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THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNER PARTICIPATION AT THE JOHANNESBURG DEPARTMENT OF CITY POWER

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Johannesburg 2007

ABSTRACT

Globalisation and a continuous advancement in technology have necessitated a need for employees to be trained and re-trained. The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that influence learner participation in the Adult Basic Education and Training programmes offered at the Johannesburg Department of City Power (Reuven). These include factors such as motivation, retention and barriers experienced by adult learners that are pertinent to learner participation. Data for the study was collected from ABET level 3 and 4 learners by means of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The following emerged as pertinent factors influencing learner participation at City Power: a) personal development, b) language, c) support structures, d) the standby/shift system and e) remuneration.

DECLARATION

I, Brenda Theresa Andrews, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Brenda Theresa Andrews

Signed on _____ day of _____ 2007.

DEDICATION

To the Almighty for giving me
strength and inspiration.
My husband
Mark for your invaluable support
and daughters Chloe and Christen
with love and thanks
and in loving memory of my son
Cole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the following people:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
DOL	Department of Labour
EFA	Education For All
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Educational Fund
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

The aim of this report is to investigate learner participation in the ABET programme at the Johannesburg Department of City Power. Areas of focus will include motivation, retention and barriers experienced by adult learners.

1.1 Background to the Research

South Africa (SA) has an illiteracy rate of 14.3% which compared to America's 3%, is relatively high. This is incongruous with the fact that SA is a fast developing country. The ideal situation would be for such a country to have a high literacy rate in order to complement the growing economy. A third of the workforce of City Power has had either little or no education. This is mainly because of the past imbalances in education under apartheid SA. Apartheid policies limited access to education for previously disadvantaged groups. As a result, the following situation obtains at the moment of writing this research report:

- There are some 1.5 million adults who have had no education at all;
- 4,6 million adults aged 15 and older have had no schooling above grade 6. About 19,3% of the population aged 20 and above have never been to school;
- The percentage of unschooled population is much higher in the rural areas, at 52% than in urban areas, at 14%;

- § 95% of South Africans are poor, with 65% of the total population living below the poverty line; and
- § In addition, poverty is overwhelmingly racial: approximately 33% of Black Africans live below the poverty line, compared with 2, 5% of Asians and 0, 7% of whites.

(Literacy Exchange: World Resource on Literacy, 2005: 2)

Consequently, the new dispensation has had to address the effects of these imbalances both in the workplace and elsewhere. This is in line with the Bill of Rights and as enshrined in the country's constitution (1996) which states that**:**

> "All citizens have a right to basic education including adult basic education and further education, which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible".

For the ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) learners in SA, the accessing of education is especially pertinent, as they risk not only exclusion on all levels of development and progress, but are bound to add to the country's prevalent high rates of poverty, crime and unemployment.

Kraak and Perold (2003: 196) contend that:

> Historically South Africa has a highly stratified human resources base, an endemic shortage of skilled and especially highly skilled labour, and a large pool of unskilled, poorly educated and unemployed people.

In accordance with the constitution and a realisation of the pivotal role that education plays in the workplace, City Power has formulated its own educational policies to coincide with the national drive towards literacy. In filling this role, City Power has introduced Adult Basic Education and Training.

ABET aims to equip those City Power employees who have little or no education with basic literacy and numeracy skills. This is in a bid to empower this section of the workforce with skills that would enable them to perform what to the literate, are mundane tasks such as reading of notices, signing forms and accessing of electronic devices such as automated teller machines unassisted.

According to Courtney (1992: 3) "…we have been told by politicians and religious leaders that change is the order of the day and that further education is needed to cope with, understand and indeed embrace change". Heelan (as cited in Timarong et al., 2006: 2) reveals how the growing demand for global education and competence has made it more important for adult learners to be technologically literate in order for them to keep their jobs, seek promotion or change careers.

A close analysis showing the rate of literacy per province reveals the following scenario captured by the graph below:

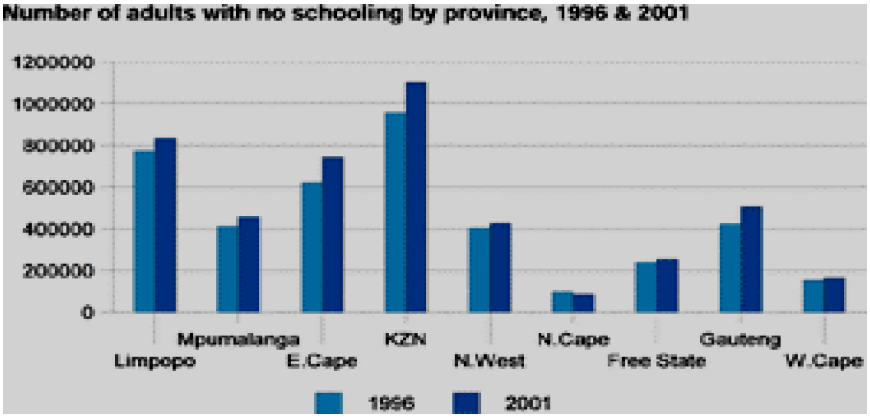


Figure 1: Number of adults with no schooling by province, 1996 & 2001 (Source: 2001 South African Census results)

The graph reveals that illiteracy rates in the northern and western Cape are relatively low compared to Gauteng and other provinces. Kwazulu Natal which is predominantly rural has the highest illiteracy rate. However, given that there is a general rural urban migration to Gauteng, there is still a need for educational programmes since this province needs literacy based skills which the migrant labourers lack.

According to the statistics gained in the 2001 Census results:

> The sex differentiation between functionally illiterate adult men and women is increasing: whereas in 1996 there were 831 992 more functionally illiterate adult women than men, by 2001 this had increased to over a million (1 073 104).

1.2 Context of the Study

City Power Johannesburg was established on the 1 November 2002. Before City Power became a parastatal, it was the municipality of Johannesburg (JHB). City Power employs approximately 2000 people. Its main function is the supply of electricity to the greater metropolitan area in JHB.

The company's commitment to fulfil its social responsibility is vested in two goals namely, "to meet our stakeholders' expectations", and "to provide access to electricity for everyone". According to the City Power Profile it therefore undertakes to:

- Deliver electricity in such a manner that customers use it safely
- Promote gender equity
- Establish and grow a black economic empowered supplier capability
- Increase its interaction with communities and customers
- Promote affirmative action
- Increase community education

As a municipality or the council as it was referred to before 1994, City Power mainly attracted migrant labourers. The nature of the work available for the migrant labourers was 'cleaning' and required limited skills. Before 1994, most of the workers employed by City Power were either illiterate or semi-literate and lacked basic skills. This lack of literacy would have serious implications for them when City Power became a private organisation, with a high level of technological changes. As an organisation whose main function was the provision of electricity, the workers were now required to have more technical knowledge and skills that were in line with the nature of the work.

Of the approximately 2000 workers, a quarter of the employees were general workers who were not skilled to deliver electricity but were employed to do cleaning. As with so many other organisations, City Power set out to develop their employees so that they could fulfil the criteria for possible new job functions. The new legislation on Labour which includes the “Skills Act” and the “ABET Act” meant that the organisation had to comply with the requirements as set out in these Acts. One of the main requirements is that they could not get rid of these employees and were forced to look at other alternatives for those lacking in basic education and skills.

According to the Department of Labour (1996: 22):

> Firms are required to become more proactive in consciously using skill creation as a vehicle for achieving competitive advantage. To achieve this there will need to be a paradigm shift in which the actual demand for skills within firms and industry changes.

In order for City Power to become internationally competitive, they had to strive to obtain skilled and competent workers. Therefore, when City Power became a parastatal, the organisation had inherited a pool of workers who were not remotely prepared for the new job functions of the company, thereby giving rise to an urgent need for ABET in the workplace in order to prevent job losses.

Because City Power has a payroll of more than a quarter million and have more than 150 employees, they had to have a Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) in place. As mentioned before, a quarter of the employees at City Power are illiterate to semi-literate. In 2002, an ABET Manager and four facilitators were appointed to take care of the employees for whom training was never

provided. This department has grown from 33 learners in 2002 to over 144 learners in 2005. ABET commenced with levels 1 and 2 in 2002. By 2003, a Pre-ABET class was introduced for those learners who were most illiterate. However, in 2005, the ABET class was suspended because of a lack of facilitators. Currently the centre caters for 144 learners. It has one ABET Manager and 5 facilitators. There are still 271 learners on a waiting list anxiously waiting their turn to access ABET.

1.3 The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research was to identify the factors that influence learner participation in the ABET programmes offered at City Power with special reference to:

- Learner motivation
- Retention of learners in ABET programmes
- Barriers/obstacles to learning

The study addresses the strategies employed by facilitators to retain learners in the ABET programmes, and the consequences on learner participation when the principles of adult learning such as continuous motivation, support, meaningful learning and relevance of learning activities amongst others, are not taken into account when planning and implementing ABET programmes.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Most studies conducted with regard to this topic focus on adult learning in general and not specifically on how ABET learners adjust to workplace learning and training within the South African workplace context. Examining the factors that influence workplace learning, learner participation and retention will help training facilitators gain insight into learning principles that underpin learning motivation and retention strategies.

In addition, findings from this study will be useful to facilitators involved in the planning and implementation of ABET learning programmes and in Skills Development. It is hoped that the research will encourage other organisations to initiate workplace learning and training programmes in order to better equip and develop their employees and to inspire aspirant ABET learners to join these developmental programmes.

1.5 Rationale

Research on factors that influence learner participation is especially important for ABET learners who require continuous training in order to keep abreast with developments in the workplace in South African organisations.

McMillan (1997) observes that adult learners, particularly in South Africa, have relatively poor experiences of formal education when crossing the border into higher education. Without a basic education, employees in South Africa today run the risk of stagnation in terms of personal and organisational development and ultimately of being unemployed. More importantly, because of a lack of education and suitable qualifications, these learners are more susceptible to factors such as retrenchment and receiving early retirement

and severance packages within organisations. Job losses impact negatively on personal, organisational and economic development.

With a global advancement in technology, there is an increase in the demand not only for manual but skilled labour. For employees today in the workplace, adequate and on-going training are required, in order to cope with the demands of their daily tasks. The implication of the afore-mentioned is a lack and loss of jobs, as employees who do not have a basic education, (i.e. basic literacy and numeracy skills), will not be in a position to receive training.

According to Delors (1998: 89):

> Purely physical tasks are being replaced by more intellectual, more mental work, such as controlling, maintaining and monitoring machines and by the work of design, study and organization as machines themselves become more 'intelligent' and the physical labour required for work diminishes.

As a developing country, South Africa has been especially affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This pandemic could be a hindering factor in terms of learning and participation in developmental programmes. According to Kraak and Perold (2003: 187), although the South African population constitutes only 0.7 percent of the global population, it has 12.5 percent of global HIV infections. The afore-mentioned can likely be linked to systemic barriers, where learner participation could be hampered by absenteeism. It has been said that "…the economic impact of the disease in organizations will be manifested in a loss of productivity as a result of employees absenting themselves from work for treatment and later dying" (Erasmus et al., 2003: 571).

The issue of equity in terms of gender will be addressed in view of our country's democracy. As our primary caregivers and nurturers, it is important for women today to be included in all developmental programmes. The empowerment of women through education has a definite impact on the development of the country's economy. Other issues to be explored are the physiological, psychological, social, cultural and systemic barriers that could influence learner participation in workplace learning programmes. For the ABET facilitator, a knowledge of these barriers and being equipped with skills to deal with them, are central to the learning experience. Quigley (as cited in Wonacott 2001:1) observes that "… dispositional factors such as expectations, self-esteem, level of family support, and past educational experience can be barriers to participation". The influence of organisational systems as they pertain to learning programmes within the workplace will also be explored. And finally, as a country with a diverse population, the influence of language and culture on learner participation particularly in SA, will be addressed.

1.6 Research Questions

The study addresses the following main research questions:

1. What are the factors that could promote or hinder motivation of learners in the ABET programmes?

2. How many learners start, drop-out and complete the ABET programmes?

3. What support structures and strategies exist within the organisation and at home, to assist learners to stay in the programmes?

3. What aspects of the ABET programme do learners enjoy?

4. What aspects of the programme do learners experience as a challenge?

5. What are the barriers/obstacles that prevent learner participation?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter areas relevant to factors influencing learner participation in ABET programmes will be discussed. De Wet et al., (1981: 40) contend that the aim of a literature review is to:

- Give all-round perspectives on the latest research findings on the topic.
- Indicate the best method, scale of measurements and statistics that can be used.
- Interpret the research findings in a better way.
- Determine the relevance of the prospective research.

The legacy of Apartheid in SA meant that the newly elected democratic government was faced with the huge task of addressing and redressing the problem of equity for all in 1994.

One of the ways in which the first democratically elected government decided to address past imbalances was to introduce legislation which would assist employers in organisations to develop illiterate or semi-literate employees. Thus, as a means of improving knowledge and skills as well as tackling unemployment, the government implemented the South African Qualifications

Authority Act, the Skills Development Act, the Skills Development Levies Act and the Employment Equity Act. The implementation of these Acts, afforded aspirant ABET learners the opportunity to advance their knowledge, thereby placing them in a more favourable position with regard to advancement in skills.

Godsell (1992: 137) argues that "for sustainable economic growth…we need literate, numerate, problem-solving workers who can add value to the production of goods and services at every possible point". In order to improve learner participation in developmental programmes, learning opportunities must be created by making education accessible to all. The introduction of ABET in the workplace is the first step to personal, educational and skills development. Aitchison et al., (1996: 49) contend that "promotion at work often depends on an individual's ability to read and write English in order to read job cards, write reports, follow written directions and instructions." Thaung and Lynd (2005: 3) concur with the former by recognising that adult learning would be a key issue in the twenty-first century and stress its importance for sustainable development, promoting democracy, justice, gender equity and other aspects of development, and ultimately for building a better, more peaceful society.

2.2 ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.2.1 Definition

Aitchison (1998: 2) defines adult basic education as “education provision for people aged 15 and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and who have an education level of less than grade 9”.
For adult learners in South Africa, adult basic education is aimed at learners who have dropped out of school before acquiring adequate literacy and numeracy skills and for those learners who have never attended school nor received formal educational training.

