schooled and literate people are white, and of so called ‘Western’ culture, and since by far the majority of the people Ong calls ‘oral folk’ are black, and usually of cultures historically perceived and described by Westerners in negative terms such as ‘primitive’, the distinctions Ong makes between the thinking habits and abilities of people in literate and oral cultures have the potential of being linked immediately to race and ethnicity. Thus challenges to his work, particularly in the form of the work of Scribner and Cole (1981)

have been impatiently embraced with eager relief. (The validity of the work of Scribner and Cole is discussed under the heading *Findings of international studies* later in this chapter.)

Literacy as power

Historically, concentration of literacy-related skills in the hands of a few has been used for centuries to maintain hegemonic power for dominant elite groups. In Europe between 1600 and 1850, when the literacy rate rose from 35% to 50%, the part of the population which was literate was overwhelmingly upper status and urban; literacy was related to power and was, in practice, confined to the elite. Positions of power in society in which literacy skills were used for regulatory functions in society were effectively inaccessible to anyone other than men of the social elite. (Kaestle in Kintgen, Kroll and Rose 1988 p. 104). Similarly, in the nineteenth century, British colonialists “created an Indian elite imbued with the literacy and values of Britain” through whom a very few English rulers exercised authority over vast numbers of people. Ultimately, this elite became leaders in the anti-colonialist movement. (Power, in Bailey and Fosheim (eds) 1983 p. 24).

It is important to note, though, that the relationship between literacy and power is certainly not unidirectional nor automatically causal. While literacy has been used to appropriate and control power, power itself gives people access to literacy. “If control of language constitutes control of scarce and prized goods, powerful people will make sure that they possess disproportionate amounts of that precious stuff called literacy.” (Power, in Bailey and Fosheim (eds) 1983 p. 24).

In this century, the metaphor of literacy as power, or the radical view of literacy, has come to be most closely associated with the name of Paulo Freire.

Freire began his work in Recife, in Brazil, where he worked among *campesinos*, peasants who lived an impoverished life under the authoritarian control of powerful landowners. Freire established “culture circles”, where people were taught literacy synonymously with “conscientisation”, an awareness of their state of exploitation and their potential power to

move against it. Freire was imprisoned and expelled from Brazil by the junta that gained power through the military coup in 1964, to whom the concept of political awareness among the *campesinos* was threatening. That they ensured his expulsion from the country attests to the power they perceived in the implementation of his ideas. It might be argued that the political awareness gained by people in Freire's culture circles was due more to political education through specifically directed discussion than through becoming literate. However, supporters of his position contend that literacy gained cannot be regarded as real literacy if learners cannot act for themselves in the political dynamics pertinent to their lives, and ensure their needs are addressed. The Freirian position is that: "to be literate is *not* to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history and future . . . If a radical theory of literacy is to encompass human agency and critique as part of the narrative of liberation, it must reject the reductionist pedagogical practice of limiting critique to the analyses of cultural products such as texts, books, films and other commodities." (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 11.)

According to Lankshear and Lawler (1987, p. 216), "Proper literacy comprises practices of reading and writing which enhance people's control over their lives and their capacity for making rational judgements and decisions by enabling them to identify, understand and act to transform social relations and practices in which power is structured unequally".

Lankshear and Lawler observe that in many social contexts, there is hostility to the practice of what they term "proper literacy" (above), and where, because of dominant ideology, policy and social conditions, those in dominant positions work actively against minority groups gaining literacy of the sort which enables them to "confront their oppression" (1987 p. 216). They contrast the Nicaraguan revolution to these contexts: in the case of Nicaragua, since the revolutionary government avowed commitment to the interests of the traditionally oppressed majority group, official policy adopted in Nicaragua promoted a form of literacy which included an exploration of the patterns of domination which had been common practice before the revolution. In this context, the Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade of 1980 aimed to enlist the active participation of learners in the "replacement of the oppressive with the emancipatory" (Lankshear and Lawler, 1987, p. 217). In this official campaign, there was a

conscious attempt to give learners a particular understanding of how history had been made, and how it might be influenced in the present and future. Thus, literacy primers used in the crusade had, as sentences and themes, “We are rebuilding our nation”, “Brave people gave their lives for our freedom”, “We did not want to be slaves” and “Sandino planted the seed of freedom”.

It would be difficult for these literacy campaigners to counter the obvious charge that it is simple indoctrination to foreground political conscientisation in literacy classes where learners are prevented by their own educational limitations from reading material written from any other political perspective. In reality, the literacy campaign was a useful strategy in the political transformation in Nicaragua. In offering (in the first year of the revolutionary regime) hitherto disenfranchised peasants a particular view of history, that emphasised their past disenfranchisement, as well as a conception of the role they could play in the new dispensation, the literacy campaign offered a virtual highway to nation state building. Its outcomes were claimed to include

- the reduction of illiteracy from 50% to under 23%³
- physical improvements in communities where literacy workers lived, and
- transformation of the political culture, in which previously marginalised groups were integrated, the unification of urban and rural Nicaragua as well as both coastal regions, the improvement in the status of women, the engagement of youth in the revolution and the increased strength of mass organisations. (Armove, 1987)

That the Sandinista government lost the 1990 election (when erstwhile supporters became disillusioned with the government, and the nation was in a state of war weariness from relentless military interference by the United States), meant that the Sandinista’s attempt to use education as a critical tool in the vigorous creation of a new political culture was cut short. However, they provided a vital example of at least temporary success in the use of basic education in political liberation or, from the point of view of Nicaraguan opposition groups, in large scale political indoctrination. (Armove and Dewees, 1991).

³ Nicaragua’s population is currently only 4.1million. The reduction of the literacy rate referred to here meant that just over 400 000 adults had learnt to read and write.

On the other hand, the lack of success of initiatives to use literacy as a catalyst to end the poverty and alienation of marginalised groups, such as UNESCO's Experimental World Literacy Programme, has led to suggestions that literacy is the result rather than the cause of social change (Scribner and Cole, 1988 p. 76). Graff noted in 1987 (p. 384) that in spite of general suppositions that raised literacy rates could be expected to result in invigorated economic development and the political foundations for democracy, considerable gains in educational levels between the early seventies and the time of his writing had not resulted in significant progress for democracy, economic development or increased social equality in Africa, Latin America or Asia. Literacy, according to Graff is best seen as a "dependent factor, a result itself and more an interactive, conditioning and shaping instrument than a determining one" (1987 p. 383).

However, what is undeniable is that Freire's conceptualisation of literacy as power has had widespread appeal and huge impact. Much of what has become common practice in adult basic education classes in countries across the world, down to simple details such as seating arrangements where learners are ranged in a circle so that they are facing one another as well as the facilitator, or the use of discussions in which central and common concerns of the learners are the focus of learning were first practised in adult basic education in Freirian "culture circles".

Freire's influence in South Africa has been very strong. In the 1980s and early 90s, many organisations who were involved in political mobilisation operated under the banner of literacy. For some, the development of reading and writing as practical skills was subordinated to their main focus on the political aspect of literacy. For example, a facilitators' training course run by TELL (Training in English Language and Literacy, a Johannesburg-based NGO) in 1992 devoted only one afternoon of a week long training programme to instruction in teaching reading and writing. The focus for the rest of the course was squarely on political consciousness raising (TELL Literacy facilitators' course observed at Tembalethu, Pietermaritzburg, 1992).

Literacy as adaptation

Literacy for adaptation, or functional literacy, sees literacy in terms of the ways in which people use, or are required to use, literacy related skills. This metaphor appears to have had two separate eras of currency as a dominant view, perhaps particularly in the South African context. The first was the result of the realisation that the simple definition of literacy agreed upon by UNESCO in the early 1950s and the perception of literacy that it represented did not adequately express what being literate implied. UNESCO's definition in the 1950s was: "A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life" (Graff, 1987). This definition permitted the description of being literate to be applied to a nonsensically low level of the skills expected in relation to the term. In fact, it is probably this definition that enabled organisations to claim with impunity that they could ~~teach people to read in twenty five minutes~~ (Lyster, in Hutton, B. 1992, p. 31), or in a hitherto unfamiliar second language in two weeks (as claimed by the director of Operation Upgrade in 1990 (Cameron, 1990). In response to the inadequacy of this definition, there was a move to describe literacy skills in terms of their functionality.

Hence the definition announced by the International Committee of Experts on Literacy in 1956:

A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development. (UNESCO, 1978, quoted in Harley et al, 1996 p. 18).

In this perspective, the activities that literacy skills enable people to engage in were given prominence. Literacy was perceived to be useful in the process of modernisation. It was regarded as a set of skills necessary for individuals to have if they were to fulfil the roles expected of them as valuable and productive citizens, and consideration of what these skills were led to the realisation that literacy had to have a subject, in other words, people had to

read and write particular things for particular purposes.

This definition lost general acceptability with the advent of the political definitions springing from the work of Paulo Freire, (described above) which presented a much broader view of literacy. Freire's influence can be detected in a later internationally agreed definition of literacy from the International Symposium for Literacy in 1975. This definition, which in a sense merges the view of literacy as adaptation with the view of literacy as power is known as The Declaration of Persepolis, which considers literacy to be

not just the process of learning the skills of reading and writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiatives and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development. It should open the way to mastery of techniques and human actions. Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right . . . Literacy is a political act . . . Literacy . . . would constitute the first stage of basic education.

(Bataille, in Harley et al, 1996 p. 19).

However, in South Africa, the 1990s have seen the second wind of functional literacy, or literacy as adaptation. As the country emerged from the isolation resulting from apartheid, and enjoyed contact and normal interaction with other countries, it was drawn into the paradigm of competency based training as the internationally dominant paradigm in vocational education. This model was first imported from Australia by Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In it, literacy training, by this time already broadened in scope and referred to as "Adult Basic Education" was, like other forms of education and training, expected to result in the acquisition of generic skills that could be applied across a range of contexts, and, through the development of these skills to facilitate labour mobility (Harley et al, 1996 p. 83). It was regarded with optimism by trade unions, industry and the government alike as a catalyst for transforming a workforce "characterised by low

productivity, and low initiative into a clever, highly productive, well informed labour force characterised by high initiative” (Harley et al, 1996 p. 81).

Inasmuch as the literacy as the adaptation metaphor accommodates differing contexts in which literacy skills are applied, and the range of purposes to which they are put, it gained acclaim as a more authentic view of literacy, with an immediate appeal to intuition and common sense. However, the huge range of literacy skills and purposes that the metaphor must encompass, as well as the impossibility of defining functional needs on behalf of individuals, makes it inconclusive and raises questions that further complicate the definition of literacy. One such example is McLuhan’s suggestion that technological advances in communication media are likely to reduce literacy requirements for all, and a related suggestion that facility in the use of these new media constitute new forms of literacy. (Scribner, in Kintgen et al 1988 p. 74).

Perceptions of literacy in a post modern paradigm

Writing from the perspective of post modernism, some writers have challenged the assumptions which have been traditionally implicit in the study of literacy, including the metaphors described above. Their position is that literacy is not an absolute nor universally common skill or set of skills. They contend that the perspective of Western academic culture has unjustly dominated literacy discourse, and its particular perspectives have overshadowed competing and equally valid alternative perspectives.

Brian Street is one of the most influential theorists within this paradigm. Street maintained in 1984 that there were essentially only two models of literacy, the autonomous model and the ideological model. In the autonomous model, regarded by Street as invalid, literacy is viewed as a set of neutral, technical skills, used in a common way by all who have acquired it. Within this model, as has been noted above, literacy was for some years generally and optimistically regarded as a catalyst with far reaching and profound effects (spanning all three metaphors explored on the preceding pages) such as economic development, social mobility, political

tolerance and cognitive changes. In the ideological model, proposed by Street as valid, literacy is seen as a set of skills and practices which have meaning only in the context in which they are used. In this view, the way these skills are learnt and used reflects the social structure and power relations of the background community and therefore its consequences are variable and completely dependent on its context (Street, 1984). As a social anthropologist, Street analyses literacy as practices 'embedded' within particular social and cultural contexts. Integral to this analysis, and congruent with current trends in social disciplines, is the view that no single perception of literacy has superior validity, and that therefore multiple literacies must be acknowledged, as must different domains and genres of literacy (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996).

The concept of multiple, equally valid literacies advanced by authors such as Street, and Prinsloo and Breier goes much further than does Graff's perception of varied literacies when he suggests (1987, p. 11) that there are different kinds of literacies such as alphabetic, spacial and graphic, mathematical, symbolic, technological, mechanical and so on. While Graff stresses that literacy is 'above all a set of techniques for communication and for decoding and reproducing written or printed materials' (1987 p. 4), the view proposed by Street and others is that there are some literacies which are competencies not necessarily involving skills associated with written or printed materials at all.

These new literacies can be compared, according to Hamilton (1994) with new perceptions of spoken language arising from recent work in linguistics. For linguists, it has become outdated and politically incorrect to refer to a 'standard language', by which was meant the form used by a social or politically dominant and elite section of its speakers. It is more in keeping with currently accepted thinking in linguistics as well as other spheres to acknowledge a range of forms of any language, including forms spoken by marginal and relatively powerless groups of speakers, as all are equally valid from a linguistic point of view. Similarly, regarding multiple literacies as equally valid implies an acknowledgement that people in less dominant cultures may interpret, experience and use literacy in ways that differ from those obvious to people within the dominant Western culture. From this perspective literacy is a set of practices and particular types of communication involving "complex transactions between the

many styles of spoken language and the many forms and purposes that written language may take” (Hamilton, Barton and Ivanic 1994 p. 2). Implicit in this conceptualisation of literacy is the perception that a person who is perceived to be illiterate according to benchmarks that characterise literacy within Western cultural practices may be literate according to other benchmarks, which must, in this paradigm, be accorded validity equal to that traditionally accorded to accepted Western standards.

This conceptual shift in literacy discourse is in harmony with the move currently popular in social research towards ethnographic studies in which context is assigned prominence, and in which, contrary to much traditional research, there is no comparison to standard yardsticks. In this model, literacy is researched in terms of the role played by literacy-related skills and the purposes associated with these skills in societies, or in groups within societies, or in the lives of individual people. This view of literacy has become known as the New Literacy Studies.

In 1996 the Department of Adult Education at the University of Cape Town and the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education at the University of the Western Cape completed a research project within the paradigm of the New Literacy Studies. In framing their research within this paradigm they “turned the ubiquitous question ‘What can we do about illiteracy? (In which ‘we’ are the literate and the competent) into ‘What are unschooled people doing in relation to print literacy?’” (Morphet in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 p. 257). The question was prompted by the observation that in spite of the fact that there are a great many people in South Africa who have been denied a basic education, adult basic education classes are not filled. Therefore it can be concluded that people are not claiming their right to literacy or basic education in the form in which it is usually perceived. The New Literacy Studies view strongly suggests that what ordinary people perceive as ‘literate’ may well differ from the traditionalist view, and that their perceptions should be acknowledged.

In pursuit of their research question, Prinsloo and Breier documented literacy practices among unschooled people in a range of contexts in fine detail. The contexts in which they studied literacy practices included the taxi industry, general workers at a school, gangsters in a shanty

town, and residents of an ex-Coloured Reserve in Namaqualand, informal settlements and townships. In the course of this study they found instances of practices related to literacy such as

- reliance on others for help with reading signs and documents (in the taxi industry)
- the use (by management at a school) of complex language and format of letters to employees in order to make them less likely to take issue with the content
- the use (by a ratepayers' association) of complex and technical forms of English to marginalise squatter camp representatives from debates
- the use of written language for display, for example of the Bible in some church services, where it is on public view, and prominently positioned in photographs but never read, of a note accompanying an oral message that is quite formally accepted but not read, and of certificates used to attest to the proficiency of traditional African herbalists
- notes sent with children to a chemist with one or two colloquial words to indicate medications required.

In his comment on the findings of this study Morphet suggests that the value placed on literacy by the communities referred to in this study is not different from other goods and services involved in transactions within the different communities. He does emphasise however, that for these communities, school literacy is quite distinct from the literacy skills used and passed on among the people whose practices were researched in this study. He describes school literacy as a “marker on the fault lines of social power”, which casts a “shadow of power” across cases (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996, p. 259). In contrast, he notes that informal literacy learning described in this study as “apprenticeships” and “mediation”, where skills are transferred in transactional ways, is not imbued with power beyond other skills common in the community.

Nowhere in the book is the value of literacy gained in ABE classes compared with school literacy or literacy gained in the ‘apprenticeships’ described above, but the reader is left with the impression that in the experience of these communities, only formal school learning

brings learners to the point of competence in literacy and language skill that is necessary for playing a meaningful role (without requiring that communications be simplified) in public debates and official processes - the kinds of communication that have come to be referred to as the discourses of power.

A dilemma associated with the New Literacy Studies paradigm for teachers who might try and follow it within their practice, and therefore avoid teaching literacy according to traditionally recognised benchmarks, is neatly described by Irene Schwab (Hamilton, Barton and Ivanic 1994 pp. 135-7). She notes that although linguists claim that variations of a language have equal validity, this does not take entrenched social implications into account. The variations might have linguistic equivalence, but they tend to be valued differently in that historically they have been, and continue to be, indicators of social class, culture and social status. While Schwab regards the Language Experience Approach of teaching learners to read and write in English as highly effective, the ultimate outcomes meet few of the students' needs. The Language Experience Approach to teaching English literacy, based on the language forms and patterns students use in their informal lives, accords positively with the New Literacy Studies approach. However, according to Schwab's report (Hamilton, Barton and Ivanic, 1994), what students learn through this approach does not help them in cases of usage such as job seeking, furthering their formal education or dealing with bureaucracies. In Schwab's experience at the Hackney Reading Centre in Canada, learners come to adult classes with a desire to learn what they need in order to gain a greater degree of acceptance from dominant groups in the society in which they live. A quote from a black volunteer teacher (Schwab in Hamilton, Barton and Ivanic, 1994 p. 137) expresses the situation admirably:

I'm not saying you shouldn't teach them how to write in dialect, but at the same time, the reason most of them want to, is not because they want just to write to friends, but some of them want not to feel left out of this society, and so putting them into a dialect mould isn't really helping them.

In the same vein, it must be said that while the colourful first hand accounts of literacy

practices in *The Social Uses of Literacy* (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996) give a refreshingly live picture of ordinary peoples' use of literacy skills, the writers' claim that these are equally valid to literacy practices traditionally recognised in Western contexts can not be construed to mean that they are equivalent. Most of the uses described for literacy in the case studies in this book are very simple. Relatively minute amounts of information are conveyed, and this usually in unambiguous situations where the demands on the reader and writer are very low. To present these uses as equivalent to the far more complex purposes which literacy has traditionally served, even in something as relatively simple as reading a newspaper report and judging its veracity and bias, would be condescending and hypocritical. A parallel situation would be to accord Fanakalo, with the restricted communication it makes possible, the same status as a means of communication as is accorded to the Zulu language.

The debate between proponents and opponents of the New Literacy Studies continues. Jonathan Geidt, in a commentary on the New Literacy Studies (Geidt, 1994) criticises the New Literacy Studies, particularly in the perspective offered by writers such as Gee, who take the notion of multiple literacies beyond the limits of reading and writing to areas such as 'visual literacy' (the reading of pictures and diagrams), for including so many different cultural practices (in an infinite number of contexts) that the field becomes impossible to research. The impossibility arises from the necessity within this approach to explore and describe the contexts and communities in which each practice is ingrained as incomparable wholes. Geidt's persuasive view is that this inevitably leads to a "doctrinal straitjacket" (Geidt 1994, p. 10). He argues strongly that in foregrounding context to the exclusion of other factors, this approach to the study of literacy clouds the fact that texts and documents themselves can be powerful influences, and that literacy, seen simply as competent application of the skills of reading and writing can be imbued with social significance that is comparable across different contexts. In arguing for the acknowledgement of one literacy as opposed to the multiple incomparable literacies of the New Literacy Studies, Geidt urges the acceptance of "the legitimacy of a research approach that treats literacy as a discrete set of interconnected skills that are measurable and that exist in a number of social contexts in which they may dialogically interact" (Geidt 1994, p. 16).

The relative position of mother-tongue literacy

In the course of the changing and expanding definition of literacy, basic literacy in African languages in South Africa has been devalued, in that the 'purchasing power' of this literacy has decreased as more and more people can claim it. This has happened as literacy classes have metamorphosed into adult basic education classes, where mother tongue literacy is offered to beginner learners not for its own importance, but most often as an approach to literacy in English, or in some areas, Afrikaans as the language most used in economic and political spheres. This literacy in the language used in communications where real power is wielded over people's lives is seen by all stakeholders, especially learners, to be of much greater importance than mother tongue literacy. The implication of this is that literacy in the first language of learners is perceived as simply the initial step in a long process of learning, with even the most elementary milestone being competence in speaking and writing the local dominant language, which in this country is now, in most regions, English. Increasingly, there are calls too for mathematical competence and skills training (Wagner, in Harley et al, 1996).

In the *Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training* of October 1997, eight learning areas selected by the Adult Education and Training Directorate of the South African National Department of Education are listed as follows:

- ▶ language, literacy and communication;
- ▶ mathematical literacy, mathematics and mathematical sciences;
- ▶ human and social sciences;
- ▶ natural sciences;
- ▶ technology;
- ▶ economic and management sciences;
- ▶ life orientation and
- ▶ arts and culture.

(National Department of Education: Directorate: Adult Education and Training 1997)

It is important to note that, as well as extending Adult Basic Education to include areas of learning not before associated with this sector of education, this definition of learning areas

will have the effect of further devaluing basic literacy in the first language, since it is included with a second language in the learning area 'language, literacy and communication'. There is considerable pressure on ABE learners to become proficient in English as quickly as possible. Therefore, neither learners, programme planners nor funding agencies tend to see any purpose in encouraging learners to study literacy in the first language since it earns no credit separate from that gained through the study of the second language, which is automatically desired by all stakeholders.

Recently there have been two South African initiatives, both of which were aimed at stimulating and encouraging literacy in African languages. The first was a call in 1999 by the organisation Easy Reading for Adults (ERA) to have the next ten years declared 'the National Decade of Reading in South Africa'. Suggestions made that would, if implemented, strengthen the position of African languages included

- building the status of African languages through the implementation of sound language policies for first and second language in schools
- the training of teachers in teaching reading as a skill, teaching creative writing and promoting a multilingual environment
- making indigenous African language writing as accessible as possible
- fostering debates about written forms of African languages
- increasing public awareness of language development in South Africa
- increasing the diversity and availability of books in African languages

(Easy Reading for Adults, 1999)

The second initiative supporting literacy in African languages has been the planning of The South African Literacy Campaign (alternatively referred to as the South African National Literacy Initiative). The emphasis of this campaign, planned for 2001 is squarely on the basics of reading in the mother tongue, and one of its central commitments is to make available basic literacy teaching sets of material in all eleven official languages of South Africa. Mother tongue literacy at a level of reading a variety of simple texts and using writing for a number of everyday tasks is fore-grounded among the stated learner outcomes (South African Institute for Distance Education, 2000).

These initiatives to enhance the standing of African languages as languages of literacy and learning must be applauded. But during 2001 Easy Reading for Adults virtually closed down, and in the same year, designated as the year for implementation of the South African Literacy Campaign, progress towards the starting the campaign can only be described as halting, consisting more of skirmishes for political territory than any real movement towards solid plans or actual implementation.

Chances of success for any initiative such as the ones described above ultimately depend entirely on the political will of native speakers of African languages and the extent to which the government in power echoes and affirms this will. If these initiatives pique a sense of language patriotism among speakers of African languages, and they are able to see worth in their languages as languages of learning, the standing of mother tongue literacy may be enhanced. However, given the current social environment of South Africa, with the glaring lack of improvement in the quality of life for most ordinary people despite increasing numbers of people completing secondary school and at least being literate in their mother tongue, this is unlikely. People see that literacy in the mother tongue is absolutely no safeguard against unemployment and powerlessness. In contrast, real facility in written and spoken English is undoubtedly perceived as a marker for success. As a result, parents are more than willing to sacrifice their children's competence in both spoken and written African languages for proficiency in English. That one's child, as a pupil in an English first language school, speaks the language without a trace of an African accent is clearly a source of pride for many parents who have put their children in English schools. Similarly, the most compelling and urgent desire among ABE learners is to achieve mastery of English.

Noble intentions and laudable initiatives notwithstanding, unless genuine, concrete and preferably economic advantages of being literate in the mother tongue become perceptible to ordinary people, the prospects for promoting the standing of mother tongue literacy are dismal.

What is expected of ABE programmes

The expectations of the vast majority of ABE programmes, both local and international, have been, in accordance with Brian Street's autonomous model of literacy, generally established on the premise that learners can be expected to acquire predictable and particular skills and knowledge which will equip them to function better in some way.

On an international level

On the level of communities, societies and nations, high rates and levels of literacy are generally associated with economic growth, industrialisation, gross national product per capita wealth, political stability and representative democracy (Graff, 1987, p. 9). As a result of this correlation, although there is no base of coherent explanation or analysis of it, literacy itself has often been accorded the status of a major causal factor in advancing economic performance, political change and development in communities and even whole nations. Because literacy is something that people think can be easily, quickly and cheaply taught on a mass scale, national literacy has often been promoted on the basis of the assumption that it will automatically result in improvement in national development and wealth (Harley et al, 1996, p. 80).

At the level of the individual, literacy has had assigned to it, in Graff's words, a "truly daunting number of cognitive, affective, behavioural and attitudinal effects" (Kintgen Kroll and Rose 1988, p. 83). He offers lists (Graff, 1987, p. 382 and 1988, p. 83) that include: innovativeness, achievement orientation, empathy, cosmopolitan views, national identification, technological acceptance and development, modernisation, mobility, economic development and independence, commitment to democracy, rationality, morality, urbanisation, an improved quality of life, lower birth rates, linearity of thought, access to information and knowledge, political stability, commitment to nonviolence, lowered crime levels, abandonment of pagan, tribal or superstitious beliefs, critical awareness of the self, others and power relations, good health practices, cleanliness, better parenting skills and strong powers of discrimination between good and evil, or what is functionally beneficial as opposed to what is not.

In discussing qualities often attributed to literacy, Graff noted (1979) that research had a tendency to suggest that functionally literate adults were inclined to be “more empathetic, more innovative in agriculture and at home, more achievement motivated, and more cosmopolitan than literates; they also have larger farms, greater exposure to media and political information, and more often serve as opinion leaders. Literates in addition, identify more with a nation than a community or ethnic group, aspire to post-secondary education for sons, and are more aware of new opportunities.” Graff also notes that in urban places of residence, literacy is associated with birth control and technological awareness, but warns that whether these attitudes and attributes result from literacy, or literacy from them and other influences, remains unclear.

Askov, among other writers, notes (Askov 1993), that learners, unions and employers all have expectations associated with ABE programmes, usually still referred to in the United States as literacy programmes. In her view, learners’ expectations are in most cases seen to be important, because, since their participation is voluntary, they tend to leave literacy programmes if these expectations are not fulfilled. Unions’ expectations of literacy programmes are associated with general development and improvements in welfare, while employers’ expectations relate to development of job-related skills.

Hull (1993) notes the generally accepted belief that illiteracy costs business and the taxpayer dearly because it is associated with:

- low productivity,
- accidents,
- absenteeism,
- poor product quality,
- lost supervisors’ time,
- costly errors of mis-measuring, and
- misapprehension of information.

According to Diekhoff (1988) it is generally agreed that the ultimate goal of adult literacy training is to improve peoples' lives by way of:

- improved employment
- enhanced community involvement
- home ownership
- parental involvement with children's education
- use of books, magazines and libraries

Empirical investigation of the plausibility of any of these expectations is rare. Diekhoff (1988) suggests that because people are unwilling to hear anything other than positive reports from literacy programmes, there is a general avoidance of rigorous empirical investigation that might yield unwelcome information.

Vélis, (1990) writing of unexpectedly high rates of illiteracy in developed countries notes that while unemployment is no longer regarded as due to a lack of literacy skills, there is still a generally held perception that long term unemployment is related to inadequate schooling, and associated lack of basic structured knowledge and vocational skills. In his view unreliable economic studies have given rise to "alarmist ideas" such as "illiteracy is expensive", "illiteracy is an impediment to economic development" and "illiteracy is a threat to the future of ageing societies." The point that Vélis makes may be summed up to be that while illiteracy is much more common in industrialised societies than is generally thought, its incidence does not threaten these societies; it does however, have serious consequences for people who are members of these societies, but are not literate. Their illiteracy makes many opportunities inaccessible to them, and they often feel a deep sense of shame. ^{NB}

Finally, Edwin Delattre makes an important point: "It is more fun to be in communication with human beings now long dead than to be confined to the companionship of those who can reach us only in speech. It is more fun to . . . read or write a love letter than to be reduced to . . . telephone conversations . . . In the end, this is one of the most compelling arguments for learning itself: in general, life is more fun when we can bring powerful habits of learning into

play than when we cannot. It is more fun to read Shakespeare than never to do so, more fun to understand the Declaration of Independence than not, more fun to cultivate one's mind than to waste it. It is more fun, and it is immeasurably less boring." (in Bailey and Fosheim 1983 p. 54).

Expectations of ABE programmes in South Africa

In South Africa's change to a democratic system of government in 1994, it was perceived that Adult Basic Education and Further Education and Training (FET) could be used to address some of the inequalities and disadvantage inherited from the apartheid system, as well as the economic challenges facing the country. To this end policies and plans were developed that were intended to provide a framework for the delivery of a comprehensive system of adult education. These policies included the Adult Basic Education and Training Act (No 52 of 2000), national ABET policies, the Multi-year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training of 1997 and most recently, the Implementation Plan for Tirisano of 2000. Specific goals seen to be in the reach of the ABE system are discussed below.

With regard to workplace adult basic education programmes in particular, substantial resources have been devoted to their development, and much optimism attached to their expected impact. For example, in the executive report of the National Training Strategy Initiative of 1994, the aims of adult basic education and training include the development of the potential of learners, their written and spoken communication skills in more than one language, their participation in society as a whole, and their critical understanding of society (National Training Board, 1994). The adult basic education and training agreement between the Chamber of Mines and the National Union of Mineworkers states that ABE should, inter alia, provide a base for further learning, and develop skills that enable workers to participate more actively in the process of change in the mining industry and the country (Chamber of Mines and the National Union of Mineworkers, 1994/5). The voice of the unions is clear in the articulation of these aims; their approach to adult basic education is consistent with the radical approach to literacy, in which empowerment of workers is seen as paramount.

Management, on the other hand, invest in ABE programmes as staff development, from which they expect increased productivity and a more stable, adaptable and trainable workforce; their approach is more consistent with the functional approach to literacy, which stresses the acquisition of concretely applicable skills.

Expectations of the State

Expectations of what can be gained from a basic education were expressed in the executive report of the National Training Strategy Initiative (National Training Board, 1994). The report states that ABE should

- develop potential;
- result in participation in society as a whole;
- develop communication skills in mother tongue and English;
- develop mathematical skills;
- build a democratic society;
- enhance job creation schemes;
- develop critical understanding of society;
- develop understanding of the world of science and technology.

Expectations of ABET in South Africa are implicit in the definition offered by the National Department of Education (in *Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training*, October 1997, p. 1):

Adult basic education and training introduces citizens to a culture of learning and provides them with the foundations for acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for social and economic development, justice and equality. It also provides access to further and higher education, training and employment.

The state's expectations of ABET are stated more fully in *A National Multi-year*

Implementation plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation:

- Adult Basic Education and Training must be provided to redress discrimination and past inequalities, and be of such quality and relevance as to equip people for full participation in social, economic and political life.
- at a political level there is an imperative to redress the inequalities of the past. This necessitates providing an accessible and open learning system for those previously excluded or disadvantaged by both the quality and the quantity of provisioning.
- at an economic level there is an imperative to integrate previously fragmented and inadequate systems of education and training and to ensure that the learning provided is within a “fit for purpose” framework. This involves ensuring that learning provided at the Adult Basic Education and Training level equips people both for further learning and for accessing or developing employment opportunities according to their needs, choices and circumstances.
- at a government level, there is an imperative, linked to both the political and economic requirements, to ensure that the education and training systems are integrated within the national human resources development strategy and economic growth and development programmes.

(Department of Education: Directorate: Adult Education and Training, 1997, pp. 2 - 3).

These core values are the same that inspired the principles spelled out in the Reconstruction and Development Plan for the implementation of ABE and other programmes as follows:

Programmes should

- be integrated and sustainable, using resources in a coherent and purposeful effort;
- focus on people's needs and rely on their energies for implementation, thus ensuring active involvement and growing empowerment;

- promote peace and security, building on and expanding the national drive for peace, and focussing especially on forms of violence to which women are subjected;
- recognise and protect the diversity of the country's people, accommodating the needs of minority groups for cultural identity;
- link reconstruction and development in the process of nation building
- ensure thoroughly democratic participation of decision making processes;

(Reconstruction and Development Plan White Paper Discussion Document 1994.)

In the last few years there has been unprecedented rapidity of policy development and changes in education and training, culminating in the National Education Act (Act no. 27 of 1996) and the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (Act no. 58 of 1995).

From the point of view of an employing organisation within the state sector in post apartheid South Africa, Sendall, in a paper on implications, challenges and benefits of ABE for the South African Defence Force, Sendall describes advantages of workplace ABE programmes. His description can be summarised as follows:

- improved communication in the work place (since learners can communicate more effectively in English or Afrikaans as a result of participation in ABE classes),
- improved employee commitment, productivity, and retention rates,
- facilitation of further training because of the development of basic skills, and
- the ability of workers to be trained to do a wide range of tasks.

(Sendall 1996, pp. 27 - 30)

He emphasises that investment in setting up and maintaining ABE classes has to be made long before any dividend is evident.

Expectations of the private sector

In a research publication incorporating interviews with thirty two South African organisations, Pennington lists anticipated benefits from literacy programmes as:

- moving towards becoming a world class manufacturer with wider buy-in to the companies' vision and values
- enhanced motivation
- improved communication
- more mobile workers able to become multi-skilled and transfer between jobs
- improved self esteem of workers as the company is taking notice and being serious [about meeting their needs] (Pennington, 1994, p. 51),

Very positive expectations associated with adult basic education are frequently proclaimed within the mining industry, which is probably the most prominent player in the private sector. In an Adult Basic Education and training agreement entered into by the Chamber of Mines and the National Union of Mineworkers in October 1994, (Industrial Democracy Review, 1995, pp. 52 -54), the aims of the programme were listed as:

- To provide education and training as a basis for further learning.
- To develop workers' skills and knowledge [so that they could] participate more actively in the process of change in the mining industry and in the country as a whole.
- To contribute towards removing all discriminatory barriers within the industry, particularly racial.

In order to achieve these aims, the Chamber of Mines announced that ABE programmes under its control should exemplify the following principles:

- **legitimacy** - for both providers and learners,
- **integration** - [the ABE programme should] form part of an overall human

resources development policy.

- **Coherence and flexibility** - adherence to principles and frameworks for certification which may be established at national and industry level, but allow for sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individual learners and providers.
- **Involvement** - provision for the participation of all stakeholders.
- **Standards** - based on clearly expressed standards expressed as competencies.
- **Access** - provide access to all employees.
- **Articulation** - provision, on successful completion of accredited units of learning to move from one course to another.
- **Portability** - provision for successful learners to transfer credits or qualifications, from one provider or user to another.
- **Recognition of prior learning** - give recognition to prior learning.
- **Voluntarism** - provide for individuals to undertake learning on a voluntary basis.
- **Further opportunities** - provide for employees to benefit from learning and employment options aligned with career paths.
- **Relevance** - shall address provider needs at industry and enterprise level and be relevant to national, community and individual development needs.

Industrial Democracy Review (1995, p. 53)

In 1995, the mining industry's faith in the power of adult basic education was reiterated when Bill Nairn, Johannesburg Chamber of Industries' managing director, announcing an Adult Basic Education and Training agreement between Johannesburg Chamber of Industries and the National Union of Mineworkers signed in 1996 stated: "ABET, properly constructed between both parties will help us achieve the human resource capabilities along the same lines as competitive mining industries world wide" (South African Mining World, 1995, p. 13)

The mining industry's commitment to ABE in its practical form was demonstrated in 1995 by the replacement of standard 8 (now known as grade 10) as a minimum educational level for a Blasting Certificate by English and Numeracy at ABET level 3, which is regarded as

approximately equivalent to standard 5 (now grade 7). (South African Mining World, 1995, p. 4, Centre for Adult Education, 2001, p. 58). The change to ABET 3 was prompted by recommendations by the advisory committee, which represented employees, the National Union of Mineworkers, the Underground Officials Association, the White Mineworkers' Union, the Chamber of Mines and Sasol. There was thus across the board support for the change. It was seen as positive in that the standard 8 requirement had "long prevented experienced and competent black workers who did not have formal education from obtaining a blasting certificate, thereby stemming their career development opportunities" (Pik Botha, then minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs, on making the announcement, Mining World, 1995.) The minister stressed that the change in the minimum educational level would not imply a drop in safety standards, and that training and examination of blasters would not change.

Currie (Mining World, 1996, pp. 34 - 35), articulates the aims of ABE programmes from the perspective of the mining industry in Lesotho a programme called the "Wheel of change programme", an organisational intervention in which ABE was integrated with an innovative orientation training. Results from this programme included

- greater participation in meetings,
- goals becoming common to workers and management,
- teams became self-directed,
- improved commitment to training and development,
- an increase in safety and productivity, and
- increased pay to stope workers

Productivity improvements cited are a change from 15 cubic metres mined per employee in 1994 to 24 cubic metres mined per employee in 1996. The report did not mention any change in technology in the two year period cited in this comparison.

