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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ABET) AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Education degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page no.
Abstract....(ii)
Acknowledgements....(iv)
Abbreviations....(v)

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem....1
1.2 Research Aims....1
1.3 Research Question....2
1.4 Background of the Study....2
1.5 Human Capital Theory....6
1.6 Importance of the Study....9
1.7 delimitation of the Study....10
1.8 Research Programme....10

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction....11
1.2 What makes Adults Learn?....12
2.3 Why Adult basic Education and Training(ABET)....18
2.4 Employee Incentives....22
2.5 Employer Incentives....24
2.6 Outcomes-based Education....26
2.7 What does the NQF structure looks like?....30
2.8 Outcomes-based Education in International Contexts....32
2.9 Assessment and Certification of learning....34
2.10 Conclusion....37

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN
3.1 Introduction....40
3.2 Research Approach....42
3.3 Methods of Data Collection....46
3.4 Data Collection Techniques....47
3.5 Sample Selection....49
3.6 Description of Sites....50
3.7 The Interviews....51
3.8 Problems Encountered....53
3.9 Data Analysis....54
3.10 Conclusion....54

4. CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction.....55
4.2 Learners' Views concerning ABET Certificates.....55
4.3 Description of Results.....57
4.4 A comparison of Managers' and Learners' Views.....67
4.5 Conclusion.....69

5. CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction.....70
5.2 Discussion of Results.....71
5.3 Conclusion.....75
5.4 Recommendations.....77
References.....79

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. The report is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other university.

Mapule Clementina Mohlotsane

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ABSTRACT

A national education policy proposal to integrate adult basic education and training (ABET) in South Africa came about largely because of pressure from trade unions to introduce training at the workplace which would make workers more marketable in case of retrenchment. Workplace ABET programmes provide literacy and numeracy skills, after which some workers have a chance of joining further training opportunities provided by their employers. The Independent examinations Board (IEB) provides adult examinations and certifies those learners who pass. This study aims to find out whether the ABET certificates issued by the IEB, particularly Level 3 certificates, open up job opportunities for their holders.

A qualitative approach was adopted to research the views of ABET learners and their managers. A small scale survey was undertaken in which four industries providing ABET in the Gauteng area were visited. Interviews were conducted to access information on learners' and managers' views on ABET certification. This proved a suitable method for the study because the researcher managed to build confidence in learners and at times used the learners' home language to clarify questions.

The study concludes that ABET empowered learners by giving them reading, writing and communication skills. These skills helped them in building their confidence when communicating with their supervisors and to work with less supervision. On the other hand the study showed that there was no direct relationship between the certificates that learners earned and work opportunities. Managers could not clearly identify the kind of work that learner who had attained ABET Level 3 certificates could perform.

The recommendations call for a clear policy by both unions and employers on ABET. Workers need to be rewarded for the effort they put into learning, even if the rewards are not the reasons which lead them to learn.

KEY WORDS: Adult education, certification, work opportunities, South Africa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
IEB	Independent examination Board
DET	Department of Education and Training
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NTB	National Training Board
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is a new thing in South Africa that is targeted at both employed and unemployed under-qualified adults. The government and the trade unions made big promises on its basis and put demands on employers that might be difficult to meet. So it is worth finding out if ABET certificates, the symbolic result of this new adult education system, are of importance to the learners or not. These certificates are offered by the Independent Examination Board (IEB), a private examining body in the country that mostly serves private industry and non-governmental organisations.

RESEARCH AIMS

The study intends to find out the relationship between ABET certification and work opportunities. The main concern is whether these certificates, especially the Level 3 certificate, which is equivalent to the end of primary schooling, can open up job opportunities for their holders. The value of certificates to employers and learners will also be considered. The participants' responses will help the researcher to find out if ABET has future prospects in South Africa. The reason for looking into this is that adult examinations are already taking place in the country and companies are already providing programmes leading to examinations for their workers. The certificates issued in these programmes will be the basis of

the research. It is important to find out the extent to which the certificates obtained from these programmes are of value to workers and the employers. Even though the emphasis in this study is on the certificates that are the end products of ABET programmes, I hope that investigating certification will indicate whether the programmes are perceived to be a success or not.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do adults learners perceive as benefits to themselves, in terms of holding an ABET certificate?
2. Are ABET certificates recognised as a means of employing and advancing workers who occupied low paid jobs before having them?
3. Why have adults engaged in learning programmes offered by their different companies?
4. What do employers perceive as benefits of ABET certificates for their companies and for their employers?

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The problem of illiteracy in Africa started a long time ago. African culture was not based on reading and writing. Communication, especially passing on to the next generation the history, culture and value systems of the society, was through story telling, folklore, singing and dancing.

The life style of the people changed because of colonial rule. Africans had to learn how to read and write in order to communicate with whites, to work in shops and in their homes and to help missionaries spread the Bible. Only a few Africans managed to learn these skills. It is worth noting the reasons that led to low literacy levels of Africans in South Africa in order to understand why the present government is interested in providing education to black communities, especially to semi-illiterate and illiterate people.

In the early 1800s schooling was largely confined to the slaves brought from former Dutch colonies in South East Asia so that they could learn the language of their masters. Communication was necessary so that work could be done effectively. This was problematic because the slaves used to run away and hide in caves (Molteno, 1984). Later schools were formed for the colonists' servants, mainly Coloured children. They attended the same school as the colonists' children but later they were separated. This happened because the colonists felt that servants' children might feel equal to their masters and refuse to perform servants' duties when they grew up (Molteno, 1984 and Dube,1985). So they provided separated education which was inferior and which was dominated by Bible teaching. Even the Bible teaching included only those texts which emphasised obedience and discipline. This was a common system in most colonised countries.

As years passed by education was made compulsory for the children of whites, Indians and Coloureds not but for the Africans. Africans were taught under poor conditions. The buildings were dilapidated, few schools were opened in the rural

areas, teachers were under-qualified. In fact, education for Africans was not a priority. It was through education that whites in South Africa fought against rule by black people. Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape in the 19th century, said that education could make Africans "useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue, in short, a source of strength and wealth to the colony, such as Providence designed them to be" (Molteno, 1984: 51). Nevertheless, the education that Sir Grey argued for was of low quality, designed to make Africans good servants. Although he showed how education could be of benefit to the colony, he was not supported by the government of the day. Education for Africans was under-resourced. It was provided in poor conditions and this made the level of education of the majority of Africans below functional literacy. The illiteracy rates remained at a level which threatened the country's economy. This state of poor education for Africans did not end with colonial rule, but was carried over into the post- colonial period following the Anglo-Boer war, and to the National party's rule, from 1948 to 1994.

During colonial rule attention was given to children's education; adult education did not exist. It first came into existence after the Afrikaners gained their independence from the British. Adult education activities were in the hand of non-governmental organisations, missions, trade unions and political parties, many of whom opposed 'Bantu education' the policy of separate education introduced in the apartheid era. The coming of missionaries to Africa played a significant role in the education of African children, because most schools were started by them. Later the Department of Education and Training (DET) took over control of education

activities. The reason for this was the involvement of the Communist party, which was one of the first providers of adult education for workers in the mines and industries of South Africa (Bird, 1984). Its activities were extended to conscientise workers on their rights (particularly blacks as they were badly treated, worked under harsh conditions and received low pay compared to their white counterparts).

These activities were not pleasing to the government so it decided to monitor adult education activities which were provided by other sectors as well. The monitoring of education activities was a result of apartheid introduced in 1948 after National Party's won the elections. This was done by passing the Bantu Education Act in 1953 which led the state to take control of adult and non-formal education activities and centralise them in Pretoria. Adult education providers were required to register with the DET and use its curricula which were in line with those of the formal schools.

The DET became the only accrediting body for adult education (French, 1992). This was problematic because:

* it did not address the needs of adults which are different from children's.
* the teachers were part-timers who were not trained to teach adults.
* adult schools became under the strict supervision of DET personnel.

The DET take-over of non-formal adult education led to the closure of many night schools. Providers were displeased with the interference of the Ministry in their affairs. The emphasis then shifted to industry where employers were increasingly

interested in improving workers' communication and literacy skills.

Although efforts were made to educate workers, these efforts were not enough because today most workers are still illiterate. There are about 10 million adults in the country who are illiterate (ANC 1995). This number has to be attended to because the large part of this group is made up of people who are actively involved in the production of commodities in the country. And this has a direct bearing on the success of the economy. At the moment the economy is in crisis. Literacy is not only related to the economy but it is also related to creating employment and eradicating poverty among the disadvantaged communities. The ANC- led government elected in 1994 had to restructure education so that it was relevant to the economic and social needs of the country. The departments of training and education of different race and ethnic groups were working in isolation and there was a need to integrate them. So general adult basic education came to be integrated with training and development, at least in policy proposals.

Human capital theory

Human capital theory emanated in the 1960's in North America. Its proponents regard spending on education as an investment rather than an expenditure. Education provides people with knowledge and skills which make them perform better at the workplace. According to Carnevale "educated, healthy, trained and spirited people are the ultimate source of economic growth" (1992:49). Development and production cannot take place without the contribution of people. Human resources are more important than capital because productivity depends on

the decisions they make and the attitudes they bring to the workplace. Educated people get more pay and this is regarded as a reward for the effort and time spend studying (Nordhang, 1991). Educated people are regarded as more productive, and as making more contribution to the economy. Rubenson (1992) stated that this perceived link made economists stress the need to invest money in human resources to improve peoples' knowledge and skills. If improved, these could lead to better productivity and economic growth.

This theory has influenced government policies on education and development world-wide. Nations are concerned with developing their human resources because of the role these play in the development of the country. In addition, there is an urgent need to develop human resources because of changing work organisation and advancing technologies. In modern economies workers no longer perform repetitive jobs but need to do multi-skilled jobs which are knowledge based and highly research intensive. This is caused by technological advancement in both developing and developed economies. So there is a need for a labour force which is educated and does not rely on the employer to explain everything to it. The workforce brings in skills, ideas and abilities to combine the other means of production to provide goods and services. It is because of this that spending money on education is not regarded as an expenditure but as an investment to the provider.