2.2.2 ABET in the South African Context

ABET, “subsumes both literacy and post literacy as it seeks to connect literacy with basic education on the one hand and with training for income generation on the other hand” (ABET Policy Document, 1995: 5). The ABET policy document of 1995 also aims to attain a single co-ordinated education system to address the pre 1994 inequalities in education..

There have been numerous challenges alongside the successful implementation of literacy programmes in SA. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) established by the government after 1994, was a social programme aimed at improving people’s basic living conditions. The RDP became the vehicle that government used to dismantle a number of past inequalities. Not only was South Africa experiencing immense political changes, but the country was faced with huge gaps in terms of knowledge and skills. ABET formed a pertinent part of this development programme.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was a policy aimed at ensuring that education and training was taking place at all levels of development. ABET formed the basis of this NQF framework. Compliance with the ABET Act 5 of (2000) as well as the Education For All (EFA), an International Act to which SA is a signatory, necessitated the establishment of ABET programmes at most major organisations. In addition, there is a clause in ABET Act 5 which stipulates that everybody must have achieved the NQF level 4 by 2005.

2.2.3 ABET – an urgent need

There is an ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor in this country. In addition, a large percentage of adults in South Africa today are not able to fully enjoy what the country's democracy offers because they lack basic literacy skills. Access to education through ABET is one of the ways in which the gap between the rich and poor can be bridged. Prior to 1994, the educational system in South Africa was characterised by:

- Racially segregated teaching and learning at every level from preschool to higher education.
- A system that was fragmented into 19 different departments of education serving not only the four population categories i.e. African Blacks, Whites, Indian and Coloured, but also divided along provincial lines and according to racially designated "Bantustans" or "Homelands".

(Bialobrzeska and Glennie, 2006: 2)

In these fragmented educational departments, there were disparities in the levels of education received. The implication of the latter meant that many people in the workplace after 1994 would need to be trained and re-trained.
An urgent need for adult education was recognized at the 'World Forum on Education for All' in Dakar in 2000. At this forum, the following were cited as some of the most important reasons why each and every citizen should receive an education:

- ABET enables learners to be more supportive of their children's education
- When adults are involved with the development of their own education through ABET in local schools, they are more inclined to participate and involve themselves in these schools
- Through ABET learners are in a better position to address issues such as poverty and social injustices
- ABET also has a pertinent role to play in addressing and alleviating gender inequity

In addition, a review research by Oxenham et al., (2002) on ABET and improved livelihoods found that ABET learners generally perceive Literacy and Numeracy as:

- protection against being cheated and manipulated in the market place
- skills to quantify gains in lifetime income
- getting access to credit
- an entry into vocational skills training
- realising tangible short term incomes

2.2.4 Implementation of ABET in the Workplace

Even though the importance of ABET as key to development has been recognised worldwide, some organisations have found shortcomings in the system, which stand in the way of employee development..

According to Aitchison et al., (1996:153), a survey conducted by the business-orientated research firm BMI in 1994, revealed the following:

> 84% of business agreed that it was their responsibility to upgrade literacy rates within their organisations. 80% said that their companies should fund such programmes. One of the ways in which business responded - and is still responding-to the afore - mentioned feeling of responsibility was to change the hiring policy, so that only literate people were employed.

From the information above it becomes apparent that the importance of ABET as key to personal and organisational development will only be acknowledged and implemented by organisations if there is total commitment from the government and all employers to this course. Ironically, the Department of Education raised eyebrows amongst education commentators and practitioners of adult literacy projects when the department failed to spend R11-million donated by the European Union (EU) for adult basic education and training (Mohlala and Pretorius, 2006). This situation is of concern when one considers that it occurred more than ten years after South Africa's democracy. One would have thought that the education department would be keen on the successful implementation of programmes such as ABET.

2.3 PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

2.3.1 The adult learner

Cross (as cited in Benshoff and Lewis, 1992) defines the adult (non-traditional student) as one who returns to school full or part-time while still maintaining responsibilities such as employment, family, and other responsibilities of adult life. Knowles (as cited in Wlodkowski, 1993: 5) identifies adults by two criteria:

> an individual who performs roles associated by our culture with adults (worker, spouse, parent, soldier, responsible citizen) and an individual who perceives himself or herself to be responsible for his/her own life.

The literature on adult learning and how adults adapt to the learning environment is pertinent to facilitators of ABET programmes.
According to Knoll (1983:27), adult learners are characterised by the following:

- Unlike children, adult learners usually bring to the learning situation well-developed personal goals.
- They have their own ideas about what constitutes useful subject matter.
- They have a desire to learn things which they themselves see as worthwhile, usually because these things can be applied in some way in real life.

For the successful implementation of adult learning programmes, facilitators therefore need to be knowledgeable of what constitutes adult learning in order to effectively plan and implement positive learning experiences.

2.3.2 How adults learn

Adults enter the classroom situation with knowledge and experience that could either help or hinder their learning experiences. Facilitators of learners should therefore guard against making assumptions about these learners based on their own learning experiences.

According to Timarong et al., (2006: 2) “adult learners’ willingness to learn is often affected by their need to know, and they are usually motivated because of internal or intrinsic factors.” The facilitator should therefore be wary of planning activities that have no relevance to the adult learner and activities that would not enhance or benefit personal knowledge and growth.

The political, social and economic environment has an influence on the way in which one learns. This notion is supported by Darkenwald & Merriem (1982) who believe that adult participation in education is affected by variables such as socioeconomic status, perceived value of participation, readiness to participate, and barriers to participation. With the political changes that we have experienced in SA as an example, there has been a shift in the learning process. With the introduction of Outcomes Based Education in schools, learners in classrooms are now more involved in their own learning experiences and lessons are aimed at the holistic development of the learner. Educators are required to facilitate and not to dominate the learning process. Similarly, because of the experience that adult learners bring to the classroom, it is important that their lessons are not dominated by the educator as well. This is crucial especially when we take into account that, “Teachers play a crucial role in every classroom. They are the actors that shape the success or failure of their students” (UNESCO 2005). Continuous

positive reinforcement of adult learning is also vital.. Wlodkowski (1982) supports the former when he states that people do seem to study with greater effort and learn more effectively when their specific learning behaviours are positively reinforced by their instructors.

With the education of adults, the facilitator guides and facilitates according to the needs of the learner. According to Lieb (1991: 2), there are four critical elements of learning that must be addressed to ensure that adults learn. These elements are motivation, reinforcement, retention and transference.

Adult learners come into the learning environment with their own 'baggage' i.e. past educational learning experiences. Because of time constraints and workload, it is not always possible for facilitators to compile and plan lessons to suit every individual learner. Mc Millan (1997) observes that adult learners, particularly in South Africa, have relatively poor experiences of formal education when crossing the border into higher education. The facilitator should therefore plan tasks and activities that enable learners to experience success and where there are challenges, learners should be taught how to deal with them. Learners who are equipped with these skills are more motivated to continue learning amidst all the barriers that could hinder their participation.

2.4 WORKPLACE LEARNING

There are many who are yet to realise the importance of workplace learning for personal and organisational growth. Individual growth impacts on organisational growth. (Spikes as cited in a text on 'Workplace learning for

information professionals in a changing environment,' 2000: 5) defines Workplace Learning as:

> …a multibillion-dollar enterprise in which employees learn new skills designed to help them keep their organisations competitive in an increasingly global economic environment.

Many benefits to human society have been brought about by globalisation and technological improvement whilst also creating gaps between those who can enjoy the benefits and those who cannot (Mauch 2005: 19). The implication of the former means that employees with a lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills are immediately disadvantaged when training and development programmes are offered. The majority of courses offered in the workplace today require basic and advanced literacy and numeracy skills. In order to stay abreast of and compete on the global market, employers in organisations in SA today have altered their way of thinking with regard to the development of their employees and the development of the organisation as a whole. Some of these employers are investing in their employees by sending them on courses aimed at personal and organisational development while on the other hand, some employers refuse to invest in the development of their employees.

Senge (1999: 4) talks about the importance of 'Learning Organisations' and contends that:

> The organisations that will truly excel in the future are organisations that have discovered how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all the levels in the organisation.

Robbins (1986: 434) concurs with this view when he asserts that a strong organisational culture demonstrates high agreement among members about what the organisation stands for. Unfortunately, there are South African employers who refuse to adhere to governmental policies aimed at the training and development of their employees. The result is that many employees are not developed, continue to be exploited and are not able to enjoy the 'benefits' brought about by globalisation. Fullen (2003: 93) asserts that "one's vitality can be sapped or enhanced by the conditions under which one works or lives".

In addition, Fukuyama (1998: 226) in his text on "Trust" contends that in organisations that are characterised by loyalty, trust, team work, empowering of employees through shared responsibilities, constant communication and consultation, employees are more valued and this translates into low employee turnover.

Learning programmes can also be positively or negatively affected if learning takes place on-site or off-site. One of the ways in which organisations have contributed to the development of their workers, is to provide learning not only at the workplace, but during working hours as well. ABET learners who experience tuition during working hours are indeed fortunate. This method eliminates barriers to learner participation such as fatigue experienced by learners who have to attend classes after work or learners having to travel to ABET centres. Akroyd (2003: 3) recognised the following as benefits for members who are able to learn in a Workplace Learning Centre:

- Onsite learning means no travelling. Travelling can put people off learning, particularly if they have no means of transport.

- Courses are usually more flexibly delivered in a Workplace Learning centre than they are at a college.

- Often courses in a Workplace Learning Centre are free of charge than in a college.

- Members can learn in familiar surroundings, which makes learning easier, particularly if they learn with friends.

2.5 MOTIVATION

2.5.1 Definition

When we motivate adult learners we encourage and give them the assurance that they have made the right choice to develop themselves amidst all the obstacles that they will encounter during the learning process.

Mwamwenda (1995: 259) defines motivation as:

> …a concept used as an explanation or rationale for the way a person or an organism behaves, something that is innate within an individual, an energizer or a driving force, a desire or an urge that causes an individual to engage in certain behaviour.

This concept is also important in adult learning.

2.5.2 How adults are motivated to learn

There are many theories with regard to what motivates adults to learn. However, for adults in ABET classes the acquiring of a basic education is often pertinent to their personal development.

Maslow (1970), in his representation of the hierarchy of needs, stresses the importance of meeting the physiological needs (i.e. food, water, shelter etc.) which he views as the strongest. According to Maslow (1970:13), “people’s needs are ranged in order of importance” and once these needs have been met, then they are motivated to progress to the next level of needs. Cross (1979) concurs with this claim when he cites evidence to support the understanding that adults who are less educated and in the socio-economically lower classes will be more interested in learning and education that is aimed at their survival needs (physiological and safety), while the well educated middle and upper classes will be more open to learning and education that is aimed at personal development, achievement and self-actualisation.

The implication of the view just mentioned above suggests that the context in which the learners find themselves is crucial to the motivation for learning. Hence, as mentioned before, individual circumstances will determine why learners embark on programmes aimed at development.



Figure 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs
(Source: Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality, 2nd ed., Harper & Row, 1970).

The following theory by Vroom (1964) demonstrates that irrespective of the level at which learning is taking place, the motivation to learning is quite similar between children and adults. Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation suggests that:

- Individuals will be motivated to work well if they have the perception that their efforts will result in successful performance.
- The individual must expect or believe that successful performance will result in desirable outcomes which are either intrinsic – which are directly related to the task itself, that is, how interesting and challenging it is or extrinsic – which are related to the job context environment, that is salary and working conditions.

Robinson (2005: 3) cites “social relationships – making new friends and being with others in a comfortable, rewarding environment” as one of the factors which serve as the most common motivations for adults to undertake new learning.

Facilitator support or lack of it is the key to learner motivation. According to Gettly (2003: 2), factors that influence the motivation of learners in ABET classes include:

- Lack of confidence – ABET learners find it hard to learn in a formal way again after being out of school for a long time.
- Fear of failure – the drop-out rate at level 2 was evident shortly before and after the first tests.
- Lack of support from managers and supervisors – problems in production when learners are attending classes and transport problems if learning is not on-site.
- Delay of materials – receiving leaning materials on time.
- Lack of resources and the use of the resource centre – books in the library not relevant to the level of ABET learners.

In the same text by Gettly (2003: 2), the factors that influence the motivation of facilitators in ABET classes include:

- Lack of motivated learners
- Late starting time
- Absenteeism
- Incomplete projects and homework
- Training, meetings and workshops to be attended

Brookfield (1992) warns adult educators not to fall into the trap of needs meeting. According to Brookfield, (1992:1) “teaching to meet learners’ declared needs may condemn those same learners to staying within their own familiar and comfortable, but narrow ways of thinking and acting.” Therefore, in the same way that learners must be given an opportunity to experience success, facilitators must assist them in dealing with their failures as well. Learners must also be motivated to reach their full potential.

Rogers (2002) states that the area of motivation in adult literacy learning is highly localised such that what impacts on one social group will often not have the same effect in other social groups. In order to ensure that optimum motivation occurs, adult facilitators must have knowledge of the “context” in which the learners find themselves. Duongsaa as cited in Adult Education and Development (2002: 64) also places emphasis on “context of learners’ circumstances” when referring to the factors that motivate adults to join literacy classes. Some four groups of existing motivation factors for attending ABET classes are cited in no significant order:

- **Symbolic reasons** – some adults join literacy classes not to necessarily use their literacy skills, but to belong to a “literacy set”. Social status and belonging to a literate and not an illiterate, inferior and ignorant group of people, is therefore core to joining literacy classes.

- **Instrumental reasons** – some adults want to accomplish some literacy task like reading the Bible or Quran. One person interviewed in Namibia said, “I want to learn to use the hymnbook for myself”. In India the writing of family and formal letters and filling in of forms were

cited as reasons for being able to write and in Kenya, the writing of job applications was seen to be extremely important.

§ **Opportunities** – in Botswana, some adults' reasons for attending the literacy classes was to obtain a driving license and to get a loan. In Nepal, the completion of a literacy programme was key to obtaining paid employment or getting promotion in the workplace.