More prosaic aims for ABE within the mining industry articulated by Currie can be summarised as:

- improvements in safety standards (Elandsrand mine had a 35% improvement target),
- multi-skilling, so that all members of a work group are able to perform all tasks that have to be done by the group,

Like Sendall (1996), Currie warns against expectations of immediate results, and suggests that successful ABE programmes in the mining industry are characterised by customisation to suit particular needs and have specific goals that do not imply extensive change.

COSATU identified a lack of literacy and numeracy skills as the reason for workers' failure to benefit from training programmes (South African Labour Bulletin, pp. 46 - 51).

Spokesmen for the organisation called for immediate provision of extensive adult basic education and training, indicating that they had a strong expectation that through ABET people could gain skills necessary to run industries, to shape and develop economic policies, to build a democratic society and to enhance job creation.

COSATU echoed much of the agreement between NUMSA and the Chamber of Mines in the governing principles it called for in ABET, but in addition, it called for industry to contribute to the development of a literate workforce by providing facilities for programmes to be run, by allowing workers paid time off to attend classes, and to contribute to the costs of developing ABET material for use by learners other than employees. It also argued that there should be generally agreed on and applied principles for the selection of ABET teachers and the development of ABET programmes.

Other industries within the private sector have also looked to ABE for various forms of salvation. Literacy in the workplace was advocated by a representative of the commercial ABE provider Interman to the Building Industry Federation of South Africa (BIFSA) in 1994 as a sort of insurance against misunderstandings that may result in go-slows, strikes and other work related problems. Addressing the building industry, and, it must be noted, writing from the perspective of a company whose purpose is to provide ABE for profit, Interman's representative contended that problems relating to employees in the industry are aggravated by lack of communication skills, thinking skills and life skills that are acquired at school, and

that ABE in the workplace can help overcome this deficiency. Positive outcomes of workplace ABE programmes, for both companies and learners, mentioned by Lear (1994) may be summarised as

- improving understanding, self confidence and general knowledge,
- developing communication skills, and outlook toward jobs.

Lear argues that as communication is improved, performance is upgraded and advancement facilitated, and predicts that the overall result is a better work climate, enhanced life skills (on the part of the learners), better understanding of business culture, increased participation at work, stronger identification with the company and higher morale as a result of personal development (Lear, 1994). While these claims are clearly part of a sales pitch of a commercial company, they convey the expectations of ABE in the workplace at their most optimistic.

National Skills Development Strategy

The National Skills Development Strategy of 2001 identifies priorities for skills developments and sets yardsticks, referred to as 'success indicators', for the measuring of progress towards goals in this programme of skills development in South Africa.

The goals of this national strategy are linked with expectations of ABE; the first objective of the strategy is the development of a culture of high quality life long learning, for which one of the yardsticks set is that by March 2005 70% of all workers should have a qualification at Level 1 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF 1), which is equal to the school leaving age of grade 9. Helping adults reach this stage is seen as a prerequisite for further learning (Department of Labour, 2001. p. 20).

Other objectives of the national skills development strategy include

- fostering skills development in the formal economy for productivity and employment growth,
- stimulating and supporting skills development in small businesses
- promoting skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods through social development initiatives, and
- assisting new entrants into employment

(Department of Labour, 2001, pp. 32-33).

The extent of investment in workplace adult basic education programmes in South Africa

The sector in which the most substantial investment of resources in workplace ABE programmes was made was the mining sector in the 1970s, partly to meet conditions of corporate responsibility demanded by foreign investors, and partly to prepare employees for skills training, for which they needed some degree of literacy (Harley et al, 1996). At the same time as foreign financial partners withdrew from interaction with South African companies in the 1980s, mining profits dropped from their highs of the early 70s, and the South African government of that time failed to support, or actively undermined attempts to educate and develop the capacity of unskilled black workers, particularly in the mining houses by “not allowing tax benefits, and refusing to regard literacy as legitimate ‘training’”(van Heerden, 1991). As a result, many of these programmes were discontinued. Currently only about 20% of mining companies offer ABE programmes to their workers, and in these programmes only a fraction of potential ABE learners are accommodated. (Centre for Adult Education, 2001).

In the 1990s, ‘human resource development’ became the mode in many forward looking South African companies, particularly those concerned with projecting an image acceptable to the new government. Union demands for staff development were readily acceded to, sometimes so readily as to take unions by surprise, unprepared for subsequent negotiations necessary for putting in place policy for company ABE programmes (personal communication from one of the co-ordinators of a project documented by the Durban Regional Literacy Co-operation, 1992). During this time of emphasis on human resource development, companies strove to develop the ethos of, and become known as “learning organisations”, a phrase that became commonly used in the early 90s. An aspect of what it meant to belong to a “learning organisation” was that the organisation supported the ideal of life long learning, and invested in employees’ development. It provided opportunities for workers to enhance their skills and educational development, and offered prospects for advancement to developing employees rather than seeking to fill positions that became vacant within the company by employing outsiders who come ready qualified for the position. With

regard to adult basic education, a particular attribute of “learning organisations” was their acceptance that literacy, or any adult basic education can never be regarded as a quick process, and is likely to require long term commitment, and patience in awaiting the payoff.

In 1996, it was estimated that 139 779 learners were registered in company run ABE programmes, compared with 95 500 registered in the state night school system (Harley et al, 1996).

Some of the most extensive and successful ABE programmes have been developed in parastatals, organisations previously state subsidised and run, and now transformed so that they are almost wholly self funded and directed, but retain some characteristics of state organisations.

A parastatal that has invested heavily in ABE is ESKOM, previously known as the Electricity Supply Commission. In pursuit of meeting its own target of 95% literacy within the organisation by the year 2000, it was, in 1996, spending R32 million rand a year on its ABE programme, which constituted 10% of its education and training budget. It employed 142 ABE teachers in 35 learning centres around the country, all of which are equipped with a resource centre (Harley et al, 1996).

Umgeni Water, a water utility company based in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands has invested substantially in its in-house ABE programme, since its inception in 1989 when it enrolled 32 learners and spent R89 600 on that year’s programme. The number of learners and company investment in the programme increased steadily over the years. By 1996 the number of learners enrolled in the ABE programme had reached 342, and the company was spending R957 600 on the programme. This represented close to one sixth of its training budget.

The Skills Development Act passed in the National Assembly (Act No 97 of 1998) is likely to have the effect of increasing the number of learners in workplace ABE programmes. Its purposes include

- developing skills within the South African workforce, thereby increasing workers' prospects, labour mobility, productivity and employer competitiveness and promoting self employment;
- increasing the level of investment in education and training in the labour market, and improving the return on that investment;
- encouraging employers to promote active learning in the workplace, to provide opportunities for workers to gain skills and new workers to gain experience;
- to encourage workers to take part in learning and training programmes at their place of work;
- improving employment prospects of previously disadvantaged people, and redressing disadvantages through education and training;
- ensuring quality of education and training for the workforce.

(<http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/legislation/1998/act98-097.html>)

Financing of this skills development is intended to be through the National Skills Fund which makes money available mainly from levies collected according to the Skills Development Levies Act of 1998. This Act makes it mandatory for all private employers whose payroll exceeds R250 000 per annum to contribute an amount equal to one per cent of their employees' wages to the National Skills Fund. This money is to be made available to projects that are set up and operate in accordance with the sector skills development plan of the various Sector Education and Training Authorities⁴ (SETAs) or the national skills development strategy (Skills Development Act; Act No 97 of 1998). Applications for grants or subsidies for skills programmes may be made by any developer of a skills programme.

This legislation is designed to ensure that all large private employers contribute to national skills development. But in effect it allows them to invest in skills development within their own organisations. What was anticipated was that most employers, especially those who employ large numbers of unskilled workers, would naturally choose to have the development of skills they pay towards benefit their own staff rather than resign themselves to what

⁴ Sector Education and Training Authorities are bodies set up for each sector whose function is to regulate skills training in that sector and ensure quality provision.

amounts to the payment of an additional tax on which they see no return in real terms. Therefore the expected upshot of this legislation was that companies who would not otherwise have contemplated skills development programmes would start them, and apply to the SETA or the Director General of Labour for funding for the programmes. Since skills development programmes are likely to require some basic education, it was expected that in-house workplace adult basic education programmes would increase. A great advantage of the Act, particularly from the government's point of view was seen to be that not only would it compel employing organisations to invest in skills development, but that it would facilitate better programme monitoring and support, since programmes funded by the National Skills Fund would be housed within the organisations who stand to benefit from them.

Unfortunately, in practice so far, the complexity and slow pace of the bureaucratic procedures that have to be undergone in order to access this funding have proved to be so much of a deterrent that many companies are electing to simply pay the levy and write off the loss.

However, projected investment in skills development is enormous, with one of the yardsticks set in the National Skills Development Strategy as the spending of 100% of the National Skills Fund on viable developmental projects funds by March 2003. According to telephonic communication with the Department of Labour, the amount in the National Skills Fund in December 2001 was R600 million. R500 million of this accumulated during 2001, incorporating levies (approximately R44 million per month), donor funding and interest. To date, R126 million has been spent.

Related to the impact of the National Skills Development Strategy is the decision by many companies in the mining sector to offer ABE for the first time, or to restart ABE programmes that they had closed. Although ABE is not a priority in the mining sector, some companies are now planning to offer ABE as part of their Human Resource Development strategies, in ways that integrate Further Education and Training (FET) strategies, and skills training (Baatjes, Aitchison and John, 2001, p. 40).

The mining industry has suffered an economic collapse in recent years mainly because of the

drop in the gold price. As a result, thousands of mine workers have been retrenched, many of whom would have been candidates for workplace ABE had they been kept on as employees in the mining sector. There have been some efforts to offer retrenched workers ABE, skills development and training in entrepreneurship. The Mining Development Agency is active in this area, currently reaching approximately 8000 people at its 15 centres. Results of the training offered in these centres is fairly encouraging, with surveys showing that 75% of trainees have started businesses, 55% of whom are still in business a year later (Baatjes, Aitchison and John, 2001, p. 66).

Comparing the aims with the reality of current ABE practice

Findings of international studies

Anticipations attached to ABE programmes have followed the trend which, according to Graff, has prevailed for centuries. He argues that the rise of literacy in the west has been accompanied by an unquestioning belief that to be literate and to spread literacy is important, and that while the uses of literacy are debated, its basic value is not. Thus literacy was assumed to bring benefits to both individuals and communities nations and states, incongruities were largely ignored, and literacy was accorded the status of a causal factor in the achievement of modernity and rationality. (Graff, 1981 p. 3). A number of studies have indicated that actual outcomes of literacy or adult basic education programmes fall far short of anticipations. Graff contends that “the results of macro-level, aggregative or ecological studies are usually much less impressive either statistically or substantively than are the normative theories and assumptions” (Graff 1988, p. 83).

Whether there are differences in intellectual functioning between literate and illiterate people and communities has long been a controversial issue. Scribner and Cole, who have become a favoured source of reference for writers in the literacy field, maintain that it is not learning how to read and write that is the cause of the kinds of intellectual functioning and attitudes often ascribed to literacy acquisition, such as classification and application of logic. They argue that experiences associated with schooling are the most salient factor in the development of these skills in that this development is contingent on what pupils are required to do with reading and writing skills and their refinement in the course of schooling (Scribner and Cole, 1988, p. 61). They emphasise that their findings do not support the notion that consequences of literacy affect intellectual performance. “Nothing in our data support[s] the statement ... that reading and writing entail fundamental cognitive restructurings that control intellectual performance in all domains” (Scribner and Cole, 1988 p. 70). The implication is that skills, attitudes and perceptions acquired as a result of the experience of schooling have a

far greater effect on intellectual functioning than the acquisition and practice of literacy skills themselves.

However, in considering the validity of their study, especially for the purpose of generalisation to other contexts, it must be pointed out that their conclusions are drawn from a study of the literacy practices of the Vai people of Liberia. These practices centre round the use of three different scripts. One is English script, learnt in Western type schools, and used for court records and official communication with outsiders of the Vai community. Another is the use of Arabic writing, learnt in Qur'anic training and used exclusively in reading or writing parts of the Qur'an, often without understanding of the language it represents. The third is the use of a script peculiar to the Vai, developed in the early 1800s, learnt informally within the community, and used for purposes such as listing, marking property and personal communication. Scribner and Cole compared people who had not attended school but had learnt to use the Vai script with people who had attended school in order to make comparisons between the effects of literacy and schooling. As a basis of comparison, they used performance on tests of communication skills, memory and language analysis. The widespread acceptance that their findings have gained is surprising, given that this acceptance has been gained at a time when the predominant current perspective on literacy, often termed the ideological model, holds that literacy is a set of practices or skills that have meaning only in the context in which they are used. The fact that the Scribner and Cole study focussed particularly on the literacy practices of the Vai people is surely a factor that, (particularly in view of the current sensitivity to the prime importance of context in the interpretation of any information) could be expected to mitigate against its extrapolation to other contexts. In addition, as even the authors note (1988, p. 66), equating the ability to use the indigenous Vai script with literacy is possibly debatable, given that it does not lead to the learning of new knowledge, nor to new methods of inquiry. However, it is true that Scribner and Cole's assertion that literacy does not imply superior cognitive functioning is widely quoted and generally accepted as valid. The swiftness with which these findings have found acceptance is understandable given that international literacy rates roughly parallel broad racial divisions, with low rates of literacy found in predominantly black countries. Since history is littered with examples of tragic consequences of focussing on differences between races, there is

healthy international sensitivity to and wariness of suggestions of differences (particularly cognitive differences) between groups associated in any way with race or ethnicity, and a general desire to accept studies that point to equality across such groupings.

However, one cannot ignore writers who argue convincingly that habituation to literacy practices in any society results in the development of particular cognitive processes. Goody and Watt (1988, pp. 3-25) explore the differences between societies in which literacy practices are generally relied upon for communication and record, and those in which they are not, and argue that there are significant consequences of practices associated with literacy. One of the premises on which their argument rests is that in societies in which books and other forms of permanent record are easily available and widely used, a bank of record exists in which permanently recorded versions of the past are easily accessible. This ease of access immediately results in comparisons of viewpoint, both across different recorders' perspectives and between beliefs and assumptions of the past and the present. In contrast to the transience of oral narrative, which allows selection from and transforming of past assumptions and perspectives in concert with changing current views and events, the very permanence of written records forces readers to admit to discrepancies between them, to discriminate among them, accepting or rejecting their veracity. This, according to Goody and Watt, leads to scepticism, which is then applied not only to past records but to all information. "From here the next step is to see how to build up and to test alternative explanation; and from this there arose the kind of logical, specialised and cumulative intellectual tradition of sixth-century Iona" Goody and Watt (1988 p. 26).

Diekhoff (1988) maintains that adult literacy programmes have failed to produce life changing improvements in reading ability, in all but a handful of exceptional learners. He contends that at the end of training in ABE programmes, most participants are "still functionally illiterate by almost any standard". According to Diekhoff, many evaluations of programmes ignore the real extent of improvement in reading, and base their claims of the effectiveness of the programme on criteria that exaggerate the extent of learners' progress and do not represent actual improvement in reading skills. In his view, evaluations of programmes often fail to make a distinction between apparent reading gains and statistically significant

reading improvement, so that the practical implications of gains made in performance are ignored.

The validity of his claims may be limited, at least in the South African context, in that developments since 1988 have ensured that learners in many ABE programmes have undergone external ABE exams run on a national basis, and shown proof of learning progress as measured by these examinations. However, for many programmes, particularly those which promise rapid results in the short term and do not include external assessment, his points may have currency.

Diekhoff quotes a study by Shipp which compared people who gained a General Education Diploma (GED)⁵ by completing ABE classes and taking the examination with people who started the classes but did not complete them or take the exam. In this study, the “ABE completers” scored significantly higher than the “non completers” in almost every indicator of what the researchers called “positive life style change”. However, an unexpected other finding in this study was that people who were eligible to participate in these ABE classes but who did not do so also showed life style improvement, curiously, in a pattern very similar to the “ABE completers”. Thus the “non-attenders” scored higher than the “non-completers”. These unexpected results indicated that the “positive life style change” could not be ascribed only to the ABE classes nor to the gaining of the GED certificate.

Graff (1979) reported findings contrary to predictions popularly associated with literacy. Among these findings were that literacy does not correlate with recognition and tolerance of differing opinions among others, nor with exposure to media, including print media. Graff cites a study in Columbia to support his suggestion that many adult people who become literate rarely use the skill, relying instead on other people for information. Thus individuals, and not the media, are seen as primary sources of information, implying that in this context,

⁵ It must be noted that the General Education Diploma is a high school equivalency diploma equivalent to the South African Senior Certificate. Thus a programme at this level would have a higher exit point than South African ABE programmes. In South Africa, ABE is considered to end at grade 9 (National Qualifications Framework level 1), and the Senior Certificate is written at the end of grade 12 (National Qualifications Framework level 4).

even people who can read still rely on oral sources for communication of information rather than literate sources such as the newspaper.

Malicky and Norman (1994) state that there is an “implicit assumption (in the development and implementation of many programmes) that participation leads to increased economic well being,” and that the programmes will enable people to “participate more fully in the labour force” as well as “all aspects of life in society”. They question this assumption, maintaining that in fact there is little evidence to suggest that literacy programmes have a positive impact on empowerment. This has led a number of writers to question the popular assumptions about the place of literacy in economic and individual development.

Malicky and Norman argue that improved literacy is as likely to be an outcome of economic development as a cause. In support of this position, they quote a number of studies. One by Levine in 1986 concluded that the attainment of functional literacy rarely produces outcomes such as employment or economic development. Another describes the process whereby full time basic education programmes provided by the Canadian government for unemployed people at the end of the 1960s were phased out when, according to these writers, they proved ineffective in promoting employment or economic independence within the target group.

In a study of their own, Malicky and Norman examined 94 adults enrolled in literacy programmes in one urban centre. These learners had been in full time employment at some time, but were, at the time of the study, without employment. Of all the subjects in this study, none realised their vocational goals after the programme, in that none was employed full time in the kind of jobs they had hoped to get, and specifically for which they had undergone the training. Subjects that were employed were placed in low paying, non-unionised jobs, with no reward for seniority, low educational demands, a high staff turnover and no returns for having improved their educational level. At the outset of the study, most subjects had believed that the programme would lead to improved job opportunities, but the general trend noted by the researchers was a move on the part of trainees from optimism to frustration and disappointment as the programme progressed. They concluded that although a relationship exists between education and employment, it is neither causal nor simple, and suggested that

a critical examination of assumptions underlying literacy programmes was warranted.

A vitally important factor not taken into account in the study done by Malicky and Norman is the effect of the economic policies being implemented at the time of the studies. The effects of different economic and labour policies have an enormous effect on how likely businesses are at any one time to be taking on or avoiding taking on workers. It is therefore not reasonable to make judgements on the effect of newly gained literacy skills on employability without taking into account prevailing trends in the economy in which the study is being run.

According to Askov (1993, p. 554) literacy programmes should not be seen only in terms of economic returns. She suggests that their role in reducing marginalisation and enhancing the dignity of learners may be more important factors.

Glynda Hull, (1993), in an assessment of views on literacy and work, noted that popular discussion related to the role of literacy was based on unquestioned beliefs that workers are deficient in basic literacy skills and that there are clear links among illiteracy, poor job performance and features of a declining economy. She notes consensus among employers in the United States that skills associated with literacy are necessary, and that a high percentage of the workforce lack these skills. She notes also, a common assertion that workers in the United States were the cause of the country's (at that time) lagging economy because they lacked literacy and other basic skills.

In Hull's view, not enough attention has been given to finding out how people experience programmes and how they accomplish work, resulting in the erroneous popular assumption of a causal relationship between low literacy skills and poor work performance. She contends that newer jobs demand more high skills, and that the number of jobs demanding only basic skills is decreasing. She notes that qualifications demanded for low paid jobs are rising, and workers, in order to do as much as they did in the past, need now to be able to read more. She cites the example of mechanics in the 1990s needing to know the contents of much longer, more complex manuals than did their counterparts in the 1960s.

In spite of these changed demands made on workers, Hull believes that only basic skills continue to be taught in adult basic education classes. Literacy has come to mean more than the basic skills, but literacy classes have not adapted to this change.

In support of this position, Hull notes that basic literacy skills is only one item of a much cited list of what workers need to be able to do according to employers in the United States. She quotes a list suggested by Carnevale, Gainer and Meltzer in 1988 as:

- knowing how to learn,
- reading, writing and computation,
- listening and oral communication,
- creative thinking and problem solving,
- demonstrate self esteem, goal setting, motivation and personal and career development,
- organizational effectiveness and leadership.

(Hull, 1993, p. 25)

She notes too that other abilities are sometimes cited in addition, for example, the United States Labour Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills includes the ability to allocate resources, interpret and communicate information and understand social and organisational technical systems.

Hull contends that for literacy training to be effective, it should be integrated with technical training in a context directly related to the work context.

She questions common assumptions made about effects of literacy training, holding that generally, too much faith is put in the power of literacy programmes, and too little thought given to people's abilities. According to her, popular workplace discourse under-estimates and devalues human potential, and misrepresents literacy as a panacea. She believes not only that this obstructs other social and economic problems, and that efforts to make the workforce literate has a questionable rational base, but that the publicity given to the supposed results of

poor literacy skills is a smokescreen for larger ills in society.

Hull suggests that social and economic development is not necessarily dependent on reading and writing, and cites the examples of the commercial revolution of the middle ages and the industrialisation of rural areas in the eighteenth century to support this position. Likewise, Graff has pointed out (Kintgen Kroll and Rose 1988, p. 88) that not only did the industrial revolution take place without mass literacy, but neither did it give rise to increased levels of literacy in the short term. In the view of both Graff and Hull, economic and industrial development is dependent on and occurs through very different processes in different places.

Hull's position (Hull, 1993) corresponds with Graff's contention (Graff, 1987) that literacy is neither a major problem nor a major solution, and with Scribner and Cole's assertion (Kintgen Kroll and Rose, 1988), that literacy makes some difference to some skills in some contexts. In addition, Hull states that important other factors such as different work organisation patterns have been ignored in the focus on conjectures about the effects of literacy skills.

Hull's view is that more unskilled jobs would benefit society more than an increase in the number of skilled people, and that illiteracy should not be used as a scapegoat for bigger problems that are more complex and therefore more difficult to engage with.

Overall, her view of adult basic education, which is similar to that of Malicky and Norman (1994, quoted above), is that how people experience ABE curricula, and how these really relate to work demands, needs examining.

The work of Jori Phillipi (1988) is relevant to this issue. Phillipi cites a number of studies that show that in the United States of America, growing numbers of employed people have low literacy skills, and warns that if the trend continues there will be insufficient numbers of people with basic skills to fill jobs that require them. Phillippi argues that what is necessary is that educational programmes should be revamped in order to be directly related to jobs rather than to provide general basic education. In support of this argument, she cites a number of

studies which indicated that United States military remedial programmes designed to improve job performance by improving general reading skills did not in fact improve job performance. In response to this shortcoming, the United States military analysed tasks in order to identify specific literacy skills needed to improve job performance in military occupations, and commissioned the development of specific programmes geared to develop particular job related reading skills, using reading materials from the work situation itself. The study suggests that this course of action contributed towards improved job performance. In contrast, a study of workers' desires by Gorven, quoted by Hull (1993) found that employees did not want job related reading material in classes, and felt patronised when they were offered this.

Phillipi suggests that while an improvement in reading skills is not associated with improved performance at work, nor increased employment opportunities, it nevertheless is associated with the building of self ^{}confidence. In contradiction of the generally accepted notion that general competencies applicable across a range of contexts are developed in the course of acquiring reading and writing skills, she suggests that the skills gained in the reading improvement programme are not easily applied to reading tasks in the work situations because they were too general. Several studies from as long ago as 1932 are cited by Phillipi in support of this proposition, and she suggests that the difference between job-related reading skills and those developed on programmes designed to improve general reading is that work related reading requires locating and retrieving information for immediate use, while skills developed on programmes relate to internalisation of information useful in the longer term. Phillipi proposes that what is helpful in developing job related reading skills is using schemata from the work situation in the process of developing general reading skills, and using the relevance of the learning to the job situation to increase motivation.

Local information relating to the aims and outcomes of ABE programmes

Adult literacy is undeniably an emotionally charged issue. Perhaps particularly in South Africa, people with a good education feel a sense of guilt associated with others unfortunate enough to have been denied educational opportunities. Accounts of surprisingly fast learning and great practical successes assuage the guilt and are readily repeated, often heard in anecdotal form. However, a search for verifiable grand successes yields very little empirical information. As was mentioned earlier in this study, this area is very under-researched.

From the perspective of whether adult education programmes increase employability in South Africa, research from The National Training Strategy Initiative is give no positive indications, showing that in 1992, only 23% black and 53% white unemployed people were placed in employment after training programmes (National Training Board, 1994). Employment rates have decreased significantly since 1992, and it is therefore likely that the rate of placements gained after training is now even lower. It must be noted though that the economy has declined rapidly since 1992, with rates of unemployment steadily climbing. In healthier economic circumstances an entirely different relationship between training programmes and subsequent employability might well have been established..

With reference to the effects of ABE programmes within South African companies, Pennington (1994, pp. 51 - 52) found in a survey of companies running ABE programmes, that few company representatives were able to articulate actual benefits of ABE or literacy programmes, although none reported that literacy training had not worked or benefited the organisation. He reports a “strong view” that employees who had participated in ABE programmes had a sense of hope, and that many organisations cited examples of improved teamwork and co-operation among employees, increased requests for information from supervisors, more effective use of notice boards, an enhanced understanding of their organisation employing them, and “a clearer sense of the direction of their own life.”

With reference to expectations of benefits on the part of participants in ABE programmes,

Pennington (1994, p. 53) found that in companies where the ABE programme was seen as part of an ongoing process of staff development, expectations were seen as long term, and “managed as part of the education and training itself”. The description of the management of these expectations suggests that employing companies in his study had no intention of nurturing or meeting participants’ expectations. This suggestion is strengthened by reports of even less sanguine comments from companies which did not see literacy programmes in the context of general staff development. These were generally dismissive in answer to questions about whether participants have increased expectations, and the company’s response to them, the most significant example of which was that participants did develop expectations “on a few occasions but these were easily put to bed.” Thus the spectre of token programmes for black employees previously deprived of education, offered, but jealously controlled by a largely white management raises its head.

Studies described in *The Social Uses of Literacy* (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996) are approached from the point of view of investigating learners’ literacy practices. Breier and Sait reporting on literacy practices at a Western Cape asbestos products factory reported that the only workers they found who had gained promotion had had at nine years’ schooling. In the adult basic education programme that was running, the programme ‘Brand Knew’ was in use. After some months in ABE classes using this programme, learners could write only their names, although management apparently believed that it had nevertheless had a positive effect on worker confidence. (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 p. 80). It should be noted that in spite of hard sell promises, this programme is weak and limited (Land and Fotheringham, 1995). It is quite possible that with a stronger programme, the outcomes of the initiative would have been very much more encouraging.

Also writing for *The Social Uses of Literacy*, Malan compares two other initiatives, The Bellville Development Project and an informal learning group at an old age home in Stilwani, also in Bellville (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 pp. 150 - 154). The former was judged to be successful on the basis that learners continue to attend and participate in classes. Its success was ascribed to the hierarchical structuring of the learning discourse which Malan compares with the hierarchy of officers and pensioners, and minister and congregation, social

configurations familiar to and readily accepted by adult learners in this context. The latter initiative was judged unsuccessful since its learners did not participate whole-heartedly in lessons, but apparently wandered off, simply abandoning the teacher, regardless of having assured people running the programme that they wanted to be counted as learners and hoped the programme would continue. Malan ascribes its lack of success to competition with other things going on in the neighbourhood which took up people's attention and time.

One of the main findings in this research publication was that ABE or literacy classes were not the sites where people focussed on in this study learned useful literacy skills. According to the study, these skills were frequently learnt informally from peers or associates, as they were needed in specific contexts. Literacy practices are described as happening in networks, where people pool resources and trade services with one another according to learnt skills and immediate needs.

A Pietermaritzburg case study of the ABE programme at Umgeni Water mentioned the following in its discussion of the positive impacts of the programme in 1996, the seventh year of the programme (Frost, 1996, pp. 114 -140):

- the functional literacy rate among unskilled workers had increased from 3% to 13%;
- learners' engagement in literacy practices had increased, and with it, learners' self esteem;
- there was increased ease of communication and improved relationships between management and unskilled workers;
- security guards enrolled on the programme were using their two way radios with increased confidence, and some workers were signing their names for the first time and filling in their own leave forms;
- according to managers' reports, there was improved effectiveness of general in-house training programmes;
- a drop in the number of safety-related accidents was interpreted to mean that literacy training had a positive influence in this regard;
- an improved public image of the company. Recruitment officers quoted interviewees'

statements that they sought employment at Umgeni Water because of the provision of literacy training;

- the ABE programme brought the company increased positive publicity in the form of invitations for the co-ordinator to speak at business conferences in Johannesburg organised by International Executive Communications, and the ABE programme was featured in national television;

Less positive findings mentioned in the study were that

- participation in ABE classes did not appear to significantly increase workers' chances of promotion; at the level of unskilled workers, promotions were almost equally divided among workers who participated in the ABE classes and those who did not;
- like other studies quoted earlier, there was no discernable correlation between implementation of ABE classes and increased productivity. On this subject Frost says only that the "correlation between ABE and an immediate increase in production was nebulous" (1996, p. 141), implying that there was no simple method of measuring this. On the other hand, the classes themselves had a negative impact on productivity since they necessitated the regular removal of workers from the work force during working hours. Since production demands were not similarly reduced, this regular removal of workers resulted in managers' resentment of the ABE programme (Frost, 1996, p. 204).

Efficacy of evaluations of literacy or ABE programmes

Extensive comment on the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of literacy programmes is offered by Lazar, Bean and van Horn (1998). These writers note that employers in the United States have “a diminishing pool of literate, qualified potential employees” from which to draw, and that in many organisations, existing literacy levels are no longer congruent with workplace demands. They describe a study at a hospital, which, in restructuring, decreased the number of its employees working directly with patients, while at the same time, improving the quality of patient care by creating “Care teams”. Because the number of employees was reduced, the demands of the work situation were spread across a smaller number of people, who therefore have to perform a greater range of tasks, and need increased skills. Literacy related tasks required of these hospital employees in the course of their duties are listed as: reading gauges, ordering supplies, communication with workmates, superiors and clients, problem solving and reading, creating or adding to charts, lists or forms.

In the course of the restructuring, it became apparent that people who had performed single function jobs competently had great difficulty with some of the increased demands on them, notably communicating with team members, working with registered nurses, coping with more responsibility for direct patient contact and care, prioritising tasks and using their own initiative in solving problems. In addition it was clear that employees frequently went carelessly through the motions of procedures they were required to perform (such as putting on rubber gloves), with no real understanding of the reasons for the procedures. It also found that these same employees repeatedly made mistakes that were costly to the hospital, in tasks such as ordering supplies.

On the basis that the hospital management suspected weakness in literacy skills to be the reason for these problems, the employees were screened using a screening test developed in the University of Pittsburgh, known as the Adult Learning Employment Related Tasks (ALERT). Fifty per cent of the employees failed to meet the cutoff point on this test for basic competency. On another test, the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), 62% of the employees scores reflected an education level lower than grade 8, which had been decided on

as the lowest level of education necessary for the work.

In response, a learning programme was designed to address key work performance areas in job-specific literacy-related tasks, and an evaluation system developed to determine improvements in test scores and job performance. For the latter, rating scales, interviews and test techniques that accurately reflected criteria used by the hospital for assessing levels of performance at work were designed. A curriculum was developed using these criteria and workplace materials. The goals of this programme (Lazar, Bean and van Horn, 1998, p. 355) can be summarised as:

- to upgrade literacy and maths skills to 8th grade levels on the TABE test, and a passing score on the ALERT test
- to improve job performance, particularly that involving literacy, mathematics and problem solving.

Analysis of the outcomes of the learning programme showed that all project goals had been met, with 87% of employees' scores on both TABE and ALERT tests indicating reading and maths levels of 8th grade or above. Improved writing skills resulted in better completion of hospital forms, improved reading skills resulted in more competent location of information, and improved communication skills resulted in fewer errors due to misunderstandings and antagonistic interactions among members of 'Care teams'.

In their own reports participants linked improvements in overall literacy and maths with improved performance in ordering supplies, recording data, using mental arithmetic to speed up tasks, writing clear readable memos and lists, communicating more effectively and making suggestions.

After having been made aware of underlying reasons for procedures they were required to perform, participants adhered to them more rigorously. In simulations of the areas of work in which repeated mistakes were common, employees discovered the real cost to the hospital of their mistakes, and the frequency of mistakes diminished. In another direction, in response to findings from the learning programme, forms and documents were modified to obviate

problematic areas within them.

These outcomes were clearly not in accord with the many evaluations of workplace literacy programmes that have failed to show any positive outcomes in relation to workers' competence or productivity.

With regard to this difference, Lazar, Bean and van Horn quote studies that show that although evaluations are always built into plans for federally funded workplace literacy programmes in the United States, the effectiveness of very few programmes has been rigorously evaluated. They cite a 1991 study by Kutner, Sherman, Webb and Fisher that found only 6 out of 29 had thorough evaluations, and a 1993 study by Mickulecky and Lloyd, who hold that evaluations frequently consist of surveys of learner satisfaction and anecdotal reports of the positive effect of programmes, with occasional reports of pre- and post-test gains.

They conclude that the impact of ABE on productivity has not been systematically evaluated. They quote work done in 1974 by Stuffelbeam that recommends that systematic evaluation should incorporate information collected from different sources, an investigation of whether sufficient resources, in terms of people, materials and time had been devoted to the programme, and an analysis of the extent to which stakeholders had a common view of the goals of the programme.

One aspect of the problem is difficulty in measuring improvements in teamwork, communication and attitude. Workplace competencies and foundation skills as listed by the US Department of Labour in 1992 contain a number of elements which would possibly be difficult to measure. The list (Lazar, Bean and van Horn, 1998, p. 356) can be summarised as:

- knowing how to allocate time, money, materials, space and staff;
- capacity for teamwork, the ability to teach one another, serve customers, lead, negotiate and work well with people of different cultures;
- ability to acquire and evaluate data, organise and maintain files and use computers;
- ability to understand social, organisational and technological systems;

- ability to select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, maintain equipment and perceive and rectify faults.

Foundation skills seen to be necessary as a basis for the above (Lazar, Bean and van Horn, 1998, p. 356) can be summarised as:

- listening, reading, writing, and arithmetic;
- the thinking skills of being able to learn, reason, think creatively, make decisions and solve problems;
- personal qualities of individual responsibility, self esteem, self management, sociability, and integrity.

Overall, what the study done by Lazar, Bean and van Horn suggested was that the lack of evidence found in support of positive effects of workplace literacy programmes might not imply a lack of real gains, but a lack of effective and thorough measuring of them. Clearly, this suggestion has profound implications for the track record of workplace literacy programmes.

Finally, these writers report (Lazar, Bean and van Horn 1998) that, while short term training costs less, companies have become disillusioned in regard to its effectiveness, with “high performance workplaces” increasingly committed to the ongoing process of employee learning. They maintain that linking training to strategic goals set by the employing company is a crucial to its success. In addition, programme goals and training activities should be collaboratively developed by stakeholders, and evaluation criteria should be pertinent to the programme goals.

Conclusion

There are several central trends to emerge from this literature survey.

Firstly, it is clear that there is no single definition of literacy that is not controversial. Also, the controversy is, if anything, expanding. This is because while there was unchallenged agreement that literacy is represented by skills and practices associated essentially with reading and writing orthodox forms of print or script in traditional ways, disagreement and controversy was limited to debates about what degree and what applications of these skills could be regarded to constitute literacy. Within this debate, definitions have ranged from a focus on practices that can be learnt in a few hours (or less), such as the ability to write a short sentence or sign one's name, to practices that take years to become proficient at, and require associated political understanding, such as using literacy skills for the liberation of one's community. The expansion of the controversy is the result of more recent voices challenging the assumption that there is only one kind of literacy. Proponents in this challenge contend that there are many literacies, and argue that interpretations and uses of literacy from perspectives that differ completely from that of the dominant academic discourse be accorded equal validity.

Literacy has been associated with an extremely wide range of purposes and aspirations, most of which are encompassed in the three models explored above. These are literacy as a state of grace, in which literacy is seen as intrinsically good and automatically life enhancing, literacy for power, in which literacy is seen as a path to political conscientisation and a means of challenging and redressing political disadvantage, and literacy as adaptation, in which literacy is seen as affording people ways of coping better with the demands made on them in the society in which they live, and of making the most of opportunities within that society.

The areas of experience focussed on in this study in relation to the effects of ABE are people's work situation, their community involvement, aspects of their personal situation and their educational experiences and attitude towards education. The literature yielded varied information on the effects of ABE in these areas:

Work situation

Expectations of ABE in relation to work have been associated with improved productivity, decrease in the rate of work related accidents and errors, decreased absenteeism, improved product quality, improved workplace communication, more economical use of supervisors' time, improved chances of meeting organisational objectives, improved employee retention and commitment to employing organisations, facilitation of and commitment to further training, improved worker versatility, enhanced employee motivation and sharing of visions in common with management, employee advancement within organisations, better understanding of business culture, higher staff morale and increased ability to contribute to the running of industries and policy development. (Askov 1993, Hull 1993, Sendall 1996, Meyer 1995, Pennington 1994, Currie 1996, SA Builder 1994).

Documented actual outcomes of the effects of ABE offer little support for the plausibility of these expectations. Studies in the United States of America indicated that workers reaped no work related rewards for having improved their educational levels for this specific purpose, and that improved general reading skills is not associated with improved work performance nor increased work opportunities. (Malicky and Norman 1994, Phillipi 1988).