A skilled labour force has the ability to produce more. This view is shared by lots of people in South Africa, including political parties, unions such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the National Union of Mine Workers, (NUM) and others. But high levels of development are lacking among workers. Statistics show that 30% of the labour force has no education, 35% has primary, 31% secondary and 3% higher education (Spier 1994). This is particularly severe among the black population (Bell, and Padayachee, 1984).

Education is also seen as one way of motivating workers. Besides training, modernised work practices; job grading and utilisation of working time are believed to enhance motivation and the efficiency of workers, and to bring production increases (Ministry of Finance, 1996). These are inadequate in South Africa. Their inadequacy might lead to low productivity and a sluggish economy.

To increase the productive capacity of the workforce many companies started adult basic education programmes for their unskilled and uneducated workforce in the 1990s. These courses are optional in some companies while others make them compulsory. According to COSATU (1993) these programmes should be certified so that learners can have proof that they are competent to do certain tasks. Having a certificate which shows performance at the same standard as the formal schools, along with experience to do a job, might lead learners to expect their employer to reward them. Looking at the mining industry, black workers who are the main targets of adult basic education and training (ABET) programmes often do not have formal education qualifications which are specified as requirements for

obtaining skilled jobs in the industry (Bacchus,). It should be noted that in some industries these workers are doing skilled jobs but are not paid properly for those jobs. That is why the trade unions made a demand that when the new National Qualification Framework (NQF) is implemented, prior knowledge of workers must be recognised.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Designing an educational process normally starts with identifying learning needs, setting objectives, selecting content and teaching methods, and evaluation. New policies and developments bring change in peoples' lives. A change can be constructive or destructive. Its effects should be investigated before any damage can be made. But there is a tendency among adult education and development practitioners to neglect to assess the impact of programmes they have implemented. This study tries to look into this issue even though the emphasis will be on finding people's feelings and reactions towards certification of adult education. Castle (1996) stated that an exploration of peoples' roles and responsibilities, the way they view themselves and their social world, their aspirations, and expectations lies at the heart of adult education practice. So this cannot be ignored at all by adult educators. This study thus sees to it that views of participants in ABET are not ignored.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

A perspective on the uses of ABET certificates will be drawn from adult learners who have attained ABET level 3 certificates. These are learners whose training is employer funded. Important opinions of those learners who are not employed will not be investigated in this study. And only learners and managers from selected industries in the Gauteng area have been interviewed because they were accessible to the researcher. The disadvantage of this is that a national response on ABET certification will not be available. And this might affect generalising the results to other situations.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The remaining chapters of this study are organised as follows:

*chapter two is a literature review.

*chapter three sets out the paradigm that guides this research, the methods that have been used to collect data and how was data collected.

*chapter four presents the findings.

*chapter five contains the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The research aims to find out if ABET certificates can open up job opportunities for adult learners. ABET is a new system of education embarked upon by the ANC-led government to try to provide quality education which will help adults to take control of their lives and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The government also hopes that through ABET the principles of co-operation and critical thinking can be promoted to support the development of skills needed for participation in the economy and the society (NTB, 1994:14).

This review deals with four issues which will give the reader a picture of whether there is a relationship between ABET certificates and work opportunities. The first issue concerns the reasons that make people learn and how do they learn? This section deals with learning theories as conceptualised by various psychologists and the adult educationist Knowles (1984). The second issue is the new strategic direction of adult education in the country. The third issue is the model that influenced this system, that is competency-based education. Last is the issue of the assessment of learning. This will explain how adult learners are examined in South Africa and the type of certificates they have.

What makes adults learn, and how do they learn?

Rogers (1989) stated that the reasons why adults learn may come from within an individual (intrinsic motivation) or from external forces (extrinsic motivation). The external or social forces he identified were: the need for promotion, entry to a new job or career, the need for more money and the effects of changes taking place in the society. To be affected by these external forces adult needs to have basic qualifications and the ability to acquire new knowledge. And it is through education that s/he can get these. So "education prepares people for the jobs they will do" (Christie, 1991: 198), it imparts skills, knowledge, attitudes and values needed for the world of work.

Rogers went on to show that motivation which was more fulfilling is intrinsic motivation. This is because it comes from within and if attended to brings an equilibrium in an individual. He gave an example of a father whose inability to read and write made it difficult to play at writing with his six year old child. The desire to be part of child's development made him enrol in an adult literacy class. The desire to read and write and to improve one's employment opportunities are commonly stated reasons for adult learners in South African to enrol in adult classes. One purpose of Rogers' work is to indicate to tutors and others the importance of motivation in keeping adults in a learning situation. The issue of what makes adults learn is important for this study because it forms a basis for understanding the reasons that might have led adult learners in South African industries into an educational programme. If adults learn because of the above

stated reasons they learn in certain ways in order to achieve their intentions and desires. The unfolding issue then is how do they learn? Do they learn to get a material reward or because they have the inner desire to fulfil? The next section deals with learning theories as identified by Knowles (1984).

According to Knowles (1984) the nature of people, and the way they learn can be grouped into two world views. They are the mechanistic and organismic world views. The mechanistic world view regards peoples' behaviour as predictable and controllable like machines. People are perceived to be like robots, passive, reacting to their environment and motivated by rewards. On the other hand the second world view takes "..man as an active organism rather than a reactive organism, as a source of acts rather than a collection of acts initiated by external forces" (Knowles, 1984: 17). If a woman/man is an active organism s/he organises what needs to be learnt and acts on it without need of external force.

This world view respects adults, and takes them as shapers of their environment, not controlled by it. This is the stance taken by the researcher. Adult learners are capable of deciding on their learning, and do not learn only because of extrinsic motivation. They are active not reactive beings.

There are different learning theories that fit these world views, but only two will be discussed here because of the of the limitations on the length of this research report. First, Skinner's behaviourist learning theory will be discussed in connection with the mechanistic world view. Second, Carl Rogers' motivational theory will be

used to illustrate the organismic world view. The mechanistic world view believes external stimuli drive a person into learning. Skinner's behaviourist learning theory fits within this view. According to him "..all behaviour is lawfully determined, predictable and able to be brought under environmental control" (1981: 195). When viewing behaviour in this way Skinner believes that a person's behaviour can be studied and analysed without involving her/him. If the behaviour is reinforced it tends to be repeated but if it is punished it disappears. This behaviourist learning theory takes the motive to learn as coming from external forces. People learn because of stimuli which are reinforced. If these do not exist a person will withdraw from learning.

The implication of Skinner's theory for this study is that certificates are the kind of reinforcement which attracts people to learning. This view is not acceptable to the researcher because certificates are end products of the learning process which indicate what the person has achieved. The researcher believes that people come to a learning process because they want to improve their skills, to change the situation they are in, not just to get certificates. This is a view shared by many adult educators, that is, the adults who are the focus of this study engage in learning because they want to change their lives.

The shortcoming of Skinner's theory is that reinforcement is a precondition for learning. It divorces people's mental capabilities from their ability to deal with actions and makes them dependent on their environment. It is wrong to view

people like machines as if they cannot think. Adults engage in learning if they feel a need to; they cannot be forced into a learning situation. The organismic world view regards a human being as an organiser and determiner of her/his action. A theory which illustrates this view is Rogers personality theory.

Hjelle, and Ziegler (1981) wrote a chapter on Carl Rogers' theory of personality. According to them "human beings come in many shapes and sizes and behave in exceedingly complex ways" p 1. People cannot be studied like rats or gadgets, because their most vital problems concern themselves and the way they relate to others. Rogers views people in a different way from Skinner and other behaviourist theorists. "He regards a person as an active force of energy oriented toward future goals and self-directed purposes, rather than a creature pushed and pulled by forces beyond his or her control" (1981: 403). Because he directs his actions a person will engage in learning to actualise his inner self.

Rogers' theory is based on the actualising tendency. The primary motive for a person to learn cannot be an external force like certificates but rather is the person's subjective experiences. So certificates serve as a proof of what a learner has achieved in life. Things that make people behave in a certain way are influenced by their past experiences, present experience and perception, and how they foresee their future. To understand people's actions the observer needs to know the actor's subjective experiences. And only those experiences which maintain the self are sought after and valued, while those which oppose its maintenance are avoided. So educators must be cautious about using motivational constructs to understand

people's actions. Whatever a person does results from an external need for self actualisation. This theory forms the basis of this study. The researcher believes that adult learners engage in learning to fill in a gap they have within themselves. They want to improve their jobs, be able to help their families and be active members of their society. Whatever they do is motivated by an actualising tendency, they want to achieve or accomplish something that makes their life more enriching and satisfying (Hjelle, and Ziegler, 1981).

As has been mentioned earlier, Knowles (1984) believes that engagement in learning results because of the learners' felt needs and desires. These might be family and work pressures, such as a need for promotion, avoiding retrenchment, coping with divorce and death of a partner. It is not only individuals who want to improve their education, but also governments want educated people who can meet the demands of changing technologies and who can contribute effectively to the economy their country (ANC ,1991; 1989; Ministry of Education, 1995; and Ministry of Finance, 1996). These days governments emphasise that education should prepare young and older adults for the workplace. This in return puts pressure on educational institutions to provide education relevant to the country's needs. The South African government has embarked on a new educational strategy which will emphasise what ought to be done and learnt rather than how much ought to be known. This will be dealt with in detail later in the review, under the heading 'outcomes-based education'.

This strategy will affect both formal and non-formal education. Adult learners will write examinations so that their competency in certain learning areas can be assessed. Those adults who perform well will get a certificate. It needs to be noted that before this new policy was developed, few adult learners in non-formal education programmes received certificates at the end of a period of learning. Many non-governmental organisations opposed certification. They regarded certificates as unnecessary. The need for certificates which have the same status as the formal school's could have been influenced by the realisation that people who are educated and have certificates occupy better paying positions. Carnevale indicated that "the difference in lifetime earnings between the average American who doesn't complete high school and the average American who completes college and continues to participate in some form of adult education is roughly $631 000 over a lifetime" (1992: 60). Issues like this could make adults who did not attend school or finish Standard 10 have a desire to further their studies.