It is important to note that as with the adults who attended for symbolic reasons, these adults aspire to obtain real benefits that completion of the course will bring them personally. Like symbolic participants, their goal is distant. The result: these learners will tend to drop out more quickly and more often and they will be less concerned to learn practical literacy skills than those who come for instrumental reasons.

§ **Access** – the literacy skills obtained will provide a learning pathway to further learning. These learners hope to use their literacy as an entry point into second-stage education - for example, to get into school through their adult literacy classes. However, this is not always the case, given that people are sometimes reluctant to enter a formal or non-formal education programme with a set curriculum. However, in South Africa and Namibia, where large sections of the population were denied any formal education or any effective schooling, the demand for adult literacy and continuing education is greater.

2.6 RETENTION

2.6.1 Definition

According to Holm (1988) some argue that retention and attrition are neither good nor bad, but that the achievement of the students' goals should be the measure of program success. Unlike children, adults have more of a choice to be retained in a learning programme or to quit. There are therefore more challenges with the retention of adults in learning programmes. Tracy-Mumford et al., (as cited in Kerka, 1995: 1) contends that although the reasons for leaving may differ from adult basic education to higher education, the goal of retention is the same: to keep learners in programs until they achieve their goals.

2.6.2 Personal factors that could influence learner retention

Adult learners are often faced with multiple responsibilities which could impact on their retention in classes. For ABET learners, these responsibilities are often compounded by learning difficulties because of previous educational experiences as well as the prevailing circumstances that they need to deal with daily in their organisations.

Hamann (as cited in Kerka, 1995: 1-2) indicates a gap between learner expectations and reality as one cause of early withdrawal from a program and that adult learners may get frustrated early through lack of progress, or if they are not given enough information before enrolment to know when to expect change and what they must do to achieve it. Facilitators must therefore provide learners with a framework and time frame for the completion of tasks

and courses. Adults will often become frustrated if they do not progress or if the progress is slow. Quigley (1995) asserts that retention in classes could be affected if negative past experiences of school are too strong or if classroom situations or instructors reminded learners too clearly of those past experiences. D'Amico-Samuels (as cited in Kerka, 1995: 2) agrees with this view when he states that learners will drop out of programs if they experienced culturally insensitive teachers or racism, had been labelled as failures, or if their family and community circumstances demonstrate that education does not necessarily improve mobility.

According to Brod (1995: 2) the following are personal factors that could affect the retention of learners:

- Low self-esteem coupled with lack of demonstrable progress.
- Daily pressures from work.
- Home problems of schedule, childcare and transportation.
- Lack of support of the native culture and family culture of education.
- The age of the learner.

Apart from these factors, there is a daily increase in the cost of living which has almost necessitated a need for everybody to be employed in order to survive. Unfortunately, many educational programmes are not for free. A lack of money to pay for tuition could be a hindering factor to learner participation in organisations that do not financially support their employees' learning. Timarong et al., (2006: 3) cite time and money as two obvious barriers to retention and attainment of educational goals.

2.6.3 Organisational factors that could influence learner retention

Structures within the organisation itself could influence learner participation especially if these are not supportive of programmes aimed at development.
A lack of support for the programme from managers and supervisors could deter learners from joining ABET programmes and being retained in these programmes. Hubble (as cited in Wonacott, 2001: 1) points out that "institutional factors such as red tape, program fees, scheduling, and procedures can either help or hinder participation."

According to Timarong et al., (2006: 11) economical and technological changes have eliminated or changed the nature of many jobs, thus increasing the need for job retraining. Program factors within the organisation that could negatively influence learner retention include:

- Lack of appropriate materials for low-level learners.
- Lack of opportunity to achieve success.
- Lack of flexibility in class scheduling.
- Classes so multilevel that those with no literacy skills are mixed with those quite literate (or those with very high oral skills are mixed with those with very low oral skills).
- Lack of peer support and reinforcement.
- Instructional materials that are not relevant to learners' needs and lives.

(Brod, 1995: 2)

2.7 GENDER

2.7.1 Reasons why women participate in literacy programmes

According to Robinson-Pant (2003: 2):

> The majority of people in the world today who cannot read and write are women. Though the gender gap will have narrowed considerably by the year 2015, more than half the female population in several of the poorest countries will still be illiterate.

The women in SA particularly, were sidelined in terms of educational and developmental opportunities before 1994. As such, the female population of SA before 1994 constituted a large part of the population lacking in basic literacy skills. There has been a tremendous drive in the post apartheid SA to improve the living and working conditions of women. The cultural contexts in which women find themselves, have a profound influence on the reasons why they participate in literacy classes. Yates (1994) asserts that in a district in Ghana, many women joined the Functional Literacy Programme in order to improve their religious reading skills (and gain higher social status), but the programme was intended to link literacy to functional income generating skills, such as snail rearing. In a Nepal study by Burchfield et al., (2002) it was found that women's literacy programmes had a positive impact on indicators such as children's education, family and reproductive health, and participation in income-earning activities.

2.7.2 Factors influencing the retention of women in literacy programmes

Women often have multiple responsibilities at home which could act as deterrents in their retention in literacy programmes. Abadzi (1994) states that although adult literacy programmes have been implemented in most countries of the developing world, they have often been characterised by high drop-out rates, low attainment and retention of literacy skills regarding women participants. Robinson-Pant (2003: 8) revealed that there is a gendered division of languages, which literacy planners need to respond to and that:

> Men, unlike women involved in literacy programmes, have generally had more mobility and in this way have had an opportunity to pick up other languages informally.

The implications of this observation include the following: facilitators of literacy programmes should be flexible by allowing discussions in the classroom to take place in the first language once the formal teaching has been completed. Learners should also be allowed and encouraged to assist each other. If 'code-switching' is not permitted, women are likely to drop out of the course (UNESCO, 2003: 9). However, too much "code-switching" by learners could delay the learners' effective acquisition of a second language.

2.7.3 Retention Strategies

In the same way that educators at school employ a number of strategies to retain learners, facilitators of adult learners should also have numerous strategies to retain the adult learners. Wlodkowski (1985:3) identifies the following strategies as pertinent to learner retention and states that these

suggestions synthesize the advice of a number of writers and apply to all types of programs:

- § Do not seek 100% retention. There are different types of attrition; identify which are harmful to the vitality of the program and to student objectives.
- § Begin retention efforts with recruitment; devote as much energy to retention as to recruitment.
- § Target recruiting at those whom the program is best equipped to serve.
- § Emphasise placement, orientation, counseling, and advising early in the program.
- § Follow up inactive students with phone calls; have an ongoing process for identifying and tracking these students.

In view of the above information, ABET facilitators should therefore: a) continuously motivate and encourage learners, b) provide learners with regular feedback on their progress, plan lessons that are relevant, c) provide learners with time management and coping skills.

2.8 BARRIERS TO LEARNER PARTICIPATION

2.8.1 Definition

Like so many other learners, ABET learners are often faced with various deterrents or obstacles that impede their participation and progress whilst learning. These barriers include amongst others the personal, physiological, social, cultural etc.

2.8.2 Experience of learners

One of the main barriers that could impede adult learning is the exclusion of their life experiences in the planning and implementation of lessons. Kerka (1986: 4) asserts that the predominant barriers hindering the participation of the educationally disadvantaged are:

- Lack of self confidence
- Low self esteem
- Negative attitudes towards education, compounded by language and literacy problems

The above information is supported by Scanlan (as cited in Kerka, 1986: 2), who suggests the following categories of deterrence factors to learner participation:

- Individual, family, or home-related problems
- Cost concerns
- Questionable worth, relevance, or quality of available educational opportunities
- Negative perceptions of the value of education in general
- Lack of motivation or indifference towards learning
- Lack of self-confidence in one's learning abilities
- A general tendency towards non-affiliation
- Incompatibilities of time and/or place

Lieb (1991: 2) is of the same opinion and contends that adults experience barriers to participation in learning because of the many responsibilities that

they are faced with. These include “lack of time, money, confidence or interest, lack of information about opportunities to learn, scheduling problems, red tape, problems with child care and transportation”.

2.8.3 Physiological factors

The attainment of basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as having a job enables adults to be in a better position to access medical facilities that could improve the state of their health. We have seen that in countries where people have access to health care facilities, there is a reduced mortality rate. However, in Canada, a developed country, where the lifespan of citizens is longer, the barriers to learning are similar to those in our country. The Canadian Council on Learning (2006: 6) cites declining cognitive skills as one of the barriers to learner participation and that for older adults:

- learning requires more time and repetition;
- multi-tasking becomes more difficult;
- forgetfulness becomes more common;
- the ability to think abstractly declines, as does the ability to maintain concentration over a long period of time.

Similarly, a National Adult Learning Survey conducted in 2002 in the United Kingdom, cited the following attitudinal barriers which are often the hardest to overcome:

- Being nervous about going back to the classroom and concern about not being able to keep up

- Negative perceptions of schooling and sceptism about the value of learning
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence both generally and in relation to learning
- Low aspirations and lack of role models
- Lack of trust in 'officialdom' and formal institutions or organizations
- Age. One in five non-learners thinks they are too old to learn.

(Skills and Education Network, 2005: 2)

2.8.4 Language and Communication

Language and cultural differences are much more evident in South Africa's heterogeneous population. One of the legacies of apartheid is that adult learners especially those from the previously marginalised groups, were often not taught in the language of their mother tongue. Since English and Afrikaans were the only official languages recognised in South Africa, learning difficulties are prevalent for learners in the basic literacy classes for whom learning is taking place in a second, third and sometimes fourth language.

South Africa has 11 official languages. However, only two of these languages formed the basis of teaching and learning in South Africa before 1994. Venter as cited in du Pre (2001: 2:) asserts that "prior to 1994, English was, and still is, the mother tongue of only a small percentage of South Africans but it was the general means of instruction in schools".

A study by Valentine (1990: 5)) cited the following reasons why adults enrol in second language classes in Iowa:

- Improving oneself and one's personal effectiveness in U.S. society
- Being better able to help one's children with their school work and to speak to their teachers
- Improving one's employability by being able to get a better job or to enter job training
- Functioning better with everyday uses of the language such as shopping and using the telephone
- Experiencing the success of knowing that one can learn the language
- Improving reading and writing skills in English
- Being able to help people in one's native country

2.8.5 Culture

De Haan (1997: 25) maintains there is no aspect of our lives which is not influenced by the culture in which we belong. He defines culture as:

- a way of life which a group of people has worked out to enable them to cope with the problems of daily living in a particular environment
- all ways of thinking, believing, and behaving

In the black South African culture which is still largely patriarchal, men are dominant. Therefore, the age and gender of the facilitator versus that of the

learner could influence the learning process. Facilitators should be aware of the cultural context of the learners so that they can take the necessary steps to bridge the divide between themselves and these learners. Exposure to ABET programmes also means that many learners are given an opportunity to expand their cultural horizons and inherent different views on life. This in turn is a retention strategy as learners' interests are developed.

2.8.6 Health

Health and welfare have a great influence on the number of learners who start, drop-out or complete ABET programmes. A study conducted by Fredericksson and Kanabus (2006: 5) on "The impact of HIV and AIDS on Africa" and particularly on enterprises and workplaces estimated that:

- The combined impact of AIDS-related absenteeism, productivity declines, health-care expenditures, and recruitment and training expenses could cut profits by at least 6-8%.
- Another recent study of 1006 companies in Southern Africa found that 9% had suffered a significant negative impact due to AIDS.
- In areas that have been hardest hit by the epidemic, it found that up to 40% of companies reported that HIV and AIDS were having a negative effect on profits.
- Despite this, only 13% of the companies surveyed that had less than 100 workers had a company policy in place to deal with HIV and AIDS.

One of the advantages of the ABET programmes is that learners can acquire skills to make informed choices about their health and welfare from the literacy classes. This is a positive factor in promoting learner participation.

2.8.7 The Home Environment

Support or a lack of support from home is crucial to the progress of ABET learners and could have a grave impact on the learning experience. Conditions for studying and working in the home could act as a barrier to learning. In contrast, effective support structures and strategies within the home could promote learner participation.

2.8.8 Structural barriers

The support received from managers, supervisors etc. within the organisation, is important in contributing to or hindering participation in ABET programmes in the workplace. Adequate organisational support structures have a marked effect on learner participation. A National learning survey conducted in Skills and Education (2005: 2) in the United Kingdom found that structural barriers "may relate to both supply (provider) and demand (learner)." These barriers include:

- Lack of transport
- Limited learning opportunities locally
- Lack of facilities and equipment
- Lack of necessary qualifications
- Lack of knowledge about local learning opportunities and learning advice sources.

A research project into ABET (1996: 1) revealed the following barriers (particularly in the rural areas) to effective implementation of ABET programmes "…inappropriate curriculum, lack of assessment, inconsistent tutors, and the unavailability of skilled ABET and development workers." One of the reasons why ABET programmes often fail could be attributed to the fact that ABET facilitators are often not skilled or specialists in the field. Many employers try to save costs by employing people as facilitators from within the organisations that have no ABET experience or training. This lack of training or experience means that the facilitators experience difficulties in meeting the learners' needs.

2.8.9 Social barriers/ circumstances

Learner participation is also often influenced by social circumstances. Knoll (1983: 40) cites the following social reasons that inhibit participation in adult learning classes:

- In some societies participation in adult education may have high social status, whereas in others it may carry with it the stigma of admitting that one's initial education was defective.
- In many societies, especially of the European/North American kind, decreasing effectiveness with increasing age may be a strongly entrenched norm, so that there is almost a social duty to become obsolete after a certain age – the whole system of promotion of younger workers, for instance, may depend upon obsolescence in the older.