South African studies have not been much more encouraging. Indications are that participation in training programmes leads to employment in only a minority of cases, (National Training Board, 1994), that participation in ABE classes does not lead to promotion (Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Frost 1996) or discernibly increased productivity (Frost 1996) and that many employers who offer ABE programmes have no intention of nurturing or meeting expectations of advancement held by participants in these programmes (Pennington, 1994).

On the more positive side, there are some reports of ABE being associated with improved teamwork and co-operation among employees, increases in independence with regard to simple literacy related tasks in the workplace, improved effectiveness of training programmes and a drop in workplace accidents (Pennington, 1994, Frost 1996).

Community involvement

South Africa, expectations of ABE in relation to community involvement include the hope that participation in ABE programmes would develop learners' critical understanding of society, enable them participate in the building of a democratic society (National Training and Development Board 1994), and permit them to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for social development and participation in practices that reflect justice and equality (National Department of Education 1997). Implicit in the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) (1994) was a reliance on ABE to promote active involvement in RDP initiatives along with growing empowerment, a commitment to peace, security, non-violence and political tolerance for minority groups and participation in democratic decision making. Similarly, COSATU expressed expectations that ABE could help people build a democratic society (South African Labour Bulletin, July 1992).

Although one of the ultimate goals of ABE across different nations has been enhanced community involvement (Diekhoff, 1988), Hull (1993) warns about regarding literacy as a panacea for lack of social development and, in concurrence with Graff (1987) contends that low levels of literacy should not be seen as a major problem, nor high levels as a major contribution in relation to social and economic development. This argument is supported by that of Vélis (1990) who holds that in First World countries, while individual people who are not literate face formidable barriers and often have low self esteem, illiteracy, though far more common than generally assumed, does not threaten values and norms in those societies. In accordance, but from the opposite perspective, Graff (1979) reports empirical findings suggesting that participation in literacy programmes does not correlate with increased social tolerance, and Malicky and Norman (1994) maintain that literacy programmes do not impact positively on people's sense of empowerment or their participation in various aspects of life in society.

In the South African context, implementation of plans such as those formulated for the National Department of Education and the Reconstruction and Development Plan has fallen far short of the planned delivery, both in terms of scale and time, that there is no possibility whatsoever of any of the originally planned goals and aspirations being achieved. It is

impossible to judge what the effect of the originally planned ABE interventions could have been.

Literacy practices in personal life

Factors in the personal lives of learners that have been associated with expectations of improvement are quality of life, freedom of choice, (Meyer 1995) reading habits, involvement with children's education, home ownership (Diekhoff 1988), better understanding of issues impacting on one's life, self confidence and general knowledge (Phillipi, 1988, SA Builder 1994). It has been suggested that ABE can also improve people's life skills (SA Builder 1994), introduce people to a culture of learning (Department of Education 1997), reduce marginalisation and enhance learners' dignity (Askov, 1993).

Empirical studies show that while many people who learn to read do not use these skills, (Graff 1979), participation in ABE can result in improved self esteem, a sense of hope and a clearer sense of direction in life (Pennington 1994).

Attitudes towards education

ABE is automatically expected to increase learners' desires to take part in workplace learning and training programmes, and to improve skills such as that of communication in English and/or the written form of learners' mother tongue, their mathematical skills and understanding of science and technology (National Training Board, 1994). As a result, ABE is expected to provide access to further education and training (Department of Education 1997, Industrial Democracy Review, 1994/1995).

Overall, there is an inescapable sense not only among adult educators, but people in general, that helping adults to gain literacy skills is a good thing, and a contribution to the general health of any nation, in spite of the lack of evidence from studies to support this notion. Studies such as that by Lazar, Bean and van Horn (1998), with its contention that ABE is worth while, and that the lack of empirical evidence to demonstrate this is possibly due to the way it has been assessed all along is of interest and importance.

The study described in the following chapter attempts to identify and explore the kinds of gains that have not yet been researched in South Africa, but possibly have profound effects in the personal lives and practical experience of ABE learners.

Chapter 2

A description of this study

Statement of the research hypothesis

The research hypothesis of this study is that participation as a learner in an ABE programme has no significant effect on adults' self report of aspects of their work situation, involvement in community issues or the extent to which they put literacy related skills to use in their personal lives.

Issues investigated

Research into the effects of participation in ABE programmes could be either longitudinal, tracking the development of a group of adult learners over some years, or, as in the case of this study, cross-sectional. Here, the self reports of a group of employed adults who have participated for between two and three years in the workplace ABE programme offered by their employing organisation are compared with self reports of a similar group who have had no involvement with the ABE programme. A description of the way in which these groups were matched for characteristics apart from involvement in the workplace ABE programme follows below. This study seeks to investigate the effects of ABE by examining differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of people's own descriptions of their:

work situation	including their work history, current position, their sense of security and awareness of rights, experience of job satisfaction and perception of future prospects
educational experience and attitudes toward education	including level of formal schooling, their ability to read in their mother tongue, reasons for wanting to attend ABE classes and their own perception of changes effected by ABE and gains (or sacrifices) made;
community involvement	including awareness of current issues, sense of power / helplessness (in terms of the extent to which they feel they can influence what happens to them) and the extent of their participation in community meetings and structures;
literacy practices in personal life	including the extent to which they read (anything), the strategies relied on for dealing with difficult written communication, their attitudes towards family planning, their involvement with their children's schooling, their use of libraries, their awareness of the availability of easy reading material for adults, the reading habits of family members, sources of information relied on, awareness of current issues, their management of money, whether they spend any money on printed material, their degree of confidence in using technical means of communication and the way in which they keep records of financial transactions and communications.

Focus of this study

In 1996, ABE programmes run at places of employment were estimated to accommodate 156, 597 learners, or 48.7% of adults in ABE classes in South Africa, which was a far greater proportion than was accommodated in any other sector. In comparison, the Department of Education accommodated 26.5% in state night schools (now called Public Adult Learning Centres). 4% were accommodated in classes run by other government departments, 18.5% were at non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and 4% and the remainder of learners (4.3%) were in classes run by religious and other organisations (Harley et al, 1996, p. 60).

Since 1996, the number of learners in workplace ABE programmes is estimated to have decreased to 140 000, which is 39.3% of learners in ABE classes in South Africa. During the same period the number of learners in classes run by the Department of Education has increased to 162 900, which means they now accommodate 46% of learners in ABE classes in South Africa, while other government departments accommodate 25 000 or 7%. The number of learners in classes run by NGOs and classes run by religious or other organisations has dropped radically; NGOs now offer ABE to only 20, 000 or 5% of ABE learners, which represents only a third of the number they accommodated in the 1990s, and the number of learners attending classes run by religious and other organisations has halved, so that they now offer ABE to only 8, 000, or 2% of learners (Aitchison, 2000, p. 5).

This study is based entirely on learners in workplace ABE programmes. It compares a group of 40 employed adults who have been learners in ABE classes run at the place of their employment for at least three years with a control group of 40 similarly employed adults, who have not participated in these classes. The former group is seen as the experimental group, referred to as 'ABE participants', and the latter as the control group, referred to as 'non-ABE participants'. The groups were matched for initial literacy level by selecting employees whose scores on a literacy screening test administered by the employing organisations' training divisions indicated that their level of literacy was minimal, and that they needed to enter the company ABE programme at the most basic level. This assessment was done before the ABE participants commenced their participation in the workplace ABE programme.

Descriptions of the experimental and control groups

Selection of subjects for inclusion in the ABE participant group

In view of the fact that ABE classes do not result in any rapid change in attitudes, perceptions or practices of learners, ABE learners of three years' standing were selected for inclusion in the ABE participant group. In all organisations from which learners were drawn, classes were organised according to work location and time constraints of work shifts as well as ABE level, so that there was no strict class division according to English levels. Instead, the classes were regarded as English 2/3, or English at some level beyond the basics, and accommodated learners who were aiming to write the IEB exam at either of these levels.

All of the people included as subjects are adults working in the Pietermaritzburg area, but they were drawn from different organisations. Because of this, the findings of the study are not skewed by particular teaching styles or learning or assessment material used. For the sake of standardisation, only employees from companies running classes on a continuous part-time basis, (as opposed to intermittent full-time blocks) were included in the study. In companies running block release ABE programmes, workers are released from normal duties for periods of between four and thirteen weeks in order to attend ABE classes full time. Employees from these companies were not included, since the progress of learners in block release classes is likely to be characterised by periods of rapid gain (when they attend classes full time) interspersed with long plateaus, characterised by no progress, or possible regression, when they do not attend classes. In contrast, the progress of learners in part time classes run on a regular basis is likely to be slower and steadier.

While it was assumed initially that it would be a simple task to locate companies whose ABE programmes conformed to this seemingly common form, of seventeen companies approached, only six (listed below) had learners who met the criteria for inclusion in this study. Of the other eleven, five ran block release ABE programmes, two had started their programmes too recently for their learners to reach the level required for inclusion, and four had difficulties in identifying learners at the required level in their records.

An interesting and somewhat perturbing aspect of ABE programmes in Pietermaritzburg revealed in the course of preparation for this study was the paucity of records kept on potential learners and learners by staff training departments in most of the organisations approached. Ideally, there should be an information system from which can be readily retrieved employees' level of education at the time of their entry into the firm, their educational needs, training courses attended, level of performance on courses, skills gained on courses, examinations passed, and, in relation to ABE, length of time spent at each level. Without this sort of information system any staff development must inevitably be haphazard and impossible to monitor. Of the organisations approached, only two (Umgeni Water and the Local Council), had records approaching this ideal.

However, in contrast to the poverty of their record-keeping systems, it must be noted with gratitude that almost all organisations approached responded to requests for information positively and obligingly, welcoming the contact with the Centre for Adult Education and demonstrating eagerness to co-operate with the researcher.

The ABE participant group finally selected comprised workers from five different employers in the Pietermaritzburg area.

14 (all men) were from the Local Council,

14 (13 men and 1 woman) were from Umgeni Water, a Pietermaritzburg water utility company,

6 (5 men and 1 woman) were from the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,

3 (all men) were from Taurus Co-op Artificial Insemination Service (locally known as the Bull Station), and

3 (all women) were from Baynesfield Estates, an agricultural estate just outside Pietermaritzburg.

Selection of subjects for inclusion in the non-ABE participant group

It was the intention at the start of the selection process to select equal numbers of subjects in the ABE participant group and non-ABE participant group from each company, in order to facilitate comparison of the groups. This was very nearly achieved. The non-ABE participant group was made up of adults employed in the same organisations as members of the ABE participant group. The breakdown is as follows:

- 15 (all men) were from the Local Council,
- 14 (all men) were from Umgeni Water,
- 5 (all men) were from the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,
- 4 (all men) were from Taurus Co-op Artificial Insemination Service, and
- 2 (both men) were from Baynesfield Estates.

People selected for the non-ABE participant group were those who, like their counterparts in the ABE participant group, had been identified by the training department of their employing organisations as requiring ABE classes at the most basic level offered, but who had not attended classes in their present position, either because they had not yet been offered inclusion, or had declined to participate, or because they had dropped out (see details below)

There is no standard placement or screening test for determining adults' eligibility for ABE classes, and the six different employing organisations in this study all used different tests. However, all these organisations used the IEB ABE examinations for formal assessment of their learners, and therefore the placements tests used were all designed to place learners according to levels determined by IEB exams. For this reason, although members of the non-ABE participant group cannot be said to be grouped on the basis of scores on a single test, the common criterion that determined their inclusion was that they were all identified as having only minimal literacy skills, and were deemed eligible for entering the company ABE programme at ABE level 1.

Initial literacy and education levels

At the outset of the selection of people for this inclusion in both the ABE participant group and the non-ABE participant group of this study, the researcher expected that adults who scored low enough on a literacy screening test to be deemed in need of the most basic level of ABE would naturally be those who had neither been to school as children, nor participated in adult literacy classes in later years. However, as soon as interviews commenced, it became clear that a large proportion of people selected for inclusion in both the ABE participant group and the non-ABE participant group had in fact been to school or attended night school.

It is impossible to say whether their poor performance on screening tests, which was low enough to indicate their need for ABE level 1, points to hopelessly inadequate schooling, or their inability to take advantage of the schooling offered them as children, or attests to the strength of their desire to be included in an ABE programme of their employers, or a combination of these factors. Chapter 3 of this study includes a discussion of possible explanations for these surprisingly high levels of formal schooling.

It transpired that in the ABE participant group, only two (5%) had never been to school at all. Four (10%) had up to three years of schooling, twenty one (52.5%) had more than three years, but had not gone beyond primary school, and thirteen (32.5%) had attended high school, with three even reaching standard eight.

Previous educational experience of the ABE participant group is represented in the following table, in which learners' level of schooling is crossmatched with experience in ABE classes previous to enrolment in their current programmes.

ABE participant group						
Cross tabulation of school grade reached and time spent in ABE						
School level reached		ABE level reached before starting current employment				
std	grade	less than level 1	level 1	level 2	level 3	other training
0						2
ss1	1					
ss2	2	1				
std 1	3	3				
2	4	1				1
3	5	2		1		
4	6	6		1		
5	7	7		1		
6	8	4			1	
7	9	3		1	1	
8						

Comparison of ABET levels and school standards / grades		
std	grade	ABET level ⁶
ss1	1	
ss2	2	
std 1	3	1
2	4	
3	5	2
4	6	
5	7	3
6	8	
7	9	4 (NQF 1)
8	10	

⁶ ABET levels are sub-levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1. ABET level 4 is regarded as equivalent to school grade level 9, which is NQF level 1.

Among the non-ABE participant group, 14 (35%) had never been to school at all, 6 (15%) had up to 3 years of schooling, 14 (35%) had more than 3 years, but had not gone beyond primary school, and 6 (15%) had between standard 5 and standard 8.

Overall, twenty four of the forty (60%) had never had any experience of ABE at all, though some volunteered the information that they would have liked to be included in classes. Three (7.5%) had been in classes for less than two months. Two of these attributed the brevity of their attempts at learning to inability to see the letters well enough to read, and one to the fact that he saw no purpose in the classes. Five (13%) had been in classes for between three and six months. Of these, one reported that classes had clashed with overtime, and the others said they had simply left. Three more (7.5%) had been in ABE classes for a year, and said they had simply left, one because his alcoholism prevented his making progress. Two had attended night school for two years more than twenty years ago, and three had had other training (business economics, waste management and shop steward training). Previous educational experience of the non-ABE participant group is represented in the following table:

Non-ABE participant group			
Cross tabulation of school level and ABE level reached			
school level		ABE level reached prior to starting current employment	other training
std	grade	less than level 1	
0		14	
ss1	1	2	
ss2	2	3	
std 1	3	1	
2	4	3	
3	5	1	
4	6	3	
5	7	6	1
6	8	1	2
7	9	2	
8	10	1	

Although none of this group had attained any ABE level, some had spent some time in ABE classes at some point, although for some this was in the 1970s. The time spent, crossmatched with school level reached is presented below:

Non-ABE participant group					
Cross tabulation of school level and time spent in ABE					
school level		Time spent in ABE classes prior to current job			
std	grade	no time	less than 6 months	1 year	2 years
0	0	9	2	1	2
ss1	1		2		
ss2	2	1	2		
std 1	3	1			
2	4	3			
3	5		1		
4	6	2	1		
5	7	4		2	
6	8	1			
7	9	2			
8	10	1			

Members of this group were asked to give their own perceptions of their levels of literacy-related skills. Twelve of the forty (30%) reported that they were unable to read and write any texts at all, although they all said they could count cash. Of these twelve, six (15%) said they could write their names and read some numbers. Eleven of the forty (27.5%) could read some Zulu but no English. Of these, three (7.5%) said they could understand some spoken English, but could not speak any themselves. Thirteen (32.5%) regarded themselves as able to read Zulu and a little English, and four (10%) could read Zulu and English effectively. (All of the ABE participants described themselves as easily able to read Zulu texts.)

Those who had learnt reading and writing skills said they had done so in various ways, including, for some, formal learning experiences undergone many years before (see cross

tabulation: School level reached and time spend in ABE: Non-ABE participant group). Others reported learning in different informal ways, including watching children in the home do their homework, and asking friends for help in deciphering writing on documents, and in advertisements and forms.

The fact that seventeen (42.5%) of this group claimed to be able to read and write with confidence in Zulu, indicates some disparity between their own perceptions of their literacy skill and their test performance on the placement tests carried out by their employers, which, as noted above, indicated that they needed ABE at the lowest level. According to the co-ordinators of all the ABE programmes included in this study, the lowest level was understood to be beginner level mother tongue literacy.

In discussion, facilitators of ABE programmes in both the largest employing organisations (Umgeni Water and the Local Council) reported that they frequently found that adults whose scores on screening tests showed that they had little or no literacy skill had in fact been to school, though many of them initially claimed to have had no schooling. Umgeni Water facilitators offered as an explanation for this that whatever skills had been acquired at school had not been retained, and that people denied having attended school for two reasons: firstly that they feared humiliation if they were expected to demonstrate literacy skills and failed, and secondly that some feared that they might not be offered places in the workplace literacy programme if they were thought to have already had the benefit of some education.

Exclusion of people with previous education would consequently not have resulted in a representative sample of actual ABE learners or people eligible for ABE at the employing organisations. Since the focus of this study is squarely on the effect of ABE classes, it would not have been logical to attempt to exclude people on the basis of anything other than the inclusion criterion of low initial scores on ABE screening tests (prior to ABE classes in the case of the ABE participant group) as per the original research design.

It is popularly assumed that all educationally deprived adults are eager to join classes and make up their perceived deficit. However, almost one third of this group said that they had no

desire to join classes. Twenty nine (72.5%) stated that they would definitely want to join an ABE class, and eleven (27.5%) said they would not. Their attitudes towards class and reasons for not wishing to join are summarised in the following table:

Attitudes towards joining ABE classes						
would join	reasons for not joining					
	no desire	eye injury	alcoholism	dislike of teacher	fear of failure	too old
29	6	1	1	1	1	1

Gender

While the intention at the outset of the study had been to try to include as many women as men in the study, this proved to be totally impossible. As has been noted, for inclusion in both the ABE participant group and the non-ABE participant group, people needed to have been identified, since the commencement of their employment, as requiring ABE at the most basic level. Therefore it is not surprising that fifty four of the eighty people included in both of the groups in this study (67.5%) were employed to fill positions as manual labourers. Given the nature of much of the manual labour done by the employing organisations (lifting and laying paving stones, digging drains and trenches and so on), and the physical requirements and social patterns that govern selection of people to fill such positions, it would be reasonable to expect that among manual labourers, men would outnumber women. In fact, only five of the 40 people in the ABE participant group in this study were women, and none of the 40 of the non-ABE participant group were women. Thus overall only 6.25% of the people in this study were women. The reason for the absence of women in the non-ABE participant group was that because in all five of the organisations from whom people were drawn for this study, the few women employees who lacked education were employed in jobs associated with catering (such as tea lady) or cleaning. Therefore, because their place of work was in the area of offices and main buildings (as opposed to sites away from offices, such as sewers or building sites), and the nature of their work was such that they could fulfil the demands on them in spite of regular absences of one or two hours, all women in need of ABE

were included in ABE programmes.

This situation is similar to that obtaining in the sector employing more unskilled workers than an other, the mining sector, in which 99% of the workforce are men. As is the case in this study, women who are employed by mining houses are usually in positions such as cleaners (Centre for Adult Education, 2001, p. 67). This gender imbalance, with far fewer female than male learners in workplace ABE programmes was found to be common in South African organisations in the most recent large survey of ABE in South Africa, *A Survey of Adult Basic Education in South Africa in the 90s* (Harley et al, 1996, p. 70).

Interviews and questionnaire

Information was obtained from an individual interview with each person selected for inclusion in the study, conducted in Zulu at their place of employment. The interviews were based on a list of questions (see end of this chapter, with English translation). These questions are centred round issues that, on the basis of experience in the field as well as literature reviewed, appear the most salient for the area of investigation.

Questionnaire development

A trial questionnaire was drawn up and piloted in interviews with learners from Tholulwazi, an ABE learning centre run in Thornville. On the basis of this trial, some questions were excluded and the content or form of others was modified.

Although Tholulwazi is not an example of a workplace literacy programme, learners at this school included some who had attended ABE classes for three years, as well as some who had nearly no literacy skills and had attended for only a few weeks. Thus they were a near reflection of the experimental and control groups identified for the study. Three new learners, and three learners who had attended since 1994 were interviewed. Other learners at the school quickly became interested in these trial interviews and requested to be informed about the reason for them and their content. A group discussion followed, which was as useful as the trial interviews in identifying questions that would yield useful information relevant particularly to literacy practices in people's personal lives.

Questions that were excluded on the basis of this discussion related to medical practices (the original questionnaire included questions to determine the extent to which people relied on traditional Zulu medicine or Western doctors). The discussion revealed that learners at Tholulwazi, without exception, resorted to both systems of medical practice as a matter of course, as (according to their reports) did the overwhelming majority of people known to them. Wider investigation indicated immediately that it would be unusual to find any local

African people relying exclusively on only one of the two systems, and therefore these questions were excluded.

Questions that were modified related particularly to the ways in which people used specific skills related to literacy in the course of their home life. These discussions indicated that people understood the question (included in the original list) translated as “What things do you write?” very formally. Thus they did not offer in response those literate actions or practices that they might use a pen and paper for but were not the creation of documents, such as signing their names, or marking time sheets. The substitution of a question that asked “What do you use a pen or pencil to do?” yielded more comprehensive information in relation to practices involving some literacy skill. A discussion of how people kept records gave rise to a question that asked what paper records (such as invoices and receipts) people kept, and exactly how they were stored in the home.

In addition to these exclusions and additions, the trial interviews provided invaluable practice for trying out different wording of questions, so that the final form of each question avoided ambiguities and was clearly understood. This was particularly valuable since the researcher, although fluent in Zulu, is a second language speaker and was conscious in these early stages of having to rephrase some questions several times before they were sufficiently clearly understood to be answered without clarifying discussion.

The final form of the questionnaire was checked by first language Zulu speakers at the Centre for Adult Education.

Interviews

The trialing process at Tholulwazi indicated that 35 minutes would suffice for each interview. Although this time limit was, in general, adhered to, a few interviewees demonstrated tenacious determination to inform the researcher at great length about details of answers to questions, and wanted all of their answers recorded, with the result that their interviews took longer. The longest interview was with one of ABE participant group who worked for the Local Council, who was particularly enthusiastic about being interviewed and suffered from a very bad stutter. This interview lasted for 80 minutes. The shortest interview was 20 minutes, with a member of the ABE participant group working for Umgeni water, a woman of few words, who answered questions adequately, but briefly. While not adhering strictly to time limits might have jeopardised the standardisation of the interviews, it was felt that if the interviewees gained the impression that finishing the interview in time was more important than getting comprehensive answers to the questions, they might have omitted valuable information. From the point of view of allowing interviewees adequate time to communicate whatever information came to mind in response to the questions, the interviews were consistent.

An interesting aspect of the interviews was the difference between members of the ABE participant group and the non-ABE participant group in their attitudes towards being interviewed. People from the ABE participant group, who had been in ABE classes for some years were generally at ease and amiable in their approach to the interview. For this group, interviews were conducted during their ABE class time, and they volunteered readily to take turns to be interviewed. Not one objected to the researcher's explanation of her intention to write down their answers to questions, nor did they demonstrate any reluctance to having their names recorded, or show any diffidence or even cautious curiosity about the researcher's use of the information.

In contrast, adults selected for the non-ABE participant group were, on the whole, initially suspicious and extremely wary of the interview. For them, interviews were conducted during work time, so that they had to be taken from their duties in small groups to wait for their

individual interviews (in the case of the Local Council) or one by one (in the case of all the other organisations). In all cases, but especially at the Local Council, the first interview was the most difficult to initiate. Supervisors agreed, after some discussion, to let people off work, and they duly informed selected workers about the time and place of the interview.

Nevertheless, as each new work site was visited, on the day appointed for the first interview nobody due to be interviewed would appear. At most sites, investigation resulted in the discovery of the selected worker, who had simply ignored the instruction from a supervisor to attend the interview, and gone on with his work. This worker would then be persuaded to at least meet the interviewer, and after a short reassuring conversation, would agree to be interviewed. At the Local Council, however, it was only on the third arranged appointment for the first interview that anyone selected for inclusion in the non-ABE participant group could be found, and persuaded to meet the interviewer.

Once the initial interview was completed, the rest were much easier to set up. It became clear from informal conversation with people interviewed later, that the first interviewee spoke of his experience of the interview to his workmates, thus allaying their fears, and allowing them to feel more comfortable about the prospect of their own interviews.

Judging from what interviewees said to the researcher once they had completed interviews, people resisted making themselves available for different reasons. Some were afraid that they would be required to try to communicate in English and were afraid of looking foolish. Others feared that the interview signalled some shortcoming relating to their work performance. Overall, in addition to these fears, there was a general apprehension of the sheer extraordinariness of being requested to spend half an hour in one to one conversation with an unknown white woman.

It was unfortunate that there could not have been a group announcement to members of the non-ABE participant group, to allay their suspicions about the interviews, particularly since this was automatically done in all the ABE classes from which people in the ABE participant group were selected. In the case of the non-ABE participant group, individuals were scattered amongst different work groups or formed a tiny component of huge work groups so that it

was not feasible to announce to people more than the barest information about what was being requested prior to the initial interview.

It is impossible to explain with certainty why the resistance to the interviews was more pronounced in the non-ABE participant group from the Local Council than the other non-ABE participant groups. However, Local Council labourers work in gangs, to which information and instructions are channelled via the chain of command of managers and supervisors, so that at work, communication with anyone other than workmates in the same gang and immediate superiors is rare, and is likely to arouse suspicion. In addition, many among this group were from rural areas, which might suggest that for them, situations in which information pertaining to their personal lives is required suggests official use of that information, as happens in clinics or government offices. Some lived in areas where there was disastrous and prolonged political violence, such as Table Mountain and Gezobuso and they might possibly have feared that the information required was related to the political conflict which had recently involved them, either as victims or observers, or as willing or coerced perpetrators.

Some of those who had to be persuaded to be interviewed entered the interviewing room reluctantly, positioned themselves as far away from the interviewer as possible without being rude, and commenced the interview with arms folded and guarded expressions on their faces. Once the interviews were in progress, however, even the most apprehensive among the group relaxed surprisingly quickly, turning their chairs to face the interviewer, unfolding their arms, leaning across the table and becoming animated in their engagement with the interview. This change usually began with their discovering that the interview was to be conducted in Zulu, and their relaxation progressed as they realised that none of the questions was potentially threatening.

Chapter 3

Analysis of the data and report of the findings of this study

The fundamental aim of this study is to compare the responses of one group of interviewees (those who have participated in ABE classes for some time) directly with the responses of another group (those who have not participated in ABE classes). In this study this is done using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantifiable data

Quantified data and statistical procedures of analysis of it are currently often regarded with scepticism by researchers in the social sciences. Criticisms levelled at these methods are mainly that they are reductionist in that they reduce rich, complex information to simple quantities and scales, thus excluding subtle but possibly vital information, and oversimplifying rather than clarifying people's understanding of a set of circumstances.

While these charges are undoubtedly often true, there is nevertheless frequently value in having quantifiable data, particularly when its examination includes the exploration of relationships between different sets of information. In this case, statistical procedures can provide a dependable and consistent point of reference for discerning the extent to which one set of information correlates with another, since the decision does not have to rest on

superficial appearances or the 'gut feel' of the researcher. The fundamental question asked of any research is whether the conclusions follow validly from the presented evidence (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996 p. 2). Regrettably, researchers often tend to find only what they look for, simply because they do not see (or at worst deliberately ignore) what they are not searching for.

Quantified data and statistical procedures certainly do not provide any guarantees against the trap of discovering only what is expected, or misinterpreting information, since they do not broaden the view of the researcher. What they do afford the researcher in search of valid conclusions is the benefit of formulae that have been developed, tested and refined on vast numbers of studies involving comparison of data. These formulae, when used appropriately and judiciously, can be useful as a restraint that assists the researcher to avoid assuming the existence of correlations suggested by superficial examination of information, when the chances are that they are in fact coincidental.

In the case of this study, as stated above, the intention is to compare the responses of one group of interviewees (those who have participated in ABE classes for some time) directly with the responses of another group (those who have not participated in ABE classes). This type of comparison is called by some researchers 'quasi-experimental' (Campbell, in Sapsford and Jupp 1996 p. 18) by which is meant that the comparison is between existing differences between groups of people. This is distinct from 'experimental' design, in which the researcher controls the experimental variable, and thus has the power to isolate its effects from those of other variables since the experimental design usually involves a pre-test, post-test format, where subjects are tested directly before and directly after the 'treatment' or application of the experimental variable. If subjects are tested in this way, there can be a reasonable assumption that no factor other than the experimental variable can have produced the effect ascribed to it. One of the main disadvantages with this design is that only responses that can be evoked in very limited and specific 'laboratory' situations can be explored, and it is debatable whether conclusions reached can be generalised to contexts outside of the situation set up and controlled by the researcher.

On the other hand, a disadvantage of so-called quasi-experimental designs such as the one implemented in this study is that there is no guarantee that differences between the two groups are caused by the 'experimental' variable, since it is of course impossible to exclude other factors in this design. For example, in this study, it is never possible to conclude that correlations found between participation in ABE classes and particular aspects of interviewees' behaviour or perceptions mean that their participation in ABE has affected people's lives in those aspects. It might just as well be that factors in these perceptions or this behaviour led people to participate in classes, or that both participation in ABE and these particular aspects of people's lives are associated with or caused by some other factors altogether. Established correlations can at best simply be noted, and a discussion of possible causes offered. As in probably the majority of explorations of questions of social and educational interest, the nature of this study precludes an experimental design, since participation in ABE classes happens as part of the multiple, dynamic contexts of real life, and to exclude any of them would not only be practically impossible, but would result in findings that would not relate to real conditions at all.

In this study, quantitative methods were used to judge whether patterns in the responses that interviewees gave to questions in the interview schedule (see chapter 2) should be assumed to be coincidental, or could be regarded to be related to interviewees' participation (or non-participation) in ABE classes. (It must be remembered that all of the interviewees had been judged to be in need of ABE at the most basic level by their employers, before any of them participated in ABE classes.)

Null hypothesis

As stated in chapter two, the research hypothesis, or null hypothesis of this study is that:

Participation as a learner in an ABE programme has no significant effect on adults' self report of aspects of their work situation, involvement in community issues or the extent to which they put literacy related skills to use in their personal lives.

This null hypothesis could be accepted if no statistically significant correlations are found

between the distribution of interviewees' responses and their membership of either group. On the other hand it could be rejected if statistically significant correlations are found between the distribution of responses and group membership. Naturally, since it refers to different aspects or spheres in interviewees' lives, it could be partially rejected and partially accepted.

Statistical procedure chosen

The statistical procedure chosen as appropriate for this study was the Pearson Chi-Square test of independence, which basically compares the pattern of responses obtained in a study with the pattern that would be expected if the responses were due only to coincidence.

The chi-square, or χ^2 , is described in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000) as measuring 'the difference between a statistically generated expected and an actual result to see if there is a significant difference between them. Sapsford and Jupp describe the chi-square as a 'key test used to establish whether or not the two variables of a cross-tabulation are independent of one another' (1996 p. 239). Roscoe (1969, p. 196) describes chi-squares as 'extremely useful statistical procedures for determining whether two ... measures are related. If one of the variables is group membership and the other a criterion of some sort, the test may be used to determine whether two or more populations are distributed in the same fashion with respect to the criterion.' This is clearly appropriate for this study, since in it the need is to establish whether the distribution of interviewees' responses to questions correlates with their group membership - in this case of the group of participants in ABE programmes (the ABE group), or the group of non-participants in ABE programmes (the non-ABE group).

A limitation of the information available and the Pearson Chi-Square tests is that all that can be determined is whether or not there is a correlation between patterns of people's responses to questions asked them and their belonging to either the ABE group or the non-ABE group. As has been noted above, no conclusions can be drawn about whether one of these variables is the cause of another, or whether they are both the result of some other variable altogether.

Procedure

In order to perform the Pearson Chi-Square test of independence, it was necessary to organise the information from people's answers to questions in the interviews conducted with them into cross-tabulations or bi-variate frequency tables.

Quantifiable data was analysed by first coding interviewees' responses to questions in the interview schedule. This coding was done by assigning a numerical value to the answers given. As a general basis to the coding system, a value of 1 was given to answers indicating awareness, independence and confidence, and a value of 2 or more to answers indicating unawareness, dependence and self-doubt.

Many of the questions were not coded because answers to them were qualitative in nature, for example, question 16, (which asked whether people wanted to be included in ABE classes, and if so, their reasons for doing so), and question 17, (which asked whether interviewees thought that people who participate in ABE classes changed in any way, and if so, in what ways). Other questions were excluded since they yielded information that would not be useful to analyse, for example question 1, which asked the year in which the interviewee started working for this employer, and question 19, which asked where people lived.

The questions for which answers were statistically analysed, and the way the answers were coded are presented in the tables below:

Work situation

Q3 What is your work now?		
1 = position changed	2 = unchanged	

Q4 In this company do you think you will always do the work you do now, or will you do other work?		
1 = has expectations of advancement	2 = no expectations	

Q6 Will the company give you a pension?		
1 = good knowledge of pension scheme	2 = some idea	3 = no idea

Q8 What do your employers think of you?		
1 = (feels positive)	2 = feels negative	3 = cannot tell

Q9 Do you think you could lose your job here?		
1 = no	2 = possibly	3 = yes

Q10 If you lost your job here, what would you do to find other work?			
1 = definite plan	2 = vague plan	3 = search on foot	4 = no idea

Q11 If you were retrenched, what should your employers give you?		
1 = good idea of rights	2 = some idea	3 = no idea

Q12 What do you enjoy in your work?		
1 = def thing(s)	2 = satisfying employer	3 = no discrimination

Q13 What do you not like in your work?		
1 = work related aspects	2 = human related aspects	3 = nothing

Education

Q14 Did you go to school as a child? What standard did you reach?		
1 = left in secondary school	2 = left in primary school	3 = had no schooling

Community involvement

Q20 Do you go to any community meetings?	
1 = yes	2 = no

Q21 Are you on any committees?	
1 = yes	2 = no

Q22 If there is a problem in your community, what could you do about it?			
1 = do something positive	2 = report to structures	3 = nothing	4 = run away

Literacy practices in personal life

Q23 How well can you read Zulu?		
1 = well	2 = a little	3 = not at all

Q24 What do you do if you have to read something and it is too difficult for you?		
1 = work out with dictionary	2 = help from kids	3 = help from wife

Q26 In what years were they born?			
1 = definite idea	2 = uncertain	3 = no idea	4 = not applicable

Q27 Did you decide to have these children, or were the pregnancies unplanned?		
1 = all planned/ wanted	2 = some mistakes	3 = all unwanted

Q29 Do you read their school reports?			
1 = yes	2 = wife reads	3 = child reads	4 = not aware

Q30 Have you ever spoken to their teachers?		
1 = yes	2 = wife	3 = no

Q31 Do you read any books or papers?	
1 = Eng + Zulu papers, work material, social/recreational material	2 = Zulu paper, limited material

Q32 Do you ever go to the library in town? Tembaletu?	
1 = yes	2 = no

Q33 Do you know that there are easy to read books for adults at the library?	
1 = yes	2 = no

Q35 Did you buy these books?	
1 = yes - by choice	2 = not by choice

Q36 Do you ever go into shops that sell books? What shops?	
1 = yes	2 = no

Q37 Does anyone in your family read books or newspapers? Who? what do they read?		
1 = a number of le	2 = 1 person	3 = nobody

Q38 Does/did anyone in the house read to your children? What do they read?				
1 = self		2 = wife		3 = older sibs

Q39 Does/did anyone in the house tell the children stories without reading? What stories?	
1 = yes	2 = no

Q40 Do you ever use a pen out of class? What do you use it for?			
1 = multiple uses, dif spheres	2 = limited use	3 = class only	4 = not at all

Q41 Do you keep any paper records at home? Can you tell me what papers you keep?			
1 = extensive records	2 = quite substantial	3 = minimal	4 = none

Q42 When you get medicine from a doctor, how do you know how to take the medicine?	
1 = reads labels	2 = doctor explains

Q43 If you need to get a message to someone living far away, what do you do?				
1 = phones or writes	2 = writes only	3 = phones only	4 = asks other to phone	5 = sends message / goes

Q44 Do you plan how to spend your pay or do you just use your money until it's finished?		
1 = plans, doesn't run out	2 = plans - limited success	3 = uses money until it's finished

Q45 (For those who plan) Where did you learn to budget?	
1 = own idea	2 = ABE

Q46 Do you use ATM machines?	
1 = uses ATM	2 = cannot use ATM

Q47 You know that Sifiso Nkabinde has been arrested - How did you first know of his arrest?			
1 = multiple media sources	2 = 1 media source	3 = social source	4 = haven't heard of him

Once the information given by interviewees in the interviews had been coded according the above plan, it was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. This programme was then used to compare the data from the experimental group (those included in ABE programmes) with the data from the control group (people who were eligible for inclusion in ABE programmes, but who had not been included) in two ways:

1. Membership of experimental or control groups was cross-tabulated with interviewees' scores on all questions except for those not coded, for the reasons noted above.
2. The Pearson Chi-Square test was applied to these cross-tabulations.

As is fairly standard in social research, if this test indicated that the probability that the correlation was due to chance is 5% or more, this was accepted as possibly true, and therefore differences between the groups regarded as not statistically significant. In other words, the statistical procedure had to show that there was at least a 95% probability of a correlation **not** being due to chance for the pattern of responses to questions to be regarded as significantly related to interviewees' membership of the ABE group or the non-ABE group. In statistical terms, this can be stated as having a cut-off level of probability (P) at $p = .05$.