The certificate issued under the new system might bring confusion to adult education because it is new. So it is of importance to find out what these certificates can do for adult learners. The next section deals with the reasons that led government, unions and businesses to propose a new system of adult education.

Why Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)?

The past adult education system has been blamed for its ineffectiveness in eradicating illiteracy and for hindering the self-development of the adult black population in the country (ANC;1995 and COSATU, 1993). There are about 10 million "illiterate" adults in the country, a large proportion of whom are blacks. Mathiba (1995:5) states that adult education is needed to upgrade the lives of disadvantaged communities.

These people occupy low paid jobs, are not paid for the work they are doing, are often unemployed or employed in an unstable sector, or in the informal sector, and are lacking basic literacy skills. So the new government elected in 1994 was under pressure to improve the lives of the black people in the country, that is provide them with quality education. That is why they introduced competency based education.

The democratic government under the African National Congress (ANC), under pressure from businesses and trade unions, aims to restructure the education system so that the inequalities of the past are eradicated. The ANC has called for a system of education which will provide a foundation for access to lifelong learning, that is, education not confined to childhood, adolescence and early childhood, but one that continues throughout the person's life. For this to be sustainable individuals should see value in learning (Tight, 1996 : 38). This is said because of the apparent reluctance of many South African people to engage in learning

activities.

To strengthen the economy many governments have attempted to combine education with work. Education should enable people to contribute to the social and economic development of their countries (ANC, 1995). So adult education is regarded as one alternative that could help the masses in accessing lifelong learning and make the knowledge that people have relevant to the needs of the country. This is part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which the ANC embarked upon in 1994 to improve the lives of the poor and disadvantaged people in the country. The success of this campaign depends on the availability of finance.

The arguments presented above show that illiteracy is a social, economic and political phenomena. It is political and economic because it results from poor economic planning and the inability of politicians to distribute resources equitably throughout the country. For people to see the importance of education and be attracted to it, the eradication of illiteracy should combine the eradication of poverty among the poor in the rural, urban and in informal settlements, and job creation for the unemployed. It is only through following this procedure that an improved standard of living for all can be reached.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) report on ABET in 1993 described the inadequacies of the past adult education system as follows:

*It failed to develop the economy of the country and its people.

*It was of poor quality and under-resourced.

*The curriculum was not related to adults' needs.

*The teachers were under qualified.

COSATU made recommendations as to how adult education should be organised in order to meet the needs of the uneducated population, especially workers. The majority of the workforce have low levels of education; perform unskilled work and cannot be advanced because of their lack of education.

According to COSATU, education and training should be integrated so that there is no demarcation between the two. It is only through such integration that workers can acquire the skills needed in the workplace. Woods and Phillips (1993) showed that the changing organisation of work and technology pose a challenge to the workforce. Thus workers need basic education which can make them trainable and able to adapt to changing styles of work organisation.

There is a broad agreement that ABET should provide basic education and technical skills to the adult population so that they can be a useful resource to the country. Dore and Oxenham (1984), writing about the consequences of a formal, academic school curriculum far removed from the world of work, state that the problem of irrelevant education makes unemployment severe among secondary school leavers and less severe among university graduates. The lack of skilled labour force can lead to importation of qualified foreigners even though local people are jobless. And this increases the unemployment rate and poverty level.

For example the South African national department of health is presently importing doctors from Cuba. Through educating employed adults there will less need to import skilled labour from outside. This does not suggest that adult education can provide doctors but tries to show the severity of the situation in the country. If adult education can at least be relevant to the needs of learners and employers it will help to increase the production of goods and services that are needed to increase the country's economy.

It was not only COSATU and the government which advocated a need to change the current education system, but also businesses. COSATU would like to see its members earning more money and occupying better positions at work, not being taken advantage of by employers Employers' reasons for providing training to workers are to avoid wastage; to have a labour force which can make decisions without trade unions; and who can take responsibility for their work (Woods and Phillips, 1993). Employers' motives are more profit oriented than oriented to the full development of workers. This may impact on the type of education provided to workers, that is, it might be more work related than general education.

The results of a survey conducted by French (1982) contradicts Wood's and Phillips' view that employers start basic literacy classes to get better quality of work. His study revealed that a large percentage of employers' stated that their reason for providing basic literacy classes was to built workers' self-esteem and enhance job satisfaction. That is why more than 60% of employers rejected giving workers who had undergone employer funded training a reward in form of wage

increase or a bonus (French, 1982 :73). A training manager of Barlow Rand Group (in French's study) regarded a suitable reward as making skills training available to workers who had successfully completed a literacy course. But Ryan (1995) observes that employees join training programmes to change their work situations. And if this does not happen they will feel disappointed and betrayed.

According to Ryan (1995), both workers and employers benefit from employer funded literacy programmes. If workers do not get incentives such as increases in pay they will not participate in educational programmes. So it of importance to encourage both the workers and employers to participate in educational programmes. Examples of incentives that both employers and workers can get have been listed below.

Employee Incentives

The incentives that attract workers to classes differ. They can be in the form of material reward for knowledge and skills gained. They can also be intrinsic motivation from the learners themselves. Although the material benefits will be stated here the researcher believes that adults engage in learning to satisfy the inner self. Extrinsic rewards can be provided by the employer or the programme itself.

The incentives which employers can give to adult learners to inspire them to participate in ABET classes can be in the form of:

*Cash bonuses, promotions and job retention, as well as the skills that learners gain from classes. These could be used as a criteria for employing and retaining workers during retrenchment.

*There are intangible benefits that can be given to learners. They can be in a form of building learners' self-esteem through basic literacy, and recognising of their achievement by supervisors and peers. The knowledge gained can be beneficial to family members.

The incentives which employers can give to adults already enrolled in ABET classes can take the form of :

*Providing courses at a suitable time for different workers and flexible programming to address the needs of learners.

*Support in form of individual tutoring may be provided to those learners who have learning difficulties.

*Dealing with perceived barriers. One of the reasons for workers dropping out of classes is the inability to get time off from their supervisors. Supervisors should also be supportive of those workers with learning problems because such learners fear reprisal from their supervisor for repeated failure. They fear that supervisors might not allow them to repeat if they have failed, and may discriminate against them when they promote other workers.

Employer incentives

The success of employer funded training depends on the participation of both workers and employers. Lots of finance is involved in educating workers and, because employers do not want to provide basic education to their workers, they need to be motivated. Things that could motivate them are as follows:

*The desire to increase productivity - low literacy levels affect quality of goods produced and customer service. If workers are trained, their production capacity increases as does the quality of goods because workers become enthusiastic, alert, punctual and are able to read instruction on machines on their own.

*Expenses incurred for screening, identifying, recruiting and training new employees are reduced.

*Increased safety - Literate workers reduce costs in health care, human lives, liability suits, lost reputation and profits.

*Improved employee relations - the company's mission statement is easily understood by literate workers. This is needed in order to win employees' loyalty and to improve their morale.

(Adapted from Ryan, 1995; Mikulecky, 1995 and Carnevale 1992).

Employers should note that education and training are important even if they reduce short term profits because they will benefit the company in the long-term. As has been shown, companies are reluctant to offer training to their employees

because they regard it as expensive. But this study deals with those employers who have realised the importance of human capital in the success of their companies. There are companies in South Africa which have extended education facilities to their low level workers by starting ABET programmes. The South African government should provide incentives to those employers who provide basic education to their employees to encourage them and those who have not yet started. These incentives can be in form of statutory, fiscal and tripartite interventions such as those practised in France and Australia (Ryan, 1995). This should also extend to providing subsidies to public and private adult education providers. It is important to have an educated society as it is believed that educated people live in harmony (that is they do not engage in criminal activities), make better economic decisions and have a better chance of getting jobs.

The move to competency based or outcomes-based education for adults is likely to benefit both workers and employers because it proposes to prepare adults who will be productive and resourceful. The next section deals with outcomes-based education, what it is and how it is useful for adult education, especially in South Africa.

Outcomes-based education

The model of education proposed by the government and other stakeholders since 1994 is outcome-based education. Outcomes are defined as performances, skills or capabilities that learners need to achieve at the end of the learning process. The outcomes that learners need to show are of two types. They are generic and specific. The generic ones are broad, common to all skills. They include the ability to communicate, solve problems, to make decisions, plan, organise and collect information (EIC and IEB, 1996). Thinking and reasoning skills will be included in the content that a learner needs to learn. Specific outcomes are the exact skills and information required in a particular situation, such as addition in mathematics, sewing, handling a machine and others. These are related to a specific task that a learner will do after completing his/her studies. They link intentions and results of learning.

Outcome-based education should help learners to :

*develop their full potential;

*participate actively in a society as a whole;

*develop communication skills in their mother tongue and English. This is for work and social purposes because South Africa is a multi-lingual country;

*calculate and understand mathematics;

*develop critical understanding of society so that they can make meaningful

decisions;

*take development initiatives and understand the world of science.

(Adapted from COSATU 1993, ANC 1995 and NTB 1994)

These outcomes should be demonstrated by all learners, young and old, in order to be credited. A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) will be created to manage the accreditation process. It will also guide the development of curricula and assessment methods. It will be a flexible system which ensures mobility between different learning sites. Under the NQF, the adult learner will be able to learn when he/she is ready, and to transfer credits from one learning site to another. It will also accredit learning gained outside the formal education system.

Learners accredited by the NQF are expected to perform well at work. The certificates they obtain from ABET classes are regarded as paths to job acquisition and advancement at work. The trade unions have high expectations of ABET programmes because there is pressure to create more jobs which will facilitate job advancement and create opportunities for those learners who graduate from ABET.

Questions that need to be addressed so that ABET becomes a success are as follows:

First, is it possible for all prospective learners to be served by state adult centres (night schools)? Second, do all 'illiterate' learners want to attend classes?

Third, will these people be employed after completing their studies? The last question is important because ABET is supposed to prepare people for the jobs

that they will do in future.