In summary, the following meta-model encapsulates all the factors that influence learner participation as discussed in the review above:

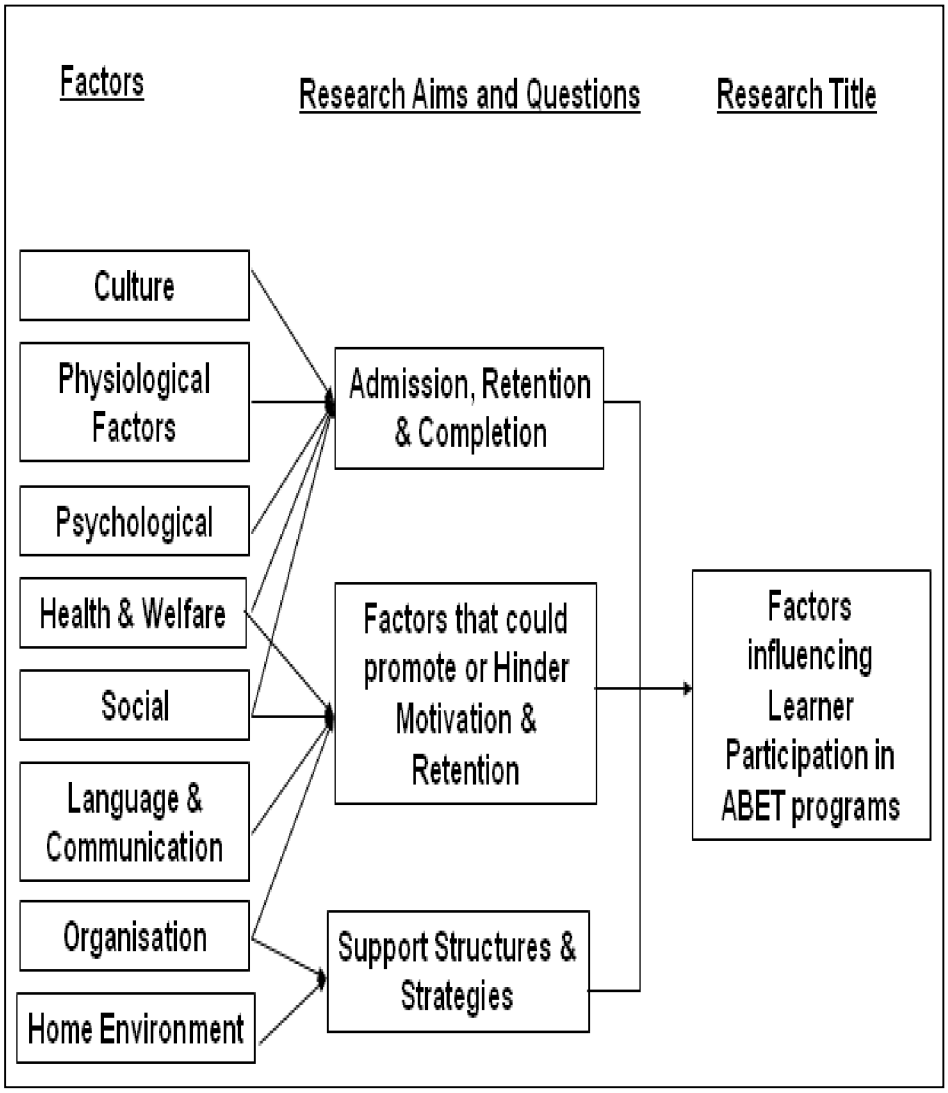


Figure 3: Meta-Model: Summary of factors influencing learner participation in the ABET programmes.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the methods used for data collection and analysis. Myers (1997: 4) defines a research method as a strategy of inquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection.

Leedy and Ormrod (2002: 94) make the following distinctions between Quantitative and Qualitative approaches in research:

- Quantitative research is used to answer questions about relationships among measured variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena. This approach is sometimes called the traditional, experimental, or positivist approach.
- Qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view. The qualitative approach is also referred to as the interpretative, constructivist.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The Qualitative method of inquiry informed the broad approach of this research study. This method of enquiry was used in order to gain a first hand account of the learners' experiences in the ABET programmes offered at City Power. It was important for the researcher to determine how learners were motivated to join ABET classes, why there were those who were retained until completion of courses and why some left. With this method of enquiry the researcher was therefore given an opportunity to experience some of the joys and challenges faced by facilitators and learners on a daily basis with regard to the ABET programmes. By interacting with learners, facilitators and managers the researcher gained profound knowledge of workplace learning and its influence on personal and organisational growth.

3.3 Research Design and Instruments

In order to determine how learners experience their learning environment and the factors influencing their participation in the ABET classes at City Power, data for this study was collected through the use of the following methods of research:

- semi-structured interviews
- focus group discussions
- documents

The nature of this research topic lends itself to greater interaction with participants in order to gain insight into factors influencing the participation of learners in ABET programmes. *Semi-structured interviews* with both closed

and open-ended questions were conducted with the ABET level 4 learners and facilitators to enable the researcher to gain first-hand knowledge and an in-depth understanding of their experiences in the programme. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989: 83) suggest the following with regard to the use of structured interviews as a method of research:

- These interviews can be fairly objective since the formality involved reduces the risk of researcher/interviewer bias or interference.

- For the interviewer, it is crucial to become familiar with the biographical and contextual features of the respondent's life history, outlook, customs, and life-style in order to be able to relate more fully and in a more appreciative way with those being interviewed.

Focus group discussions were conducted with the ABET level 3 learners to achieve greater insight into the barriers that influence learner participation in these classes. Listening to other group members' views encourages participants to voice their own opinions. Kitzinger (1995: 1) cites the following advantages of focus group discussions:

- The idea behind a focus group method is that group processors can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview.

- Group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of

importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities.

Documents with regard to the ABET programme at City Power were reviewed which included statistical information on:

- Admissions
- Attendance
- Intake and drop-out rates
- Number of passes and failures
- Lists of the number of people who complete or are retained.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define a document as “any written or recorded material” and state that it could be divided into two major categories namely:

- Public records collected from outside (external) e.g. vital statistic reports, county office records, newspaper archives and local business records.
- Internal records e.g. student transcripts and records, historical accounts, institutional mission statements, annual reports, budgets, grade and standardized test reports etc.

3.4 Sampling strategy and Data collection

Data for this study was collected at JHB Department of City Power in Booysens. There is a huge demand for ABET at City Power who at present have a list of more than 200 waiting to access the ABET programme.

According to Hoepfl (1997: 7):

> Qualitative analysis requires some creativity, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories; to examine the information in a holistic fashion; and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. Trochim (2006: 1) asserts that when we use purposive sampling, we sample with a "purpose" in mind and usually would have one or more specific predefined groups we are seeking. The following samples were identified for the use of data collection:

- 7 ABET level 4 learners
- 12 ABET level 3 learners
- 5 facilitators

The *ABET level 3 and 4 learners* were identified for use in the research for the following reasons:

- They have already proceeded through the first 2 levels of the programme and would therefore be in a better position to share their experiences about the programme.
- When these groups of learners were selected, their level of literacy was taken into account. The learners in ABET level 3 and 4 were competent in English.

The *facilitators* of the programme would be in a position to give their account of the factors influencing the participation of learners as well as the daily challenges that they experience with their learners.

The *semi-structured interviews* were conducted as follows:

- with the permission of the ABET Manager
- with consent from the interviewee who agreed that the interview could be taped
- with notes taken during the interview
- the interview was transcribed and recorded electronically

Focus group discussions were conducted as follows:

- consent from ABET level 3 learners
- notes taken during the discussion

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Cook and Campbell (1979) define validity as the "best available approximation to the truth or falsity of a given inference, proposition or conclusion". In order to ensure validity and reliability, data for this research was collected through the use of a triangulation of sources. Denzin (as cited in an article by Hammond, 2005: 4) defines triangulation as a term associated most clearly with the use of more than one method for gathering data and an explicit concern for the comparison of different sets of data.

A sample of three people was used to test the questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews. When it was found that some of the concepts within the questions were too complex, these questions were amended to suit the language level of the learners. Some of the questions were also modified in order to generate more intense discussion with the focus group.

3.6 Report on Ethical Considerations

The nature and content of the research topic lends itself to certain ethical considerations. Leedy and Ormrod (2002: 01) contend that most ethical issues in research fall into one of the four following categories:

- Protection from harm
- Informed consent
- Right to privacy
- Honesty with professional colleagues

The topic chosen for the research as well as the results, would be of interest to the employer and all stakeholders involved with the ABET programme at City Power. Hence, in order to protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used in the analysis of data in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

The permission of the ABET Manager was obtained before any of the interviews were conducted. A letter was used to obtain permission from the Manager of the ABET School in order to use their ABET programme for assistance in the research study. Letters of consent were also issued to all

the people interviewed. The nature of the content on the consent form was explained in detail to the participants who then agreed to be interviewed. They were informed that they could withdraw form the interview at any time, that their right to privacy would be protected, that views shared by them would remain confidential and they would have access to the results of the interview after these had been compiled in a report.

3.7 Delimitations and Limitations of the Research

Locke et al. (1987: 1) asserts that to delimit, “literally means to define the limits inherent in the use of a particular construct or population”. The following delimitations have been identified with regard to this study:

- The study is mainly limited to ABET level 3 and 4 learners.
- Only a sample of learners from City Power in Reuven has been included in the study.

The following limitations have been identified with regard to this study:

- The study was limited to ABET level 3 and 4 learners because of their competence in English.
- The time set aside for interviews was limited as learners were already experiencing constraints with regard to setting aside time for lessons during their working day. They were required back at their various workstations as soon as lessons and in this case, interviews were completed.

- Unfortunately, only one manager could be interviewed during this process as the other managers did not respond to numerous invitations to take part in the study.

- Because the study only made use of samples from City Power, the results obtained cannot be generalised.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from the various research instruments. The chapter is divided into 3 sections; the first section deals with the ABET level 4 group, then the ABET level 3 and finally the facilitators.

4.2 ABET LEVEL 4

4.2.1 Demographics of learners

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions revealed the following demographics which are represented graphically in terms of age, sex and race (Figure 4). The duration of attendance in the programme is presented in Figure 5.