It is accepted practice in especially rigorous testing for a cut-off level of $p = .01$ to be used. When this is done, only correlations that are indicated to have 1% or less probability of being due to chance are accepted as statistically significant. As is noted below, some of the correlations found in this study would meet the criterion for acceptance as significant even at this level of stringent exclusion.

In SPSS for Windows (9) programme used for these statistical calculations, the probability that a correlation found is due to chance is referred to as 'asymptotic significance', and not 'probability' or ' p '. Therefore, in the tables on the ensuing pages probability levels, or P , is tabled under 'asymptotic significance'. These cross tabulations, with the Pearson Chi-square test results and explanatory comments are presented on the following pages.

Qualitative data

Much of the information obtained in this study is qualitative, since it was obtained in structured but fairly free-ranging interview conversations between the researcher and each interviewee. These conversations took between half an hour and an hour each. They were never cut short to fit in with time constraints, although this meant that some carried over from one day to another. What was uniform about the interview conversations was that each interviewee was given as much time as they wanted to respond to each question, and where appropriate, some answers were explored in detail, as long as the interviewee was happy to discuss issues pertaining to the interview questions. Perhaps because the interviews were conducted in Zulu, as the first language of the interviewees, none of the interviewees displayed any reluctance to give information beyond the first few minutes of the interview. Most appeared to thoroughly enjoy the fact that the interviewer was interested in their personal perceptions and life experiences, and were generously forthcoming in their responses.

In the following pages selections from and summaries of the responses of the interviewees are presented, along with the quantitative data that pertains to each question from the interviews. Patterns and relationships among variables that became apparent in the course of examining the information gained from these conversations are discussed. As part of the qualitative information included in this study, case studies of eight of the interviewees (four from each group) are presented after the discussion of information gained from the interview questions.

Discussion of information gained from interview questions

Question 3: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to whether people interviewed have changed the job they were originally employed to do.

Interviewees were asked what job they had when they were first employed, and what job they had at the time of the interview. Their answers were coded according to whether their position had changed or not.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee has changed original job within organisation or not			
	Changed	Unchanged	Total
ABE group	26	14	40
Non-ABE group	24	16	40
Total	50	30	80
	62.5%	37.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	.213	1	.644

The value of the chi-square(χ^2) for this comparison is .213, for which $p = .644$, which far exceeds the .05 cut-off level for acceptance. Therefore no statistically significant correlation between membership of the ABE group or non-ABE group and whether people's jobs had changed was found.

This finding is not surprising. Examination of the cross tabulation of these two variables shows that slightly more than half of the people in both the ABE group and the non-ABE group had changed their jobs, and, correspondingly, slightly less than half in both groups were still in the jobs for which they had been originally employed.

An examination of what kinds of work interviewees were employed to do showed that most of the eighty people interviewed were originally employed as general labourers, and the rest as artisans' assistants, cleaners, gardeners, machine operators or delivery men. Two of the eighty were employed as drivers, two as a security guards, and one as a chef.

Four of those whose positions have changed have become *indunas* (overseers). Eleven have changed from doing general labour to driving lorries, tractors, large machines such as rollers or operating machines. Others have become artisans' assistants or messengers, or, in the case of those who are employed by the local council, have changed from one grade of manual labour to a superior grade.

What is immediately clear from information gained from this question is that as far as this particular group of educationally disadvantaged adults were concerned, participation in ABE classes had not made any difference to their advancement within the organisations for which they worked. Impressions gained from what the interviewees said in conversation with the researcher suggested that advancement appeared to depend on factors such as demeanor, personality and intelligence rather than the extent of people's literacy skills. Those who had advanced seemed to have done so because they had established a good relationship with their superiors, through, for example, demonstrating their dependability, leadership qualities, or simple common sense.

Naturally, the lack of advancement of ABE learners has to be considered in the light of the limited range of unskilled jobs available in any organisation. While there might be a great deal of unskilled work to be done, there are very limited opportunities for advancement within it. Also, directly above the unskilled workers in the hierarchy of any large organisation are the strata of skilled workers. As is usual in workplace ABE programmes, no vocational skills training accompanied ABE in any of the organisations whose workers were included in this study, and therefore it is hardly surprising that ABE learners have not become skilled workers within their organisations. The one area of skills training that was accessible to them was driver training, mainly of lorries, tractors, heavy machinery or motor bikes, and eleven of the fifty interviewees who have changed their original position have become drivers of one

sort or another. Even in this particular type of skills training, which is related to literacy in that it requires reading road signs at the very least, participation in ABE classes did not result in greater chances of advancement in this study, since, interestingly, there were almost equal numbers in each group who became drivers: five in the ABE group and six in the non-ABE group.

The only case discovered where one of the non ABE group missed an otherwise certain opportunity for promotion to the position of driver directly because of his lack of literacy skills, was one man who had been selected for the position, and has a driver's licence, but was unable to record the information required in the daily record books, such as distance travelled, fuel used and so on. Under the praise name Phambuka, his is one of the stories explored in the case studies that conclude this chapter.

Question 4: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to whether people interviewed expect to advance or expect nothing other than to remain in the position in which they currently are.

In this question, people were asked whether they expected to remain in the position they held, or expected to ever advance to another position in their organisations. Their answers were coded according to whether they expected to advance, or not.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee expects to advance in terms of position in organisation			
	expects to advance	does not expect to advance	Total
ABE group	22	18	40
Non-ABE group	11	29	40
Total	33	47	80
	41.25%	58.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	6.241	1	.012

In this comparison, a statistically significant correlation was found, since the value of the chi-square(χ^2) for this comparison is 6.241, for which $p = .012$, which is well below the cut-off level of .05. (In other words, this shows that statistically, the differences between the responses of the two groups being due to chance is only 12 in 1000, far below the cut-off level of 50 in 1000.)

Examination of the cross tabulation of these two variables shows a striking difference in expectations of advancement. While 55% of the ABE group expect to advance from their current position, only 27.5% of the non-ABE group express a similar expectation.

These expectations should be seen in light of the fact that since roughly 25% of the whole group were, or appeared to be (in the cases of those who did not know their ages) 50 years old or more. Therefore, for many of them, their working years were drawing to a close and they

were looking forward to retiring and drawing a pension more than advancing their positions at work.

In conversation, six of the ABE group expressed the hope that they would advance as a direct result of their participation in ABE classes, and indicated that they had joined classes with this specific hope in mind. In the light of the information yielded by the previous question, their expectations appear to be over-optimistic.

An interesting difference between the two groups that was very apparent in conversation with the interviewees, was that there was more of a quality of passive fatalism in the responses of the non ABE group than the ABE group. Six of the non ABE group, (but none of the ABE group) stated very definitely that whether they advanced or not was up to their employers, and that they did not think there was much that they could do to improve their chances. In addition, while discussing their situations, the non ABE group tended to use the Zulu words for 'employers' (*abaqashi*) and 'white people' (*abelungu*) interchangeably. Thus their expectations of their prospects were expressed in terms of a definite perception of an opaque imbalance of power relations between black and white. This tendency was not apparent among members of the ABE group. This may be at least partly because some of the teachers in ABE classes are white, and therefore at least some of the ABE group are accustomed to regular informal communication with white people who are clearly not in management positions. In contrast, most people in the non-ABE group do not have regular communication with white people who are not in positions of authority over them.

On the other hand it is tempting to speculate on whether gains in ABE classes include the ability to critically analyse the power structures in the organisations for which people work, and a less fatalistic attitude towards what the balance of power between the races can be.

Question 5: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to whether people interviewed would rather stay with the organisation currently employing them or consider moving to another organisation.

In this question, people were asked whether they wanted to stay with the organisation currently employing them until they went on pension, or whether they would consider a move to another organisation. Their answers were coded simply according to whether they said they wanted to stay with their current employers or would consider moving.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee would consider moving			
	does not consider moving	would possibly move	Total
ABE group	38	2	40
Non-ABE group	36	4	40
Total	74	6	80
	92.5%	7.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	.721	0	.396

The value of the chi-square(χ^2) for this comparison is .721, for which $p = .396$, well above the cut-off level for acceptance. This demonstrates very clearly that there is no significant difference between the two groups in relation to the pattern of their answers to this question. This close similarity between the answers of people in both groups is obvious from the most cursory examination of the cross-tabulation, where it is immediately apparent that the overwhelming majority of people in both the ABE group and the non-ABE group were firmly of the opinion that they wanted to stay with their current employers. Only 5% of the ABE group, and 10% of the non-ABE group indicated that they would consider moving from their present employment.

Given the current economic climate, and the steady shrinkage in the number of jobs available for people with little education and skills, this is completely predictable. People in this category who have a permanent job are well aware of their good fortune and are only too

painfully aware of relatives and neighbours who are unemployed or survive on erratic income from lowly paid 'togt' work. There is such competition for jobs not requiring advanced levels of skill or education that there are no real prospects of being able to choose to work in one place or another. 92.5% of these interviewees made it absolutely clear that they had no intention of seeking to move from their secure positions. Only 6 out of the 80 people interviewed (7.5%) indicated that they would consider moving.

Of course it must also be taken into consideration that interviewees might not have felt free to answer this question absolutely truthfully, especially since it came so near the beginning of the interview, before there had been time for the establishment of rapport between the interviewee and interviewer. Interviewees might have felt reluctant to tell the interviewer that they would consider moving in case this information was passed on their employers, who might conceivably have reacted negatively to it.

Question 6: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to interviewees’ extent of knowledge of the pension scheme offered by their employer

In this question, people were asked if they knew whether their employing organisations would pay them a pension if they reached retiring age in its employ, and if so, if they knew whether the pension would be better than the pension paid by the government. People’s answers were coded into three categories:

- 1. Interviewee has a good knowledge of pension scheme
- 2. Interviewee has some idea of pension scheme
- 3. Interviewee has no idea of pension scheme

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's awareness of pension scheme offered				
	detailed accurate knowledge	some knowledge	no knowledge	Total
ABE group	16	17	7	40
Non-ABE group	6	16	18	40
Total	22	33	25	80
	27.5%	41.25%	31.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	9.416	2	.009

A very strong statistically significant correlation was found between membership of the ABE group and knowledge of pension schemes. The value of χ^2 is 9.416, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .009$, showing that the likelihood of the pattern of difference between the two groups being due to chance is extremely small, and of course well below the .05 cutoff level.

Examination of the cross tabulation of these two variables shows that while 40% of the ABE group have a thorough knowledge of the pension scheme offered, only 15% of the non-ABE group do. Roughly the same proportion of each group (40% or just above) have some

knowledge of the pension scheme. However, a similar imbalance as was shown between the two groups in relation to the number who were well informed about the pension scheme is reflected in the number who have no knowledge at all of the pension scheme: only 17.5% of the ABE group are in this position of ignorance, compared with 45% of the non-ABE group.

A recurring comment among members of the non ABE group was that no-one had told them or shown them about the pension scheme, so that although most of them knew that they were paying in and expected to get something out eventually, very few of them knew much more than this. There is a central question that arises on comparing their relative ignorance with their counterparts' knowledge of their pension scheme. This question is whether or not the difference in the extent to which these employees are informed about their pension schemes is a result of participation in ABE classes, perhaps because ABE teachers have taken the trouble to cover their organisation's particular pension scheme and its implications for employees in the course of their lessons. Teachers of ABE generally adhere to the material with which they are supplied, which naturally has a very general focus, but ABE facilitators at the Msunduzi Local Council and Umgeni Water indicated that these topics could possibly have been covered in some ABE classes. They both said that usually people from their human resources department inform all the employees about things like pension schemes in specially held meetings, but that sometimes ABE learners approached their teachers with specific requests that things like this be covered in class. They did say that this was entirely up to the discretion of the facilitator and certainly did not happen as a matter of course.

It must be considered then, whether the difference between the two groups should be ascribed to some other factor. While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore the causes of differences between the ABE group and their counterparts, it is tempting to speculate, particularly in the light of some of the other differences that are explored on the ensuing pages, whether it is not possible that people who are in the habit of seeking out information, in this case, information on their pension schemes, are possible more likely to be included in education initiatives such as ABE classes than people who do not actively seek information.

Question 8: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to interviewees' perceptions of their employers' attitude towards them

This question investigated people's perception of their employers' attitudes to them.

Interviewees were asked about how they thought their employers saw them, and their answers were divided into three categories:

1. Interviewee believes employer has a positive attitude towards him⁷
2. Interviewee believes employer has a negative attitude towards him
3. Interviewee says he has no way of knowing

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's perception of employer's attitude towards him				
	Positive	Negative	Cannot tell	Total
ABE group	35	2	3	40
Non-ABE group	34		6	40
Total	69	2	9	80
	86.25%	2.5%	11.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	3.014	2	.222

No statistically significant correlation between group membership and people's answer to this question was found. The value of χ^2 was found to be 3.014, for which the asymptotic significance of $p = .222$, is well over the cutoff level for significance.

Examination of the cross tabulation shows that interestingly, an overwhelming majority of people in both the ABE group and the non-ABE group (87.5%, and 85% respectively) expressed the belief that their employers had a positive attitude towards them.

⁷

Throughout this chapter, which deals with findings in this study, the personal pronouns 'he' and 'his' are used when referring to the interviewees, because the vast majority of them were men.

This finding is an interesting contradiction of the customary view of the relationship between South African employers and their low skilled workers, which supposes that there is not much that is positive in this relationship. However, by far the majority of the interviewees who reported a sense of their employers having a positive attitude towards them did so unhesitatingly. Many reported that they felt personally liked and trusted by their employers. It is unfortunate that the study did not include a question about what interviewees thought of their employers.

Some of the responses that were illustrative of the bulk of interviewees' perceptions of employers' positive attitudes towards them included:

- feels liked, trusted, believed. They know he's not a loafer, not absent often, and doesn't do the wrong thing
- trust him enough to lend him a car to go home
- they shake his hand, they trust him
- they praise him
- like her and praise her
- they trust and like him a lot
- they think he works well, they call on him
- gets on well with them
- new boss likes him, previous one didn't
- doesn't get complaints, knows he works well and observes regulations
- they see him as trustworthy, competent
- they say when he's away problems arise
- gets praise for the clean garden
- thinks they are positive because he doesn't make mistakes, doesn't fight

Of the few who reported that they perceived that their employers felt negative towards them, almost all said that they had gained the impression that their employers had something against them, but protested that they could see no reason for this negative attitude.

Responses that were illustrative of these interviewees' perceptions of employers' negative attitudes were:

- they don't tell him - he feels hard done by
- doesn't know - they don't praise, don't complain
- thinks they don't like him, doesn't know what the problem is
- they object to the time he spends on the telephone

On testing for a correlation between the interviewees’ expectation of advancement and their perception of their employers’ attitude towards them, a significant correlation was found.

Interviewee expects to advance or not * interviewee's perception of employer's attitude towards him				
	Positive	Negative	Cannot tell	Total
expects to advance	33			33
does not expect to advance	36	2	9	47
Total	69	2	9	80
	86.25%	2.5%	11.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	8.955	2	.011

In this comparison, the entirely predictable overlap between awareness of employers’ approval and expectation of advancement is clear. All of those of both groups who have expectations of advancement experience their employers’ attitude towards them as positive. All of the eleven who could not tell what their employers thought of them, or who said their employers were negative towards them did not expect to advance.

The statistical significance of this pattern is shown in that the value of χ^2 was 8.955, for which the asymptotic significance is $p. = .011$. This is under the cutoff level for significance, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that the correlation is not due to chance.

Question 9: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to people’s perceptions of the likelihood of their losing their jobs through retrenchment or dismissal

In this question, people were asked whether they thought they could possibly lose their jobs. Their answers were grouped into three categories:

- 1. Interviewee does not think it likely that he will lose his job
- 2. Interviewee thinks he may possibly lose his job
- 3. Interviewee thinks he may well lose his job

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee’s perception of prospects of losing his job				
	not at all likely	possibly	highly likely	Total
ABE group	18	21	1	40
Non-ABE group	20	14	6	40
Total	38	35	7	80
	47.5%	43.75%	8.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	5.077	2	.079

From examination of the cross tabulation it is tempting to suppose that there is a correlation between group membership and this perception. This is because only 2.5% of the ABE group believed that they were highly likely to lose their jobs, compared with 15% of the non-ABE group. However, on the other hand, it can be seen that approximately half of both groups felt that they were not at all likely to lose their jobs, (45% of the ABE group and 50% of the non ABE group) and that 52.5% of the ABE group compared with 35% of the non ABE group felt that it was possible that they might lose their jobs.

It is therefore not surprising that no statistically significant correlation exists between group membership and patterns of people’s perceptions in this comparison. The value of χ^2 in this comparison is 5.077. At this level, the asymptotic significance, or p . = .079, which slightly exceeds the cut-off level of .05.

The interviewees who worked for the larger organisations, Umgeni Water, the Local Council and the University expressed the view that although in the current economic climate lay-offs were possible, they felt secure because of the size and solidarity of their employing organisations. Those who worked for Taurus and Baynesfield Estates expressed a sense of much less security. These differences in perception have since proved accurate in the case of Taurus Co-op Artificial Insemination Service, since it has closed since these interviews took place and its workers have been retrenched.

Question 10: Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with respect to people's ideas with regard to what they would do to regain employment or make a living in the event of losing their jobs

For this question, in which people were asked what they would do to survive in the event of losing their jobs, people's responses were grouped into four categories:

1. Interviewee suggests a definite plan
2. Interviewee suggests a vague plan
3. Interviewee has no ideas apart from going from door to door on foot, searching for work (known in Zulu by one word 'fesa').
4. Interviewee has nothing at all to suggest, indicates he would simply despair

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's strategies for regaining employment if retrenched					
	definite plan	vague plan	fesa	no idea - despair	Total
ABE group	7	22	11	0	40
Non-ABE group	4	18	16	2	40
Total	11	40	27	2	80
	13.75%	50%	33.75%	2.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	4.144	3	.246

No statistically significant correlation was found between group membership and the pattern of people's responses.

From the cross tabulation it can be seen that very few of either group could suggest a definite plan, but that about half of both groups (55% of the ABE group and 45% of the non-ABE group) suggested vague plans. Although slightly more of the non-ABE group responded in ways that suggested having no plan, (responses 3 and 4 above), χ^2 reads at 4.144 in this comparison, and the asymptotic significance, or $p = .246$, which is not statistically significant.

The current economic climate undoubtedly makes economic survival after losing a job extremely difficult for everyone, and there are only limited options available to those who have this misfortune. However, given that retrenchment is a very real and continuing possibility for many low skilled workers, strategies for regaining employment or generating income in the informal sector are surely areas that could be addressed in ABE classes. It is telling that among the forty participants in ABE classes interviewed in this study, only seven (compared with four of non ABE group) could articulate a definite plan for how they would cope.

Question 11 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the extent of their knowledge about what was due to them in the event of, their being retrenched.

In this question, people were asked if they knew what their employers should give them if they were retrenched. Their answers were divided into three categories:

1. Interviewee has a good idea of what would be due to him
2. Interviewee has some idea of what would be due to him
3. Interviewee has no idea of what would be due to him

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's idea of rights on dismissal				
	good idea of rights	some idea of rights	no idea of rights	Total
ABE group	27	13		40
Non-ABE group	10	28	2	40
Total	37	41	2	80
	46.25%	51.25%	2.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	15.299	2	.000

The value of χ^2 in this comparison is 15.299, and the asymptotic significance, or p . = .000. This indicates an extremely strong statistical correlation between group membership and the extent of people's knowledge about what they are entitled to on retrenchment.

The strength of this correlation can be seen from the cross tabulation, which shows that most of the ABE group (67.5%) had a good idea of what they should be given, and that the rest of this group had at least some idea. In comparison, only 25% of the non-ABE group had a good idea of what they were entitled to.

While the finding that the relationship between group membership and people's knowledge

about what they are entitled to on retrenchment is very strong, what is not clear is the causal direction of the relationship. In other words, it is not possible to tell from this information whether people know what they are entitled to because of gains made in ABE classes (because, for example, issues such as this are discussed in ABE classes, or because people in ABE classes gain reading skills and consequently read about their rights) or because the kind of people who make it their business to find out about their rights also make it their business to ensure themselves a place in classes available to them.

It must be noted that the strength of the difference between members of the ABE group and members of the non ABE group with regard to the extent of their knowledge of what is due to them on retrenchment echoes the difference between the groups with regard to knowledge of their pension schemes (Question 6). According to facilitators from the Msunduzi Local Council and Umgeni Water, workers' rights on retrenchment might have been covered in some ABE classes if learners requested this, but would not have been covered formally as a matter of course.

Question 12 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to what they enjoy in their work situations.

In this question, people were asked what they enjoyed in their work. Their responses were grouped into four categories:

- 1. Interviewee expresses enjoyment of particular aspects of work
- 2. Interviewee expresses enjoyment of social aspects of work
- 3. Interviewee expresses enjoyment only in relation to getting paid
- 4. Interviewee expresses no enjoyment of anything in his work.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's experience of job satisfaction					
	enjoys particular aspects of the work	enjoys social aspects	enjoys getting paid only	nothing	Total
ABE group	32	3	3	2	40
Non-ABE group	22	5	9	4	40
Total	54	8	12	6	80
	67.5%	10%	15%	7.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	6.019	3	.111

The value of χ^2 in this comparison is 6.019, which in this case has a value for asymptotic significance, or p. of .111, far above the cut off level.

This analysis shows that although 80% of the ABE group compared with only 55% of the non-ABE group express enjoyment of particular aspects of their work, and only 7% of the ABE group enjoy nothing apart from getting paid compared with 22% of the non-ABE group, these differences between the groups are not statistically significant.

A different picture emerges when the number of categories in this cross tabulation is reduced

to two, to distinguish between:

1. Those who enjoy any aspects of their work, and
2. Those who enjoy nothing or only getting paid.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's experience of job satisfaction			
	enjoys social or other aspects of the work	enjoys nothing or getting paid only	Total
ABE group	35	5	40
Non-ABE group	27	13	40
Total	62	18	80
	77.5%	22.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	4.588	1	.032

With this contraction of the categories of comparison, there is a significant correlation between group membership and work enjoyment. The value of χ^2 in this comparison is 4.588 and the asymptotic significance, or $p = .032$ indicates that there is a significant correlation between membership of the ABE group and the reported experience of job satisfaction. 87.5% of the ABE group reported enjoying social or other aspects of the work, compared with 67.5% of the non-ABE group. Conversely, although more than half of the non-ABE group did report experiencing job satisfaction, it also shows a significant correlation between membership of this group and the reported experience of no job satisfaction. 12.5% of the ABE compared with 32.5% of the non-ABE group said that they enjoyed nothing, or only getting paid.

Aspects of their jobs which members of the ABE group reported enjoying included:

- working machinery, such as photocopiers, grass cutters, vacuum cleaners, car engines
- knowing a job is well done (x5 responses)
- being left to get on with a job without direct supervision (x4 responses)
- working hard (x2 responses)
- being really familiar with the work
- good co-operation (x3 responses)
- working for a particular boss (x2)
- having clear instructions

- solving problems
- coming to adult classes
- gaining expertise that can be used to do private work in own time to augment income
- learning to do new things by watching artisans
- using knowledge gained (in this case, working with electricity)
- learning things that will help others
- doing things for the community
- sitting in the office with the air conditioning on completing time sheets
- completing a job, eg in response to a complaint from the public
- seeing people enjoying food she has cooked
- transplanting seedlings
- preparing newspapers for readers
- working with cattle
- being a messenger to other departments

There was not much difference between the above list, and aspects of work which members of the non-ABE group reported enjoying. These included:

- getting on well with workmates / co-operating with others (5 responses)
- laughing and joking with workmates even when work is tough
- being happy to have work, knowing you'll get paid and be able to eat (4)
- driving (3)
- everything in present job (2)
- working with machines (2)
- likes to see things he's done look good (2)
- likes all work - machines, mixing cement, everything
- feeling respected
- work that 'gets the blood moving'
- doing things properly
- likes work, wakes up, goes to work freely, likes the boss
- arriving on time, working in harmony
- likes waking up and going to work
- working with clear instructions and in a positive atmosphere
- getting on with things, cleaning cars
- likes current supervisor
- knowing that your work rate is high
- working to a plan and being left to do it his way
- working with cattle
- with good work there is no noise from supervisors, no noise in your heart

Some of the interviewees, particularly those in the non-ABE group, seemed to regard the question as frivolous, although they did attempt to answer it sincerely. Their attitude seemed best represented in the comment of one old man, whose answer to the question was "One just works. Children choose. Old people just do the job."

Question 13 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to what they dislike in their work situations.

In this question, people were asked what they disliked about their work. As with the previous question, people's responses were grouped into four categories:

1. Interviewee expresses dislike of particular aspects of work
2. Interviewee expresses dislike of conflict with employer
3. Interviewee expresses dislike of conflict with workmates
4. Interviewee expresses dissatisfaction in relation to low pay and/or limitations in possibilities for advancement.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's experience of dissatisfaction with work						
	dislikes aspects of the work	dislikes conflict with employer	dislikes conflict with workmates	no advancement / low pay	nothing	Total
ABE group	15	11	4	4	6	40
Non-ABE group	9	8	10	1	12	40
Total	24	19	14	5	18	80

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	8.345	4	.080

In this comparison, the value of χ^2 is 8.345, for which, in this case, the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .08$. This is slightly about the cut-off level of .05, and therefore indicates that the probability of the pattern being due to chance are too high for it to be regarded as associated with group membership.

Thus, although examination of the cross-tabulation shows that more of the ABE group (35.5%) than the non-ABE group (22.5%) express dissatisfaction in relation to aspects of work and conflict with employers, that more of the non-ABE group express a dislike of conflicts with workmates, (25% compared with 10%), and that only 15% of the ABE group as opposed to 30% of the non-ABE group find nothing to dislike in their work, this pattern is

not statistically significant.

The groups were identifying very similar aspects of work as those that they disliked, with conflict and being told off rudely identified by both groups as the things they disliked the most, and by far the most unpleasant aspects of work.

Aspects of work that members of the ABE group said that they disliked included:

- conflict (10)
- being told off (5) (one said: like a child)
- having one's work constantly checked and commented on (2)
- not having a chance of improving (3)
- being refused opportunities to learn
- doing work he wasn't hired for / getting told to do things not in his job (2)
- noise, interruptions, disturbances
- being called to different places during work / getting shifted about
- not getting good instructions
- strikes
- loafing
- getting attacked by dogs and harassed by drunk or angry people in the course of reading meters
- carrying heavy machines, since he's getting old
- roughness of physical labour
- having one's work destroyed or vandalised, for example when vandals break trees
- seeing drunk people at work
- making mistakes
- getting rained on, using own clothes instead of a uniform
- travelling a long distance to work
- seeing thieves

Aspects of work that members of the non-ABE group said that they disliked included:

- conflict (8)
- being told off angrily (7)
- going down manholes, cleaning them
- getting in lorries that transport them to work, getting wet
- working machines
- loafing
- arriving late
- heavy work that strains him
- working with drunk people
- getting rained on
- short hard shift, getting tired, injured (he is a rubbish collector)
- having no work to do
- people taking his tools while he's away
- being watched and hounded, wants to be told and left
- low pay
- one particular *induna* (foreman)

Question 14 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to years spent in formal schooling

Interviewees' responses to the question of how long they had been at school were divided into five categories:

1. Interviewee had no formal schooling whatsoever.
2. Interviewee had between 1 and 3 years' formal schooling.
3. Interviewee had between 4 and 6 years' formal schooling.
4. Interviewee had between 6 and 8 years' formal schooling (and had therefore probably completed primary school).
5. Interviewee had more than 8 years' formal schooling.

ABE group or non-ABE group * extent of interviewee's formal schooling						
	no formal schooling	up to 3 years' formal schooling	4 - 6 years' formal schooling	6 - 8 years (end of primary)	more than 8 years' formal schooling	Total
ABE group	2	4	13	8	13	40
Non-ABE group	14	6	7	7	6	40
Total	16	10	20	15	19	80
	20%	12.5%	25%	18.75%	23.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	13.082	4	.004

What is of import from this table is that

- only 5% of the ABE group compared with 35% of the non-ABE group had had no formal schooling whatsoever.
- 67.5% of the people interviewed (54 out of 80) had completed four or more years of formal schooling
- of the ABE group, 85% (34 of the 40) had had at least 4 years schooling
- of the non- ABE group, 50% (20 out of 40) had had at least 4 years at school

This finding, one of the most significant in this piece of research, shows that for the people interviewed in this study, the probability of their being in ABE classes increased dramatically with the amount of formal education they had already had. This is consistent with research on adult learning in other parts of the world where it has been established that in general, the probability of adults' taking part in education initiatives increases with the amount of education they have already had (Tight 1996, p. 131). Cross, (1981) states that "Virtually all surveys, past and present, show that the more education people have, the more interested they will be in further education, the more they will know about available opportunities and the more they will participate". Though this trend clearly follows patterns that have been documented elsewhere, what is of concern is that it means that many of those whose need of ABE is the greatest are not in classes. This is most certainly in stark discord with the integral aims of ABE in South Africa, (see pages 31-38 in chapter 1) which are rooted in the development of learners' potential and removal of barriers resulting from past discrimination.

In the case of this study, all people selected for interviews had been shown by their performance in screening tests administered by their employing organisations to be in need of ABE at its most basic level. One would expect people shown to be in need of the most basic adult education available to have not had any formal schooling, but it transpired that only 20% of all those selected for interviews had actually had no formal schooling. This begs the question of why the other 80% of the people interviewed scored so poorly on the screening tests as to be deemed in need of the most basic ABE available.

Unfortunately (but naturally) the five employing organisations used different screening tests in their assessment of their employees' literacy skills. Therefore uniformity of assessment cannot be assumed, beyond noting that all were judged to be in need of tuition at the most basic level of ABE. Considering that almost a quarter of the people interviewed (almost 24%) had actually completed primary school, this must be regarded as an anomaly.

Perhaps for some, schooling was simply not effective, and they failed to gain the literacy skills tested for in literacy screening tests. Alternatively, they may have gained the skills at the time, but lost them through disuse since leaving school. A third possibility is that the

screening tests were ineffective in that they did not reflect skills that people actually had. Finally, it is possible that although schooling was at least basically effective, and people retained the skills they acquired as children, they deliberately disguised these skills when doing the screening test to ensure their inclusion in ABE classes. One motive for doing this might be simply that spending four hours a week in ABE classes is an attractive option, particularly when it is an alternative to simply carrying on with normal work, which for most of the people interviewed was, to say the least, not particularly stimulating or enjoyable. (Interviewees' work was mainly general manual labour, garden maintenance, cleaning, and assisting artisans.) In addition to this, as is shown in their answers to Question 16, people tend to hope that possibilities for personal advancement will follow their participation in ABE classes, and naturally, there is the perennial hunger for certificates, which do tend to flow forth from ABE classes.

From a slightly different perspective, taking into account the diffidence and ambivalence that characterised the approach of many in the non-ABE group in relation to literacy and learning activities, and indeed, their attitude towards being interviewed for this piece of research, it is unlikely that they would have made assertive attempts to get included in literacy classes. This might be particularly salient where there is a point at which the immediate supervisors of potential participants in ABE classes decide which of the workers they supervise should be released to attend classes. According to facilitators at Umgeni Water, participation in ABE class is voluntary and selection of potential learners is done through their supervisors. At the Msunduzi Local Council, all workers who are eligible for inclusion in ABE classes have been included since an expansion in the council's ABE programme in 2001 (Mbatha, 2001). However, before this date, selection was generally done through supervisors. Thus it is very reasonable to suppose that workers who show the most eagerness to attend classes are given preference. Adults who have some idea of what reading and writing entail, and who are confident in their ability to perform satisfactorily in class (since they know they have at least some skill in this sphere, gained at school) are more likely to put vigorous effort into seeking admission to class than those for whom the whole world of literacy and schooling is alien and who are uncertain of their capacity for this kind of learning. They would surely be more hesitant, and very possibly get shouldered out of the way by their more schooled and

confident fellow workers.

The co-ordinator of the ABE programme at Umgeni Water (the employing organisation that runs the most extensive ABE programme in Pietermaritzburg) was asked whether it might be true that adults faked low literacy skills when doing the screening tests to ensure their inclusion in the ABE programme. She expressed the view that this was likely, and went on to say that the level of skill demonstrated by some of the learners in the course of the ABE programme was too high to be consistent with their performance on the screening test.

The fact that so many of the ABE programme participants interviewed in this study had higher than expected levels of prior formal education parallels the findings of studies on ABE programmes done in Uganda and elsewhere (Oxenham, 2000):

A striking finding in the Uganda programmes of adult basic education is that no fewer than 73 per cent of a randomised national sample of graduates from the programmes had actually already had some primary schooling. Even more striking is that half of these schooled people had stayed in school between 5 and 8 years. Further, although these people had graduated successfully from their literacy programmes, they persisted for several months longer in attending more literacy classes. These facts have their counterparts in Indonesia and Namibia. The Ministry of Education and Culture found that two thirds of the sample in Indonesia had had two or more years of primary schooling, while Lind encountered a similar phenomenon in Namibia (1996). In Senegal, a pilot literacy programme, *Projet Aphaséisation Priorité Femmes*, found in its first year that nearly 10% of the enrollees had been to school. In its third year, that proportion had increased to 18%. (Oxenham, 2000, p. 247)

Question 15 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to years spent in informal adult education.

Selection for the non-ABE group effectively precluded people who had participated in informal adult education, since only people who had not benefited from ABE classes were eligible for inclusion in this group. Therefore information obtained in this question yielded no information that could be usefully analysed.

Question 16 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to reasons for which they would attend ABE classes

No chi square test was applied to the information yielded from answers to this question since interviewees naturally volunteered too varied and multiple a set of reasons for wanting to attend, or, in some cases, not attend, ABE classes. It would have made no sense to attempt to reduce people's responses to one coded answer each.

Instead, reasons stated were categorised and the responses frequency in each category noted, whether it was the only reason stated by a particular person, or one of many reasons.

Reasons given for wanting to attend ABE classes

	ABE group	non-ABE group
to read and write	1	6
to speak, read and write English	23	11
to learn maths	2	0
to gain or remember school knowledge	17	14
learn about rights / things that will help	10	4
vocational benefit (eg more pay/ better communication / increased skills)	13	2
declines to attend	0	11
	65	42

As is immediately apparent from the above table, people already in ABE classes offered many more reasons for wanting to attend ABE classes than those not in classes. Also, interviewees in the ABE group suggested a wider range of reasons than did people in the non-ABE group. This is not surprising since they clearly have a better idea of what is offered in classes and, one would hope, of how what is learnt can be used in practical contexts, than do those who have not taken part in classes.

What was particularly interesting was the responses of those in the non-ABE who had declined to join classes, or who had dropped out immediately after joining. The reasons they

offered for rejecting this opportunity are listed below.

- did not want to join, because he does not want to read and write;
- chose not to join here, knows everything he needs;
- he doesn't have a use for ABE;
- has too much to think about. Wants education for his children, not for himself;
- stopped after two or three weeks because he did not like being left behind by others and ignored by the teacher;
- did not like the teacher;
- joined, but could not participate because of eye problems, and chose not to get glasses or continue;
- joined, but left almost at once because he 'found Monday difficult' because his 'head was full of home'. *Researcher (because of fairly obvious signs of heavy drinking): 'And of beer?' - Interviewee (laughing): 'Yes.'*
- he has no money to pay. Says he would like to learn but fears it will cost money
- it was too much bother to arrange with his job and the things he has to do;
- he is still thinking he might go;

Thus the most common reason given is not desiring education for themselves. Following this are negative experiences associated with ABE facilitators and /or classes, a problem with vision, fear of the cost and simply not getting organised enough to participate.

Question 17 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their perceptions of changes in people who attend ABE classes

The experiences and perceptions of both groups were overwhelmingly positive in regard to the effects that participation in ABE has on people in a number of spheres.