Organisation of work in South Africa is characterised by a division of labour whereby low educated workers perform manual work and skilled ones deal with duties that require decision-making (Christie, 1991). Most of the workers who perform manual jobs are black. At the same time some black workers are performing skilled jobs, but are not paid for these skills because they lack formal qualifications. This is why trade unions want employers to assess the skills that workers have, and to pay them on the basis of such skills rather on their job grade. This is the basis for the unions' argument for recognition of prior learning. But the division of labour that still exists in the country will make employers reluctant to meet union demands.

Ryan (1995) perceives payment on the basis of skill as 'novel' because management normally pays people on the basis of the qualifications they have. Education qualifications determine the kind of job a person can do and the pay she gets. Payment on the basis of skills is currently a secondary issue in organisations. Our society has been using qualifications as criteria for job selection for a long time and it will not be easy to get rid of. Related to this issue is that there will always be a need for manual labourers because in a capitalist system there will always be a division of labour. Only a few industrialised countries, such as Japan, pay their employees on the basis of skill, knowledge, rank, and length of service.

Ryan (1995) described four reasons why employers do not pay workers on the basis of the skills they have acquired on the job. Firstly, labour costs incurred to pay workers for unused and under-used skills are not profitable. It is difficult for the labour unions to force employers to pay for skills which are not of immediate value to them. That is why NUM, COSATU, and others are still battling with employers to pay workers according to the skill they have.

Secondly, payment by job content has overtaken payment by results because of "the anomalies and everyday friction that was induced by the inequities of piecework and its derivatives" (Ryan, 1995:33). Thirdly, older, senior and less qualified employees resist being tested so that they can be paid on the basis of the skills that they have. Lastly, there is mistrust by manual labour and the unions of the supervisors who are supposed to assess them. They think assessment might be used as a basis of favouritism and division. For example, in Sweden unions oppose this because it will disrupt worker solidarity and the existing egalitarian wage structure.

The IEB seems to share the views of the unions on what certificates should do for the adult learners. This is reflected in the IEB principles which state that learning examined by it should give:

*high place to understanding, insight ... and ability to use learning effectively,

*recognise prior learning,

*have street value, in terms of economic advancement.

(IEB 1995 : 6)

This illustrates that there are great expectations placed on the certification of ABET programmes. How will ABET be able to restructure the workplace and give black people a chance of participating in the economy when the division of labour still exists?

What does the NQF structure looks like?

The NQF has three training bands or stages that the learner has to go through until he/she gets a higher qualification. They are the general education and training band; further education and training band, and higher education. This review will concentrate on the general education and training band. In this band the exit point for adults will be equivalent to those of formal schooling (NTB, 1994). The NQF policy document (HRSC, 1995) states that general education will be provided for both children and for adults. For adults the starting point is Level One, which is roughly equivalent to Standard one, with consideration given to prior learning and experience, and the needs and roles of adult learners. From Level One a learner moves to Level 2, then Levels 3 and 4. The curriculum in Levels One to Three is made up of English, mathematics and mother tongue.

According to current education policy, through the NQF the previous education and training that the learner have acquired will be assessed and credited. In order to get a qualification the learner has to obtain several credits which can be

combined and accredited towards a qualification. The outcomes expected from a learner are specified in advance, as well as the criteria used to assess these outcomes. The system allows learners to enter the education system at different levels, learn what they want, at their own pace and get credits for what they have learnt. The NQF structure for one level of the general education and training band is shown below. This level is equivalent to primary exit point. Only this level is shown because most adult education activities in South Africa are currently based on it.

Figure One: The NQF structure for one level only.

NQF level	Band	Types of Qualification and Certification		Locations of learning
1	General education and training band	Standard 7 (10 years)	Equivalent to ABET level 4	Formal schools in urban, rural, farm and special schools. Non-formal learning centres such as workplace, night schools, NGO's and others
		Standard 5 (8 years)	ABET Level 3	
		Standard 3 (6 years)	ABET Level 2	
		Standard 1 (4 years 1 year Reception	ABET level 1	

(Adapted from HRSC, 1995)

According to education policy certified adult education opportunities will be provided by a variety of centres on condition that permission has been granted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). One problem that this system poses is that many areas of South Africa are inaccessible and under-resourced.

There are no proper roads and ways of communication. If there is an organisation which wants to start an ABET programme it will have to wait for a long time to get permission. Some learners may become impatient for certification, others may not want or need certification, and the process of registering with SAQA could prove costly, and could be unsuccessful.

ABET should reach out to those people who thought they had already reached their destiny as far as education is concerned, and give them a chance to change their lives. It should liberate the minds of those who regard themselves as inferior, those who think they are incapable of learning. ABET is also a useful and relevant tool for those people who lost the opportunity to attend school.

Outcomes-based education in international contexts

It is worth noting the model which influenced the new South African approaches to education and training. Australia developed outcomes-based education to prepare its youth and adult population for the world of work, "... to improve the education and training levels of Australian youth and orient them more towards changing demands of workplace" (Christie, 1993: 1). The South African economy is based on both the formal and informal sectors. Small businesses are cropping up every day. There are no longer pavements to walk on in Johannesburg, because of the hawkers and other small businesses. So adopting an education system which was set to improve the "standard of living of Australians through performance in formal

employment" (Lyster, 1996) might not be right for South Africa.

Lyster shows that the Australian context from which the competency-based education model originated is different to the South Africa's context. There are slim chances that most of the adult population in this country will be employed in the formal sector, yet OBE was developed to satisfy the needs of the formal employment sector. Adult education in South Africa, says Lyster, aims at providing initial basic general education because the targeted learners are illiterate; they do not have the same needs and background as Australian, British and American youth who already have basic education. Outcomes based education, according to Lyster, is not relevant for adult education in this country because it serves a different population from where it was derived.

Although advocates of competency based education regard it as the best model to solve economic problems in many countries, it has been criticised as inefficient and irrelevant, rigid, and leading to deskilling (Marshall, 1994). This is because it concentrates on actual performance of the job, not on the mental skills needed to do the task. Barnett (1994) criticised the emphasis placed on demonstrable skills in outcomes-based education. Understanding is not easily observable in demonstrated skill. In his view the OBE assessment model does not respect the learners' ability to think because it regards them as operational beings.

However these criticisms should be seen against criticisms of traditional schooling in South Africa. Most learners finish schooling without a specific skill that they can

offer to their employers, their communities and their families. The former academic education system is general and does not make a person competent in terms of employable skills. Learners still need a lot of training after schooling.

Assessment and certification of learning

The assessment model that will be adopted for adult education activities in South Africa is outcome based. Peddie (1992 :24) defines competency or outcomes-based assessment as the one under which a particular standard which a candidate must reach to be judged competent and awarded a credit for unit of learning is predetermined.

Outcomes-based assessment has been adopted for adult learners because the previous assessment system had problems. Adults were writing the formal school examinations meant for children, and which was based "on content and retention skills not on the critical abilities and range required by the outcome based approach" (Department of Education 1997: 88). The department hopes that the outcomes-based education assessment model will help to produce quality learning. The IEB, which is the only nationally recognised examination body for adult education, has promised quality certificates.

There is a need for quality assurance because formal assessment and certification have impact on education provision, and if not done the right way, could lead to the 'Diploma Disease' (IEB: 8). This is a concept used by Ronald Dore to describe

the situation that is facing the schools today. People no longer consider schools as places to get knowledge to be used in future, but as places to get knowledge to be reproduced in examinations, to get certificates which are a passport to job acquisition (1976: 8). Certificates loses value as more and more students have them. This leads to educated unemployment. For example, there are many certified secondary school leavers who are unemployed in South Africa. A Standard 10 certificate does not have the same value as it used to have 10 years ago. The IEB would like to avoid a situation like this, therefore it aims to assure the quality of its certificates.

The information contained in a certificate can be diverse; it can acknowledge that a person attended a course, grade an achievement and or credit a task learnt. According to King and Van de Berg "certification rewards the attainment of a certain level of proficiency as assessed by an examination and provides passport a to future options" (1992:1). Assessment and certification of adult learning are necessary because they are a prerequisite for entry into occupational markets (Ryan, 1995) and other learning programmes. Certificates play an important role in every society because they help to identify people with certain skills from those who do not have them.

Assessment of skills and knowledge, and the award of certificates, give a person access to job opportunities, and further education (Tutchten, 1991). This is why it is necessary to know whether certificates as products of assessment are important to adult learners. Even though certificates have uses in the society there is a strong

rejection of certifying employer funded adult basic literacy training.

Ryan(1995) showed the reasons for this. He says wider educational training programmes are not liked because they allow transferability of employees' skills to other companies, and this increases labour costs to the former employer. This is one of the reasons for proposing the provision of ABET by the government and labour unions. One of the objectives of the IEB is that certificates should be portable across different employment contexts. A question which arises for ABET is, will employers invest in such programmes wholeheartedly if they are threatened with losing trained workers to other companies?

Employers do not have a problem of accepting certificates as means of advancing and employing workers. But a certificate is accepted on the following conditions:

* it is obtained by an employee on his own time and it is of value to the employer for career development internally and externally.

*assessment is done on the basis of ability to perform the job rather than on wider educational and occupational criteria favoured by government and unions.

This shows that employers are more interested in the profits that they make, than in things that will make them lose those profits. It is likely that the government will get resistance from employers on this matter. So employers need to be educated on the importance of and benefits of educating low level workers. They need to realise that there are long term benefits attached to education and training of workers such as reduced accidents at the workplace and increased production capacity.

Many employers seem reluctant to invest in human resource development as realised by supporters of human capital theory. Although this seems to be the case, there are employers in South Africa who have started education and training programmes for their employees. Employers seem to have realised that an educated and trained workforce has the capacity to produce more. The study deals with those employers who have started education and training programmes for their employees.

CONCLUSION

This review suggests some reasons why adult learners enrol in literacy or adult classes and why ABET was started in South Africa. The review shows that although learning often depends on inward motivation, employers need to realise that after completion of the learning process adults need compensation for their efforts, that is, a person enrolled in a literacy class should be considered for promotion and further education. External rewards (certificates) play an important role in the lives of adults because they serve as proof for knowledge gained. It is necessary to have them. The NQF promises that certificates should have value, give learners access to further learning, be transferable to other contexts and secure employment. The researcher assumes that ABET certificates can give their holders opportunities similar to those provided by the formal education certificates.