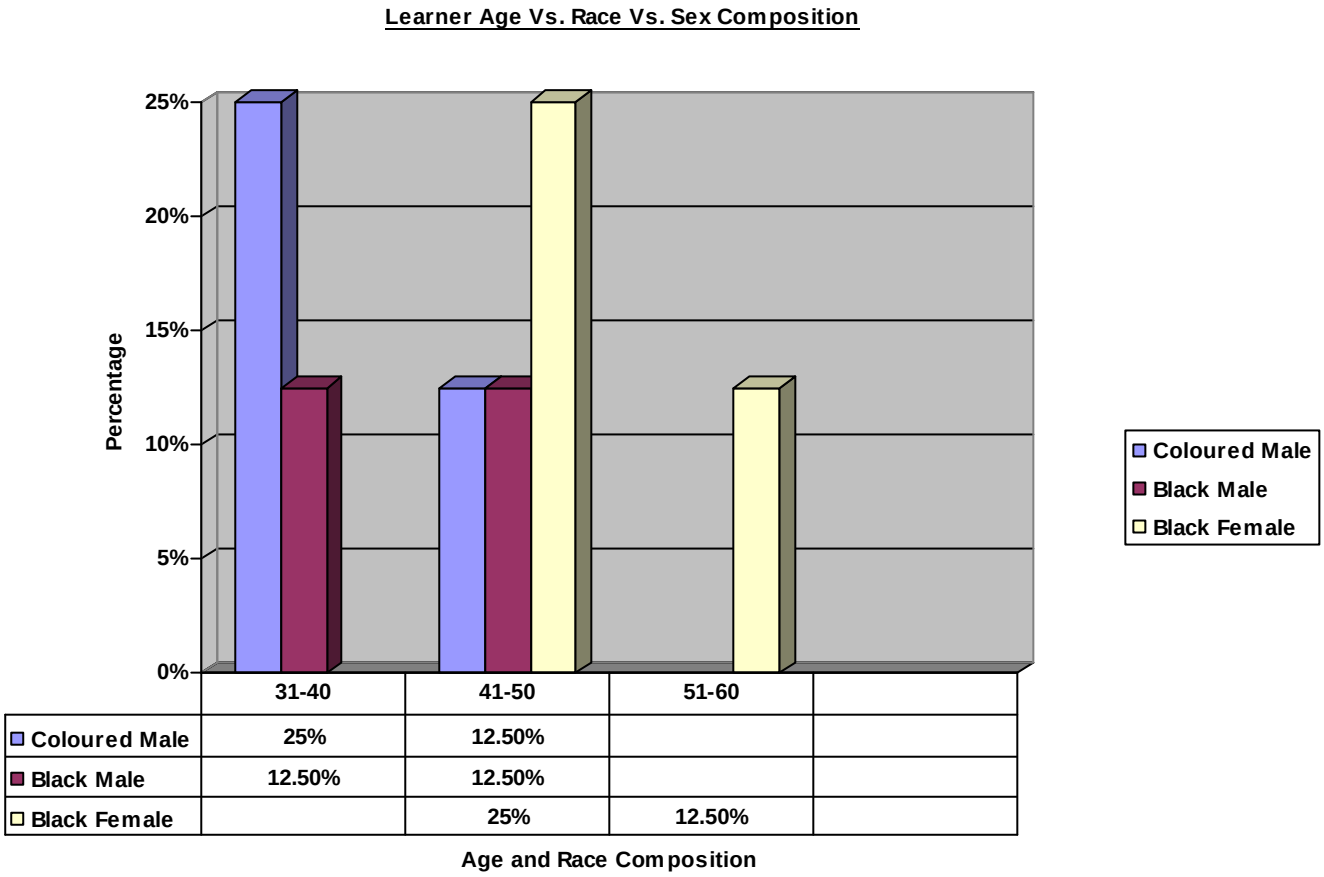


Figure 4: Graphical representation of learner sex, age and race

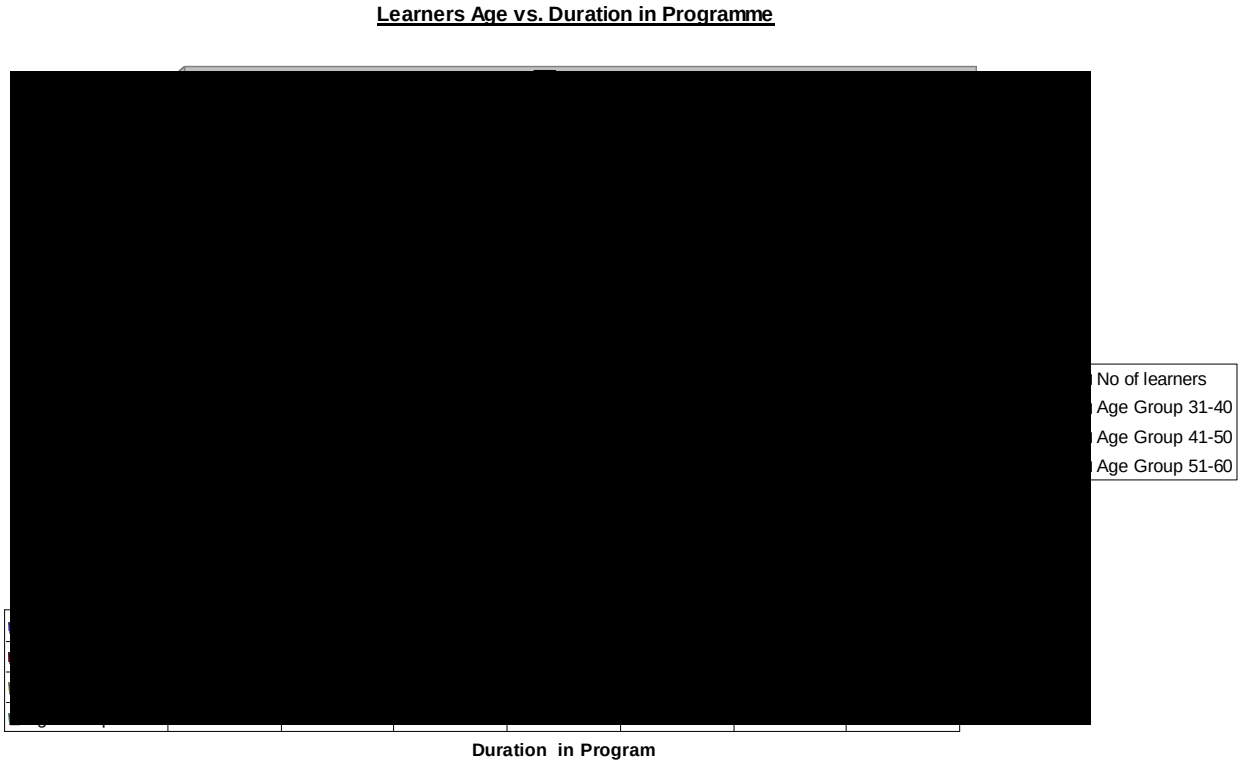


Figure 5: Graphical representation of Learner Age vs. Duration in Programme

The pre and post political situation in South Africa, amongst other factors, is evident by the results yielded in the above graphs. It would appear that:

- There are no learners younger than 30 years in the programme. This can be attributed to the positive post 1994 political and social climate of the country where the acquisition of an education at all levels of development was encouraged so that all citizens (both young and old) would be empowered to enjoy the benefits of the country's democracy.
- There are no coloured women in the programme. This has a direct link to the social situation in the country where younger coloured women before 1994 were generally not employed as cleaners.
- No woman between the age group 31-40. Here one could assume that in this age group most women are preoccupied with child rearing activities, housekeeping and possibly, single parenting.
- Interestingly, compared to the previous point the interest in ABET appears to be significantly higher (25%) in the more mature black women between the ages of 41-50 which could be attributed to improved home circumstances when they reach this age and more time available to further studies. Compliance with the Equity Act (1999) could mean that women after 1994 enjoy more benefits. Special programmes e.g. (women upliftment and development) have been put in place after 1994, to ensure that women catch up in all spheres of life.
- From the information above it would appear that males, both black and coloured between 51-60 years of age are not active in the programme, which could be attributed to the effects of oncoming retirement or illness and mortality compared to women of the same age. Thus, it would appear that women tend to start studying later in life but persevere in their studies longer than their male counterparts. The statistics from City Power reflect that women enrolment since the

inception of the programme has been stable. In contrast, City Power has experienced a significantly higher drop-out rate amongst the male population. (There has only been one female drop-out recorded since the inception of ABET at City Power whilst more than 20 males have dropped out).

4.2.2 Motivation: Reasons and Values

There is evidence in the literature to support the understanding that adults who are less educated and in the socio-economically lower classes will be more interested in learning and education that is aimed at their survival needs while the more well educated middle and upper classes will be more open to learning and education that is aimed at personal development, achievement and self-actualisation.

Table 1: Reasons provided for joining of the ABET programme.

Reasons provided for joining ABET	No of respondents	Total Percentage
To obtain basic literacy (Instrumental +Symbolic))	6	75%
To further occupation (Opportunity + Access)	2	25%

The majority of the respondents were motivated to join the ABET classes in order to acquire basic literacy skills while only 2 of the respondents viewed

their participation in ABET as an opportunity to further their occupation. The following quotations are examples of learners' responses:

"I want to learn."

"I'm not well educated," I left school in standard 4", "I had to leave school at an early age to find work because there was no money", "I want to become an electrician".

Table 2: How learners value the ABET programme.

Respondents' evaluation of the programme	**No. of respondents**	**Total Percentage**
Personal development	3	44%
Key to a better life	4	50%
Promotion at work	1	6%

All the respondents agreed that they would definitely encourage other people to join the ABET programme.

Of the respondents interviewed, 3 believe that ABET would aid in their general personal development. Some of the sentiments include, "I am independent, speak better", "Yes, it's nice to know how to read and write for independence, so that nobody can read your secret things". Of the respondents interviewed, 4 of them believed that ABET was key to a better life and would improve their independence: "Yes, I can write and read, improved a lot, I can write a letter for my bank policy". Only 1 respondent viewed his participation in ABET as a pathway to promotion at work.

Table 3: Improvements in daily work because of ABET.

Performance improvement	No. of respondents	Total percentage
Promotion or awards	3	44%
Life skills attained	4	50%
No improvement	1	6%

Less than half of the respondents explained that they had received either awards for excellent service or promotions because of an improvement in their standard of work and knowledge obtained in the ABET classes. Some of the comments were: “I started as a cleaner, because of the ABET programme I moved to switchboard, now I am doing data capturing”. “I started as a worker, progressed to store man then switchboard operator”.

Half of the respondents said that the skills they obtained in the ABET classes enabled them to be more effective in their daily work. “I improved a lot, I received an award for ‘excellent service last year and was again nominated for the award in January this year.” “You know how to plan your daily job, you can now read about dangers in signs.” You understand things better, as a safety rep, I can now chair a meeting, Life Skills lessons have helped me”. “Lessons in business management has helped me so if I don’t work one day, I will be able to run my own business. I have already started a small tuck shop at home.” Only 1 respondent felt that there had been no improvement in his daily work.

The correlation between the questions on value and performance in Table 2 and 3 above is interesting. If one takes the age group of the learners into consideration, one can assume that the possibility of promotion is bleak because these workers are either low-skilled or under-skilled. In addition, there is little scope for upward mobility. Therefore half of the respondents are in the programme purely to obtain basic skills.

Table 4: Aspects of ABET enjoyed by learners.

Aspects of programme enjoyed	**No. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
Mathematics	2	37%
Life Orientation	1	6%
General programme	3	44%
Social aspect	1	6%
Literacy and communication	1	6%

When comparing this table and the previous tables, the motives and reasons specified above correlate with the aspects enjoyed in the programme.
Because 50% of the learners joined ABET to obtain basic literacy and numeracy skills, they generally enjoy all the aspects offered in the programme. Approximately 37% of the respondents in the programme are goal directed. “I like Maths; I want to become an electrician”. This is connected to the acquisition of mathematical skills that is a prerequisite to obtaining a qualification in the electrical field.

Only 1 respondent is in the programme for social reasons. One could assume that these are mature adults who have well-founded and established social ties and links and therefore are not in the programme to advance the social aspect of their lives. One respondent indicated that he is in the programme to advance his literacy and communication skills. This is a true reflection of the learner's needs in NQF level 1.

4.2.3 Barriers and Obstacles

According to Kerka (1986), the predominant barriers hindering the participation of the educationally disadvantaged are: lack of self confidence, low self esteem and negative attitudes towards education, compounded by language and literacy problems.

Table 5: Aspects of the programme that are challenging

Challenging aspects in programme	**No. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
Mathematics	4	50%
Economic Management Science	1	12,5%
Language	2	25%
No challenging aspects experienced	1	12,5%

Of the respondents interviewed, 4 found Mathematics to be challenging. This result could be ascribed to past negative experiences in the subject at school. One of the respondents experienced difficulties with Economic Management Science (EMS). “I did not do this subject at school, I have to learn the basics, it’s a new experience”. EMS is a subject that was not taught at secondary school level and many of the respondents have indicated that they have not progressed beyond primary school.

Less than half of the learners cited English as a difficulty. This could be attributed to the fact that all the respondents are learning not in their native tongue but in their second, third or fourth language. One could therefore assume that language could act as a barrier to learning in the ABET classes at City Power due to the racial composition of the learners with different mother languages. “The switch of languages is a difficulty, I now have to learn my subjects in English, it’s a big problem from being predominantly Afrikaans speaking”, “I don’t understand the words, some of the words are very difficult”. Of the 8 respondents interviewed, 1 asserted that he found none of the aspects of the programme to be challenging.

Table 6: Challenges with regard to balancing study and responsibilities of home and work.

Respondents able to cope with work and studies	**No. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
Respondents not coping	6	75%
Respondents who are coping	2	25%

The majority of the respondents stated that they found it difficult to cope with work and studies. The women cited their multiple responsibilities as reasons for not coping. “It’s very difficult, I’m worried about cooking, the children, at home I have problems, can’t study at home”. “I’m a single parent, it’s hard to work, study and be a parent. When you get home somebody says this and that and you can’t concentrate at school”. “At home, no study time, washing, cooking, cleaning the house, going to church”.

The reasons cited by the men who are not coping were more organizational or systemic. “We work late sometimes and there is no time to sit with the books”. “We have standbys sometimes and come home at 2:00 in the morning to be back at work at 10:00. Sometimes you [are] still tired and don’t feel for books or if you want to sit with your books, family sometimes disturb you. They ask you to take them here or there”. At City Power, the standby system entails your normal working hours plus an additional 5 hours per day, this hence this could make it difficult for the respondents to cope. Even though they are aware that they are not coping, the respondents do not forfeit the standby system because it means extra remuneration which could afford them a better lifestyle. Less than half of the respondents stated that they were able to cope because of the support from family members.

Table 7: Support received from managers/supervisors.

Support from manager/supervisors and fellow workers	**No. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
No support	6	75%
Support	2	25%

Of the 8 respondents interviewed 6 stated that they were not supported by their managers/supervisors. “Our managers degrade us, they tell us we doing grade 1 and we are illiterate, they don’ understand that we are learning to improve ourselves”. “The managers look down at us if we are in ABET, they see us as illiterate, because my manager always saw me with a paper he did not understand why I want to join ABET. They don’t inform us at the Depot about ABET, I had to find out about it myself”. This lack of support from managers/supervisors was attributed to a lack of interest in the programme and to a loss of production time, hence the reluctance to give learners time off to attend the classes.

A lack of interest in ABET was the general reason cited for the lack of support from fellow workers. A quarter of the respondents asserted that they were receiving support from their managers/ supervisors and fellow workers. Supportive managers/supervisors were encouraging respondents to learn and some were assisting respondents with their homework. Supportive managers/supervisors were also encouraging learners to apply for better jobs within the company.

4.2.4 Retention

In the literature Brod (1995) does allude to amongst others, the following personal factors that could affect the retention of learners: low self-esteem coupled with a lack of demonstrable progress, daily pressures from work, home problems of schedule, childcare and transportation, etc.

Table 8: How family, friends and colleagues view ABET.

How family, friends and colleagues value the respondents' participation	No. of respondents	Total percentage
Family	8	100%

The table reflects that all family members know that respondents are in the programme and support them. It was difficult to quantify whether friends and colleagues were aware of the respondents' participation in the programme. Of the 8 respondents, 3 stated that they do not talk to their friends about ABET, 2 said that their friends supported them, 1 respondent stated that they had no friends. Some of the responses, verbatim, were: "I don't talk to my friends about ABET, they will think I'm bragging and will phone and make trouble for me at work". "I don't talk about ABET to my friends, we don't' talk about learning and school, just other things", "I have no friends", "My friends are happy, they help me with my assignments".

Of the 8 respondents, 2 said their friends don't know about their participation in the programme and 2 respondents stated that they don't talk about ABET to their friends. We can therefore view the former responses as potential barriers or demotivating factors to learner participation in literacy programmes. The social and cultural context in which learners find themselves is also pertinent to their participation in the ABET programmes. One of the incidents pertaining to this point is revealed by one of the facilitators who commented that, "A learner was threatened with witchcraft by a fellow learner. He was called to order and told to drop out of the programme which he did".

Table 9: Availability of rewards for successful completion of ABET programmes.

Rewards for performance improvement	No. of respondents	Total percentage
No rewards	4	50%
Symbolic rewards (certificates or awards)	4	50%

Half of the respondents stated that there were no rewards in place at City Power for completion of the programme. The other 50% of the learners stated that they had received certificates on completion of certain programmes.
In place of certificates, the above respondents were asked how they would like to be rewarded on completion of he programme. All the respondents preferred to receive money. One can assume that because they are low-skilled or under skilled workers, monetary remuneration is viewed as the ultimate incentive.

4.3 Comparison of findings to the literature review

4.3.1 Motivation

Of the respondents interviewed, 75% were in the ABET programmes for instrumental and symbolic reasons. These learners indicated a strong desire to gain personal development and fulfilment from their participation in the

ABET programmes. The idea that adults study to gain “Access” is also supported in an article by Oxenham et al. (2002) in the literature. With the advancement in technology, these learners are faced with challenges which include the use of automated teller machines, filling in of bank statements and forms, use of cellular phones, computers etc.

Only 1 respondent indicated that he joined the programme for the social aspect. This small number could be attributed to the fact that as adults, many of these learners may already have their set of friends and therefore do not regard the social aspect as key to their participation in the ABET programmes. This observation is in contrast to evidence in the literature by Robinson (2005) who cites social relationships as one of the most common motivations for adults to undertake new learning. Approximately 94% of the respondents viewed their participation in ABET as “key to a better life” and for personal development.