ABE group	Non-ABE group
Literacy and language skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they learn to speak English (14) • they learn to read and write English (7) • they can read and write Zulu (9) • leave Fanakalo, can talk without getting someone to translate 	Literacy and language skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they can speak English to people (7) • they read and write for themselves (8) • they can see what is in books • they write quickly (2) (hands run lightly) • they can read signs • can fill in time sheets • learn to budget • they can write their names -(5) (they can stop using their thumbs - humiliating) • old ones want to learn Zulu, young ones want more
General changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they have more knowledge and skills (9) • they can overcome problems, can manage things like ATMs themselves (3) • some think they are better than others and boast (2) • don't have problems that uneducated people do in signing forms, reading books; • they change, are clever, have new ideas • other people rely on people who have this knowledge and skill • they learn to respect one another • they stop fighting • people who have no education don't realise the importance of things, take things too lightly, answer people any old how, have no manners. 	General changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they know about things (3) • it wakes up people's minds /understanding (2) • they get more knowledge (2) • big changes, like being able to sign in banks • communicate with people they meet • there is nothing that worries them they are independent and able • their life is better • can read danger signs • they don't meet with problems like people who haven't learnt
Work relatd changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can do better at work because they can understand English instructions and talk to supervisors (3) • get promoted / better jobs (3) • easier to get work (2), can get better work • can apply for jobs, because they can write, get different kinds of work, reach things above others • they can write notes to their supervisors • work better and quicker because they can read • can translate at meetings 	Work related changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get time off work for classes • helps them progress get new positions • sees people talking English to bosses

<p>Personal changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they feel better about themselves (10) • feel happy because they can sign (5) • can read and write letters and notes (4) • they can fill in forms (3), write letters, without these things you can't be a person • they don't have to ask for help • understanding changes people • education helps people improve themselves • it reminds them of what they learnt but have forgotten, • they understand things - can solve problems • helps them think properly. ABE is much better than school because from std 5 you know nothing • they know how to help people, eg at the bank (3) and discipline others. Others are helpless, vulnerable to criminals. Education is a mother father brother sister to look after you • a great change. Education is a discipline, prevents problems, develops people and frees them. • helps in many ways (his blood pressure went down!) • whole life can improve - trusts that it's so! 	<p>Personal changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it makes them happy (5) • they say they feel different, he notices they apply themselves to things • people in ABE praise it • they are independent • they are very happy when they learn to write (sees them revising out of class) • they change their attitude. Without education, they did not live happily, men beat their families and think all they do is right
	<p>No change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is no change in them (6) • they're the same, have the same jobs (3) • they learn things, but their lives don't change (2) • they may feel different, he doesn't know

(numbers in brackets refer to the number of times this factor was repeated by different interviewees)

Members of both groups were in agreement with regard to the benefit of gains made in traditional literacy skills and communication skills in English. In their descriptions of the advantages of being able to speak English at work and to English people in general, people spoke of the increased self esteem in being able to do so, and the relief of not having to resort to the debased and grotesquely simplified form of Zulu known colloquially as '*Fanakalo*' often used for communication between speakers of African and European languages who have minimal understanding of each others' languages. Descriptions of gaining the ability to read and write focussed mainly on being released from the humiliating necessity of having to give a thumb print or make a cross when signing official documents. Not surprisingly, this was most emphasised by those members of the non-ABE group who were unable to write at all, and thus obliged to sign in these ways; almost all of them expressed feelings of acute shame at having to do this in public places like banks and in Home Affairs offices. With

regard to interviewees' perceptions of general changes resulting from participation in ABE classes, people in both groups emphasised increased knowledge, understanding and independence in managing processes such as those necessary in banks. Some focussed on people's gaining the ability to help others rather than encountering problems they cannot solve and requiring help themselves.

The non-ABE group were less optimistic and more cynical than their counterparts in the ABE group about work related changes. While about 25% of the ABE group perceived that there were positive work related changes such as better communication with supervisors, increased work-related skills and the ability to work more efficiently and apply for better jobs because of being able to read and write, few of the non-ABE group noted work related changes. Things that were noticed by members of this group were that they saw workmates who attended ABE classes starting to talk to the bosses in English and, wryly, getting time off work for classes.

Members of the ABE group mentioned far more personal changes than did the non-ABE group, although a number of members of both groups stated that participation in ABE classes brings people happiness and makes them feel better about themselves. Again, independence, increased understanding and the ability to solve problems was repeatedly mentioned. Members of the ABE group also mentioned that education helps people improve and fulfil themselves, learn to think, help others, and protect themselves against people who try to take advantage of them. Rather optimistically, one of the non-ABE group associated education with less family violence.

On the whole, members of the ABE group, on average, associated a greater number of beneficial changes, and a wider range of changes with attendance at ABE classes than did members of the non-ABE group. Approximately 15% of the non-ABE group did not think people changed as a result of participation in ABE classes at all, although as a whole, the non-ABE group was vividly evocative in their descriptions of changes they observed in their workmates as a result of their participation in ABE classes.

Question 18 Account of members of the ABE group of things they are able to do as a result of attending ABE classes

The acquisition of oral and written English skills were definitely the gains most prominently perceived by members of the ABE group.

By far the most commonly reported gain mentioned by members of the ABE group was that their speaking and listening skills in English had improved for a range of purposes. Thirty one interviewees (77%) described how their oral skills had improved, and the vast majority of these interviewees reported improved communication at work as a result. Some said that before classes they had been able to 'hear but not speak' English, and that as a result of classes they had begun to speak. Many spoke of improved communication with their employers, and said that they were now able to answer the telephone, make requests and report problems.

Fourteen of the group (35%) reported being able to write English better and said that they had learnt to write things such as letters, cheques, lists, and work records. 25% of the group reported being able to read more English, mentioning things such as signs in shops, books, letters, and written communications at work. One woman, a cook in a large organisation, said she felt better now that she could see what was being ordered for the kitchen. Some commented on the usefulness of the kind of English learnt in ABE classes, saying that it is much more useful than 'school English', and others said that the English in ABE classes have helped 'join up' the English that they already knew.

Another commonly mentioned gain from ABE classes, mentioned by 40% of the group involved understanding, filling in and signing forms. One described the relief he felt at not having to sign what he can't read, and others the satisfaction of not having to ask others to read for them.

Other gains mentioned were that ABE classes

- reminded people of things learnt at school but since forgotten, like how to write essays
- enabled people to overcome some problems, and help others with problems
- made people familiar with bank processes, and how to open and manage store accounts
- enabled people to understand maps and give exact directions
- help people to apply for jobs without having to queue at factories
- enabled people to see for themselves whether things are done right or not
- enabled people to started budgeting
- gave good practice in sums, so that people know how much change they should get
- enabled people to manage things like ATMs
- made people feel better about themselves
- gave people a chance to learn how to photocopy (!)
- helped with driving, especially with the K53 drivers' licence test in English
- taught some computer skills

Question 19 Exploration of the perceptions of both the ABE group and non-ABE group of what is going on in the communities in which they live.

Most interviewees live in or close to Pietermaritzburg, although a few in both groups came from the Eastern Cape or distant KwaZulu-Natal areas such as Hluhluwe.

Perceptions of members of the ABE group

Five of ABE group report having moved to areas previously designated for races other than African under the apartheid era Group Areas Act.

Six of the group reported some development activity, citing examples such as piped water systems, road renewal, the delivery of electricity, and the building of a community hall. In contradiction of popular reports of no development taking place in the Msinga area, one man who lives there reported that schools and clinics are being built. A man from Ixopo reported development in the form of a new clinic, and explained that this was because he lives in the chief's area and that this chief is "a man with a good heart". He expects development to continue.

In contrast to the above reports, five of the group reported a lack of development activity. An Impendle resident reported that though things are quiet and peaceful, there is no electricity, roads are bad and schools are dilapidated; a man from Caluza said that there are problems with roads and water; a man from Hluhluwe reported that there is no development in this area, and one from Matatiele said that things are bad in this area, and no progress is being made because of conflict between SANCO (South African National Civic Organisations) and the chief. In contrast to the report of active development in Ixopo (above), another Ixopo resident reported that apart from the clinic there is no development at all.

Eleven of this group expressed the sense that there were essentially no urgent problems in their communities. Among problems described by other members of the group, most frequently mentioned were crime and unemployment, followed by poor roads, inadequate transport and alcohol abuse.

Political violence, which had been a serious problem of the mid nineties in the areas in which the interviewees live, appears to have abated. Ashdown was reported to be peaceful after its history of violence, and Mphophomeni, where there had been prolonged and extensive political violence, was described as peaceful, with a place where refugees could build. Three residents of Elandskop reported that it is peaceful and that the violence is over, and a Hopewell resident said that there had been some fighting, but that the area is now peaceful. Personal accounts of the experiences of living in the communities where the violence played itself out would have been harrowing, had they not been given with a fatalistic and almost matter-of-fact understatement. A man living in kwa-Pata described how his family had moved from place to place because of violence, but were now living in peace; someone from Richmond said that he now lives alone in Azalea since his home in Richmond was destroyed; someone from Stage 1 in Imbali, said that although his family had survived, his house was ruined and he had no insurance.

Perceptions of members of the non-ABE group

Four members of non-ABE group report having moved to areas previously designated for races other than African under the Group Areas Act

Five of the group reported some development associated with the Reconstruction and Development Plan in their communities, giving examples of water and electricity delivery, road development, and the building of schools. One man from Umbumbulu said that life is much the same as it ever was in this area, but that they have a new road. In contrast to the report of no delivery taking place in Matatiele (above), two residents from this area reported RDP activity in the form of the building of a new school.

Only one member of the group, a man from Taylor's Halt, reported that no development at all was happening in his area.

Twenty of this group, (half the group, and almost twice as many as the ABE group) expressed

the sense of there being no urgent problems in their communities. The single problem most frequently identified as a problem by those who perceived the existence of problems was crime. Other problems mentioned were hunger and unemployment (some noted particularly that educated children or siblings were unemployed), bad roads and having no place to stay and no right to build.

This group's account of the political state of their areas paralleled that of the ABE group, except for one man from Table Mountain who said that political violence was continuing in this area; however another Table Mountain resident area reported that people were trying to get themselves organised. Areas that interviewees described as peaceful after histories of political violence included Taylor's Halt, Impendle, kwa-Shange (past Gezubuso), Fredville, Ncwadi and KwaNdengeza. A resident of Qanda said that his area had not been affected by violence at all, by which he presumably meant that at Qanda political violence had not reached the stage of house burning and general devastation that it did in so many nearby areas.

Question 20 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to people’s attendance at community meetings

People were asked if they attended community meetings or not, and their answers coded according accordingly.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee’s attendance of community meetings			
	attends	does not attend	Total
ABE group	35	5	40
Non-ABE group	37	3	40
Tota	72	8	80
	90%	10%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	.556	1	.456

The value of χ^2 is .556, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .456$, which is well beyond the cutoff level for acceptance of significance. This means that there is no statistically significant correlation between group membership and patterns of people’s attendance at community meetings.

This finding is readily apparent in the cross-tabulation, which shows clearly that nearly everyone from both groups (87.5% of the ABE group, and 92.5% of the non-ABE group) attends community meetings.

Unfortunately, this question did not discriminate between types of meetings, or the reasons for which they were called. If this kind of discrimination had been included in the question, differences between the ABE group and non-ABE group might have been detected.

Question 21 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their participation on committees in their communities.

In this question, people were asked whether they were on any committees. Their answers were coded according to whether they were on any committees or not.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's participation on committees in their communities			
	on one/more committees	on no committees	Total
ABE group	4	36	40
Non-ABE group	2	38	40
Total	6	74	80
	7.5%	92.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	0.721	1	0.396

As is immediately apparent from the table above, very few people from either group reported that they participated as members of any committees. Of course, by their nature, committees embody the principle of few representing many, and therefore it cannot be expected that a substantial number of either group would be on committees. However, if none of one group were on any committees, the finding would have been noteworthy.

What is worth noting is that the pattern of responses to this question is exactly the reverse of the pattern of attendance at meetings, where almost everyone in both groups attended community meetings. In the case of this comparison, the response to the question was similarly negative for both groups, with only 4 of the ABE group (10%) , and only 2 of the non-ABE group (5%) reporting that they are active on any committees.

Similarly to the previous comparison, no statistically significant correlation was found between group membership and patterns of people's activity as members of committees; the value of χ^2 was found to be .721, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .396$, is well over the cut-off level of .05.

Question 22 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the pattern of their response to problems in their communities.

In this question people were asked about what they would do if a problem arose in their communities. As with some of the previous questions, people's responses were grouped into four categories:

1. Interviewee indicates that he would attempt to do something to address the problem himself.
2. Interviewee indicates that he would report the problem to people he perceived to be in authority in the area, either an *induna* or councillors.
3. Interviewee indicates that he would do nothing.
4. Interviewee indicates that he would move away.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's response to possible community problems					
	do something positive	report to authorities	nothing	move away	Total
ABE group	13	26		1	40
Non-ABE group	5	25	8	2	40
Total	18	51	8	3	80
	22.5%	63.75%	10%	3.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	11.908	3	0.008

A statistically significant correlation, with the value of χ^2 at 11.908, and an asymptotic significance or p. of .008, was found in this comparison, indicating a strong association between membership of the ABE group and the likelihood of taking positive action in relation to community problems.

Examination of the cross-tabulation shows that 32.5% of the ABE group would attempt to do something to address the problem, compared with only 12% of the non-ABE group. Equal

proportions of both groups (slightly more than 60%) indicated that they would report problems to people they perceived to be in authority, but whereas only 2% of the ABE group would do nothing or move away, 10 of the non-ABE group, (25%) indicated that they would be similarly inactive.

As has been noted in some of the questions above, no inference can be made from the available information about the causal nature of the correlation indicated. In the case of the information yielded by this question, it might be tempting to use these results to support an argument that participation in classes increases the chances of people taking action in relation to community problems. However, these results indicate only a correlation, not a causal relationship. Therefore, an equally logical and plausible explanation for the correlation would be that people who tend to be pro-active in relation to community problems are likely to be pro-active for themselves as well, and might well take action to make it more likely that they are included when participation in ABE classes at work is decided.

Question 23 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their ability to read in their mother tongue.

In this question people were asked if they were able to read Zulu text. Their responses were grouped into three categories:

1. Interviewee indicates that he can read Zulu well
2. Interviewee indicates that he can read Zulu but with difficulty
3. Interviewee indicates that he can not read at all.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's mother tongue reading competence				
	reads Zulu well	can read a little	unable to read at all	Total
ABE group	40	0	0	40
Non-ABE group	23	8	9	40
Total	63	8	9	80
	78.75%	10%	11.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	21.587	2	0

A statistically significant correlation, with the value of χ^2 at 21.587, and an asymptotic significance or p. of .000, was found in this comparison, indicating an extremely strong correlation between membership of the ABE group and the ability to read Zulu text.

The cross-tabulation shows that 100% of the ABE group are able to read Zulu well. In comparison, only 57.5% of the non-ABE group say that they are able to do this, while 20% of the group say that they can read Zulu but with difficulty, and 22.5% report that they can not read at all.

It is naturally to be expected that all of those in the ABE group should report being competent in reading Zulu. What is worth noting is that such a high number of the non-ABE group

indicate that they are able to read Zulu, when their scores on screening tests indicated their need of ABE at the most basic level available. This information is in accord with interviewees' levels of formal schooling, discussed under Question 14 above, where 50% of the non-ABE group reported that they had completed at least four years of formal schooling. Since four years of schooling is the level used by UNESCO as a yardstick for the minimum requirement for sustainable literacy (Harley et al, 1996, p. 24), it is predictable that those who have this level of schooling will be able to read Zulu text.

In addition, in the workplace, ABE is often strongly associated particularly with English, and therefore fluency in Zulu language and literacy is to a large extent an irrelevant factor in whether a person is perceived to be a potential candidate for an ABE programme.

Question 24 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to how they react to the reception of written communication that they find difficult to understand.

In this question, people were asked what they would do if they received a written communication that was clearly important but which they found difficult to read. Their responses to the question were divided into five categories:

- Interviewee believes that he could work out what information the message conveyed without needing to seek help.
- Interviewee says he would seek help from his children.
- Interviewee says he would seek help from anyone.
- Interviewee says he would seek help from a known, trusted adult.
- Interviewee says he would seek help from his employer or teacher.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's response to receipt of difficult written communication						
	work out for self	help from children	help from anyone	help from trusted adult	help from employer / teacher	Total
ABE group	11	3	7	19		40
Non-ABE group	4	13	11	11	1	40
Total	15	16	18	30	1	80
	18.75%	20%	22.5%	37.5%	1.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	13.539	4	0.009

A strong significant correlation was found between group membership and the pattern of peoples' answers to questions, with the value of χ^2 at 13.539, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .009$, well below the cutoff level for significance.

27.5% of the ABE group were confident that they would not need help in deciphering the

communication compared with only 10% of the non-ABE group. The answers of the non-ABE group showed that they were more likely to get help from children than the ABE group (32.5% of the non-ABE group compared with only 7.5% of the ABE group). The non-ABE group were also more likely to get help from just anyone than the ABE group (27.5% of the non-ABE group said they would do this, compared with only 17.5% of the ABE group). On the other hand, a higher percentage of the ABE group (47.5%) reported would be likely to seek help from a known and trusted adult than the percentage of the non-ABE group who indicated that they would do this (27.5%). None of the ABE group, and only 2.5% of the non-ABE group said that they would get help from their teacher or employer.

The differences between the groups support what would naturally be expected, in that clearly more of the ABE group than the non-ABE group expect to be able to manage dealing with difficult written communication.

The pattern of their responses, in relation to what they would do in getting help where they found they could not manage, indicates that the ABE group would be far more selective and cautious than the non-ABE group in this regard. This may well indicate that they know the dangers in a little literacy, for example in signing things that they do not understand, and also that they understand the importance of seeking help from someone whose knowledge of the implications of the document and personal support they can count on. This might be regarded as an indication that participation in ABE classes serves to make people aware of ways in which people with little literacy skill may be duped by others seeking to take advantage of their helplessness, and to make them less vulnerable.

On the other hand, as has been noted in some of the discussion above, only a correlation between participation in ABE classes and the pattern of responses to this question is indicated, and no causal direction can be assumed. Therefore, the correlation might just as well indicate that people who are in ABE classes are those people who are generally more sussed and show a greater awareness of things impacting on their lives than their peers who are not in classes.

The readiness of many (32.5%) of the non-ABE group to seek help from their children is interesting, in view of the family relationships between parents with limited literacy skill and their children. In African tradition, children do not have a particularly close relationship with their fathers, who are seen as figures of authority and treated with deference. Considering the likelihood of defensiveness on the part of fathers who might perceive that their authority is threatened by their children's superior skills in this area, it would not be unexpected to find that they were reluctant to seek help from their children. However, many of those who reported that they would seek help from their children as a first resort indicated that they were proud of their children's skill and would readily get help from them.

Question 25 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the number of children they have.

This seemingly simple information was clouded with complexities, such as whether children who had died should be counted, or children who had been fathered out of the family, and were supported (or not supported) by the interviewees, or children who lived in the interviewee's family but had a different father. Figures used here are of all living children of whom interviewees were the biological parents, whether or not they lived in the same household.

Using these figures, members of the ABE group, with a group total of 126 children and an individual average of 3.15 appeared to have slightly fewer children than did members of the non-ABE group, whose group total was 152 and individual average was 3.8. These figures cannot be used as the basis for any conclusions in this regard, however, because, apart from the complexities described above, the varying ages of the interviewees mean that the figures cannot be used as the basis of any comparisons, because older interviewees had probably fathered or borne all the children they were likely to, while some of the younger ones had yet to become a parent.

It would perhaps have been useful to compare the groups with reference to the number of infant deaths in their families. But since, although many interviewees volunteered this information it was not specifically asked for, and presumably there were a number of interviewees who did not speak of their dead children. In addition, once again, the varying ages of the interviewees would have had a strong influence on this information, so that differences could not have been associated definitely with membership of the ABE group or non-ABE group.

Question 26 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the extent to which they know the dates of birth of their children

For this question, in which interviewees were asked to state the years in which their children were born, and their responses were grouped into four categories:

1. Interviewee confidently states the dates of his children's birth.
2. Interviewee has some idea of the dates of his children's birth but is uncertain.
3. Interviewee has no idea of the dates of his children's birth.
4. Not applicable, because he has no children.

Only two of the 80 people interviewed had no children.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's knowledge of dates of birth of children					
	definite idea	uncertain	no idea	not applicable	Total
ABE group	34	5		1	40
Non-ABE group	19	18	2	1	40
Total	53	23	2	2	80
	66.25%	28.75%	2.5%	2.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	13.593	3	0.004

A very strong correlation, with the value of χ^2 at 13.593, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .004$, was found between membership of the ABE group and interviewees' confident knowledge of the dates of birth of their children. Examination of the cross tabulation shows that 85% of the ABE group could state exactly when their children were born, compared with 47.5% of the non-ABE group. Only 13% of the ABE group compared with 45% of the non-ABE were uncertain of the dates.

This question was included on the premise that having a strong frame of time reference, so that events are remembered according to year dates is characteristic of a very literate way of life. The aim of the question was to discover whether members of the ABE group were more

likely than members of the non-ABE group to know their children's years of birth. As the information shows, they are indeed significantly more aware of these dates than members of the non-ABE group. On reflection this is a very interesting finding, especially in view of the fact that many far more literate fathers - and even some mothers - do not readily recall the years of their children's birth and have to calculate them. One explanation for the difference is that form filling is much emphasised in ABE classes, and particularly in some popular ABE workbooks. Because of this, members of the ABE group might have had what amounts to drilling of this kind of family information, and therefore have become able to recall these dates immediately. However, this explanation does not account for the surprisingly high number of the non-ABE group who are also able to recall this information (almost 50%), especially since the average number of children for this group of interviewees was almost 4.

Question 27 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the extent to which the births of their children were planned.

For this question, in which interviewees were asked whether they had planned to have the children they had or not, interviewees' answers were divided into three categories

1. Interviewee reports that all his children were planned.
2. Interviewee reports that some of his children were planned and some were not
3. Interviewee reports that all of his children were the result of unwanted pregnancies.

ABE group or non-ABE group * extent to which interviewee's children were planned					
	all planned	some unplanned / mistakes	all unplanned / mistakes	not applicable	Total
ABE group	21	11	8		40
Non-ABE group	31	4	4	1	40
Total	52	15	12	1	80
	65%	18.75%	15%	1.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	7.523	3	0.057

Note: Although one of the ABE group has no children, he says very definitely that he would use contraception, hence the difference in the number in the category 'not applicable' between this question and the preceding one.

With the value of χ^2 at 7.523, with the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .057$ this correlation is only just over the cut-off point of statistical significance. This indicates that there is no statistical correlation between membership of the ABE group or non-ABE group and the extent to which interviewees planned to produce the children they did or not.

Interestingly though, 78% of the non-ABE group claimed that all the births of their children were planned, compared with 53% of the ABE group.

This is not a surprising finding considering the number of highly literate couples who find

themselves with an unexpected family member!

More importantly, the inclusion of this question was perhaps based on a particularly Western middle class attitude towards family planning, which assumes that couples will automatically use some form of birth control to space their children once they are aware that they can do so. However, for groups where forward planning and preparation is not so foregrounded in cultural norms, or where fecundity is valued and contraception itself might be regarded with suspicion, it might not be a valid or appropriate assumption.

Many of the interviewees were somewhat at a loss as to how to respond to this question. The way they responded indicated that they found the question odd. In subsequent discussions, It seemed that many of them would be likely to regard the birth of children as God-given, and as such, not something that should be planned and manipulated for the convenience of the family. It seems that in saying that the births of their children were planned, at least some of the interviewees meant to convey the idea that they were readily welcome, and expected as a matter of course in a marriage. Zulu colleagues in the Centre of Adult Education, when discussing how this question might be viewed by Zulu people with limited literacy skills, suggested that they might see contraception as something that goes with sexual encounters that are not part of marriage.

On the other hand, information yielded in question 28 presented a somewhat different picture. In this question, interviewees were asked whether they wanted to have more children, and, if the answer was negative, how they planned to avoid future pregnancies. The responses to this question were not coded or analysed statistically, since the interviewees' answers were, to a large extent, influenced by the number of children they already had. However, the vast majority of interviewees indicated that once they had as many children as they desired they would definitely use some form of contraception. This appears to contradict the suggestion that they would be likely to simply accept the birth of children without attempting to exert any control over conception.

What was noteworthy in the attitude of this overwhelmingly male sample of interviewees was

their attitude towards contraception. Many of them said they would use family planning clinics, and a substantial number included in their response the type of contraception they would choose. They appeared to have a good knowledge of what options were possible, most saying that their wives would go to get sterilised, or to get the injection. Not one suggested that he would have a vasectomy! One man swore by his wife's use of castor oil as a contraceptive. Another declared that he would never use any form of contraception because all those who did offended the ancestral spirits and inevitably became ill.

Question 29 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their reading of their children's school reports.

For this question, which asked interviewees if they were in the habit of reading their children's school reports, people's responses were categorised as follows:

1. Interviewee reads the reports himself
2. Interviewee's wife reads the reports to him
3. The children read the reports to the parents
4. Interviewee is not aware of anyone reading the reports.
5. Question is not applicable since the interviewee does not have school going children.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's account of reading of school reports						
	interviewee reads them	wife reads them	children read them	no-one reads them	not applicable	Total
ABE group	36				4	40
Non-ABE group	13	10	7	2	8	40
Total	49	10	7	2	12	80
	61.25%	12.5%	8.75%	2.5%	15%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	31.129	4	0

A strong statistical correlation was found between membership of the ABE group and the likelihood of interviewee's reading school reports, with the value of χ^2 at 31.129, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .000$.

Examination of the cross-tabulation shows that all of the ABE group who had school-going children read the school reports themselves. In comparison, only 40 % of those of the non-ABE group to whom this question applied read the reports themselves. As regards the rest of the non-ABE group, 25% reported that their wives read school reports to them, or told them what the reports said, 17.5% had their children read the reports to them, or say what was in them, and only 5% said that they were unaware of anyone reading the reports. The most

common explanation offered for not being reading reports was the inability to read English. According to the principal at Chamusela Lower Primary school near Pietermaritzburg, teachers have been instructed by the Department of Education to use the language most likely to be understood by parents for the first three years of children's schooling. Thereafter, from grade 4 (ex Std 2) onwards, reports must be written in English. According to this source, common practice in rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal is for reports for the lower grades to be written in Zulu, and in English for the higher grades. In more urban areas, English is apparently more likely to be used for reports for all grades.

A comparison of the interviewees' report of their ability to read Zulu and their reading of their children's reports shows a strong correlation between these two factors.

Ability to read Zulu * interviewee's account of reading of school reports						
	interviewee reads them	wife reads them	children read them	no-one reads them	not applicable	Total
reads Zulu well	49	2	3	0	9	63
reads Zulu a little	0	3	2	1	2	8
cannot read Zulu at all	0	5	2	1	1	9
Total	49	10	7	2	12	80
	61.25%	12.5%	8.75%	2.5%	15%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	48.469	8	0

With the value of χ^2 at 48.469, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .000$, the expectation that those who can read reports do is shown to be realistic.

One man, who, like his wife, was unable to read, and therefore relied on his children to read their school reports described a canny strategy he had developed to ensure that the children read what was actually in the report and did not invent improvements of their own. His strategy was to call his children one by one into a room and to get each one to read all the

reports. Any discrepancies between readings were immediately obvious, and he was assured of getting the real information.

Question 30 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the extent to which they have contact with the teachers of their children.

In this question, interviewees were asked whether they ever met with their children's school teachers. Their answers were categorised as follows:

1. Interviewee has met with his children's teacher/s.
2. Other family member has met with his children's teacher/s.
3. Interviewee reports that no-one in the family has contact with his children's teacher/s.
4. Question is not applicable since there are no school going children in the family.

ABE group or non-ABE group * contact with children's school teachers					
	subject met with teachers	contact through other family member	no contact	not applicable	Total
ABE group	23	10	4	3	40
Non-ABE group	17	10	5	8	40
Total	40	20	9	11	80
	50%	25%	11.25%	13.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	3.284	3	0.35

With the value of χ^2 at 3.284, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .350$, no correlation was found between membership of the ABE group or non-ABE group and the extent of contact with interviewees' children's teachers. 57.5% of the ABE group and 42.5% of the non ABE group reported having had direct contact with their children's teachers.

Many of those who said they met with teachers said that they and their wives went to meet with teachers together. Some of said they had met with teachers because there were problems with their children's performance or behaviour at school, and others said that they had not met with teachers because there were no problems. Family members other than interviewees who met with teachers tended to be mothers or grandmothers of the children.

Question 31 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their reading of books, papers or other printed material.

In this question, interviewees were asked whether they ever read letters, books, papers or notices, and if so, what they read.

Their answers were grouped as follows:

1. Interviewee reports reading English and Zulu papers, work material, social or recreational material
2. Interviewee reports reading Zulu papers, limited material
3. Interviewee reports reading basic signs or pictures
4. Interviewee reports reading nothing

ABE group or non-ABE group * whether interviewee reads any printed material				
	English and Zulu papers, work material, social/recreational mat	Zulu paper, limited material	nothing	Total
ABE group	27	13	0	40
Non-ABE group	16	11	13	40
Total	43	24	13	80
	53.75%	30%	16.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	15.981	2	0

As would be expected, an extremely strong statistical correlation was found between membership of the ABE group and reading of printed material, with the value of χ^2 at 15.981, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .000$.

The strength of the correlation is immediately apparent on examination of the cross tabulation, which shows that 67.5% of the ABE group, compared with only 40% of the non-

ABE group read a variety of printed material, in both English and Zulu. The rest of the ABE group, and just 27.5% of the non-ABE group read limited material in Zulu, while no-one at all from the ABE group, but a substantial part of the non-ABE group (32.5%) reported reading nothing at all. Perhaps the most noteworthy factor in this finding is that so many of the non-ABE group reported reading as much.

For ease of comparison of the different kinds of printed material mentioned by interviewees, the responses of the ABE group and non-ABE group are compared in three categories: newspapers, magazines, and other printed material.

Many of the interviewees reported reading more than one newspaper, magazine or other form of printed material. The frequency of responses for each of these was noted, regardless of whether it was the only kind of material mentioned by a particular interviewee, or one among a selection of kinds.

Number of members in each group who read particular newspapers

	ABE group readers	non-ABE group readers	total
iLanga laseNatal	28	19	47
Natal Witness	22	6	28
Echo	16	7	23
umAfrica	8	5	13
Learn with Echo	5	6	11
Sowetan	8	3	11
S Times/ Tribune	3		3
City Press	1	1	2
Mercury	2		2

As would be expected, this table shows that many more of the ABE than the non-ABE group read newspapers. For both groups, *iLanga* was the most popular newspaper. Among the ABE group, *The Natal Witness* and *Echo* were also popular. From the point of view of the Centre for Adult Education, it was disappointing to note that a relatively low number of people read *Learn with Echo*; what was interesting was that six of the non-ABE group indicated that they read this supplement, which was one more than those in the ABE group. However, it must be

said that many of the interviewees did not distinguish between *Echo* and *Learn with Echo*. A response for *Learn with Echo* was counted only for those interviewees who made it clear that they saw the supplement as a separate entity.

Number of members in each group who read particular magazines

	ABE group readers	non-ABE group readers	total
Bona	16	10	26
Drum	9	2	11
Soccer/Kickoff	3	5	8
Pace	4	0	4
any magazine	2	1	3
work magazines	2	1	3
You	2	0	2
film magazines	1	0	1
clothing shop magazines	1	0	1

Again, it is not surprising that far more of the ABE group than the non-ABE group read magazines. It is interesting to note how much more popular *Bona* magazine is for both groups than any other publication mentioned.

Number of members in each group who read other material

	ABE group readers	non-ABE group readers	total
notices at work	15	6	21
school books /dictionary	5	5	10
work documents	7		7
Bible	5	2	7
easy readers	5		5
letters	2	3	5
library bks/ novels	4		4
looks at pictures		4	4
school notices		2	2
Church notices	1	1	2
accounts		1	1
racing forms		1	1
traffic signs		1	1
driving manual		1	1
political notices	1	0	1
shop advertisements	1		1
payslip	1		1

In this category, none of the non-ABE group reported that they read library books or novels, or political material, or work documents apart from those appearing on notice boards. On the other hand, they did mention reading accounts, racing forms, traffic signs, school notices and four of them said that although they were unable to read they liked to look at pictures. These differences in what people in the different groups listed are so slight that they are probably simply differences in what came to mind. If they had been read a list of things that they might possibly have read, differences could be regarded as more salient.

Question 32 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their use of any library

This answers to this question, were coded according to whether interviewees ever used any libraries for any purpose or not.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's use of any library			
	uses library	does not use library	Total
ABE group	8	32	40
Non-ABE group	2	38	40
Total	10	70	80
	12.5%	87.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square (χ^2)	4.114	1	0.043

Examination of the cross-tabulation shows that library use is unusual for members of both groups. Only 20% of the ABE group and 5% of the non-ABE group reported using the library. However, a statistically significant correlation was found between membership of the ABE group and the use of libraries, with the value of χ^2 at 4.114, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .043$, just within the limit for accepting the association as significant.

Even though it is therefore statistically more probable that the ABE learners among this group of adults will use a library, it is never the less highly unlikely that they do.

Question 33 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their knowledge of the availability of easy to read material designed for adults.

In this question interviewees were asked whether they were aware of the existence of easy to read material written specially for adults, and their answers coded accordingly.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's knowledge of easy readers for adults			
	Knows of easy readers	Does not know of easy readers	Total
ABE group	24	16	40
Non-ABE group	13	27	40
Total	37	43	80
	46.25%	53.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	6.084	1	14

The difference between the groups was statistically significant, with the value of χ^2 at 6.084, for which the level for asymptotic significance or p . = .014, showing that awareness of such material correlates with belonging to the ABE group.

The cross-tabulation shows that exactly 60% of the ABE group, and 32% of the non-ABE group, were aware of the availability of easy reading material.

While it is hardly surprising that the correlation between membership of the ABE group and awareness of the existence of easy readers for adults is statistically significant, it is surprising that 40% of the ABE group were unaware of these books. If these books are not used in these relatively well-resourced ABE programmes, it is not surprising that the publication of these books is not proving as economically viable as the publishers had originally hoped. The learners' lack of awareness of easy readers raises the question of what reading material (if any) teachers are using for their learners. Equally surprising is that such a large proportion of the non-ABE group were aware of easy reading material. It is possible that they were aware of easy readers their workmates got in class, it is possible that they were aware of the *Learn with Echo* newspaper supplement.

Question 34 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to reading material they report having in their homes.

No chi square test was applied to the information yielded from answers to this question since interviewees naturally mentioned very different kinds of material, much of which depended on other members of the household. As in some of the previous responses it would have made no sense to attempt to reduce people’s responses to one coded answer each.

Instead, the kinds of material mentioned were grouped into categories and the frequency of responses in each category noted, regardless of whether it was the only kind of material mentioned by a particular person, or one of many kinds of material.

Print material in the homes of interviewees

	ABE group readers	non-ABE group readers	total
school books	24	23	47
magazines	18	11	29
church books	4	4	8
newspapers	3	4	7
Bible	3	3	6
adult ed books	4	1	5
novels	2	2	4
health books	1	2	3
drivers' licence material	1	1	2
political material	1	0	1

This table shows a surprising similarity in the reading material in the homes of the ABE group and non-ABE group. 60% of the ABE group and 57.5% of the non-ABE group make a point of keeping school books that have belonged to various family members and some of the interviewees claimed to attempt to read these books from time to time. One of the non-ABE group, who left school in Standard One (grade 3) in Matatiele in the 60s told the researcher that he still has his old school slate, which he has kept for more than thirty years, and through several moves of place of residence.

The popularity of magazines among members of both groups is also striking, with 45% of the ABE group and 27.5% of the non-ABE group reporting that they had magazines in their homes. The next most frequently kept item was 'church books' by which was meant Christian or religious reading material other than the Bible. 10% of each group reported that they had material of this sort in their homes, slightly more than the 7.5% of each group who said that they had a Bible. This relatively low incidence of Bibles being kept in homes is surprising given the strong Christian culture of so many older Zulu people in KwaZulu-Natal.

An optimistic non-ABE group member said his wife had a book of competitions, from which the family hoped to win thousands of rands, but added that as yet they had had no good news.

Question 35 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to whether they spend money on books or other printed material.

Once again, answers to this question, in which interviewees were asked whether they ever bought printed material on their own volition, were coded in two categories according to whether they said that they did or not.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee buys printed material			
	yes	no	Total
ABE group	26	14	40
Non-ABE group	21	19	40
Total	47	33	80
	58.75%	41.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	1.298	1	0.256

With the value of χ^2 at 1.289, for which the level for asymptotic significance or p . = .256, there was no statistically significant correlation between group membership and the tendency to buy books.

The cross-tabulation shows that a substantial number of people in both groups report that they buy books (65% of the ABE group, and 52.5% of the non-ABE group). However, it must be noted that the books people reported buying included school books for their children.

The question could have possibly yielded more useful information if interviewees had been asked whether they bought books other than school books.

However it is noteworthy that there appears to be no more likelihood of members of the ABE group buying books than members of the non-ABE group, a finding which does not lend support to publishers' hopes that investment in ABE would lead to an increased market.

Question 36 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to whether they go into book shops

In this question, interviewees were asked simply whether they went into book shops. An adjunct question, which asked which book shops they went into, was asked of those who answered positively. This was to ensure that people were not referring to any shop in which printed material for sale is on display, such as supermarkets or other general shops.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee goes into bookshops			
	yes	no	Total
ABE group	21	19	40
Non-ABE group	14	26	40
Total	35	45	80
	43.75%	56.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	2.489	1	0.115

Examination of the cross-tabulation alone might suggest that people in the ABE group were more likely to go into book shops, since 52.5% of this group report that they do go into bookshops, compared with only 35% of people in the non-ABE. However, in this case, the value of χ^2 was found to be 2.489, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .115$, which is above the cutoff level for significance, and thus indicates no significant correlation between membership of the ABE group and the tendency to enter book shops.

However, of the ABE group, thirteen said that they went into Shutters, and thirteen said they went into CNA (a curious coincidence, since although some said they went into both shops, some said they went to one of these shops only). Three said they went to the part of tearooms or supermarkets that sold books.

Of the non-ABE group, six said they went to Shutters, seven said they went into CNA, one said he went into Kilo Books, and one said he went to the sections of tearooms where books are sold.

Question 37 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to whether people in heir families read books or newspapers.

In this question, interviewees were asked if any people in their households read newspapers or books. If they reported that there were, interviewees were asked to say who the readers were, and what they read. People's answers were coded in three categories:

1. A number of people read books or newspapers.
2. One person reads read books or newspapers.
3. Nobody reads read books or newspapers.

ABE group or non-ABE group * who reads in interviewee's household				
	a number of people	one person	nobody	Total
ABE group	13	19	8	40
Non-ABE group	14	24	2	40
Total	27	43	10	80
	33.75%	53.75%	12.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	4.218	2	0.121

No statistically significant difference between the two groups was found in relation to this question, since the value of χ^2 was found to be 4.218, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .121$.