If ABET certificates do not have the same status as the ones issued in formal schooling people could end up fighting, and leaving learning because of promises

unfulfilled. Donegal (1990) wrote a story of animals living in the forest. Some of these animals designed a curriculum that would meet their needs. But others could not fulfil the requirements for assessment because the criteria for passing were based on the ability to run fast, jump, and defend oneself from the enemy. Birds, insects, and crawling animals were unable to meet these set standards because of their physical features. So they decided to design a curricula that would be relevant to their needs. After designing it, they adopted it and graduated from their school. Problems arose when their certificates had to be recognised for leadership positions. The big animals (foxes) denied them a chance to be leaders because their certificates were perceived as inferior. The small animals tried to reason, but the fox jumped and ate the duck who was the spokesperson. This situation ended with community of animals going back into normal life where there was no leader and no school. This is a danger that should be avoided by the government and other bodies who propose certifying adult education in South Africa. Certificates from different learning sites should have the same status. Adult education should not be regarded as inferior, as education for blacks was in the former DET system.

In South Africa the labour market is segmented. There are still jobs, such as engineering,which are reserved for whites and for men. Women and blacks are still struggling to prove that they are capable of performing men's and whites' jobs. There are also jobs which require little or no education to perform and there may be resistance from employers to train such people or to recognise the education they have, and pay them on that basis. If all illiterate adults in the country can manage to attend classes and pass the general education level, they will expect to

perform better paying and more interesting jobs than those they previously held. This will be difficult as the economy is not growing as expected, and few such jobs will be created.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The questions to be answered in the research are as follows:

1. What are adult learners' perceptions of the personal benefits of holding an ABET certificate?

2. Are ABET certificates recognised by employers for the employment and advancement of adults?

3. Are ABET certificates portable across different employment contexts?

A qualitative approach will be used in this study. This research approach has been chosen because it is in line with the researcher's philosophical beliefs, especially her beliefs about how researchers should relate to research subjects. These have been influenced by adult education principles which state that research should empower learners to take control of their learning and change their environment. Human beings need to be treated with respect as they are responsible people who can take control and guide their education. As Knowles (1984) showed, adult learners are often self-directed learners who have experiences that need to be respected and taken into consideration in learning. So it would be difficult and foolish to ignore learners' views when conducting research. In line with adult education principles, it is also important to share and discuss research findings with the research participants.

A researchers' philosophical framework can be influenced by education models such as, progressivism, humanism and radicalism. But the researcher's teaching relies heavily on the radical model because she believes that adults need to be empowered and enlightened through education. It is the people themselves who create meaning out of their situation, history and culture. Through knowledge a person can understand himself better and the situation he is in and therefore solve problems.

The researcher's philosophical position has been influenced by Freire's work. Freire (1984) regards the purpose of education as liberating the oppressed. This can be achieved only if education revokes its authoritarian nature, and engages learners in dialogue among one another and their teachers. By so doing the 'banking concept' of education will fall away. This 'banking concept' does not allow dialogue in a learning situation. The teacher (or in this case the researcher) is the one with the relevant knowledge to impart. But dialogue is important because it helps people to talk about their situation and problems, and devise ways of solving them. Freire shows that the banking concept of education requires learners to memorise and repeat what the teacher has said. Information gathered in this way tends to be lost quickly. 'Banking' education creates learners who do not question their way of life. As in one famous adult educationist says, "I see, I forget; I hear, I remember, I do, I understand" (Rogers, 1989).

Research approach

The research paradigm that goes hand in hand with the researcher's beliefs is the post-positivist paradigm. A post-positivist approach rejects the use of natural scientific methods in conducting research. A post-positivist approach the approach that will guide the study. Before going on to a description of qualitative research it is necessary to outline how positivists view research and how it should be conducted.

Positivists argue that natural scientific and quantitative methods are applicable to the social sciences. They often view society "... as a body of neutral facts governed by immutable laws" (Kincheloe, 1991:48). So any event can be controlled by laws like a physical matter. The laws or explanations are derived from observations and predictions. Usher and Bryant (1989) indicate that scientific methods are concerned with objective knowledge from collected facts which mirror the reality of the world. To natural scientists the world can be predicted, because it can be controlled.

According to Kincheloe (1991: 49) a positivist approach has four themes. They are as follows: firstly, human knowledge should be sought through science . Secondly, the search for knowledge should be concerned with explaining and predicting observable events. Thirdly, arguments in social sciences should be settled in an objective way as in the natural sciences. Lastly, scientific investigation purports to be value-free because judgements made from investigations which explore people's

ideas, perceptions, attitudes, are 'discomforting' and discarded if they cannot be easily translated into false or true statements. These methods may be applicable to experiments involving inanimate objects whose behaviour can be asily manipulated. All these themes go against the way social scientists view people and how research should be conducted. A researcher cannot regard humans in the same way as she regards objects if she has research ethics, and especially if she believes it is important to respect adults and their life experience.

If the scientific approach can be adopted in teaching, the students will just store information from the teacher without questioning it. So reality is taken as if it is "motionless, tactic, compartmentalised and predictable". If this approach is used in education it will also influence the way research is undertaken. For example, scientific approaches are often used to gather information in research. In a scientific study people's perceptions and opinions are often ignored. This is not the best method for this research because this study aims at finding out opinions of people regarding ABET.

Educational experience, which is what the researcher is researching, involves society and the events taking place in that society. So it would be senseless to adopt a method of inquiry which rejects participants' views, beliefs, and perceptions when searching for social knowledge. One cannot know about how people do things or act in their lives without asl ' . aem. They cannot be observed as if they are immutable objects. A post-positivist approach is regarded by many social scientists as more relevant to social issues than positivist research.

Merriam and Cunningham (1989) believe that knowledge is a creation of the human mind, so it is social and its meaning should be interpreted within specific social settings and traditions. The issue of specific social settings shows that knowledge or findings cannot often be generalised because they refer to specific people at specific times. According to them, knowledge changes continuously and influences people's perspective.

So there is no objective truth where people are involved. Usher and Bryant (1989) also reject the use of generalised law-like statements to describe the peoples' social world. They support the view that an interpretive, not a scientific approach to educational research is relevant; they substantiate their argument by using Kuhn's paradigm shifts in scientific knowledge and Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics.

Kuhn's theory of knowledge is based on paradigm shifts. He shows that scientific knowledge passes through the following stages: pre-science; normal science; crisis; and revolution. The pre-science period is characterised by instability and discoveries to find the theory that can guide scientists' activities. At this stage any theory that comes up is put through vigorous tests, refuted or accepted. If it withstands refutation and proves to be correct/true it will be adopted. Then follows normal science; at this time the scientific community is at `rest' because there is something that guides their ways. `Anomalies' might arise during this period (normal science) that need to be solved by the existing theory. If it fails to solve them the research community starts to question the credibility of the theory. Its proponents protect it and try to improve it. Other hand, other scientists try to

find/discover another theory which can resolve the anomalies. The new theory will also go through a testing and refutation process. This is the crisis stage. If the old cannot be improved, and the new stands the test, it will be adapted. This is then called the revolutionary stage. This would result in a paradigm shift whereby the new theory will be regarded as a guide to the scientific community.

This paradigm theory illustrates how important people's beliefs and values are in research. Even during the pre-science stage, the researcher believes that some values are attached to the search for a theory, because people's historical backgrounds influence the way they perceive things. It is through social practice that a society understands, communicates with itself and acts. This process involves Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics. It is " a study of texts in order to interpret their underlying and often obscure meaning" (Usher and Bryant, 1989: 29). Texts are analysed to understand the actions of people. When engaging in research the purpose becomes one of elucidating information from human actions.

Therefore one cannot engage in an education investigation without trying to understand and interpret the way people do things. People's prejudices and traditions are embedded in their way of life. These need to be exposed and recognised in research, otherwise they can be misleading and destructive.

When dealing with certification of ABET it would be difficult to discard the learner's views on certification. Learners cannot be treated as objects because their actions depend on their subjective experiences. Certificates cannot be counted as if

they are separate from the people who hold them and use them.

Making conclusions on the relationship between certification and work opportunities based on the number of people who have certificates and those employed through them, without engaging in dialogue with people, will result in a cause-effect understanding of this dynamic process, and will not uncover the issues underlying certification

Methods of data collection

The survey method was used to gather information for this study. It is a method which involves gathering data with the purpose of describing the nature of existing conditions, and determining the relationship that exists between specific events (Cohen and Manion 1994). This method represents a broad category of techniques which use questioning as a strategy to elicit information from participants (Merriam and Simpson, 1984: 127). Qualitative survey method was chosen because the research involves finding out what is in people's minds, and their feelings and expectations of ABET certificates. This was a small scale survey involving few people from selected industries.

Data collection techniques

The techniques used to collect data were personal interviews and document analysis. The documents used were policy documents which showed the reasons for starting the programme in some companies. The researcher also read reports which showed how learners were progressing in their ABET courses. An interview involves face to face interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. There are different types of interviews. There are structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews involve going to the interview situation with prepared questions. The interviewer adheres strictly to the questions and their order. This is problematic because at times the context might require changes to the structure of questions but the interviewer cannot make these changes.

There are situations in which the interviewer goes to the interview without particular questions. She just introduces the topic to the respondent and the latter takes the leading role. This is called an unstructured interview, and it is beneficial because the respondents will be free to discuss their knowledge and views of a topic without interruption. A danger is that at the end of the session the interviewer may come out with irrelevant information. A third type of interview, the semi-structured interview, was used in this study and will be discussed later.

Although interviews might appear easy to conduct they have some limitations which might affect the reliability of data. These are as follows:

*In an interview situation there is face to face interaction between the interviewer and the respondents and the interviewer might end up showing pity for the respondent and no longer asking the necessary question. Or the interviewer may get side tracked from the interview topic.

*The relationship between the researcher and the participant can be destroyed by a lack of confidence in the answers provided.