There is a correlation between the findings in this research report and the literature with regard to improvement of their daily work. Of the respondents interviewed, 3 had either received awards or a promotion at work. These learners have obtained the basic literacy skills and are striving for the fulfilment of their social needs, which Maslow alludes to in the literature. In many of the organisations today, communication largely takes place via the electronic mailing system. Half of the respondents said that the skills they obtained in the ABET classes enabled them to be more effective in their daily work. In the literature Aitchison et al., (1996) does cite the importance of literacy for completion of daily tasks and promotions. Only 1 has fulfilled the physiological and social and is now busy with the fulfilment of his Ego needs in terms of Maslow’s theory, e.g. recognition, status etc. At the same time

their responses can also be attributed to the 'expectancy theory of motivation' as espoused by Vroom (1964). Having studied, these learners expect something tangible such as promotion, remuneration, awards, and increase in salary among other things.

4.3.2 Barriers experienced in learner participation

UNESCO (2003) reveals that women in literacy programmes are more likely to experience language problems and to drop out of programs if "code-switching" is not permitted. The findings at City Power however suggest that there is a general language problem especially at the lower levels irrespective of gender. Because learners are receiving tuition in a second or third language, levels of understanding in the lower ABET levels are especially low. In this case, an understanding of the learners' context as cited by Duongsaa (2002) in the literature is essential.

There is a strong correlation between the female respondents' experience of barriers to learner participation and those indicated in the literature. The women at City Power list amongst others the following barriers to participation that closely approximate those cited by Wonacott (2001): heavy domestic workload, caring for children, doing personal homework and assisting children with homework. The availability of literature on the barriers to learning experienced by people working on the standby/shift system is limited.

4.3.3 Retention

The majority of the respondents indicated that they were receiving little or no support from managers/supervisors while in the ABET programme. In the literature, Senge (1994) underscores the importance of political will in organisations for personal and organisational development. All the respondents indicated that their families were supporting their participation in the ABET programmes. The importance of family support on learner participation and retention is evident in the literature.

The literature alludes to the importance of the social and cultural context of learning but it is silent about jealousies and threats amongst learners that may exist in the programme. The inherent belief system which as expressed in the cultural context also comes into play here. An example cited by a facilitator concerned a learner dropping out of the programme because his peers threatened him with “witchcraft”. All the respondents stated that they would like to be rewarded with money on successful completion of the ABET programmes. Often, learners in the ABET programmes are in the lower income brackets. It is therefore not surprising that these learners view money as an important incentive for successful learning.

4.4 ABET LEVEL 3

A focus group discussion was conducted with 12 ABET level 3 learners. The sample comprised of 14 males and 3 females. This interview was conducted with the sole purpose of determining the barriers experienced by learners involved in the ABET programmes.

4.4.1 Background Characteristics and Demographics of Learners

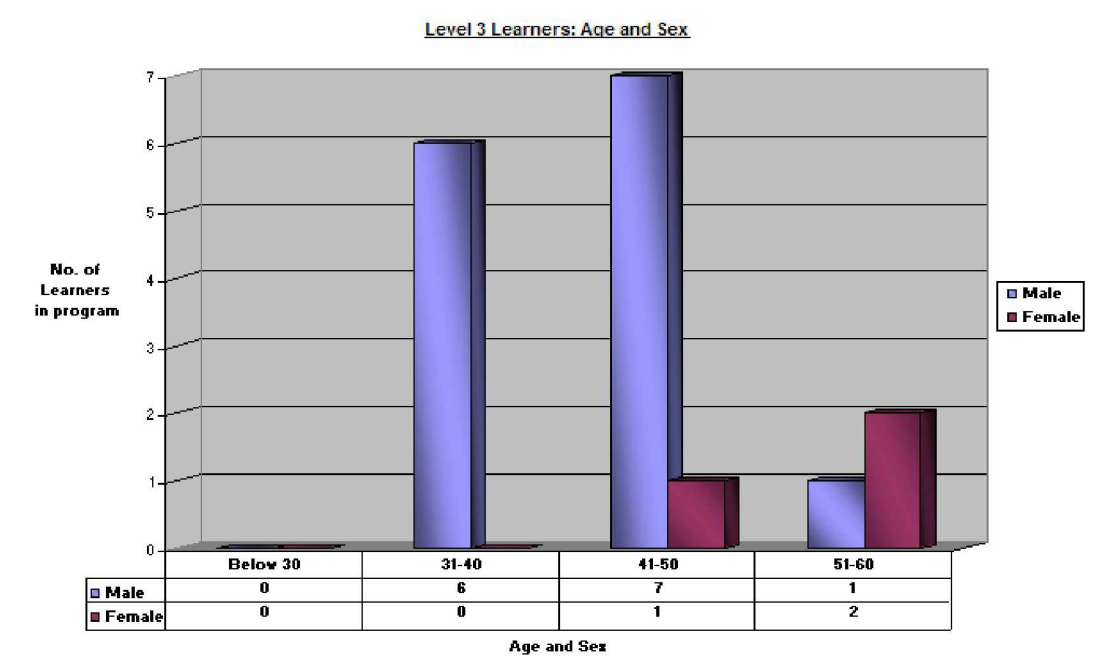


Figure 6: Graphical representation Level 3 learners' Age and Sex

The graphical information in Figure 6 shows that there are 17 ABET level 3 learners. Once again, it is apparent that there are no women between the age group 31 and 40. There is an increase in the number of men between the age group 41-50. In addition, there seems to be an increase in the number of women involved in ABET between the ages 41 to 60. The same reasons cited with the women studying in ABET level 4, will apply here.

4.4.2 Emerging themes relating to barriers

In terms of support, 25% of the respondents cited a lack of adequate support at home as one of the reasons why they experienced difficulty with studying. This left 75% of the respondents who indicated that they were receiving support from home. A lack of support from managers and team leaders was also evident in the discussion. One of the reasons cited for the lack of support from managers could be ascribed to the shortage of sufficient workers within departments which results in a reluctance from managers to release workers in order to attend classes. One of the interviewees said, "…managers complain if the work is too much, they say you will leave if you don't pass". Colleagues who were not supportive of the respondents' participation in the literacy programmes cited old age as one of the reasons. "We have no support from colleagues, others say you are next to the graveyard, why are you still learning?"

With regard to the learning content, 80% of the respondents indicated that they found Mathematics difficult. Of the respondents interviewed, 50% indicated that receiving lessons in English was challenging. The last mentioned figure correlates favourably with the findings of the individual interviews where 50% of respondents cited Mathematics as being complex. In interviews conducted with the facilitators, it emerged that the underlying barriers in Mathematics were embedded in the language in which they were being instructed, which is not their mother tongue. Firstly, many of the concepts cannot be translated into the vernacular. In addition, as English is not their first language, this results in an inability to grasp the necessary concepts in word sums.

A lack of adequate lessons and time were among the reasons cited by respondents who were not coping. "We don't study, there is no time to study". "After lunch, we find it very hard to concentrate, we need three lessons per week". "On payday, some people leave, they don't come back, they do shopping." Due to the nature of the work done at City Power, one of the respondents cited being late as a barrier to the respondents' effective participation in the ABET classes. "Cleaners must first clean before they attend classes, I'm late all the time, classes start at 8:00 in the morning."

In terms of resources, 25% of the respondents indicated that they were receiving off-site training. Lack of transport was cited as a barrier to their participation in the ABET programmes. "Managers must arrange transport, it is a problem". With regard to the subject of transport, interviews conducted with facilitators revealed the following: "At Reuven (i.e. City Power in Booysens), learners have to travel to the centre, they are often late because of traffic problems". "When learners receive lessons that are on-site, they are more likely to duck and dive, when they travel we have found that there is less delinquency". With regard to learning material, one of the respondents indicated that the font in their reading material was problematic. "… the letters are too small to read".

4.4.3 Comparison of findings to the literature review

Some of the respondents cited a lack of adequate support from home, managers, colleagues and friends as possible barriers to their participation in the ABET classes. In the literature Kruger et al., (2005) contend that many black families in South Africa are faced with the problem of opposing values between home and school and this contributes to the number of barriers to

learning. There were respondents who felt that they could not talk to their family members about their participation in ABET. Knoll (1983) does mention how participation in learning activities could be seen as “showing off” in some social groups.

In this interview, 30% of the respondents indicated that they were not being supported by their managers/team leaders. In the literature, Hales (2004) mentions the importance of having skilled teachers and qualifications to support the learning process. This requirement is particularly important for the motivation and progress of learners. If facilitators are not skilled, they will not be adequately equipped to support the needs of ABET learners which are sometimes more challenging than the needs of younger school-going learners.

English also emerged as a pertinent barrier in this discussion. As previously mentioned, receiving tuition in a second or third language could be challenging. This view is supported in the literature by Kerka (1986). Many of the respondents indicated that they don’t have adequate time to study. In the literature, Lieb (1991) does contend that adults experience barriers to participation in learning because of the many responsibilities that they are faced with.

The findings indicate that travelling to ABET classes could be a possible barrier to learner participation. Akroyd (2003) does indicate how travelling and a lack of transport can put learners off learning. One of the respondents cited the small font in the reading material as a barrier to effective participation in

the ABET classes. Facilitators must ensure that the age and levels of learning are taken into account when learning materials are chosen.

4.4.4 Background Characteristics and Demographics of Facilitators

All the facilitators at the department of City Power were interviewed during the course of the analysis. Below is a graphical representation of the age, race and sex composition of the population.

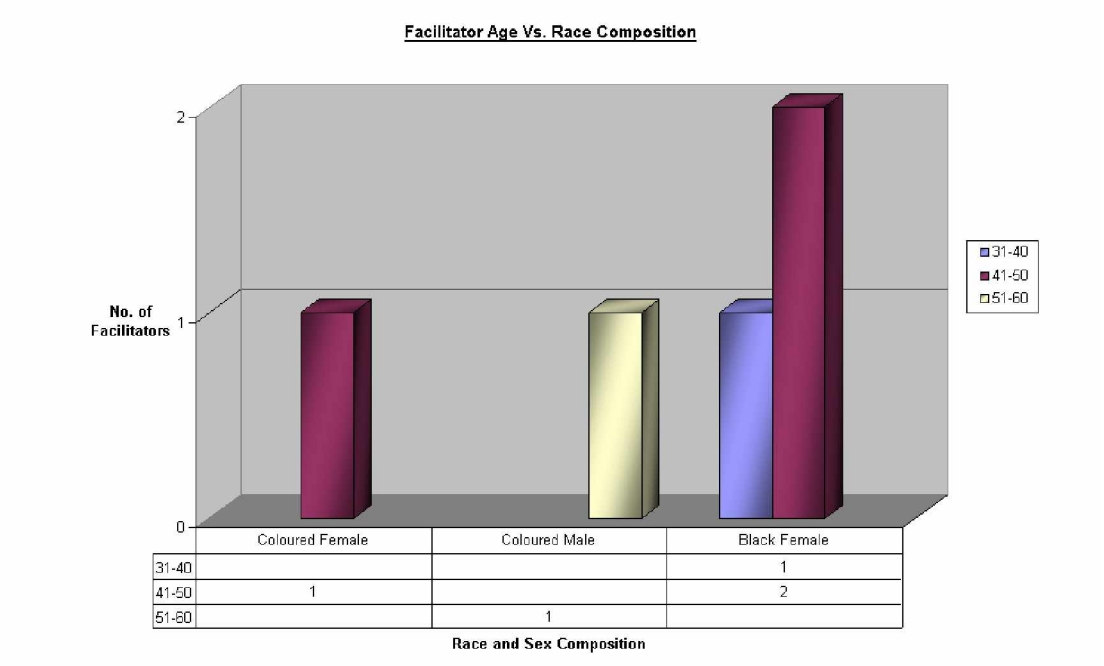


Figure 7: Graphical representation of Facilitator Age vs. Race Composition

- As depicted in Figure 7, of the five facilitators interviewed one was a male constituting 20% of the population compared to the 80% of the female population.
- Compared to the learner representation, where more learners are male and most facilitators are female, this arrangement may have an effect on the learning process in that the male learners are older and as such come from a patriarchal background and may react negatively to authority from women.

4.4.5 Semi-structured interview responses from Facilitators with regard to questions on Motivation, Retention and Barriers to learning

Table 10: The facilitators' no. of years in the ABET programme.

ABET facilitators	**No. of years in ABET**
Respondent 1	3 years
Respondent 2	2 years
Respondent 3	2 years
Respondent 4	3 years
Respondent 5	6 months

The number of years depicted in the table above, indicate that for the majority of facilitators at City Power, the facilitating of ABET is a fairly new experience.

Table 11: Reasons for becoming an ABET facilitator

Reasons for becoming an ABET facilitator	No. of respondents	Total percentage
Accidentally	1	20%
Education specialist	1	20%
Helped out	1	20%
LND consultant	1	20%
Ex- educator and ABET facilitator	1	20%

More than half of the facilitators have experience in education. About 2 of the facilitators were asked to assist in the ABET programme which indicates that this was not their chosen career path.. “I became a facilitator by accident, the company was looking for facilitators and asked if I was interested”.
The findings indicate that 3 of the 5 facilitators have experience in education. “I’m an ex-high school teacher, I have been in education for 30 years”. “I am a foundation phase specialist, an ex- primary school teacher and I also worked in the District”. “I was an administrator, I was asked to help by my supervisor because there was not enough staff to manage the ABET programme”. The fact that 2 have no educational experience may serve as a possible barrier in the retention of learners in literacy programmes.

Table 12: Methods employed by facilitators to motivate potential learners to join the ABET programmes.

How learners are motivated to join the programme	No. of respondents	Total percentage
Road shows at beginning of year	4	75%
Has no idea how learners are motivated	1	25%

The majority of the respondents stated that learners were encouraged to join the ABET programme through a number of road shows held at the beginning of each year and by talking about the programme to people at work. “We have road shows at the beginning of the year. We go to managers that have already sent people, we don’t approach people directly”. One respondent stated that she was not aware of how recruitment for the programme was done each year. “I don’t know how recruitment in ABET is driven, I have only been a facilitator for 6 months”.

Table 13: The rate of learner attendance on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest.