Examination of the cross-tabulation shows that the majority, and interestingly a very similar percentage of each group (30% of the ABE group, and 32.5% of the non ABE group) reported that in their households, a number of people were in the habit of reading. In 47.5% of the families of members of the ABE group and in 60% of the families of the non ABE group only one person reads books or newspapers. 20% of the ABE group, and interestingly, only 5% of the non ABE group reported that nobody in their families read anything.

While it is quite possible that there was a difference in the understanding of what is meant by 'reading' between the two groups, since the ABE group, with greater competence in this sphere may define the activity more narrowly, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore this potential difference in perception.

Question 38 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to whether anyone in their families reads anything to children in the family.

This question asked whether anyone in the household reads to children, and if so, who does this. People's answers were categorised as follows:

1. Interviewee reads to children himself.
2. Interviewee's spouse reads to children.
3. Older children read to younger ones.
4. Interviewee is unaware of anybody reading to children.

ABE group or non-ABE group * who reads to children in interviewee's household						
	self	wife	older children	nobody/ doesn't know	no children at home	Total
ABE group	7	12	7	10	4	40
Non-ABE group	2	15	12	7	4	40
Total	9	27	19	17	8	80
	11.25%	33.75%	23.75%	21.25%	10%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	4.956	4	0.292

No statistically significant difference between the two groups was found in relation to this question, since the value of χ^2 was found to be 4.956, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .292$, which is well over the cut-off level of .05 for acceptance of a significant correlation.

Reading to their children was clearly not a priority for interviewees in either the ABE group or the non-ABE group. For 10% of each group the question was not applicable since there were no children living in their households. For the remaining interviewees, only 17.5% of the ABE group reported reading to their children, and, not surprisingly, only 5% of the non ABE group reported doing so. 30% of the ABE group reported that their spouses read to their

children, compared with 37.5% of the non-ABE group. If one combines the first two columns of the table, to show how common it is for a parent to read to children, it is immediately apparent that almost no difference exists between the two groups: 47.5% of the ABE group, and 42.5% of the non-ABE group report that at least one parent reads to children.

17.5% of the ABE group, and 30% of the non-ABE group reported that in their families older children read to younger ones. Interestingly more of the ABE group (25%) than the non-ABE group (17.5%) reported that they were not aware of anyone reading to their children.

Clearly being a participant in ABE classes has not made these interviewees insist on literate activities for their children; members of the ABE group are not more likely to be aware of whether their children are read to, or to encourage their being read to than members of the non-ABE group.

Question 39 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to whether anyone in their families tells stories (as opposed to reads stories) to children in the family.

In this question, people were asked if anyone in their households told stories to children, and if so, if the stories were old traditional stories or new ones. Answers were divided into four categories:

1. Traditional stories are told to the children.
2. New stories are told to the children.
3. No stories are told to the children.
4. There are no children in the household.

ABE group or non-ABE group * storytelling to children in interviewee's household					
	traditional	new stories	none	no children at home	Total
ABE group	23	9	5	3	40
Non-ABE group	23	8	5	4	40
Total	46	17	10	7	80
	57.5%	21.25%	12.5%	8.75%	100%

Note: the number in the category 'no children at home' is less for Question 39 than Question 38 since one interviewee reports that stories are told in household even though there are no children

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	0.202	3	0.977

For this comparison, the value of χ^2 was .202, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .997$. This shows that there was no statistically significant correlation between group membership and answers to this question. In fact, the exercise shows that there is almost a 100% probability that the very small differences between the two groups are due to chance.

This likelihood is easily seen in examination of the cross-tabulation, which shows a strikingly similar pattern between the two groups. Exactly the same percentage of the two groups

(57.5%) reported that people in their families told traditional stories to children in the household. Nearly the same number in each group (22.5% of the ABE group, and 20% of the non ABE group) reported that people in their families told non-traditional or new stories to the children, while 12.5% of each group reported that no-one told stories to the children. 10% of the interviewees in each group reported that there were no children in their households, but one of these reported that even though there are no children in the household, people tell stories.

In spite of one interviewee's opinion that 'old women don't tell stories any more', in thirty seven of the forty six households where traditional stories (*izinganekwane*) are told, they are told by a grandmother. Two of the non-ABE group are grandfathers themselves and expressed their enjoyment of sharing the telling of traditional stories to their grandchildren with their wives. Enjoyment of family story telling was strongly expressed by members of both groups.

Question 40 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the extent to which they use pens in their everyday lives.

For this question, interviewees were asked to describe any situations in which they used a pen. Their answers were grouped into five categories:

1. Interviewee makes extensive use of a pen in different spheres of his life.
2. Interviewee makes limited use of a pen in one or two spheres of his life.
3. Interviewee makes minimal use of a pen.
4. Interviewee makes use of a pen in learning situations only.
5. Interviewee makes no use of a pen.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's use of a pen						
	extensive uses in different spheres	limited use, one or two spheres	minimal use	in class only	no use	Total
ABE group	33	7	0	0	0	40
Non-ABE group	9	19	8	0	4	40
Total	42	26	8	0	4	80
	52.5%	32.5%	10%	0	5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	31.253	4	0

An extremely strong statistically significant correlation was found between group membership and the pattern of answers to this question, with the value of χ^2 at 31.253, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .000$.

As can be seen in the cross tabulation, 82% of the ABE group, compared with only 22.5% of the non-ABE group used a pen in multiple spheres of their lives. The rest of the ABE group, 17.5%, and 47.5% of the non-ABE group used a pen in one or two spheres. 20% of the non ABE group reported minimal use of a pen, and the remaining 10% reported that they did not ever use a pen for anything. Not one of the interviewees reported using a pen only in class.

In order to explore the purposes people used pens for, things that interviewees described were grouped into fairly fine-tuned categories and the frequency of responses in each category noted, regardless of whether it was the only purpose stated by a particular person, or one of a number of purposes. Naturally, this list of purposes is by no means exhaustive since interviewees described only purposes that happened to come to mind in response to the question, and were not prompted. An analysis of the purposes described in the interviews follows, first for the ABE group, and then for the non-ABE group.

Uses of a pen relating to work / community		
	ABE group	non-ABE group
time sheets / forms	19	17
recording of information at work	16	5
phone messages	5	0
reports	3	1
Church notices and forms	3	0
notes at meetings	2	0
application forms	2	0
signs for things	not mentioned	1
draws plans	1	not mentioned
	51	24

Uses of a pen for things relating to money		
	ABE group	non-ABE group
bank forms	17	6
working out domestic money matters	6	0
price comparison	4	0
records of transactions in own business	1	0
	11	0

Personal and domestic uses of a pen		
	ABE group	non-ABE group
letters	18	14
competition forms	12	4
tel nos / address	8	6
lists	9	5
memos to self	4	2
records new English words / practises writing words	2	4
draws for fun	1	4
helping kids with homework	2	2
notes / memos to others	3	1
writes stories	2	1
	??	??

This analysis shows the same pattern as does the table “Uses of a pen relating to work / community”, with a far higher number and wider range of purposes for using a pen described by the ABE group than the non-ABE group.

Some interesting points emerged in conversations with the interviewees, and from comparison of their responses. Among these were that some of those with the least education and literacy skill reported using a pen to practise the very minimal skill they have, such as trying to write words that they had learnt years ago.

Two of the ABE group and five of the non-ABE group reported using pens to fill in forms for betting on horse racing. The ability of all members of the ABE group to read and write Zulu and English has been noted above, so it is not surprising that some of them report using a pen to fill in racing forms. But only three of the five from the non-ABE group who said that they used pens to fill in racing forms had said they were able to read Zulu. One of the remaining two had said that he was able to read only a few Zulu words and numerals, and count cash. The other said he was able to read only numerals and count cash. Yet both of these reported being able to fill in these fairly complex forms without great difficulty, and both found the

surprise of the interviewer quite amusing.

The recordings people reported doing at work included recording things like meter readings, mileage and measurements, as well as more simple things such as making marks on pipes and wood for the artisans the interviewees assisted.

It is well known among ABE teachers that for newly or minimally literate people, the ability or inability to sign one's name is a very salient point. Interestingly, none of the ABE group reported using a pen 'to sign for things', while three of the non-ABE group did so. While of course this may be simply due to chance, it is interesting that those who did report signing their names were those with little literacy skill. Some of the those in the non-ABE group who said they did not use a pen for any purpose, or only for 'making a cross', expressed sadness that this was all that they could use a pen for. One of these, a man very near retirement, described how he uses using a pen only to play with his grandchildren, saying that he doodles, and uses a pen to make '*inyokanyoka*' (snaky lines) which, he says with rueful amusement, amuses the children.

Another man, also from the non-ABE group, reported that his favourite use of a pen was doing the exercises in *Learn with Echo*, (and it must be noted that he said this without knowing that the interviewer was involved in any way with this publication).

Question 41 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their keeping of print records in their homes.

In this question, interviewees were asked if they kept receipts or other papers in their homes. If they indicated that they did, they were asked what papers they kept, and how and where they kept them. Their answers were categorised as follows:

1. Interviewee reports that extensive records are systematically kept.
2. Interviewee reports that quite substantial records are kept.
3. Interviewee reports that minimal records are kept.
4. Interviewee reports that no records are kept.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's keeping of print records					
	extensive records, systematically kept	quite substantial	minimal	none	Total
ABE group	13	26	1		40
Non-ABE group	11	17	11	1	40
Total	24	43	12	1	80
	30%	53.75%	15%	1.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	11.384	3	0.01

A strong statistical correlation was found between membership of the ABE group and systematic keeping of records, with the value of χ^2 at 11.384, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .01$.

The cross-tabulation shows that there is not much difference between the two groups as far as numbers of people who indicated that they kept extensive records, in a systematic way (32.5.% of the ABE group, and 27.5% of the non-ABE group). The difference between the groups is much more salient in the other categories, where:

- 65% of the ABE group, compared with 42.5% of the non-ABE group reported that they keep substantial records,
- only 2.5% of the ABE group compared with 27.5% of the non-ABE group reported that they keep minimal records, and
- none of the ABE group, but 2.5% of the non-ABE group said that they kept no records at all.

A comparison of the ability to read with the keeping of print records shows that there is a strong correlation between these two factors.

Ability to read Zulu * interviewee's keeping of print records					
	extensive records systematically kept	quite substantial records kept	minimal records kept	no records kept	Total
reads Zulu well	20	37	5	1	63
reads Zulu a little	2	2	4	0	8
cannot read Zulu at all	2	4	3	0	9
Total	24	43	12	1	80
	61.25%	12.5%	8.75%	2.5%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	12.893	6	0.045

With the value of χ^2 at 12.893, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .045$, a significant correlation is indicated between the ability to read and the keeping of print records.

An anomaly shown up in this table is that seven of those who said they could not read Zulu at all reported keeping extensive or substantial records. Neither of the two among them who say that they keep extensive records have ever had any education at all. The story of one of them forms one of the case studies at the end of this chapter, as an example of what can be achieved by a person of intelligence and determination in spite of having no education. He keeps extensive records in relation to the kombis he runs, which he does to augment his

income, and has his school going son organise these records. The other is a man who says he wants education for his children but not for himself, and has a good sense of what use papers can be, and keeps papers from all the institutions with which he has dealings in a wardrobe. This sense of the importance of papers is echoed in the reports of the other interviewees who keep records in spite of their inability to read them for themselves. In complete contrast, the man who says he keeps no records completed primary school, and so has seven years of formal education. While not a member of the ABE group he says he can read Zulu and some English. He reports that he keeps no papers at all because he just loses them, and says that he has even lost his birth certificate.

Interviewees' descriptions of what records they kept, and how they kept them were very interesting. Most reported that they kept these print records in a box, or briefcase, or, where less extensive records were kept, in plastic bags or envelopes or bulldog clips in a secure cupboard or drawer. One man from the non-ABE group described how he glued all his papers into a book, and another, also from the non-ABE group described how he locks his papers in his gun safe, with his revolver! Only five, all of whom were in the ABE group, reported that they kept records in a file.

A table of interviewees' reports of records kept follows on the next page.

Records kept

ABE group	non-ABE group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identity documents • birth, baptism and marriage certificates • hospital and clinic cards • papers from doctors • addresses and telephone numbers • bank books and records • invoices and statements from shops • receipts • records of HP payments • records of payments to community committees • Church papers • pay slips • letters • insurance policies and papers • school reports • school certificates • wedding photos • photo albums • title deeds for house • records for own tuck shop • library cards • cash cards / ESKOM cards • soccer team lists • cash slips from ATMs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identity documents • birth and marriage certificates • hospital and clinic cards • addresses and telephone numbers • bank books • accounts and statements • receipts and other proofs of payment • pay slips • letters • school reports • papers from children's school • photographs • title deeds • papers relating to a tuck shop (kept by wife) • cash cards • log book for a car • minutes of meetings • references from employers • work notices • competitions • training certificate

Many of the interviewees in both groups displayed pride in their record keeping. Those who had developed more extensive and systematic ways of keeping records were proud of the complexity and efficacy of their systems. Some who simply kept their papers in a paper bag were eager to say how full their paper bags were, or of how long they had been collecting papers. One of the non-ABE group, a man with minimal literacy skill, said he has been keeping papers a long time, and has some from 1958.

Some expressed their resignation to having no records at all. Two who had no birth certificates or identity documents (and worked in agriculture) said that this presented them with perennial problems, but did so with passive acceptance of these problems as part of what they apparently perceived to be their natural fate. Some of the interviewees had clearly

accepted that they would be dependent on their wives or other family members for whatever record keeping would be done in their households. One such man said that while his wife keeps papers in a suitcase, he simply loses them.

One of the most striking reasons given for keeping receipts of payments, given by a number of interviewees in both groups was that it was imperative to be able to produce receipts to show police inspectors who go to townships specifically to look for stolen goods. If no receipt can be produced there is a risk that things that appear new may be confiscated in these raids, on suspicion of being stolen goods, and possibly never recovered. One of the most canny of the non-ABE group described his strategy for making sure he is not faced with this predicament - he makes copies of receipts of payments he has made and stores the copies in different places.

Question 42 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to how they gain understanding of instructions that accompany Western medicine.

In this question, interviewees were asked how, when they got Western medicine with written instructions, they knew how and when to take it. Their answers fell into only two categories:

1. Interviewee reads instructions for himself
2. The doctor explains how the medicine should be used.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's understanding of instructions on medicines			
	reads for self	doctor explains	Total
ABE group	40		40
Non-ABE group	34	6	40
Total	74	6	80
	93%	7%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	6.486	1	0.011

A statistically significant difference between the answers of the ABE group and those of the non-ABE group was found, with the value of χ^2 at 6.486, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .011$.

The cross tabulation shows that all of the ABE group, and 85% of the non-ABE group reported being able to read instructions for themselves. The rest of the non-ABE group (15%) reported that they had instructions explained to them by the doctor or person from whom they got the medicine.

This is an unexpected finding; there has been considerable research on the difficulties faced by clinics and doctors in centres where medicine is distributed in getting people with limited

language and literacy skills to understand how medicine should be taken (Dowes, 2000).

However, in spite of probing from the researcher, interviewees maintained that they were able to understand from the label on medicines given them how much of the medicine to take and how often they should take it. One of the answers, which typified the response given by those interviewees who (on the basis of their other responses) appeared to be likely to have difficulty reading medicine instructions was given by a man in the non-ABE group. He insisted that he can read the labels 'as long as there are numbers and no English words'.

There are a few possible explanations for the discrepancy between what the interviewees in this study claim, and information yielded by other studies.

One is 'the lie factor'. This is a term used to refer to the propensity of people whose behaviour, perceptions or attitudes are being studied to present to the researcher an invalid picture, not because they intend to lie, but because they wish to present themselves or those they represent in a particular way, or believe that the researcher sees them in a particular way and, perhaps without even realising it, want to confirm or contradict this view. In this case, the interviewees may want to present themselves as able to cope with simple things such as being able to take medicine. However, since those who experienced difficulty in reading in different contexts had no qualms about revealing this difficulty, it does seem unlikely that they would feel sensitive about admitting that they could not read medicine labels.

The effects of the lie factor may be avoided by a sort of sleight of hand, where the researcher asks a question whose main apparent focus is not the real focus. For example in this case, a direct translation of the question that was asked is "When you get medicine from a doctor, how do you know at what times you should take the medicine?" If the question had been phrased "Who helps you to understand the labels on medicine?" people's answers might have yielded a different picture. This is because interviewees might have been less likely to claim that they read the labels themselves in answer to that question than they were in answer to the question as it was asked. Alternatively, an even better way to test the interviewees' reading of labels would have been to present them with an array of real labelled medicine bottles and ask

them to read the labels.

Another possible explanation for interviewees' optimistic claims about their ability to read labels might be that it is automatic practice in many clinics and hospitals for the nurse or doctor handing over medicine to explain how it should be taken, referring to the label and pointing out times or numbers of pills to be taken noted on the label as they do so. In this case, it might be that after the doctor or nurse has explained the label, the numerals that patients see and can read on the label may serve merely as an aide memoir. The likelihood of this being the case is underscored by the fact that numerals are far easier to interpret than words, since they convey a whole concept in only one symbol, whereas words, apart from one letter words, represent concepts in combinations of symbols.

Another explanation is that studies which have shown up the inadequacy of people's understanding of medicine labels tended to focus on the perceptions of people dispensing the medicines. These professionals may have well founded perceptions that people with minimal literacy skill tend to get the instructions wrong. However, this study focussed only on the perceptions of the interviewees. It is quite possible that even though they are at risk of taking medicines in completely the wrong way, they think they understand instructions well, and believe that they follow instructions correctly.

Question 43 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to how they make contact with people distant from them

In this question, interviewees were asked how they would make contact with someone living far from them.

Their answers were categorised as follows:

1. Interviewee reports that he phones or writes
2. Interviewee reports that he writes only
3. Interviewee reports that he phones only
4. Interviewee reports that he asks another person to phone for him
5. Interviewee reports that he sends a message or goes personally to the person.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's strategies for communicating with a distant person							
	phone or write	write only	phone only	ask another to phone	send messenger only	dictate note	Total
ABE group	36	1	3				40
Non-ABE group	18	3	10	7	1	1	40
Total	54	4	13	7	1	1	80
	67.5%	5%	16.25 %	8.75%	1.25%	1.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	19.769	5	0.001

A statistically significant correlation was found between membership of the ABE group and the likelihood of using the telephone or the postal system. The value of χ^2 was 19.769, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .001$, which is well within the cut-off level for acceptance of significance.

The cross tabulation shows that 90% of the ABE group reported that they would phone or

write, indicating that they felt comfortable doing either or both of these things. In contrast, only 45% of the non-ABE group reported that they would do this. Not surprisingly, only 7.5% of the non-ABE group reported that they would write, 25% of them said they would use the telephone, and 17.5% of them said they would ask another person to phone for them, and interestingly, only 5% of them said they would send another person or go themselves to see the person with whom they sought contact. This means that 95% of all interviewees have come to rely on postal or telephonic means of communication.

This question did not elicit much qualitative information, but an interesting factor was that while 15 of the non-ABE group said explicitly that they were unable to use telephone directories, (and some of these did not know what directories were), 14 of the group claimed that they definitely could use directories, and this number included some of those with very low literacy skills. On being asked to find a number in a directory, one of these started off with apparent confidence and expressed surprise when it became clear that he was actually unable to find the number. In fact he had very little idea of how to go about finding the number. Since the researcher had no wish to elicit a sense of defensiveness on the part of interviewees, those that said they could use directories were not asked to prove it. But their claim is unlikely to be valid.

The fact that this one claim is unlikely to be true, and is probably an example of the emergence of the lie factor (discussed in the findings of the previous question), must cast some doubt on other claims made by interviewees. However, the stated scope of this study is to explore adults' self report of aspects of their work situation, involvement in community issues or the extent to which they put literacy related skills to use in their personal lives. Therefore, while it is clearly relevant to consider critically the validity of claims made by participants, putting these claims to the test is beyond its parameters.

Question 44 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to the extent to which they manage their money by budgeting.

Since all the interviewees were employed, it could be assumed that they were all earning. In this question they were asked if they planned and managed the use of their money so that they did not run out, or if they found that their money just runs out. Their answers were divided into the following categories:

1. Interviewee plans spending successfully. In other words, he does not run out of money.
2. Interviewee plans spending with limited success and does not always run out of money.
3. Interviewee just uses money until it is finished.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's ability to plan spending of pay				
	plans, doesn't run out	plans with limited success	just uses money until it's finished	Total
ABE group	20	10	10	40
Non-ABE group	17	12	11	40
Total	37	22	21	80
	46.25%	27.5%	26.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	0.473	2	0.79

With the value of χ^2 at .473, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .790$, no significant difference was found between the two groups in relation to this question. The category with the most responses for both groups was the first, with 50% of the ABE group, and 42.5% of the non-ABE group reporting that they managed to budget successfully and thus avoid running out of money. 25% of the ABE group and 30% of the non-ABE group reported that they planned with limited success, and a very similar proportion (25% of the ABE group and 27.5% of the non-ABE group) reported that they never spent their money

according to a plan, and simply used it until it was finished.

Not surprisingly, the level of asymptotic significance for this correlation was found to be .790, showing that the differences between the groups are very likely due simply to chance.

It is tempting to assume that people who earn low salaries know, out of necessity, how to look after their money, that people who earn very little money must spend it on basic foods and essentials such as transport to work, and that they know from experience just what their money can buy, and resist buying other things even on pay day. However, this may be too casual an assumption, when it is very clear that a great many people in all societies who earn inadequate wages spend their money as soon as they have it, largely on gambling and alcohol, and struggle to survive until the next pay day.

This study would have been enhanced by information on the amount of money earned by each interviewee. This would have made it possible to know whether those who failed to make their money last between pay days were those who earned the lowest wages. Unfortunately this information was not obtained.

However, from an examination of the data it appears that the employees of some organisations do better than others in making their money last from payday to payday.

Employing organisation * interviewee's ability to plan spending of pay				
	plans, doesn't run out	plans with limited success	just uses money until it's finished	Total
Local council	21	6	2	29
Umgeni Water	8	7	13	28
Baynesfield Estate	3	2	0	5
Taurus	3	1	3	7
University of Natal	2	6	3	11
Total	37	22	21	80
	46.25%	27.5%	26.25%	100%
Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance	
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	23.021	8	0.003	

Since the value of χ^2 was 23.021, for which the level for asymptotic significance or $p = .003$, a significant correlation exists between working for a particular employer and being able to plan the spending of wages so that they do not run out between pay days. The automatic expectation is that agricultural organisations are likely to pay very low wages in comparison with parastatals and the university, and therefore be the likely employers of people whose money runs out. However, as can be seen in the above table, only three of the twelve people who work for these agricultural organisations experienced the problem of having their money run out. This is 25% in comparison with the 46% of the employees of Umgeni Water who run out of money. In comparison, only 6% of the employees of the local council experience this problem, and 27% of the employees of the university.

One of the ABE facilitators at Umgeni Water (personal communication, 2 May 2001) said she was aware that employees failed to plan the spending of their money so that it lasted from pay day to pay day. She was fairly certain that Umgeni paid its workers relatively highly for Pietermaritzburg. In fact it is possibly the highest payer of the five employing organisations in this study. She said that she was aware that many of Umgeni's employees ran a number of accounts and spent most of their money servicing these accounts. She said that in addition, some had borrowed money from micro lenders ('loan sharks') and were so fearful of their representatives (sent to collect payments on pay day) that they stayed at home on the day they were paid and sometimes even a couple of days thereafter.

Question 45 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to where they learnt to budget

In this question, those interviewees who had indicated that they budgeted successfully were asked how they learned to budget. Their responses were divided into four categories:

1. Interviewee devised a way of budgeting himself.
2. Interviewee got the idea from classes.
3. Interviewee got the idea from another source.
4. Interviewee doesn't budget.

ABE group or non-ABE group * source of ideas about budgeting - for those interviewees who do					
	self	ABE	other	doesn't budget	Total
ABE group	14	20	0	6	40
Non-ABE group	26	1	4	9	40
Total	40	21	4	15	80
	50%	26.25%	5%	18.75%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	25.39	3	0

A statistically significant correlation between group membership and the pattern of answers given was found for this question, with value of χ^2 at 25.390, and the value of asymptotic significance or p. of .000.

However, the usefulness of this finding is doubtful, since the nature of the question itself might have ensured this finding. This is because firstly, it was highly unlikely for any of the non-ABE group to have given number 2 as an answer, since they don't attend classes. Therefore the second answer is thus excluded for the non-ABE group. Secondly, budgeting is a common feature of ABE classes, and therefore even those of the ABE group who might have devised the idea of budgeting for themselves probably remember developing it in ABE

classes, and are likely to report learning it there. This probably predisposes them to reporting that they got the idea from ABE classes.

A pattern supporting this analysis can be seen in the cross-tabulation, with 35% of the ABE group reporting that they had devised the idea of budgeting for themselves compared with 65% of the non-ABE group. 50% of the ABE group report gaining the idea from classes, compared with only 2.5% of the non-ABE group (the 2.5% represents one man who had had some business skills training). None of the ABE group report learning budgeting from a source different from classes, while 10% of the non-ABE group do. The number who reported not budgeting at all was similar between the groups, with 15% of the ABE group reporting this, compared with 20% of the non-ABE group.

Question 46 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their use of automatic teller machines. (ATMs)

In this question, interviewees were asked whether they used automatic teller machines (ATMs). Their responses were categorised as follows:

1. Interviewee reports that he uses ATM.
2. Interviewee reports that he cannot use an ATM.
3. Interviewee reports that he can use ATM but chooses not to.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's use of ATMs				
	uses ATM	cannot use ATM	can use ATM but chooses not to	Total
ABE group	27	12	1	40
Non-ABE group	20	16	4	40
Total	47	28	5	80
	58.75%	35%	6.25%	100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	3.414	2	0.181

No statistically significant correlation was found between group membership and the pattern of interviewees' answers to this question, with the value of χ^2 at 3.414, for which in this case, the asymptotic significance or $p = .181$, beyond the cut-off level for acceptance of significance.

Examination of the cross-tabulation shows that a substantial proportion of each group use the ATM, with 67.5% of the ABE group and 50% of the non-ABE group doing so. 30% of the ABE group and 40% of the non-ABE group report being unable to use ATMs. 2.5% of the ABE group and 10% of the non-ABE group report being able to use ATMs, but choosing not to do so.

This is a surprising finding, since one would have expected the use of ATMs to be covered in ABE classes in the same way as is budgeting. It is tempting to take note of the apparent difference between the groups, since slightly more ABE group members reported use of ATMs, and slightly more of the non-ABE group reported inability and / or unwillingness to use ATMs. However, with the asymptotic significance found to be .181, the statistical analysis indicates that this difference is quite possibly due to chance and cannot be regarded as significant.

Two from the ABE group said that they did not use banks at all (one from the Local Council, one from Taurus). In the non-ABE group, six interviewees said that they did not use banks. Significantly, these were all employees of the two employing organisations just outside Pietermaritzburg involved in agricultural activities. All of these six said they were paid in cash, and two of them said the amount they were paid was not worth putting in the bank ('Why put two cents in the bank?' said one). The six constituted all of those in the non-ABE group that were from these organisations. However, of the six interviewees that were employed by these organisations, but in the ABE group, only one did not use a bank.

All of the non-ABE group that were employed by urban organisations (the Local Council, Umgeni Water and the University of Natal) said that they use banks. Interviewees' use of banks might well have been prompted by their employing organisations, particularly those in the city, requiring them to have a bank account for direct payment of wages.

Among those who did not use ATMs, there were a number of reasons given for not using these machines, and not wanting to learn to use them. Some interviewees were mistrustful of the ATM itself, and others believed that using ATMs put them more at risk of being robbed by '*tsotsis*' (tricksters) who prey on people using ATMs. Others were wary of the ease with which they could withdraw money from their own accounts using these machines, and preferred to limit their own opportunities to withdraw money to places and times where they could withdraw over a bank counter. Not having a cash card relieved them to a great extent from feeling obliged to entertain requests from friends wanting to borrow money from them, or, as one man put it, from girls wanting 'cool drink money'.

Question 47 Comparison of the ABE group and non-ABE group with regard to their awareness of a news item of local political importance.

This question attempted to discover whether being in ABE classes made it more likely for people to access news from the media (as opposed to social networks). It did this by checking that they had heard that Sifiso Nkabinde, a local political leader, now deceased, had recently been arrested, and asking them how they had discovered this information.

Interviewees' answers were divided into four categories:

1. Interviewee reports becoming aware of this news from multiple media sources
2. Interviewee reports becoming aware of this news from one media source
3. Interviewee reports becoming aware of this news from other people
4. Interviewee reports that he has not heard of Sifiso Nkabinde.

ABE group or non-ABE group * interviewee's awareness and source of local news item					
	from multiple media sources	from one media source	heard from other people	unaware	Total
ABE group	28	12			40
Non-ABE group	8	23	7	2	40
Total	36	35	7	2	80
	%	%	%		100%

Chi-square test	value	df	Asymptotic significance
Pearson chi-square(χ^2)	23.568	3	0

An extremely strong statistical correlation was found between group membership and interviewees' patterns of answers to this question, with the value of χ^2 found to be 23.568, for which the asymptotic significance or $p = .000$.

Examination of the cross-tabulation shows that 70% of the ABE group, compared with only 20% of the non-ABE group got this news from multiple news sources. The remainder of the

ABE group, and the bulk of the non-ABE group (57.5%) heard the news from one news medium. 17.5% of the non-ABE group heard the news from other people, and 5% were unaware of it altogether.

This finding is in accord with information from previous questions (for example, questions 6 and 11) which have shown that people in the ABE group tend to be more aware of things and better informed than members of the non-ABE group.

Summary of findings in each area of focus

Work situation

Information showing similarities between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

Firstly, there was almost perfect similarity between the two groups with regard to the extent to which their positions have changed from the original position they were employed in, since sixty per cent of both groups had changed their positions. Of the eighty people interviewed, four had become *indunas* or overseers, two of whom were in the ABE group, and two in the non-ABE group. Others had shifted from the position of general labourer to positions of driver, machine operator, artisan's assistant or messenger. Many of those employed by the local council have gone up one or two notches in the council's system of worker hierarchy. With the same percentage in each group having changed their position, it obvious that participation in ABE classes had made no difference to the likelihood of advancement within organisations for the people interviewed in this study. For them, advancement appeared to have less to do with the acquisition of literacy skills than the establishment of good relationships with superiors and the demonstration of dependability, leadership qualities, or simple common sense.

Interviewees' perceptions of employers' attitudes towards them showed no difference between the two groups, with an overwhelming majority of people in both groups (87.5% and 85%) confident that their employers had a positive attitude towards them. An associated finding was that there is a strong positive correlation between the interviewees' expectation of advancement and their perception that their employers' attitude towards them was positive.

With regard to their perceptions of the likelihood of their losing their jobs, the groups again displayed similar attitudes, in that approximately half of both groups thought they were unlikely to lose their jobs. In both groups, people who worked for the larger organisations, Umgeni Water, the Local Council and the University of Natal felt secure because of the size

and solidity of their employing organisations, but employees of smaller organisations felt much less secure. The groups were also similar in the strategies they said they would use for regaining employment if they were retrenched. Very few members of either group suggested any definite strategies, but close to half of both groups could suggest vague plans. In the face of the high rates of unemployment current in South Africa, and the fact that there is no welfare system for the unemployed, economic survival after losing a job is extremely precarious.

In response to being asked about dissatisfaction in relation to aspects of their work, patterns of responses did not differ significantly between the two groups, with approximately one third of each group expressing dissatisfaction in relation to aspects of work and conflict at work. Members of both groups identified conflict and being told off rudely as what they found most offensive. Slight differences between the groups were that the areas of dissatisfaction mentioned by the ABE group tended to relate more to conflict with management and specific aspects of the job, while more of the non-ABE group expressed a dislike of conflicts with workmates, and twice as many of the non-ABE group (30% compared with 15%) of the ABE group found nothing to dislike in their work.

The groups were also almost completely similar in the way they responded to the question of whether they consider moving from their current employers, nearly all members of both groups (95% in each) stated definitely that they intended to remain where they are. Given the current high rates of unemployment in South Africa, and the competition for the decreasing in the number of jobs available for people with little education and training this finding is entirely predictable.

Information that showed differences between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

In contrast to the similarity between the two groups with regard to their history of gaining advancement within their organisations (described above), there is a marked difference

between them with regard to their expectations of advancement. While less than a third of the non-ABE group expect to advance from their current position, more than half of the ABE group expect advancement, with some stating unequivocally that their reason for taking part in ABE classes is the hope that skills and knowledge gained in ABE classes will result directly in their advancement. However, if the actual experience of people interviewed in this study is representative of what can be expected in these organisations, their expectations appear to be sadly over-optimistic.

There was a great difference between the groups in relation to the extent of their knowledge of the pension schemes offered by their employing organisations. While roughly the same proportion of each group (40% or just above) have some understanding of the pension scheme, far more of the ABE group than the non-ABE group have a thorough knowledge of it (40% compared with 15%), and far fewer of the ABE group than the non-ABE group know nothing at all of the scheme (17.5% compared with 45%). Differences between the groups in relation to knowledge of pension schemes was paralleled by interviewees' understanding of what they were entitled to get from employers in the event of their being retrenched. Far more of the ABE group than the non-ABE group had a good idea of what they should get (67.5% compared with 25%).

The final difference between the groups in relation to their work situation was with regard to job satisfaction, with substantially more of the ABE group than the non-ABE group (87.5% compared with 67.5%) reporting that they experience job satisfaction, and far fewer members of ABE group than the non-ABE group (12.5% compared with 32.5%) reporting that they enjoy nothing in their work apart from getting paid.

Educational experience and attitudes towards education

Information relating to interviewees' levels of formal schooling is perhaps the most important yielded in this study:

- only 5% of the ABE group, and 35% of the non-ABE group had had no formal schooling whatsoever.
- of the ABE group, 85% (34 of the 40) had had at least 4 years' formal schooling
- of the non-ABE group, 50% (20 out of 40) had had at least 4 years' formal schooling

Thus the probability of interviewees being in ABE classes increased dramatically with the amount of formal education they had already had, which means that those with the greatest need of ABE are less likely to be in classes. Although, as noted in the discussion under Question 14 above, this finding echoes studies in Uganda, Namibia, Senegal and Indonesia (Oxenham, 2000), it suggests that the selection of candidates for these classes is in stark discord with the aims of ABE in South Africa, (discussed in chapter 1 of this study) which are rooted in the development of learners' potential and removal of barriers resulting from past discrimination.

As stated in the discussion of interviewees' levels of formal schooling (under Question 14 above) there are four possible explanations for the anomaly of interviewees having scored so poorly on screening tests in spite of having had the benefit of some years of schooling. Firstly, the schooling they had might have not have been effective, so that they failed to gain literacy skills. This is, in many cases not unlikely. At the time these interviewees were at school, black school children, many of whom lived in poverty stricken households and were poorly fed, were likely to have to walk long distances to school, and did not receive much support once there. Classes were often enormous, teachers were poorly trained, weary and uninspired. Feeding schemes were limited to the efforts of thinly scattered church groups, and support services for children with special learning needs were simply non-existent.

Secondly, although they may have gained literacy skills while at school, they may have lost

them through disuse, since as manual labourers, few would have been required to use literacy-related skills with any regularity.

Thirdly, the screening tests may have been ineffective. Each employing organisation used different screening tests and there is no system of reference or control of these screening tests. As a result they are often produced in-house and are not tested for validity or reliability.

Fourthly, people may have deliberately disguised their literacy skills when doing the screening test to ensure their inclusion in ABE classes. This was thought to be entirely possible by the ABE co-ordinator at the organisation that runs the most extensive ABE programme in Pietermaritzburg, who noted that the level of skill of some of the learners in ABE classes was too high to be consistent with their performance on the screening test. Motives that people might have for disguising their skills and thus gaining access to ABE classes might be, as discussed above, that ABE classes present an attractive alternative to work, or that people perceive them as an opportunity to further improve their English and literacy skills, and gain valued certificates.

Information that showed differences between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

It is difficult to decide whether interviewees' ability to read in their mother tongue relates more to their personal lives or to their educational experience. However in light of the pattern yielded by interviewees' responses in relation to their level of formal schooling, it seems more logical to discuss their reading ability in relation to their schooling experiences.

A fully expected finding of the study was that the groups differed significantly in their ability to read in their mother tongue, which, for all the interviewees, was Zulu. All members of the ABE group indicated that they are able to read Zulu well, while slightly over half the members of the non-ABE group make the same claim. Almost a quarter of the non-ABE group said that they could read a little, but with difficulty, and the rest, also almost a quarter of the group, said that they could not read at all. The most surprising aspect of this finding is

that more than half the members of the non-ABE group claim to be able to read at a level higher than that indicated by their scores on screening tests, which indicated their need of ABE at the most basic level available.

However, on investigation of interviewees' levels of formal schooling this information ceases to be surprising, since, in spite of their low scores on ABE screening tests noted above, 50 % of the non-ABE group had completed at least four years of formal schooling, which makes their ability to read Zulu text quite predictable.

With regard to reasons for wishing to attend ABE classes, members of the ABE group offered many more reasons, and suggested a bigger range of reasons for wanting to attend ABE classes than those in the non-ABE group. Since the ABE group clearly have a better idea of what is offered in classes, and of how they could apply what is learnt this is predictable. The most common reason given by members of the non-ABE group for not desiring to attend ABE classes is that although they desire education for their children, they do not desire it for themselves. Other reasons include eye problems, fear of the cost and simply not getting organised enough to participate.

Community involvement

Information that showed similarities between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

The majority of members of both groups live in the Pietermaritzburg area, and approximately 10% of each group have moved into areas previously designated for races other than African under the old Group Areas Act⁸. Between 12% and 15% of each group reported some development activity in their areas, citing similar examples such as piped water systems, road repair, the delivery of electricity, and the building of schools or clinics. Both groups identified crime, unemployment, poverty and poor roads and transport as the major community problems they perceived in their areas. Common to the majority of both groups was their descriptions of the areas in which they live as peaceful after a past of political violence.