*Interviews are expensive to conduct especially if the researcher has to travel a long distance to reach the interview place (Neuman, 1997).

*It is time consuming for both parties.

The other technique that could have been used was a questionnaire. This involves collecting data from individuals at a distance from the researcher. The questions may be posted to the respondents, and answered by them on their own. A questionnaire is cheap to conduct but has limitations in terms of response rate. Questionnaires were not used in this study because their reliability and validity depends on the respondents' ability to read and write effectively. The group involved in this research were Level 3 learners who were not yet proficient in writing and speaking English. Asking thought- provoking questions could become a problem in questionnaires, as most people dodge answering them. The researcher would not have a chance to explain unclear questions.

The above limitations of questionnaires showed that an interview was the best method to collect data for this study. Because some of the Level 3 learners were not proficient in English, at times the researcher switched to the language that the respondent understood best. This gave the researcher an advantage of explaining questions, probing and engaging in detailed conversation with respondents.

Sample Selection

The study was conducted during March and April 1997 at industries based in Gauteng Province. These were industries offering ABET classes for their under-qualified adult workers, and to locate them the researcher obtained a list of ABET providers from the IEB. A short list of companies was drawn up and these companies were phoned. Two mining sites, two manufacturing sites and a service industry site allowed the researcher to conduct interviews. Human resource managers at different companies were phoned. Some of them asked for a written request and the researcher faxed it. The names of the companies will not be mentioned for confidentiality reasons. They will be referred to as Mining A, Mining B, Service, Manufacture A and Manufacture B.

These companies were chosen because they are major contributors to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and are targets of the human development strategy the government is embarking upon. Also, they allowed me to interview their learners.

Description of sites

A brief overview of the sites will be given below to give a picture of the type of companies involved in the research. Three companies are situated in the East Rand, one in Johannesburg and one in Pretoria. Two of the East Rand companies mine gold and platinum. The other manufactures ceilings and office partitioning equipment. The service company in Johannesburg provides transport services to both employed and unemployed people in the Gauteng area. In Pretoria the researcher interviewed learners who work for a company that manufactures cars. A large percentage of workers in all these companies is undereducated and black. They are concentrated in the productive sectors. Four companies operate on a large scale, whereas the last one is a small-scale company. The workers in all five companies are members of prominent unions in South Africa. These unions advocate the provision of ABET.

The sample under study was purposive in terms of the kind of participants interviewed. The researcher relied on the manager's choice of participants because they knew their learners. Data were collected from two groups of participants. five training managers and nineteen adult learners/workers. The numbers from each company are indicated in the table on the next page.

Table 1: The research sample according to company

Type/name of company	Learners with Level 3 certificates	Learners without Level 3 certificate	Managers (human resources and training)
Service	3	2	1
Manufacture A	0	3	1
Manufacture B	0	1	1
Mining A	5	0	1
Mining B	5	0	1
Total	13	6	5

Altogether thirteen learners had Level 3 certificates at the time of interviewing, while the remaining six were in the process of getting ABET certificates. Five female learners were interviewed. The learners' ages range from young to middle-aged and older adults. The views of people of different age groups made the study more representative. The interviews took place at work during working and learning time.

The interviews

As mentioned above, semi-structured interviews were used to access information from the informants. This involved bringing pre-prepared questions to guide the interview. This was done to avoid a situation where the subject matter was lost.

Although a guide was used there were times when the researcher just introduced the theme and the respondents took the lead. Here, probes were used timeously. The face-to-face nature of interviewing was helpful, as the researcher managed to built rapport and trust with the respondents. Two interviews were conducted in Sesotho.

Interviews were conducted in a separate room. Questions were asked in a relaxed atmosphere to allow free conversation and to avoid yes and no answers. Conversations were tape recorded and later transcribed. To validate the information gathered from learners, documents in the form of newsletters and policy guidelines on how and why classes were started were collected and read. Human resource development practitioners (they will be referred to as managers in the report) in the company were also interviewed.

The reason for using different sources is that a single source of information cannot be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective. At times a person can say something which others do not agree with. For this research it was important to have the opinions of different types of participants. Gathering data through interviews might lead to incorrect interpretation because of personal bias, anger, anxiety, and recall error (Patton, 1990: 245). That is why documents such as company newsletters were consulted. Through them a researcher can get a 'behind the scene' look at the program, to offset the diversity of interview results.

Problems encountered

Two problems were encountered when collecting data. First, one training officer requested the presence of a facilitator during an interview with learners. It should be noted that he did not force the researcher and she did not mind at the beginning. But at the end, this interfered with the way questions were asked. After the first interview the facilitator went out and came back with the training officer who asked the researcher to change the phrasing of some questions, and not to talk of some issues during the interview. For example one learner mentioned that Level Four classes might not be started and the researcher said, "I do not find anything wrong if they are still going to continue with their studies". This became a threat to the facilitator. She thought the researcher was influencing the learners to accept what they were fighting against. It seemed the company wanted learners to undergo technical training rather than continue with ABET classes. Second, in one company the training officer with whom the researcher arranged a meeting was attending a workshop in the next block. The researcher asked a co-ordinator of the programme where she could find the man. She said she did not know him and referred the researcher to a facilitator who tried to give the necessary information but could not answer some questions. He then referred me back to the co-ordinator who in turn fetched the relevant person. The training officer also referred the researcher to the co-ordinator with whom the researcher was uncomfortable because she could not help the researcher from the beginning. These problems did not affect the data collected because the researcher managed to overcome them, but they show some of the difficulties of fieldwork in company ABET

programmes.

Data analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse general opinions regarding ABET certificates. Content analysis is a "process of identifying, coding, and categorising the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990: 381). This was done by creating themes of recurring issues and by summarising the main ideas in table form. The tables are explained in detail in chapter four and substantiated by the inclusion of important quotes.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the approach used to collect data from the participants; the pros and cons of using interviews to collect information; the people involved in the research and the problems encountered. The interview method proved to be the best method of collecting data information from the research participants for this study. Although problems were encountered during interviewing they did not affect the reliability of the information collected. The next chapter deals with the findings and interpretation of results.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the information collected from ABET learners/workers and training managers. Additional information comes from company policy documents and newsletters. This information has been categorised into themes and then explained. The data is tabulated and the number of people sharing the same view has been presented. However in presenting this information the emphasis is on what the participants said and not on how many said it, because the study is qualitative in nature. The results will be presented in two categories; learners' views of ABET certificates, and managers' views of ABET certificates.

Learners' Views concerning ABET certificates

The learners' views are divided into five themes. They are as follows: expectations concerning ABET; importance of examination and certification; achieved desires and changed behaviour; failed expectations; and social and personal effects. Before turning to these themes a table presenting an overview of learners' views is presented on the next page.

Table 2: Learners' views concerning ABET certificates

Expectations	get better paying jobs	17
	improve communication skills	12
	help children with school work	3
	learn mathematics and science	6
	learn to use computers	5
	continue studies and improve education	13
Importance of examinations and certification	proof of knowledge gained	12
	entry to other types of work and training	5
	symbolises achievement	1
	motivating factor for others, especially children	6
	sharing achievement with others	6
	open ways for other levels	5
	knowledge tester	8
Achieved desires and changed behaviour	English has improved	16
	confident to apply for new jobs	3
	acquisition of better paying jobs	1
	sense of belonging	3
	speaking English freely with supervisor	5
	filling in bank forms	2
Failed expectations	no job change	5
	not heard of actual portability of ABET certificates	1
Social and personal effects	family happy	8
	colleagues happy	5
	supervisor happy and approves attendance	8
	learner encouraged to study	7
	peers encouraged to study	6
Other issues	supervisor not co-operative	1
	concern about level 4 not starting	6
	supervisor/ management does not show interest in progress	2

Description of Results

Expectations

The kind of job that workers do, their experiences and social background influence the way they perceive education and specifically their expectations about ABET. None of the interviewed learners was able to finish a senior certificate in formal schooling mainly because of financial problems. This was a result of poverty in their families. One learner stated: "I grew up in an orphanage, the way they treated us there was not good. It was the same way you black people were treated during apartheid. They took me out of school when I was doing Standard 6 and made me work for 2 pounds a week". Another learner continued, "I passed my Standard 8 in 1978, and in the following year I left school because my parents did not have enough money for me to continue with my studies". In order to get what they lost at a young age, they joined an ABET programme when it was offered by their employer.

Although the overall aim of these learners was to upgrade their education, ABET was perceived to be needed to get better paying jobs and to be fluent in English. English was needed to ease communication between themselves and management and also to be able to help children with school work. Lineo, a female learner, revealed the misery she goes through when she cannot help her children with school work. She said, "it is very hurting to see one's children going to another parent to be helped with school work. I want to learn so that I can help them". The happiness of families seems to be important to learners. That is why Tom said, "my

son is great, he always asks things I cannot answer, so I joined ABET to please my family".

Importance of examinations and certification.

Every learning process has a result. That was why all Level 3 certificate holders regard certificates and examination as necessary. Examinations were regarded as a test of what a person knows. Through them a learner will find out if s/he has learnt anything or not. And it then becomes proof of knowledge gained. David, a Level 3 certificate holder said, "if you take a person to a driving school to learn how to drive, you must teach and then give him a test to find out if he has learnt anything or not. If he passes you must give him something which proves that he can drive".

Access to other types of job was also stated as a use of an ABET certificate. Lindi, a female learner, stated that she does not want to stay in one job(she is a cleaning supervisor), she wants to end up doing administration. When asked if certificates get them better paying jobs in their companies, most learners stated that if the certificates they have cannot do anything for them in their companies they will "sell" their services to other companies.

Parents have a significant influence on the development of their children. The latter usually copy the parents' behaviour. That was why some of the learners regarded their ABET certificates as a motivating factor for children to attend school. Besides motivating their children, learners said they were proud to have passed. To show his pride in his success a male learner stated "I will hang my certificate on the

wall so that my friends can see what I have achieved".