Attendance of learners on a scale from 1-5	**No. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	3	60%
4	1	20%
5	1	20%

Three of the 5 respondents rated the attendance of learners as average. One respondent rated the attendance as good and another one as excellent. The following were cited as reasons for variation; “The higher the level, the greater the number of attendance because learners now have more self confidence”. “Lifestyle and culture problems also affect attendance”. “Pay day blues, learners are reluctant to attend they are more concerned about bread and butter issues, then there is leave which upsets attendance, they have to take leave or they will forfeit it”. “The weather also pays an important role i.e. in summer attendance is higher and in winter lower because of the power outages”.

Table 14: How learners are assisted to stay in the ABET programmes.

How learners are supported to stay in programme	No. of respondents	Total percentage
No proper support	1	20%
Talking to learners	3	60%
Objectives at start of learning	1	20%

Only 1 respondent was not offering adequate support to help retain the learners in the programme. Three were encouraging learners to stay in the programme by speaking to them and phoning them if they were not attending classes. One respondent gave clear objectives to the importance of the learning programme to personal development. “I map out the learning path and progress they would follow; we have annual graduations to recognize learners who have achieved and we organise for them annual excursions and little socials and eats once a month”.

Table 15: Aspects of the programme that learners enjoy.

Aspects of the programme enjoyed	No. of respondents	Total percentage
Life Orientation and communication	5	100%

The findings indicate that all the facilitators said that their learners enjoyed Life Orientation and communication in their classes. ”The learners enjoy talking about life, especially when they talk to you about themselves”. “Although some learners are struggling with the language, they enjoy English”. “My learners like to read aloud in class but not long sentences, they like to talk about general things”. “My learners love to communicate and enjoy writing”.

Table 16: The challenges encountered by learners in the programme.

Challenges experienced by learners	**No. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
Language	3	60%
Standby/night shift	1	20%
Age and lifestyles	1	20%

Three of the facilitators viewed language as the major challenge experienced by learners. This is in contrast to the findings of the learners, where only 3 out of the 8 learners interviewed saw language as a challenge. We can therefore assume that the problem of language is more pertinent to the ABET level 1 and 2 learners. “They are not fond of talking, pronunciation is a problem.” “Language is a major problem at ABET level 1, most of them can speak Afrikaans not English, you have to interpret certain words, you have to repeat yourself”.

Only 1 respondent cited standby/nightshift as a barrier to learner participation. “Nightshift and standby, especially now in winter, when the electricity trips, they are called out of classes for emergencies. They don’t relax, they are tired, they can’t concentrate”.

Another facilitator viewed age and lifestyles as possible barriers to learner participation. “There are cultural and gender differences that come into play, especially with the men. They view young and female facilitators with bewilderment. They think that these facilitators are young and have to teach older people”.

Table 17: The relationship between the number of men and women who are retained in the ABET programme.

Total no. of men and women retained in ABET programme	**Total no. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
Men are retained longer	0	0%
Women are retained longer	5	100%

All the respondents agreed that more women are inclined to complete the ABET programmes as opposed to their male counterparts. “Mostly women stay, they are able to see the programme through. We have only had one female drop out at City Power”. “Initially, retention was a problem when the programme started, now we have to turn people away. They now see the benefits provided by opening a learning pathway”.

Table 18: Availability of resources to assist learners in their studies.

Availability of resources	Total no. of respondents	Total percentage
Adequate supply of resources	3	60%
Inadequate supply of	2	40%

Three of the facilitators stated that there was an adequate supply of resources available at City Power. “We have a library, computer assisted learning programmes for ABET level 3 and 4 learners and internet”.
Two of the facilitators felt that there was an inadequate supply of resources.

Table 19: Support from managers/supervisors for ABET on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest support for the programme and 5 the highest.

Support	Total no. of respondents	Total percentage
1	0	0%
2	1	20%
3	1	20%
4	2	40%
5	0	0%
Varies	1	20%

Only 1 respondent asserted that some managers do not support the programme.

“Facilitators have to force for information, they are not supportive”. Only 1 facilitator rated the support from managers as average. “Some managers will phone on behalf of their workers if there is too much work and they can’t attend lessons”. Two of the facilitators believed that the managers/supervisors’ support was good. “They provide transport and give permission”.

One facilitator felt that support received from managers/supervisors varied from region to region. “If ABET is not a priority, it is not supported”.

Table 20: Reasons offered by facilitators for learners who stay in the programme.

Reasons for learners who stay in the programme	**Total no. of respondents**	**Total percentage**
Literacy and numeracy	3	60%
Promotions	2	40%

Of the 5 facilitators interviewed, 3 cited the acquiring of literacy and numeracy as reasons for learners who stay in the programme. “They can help themselves, fill out forms, be part of a world in which they find themselves”. Two facilitators viewed promotions and recognition as key to retention of learners in the programme. “The fact that they would get certificates, money status, recognition and job promotion”.

Table 21: Reasons offered for learners who do not complete the programme.

Reasons for learners who do not complete the programme	Total no. of respondents	Total percentage
Learners completing	2	40%
Learners not completing	3	60%

Findings from the respondents show that 40% of the learners were completing the programmes.

More than half of the learners were not completing the programmes because they were not coping. “Learners who are not coping, lack self motivation, facilitator is key, one has to consider factors such as personality, qualification and level of professionalism of the facilitator”. “Learners fear assessments and examinations, before the exams they drop out”. “Learners drop out because of illness, diseases, if bosses are not supportive, they can’t cope”. “Others are lazy, they don’t complete because they are using their day at school to do their own business”.

4.5 Comparison of findings to the literature review

There is very little evidence in the literature to suggest the importance of an educational qualification as a prerequisite for facilitating ABET classes. Because the facilitation concerns basic education, one cannot assume that an educational qualification in the foundation phase is not necessary in order to facilitate these learners. On the contrary, educational qualification should

be a prerequisite for facilitation as many of these learners already have learning backlogs when they enter the ABET programmes. This line of thought is supported in the literature by McMillan (1997) who observes that adult learners, particularly in South Africa, have relatively poor experiences of formal education when crossing the border into higher education. Facilitators of these learners should therefore be adequately skilled to deal with these learners. The findings would suggest that experience in the foundation phase should be a prerequisite for the facilitation of adult learners.

4.5.1 Motivation

With regard to the question on motivation, the findings suggest that 3 out of the 5 facilitators encouraged learners to stay in the programme by constantly talking to them and 1 facilitator mapped out a clear learning path to indicate how the learners would progress. Setting out clear objectives/outcomes is important for learners and this is supported in the literature by the expectancy theory of Vroom (1964).

4.5.2 Barriers experienced to learner participation

Some structural barriers within the organisation also emerged as possible factors influencing learner participation in the ABET classes at City Power. From the lack of support from managers/supervisors for learners in the programme, one can assume that the importance of ABET to the general development of the organisation as a whole, is not shared by all stakeholders within the organisation. The literature does allude to the importance of learning organisations. It is interesting to note that the facilitators view the barriers experienced by learners as more external than internal namely,

circumstances occurring on the outside often influence learning on the inside e.g. (pay day blues – learners cannot wait for lessons to be over in order to go to the banks, standby – learners are often tired, therefore cannot concentrate, or they miss lessons).

4.5.3 Retention

The findings indicate that 60% of the learners were not completing the programme because they were not coping.

Facilitators stated that they assist learners to stay in the programme by constantly talking to them and providing encouragement by phoning them if they do not attend classes. The former is supported in the literature by Wlodkowski (1985) who mentions the importance of “tracking” inactive learners. One of the facilitators indicated that the reading material in the library did not cater for ABET learners. Less than half of the respondents indicated that there were not adequate resources available to assist ABET learners. In the literature Timarong et al. (2006) mention how program factors can influence retention.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This chapter addresses the main research questions raised by this study namely:

1. **What are the factors that could promote or hinder motivation of learners in the ABET programmes?**

The acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills emerged as important motivating factors for the enhancement of personal development and performance. The younger people interviewed tended to view ‘promotion’ as a significant factor for their participation in the programme while the older people viewed the attainment of basic skills as key to their participation in the programme.

In this study a lack of support from managers/team leaders surfaced as a significant factor that hinders the motivation of learners. A lack of time for studies and multiple responsibilities also emerged as pertinent factors hindering motivation. However, this study revealed that “multiple responsibilities” was a hindering factor predominantly experienced by the women who are attending the ABET classes.

This study also revealed that standby/shift system was an organisational factor that hinders motivation. Because of the nature of the job, (i.e. the supply of electricity) the learners' studies were often interrupted. During the winter months with an increase in power outages, the facilitators experienced a higher absenteeism rate than in summer. Another factor hindering the motivation of learners was a lack of remuneration and adequate recognition for successful completion of the ABET levels.

2. **How many learners, start, drop-out and complete the ABET programmes?**

According to the statistics indicated in the table below on the number of learners enrolled in 2004/5 and 2005/6, it may seem that there has been no growth in the ABET programme between 2004 and 2006.

Table 22: Number of enrolled learners in 2004/5 and 2005/6

Year	ABET Level 1	ABET Level 2	ABET Level 3	ABET Level 4
2004/5	39	46	20	41
2005/6	25	35	13	51

The possible reasons for the lack of growth especially in the lower levels include:

- Low self-esteem of ABET learners coupled with old age.
- A lack of motivation – when learners do not receive support from their managers or team leaders they do become despondent.
- Fear of failure – the learners are anxious before tests and examinations and because of this anxiety, they often forget their work.
- Poor facilitation.
- Lack of progress – some of the respondents interviewed have been in the programme for more than 5 years.
- ABET is sometimes used as an escape from daily responsibilities at the workplace.

Table 23: The drop-out rate of learners in 2005/6

No. of learners and Year	**ABET Level 1**	**ABET Level 2**	**ABET Level 3**	**ABET Level 4**
No. of learners enrolled in 2005/6	25	35	13	51
No. of drop-outs in 2005/6	4	4	3	18

The reasons for the drop-out rate are different in the lower ABET levels than in the higher levels. Results from the interviews and reports compiled

by City Power indicate that the drop-out rates at the lower levels are more as a result of a lack of motivation, support, low self-esteem and often a lack of progress. The ABET Research Paper (2003) cites some of the following reasons for the drop-out at ABET levels 1 and 2:

- Lack of confidence
- Fear of failure
- Lack of support from managers and supervisors
- Delay of materials
- Lack of resources and use of resource centre
- Problems encountered by facilitators
- Late starting time
- Absenteeism
- Undone projects and homework

At the higher levels, the drop-out rate can be ascribed to a need for change and work improvement. Learners at ABET levels 3 and 4 are often 'stopping out' to return again. The drop-out rate in ABET levels 3 and 4 can be ascribed to the following:

- The need for change – when learners have reached ABET levels 3 and 4 and have acquired a bit of literacy and numeracy skills, they want change.
- On becoming electricians - operational requirements of City Power necessitates that learners take a shorter route to becoming electricians hence, once they reach levels 3 and 4, they often drop-out to do a PGH (an electrical training course for 6 weeks). However, most learners find it difficult to attain this

PGH because the knowledge they have acquired in ABET is often not good enough. Hence, they are compelled to return.

- § Personal and work improvement – when learners have qualified as electricians, there is an improvement in their salary and status. As electricians they are no longer general workers or assistant artisans but LTO's (Low Tension Officers).
- § Death and illness – the drop-out rate at City Power at level 3 in 2005-06 was mainly due to illness and death.

3. What support structures and strategies exist within the organisation and at home, to assist learners to stay in the programmes?

Facilitators were regarded as significant in terms of the support they offered to the learners at City Power through continuous motivation as well as making learners aware of the personal benefits of learning.

The support from managers/team leaders also emerged as pertinent to learner retention. Some of the learners were motivated to stay in the programme through encouragement from a few managers/team leaders who motivated them to apply for better positions that became available within the organisation. However, as stated before, the results also revealed that the ABET programme was not effectively supported by all the stakeholders in the organisation which ultimately hindered motivation and learner participation. Results from this study indicated that the support received from family at home was excellent. The majority of the respondents indicated that their participation in ABET enabled them to assist their children with their homework and that their children in turn

assisted them with the content of their ABET work that they found challenging. As previously mentioned in the literature, ABET enables learners to be more supportive of their children's education.

4. What aspects of the ABET programme do learners enjoy?

Most of the respondents indicated that they enjoyed Life Orientation as it equipped them to deal more adequately with personal challenges they experience and with their daily tasks. The electricians seemed to favour the Mathematics lessons more as knowledge of the concepts in Mathematics have a direct impact on the daily tasks that they perform.

Although it was a challenge for many of the learners to receive lessons in English, they enjoyed reading aloud and communication. Most of the learners in this study are from the rural areas where tuition at school in the past was mainly given in the vernacular. The learners therefore view the ability to read and communicate in English as crucial in accessing the technological world in which they find themselves.

5. What aspects of the programme do learners experience as a challenge?

For many of the learners in this study Mathematics was cited as a main challenge. If one looks at the history of South Africa before 1994, the previous regime carved out a way of learning for black people that would not require knowledge of Mathematics as they were generally encouraged to become labourers. The result is that facilitators find some of the learners have a phobia for Mathematics based on past learning

experiences. The younger men who tend to fair much better in Mathematics have realised the importance of knowledge of the subject as a prerequisite to becoming electricians.

6. What are the barriers/obstacles that prevent learner participation?

A fear of failure and a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed were cited as possible barriers to learner participation especially in ABET levels 1 and 2. As previously mentioned in the literature, the drop-out rates were more evident shortly before and after tests.

Although most respondents cited Mathematics as being complex, it is their grasp of English in which they receive their instruction, which negatively affected their performance. A command of English is important as it forms the basis of all the other learning areas. Hence, if learners have problems with English, it will impact negatively on their understanding of the other learning areas.

A lack of adequate resources was also cited as a barrier to participation. There are no readers for the learners. A report compiled by the ABET programme at City Power did reveal that learning materials take time to arrive, learners do not find relevant books in the library for their projects and that the books in the library are not at the learners' level and are more technical and of a higher standard. The support or lack of adequate support from managers/team leaders also emerged as pertinent to learner retention. The study revealed a significant correlation between the learners who were not coping in the ABET classes and the lack of support

they were receiving. It is interesting to note that the health of the aging learners in the ABET classes at City Power did not emerge as a significant barrier especially in view of the fact that we are dealing with much older learners. This could be attributed to the established 'Wellness Centre' on the City Power premises.