Approximately ninety per cent of both groups reported that they attended community meetings, and very few people from each group (10% of the ABE group and 5% of the non-ABE group) reported that they were members of any committees. Although the groups were not alike in the extent to which they saw themselves as able to have a positive effect on community problems, they were similar in that approximately 60% of both groups indicated that they would report problems to people they perceived to be in authority.

Information that showed differences between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

More of the ABE group than the non-ABE group reported a lack of development activity (12.5% compared with 2.5%). Although, as stated above, members of both groups identified the same issues as community problems, half of the non-ABE group expressed the sense of there being no urgent problems in their communities. This was almost twice as many as those of the ABE group who expressed this perception.

⁸

All of the interviewees were African, and had therefore been constrained to live in areas designated for Africans until the Group Areas act ceased to be enforced.

A significant difference between the groups was in the way they said they would respond to community problems, with 32.5% of the ABE group saying that they would attempt to do something to address the problem themselves, compared with only 12% of the non-ABE group. There was a similar difference in the proportion of members of the groups who perceived that the only way to deal with community problems was to keep a low profile or flee; 2% of the ABE group, and 25% of the non-ABE group indicated that they would adopt this strategy.

Literacy practices in personal life

Information that showed similarity between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

In both groups, people's responses to being asked whether they had planned their families showed that this question was based on a particularly Western attitude towards family planning, which assumes that with knowledge of contraception, people would be likely to choose to space their children. There was no difference between the responses of the groups to this question, and many interviewees responded in a way that indicated that they found the question odd. Their responses suggested that, from the perspective of Zulu culture, in which fecundity is valued, children are generally regarded as God-given, and the value of forward planning is not particularly stressed, the idea of planning pregnancies is not perceived as an obvious option. Pregnancies and the birth of children are expected in any marriage, and Zulu members of staff at the Centre for Adult Education, in discussion of interviewees' attitudes to this question, pointed out that it is not uncommon for Zulu men to associate contraception particularly with extramarital sexual encounters. In spite of the possible validity of this suggestion, as well as the attitudes toward childbirth described in the above paragraph, most members of both groups indicated that once they had as many children as they desired they would use some form of contraception. Many interviewees said they would use family planning clinics, and a substantial number stated their preference for one or other type of contraception. They demonstrated sound knowledge of options, most stating that they would

get their wives to be sterilised, or to use the Depo Provera injection. None suggested vasectomy, nor, more importantly (and disturbingly) in view of the AIDS epidemic, the use of condoms.

Interviewees' descriptions of the reading material they kept in their homes, their habits of buying printed material and their families' reading practices showed no variation at all between the groups. More than half the people in both groups said they keep school books that have belonged to various family members. Almost half of the ABE group and close to a third of the non-ABE group reported keeping magazines, and people from both groups said they kept Bibles, books they got from church and newspapers. Slightly less than half of the non-ABE group and slightly more than half of the ABE group reported going into book shops in town, or said they consciously went to the part of general stores where printed material is sold. All those who said they went to book shops named the shops they visited. More than half of the members of both groups reported spending money on print material, but this included school books for their children. Interviewees' descriptions of reading practices in their households showed that in approximately one third of the households of members of both groups, there were a number of people who read books or newspapers. 20% of the ABE group, and only 5% of the non-ABE group reported that nobody in their families reads anything, a difference that might possibly be accounted for by differences between the two groups in their understanding of what constitutes reading, since members of the ABE group could possibly define the activity more narrowly.

Although differences between the groups with regard to reading their children's school reports were noted, the groups' reports of contact with their children's teachers were very similar, with close to half of both groups reporting having had direct contact with their children's teachers, often saying that they had been with their wives to meet teachers, in many cases because of their children's poor performance or bad behaviour at school.

In describing their practices of telling stories or reading to children, the groups showed no more variation than in the literacy practices described above. The vast majority of interviewees (approximately 80% in each group) said that stories were told to children in their

households. Exactly the same proportion of the two groups (slightly more than half) said that these were mainly traditional stories, and just less than a quarter said that mainly non-traditional or new stories were told to the children. For both groups, the family member most likely to be the story teller is a grandmother, and enjoyment of family story telling was strongly expressed by members of both groups. Reading to children was a less common practice, but again, there was similarity between the groups in terms of the habits they described. In a little under half of the households of the members of both groups at least one parent reads to children. Members of the ABE group were only slightly more likely than non-ABE group members to read to children; for both groups the family member most likely to read stories to children was their mother, and the next most likely was an older sibling. Members of the ABE group were not more likely to encourage their children being read to than members of the non-ABE group.

There were no significant differences between the ABE group and the non-ABE group in relation to their money management. Half of the ABE group and a little under half of the non-ABE group reported that they managed to plan the spending of their wages so that they avoided running out of money before payday, and approximately a quarter of both groups said that they did not plan the spending of their money, but simply used it until it was finished. What was of particular interest was that statistical analysis showed that employees of some organisations did far better than others in making their money last from payday to payday. Contrary to the logical expectation that interviewees employed by agricultural organisations (and earning the lowest wages) would be the most likely to run out, only 25% of these low paid interviewees report that they run out of money, while almost half of the employees of the Umgeni Water, whose minimum wage is approximately equal to that of the Local Council but more than triple the minimum wage at Baynesfield Estate, said that they fail to make their wages last between paydays. Further investigation yielded the information that many of Umgeni's employees ran a number of accounts and spent most of their money servicing these accounts. In addition, in order to service these accounts, some had borrowed money from micro-lenders ('loan sharks') and were so fearful of their representatives, sent to collect payments on pay day, that they stayed at home on the day they were paid.

Another aspect of money management in which the groups were similar was in their use of Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). Two thirds of the ABE group and half of the non-ABE group use ATMs, while 30% of the ABE group and 40% of the non-ABE group report being unable to do so. A small number of people in each group said that they deliberately avoided the use of ATMs, some because they were mistrustful of the ATM machines themselves, or believed that using ATMs put them more at risk of being robbed, or because they feared that with the ease of withdrawing money afforded by ATM machines they would be likely to overspend.

Information that showed differences between the ABE group and the non-ABE group

As one would expect, there was a marked difference between the responses of the two groups in relation to their reaction to the reception of written communication that they find difficult to understand. More than a quarter of the ABE group but only 10% of the non-ABE group displayed confidence that they would definitely not need help in this situation. Strategies for seeking help needed in this situation varied between the groups, with members of the non-ABE group more likely to seek help from their children or 'just anybody' than the ABE group. The fact that many of the interviewees showed a readiness to get help from their children is interesting, since it would not have been surprising if it had been apparent that their children's superior literacy skills made them feel threatened. The answers of many of those who reported that they would seek help from their children as a first resort indicated that they readily accepted that their children's literacy skills surpassed their own and that they did not try to conceal this fact from their children or other people. Members of the ABE group were more likely than members of the other group to seek help from a known and trusted adult, indicating a tendency to be more selective and cautious than members of the non-ABE group in this regard.

In the light of differences in claimed reading competence noted between the two groups, it is not surprising that the groups differ in their reading of their children's school reports. All

members of the ABE group with school-going children read the school reports themselves, but less than half of the non-ABE group with school going children did so. The most common reason given for not being reading reports was the inability to read English. Statistical analysis showed a direct correlation between interviewees' statements about their own competence in reading Zulu and what they said about who read the children's reports; interviewees who were able to read the reports did so. Most of the rest had the reports read to them by their wives or children. Only 5% of interviewees (equally divided between the two groups) were unaware of anyone reading the reports.

Another area of definite difference between the two groups relates to their ability to state the years of their children's birth. Nearly all of the ABE group but just under half of the non-ABE group stated the years in which their children had been born. That so many of both groups can give this information is very interesting, particularly because many highly literate parents can not readily recall the years of their children's births and have to calculate them. Members of the ABE group might have this information at their finger tips as a result of the frequent form filling exercises that characterise many ABE classes, but this does not account for the fact that almost half of the non-ABE group could also cite the years in which their children were born.

Returning to differences between the groups that relate to reading competence, predictable information yielded by this study was that whereas approximately two thirds of the ABE group read a variety of printed material in both English and Zulu compared with slightly above one third of the non-ABE group. The remaining one third of the ABE group, and just less than one third of the non-ABE group read only limited material in Zulu. None of the ABE group, but one third of the non-ABE group reported reading nothing at all. More of the ABE group than the non-ABE group read newspapers and magazines, but those members of both groups who read newspapers tend to read both English and Zulu newspapers. The popularity of *Bona* magazine among members of both groups is noteworthy. The most remarkable aspect of this particular information is undoubtedly the fact that the non-ABE group reported reading as much, but this accords with the information on prior formal schooling under the heading '**Educational experience and attitudes towards education**'

above, p198.

Members of the ABE group were shown to be much more likely to be aware the availability of easy reading material than members of the non-ABE group. This difference is to be expected, but what is of concern is the high proportion of members of the ABE group (40%) that said they were unaware of these books. Library use is very unusual for members of both groups, with only 20% of the ABE group and only 5% of the non-ABE group reporting using any library. However since this indicates that four times as many of the ABE group as the non-ABE group use a library, the difference is salient.

Differences between writing habits of the group were investigated by asking people to describe the things they used a pen or pencil for. More than 80% of the ABE group, compared with less than a quarter of the non-ABE group reported using a pen for multiple purposes. In work related use, among the ABE group there were 51 counts of instances of use of pens compared with 24 among by the non-ABE group. Close to half the members of both groups reported using a pen for filling in forms and time sheets. Half of the ABE group reported that they recorded things at work, but few of the non-ABE group made this claim. In matters relating to money, there were 28 counts of instances of use of pens among the ABE group compared with only 6 among by the non-ABE group, with filling in bank forms as the most commonly cited use. Almost three times as many members of the ABE group said that they used a pen for matters relating to money (42% compared with 15%). In personal and domestic matters, among the ABE group there were 61 counts of instances of use of pens compared with 43 among the non-ABE group. By far the most popular personal use of a pen for members of both groups was writing letters, with almost half of the ABE group, and more than a third of the non-ABE group reporting that they did this. In addition more than a third of the ABE group said that they used a pen for filling in competition forms.

There were two particularly arresting points in information gathered in relation to the use of pens. One was that two men who had described the extent of their literate competence as the ability to read numerals but not words, described how they used pens to fill in, without assistance, betting forms for horse races. The other was the sadness with which those

members of the non-ABE group who said they used a pen only for 'making a cross' gave this information, expressing a great sense of loss that this was all that they could use a pen for.

With regard to the keeping of records, all but one (97.5%) of the ABE group reported keeping extensive or substantial records, while two thirds of the other group reported doing so, and only 2.5% of the ABE group compared with 30% of the non-ABE group said that they keep minimal records, or no records at all. Statistical analysis showed that the extent to which interviewees kept records was related to their ability to read, in spite of there being a number of people (almost 10% of the total number interviewed) who said that they kept extensive or substantial records even though they could not read at all.

The crucial importance of record keeping in the lives of disadvantaged was illustrated by accounts given by a number of interviewees in both groups of how critical it was to be able to produce receipts to show police inspectors who go to poorer sections of Pietermaritzburg townships specifically to look for stolen goods. If no receipts can be produced, things that seem new are sometimes assumed to be stolen, and confiscated.

Although the vast majority of the interviewees (all of the ABE group, and 85% of the non-ABE group) reported (with great insistence) that they were able to read medicine instructions for themselves, the difference between these proportions was significant. In the light of difficulties faced by medical practitioners in getting people with limited language and literacy skills to follow instructions this was a truly unexpected finding. While it might be that people who would have difficulty reading the labels in isolation can use them as an aide memoir in remembering oral instructions received along with the medicine, it is also possible that at least some of the interviewees were mistaken in their conviction that they understand instructions well, and could be following instructions incorrectly.

In answer to a question relating to how they would contact people in places distant from them, almost all of the ABE group indicated that they would equally easily telephone or write, but less than half of the non-ABE group reported that they would do the same. While very few of the non-ABE group reported that they would write, half of the group said they

would either use the telephone themselves or ask another person to telephone for them. Only one interviewee said he would send a messenger which means that 98.75% of all interviewees rely on postal or telephonic means of communication.

With regard to use of news media, three quarters of the ABE group, but less than a quarter of the non-ABE group said that they had got information pertaining to an item of local political importance from multiple news media. The bulk of the non-ABE group heard the news from one news medium. Only members of the non-ABE group said they had heard the news from other people. This finding suggests that people in the ABE group tend to be better informed than members of the non-ABE group.

Summarised profile of responses of ABE group and non-ABE group

Note: Bold type indicates responses in which there was a significant difference between the groups

Question		ABE group	Non-ABE group
3	Interviewee has changed original job within organisation or not	approximately 60% have changed jobs	approximately 60% have changed jobs
4	interviewees' expectations of advancement	55% expect to advance	27.5% expect to advance
5	interviewee considers moving or not	approximately 95% would not consider moving	approximately 95% would not consider moving
6	interviewee's awareness of pension scheme offered	40% have sound knowledge of pension scheme	15% have sound knowledge of pension scheme
8	interviewee's perception of employer's attitude towards him	85% report that employers' attitude is positive	85% report that employers' attitude is positive
9	interviewee's perception of prospects of losing his job	45% thought this was unlikely 2.5% thought it likely	50% thought this was unlikely 15% thought it likely
10	interviewee's strategies for regaining employment if retrenched	55% suggested vague plans 30% would go door to door to ask for work	45% suggested vague plans 40% would go door to door to ask for work

11	interviewee's knowledge of rights on dismissal	67.5% had a good idea of what they were entitled to	25% had a good idea of what they were entitled to
12	interviewee's experience of job satisfaction	87.5% reported experiencing job satisfaction	67.5% reported experiencing job satisfaction
13	interviewee's experience of dissatisfaction with work	35.5% are dissatisfied with aspects of their work	22.5% are dissatisfied with aspects of their work
14	extent of interviewee's formal schooling	85% had had at least 4 years formal schooling 5% had had no formal schooling	50% had had at least 4 years formal schooling 35% had had no formal schooling
16	reasons for wanting to attend ABE classes	many reasons, wide range	fewer reasons, narrower range
17	perception of changes in people resulting from participation in ABE classes	Optimistic perceptions, many changes noted	Less optimistic, especially in relation to changes in work situation
20	attendance of community meetings	90% attend	90% attend
21	participation on community committees	10% are on committees	5% are on committees
22	response to possible community problems	32.5% would attempt to do something to address the problem	12% would attempt to do something to address the problem
23	mother tongue reading competence	100% are competent readers of Zulu	57.5% are competent readers of Zulu
24	response to receipt of difficult written communication	27.5% would not need help 7.5% would get help from their children 17.5% likely to get help from just anyone	10% would not need help 32.5% would get help from their children 27.5% likely to get help from just anyone
26	knowledge of dates of birth of children	85% can state years of children's birth	47.5% can state years of children's birth
28	planning of children's births	53% said they planned children's births	78% said they planned children's births
29	reading of school reports	100% read school reports	40% read school reports
30	30 contact with children's teachers	57.5% had had direct contact with children's teachers	42.5% had had direct contact with children's teachers

31	reading of books, papers / other printed material	67.5% read a variety of print material 32.5% read print material in Zulu 0% read nothing	40% read a variety of print material 27.5% read print material in Zulu 32.5% read nothing
32	library use	20% use a library	5% use a library
33	aware of availability of easy reading material	60% know of easy readers for adults	32% know of easy readers for adults
34	reading material in the home	keep school/educational books, magazines, Bible, church books, newspapers	keep school/educational books, magazines, Bible, church books, newspapers
35	money spent on print material	65% spend money on books	52.5% spend money on books
36	visiting bookshops	52.5% go into bookshops	35% go into bookshops
37	families' reading patterns	30% a number of people in the family read	32.5% a number of people in the family read
38	reading to children	17.5% interviewee reads to children himself 47.5% one parent reads to children 25% no-one reads to children	5% interviewee reads to children himself 42.5% one parent reads to children 17.5% no-one reads to children
39	storytelling	57.5% traditional stories told to children 22.5% non-traditional stories told to children	57.5% traditional stories told to children 20% non-traditional stories told to children
40	use of pens	82% uses a pen in many spheres	22.5% uses a pen in many spheres
41	interviewee's keeping of print records	97.5% keep extensive or substantial records 2.5% keep minimal records	60% keep extensive or substantial records 27.5% keep minimal records
42	understanding of instructions on medicines	100% say they understand instructions	85% say they understand instructions
43	communicating with a distant person	90% would phone and/or write 7.5% would phone only 0% would ask another to phone for them	45% would phone and/or write 25% would phone only 17.5% would ask another to phone for them
44	ability to budget successfully	50% budget successfully	42.5% budget successfully
46	use of ATMs	67.5% use ATMs	50% use ATMs
47	awareness and source of local news item	70% aware of item from multiple news media	20% aware of item from multiple news media

Chapter four

Conclusions and implications of findings

Overall conclusions of this study

As referred to in chapters two and three, the research hypothesis, or null hypothesis of this study is that:

Participation as a learner in an ABE programme has no significant effect on adults' self report of aspects of their work situation, involvement in community issues or the extent to which they put literacy related skills to use in their personal lives.

Statistical analysis of interviewees' responses showed that there can be no outright acceptance or rejection of this hypothesis. In 47.3% of the responses that could be statistically analysed, there was no significant correlation between the distribution of interviewees' responses and their membership of either group. Conversely, in 52.7% of responses where statistical analysis was possible, there was significant correlation between group membership and the distribution of people's responses. Therefore, the hypotheses must be partially rejected and partially accepted.

In a sense, therefore, the study failed since it did not offer clear evidence either that ABE does have a definite affect on people's perceptions and behaviour or that it does not. Difficulty in uncovering this kind of clear and simple evidence is not uncommon in areas of social research where influences on people's behaviour are difficult if not impossible to separate from others, as well as from people's background and factors in their history. What the study

does show clearly is that there is no easy and simple way of identifying and describing the effects of ABE. In the complexity of information it yields as well as the questions it raises, it emphasises the importance of the hypothesis for adult education, and the need for further in-depth research in this area.

The pattern of responses found in this study is explored in relation to patterns found in other studies in the section that follows.

Findings of this study compared with those described in the literature review

In the work situation

Information relating to work situations of people interviewed for this study echoes some of the findings of local and international studies quoted in chapter one. Firstly, in spite of optimistic expectations associated with the participation in ABE classes, interviewees who had participated in ABE had experienced no more advancement in their work situation than their workmates who had not participated in ABE classes (cf Malicky and Norman 1994, Phillipi 1988, Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Frost 1996, and Pennington, 1994). Regrettably, some of the strongest believers in the notion that ABE results in advancement are the ABE participants themselves. On the basis of the evidence yielded by this study, it is unlikely that their hopes are any more likely to be fulfilled than if they had not participated in classes, and the more cynical attitudes evinced by the non-ABE participants in relation to work related results of ABE appear to be more realistic.

However, there are nevertheless positive work related effects of ABE (Pennington 1994 and Frost 1996). In this study these involved increased ability to communicate with supervisors

and management, (with concomitant reduction in dependence on interpreters), better understanding of written workplace communication, and improved competence in tasks such as using the telephone, making requests and reporting problems (cf Lazar, Bean and van Horn, 1998).

In educational experience and attitudes towards education

With regard to the relationship between ABE and other educational experiences in the lives of ABE participants, one of the main points noted from other studies was that the probability of adults' taking part in education initiatives increases with the amount of formal education they already have (Tight 1996, Cross, 1981). Of particular relevance was the paper by Oxenham (2000) noting that almost three quarters of participants in an ABE programme in Uganda had had prior formal schooling, and that this pattern was similar to trends in Senegal, Namibia and Indonesia.

In this study, the same trend was apparent; only 5% of the ABE group, and 35% of the non-ABE group had had no formal schooling whatsoever, and of the ABE group, 85% had completed at least 4 years schooling. This significant finding means that the probability of people being in ABE classes increased dramatically with the amount of formal education they had already completed, and also that those whose need of ABE was greater were not being in classes.

Other relationships between ABE and additional educational experiences noted in the literature review were that ABE is expected to increase learners' motivation for taking part in other training programmes, and to improve skills generally associated with literacy in the South African context such as written and spoken English, mother tongue literacy and basic mathematics, as well as to facilitate further education and training (National Department of Education 1997, Industrial Democracy Review, December/January 1994/1995). These expectations were supported by the findings in this study that ABE participants showed more enthusiasm and optimism in their reasons for wanting to attend ABE classes and their

expectations of what could be achieved as a result of these classes than the non-ABE participants.

In community involvement

Hoped for effects of ABE in relation to community development are subtle, probably only detectable in the long term, and impossible to isolate from effects of multiple other influences on the lives of people. Examples of these are the hope that participation in ABE should enable people to participate in the building of a democratic society, develop their critical understanding of society and enhance their community involvement (National Training Board, 1994, and Diekhoff 1988), and prepare them for the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for social development and participation in practices that reflect justice and equality (National Department of Education 1997).

For people interviewed in this study, participation in ABE made no difference to the likelihood of their attendance at community meetings, which was equally high for both the ABE group and the non-ABE group, nor the likelihood of their being on committees, which was equally low for both groups. The groups were also completely similar in that the majority of people in both groups identified the same things as community problems, and more than half of both groups indicated that they would respond to problems by reporting them to those they perceived to be in authority.

There were, however, significant differences between the groups. Significantly more ABE participants than non-ABE participants indicated that they would attempt to do something about community problems themselves, and far more non-ABE participants than ABE participants perceived that the only way to deal with community problems was to keep a low profile or flee the community. ABE group members also appeared to demonstrate a more critical attitude in relation to the development of their communities in that although they lived in the same communities as their non-ABE group counterparts, many more of the ABE group reported a lack of progress in the development of infrastructure than non-ABE group members. They were far less likely than members of the non-ABE group to describe their

communities as free of major problems. These findings appear to be discordant (if somewhat obliquely) with those of Malicky and Norman (1994), who maintain that literacy programmes do not affect people's sense of empowerment or their participation in various aspects of life in society. However, the fact that this study is cross sectional, as well as the limited size of the sample on which it focusses limits the reliability and validity of its findings particularly in this sphere, since, as noted above, the subtle effects in question are probably detectable only in the very long term.

Literacy practices in personal life

Literature reviewed focussed more on the effects of ABE on the personal lives of ABE participants in terms of more abstract but vital factors such as self esteem, quality of life and dignity than on the effect of ABE on people's personal literacy practices, although some writers noted changes in ABE participants' reading habits and involvement with children's schooling, (Meyer, 1995) and improvement in life skills (SA Builder, 1994) .

People who participated in this study had a great deal to say about the positive effects that participation in ABE classes had had in their lives in terms of increased self esteem and other affective aspects, and the information they volunteered is discussed below. In terms of traditional literacy practices in their private lives, both groups offered a wealth of information, which showed both similarities and differences between the groups. The groups were similar in their descriptions of reading material kept in their homes and their habits of buying print material. In the great majority of the homes of each group traditional stories were told to children, most likely by a grandmother. In slightly under half of the households of each group at least one parent read to children, but ABE participants were only slightly more likely than non-ABE participants to read to children. ABE appeared to make no significant difference to people's management of their money; close to half of both groups reported that they managed to plan spending so as to avoid running out of money before payday, but approximately a quarter of both groups said they always ran out of money before payday. Two thirds of ABE participants and half of the non-ABE participants reported using ATMs.

Predictably, ABE participants exhibited far more confidence than non-ABE participants in relation to traditional literacy practices such as reading a range of print material and coping with complex written communication. They used writing skills for a greater range of purposes, had, on average, more systematic and extensive ways of keeping records and were more confident in their ability to communicate by telephone or post equally easily.

Questions raised by findings of this study

In relation to ABE and work experience

Anticipated benefits from literacy programmes listed by various South African organisations offering workplace ABE programmes include the development of workers' skills so that they could transfer between jobs, become more mobile and enhance their self esteem (Pennington 1994). Correspondingly, many ABE participants expressed the hope that gains made in ABE classes would result directly in their advancement. The fact that this study found promotion or job mobility no more likely for ABE participants than non-ABE participants prompts enquiry into the extent to which the skills and knowledge learned in ABE classes matches what is desired by host companies in terms of worker development, and whether or not it would be desirable to attempt to use this information in planning programme outcomes. Another question to be asked is whether employing organisations regularly (or indeed ever) consider workers initially employed for low skilled jobs when seeking to fill positions requiring more advanced skills. It is possible that habitual perceptions blind employers to possibilities of existing employees taking on jobs demanding skills they lacked when they were employed but might have gained in the course of ABE classes.

With regard to the fact that retrenchment is a very real and continuing possibility for many low skilled workers, literate or not, a vitally useful service that ABE classes could provide would be to equip learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to devise optimal strategies for regaining employment or generating income in the informal sector in the event of the loss of employment. While it is obvious that the best cure for unemployment is a booming economy, and that good strategies do not necessarily lead to success, it is clear that coaching in these skills would definitely benefit at least some ABE participants who found themselves retrenched. Research into the extent to which it is possible to learn to develop this kind of strategy in ABE classes is needed.

In relation to educational levels and selection procedures

Clearly the finding that the chances of being in ABE classes increased with interviewees' levels of prior formal schooling strongly signals the need for further research to ascertain whether this situation is representative of other workplace ABE programmes, or is simply peculiar to this study.

Linked to the finding of the difference between ABE participants and non-ABE participants in the extent of their schooling, was the fact that only 20% of all those selected for interviews said that they had had no formal schooling. This begs the question of why the other 80% of the people interviewed met one particular criterion for inclusion in this study, which was to have scored so poorly on the screening tests as to be deemed in need of the most basic ABE available, particularly since a substantial number amongst them said that they had actually completed primary school.

Reasons suggested in the discussion of this finding in Chapter 3 (under Question 14) as possible explanations for people's achievement of minimal scores on screening tests despite having had some schooling can be summarised as follows:

- some may have failed to learn literacy skills at school because of the poor quality of the schooling they received, or
- although they may have acquired traditional literacy skills, they may have subsequently lost them because of failing to practise them, or
- the screening tests may have been ineffective, and failed to reflect people's literacy skills, or finally,
- although schooling might have been effective, and skills retained, people might have deliberately done badly in screening tests so as to avoid being excluded from ABE classes because of already being literate.

The extent of the validity of these possibilities could be determined only through further research.

The co-ordinator of the ABE programme in one of the participating organisations expressed the view that low literacy skills on screening tests might well be faked, in the light of her observations that the level of skill demonstrated by some of the learners in the course of the ABE programme was too high to be consistent with their performance on the screening test. If it was found to be true that people were pretending to be less literate than they actually were in order to gain entry into ABE classes, their reasons for doing so invite inquiry. There are a number of plausible incentives for desiring inclusion in ABE classes in spite of being already literate. ABE classes could be an attractive and welcome break from the routine of normal everyday work, or people might hope to gain skills associated with literacy but not attained in school, especially if they perceived a possibility that these skills would facilitate their advancement at work. The desire for certificates, or the desire to get through the figurative gates that people believe certificates can open, might also have contributed to their desire for inclusion in ABE classes.

With regard to those who have not been included in classes in spite of being the most in need of them, it is possible that the processes of selection failed to underscore their need for ABE classes in spite of its being greater than that of their more literate peers. According to staff in ABE programmes of the organisations participating in this study, once possible candidates have been identified by their scores on screening tests, final selection of those who attend ABE classes is usually left to the immediate supervisors of possible candidates. In none of the five participating organisations was attendance in ABE classes compulsory, even for the most illiterate workers, and it was entirely possible in all these organisations that those whose eagerness to attend classes made the most impression on their supervisors were those who were given the opportunity. This situation parallels that in the mining sector, where candidates for ABE do not have automatic access to ABE classes, but can be on a waiting list for a year or more, and might be denied access by supervisors or line managers (Centre for Adult Education, 2001).

Candidates for whom literacy related activities are at least somewhat familiar, and who crave the opportunity to further the beginnings of education that they have had are quite likely to be more confident and assertive in communicating their desire for inclusion in class to making

the selection. If the diffidence and hesitancy noted in members of the non-ABE group (described in Chapter 2 of this study) also characterised their response to the offer of inclusion in ABE classes, a situation just as alien and possibly threatening to them as being interviewed, it is quite conceivable that they would have simply allowed more literate and assertive workmates to claim all the places available in ABE classes. Thus there is also a need for further research into the extent to which selection processes used for choosing ABE participants lead to the inclusion of those whose need for ABE is the greatest.

In relation to reading practices learned and supported in ABE classes

For people included in this study, participation in ABE classes had clearly not resulted in any increase in practices of reading with and to children. This raises questions of how the kind of reading that is promoted and practised in ABE classes relates to activities that are central to family literacy. Questions that invite further research in this area are: Is the kind of reading focussed on in workplace programmes particularly work related? Do facilitators regard elements and aspects of reading that might be pertinent to family literacy as inappropriate in classes composed of men? Does participation in ABE classes, while resulting in the development of the skills of reading certain kinds of texts, not result in the development of reading habits in the home? Are ABE facilitators and programme planners aware of the value in encouraging story telling practices in the home? In light of answers to Question 24, which indicated many of the interviewees' willingness to seek help from their children in tasks requiring literacy skills, and the questions asked above in relation to family literacy, the scope for work in the area of family literacy must be noted. Projects such as the Durban based Family Literacy Project are clearly addressing a critical issue, and it would be interesting to investigate their impact.

Members of the ABE group were shown to be much more likely to be aware of the availability of easy reading material than members of the non-ABE group. This difference is to be expected, but what is of concern is the high proportion of ABE participants (40%) who

said they were unaware of easy to read books for adults. If these books are not being used in relatively well-resourced workplace ABE programmes, it is not surprising that the publication of these books is not proving as economically viable as the publishers had originally hoped. The learners' lack of awareness of easy readers raises the seriously important question of what reading material (if any) teachers in ABE classes are using for their learners.

Similarly, while library use is slightly more common for ABE participants than non-ABE participants, the fact that only one in five ABE participants reported using any library is of concern. Surely library use is something that should be actively encouraged in ABE classes, perhaps including field trips in which learners join libraries and are subsequently are given assignments that require them to use the facilities offered by the library, even if only in simple ways.

Thus research into the extent to which ABE programmes models and coaches useful and empowering literacy practices that can become life habits is called for.

In relation to the type of people who attend ABE classes

This study showed significant differences between ABE participants and non-ABE participants in relation to the extent of their knowledge about work benefits and rights, their attitudes towards community problems and their confidence in their own capacity to effect change, their degree of selectiveness in choosing people from whom to seek help, and in the extent to which they made use of news media.

The greater awareness of ABE participants about work benefits and their rights as employees could be used to argue that the difference between the groups reflects the effects of information gained or the application of skills obtained in ABE classes. Similarly, the finding that ABE participants were more selective and cautious than non-ABE participants in selecting people from whom they would ask for help could be interpreted as evidence that ABE makes people more aware of how superior literacy skills can be used to take advantage

of others. That almost twice as many non-ABE participants as ABE participants felt that there were no urgent problems in their communities, that they were less likely than ABE participants to attempt to address problems themselves, but were more likely to do nothing or simply flee from them could be taken to imply that ABE helps people develop habits of critical thinking and gives them the confidence to be pro-active.

However, the findings described here indicate only correlation, not causality. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that an equally logical explanation for the differences described could be in terms of differences between personality types and habitual patterns of behaviour. From this point of view it could be argued that people who are in the habit of attending to news media and who make it their business to find out about their rights and things that impact on them are also likely to be the kind of people who make it their business to find out about educational opportunities and act to ensure themselves places in ABE classes at work. Non-ABE participants' descriptions of their own perception of and reactions to community problems could be taken as an indication that as people, they tend to be passive and ready to accept things as they are. In contrast, ABE participants' descriptions of their attitudes towards community problems could indicate a tendency to be generally more critical and pro-active.

Research into the part played by personality and patterns of behaviour in the process of being selected for and perseverance in ABE classes could possibly yield interesting results, and might indicate that different approaches to selection for ABE classes would be more effective in ensuring places in classes for people who have the most to gain from them.

Interviewees' overall assessment of ABE and its value

The last words in the conclusion of this study on the effects of ABE classes must be those of the interviewees. Most importantly, information given by both ABE participants and non-ABE expressed showed that people in both groups had overwhelmingly positive perceptions of ABE classes. Their reports show that in their experience and perception, participation in ABE classes results in many highly valued gains, among which are:

- learning to speak English and no longer having to resort to 'Fanakalo' or depend on an interpreter to communicate with English speakers
- being able to sign one's name, and avoid the public humiliation of having to give a thumb print on official documents
- not having to ask for assistance where literacy-related skills are demanded
- being able to help others

In the words of one of the non-ABE participants, according to what he observes of those of his workmates who attend classes "ABE frees people and makes them happy".

Of equal importance, and perhaps less predictable, was information the study yielded about how the lives of those non-ABE participants who had attended neither school nor literacy classes had been affected by their not being able to read and write.

Without exception, the non-ABE participants who had never developed traditional literacy skills expressed regret about having never learnt to read and write. Their descriptions of the humiliation of being observed by others in instances where they had to cope with official paper work, such as having to make a thumb print or put a cross on official documents in public places, or having to have the content of forms or documents read out aloud to them were coloured for some with great sadness and others a kind of wry, rueful humour. As was described in chapter 3 (under Question 16), eleven of this group had elected not to attend classes, but of these only one said that he did not want to read and write.

What became abundantly clear was that being unable to read and write meant profoundly differing things to different people. For some, not having these skills had proved to be a crippling factor in their lives, compounding and amplifying social and economic problems. Some of these people appear to see themselves as completely dependent on people they perceive to be far more powerful than themselves, and believe that they themselves can do nothing to shape their own lives for the better, but simply attempt to minimise the effects of the negative things that happen to them. One such is case study number 1 (Ximba) of the non-ABE participants (Appendix 2). In contrast, there were others who had exercised impressive ingenuity and determination in finding ways to meet or detour the literacy-related demands made of them in today's society, and described how they had discerned opportunities for improving their life situations, capitalised on them, and ensured themselves a very decent living, a great deal of independence and good prospects in spite of being unable to read and write. The strongest examples of these people are described in case studies number 3 (Gatsheni) and 4 (Phambuka) of the non-ABE. What is noteworthy is that while these men were extremely different from one another, both demonstrated intelligence, high levels of insight and unusual strategic ability. In spite of these qualities both had lost opportunities that would have been open to them had they acquired traditional literacy skills.

Among those who said they would choose not to participate in ABE, the most common reason given for this choice was not desiring education for themselves at this time in their lives, although those who gave this reason added that they wanted education for their children. In fact, an echoing refrain among interviewees who had minimal or no traditional literacy was "*Angifuni ukuthi abantwana bafane nami*" (I don't want my children to be like me.)

Interview Schedule

Imibuzo

Emsebenzini

- 1 Waqala nini ukusebenza lapha?
- 2 Wenza muphi umsebenzi ngaleso isikhathi?
- 3 Wenza muphi umsebenzi manje?
- 4 Ngalenkampani ucabanga ukuthi uzohlala njalo esikhundlini sakho samanje, noma uzobuya ungena kwesinye isikhundla?
- 5 Ufuna ukuqhubeka usebenza ngalenkampani ukuze uthole impesheni, noma uthanda ukushintsha uye kwenye inkampani?
- 6 (abazohlala) - Lenkampani izokunika impesheni? Izobangcono nempesheni elitholakala kahulumeni?
- 7 (Abathanda ukushintsha) Uthanda muphi umsebenzi? Uthanda ukusebenzela ubani? Yini indaba uthanda ukushintsha?
- 8 Abaqashi bakho bayakubona kanjani? (Bacabanga ukuthi ungumuntu osebenza kahle/ohlakanphile/uthembekile?)
- 9 Ucabanga ukuthi ungadilizwa lapha?
- 10 Uma kwenzeka udilizwa, uzokwenzenjani ukufuna umsebenzi omunye?
- 11 Uma kwenzeka udilizwa, abaqashi kufanele bakunikani?
- 12 Ini oyithanda ukuyenza emsebenzini wakho?
- 13 Ini ongayithandi emsebenzini wakho?

ABE classes

- 14 Waya esikoleni usemncane? Ugcina ngaliphi iklasi?
- 15 Ungenile ngemfundo yabadala ngaphandle kwalamaklasi?
- 16 Uthandelani ukungena emifundweni yabadala ? / Yini ongathandi ukungena emifundweni yabadala?
- 17 Ucabanga ukuthi laba abaya emfundweni yabadala bayashitsha? Kanjani?
- 18 Ungakwenza ziphi izinto manje ezakuhlula ngaphambi ngokuqala emifundweni yabadala? /Usutholile iphi ikhono ngenxa yemifundo yabadala?

Umphakathi

- 19 Kwenzenjani komphakathi wakho?
- 20 Uya emihlanganweni womphakatho?
- 21 Wena usenkomitini yini?
- 22 Uma kunenkinga komphakathi wakho, yini ongakwenza?