Achieved desires and changed behaviours

ABET programmes succeeded in meeting learners' needs for improved communication skills. By being able to speak English they became free to talk to their supervisors and did not have to rely on them to read instructions on the machines. Their egos were boosted. As one learner, Tom, said "I am somebody I know I was not before". Through ABET workers no longer rely on strangers to fill in bank forms for them. An elderly learner showed that her money was no longer stolen at the banks as she could now fill in bank forms. Besides eased communications at work and filling bank forms, migrant workers benefited from attending ABET classes. A migrant from Mozambique could not communicate with local people, especially white businessmen. He said, "I could see the prices but I could not ask the seller to explain to me how to use the item and I could not read instructions myself". This shows that learners can apply the knowledge they have gained from ABET classes to other contexts. And in a way it has boosted their ego and self-confidence. It has fulfilled the need for self actualisation.

Failed Expectations.

Among all learners interviewed only one managed to get a better paying job. This made some learners lose trust in management and lack confidence in ABET programmes. This was most pronounced in the case of workers in Mine B, and was influenced by changes taking place in the company. The mine was under new management, and was revisiting the company training policy. Workers complained

because they were not updated on what management was doing. In other industries those learners whose jobs had not changed were not worried about that; they wanted to concentrate on their studies first, and the possibility of continuing to Levels Four and Five.

Social and personal effects

The support of family members, employers and peers gives many learners the strength to continue with their studies. Some learners stated that these people were pleased when they learnt that learners had passed their exams. But with other learners, there are poor relations and communications between themselves and their immediate supervisor. This made learners reluctant to tell supervisors when they had passed their examinations. France, a learner, even mentioned that he could not tell his supervisor that he had passed because his supervisor might stop him from continuing with his studies.

Other issues

There were issues raised by learners in different industries. These were either concerns about their progress in ABET or complaints. In mine A, management wanted learners who had completed Level 3 to join a technical college in Springs to do N1. Learners were complaining about this. They wanted to continue to Level 4 so that they could do science and 'advanced' mathematics. Their problems with the technical college proposal were as follows: first, for learners to pass at the college they needed science or Standard 10; second, the college was too far from work and the company did not always keep its promise of allocating work time for

learning. In this company workers contribute half of their learning time and the company the other half. One learner stated that at times supervisors did not release them to attend classes because of operational requirements.

Some supervisors' lack of co-operation causes tension between themselves and learners. At times this makes learning stressful to learners. They feel that they need support from their immediate supervisor and management because they feel that the company will benefit from their acquired skills. A male learner said, "I would like my supervisor to ask about my progress because one day the company will gain from my efforts". To show how this was important to him, he mentioned that at one stage the training manager called him and told him that he was impressed by his attendance and showed him the computer attendance records. This recognition of his efforts made a positive impact on the learner. This indicates that it is not only how classes are run that might affect learners' interest to learn but the company itself. For a learning culture to be sustained in companies all the stakeholders should show concern for learners' progress.

Managers' views concerning ABET certificates.

Managers' views will give an indication of whether ABET certificates have a future for their holders, as promised by the IEB and unions. Managers' opinions have been categorised into seven themes shown in the following table.

Table 3: Managers' views on ABET certification

Theme	managers' responses	no. of responses
Intended recipients	general workers: semi-skilled, unskilled and illiterate workers.	6
ABET aims and worker development	educate disadvantaged workers	1
	equip workers with reading, numeracy, writing and communication skills to:	
	(i) make communication between supervisor and workers easier	3
	(ii) help children with school work.	2
	(iii) Prepare workers for further learning	4
Benefits to the company	enhance workers' productivity	2
	develop work ethic	1
	increase independence	3
	do better quality work	2
	utilise workers effectively	1
Workers' rewards for learning	although there is no automatic pay increase employers offer:	
	(i) free classes during working hours	7
	(ii) full salary during attendance	7
	better positions when certificates are obtained	3
	preferential treatment in terms of promotion	2
Policy for learner development	too early to draw a policy	1
	no policy	3
	multi-skilling	2
Certificates valued in relation to work	certificates linked to career guidance	2
	provides access to company training	1
	related to job acquisition	4
	level 3 certificate cannot get its holder a better job	2
	nationally recognised	6
	lifetime asset	1
	awakens the spirit of learning	1
Success and failures of ABET	attracted more learners	2
	better positions acquired by learners	2
	enrol learners for level 4 exams	2
	first preference if posts are available	3
	lot of workers completed level 3	1
	older workers reluctant to attend	2
	improved work relations	2
	failures were not mentioned	–
Workers' reaction	excited to attend due to benefits	5
	impatient as all cannot attend	1
	those aged 40-50 are reluctant to attend	1

The table is followed by a brief explanation of what the managers said.

Intended recipients.

Most managers agreed that ABET is education for adults who did not get an opportunity to learn when they were still young. One of the aims of ABET was outlined in the company newsletter as providing workers who had little or no formal education with skills which would enable them to develop their full potential and engage in the process of further learning. This was also a common response from ABET practitioners. The targeted learners for ABET in their respective industries were all general workers who are unskilled or semi-skilled. These workers occupy low paid jobs, defined as "unskilled" by their employers.

Benefits to companies

Through ABET, employers hope workers will become more productive.

Managers believe that workers' lack of basic education is an obstacle to their productive capacity. They believe, for example, that uneducated workers cannot make a full contribution to the innovations needed to improve safety measures and production methods in the company. Through ABET, managers hope to achieve better quality work, decrease dependency of workers on their supervisor to perform their duties, and reduce losses caused by wastage and stealing. One manager stated that some workers have a tendency to idle when the supervisor is not around. He claims that this problem can be reduced through educating workers on work ethics. Work performance seems to be the underlying factor for employers to start ABET programmes for their workers. A manager from a manufacturing

industry said "no matter what you do, the better educated you are, the better you can do your job. Whether you are sweeping the floor or whether you are a clerk". So greater efficiency on the job seems to be expected from workers attending ABET programmes.

ABET aims and workers' development

The above paragraph shows that managers believe that skilled workers help the company to progress. The skills that managers think will help in this are reading, writing and communication skills. They said that if workers were literate the rate of accidents that occur in the production sites would be reduced. In addition, workers who manage to do Levels 4 and 5 have a chance of enrolling with institutions of further learning. This was not mentioned by all managers. Indeed, one said that ABET learners could not be taken to higher education because they were already too old; young adults would have a better chance. In the service industry the manager said that learners who wanted to follow a technical career would have a chance of attending the company's college.

Workers' rewards for learning

Incentives play an important role in encouraging workers to participate in educational programmes provided by the company. These could be in the form of a salary increase, promotion, or free training during working hours. The latter form of incentive seems to be the one most often provided by the companies in this study. However this might change in some companies as Tom (from manufacturing A) indicated. In his company, if more workers show interest in ABET they might

be asked to sacrifice lunch or come on the weekends, rather than receive training during working hours.

Policy for learner development

Learning is a continuous process which does not end at a certain stage in life. Responses received in connection with questions regarding a policy of lifelong learning and career progression indicated that it was too early to draw up company policy. Some managers said ABET was a potential assessment tool for career guidance for learners, but there was no policy on this. In Mine B, the training manager mentioned that there was no general policy because each department had specific requirements for its workers.

The value of certificates in relation to work

Managers attach a specific meaning to ABET certificates. According to managers certificates give learners access to company training where they can be trained to do specific tasks. Although it was mentioned that a better job was not automatic, three managers took ABET certificates to be a means of acquiring jobs for their holders. According to them, learners who got reading and writing skills from ABET could apply for different positions in the company and succeed. But the other two managers did not think Level 3 certificate holders could look for jobs on the basis of their certificates.

Successes and failures of ABET

The training managers felt that workers were keen to attend ABET classes. Even in those centres where there were few learners the problem was not with the ABET programme itself but with the company. For example, one would find that many learners could not be released because of production demands. All managers felt that learners (except for older ones) were keen to attend because of the benefits attached to ABET. These included free classes, being paid while learning, opening of Level 4 classes, and preferential treatment given to adult learners when posts were advertised.

Reaction of Workers

Managers believed that the benefits attached to ABET attracted workers to classes. When ABET was introduced in the companies there were different responses from the workers. Some were keen to attend while others were reluctant. One manager, Lipuo, relates "there was an old man who said he could join classes only if he got a pay increase and I told him that this is not the benefit of the company but yours". According to Lipuo rewards such as pay increases and promotions should not be promised to learners, because learners are the ones who benefit from ABET programmes. She indicated that the company was doing a favour to learners; it was not going to benefit from ABET programmes.

A comparison of learners' and managers' views

In this section the views of managers and learners on ABET certificates will be compared to draw out issues they agree on and that are of important to them. It is hoped that these will make explicit whether ABET as outlined in the policies of the NQF has a future in the country or not.

The main reasons why employers started ABET classes was a desire to provide disadvantaged, unskilled workers with reading and writing skills to make them more competent at work. Both workers and managers agreed that lack of these skills was creating both social and work problems for the workers. Some learners indicated that after doing Level 3 they communicated better and more freely with their supervisors. This was difficult before ABET. Though this was an acquired skill, it was not indicated by learners as a reason for enrolling in ABET classes. Most workers wanted better paying jobs and to get knowledge that would enable them to help their children with school work. This reason was more often articulated by women than by men. Not suprisingly, learners were more interested in their own development than in the company's development. This does not mean that workers were totally unconcerned with the company's progress; some stated that they could now perform their jobs better. Managers, on the other hand, hoped to benefit from ABET classes through better quality work, increased independence and better work relations.

The certificates hold some importance to learners. Both managers and learners regard them as markers on a path to further training. Managers felt that Level 3 certificate holders could easily access more company training. This happened in two companies, where workers were sent to technical colleges for work related training. This was difficult before the introduction of ABET programmes as workers did not have the reading and writing skills which were needed as a basis for further training. Managers stated that learners would have a chance of better paying jobs within the company if such jobs were available and workers qualified for them. This was a common feeling in those industries where workers were promoted on the basis of skills acquired from ABET. On the other hand a manager from Manufacturing A noted that a Level 3 certificate holder could not get a job on the basis of that certificate alone.