Ngasekhaya

- 23 Control group: Uyakwazi ukufunda isiZulu kancane? IsiNgisi?)
- 24 Uma unephepha njenge isamanzi elidingekile ukufunda, kodwa wena uhluleka ukuyifunda uzokwenzenjani?
- 25 Unabantwana abangaki?
- 26 Bazalwa ngemiphi iminyaka?
- 27 Wabahlelela labantwana, noma yiphutha?
- 28 Ufuna abanye abantwana yini?
- 29 Uvamide ukufunda irepothi lesikole?
- 30 Uyile ukhuluma nothisha esikoleni?
- 31 Uvamide ukufunda izincwadi noma amaphepha noma izaziso?
- 32 Uyaya yini elibrary edolobheni? ETembaletu?
- 33 Uyazi yini ukuthi kunamabhuku elula ukufunda e-library?
- 34 Unayo yini amabhuku ekhaya?
- 35 Wawuwathenga yini lamabhuku?
- 36 Uyaya yini esitolo esidayisa ngamabhuku? Ziphi izitolo?
- 37 Kunomunye ekhaya ofunda amabhuku noma amaphephandaba? Ubani? Ufundani?
- 38 Kunomunye ekhaya ofundela abantwana amabhuku noma amaphepha ekhaya? Bafundani?
- 39 Kukhona yini omunye oxoxela abantwana izindaba ekhaya? Ziphi izindaba?
- 40 Kwenzeka ukuthi usebenzisa ipeni ngaphandle ngokusebenzisa eklasini? Ukwenzani?
- 41 Uyagcina yini amaresiti noma amanye amaphepha ekhaya? Awungichazela ukuthi ugcina maphi amaphepha. Uwagcinaphi?

- 42 Uma uthola imithi kadokotela, wazi kanjani ukuthi yisiphi isikhathi sokuphuza?
- 43 Uma uthanda ukuthinthana nomuntu ohlala kude, ukwenzenjani?
- 44 Masikhuluma ngehlo lakho, uyahlela ukusebenzisa kanjani imali yakho, noma uyisebenzisa ukuze iphelile nje?
- 45 (abahlelayo) Ufundephi ukuhlela imali?
- 46 Usebenzisa liphi ibhange? Uyalisebenzisa yini i-ATM?
- 47 Angithi uyazi ukuthi uSifiso Nkabinde uboshiwe. Uzwe kanjani?

Interview Schedule (English translation)

Questionnaire

Work situation

- 1 When did you join this company?
- 2 What was your work then?
- 3 What is your work now?
- 4 In this company do you think you will always do the work you do now, or will you do other work? (Like what - probe prospects for promotion)
- 5 Do you want to continue working here till you retire, or change to another job?
- 6 (If answer is to stay with the company) - Will the company give you a pension? (Details - to see if any subjects have any knowledge of pensions schemes / different options)
- 7 (If answer to above is to do other work) what other work? For whom? When? Why?
- 8 What do your employers think of you?
- 9 Do you think you could lose your job here?
- 10 If you lost your job here, what would you do to find other work?
- 11 If you were retrenched, what should your employers give you? [probe to find whether they would ask for a reference]
- 12 What do you enjoy in your work?
- 13 What do you not like in your work?

ABE classes

- 14 Did you go to school as a child? What standard did you reach?

- 15 What other education have you had?
- 16 Why do you go to ABE classes? / not go to ABE classes?
- 17 Do you think people who go to classes change? If so, how do you think they change?
- 18 What things can you do now that you could not do before you started going to ABE classes? / (What skills have you gained?)

Community involvement

- 19 What is going on in your community?
- 20 Do you go to any community meetings?
- 21 Are you on any committees?
- 22 If there is a problem in your community, what could you do about it?

Literacy practices in personal life

- 23 how well can you read Zulu? English?
- 24 What do you do if you have to read something and it is too difficult for you?
- 25 How many children do you have?
- 26 In what years were they born?
- 27 Did you decide to have these children, or were the pregnancies unplanned?
- 28 Do you want to have more children?
- 29 Do you read their school reports?
- 30 Have you ever spoken to their teachers?
- 31 Do you read any books or papers? What where? (Eg Church, in the street, phone book, recipes, notices)
- 32 Do you ever go to the library in town? Tembaletu?
- 33 Do you know that there are easy to read books for adults at the library?
- 34 Do you have any books in your house?
- 35 Did you buy these books?
- 36 Do you ever go into shops that sell books? What shops?
- 37 Does anyone in your family read books or newspapers? Who? what do they read?

- 38 Does/did anyone in the house read to your children? What do they read?
- 39 Does/did anyone in the house tell the children stories without reading? What stories?
- 40 Do you ever use a pen out of class? What do you use it for?
- 41 Do you keep any paper records at home? Can you tell me what papers you keep? Where do you keep them?
- 42 When someone in your family gets pills or medicine from a doctor, how do they know how many times a day to take the pills/medicine?
- 43 If you need to get a message to someone living far away, what do you do?
- 44 With reference to your pay, do you plan how to spend your money or do you just use it until it's finished?
- 45 (For those who plan) where did you learn to budget?
- 46 Which bank do you use? Do you use ATM machines?
- 47 You know that Sifiso Nkabinde has been arrested - How did you know of his arrest?

Case studies

Note: Names used in these case studies are interviewees’ *izithakazelo*, or praise names.

ABE group

Case study number 1 (ABE participant)	Khabazela
<p>Khabazela was employed in 1981 by his current organisation and has done a variety of jobs within this organisation. He has been a bricklayer’s assistant, a painter, an electrician’s assistant, and eventually became a flat cleaner. The organisation he works for has a rigid grading system for workers, which dictates rates of pay, and level of work done. Khabazela was originally employed on grade 2, and was subsequently, because of an administrative error, for some time recorded as a grade 1 worker, which meant that he was paid on a lower rate. At the time, he did not complain although he felt very bitter about it and says he would definitely complain if a similar error was made now.</p> <p>Currently on grade 3, Khabazela is hoping that he will advance and will get a job which allows him to work with electricity, which is what he really enjoys, because he has learnt a lot about this work, and he enjoys using knowledge he has gained. He is hopeful that ABE will help him achieve this ambition. What he doesn’t like about his current situation is that he is frustrated with staying at one grade.</p> <p>Khabazela is well aware of the details of the company pension scheme, and says that in spite of the frustration described above he would choose to stay with his employing organisation until retirement. He is confident that he is in no danger of retrenchment, but is fairly well aware of what he would be entitled to if this did happen, and thought that in this event he would be able to live by hawking items like clothes and shoes to people living on farms.</p> <p>At school, Khabazela reached standard 6 (now grade 8) at Nels Rust School near Thornville. He says that he had been keen to join ABE classes when given the chance because he wanted to improve his formal education because he believes that there is no work without education. Changes that he sees in people who attend ABE classes are firstly that they start speaking English and no longer need to resort to ‘Fanakalo’ or have a translator when communicating with people other than Zulu speakers. He made it clear that this point was enormously significant for him. He says people feel very good about this, and also enjoy being able to apply for jobs in writing, and fill in forms for themselves. As a result of his own participation in ABE classes, Khabazela claimed that he has stopped using Fanakalo, and now talks English, and expressed pride in his ability to use different tenses.</p> <p>Home for Khabazela is Hopewell township, about 20 kms from Pietermaritzburg. He reported that although there had been a lot of political violence and intimidation in Hopewell in previous years, the situation in this township is now peaceful. Khabazela attends community meetings but is not on any committees. If confronted with problems, he would report them to the <i>induna</i> or councillor.</p> <p>He was married in 1986 and has two daughters, whose births he described as unplanned although they were born five years apart. He is fervently hoping for a son. He has no direct contact with his daughters’ school teachers but his wife, who left school after standard 4 (now grade 6) attends meetings at their school.</p> <p>In terms of his own reading habits, Khabazela reported reading the <i>Echo</i>, <i>Ilanga</i> and <i>The Natal Witness</i> and the notice board at work. Sometimes he takes home easy readers from class, but reads no other books. He spends no money on books for his own reading, although he buys school books and stationery for his children from Shutters. The person who does the most reading in his home is his younger brother, who has completed high school, and buys <i>Bona</i>, <i>Drum</i> and some English magazines. Although Khabazela is not aware of anyone reading stories to his daughters, he himself tells them traditional Zulu stories.</p>	

As far as records go, Khabazela reported keeping fairly substantial records 'on a shelf at home', mainly records of payments made and identification papers. If he needed to contact a distant person, Khabazela is confident that he could write letters or use the telephone and says that he can use a telephone directory. When deciphering labels on medicine bottles, he says that once the doctor has explained the directions to him he is able to read the label.

Khabazela says he banks at the Standard Bank and uses the ATM without problems. Asked about budgeting, Khabazela reported that he had been taught budgeting skills but says he did not use them, and sometimes just discovers that his money is finished. In spite of this, he says he will probably not attempt to use the budgeting skills he learned.

He is in the habit of getting news from a range of media, and says he heard of the arrest of a local politician, which had happened a few weeks before this interview was done on both the radio and the TV.

Case study number 2 (ABE participant)

Mavovo

Mavovo has worked for his current employers since 1984. Two years ago his position changed from that of assistant metre reader to metre reader. This means that it is his responsibility to visit people's homes and read their water and electricity metres. What enjoys doing his job well and likes to know that he has done a good job before he gets paid. What he dislikes about his work is facing drunk or angry people who object to his reading their metres, and aggressive dogs that prevent his entering a property. He has every intention of staying with his present employers and hopes to make further progress within this organisation, although interestingly, when his supervisors asked him to assume a leadership position among all the metre readers he refused. Although Mavovo feels that his employers trust him a lot and that retrenchment is unlikely in his organisation, he feels that it is never impossible. He thinks that if this should happen he is entitled to 'a package', money in lieu of the leave he is owed, UIF, and a reference. If he was retrenched, Mavovo says he would attempt to find work by going from place to place and asking for work, and adds that if this was not successful he would try to open a tuck shop. He knows details of the pension fund he contributes to and is confident that it pays a better pension than the old age pension available from the State.

At school, Mavovo reached standard 4 (now grade 6), but left school when his father died. He says that then, he had no desire to learn, but now knows that he needs more knowledge and thinks that in ABE classes he will learn what he needs. He emphasises that he is very glad to be offered this opportunity as an adult. He believes that through ABE classes, people gain the ability to communicate with their supervisors in writing, and talk to them in English. He thinks they do better at work because they understand English instructions, but other than these making these gains he thinks they remain unchanged. The gains that he thinks he has made in ABE class is that now he can read a little English and has started to speak to people in English. Also, he says he now fills in forms at work and in the bank for himself, and expresses satisfaction about this.

Although his home is in Impendle, some distance from Pietermaritzburg Mavovo rents a place in Edendale. He says that where he stays, the political violence that disrupted the community has ceased and there is peace, but adds that there is no development, that the roads are poor, there is no electricity and the schools are old and in bad repair. Mavovo does attend community meetings but is not on any committees. He says that if he was aware of any particular problems in the community he would meet the councillor and discuss the problem with him.

Mavovo tells me that he has two children, and tells me how old they are, although he cannot state the years in which they were born. He says he wants no more children as these two, who were unplanned and born before he was married are enough of a burden. He does read their school reports and has met their teachers at school meetings.

Mavovo says he is able to read Zulu but only a little English, and if confronted with a document he found difficult to understand he would seek help from a person trusted by him, probably his brother, who is more educated than he. He says he can read labels on medicine bottles, and reads several newspapers and magazines, namely *The Natal Witness*, the *Sowetan*, *Echo*, *Bona*, *Drum* and *You*. He says that he also reads the notice board at work. He never uses any library and first says he is not aware of easy to read books for adults but then says that he reads the books they use in class. He says he sometimes buys magazines and goes into Shuters book shop. He says that in his home his brother reads newspapers for sports reports and reads about 'hobbies'. He says that sometimes his wife reads children's books to the children, and that the children's grandmother tells them traditional stories and talks to them about old times.

In answer to the question relating to the uses he has for a pen, Mavovo says he uses a pen when he is out reading metres, and says he notes down useful things in a book he keeps, such as whether or not there is a dog at a particular address. He also helps his children with their homework, writes letters, does 'dictionary work', by which he means writing down English words that he has learnt and what they mean, and likes to fill in competition forms from the magazines he reads.

The records that Mavovo keeps are hospital cards, birth certificates, school reports and receipts, such as those to show he has made the compulsory payments to the community committee(!), as well as from shops in town. He says that he plans the spending of his pay successfully, and learnt these budgeting skills in ABE class, adding that this was a new skill for him. Mavovo says he banks with First National Bank and uses an ATM card without any problems.

Case study number 3 (ABE participant)

Ngqulunga

Since 1987, Ngqulunga has worked for his current employers as a general worker, doing manual labour with a pick and shovel. He is attending ABE classes because he believes that what he gains from these classes will help him attain his dream of becoming a bricklayer. He says that he would consider moving from the organisation he works for only if there was a chance of his becoming a bricklayer in a new position. Ngqulunga says he has a good relationship with his employers, who give him the impression of liking him and trusting him. He says that because of this he sees no immediate danger of retrenchment but there is always the possibility. If he did lose his job, he would try to think of ways of generating money for himself, and go from place to place asking for work. He also says that he would look in the newspaper but does not sound positive about this, as though he knows it is possible, but wouldn't know how to go about it. He believes that if he was retrenched, the only thing he could expect would be a reference, and he knows no details about the pension his firm offers.

What he enjoys in his present job is being left to get on with his work on his own, and knowing that he has done work well. What he dislikes is being hurried, or made to feel obliged to other people.

Ngqulunga used to live in Edendale but has moved to a section called BB. He says that there are no problems in this community and that some development is going on. He goes to community meetings but is not on any committees. He names a community leader he would go to if he felt the need to do anything about a problem in the community.

Ngqulunga reached standard 6 (now grade 8) at school, but give the impression of having a much lower level of education. He says that learning in ABE is better than learning at school because when one is young, one has no aim, and no idea of why one is learning. Now he has a very definite aim - to have a trade. On the negative side though, he says that work makes you tired and it is difficult to remember what has been learnt in classes during

work time. Ngqulunga has a poor opinion of people who have no education; he thinks they have bad manners and take things too lightly, but says that people who don't have any education have a bad time in today's world. He thinks that some people who have attended classes think they are better than others, but stresses that he won't develop this attitude. From ABE classes, Ngqulunga learnt first to read and write in Zulu, and later to write letters in English. He now writes to his supervisor to let him know if he is ill and has to miss work. He complains that the time they have for classes is too short. He says he can now read newspapers and almost any English book; then adds that he can't read much of it, but can get somewhere! If he finds he needs help with reading a difficult document he gets help from a friend or his brother or sister. Ngqulunga tells me that he can read the labels on medicine bottles and that he reads *The Natal Witness*, *The Sunday Times* and *umAfrica*, and that he buys these papers, and also *Drum* and *Bona* magazines for the woman he lives with if he has spare money. He doesn't go to any libraries but would like to, specifically because he has heard that easy readers for adults are available in libraries; he says he doesn't go because no-one tells him to go! He says that he hears items of local news on the radio and the television, but that he heard of the arrest of a local politician from other people, particularly people who had been seeking refuge from him.

Ngqulunga has two children and gets slightly confused trying to remember the years in which they were born, but tells me their ages. He says that although they were unplanned he was happy that they were born and says that he plans to marry their mother. They are too young to be at school but Ngqulunga says he will definitely read their reports once they are at school and says he has met the women who look after his children at a creche. He says he would like more children only if his situation at work improves. Their mother reads to the children, showing them the pictures in the magazines he buys her. No-one in the household tells the children traditional stories but Ngqulunga thinks that their maternal grandparents tell them stories when they visit.

Ngqulunga says he uses a pen for lots of things. He says he draws plans, records measurements, makes lists, fills in forms, writes letters to his sister, works out things to do with money, and writes stories to 'practise writing'. He says he plans how to spend his money, using budgeting skills he learnt in ABE class. In a cupboard used only by himself, Ngqulunga keeps invoices and receipts from shops, hospital and clinic cards, ID documents, birth certificates and baptismal certificates. Ngqulunga says he banks with Ithala bank and uses a bank book, not an ATM card.

Mphephethwa is forty years old and has been a security guard for the last thirteen years. He expects to remain in this position and has no thoughts of seeking work in any other organisation. He says he has no way of knowing whether he is in danger of losing his job due to retrenchment, and is not sure of what he could expect from his organisation if this happened. He suggests that he might get a reference and get his pension contributions returned to him, although he is not sure of the details of the pension scheme used. If he was retrenched, Mphephethwa says he would look for work as a kombi driver, or try to find other work as a security guard. What he enjoys in his present work is seeing that everything is safe; seeing thieves or vandals is what he dreads.

At school, Mphephethwa passed standard 7 (grade 9), and is doing level 3 in ABE classes. He joined the ABE class in order to get qualifications in a way that bypassed the formal education route. He feels that he has gained a lot from ABE classes, and knows things he didn't before. He thinks that ABE changes the way people see things, and gives them a new way of thinking about things. He stresses his belief that one must try to go on learning and says that if a man has very little education, people will say "This man he's literacy man" however, if one carries on learning they will say, "This man he's educated man."

Mphephethwa lives with his wife and two children in Imbali, having moved there from Edendale. He appears to be fairly content with where he lives although he says that there is some crime in the area. He says that he sometimes attends community meetings but is not on any committees and stresses his desire not to be on any! If there were problems in the community, Mphephethwa says he would discuss them with his family and they would decide what to do. Mphephethwa has three children in his own family, whose births were planned, and one outside his family, whose birth was not planned. He would like to have two more children, after which he would come to some agreement with his wife about contraception, clearly seeing it as something she would do. He says that he reads his children's school reports and has met their teachers.

As far as his own literacy skills go, Mphephethwa tells me that he can read Zulu text easily, and English "quite well". He says that if he could not understand a difficult document he would get help from anyone he knows who has more education than he does. He says he easily understands instructions on labels on medicine and reads a number of magazines and newspapers, and lists *The Natal Witness*, *iLanga LaseNatal*, *umAfrica*, *The Sowetan* and *Soccer*. He says he also reads school books, and knows that easy to read books for adults are available but doesn't use any library. He has school books in his home, which he sometimes borrows, and otherwise buys from Shuter and Shooter. He gets information about local news items from both the radio and newspapers. He says he is the only one in his household who reads, and that he does not read to his children but sometimes teaches them things. He and his wife both tell the children traditional stories.

At work, Mphephethwa uses a pen for writing reports. He also writes letters, and is equally happy to communicate by telephone or post. Mphephethwa says he keeps plenty of papers at home in a cupboard, including statements of accounts held at stores, statements from hospital, his payslip (although he says he throws this away after a while), birth certificates and marriage certificates and "many more". He says because his pay is low, he has to budget, which he says he does successfully, in a way that he devised himself. He banks with Allied Bank and although he is able to use an ATM card he prefers to go inside the bank to draw money for safety's sake.

Non-ABE participants

Case study number 1 (non-ABE participant)

Kimba

As a member of the non-ABE group, Kimba characterised the approach to life shared by many people in the non-ABE group, in that he appears to have a fatalistic attitude to situations he finds himself in, and has not been active or strategic in trying to improve things for himself. He seems to simply accept the fact that he is disadvantaged in relation to others, and that that's the way life is going to be for him. If a windfall comes to him, such as severance pay, he is likely to take advantage of it while it lasts, and only worry about not having anything to fall back on when it is finished. When he feels hard done by, he is likely to complain, but not to act in any assertive way to change the situation for himself. He appears to attribute substantial value to education, but perceives a gulf between himself and education, or educated others.

Kimba does not know how old he is, but looks roughly between 35 and 40. He grew up in the Transkei and came to KwaZulu-Natal a few years ago to look for work, leaving his family of a wife and three children in Matatiele. He was at first reluctant to be interviewed, because he thought he might have to pay for the privilege!

Having started school in Matatiele, Kimba reached standard 1 (now called grade 3), after which his family did not send him back to school. He never had any further education, and has not sought to be included in any adult education classes because he assumes they will cost money. He says that he can read a little Xhosa and Zulu, as well as a few words in English.

Kimba was hired by a predominantly agricultural organisation near Pietermaritzburg three years ago to do general labour, including grass cutting, weed control, and in his own words, to be a 'daga boy' - a builders' assistant cement mixer. Three years later, his position is unchanged, and he says he has no expectation for any change in position, adding, with a fatalistic air that that kind of thing is up to his white employers to decide. He would like to stay in the organisation, but enjoys no one part of his work any more than any other part. He says he is just happy to have work and does not mind what it is. Even when pressed, he can not voice any ideas about any change he would like, apart from saying that what he dislikes in his work situation is getting spoken to angrily if he has made a mistake. He emphasises that he does not object to correction if it is done courteously.

The view that Kimba has of his employing organisation appears to be fairly opaque. He can not say whether or not his superiors think highly of him, but says he has not seen anything to suggest that they do not. However, he supposes that there is a fair chance that he could lose this job. His tone implies that this is something that is a matter of course. Asked if he could expect a pension from his employing organisation should he continue working for it until retiring age, Kimba says that he is unaware that there are any pension schemes available to him other than the state pension. In the event of his losing his job before retiring age, he would expect to get money from the blue card, and UIF, (the way he speaks of these two items indicates that he thinks of them as separate things) and says he has no idea of whether he would get letters of reference but would be grateful if he did.

If he did lose his job, Kimba says that he would go from company to company or farm to farm looking for work, but adds that if the organisation that retrenched him gave him some money when he left, he would just go and stay at home until it was finished.

Kimba says he would talk about problems in his area to his mother! He also says that he would report these problems to the induna or to the police, and hope that they would do something to solve them. However, he says that now there are no problems in the part of the Eastern Cape that is his home. He says that people are living well and that thanks to the Reconstruction and Development Plan, schools are being built near his home.

Kimba's opinion of ABE classes is very positive. He says that some people gain a lot from these classes and 'get their intelligence woken up'. They learn from things like geography books and then know more than other

people. Although, for fear of having to pay, Ximba has never tried to join an ABE class he does try to read things on his own, for example if he finds 'yesterday's newspaper', or children's school books, but does not find out things from newspapers. He reports hearing of Sifiso Nkabinde's arrest from other people. He says he would like to be taught more. He has never been to a library, because he says, he has never had anyone to show him what to do there, and has never heard that there are easy to read books written specially for adults. When his children were at school, he tried to read their reports, but gave up because he could not read enough English to understand them. He keeps some old school books in his house, and, astonishingly, old school slate. He has kept this slate through all the moves and changes he has experienced in more than thirty years. He says that sometimes he goes into book shops in Church Street and looks at the books, but can never find any he can read. In his family, he says that his brother, who has completed std 8 (form 10), reads newspapers and books, but he is unaware of whether anyone reads to his children or not. Ximba uses a pen to write letters to his family, but says he doesn't take his pen to town - for some reason this seems an important point to him. As far as keeping written records goes, he has a box in which he keeps some school books, his children's school reports, receipts and a certificate he got that shows he is capable of performing artificial insemination on cows.

In terms of coping with situations which demand literacy skills, Ximba communicates with people at a distance by either writing or telephoning them, and, surprisingly, claims to be able to use the telephone directory. When confronted with printed material that he cannot read, he says he would get help from Thando (the ABE teacher at the organisation he works for) or, if he was at home, he would get help from his competently literate brother. He says he can understand labels on medicine bottles if the information is represented in numerals (for example, the number of pills to be taken daily) and there are no English words. He does not have a bank account, since he gets paid in cash. He has no wish to have a bank account; 'Why put 2 cents in the bank?' he says. He is bitter about the low pay he earns, and says no matter how well he plans his spending, he earns so little that it just gets finished anyway. He makes it clear that this is a very sore point.

Case study number 2 (non-ABE participant)

Mgabadeli

Mgabadeli is a middle aged, bearded man with a quiet gentle manner. He approached the interview situation with diffidence, but relaxed within a few minutes and appeared to take pleasure in the conversation with the interviewer.

In 1982, Mgabadeli was hired as a road labourer, and worked on road maintenance with a pick and shovel. In 1990 his position changed when he was switched to work in the position of loader for a delivery man in the same organisation. He would like to progress to a higher position in this organisation and says that what he would really like is to be a driver. He has no intention of leaving this organisation, and says that he gets on well with his supervisors, with whom he has a relationship of mutual trust. He feels secure in his position, and does not believe there is any danger of his losing his job. Although he has no knowledge of the pension the company offers apart from the fact that he is aware of making contributions towards a future pension for himself, he knows that in the event of retrenchment the company should refund the pension contributions he has made and give him severance pay and a reference. In the (according to him) unlikely event of retrenchment, he says he would rather not seek other work, because, as he says, *Angifuni ukusebenzela omunye umlungu*. (I don't want to work for a different white person). He says that he would rather start his own business and describes his idea of starting a small scale farm where he would plant mealies and beans, and sell his harvest for a living.

What he enjoys in his work is laughing and joking with workmates even if, (and especially when) the work is tough. What he doesn't like is arriving late at work and getting told off.

As child, Mgabadeli was sent to school, and reached standard 2 at a school in Donnybrook. He says his family didn't have the strength to send him to school after he had reached this level. He says he would like to go to ABE classes because as a child he didn't know what he needed to learn, but as an adult he knows what he

needs, such as to be able to communicate in English. He has quite dramatic views on how attendance at ABE classes changes people. He starts off by saying they change because they learn to budget effectively, but quickly goes on to say that without any education people cannot live happily. Warming to his subject he adds that uneducated men beat their wives and children and drink heavily. In his opinion, they think that all they do is right, and the thought in their minds is "*Mina ngiyibhubesi!*" (I am a lion!) With education they learn to reflect on what they do and realise that they are not always right.

Mgabadeli's home is still in Donnybrook, where he says there is not much going on. He attends community meetings if they are on Sundays, but is not on any committees. If problems arose in the community, he would contact the *umphakatho* (the committee) and they would have a meeting to discuss how to deal with the problem.

Mgabadeli has five children, and reels off the years in which they were born with ease. He says they were all planned, but when I question this he explains that they were all born after he was married. In spite of having this large family, he says he would like to have one or two more children, and that after that are born he will let his ancestors know that his family is complete and just hope that no more children are born. He has no faith in Western methods of contraception, and says that he has observed that people who use them get ill. He says that he reads his children's school reports and attends parents' meetings at their school.

Confronted with documents he finds difficult to read, Mgabadeli gets help from his children, or an Indian workmate who can speak Zulu. If he has to take medicine, Mgabadeli says he can read the label on the bottle once the doctor has explained it to him. He says gets to know of things on the news from both radio and newspapers. He reads *ILanga lase Natal* and *umAfrica*, and also Soccer and Bona magazines, which he buys at supermarkets and keeps at home, since his wife and children also enjoy reading these magazines. If his wife is not busy, she reads from them to the younger children in the family. No-one in the immediate family tells the children traditional stories but when the children's grandmother visits she tells *izinganekwane* and talks of old times. Mgabadeli does not use any library, but is vaguely aware of the existence of easy readers for adults. He regularly goes into CNA, where he buys postcards and envelopes. He is very enthusiastic about using these postcards for sending requests and messages (*imikhonzo*) to Radio Ukhozi, and says he always listens to the programme they are broadcast on even though it is at 2 am! Other than writing these postcards, Mgabadeli also uses a pen for revealing numbers on scratch cards and filling in betting forms for horse racing. He tells me he enjoys gambling and once won R700 at a casino. Mgabadeli says he can write letters, but very slowly, and if he needs to communicate with someone at a distance he prefers to telephone, using a phone card.

There are quite a range of documents that Mgabadeli says he keeps, and says it is particularly important to keep receipts of things he buys, since he has to show them to police who come inspecting for stolen goods. He says he buys things from demolishes, as well as from tailors and from furniture shops and keeps all the receipts in a locked suitcase, with the family's birth certificates, school reports, hospital cards and his bank book. Mgabadeli uses Ithala bank, and has a book rather than a card. He says he used to have a card which he used by going to the counter as if it was a book. He says that he manages to plan his spending effectively although he does it without writing anything down, and just works it out in his head.

Case study number 3 (non-ABE participant)

Gatsheni

Gatsheni was interviewed as a member of the non-ABE group. In contrast to subject of the case study described above, he characterises the tenacity and resourcefulness of those people interviewed who, in spite of the limitations imposed on their lives by their lack of education and often unsophisticated backgrounds, have perceived opportunities for improving their life situations and have confidently moved to take advantage of these opportunities.

Gatsheni is an imposing looking man, with a full white head of hair and a beard that must surely be the envy of others. Surprisingly, he says is only 48 years old; he looks older, not because he looks worn, but because he seems to have the dignity and gravity of more years. He has the gestures and mannerisms characteristic of Zulu men who hold to their traditions. He works in town but his home, which he shares with his wife and two daughters is in Impendle, some distance outside Pietermaritzburg. He is fervently hoping for a son.

As a child Gatsheni never attended school, since his family had a large herd of cattle, and he was required to herd them. He has never been included in ABET classes, although he would very much like to attend them. He says that he is almost completely illiterate and only just able to sign his name, but added that he could fill in racing forms, and then laughed at the amazed reaction of the researcher.

Gatsheni has worked for the same organisation for 25 years. At first he cleaned the yard, then moved to the work of a general labourer in workshop. Four years ago he obtained a code 11 driver's licence and since then he has been a driver, a position he expects to retain until retirement. In response to being asked how he copes with street signs and written road signs in view of his inability to read, he says that he sticks to familiar routes only and thus encounters no problems. He enjoys driving because he finds it easy, but dislikes operating machines.

His insight into the organisation that employs him, and what he can expect from it is limited. He says that he does not know what the attitude of his superiors is towards him, but that since he doesn't fight and doesn't make mistakes in his work he sees no reason for them to be negative. Although he is aware that contributions to a pension fund are deducted from his pay, he knows nothing about what he can expect from it, nor whether it will compare well with the state old age pension. In the event of his being retrenched, which he sees as unlikely, he supposes he might get some money and a reference.

When asked about what he would do if he did lose his job, Gatsheni was at first non-committal, but finally, after checking that this information was not going to be made available to his employers, he announced that he owns two tuckshops at his home in Impendle. If he was retrenched, Gatsheni says he would simply stay at home and keep a closer eye on these. When asked why he doesn't want his employers to know about these tuck shops he says he feels that it is better if they see him as entirely dependent on his job because otherwise they will think he might not apply himself to his duties as he should.

The story of these tuck shops proved to be very interesting. Gatsheni has clearly always been very deliberate in ensuring his own security, and has been quite canny in not allowing the limitations he has faced to obstruct his attainment of his goals. He declared that one of his most deliberate strategies was that he waited a long time before marrying, finally choosing a wife whom he knew to be dependable and, importantly, competently literate (she has standard 10). Once he was married, he started a tuckshop, with his wife as manager, and when this proved successful, he opened his second shop. His wife attends to all the aspects of running the shops, keeping track of income and expenditure, setting prices and making sure that customers' needs are met. When new stock is needed, she writes lists of what is needed and gives the lists to Gatsheni, who hands them to wholesalers in town, and returns with the stock. The shops generate enough money for the family to live on, and Gatsheni banks his whole salary and does not use it! Gatsheni got the idea of starting a shop when he was sent to collect oranges from a farm belonging to the organisation for which works. The farm workers would ask him to run errands for them, and he saw, in the combination of errands and in buying and selling these oranges, the possibility of making a profit. The idea of the shops developed from this perception. The only trouble he has had with these shops is frequent burglaries by local youths. Gatsheni is very disappointed that the police do

nothing in response to his reporting the burglaries even though he has told them who the culprits are. He tells a story, very bitterly, of having caught these boys red-handed himself and having meted out his own punishment with a sjambok, and having consequently been charged with assault and jailed for three nights himself.

With regard to what he would do about problems in his area, Gatsheni says he would report these problems to the police, but would not expect much help from them. He says that if the problems were very bad he would leave the area.

Gatsheni says that he would like to attend ABE classes. He has heard people who attend ABE classes praising the classes, and has noticed that they learn to write and read road signs, which he sees as an important gain for them. His own literacy skills, apart from being able to sign his name, extend only to counting money and reading numerals. Clearly Gatsheni would not have trouble gaining literacy skills if he was given the opportunity of learning them: he had no trouble with learning traffic regulations because (he says) they made sense to him, and says that he reads the simplified labels on medicine bottles provided by the clinics, and does not have trouble understanding and filling in racing forms. When he needs help with deciphering written information, he seeks help from anyone. He has never actively sought to participate in classes, but once bought some educational books from a travelling salesman because the salesman said they were the kind of books used by Indian children, and this made Gatsheni think they would help 'to wake up his intelligence'. He regrets the fact that he has not used these books. When asked if he ever goes into libraries, it transpired that he has never heard of libraries before and was quite surprised at the whole concept of an institution making books available for the general public to borrow. He has never heard of easy to read material for adults. His wife reads his children's school reports to him, and he has never met their teachers; in fact his answer indicated surprise at being asked if he had.

In terms of coping with the practical demands of urban living, Gatsheni relies on some very definite strategies of his own. If he needs to contact someone at a distance, he gets someone else to phone for him, and listens to what they say. However, he can sign his name when he needs to, and fills in racing forms for himself. (These are the only occasions when he uses a pen). He and his wife listen to the radio a lot, and especially enjoy a programme on Saturday mornings in which traditional stories are told. He reported hearing of the arrest of Sifiso Nkabinde over the radio. Gatsheni has great confidence in his own ability to manage money, to plan how and when to spend it, and to be sure that he will never be short. He says that when he buys things for cash he is able to work out what change to expect, and can tell if he is given the wrong change. He operates two bank accounts, at separate banks, one for his salary (the whole of which he saves) and one for the money from the tuck shops, which he and his family use for everyday expenses. He uses ATMs but when he wants to withdraw money, he waits nearby until he sees a white person join the queue, and then asks him (or her) for help, although he makes sure he keys in his PIN number himself. Asked why he asks only white people for help, he replies that he believes that they are less likely to try and cheat him than people of any other race!

Phambuka is the most striking example in the group of a man who, in spite of having been denied opportunities directly because of his lack of literacy skill has refused to allow the potentially crippling drawback of absolutely no education whatsoever blight his management of his life.

He has worked as an electrician's assistant in his current organisation for thirteen years, and does not expect to change from this position because of his complete lack of education. He would not choose to change organisations because he perceives that his lack of education would make it extremely difficult for him to get as good a job anywhere else. Besides, he enjoys a congenial relationship with his supervisors in the organisation he now works for. He says that were he to get retrenched, he would look for work on farms, where he thinks he would be likely to get employment because he has a driver's licence, and because no education is required on farms. His ideas about what he could expect if he was retrenched are, like his ideas about the details of the company pension, sketchy. He knows he makes contributions to the pension scheme, but knows nothing else about it, and he thinks that on retrenchment he would probably get some money and a reference.

He has never had any education at all. As the eldest son of the family he was kept at home to do boys' work for the family while the younger sons were sent to school. He has put his name down for inclusion in adult classes but as yet has not been included. He reported that his literacy skills extend only to reading a little Zulu, signing his name and counting cash. The little reading skill he has is limited to typed Zulu (as opposed to handwriting), and was gained by watching his sister's children learn to read, and teaching himself. He says he reads driving school books, which he bought second hand some years ago and the *iLanga laseNatal* newspaper. He also says that he is able to read instructions on bottles of medicine from the clinic. If confronted with material that he needs to understand but cannot decipher, he consults any one of his workmates who is able to read. He says he practises 'writing words' when he is lonely. What he would like to learn in ABE classes is to read Zulu and English, and to speak English. He sees people who do participate in classes talking easily to the bosses and envies their ability. Recently he missed a job as a driver within the organisation he works for purely because, although he is able to complete his own leave forms at work, he could not fill in the record book showing petrol put in and mileage covered. This is, to him, a personal tragedy.

What is particularly interesting about this Phambuka is that, like the first Phambuka described above, Phambuka runs his own business. Initially wary of talking of this initiative for fear of letting his employers know of it, Phambuka eventually says that he owns two kombis and employs drivers to operate them. He clearly holds a great deal of information about these kombis and their operation in his memory, such as the stage he is at with instalments paid on the kombis, where receipts are for spares bought for them, and exactly how much money each driver brings in. He counts the money collected from fares himself every day, and gets his 11 year old son to fill in bank deposit forms. He is well aware that his drivers steal some of the money, but says that as long as they don't steal too much, he does not confront them about it. He adds that if one does not tolerate one's employees taking some advantage of the situation they are in, one's business collapses - "Just like here in the workshop," he added, "workers put tools in their pockets, but not enough to upset the bosses." He knows exactly how much money he has in the bank at any time. The family lives off the money the kombis make on weekends only. He banks his whole salary, as well as the money made during weekdays by kombis, although the weekday money is sometimes used to pay for repairs to the kombis.

Getting his own driver's licence was quite a struggle for Phambuka, who first attempted to do his learner's test orally, and failed six times. Then he heard that the written test was less demanding, and he realised that since it is a multiple choice test that requires no actual writing, he could read print well enough to do it. He entered for the written test and immediately passed. He still has the books he used to prepare for this test.

Phambuka is originally from Umbumbulu, which he says is now a peaceful place, where life has changed little in the last few years although they do have a new road. He now stays in Umlaas road, but purposely stays out of community issues. He does not attend meetings of the community, although he does attend meetings of taxi drivers and owners. He says that he has no wish to be on the committees associated with these meetings because it is very dangerous to be a committee member. At meetings he sits at the back and keeps quiet. He perceives

that he is at some risk of criminal attack, known as he is to be the owner of two kombis and therefore often in possession of substantial amounts of money. To protect himself he has a gun, which he keeps in a proper gun safe, with his important papers such as clinic and hospital cards, birth certificates, and receipts.

In an informal conversation with the researcher, Phambuka's supervisor remarked on his intelligence and potential, and volunteered the information that he had a 'bad patch' at work when he was assigned to be assistant to a black electrician. This man, according to the supervisor, had a weaker personality than Phambuka. In the boss's words, Phambuka 'got completely out of hand' and was telling the electrician what to do. The situation got so bad that this electrician left, and Phambuka was assigned to a white electrician, with whom he works very well. This supervisor suggested wryly that because of his strong personality and intelligence, Phambuka appeared to find it difficult to be in a position inferior to another black man, but was happy to accept the same position if his immediate superior was white!

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