The motivating element of certificates on workers' children was not recognised by managers. Managers related certificates to children's welfare in terms of empowering parents to help children with school work. But the parents felt that their acquisition of ABET certificates could motivate their children to learn.

Both learners and managers thought certificates could be accepted by employers in other companies. Managers stated that the certificates that learners got come from a nationally recognised body. Learners said that if they did not get promotions on the basis of their certificates, they would go to other companies. This shows the trust and value they have placed in their certificates.

Although certificates were linked to further training by managers there was no clear policy regarding the development of ABET learners. This does not correspond with learners' intentions, because learners were keen to continue with their studies. This could be one reason why workers in two of the companies under study made complaints in regard to how the ABET programme was run.

Learners appreciated the free training provided by the company. But they also expected long term rewards for their efforts. That is why those whose jobs did not change were discouraged and lacked trust in their management. Managers indicated that better paying jobs were not automatic, they should be applied for if available. Other managers stressed that free training is enough reward for learners.

Conclusion

In this chapter the results of managers' and learners' views on ABET certificates have been elaborated. Both expect and hope ABET to do something worthwhile for them. Basically their interests differ, and this is acceptable as they are two groups of people with different interests. Managers feel their companies will gain through learners' increased productive capacity. Workers on the other hand feel that ABET will give them knowledge which will make them more marketable, that is the certificates they get from ABET will help them get different, better paying jobs.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter considers the significance of learners' and managers' views in relation to ABET certification. The aim of the research was to find out the relationship between ABET certification and work opportunities. To achieve this aim four main questions were addressed to research participants. The results under each question will also be summarised. The questions were as follows:

First, what do adults' learners perceive as benefits to themselves, in holding an ABET certificate? Learners felt that an ABET certificate served as proof of the knowledge they acquired. This certificate could be shown to a prospective employer when looking for a job. The certificate benefited both the holder and his family.

Second, are ABET certificates recognised as a means of employing and advancing workers who occupied low paid jobs before having them? This question was addressed to managers in the companies. They indicated that an ABET certificate could be used to advance workers, but this was not guaranteed. In three of the five companies where the research was conducted, managers and learners indicated that only Level Four or Five certificate could be used to advance workers.

Third, why have adults engaged in learning programmes offered by their employers? Different reasons were indicated. In general learners wanted to change the situations they were in. They wanted literacy skills to make their lives better. Because they wanted to change their lives they were not forced to learn but enrolled in classes voluntarily.

Last, what do employers perceive as benefits of ABET certificates for their companies and for their employers? Managers felt that workers' performance would change after attending ABET classes. Workers and managers would have better work relations and workers would not rely so heavily on their supervisors. Reading, writing, numeracy and communication skills would enable adults to help their children with their school work and equip them with life skills

The discussion of these results which follows next will be based on four issues: reasons for engaging in ABET programmes; the role of rewards in motivation; and the perceived value of ABET certificates and examinations. After the discussion a conclusion and some recommendations will follow.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The reasons given by managers for starting ABET programmes were to empower workers with literacy skills so that they could participate in issues that affect their lives and to increase their productive capacity. A large number of workers stated that they expected their jobs to change after completing the ABET programme. These views coincide with Rogers' (1989) analysis that adult learners engage in

literacy classes to change the situations they are in. External rewards do not motivate them to learn, but they are influenced by the inner need to solve their problems whether internal or social. Besides this, actions and successes of educated people in their communities motivated learners to learn. Carnevale (1992) stated that educated people get more money than less educated ones, and their employment probabilities are high. Observing the behaviour of achievers inspired learners to learn. They stated "one cannot do anything these days without education".

Only two of the certified adult learners interviewed got a promotion or an offer of a new job after completing ABET Level 3. There are several possible reasons for this, such as a shortage of posts, the attitude of management, and the obstacles of the existing labour system. Christie, P (1991) stated that the South African labour market was characterised by the division of labour whereby a certain group of people perform certain jobs, that is blacks do mostly menial jobs while whites do skilled jobs. It would be very difficult to expect that within only a few years those people who performed low skilled jobs would be brought into higher skilled and better paying positions which they were denied before.

Although better jobs and access to further company training had not happened for some workers, ABET programmes managed to fulfil some of their desires. Learners' spoken English was improved, their confidence was built, and hope for a better future was created. These would at least make ABET programmes sustainable in future as more learners will be interested to attend. Workers need

literacy skills so that they can participate in issues that affect their lives. Their lives were affected by their inability to read and write or speak English, they were cheated at the banks, they were relying too much on supervisors and interpreters at work. But other skills which relate to workers' daily lives need to be included in ABET programmes as learners lives do not end in the workplace

Employers want to uplift workers' skills as well as the company's productivity. This coincides with Woods and Phillips'(1993) assertion that employers were concerned about increasing productivity, decreasing wastage and getting workers who can take responsibility for their work. French's (1986) research indicated that most managers started workplace literacy programmes to enhance workers self-esteem and enhance job satisfaction. Productivity increases were not regarded by many managers as the main reason for starting adult basic education programmes. This contrasts with Woods and Phillip's study in which employers wanted to develop workers' skills with the aim of getting a return on their efforts.

Although it has been mentioned by Rogers (1989) that elements like promotions do not motivate people to learn, workers in this study felt that their efforts need to be rewarded. Literacy skills were needed by workers to satisfy their inner self, and as a way of getting better paying jobs. Learners indicated that their efforts to learn would be wasted if they do not get a reward for them. On the other hand managers, had different views on rewards for learning. Three of them regarded free training as enough reward for learners. Promotions that learners got after doing ABET were not rewards because they had to apply for them. This showed that the

impressions of managers about rewards have been the same for many years. French's (1982) survey of illiteracy in South Africa revealed that more than 60% of employers regarded free training as enough reward for adult learners. This was the reward which managers stated most often and most clearly. Ryan's (1995) idea that employers should try to give learners rewards such as improved employment possibilities (which some managers in the study indicated), occupational status and pay increases seems not to have currency in South African industries yet.

There many meanings attached to ABET certificates. They play an important role to both the learners and managers. Through certificates, learners hope to obtain better jobs, promotion, and to provide incentives for their own children to learn. For managers, certificates help in selecting people appropriate for particular jobs and for further learning (Christie, 1991, Ryan 1995, and Tutchen 1991). If this happens ABET certificates would fulfil their holders' expectations. More than half of the managers perceived certificates as contributing to employability and emphasised that ABET certificates came from a nationally recognised examining body.

These ABET certificates were supposed to be portable across industries. That was one reason why the trade unions advocated workplace ABET programmes. But no manager could relate a situation whereby a Level 3 certificate holder was employed in her/his company on the basis of this certificate. In fact, one learner complained about this. Currently the value of ABET certificates in relation to work depends on the company's policy (whether this is written down or not) and differs from

company to company and department to department. There was no general consensus across sectors on how certificates could open up job opportunities. Some companies recognised Level 3 certificates for promotion (depending on the availability of jobs) and access to further training while others regarded it as a beginning stage that could not be recognised for anything much. For example one company did not even allow its learners to write the IEB Level 3 examinations. Workers were satisfied with this because they were going to write Level 4 examination. But this was disadvantageous to those workers who may not continue to Level 4 as they were given only a year to study. And there were some workers who went back to the production site after Level 3. These workers do not have certificates which are nationally recognised. Although job advancement was not promised by companies, managers understood that incentives for learning were necessary to keep learners in class. So they do provide some of the rewards defined in Ryans'(1995) and Mikuleckys'(1995) work. For example, workers received the full pay and bonuses while learning. It should be noted that in some companies workers were totally cut from the production line so that they could participate in ABET classes. This indicates the commitment of companies to education and training of their workers.

CONCLUSION

The study found that there was no direct relationship between ABET certification and work opportunities in five South African companies. None of the managers interviewed explicitly linked the two. This indicates an area around which the

unions should work, or else state clearly to their members that they should not expect a lot from ABET besides reading and writing skills. Opportunities for further education and training might be possible within the same company, as some managers indicated that after completion of the ABET programme learners would have an opportunity for further training leading to skilled jobs. Learners were also given preferential treatment when posts were available. While jobs may not be available within a company both learners and managers believe that ABET certificates are portable, because they are issued by a nationally recognized institution (the IEB).

Education seemed to lead to better work performance. Workers reportedly became more independent, they no longer relied on supervisors for direction and felt that they could perform better than before. Thus companies reaped some fruits from the effort they made by providing classes for low skilled workers.

Learners regard ABET certificates as a basis for promotion; managers think they are useful tools for screening learners. But in themselves Level 3 certificates do not have high status. Despite problems surrounding certification, some managers in South Africa have realised the contribution that workers (human capital) can make in their companies. They are providing education and training facilities to develop their employees. If this can be realised by other companies and be sustained, the South African labour force will be in a position to work with new technologies and be effective members of their communities. Companies should realise the importance of lifelong learning in the development of their workers. As few

companies indicated the possibility of these for adult learners, the government and unions have to work hard to convince employers of the need for lifelong learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are meant for companies and for policy makers. There is a need for more research on this issue to find out whether ABET is achieving its objectives, especially to what extent this new system of education meets the expectations of employers, workers and trade unions. The research discussed in this report can be used as a basis for gauging what learners and managers expect from ABET so that any future policies made regarding ABET can take that into account. There seem to be lot of meanings attached to ABET certificates by the examining body, the IEB, and these may need correction. ABET providers and examiners should look deeper into the issue of the portability of certificates. An ABET certificate's value is more than just a potential work opportunity, but could also be a way to bring back the culture of learning in our society. This perspective emerges from learners' statements about the value of their certificates, but is not explicit in the providers', the unions' or the examiners' statements. The union emphasises that the only purpose of certificates is to open up job opportunities for the learners. This perception is misleading. Even on the issue of an ABET certificate as an employment tool the providers need to state clearly what kind of job a certain certificate holder can do, and if possible how much he/she should earn pear year. This issue should be revisited to avoid the certificate escalation.

The employers should state explicitly at the beginning of the learning process what they can actually provide for learners in terms of future prospects after their certificates have been obtained. They also need to involve workers/ learners in designing programmes so that both work and social literacy needs can be met.

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