The following meta models provide a summary of the research questions above:

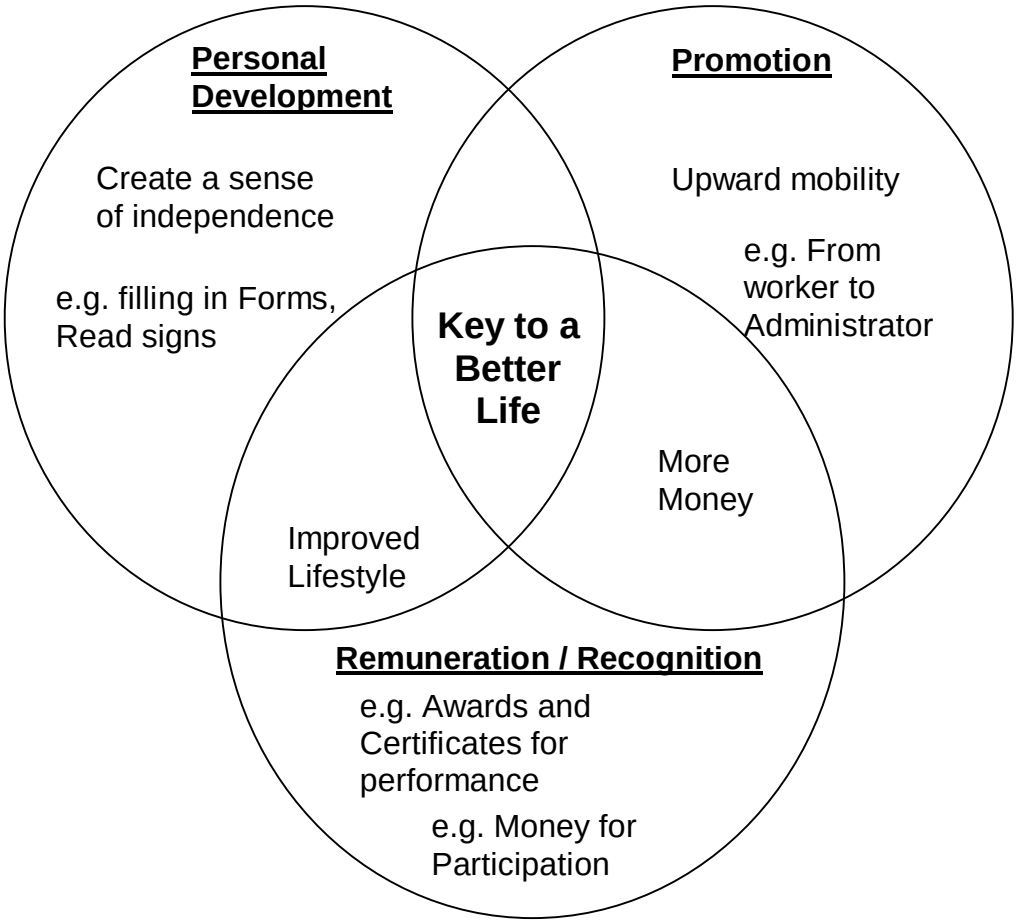


Figure 8: Summary of factors that influence learner participation

In Figure 8 we see a representation of the inter-relationship between personal development, promotion and remuneration or recognition. The ability to read and write sets learners on the path to self reliance. The completing of day to day activities requires literacy and numeracy skills in order to cope with technology (e.g. using an ATM machine) becomes easier, which creates a sense of well-being and independence. An improvement in knowledge and skills places learners in a more favourable position for awards and promotions which is 'key to a better life.' Recognition for improved performance is a motivation for learning and contributes to personal development which is once again key to a better life.

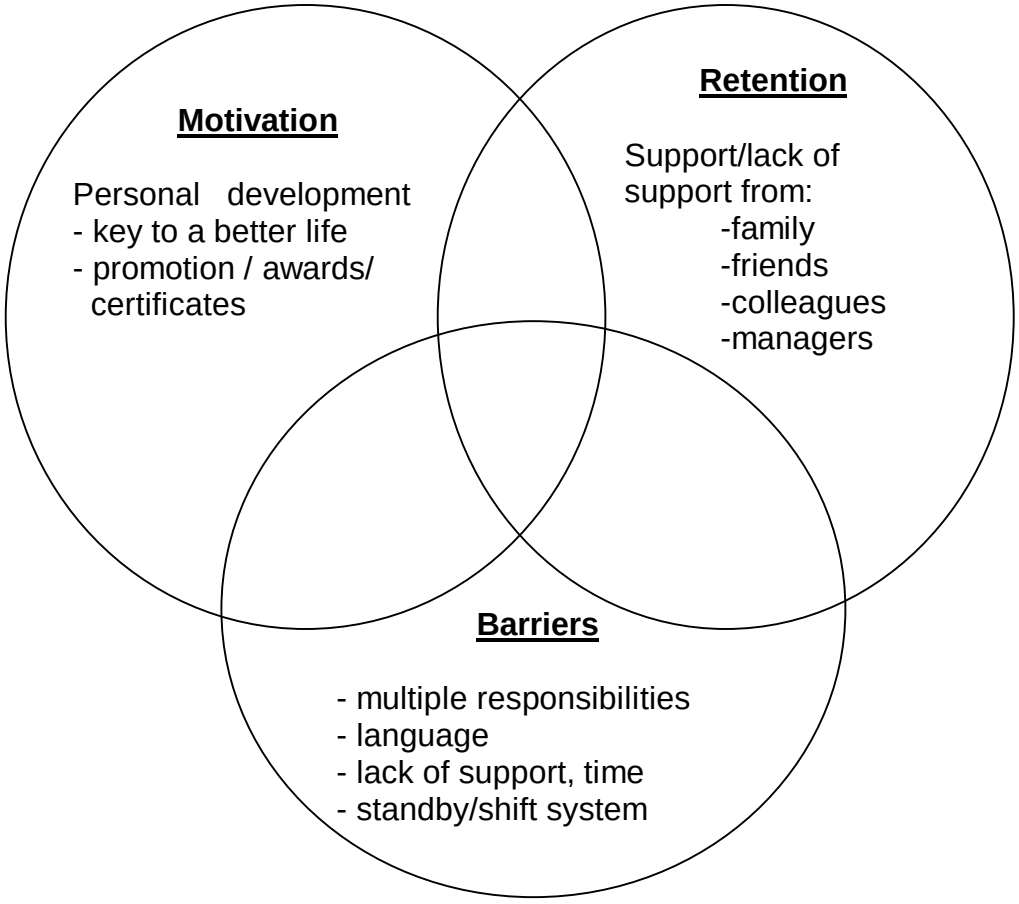


Figure 9: The relationship between Motivation, Retention and Barriers

The link between motivation, retention and barriers is also evident from the presentation in Figure 9. The support or lack of support from family, friends, colleagues or managers not only impacts on learner retention but motivation as well. Similarly, the barriers experienced by adult learners has an effect on their motivation which in turn would be a determining factor to their retention in the ABET classes.

This study has contributed to the literature on factors that could enhance or impede ABET learners from successfully acquiring basic knowledge and skills. Being in a position to be trained or retrained means that people at all levels of development are equipped with tools to contribute positively to their personal development and the development of the country's economy.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations based on this research are listed below.

The Facilitators at City Power could:

- Strive to clearly define the outcomes of the ABET programme to learners at the onset of the programme. In this way, learners know what they are working towards.

- Ensure that learners are equipped with time management and study skills in order to assist them to balance their time spent on working and studying.

- Provide adequate resources that are aimed at the level of the ABET learners such as readers, e-learning programmes and computers in the regions where there are no libraries.

- Provide on-going support and motivation to the learners in order to assist them to be retained in the programmes such as learner support groups or study groups.

Managers/supervisors/team leaders directly or indirectly involved in the learning programmes at City Power could:

- Ensure that the mission and vision statement of the ABET programme is shared by all the people in the organization.

- Explore the reasons why there is a lack of support from managers for the learners involved in these literacy classes.

- Consider employing specialists to facilitate the ABET programmes.

- Look at ways of minimizing the external barriers (standby/shift system or lack of transport) that directly impacts on the learning of people involved in the literacy classes.

- Resolve that promotions and opportunities for development be substantially increased for learners involved in the ABET programmes. Receiving of tangible rewards (money) could prove to be an excellent retention and participation strategy.

- § Take into consideration factors such as educational qualifications, dedication and commitment to ABET learning programmes when appointing facilitators.

5.3 Suggested Areas for Future Research

This study has focused only on the factors that influence the participation of learners at the City Power in Reuven. A study could be conducted to determine these factors as they influence the participation of learners at the other depots of City Power throughout the country. Since the study mainly included the factors as they apply to ABET level 3 and 4 learners, it would be interesting to see whether the same factors apply to ABET level 1 and 2 learners. An avenue that could also yield interesting results would be the impact on learner participation of facilitators who have no prior educational experience.

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APPENDIX A

13 Florida Avenue
Eldorado Park
Ext. 7
1811
5 September 2005

The Manager of the ABET School
City Power
Booysens

Sir

Re: Permission to use the ABET programme at City Power for assistance in research study

I am presently completing a Masters Degree in Education at the University of Witwatersrand. My research topic is on the 'Factors influencing learner participation in ABET programmes offered in the workplace.'

I am involved with ABET learners on a part-time basis at the Secondary School where I am presently teaching. The programme we offer is fairly new and I would therefore appreciate an opportunity to use the ABET programmes offered at City Power in order to conduct my research.

One of the requirements of the research would entail collecting data from learners and facilitators by means of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Please find attached to this letter, a Research Participation Consent Form in which I outline the purpose of my research and the process that I will follow in the conducting of my research.

If there are any questions or concerns with regard to my research and the use of the ABET programme at City Power, I could be contacted at the following numbers: (H) 342-3251 / © 084 250 1728 / andrewsb@st.barnabas.co.za.

Thanking You

_____
(Mrs) B. Andrews

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION CONSENT

Dear Learner, Facilitator, Manager/Supervisor

I am a final year student at the Wits MEd School and I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. Before you agree/decline to participate in any activities set, I would like to explain what my research study is about.

Please read through this document carefully and if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to ask me to explain. It is also important to note that you have the right to withdraw from any of the set activities in the event that you change your mind.

Thank you for your time

Brenda Andrews

Research Aim

The aim of this research, is to 'Identify the factors that influence the participation of learners in the ABET programmes offered at City Power'.

How the research information will be collected

In order for me to find out more about the reasons why people join the ABET programmes, what they learn, why they complete and why some leave, I will need to do the following:

> Conduct semi-structured interviews where you will be involved in a discussion about your experiences in the ABET programmes

> Conduct focus group discussions to determine the possible barriers/obstacles experienced in the learning process.

What does your participation involve?

In agreeing to participate, you will allow me to:
Use the information you have given me, in my final research report.

How will the data be used and presented?

In order to protect the rights of individuals the following procedures will be followed with the collection and analysis of data:

> For each participant, a pseudonym or code will be used. In this way, each person will remain anonymous.

> Once data has been analysed, participants may if they wish, examine the data, add comments and be given an opportunity to verify the information.

The following form must be completed once you have read and understood the information above:

I, _____ agree / do not agree to

participate in the research study. (Rule a line across the option that does not apply to you).

With regard to information shared during the study and in agreeing to participate I understand that:

> My honesty in the sharing of information is important
> My identity will be protected
> I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time
> My participation in the study will in no way negatively affect my work in the programme
>The researcher will allow me to view and comment on the analyses of information before it is submitted.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEWEE:

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Brenda Andrews. I'm a final year MEd student at the University of Witwatersrand, doing my dissertation on the 'Factors that influence learner participation in the workplace'. Would you mind if I ask you a few questions? Please remember that all information will be kept confidential.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DETAILS

Demographic Information.

1. Determine sex of respondent (non verbal).

Male		Female	

2. What is your age?

21 – 30	
31 – 40	
41 – 50	
51 – 60	
61 and over	

3. Racial Composition

Black	
White	
Indian	
Coloured	

4. Number of years in the ABET?

1 – 3 years	
4 – 5 years	
6 – 7 years	

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ABET LEARNERS

5. Why did you decide to join the ABET programme?

Learn to read and write	
Self- improvement	
Helping kids with homework	
Other (specify)	

6. Would you encourage other people to join the programme? Why or why not?

Motivation for encouragement	
Motivation against encouragement	

7. Do you think your daily work has improved because of your participation in ABET?

If yes, specify	
If no, specify	

8. Do you enjoy the programme? If yes, what do you enjoy about the programme. If no, what don't you enjoy about the programme?

Work content	
Facilitator	
Other (specify)	

9. Are there aspects of the programme that you find difficult? If yes, explain what these aspects are.

If yes, specify	
If no, specify	

10. Do you find it hard to work and study at the same time? Why or why not?

If yes (specify)	
If no (specify)	

SECTION C: SUPPORT/ PERCEPTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS OF ABET PROGRAMME

11. Do you get support from…?

    a. Managers /supervisors /team leaders
    b. Colleagues

Managers/supervisor/team leader	
Colleagues	
Other (specify)	

12. What do other people i.e. family and friends think about your participation in the programme?

Family	
Friends	
Other (specify)	

13. Are there any rewards in place from the company if you complete the programme?

Yes	
No	

14. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, are these rewards…?

Certificates	
Promotions	
Other (specify)	

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

5. How long have you been an ABET facilitator?

1 – 3 years	
4 – 6 years	
7 – 10 years	
Other (specify)	

6. What motivated you to become an ABET facilitator?

Passion for facilitating	
Qualified practitioner	
Other (specify)	

7. Do you encourage the people to join the programme? If answered 'yes', do you offer…?

Food	
Incentives	
Other (specify)	

8. How would you rate the attendance of learners on a scale of 1 to 5. Number 5 being excellent.

5. Excellent	
4. Very Good	
3. Good	
2. Average	
1. Poor	

9. How are learners helped to stay in the programme?

Encouragement	
Extra lessons	
Other (specify)	

10. List the aspects of the programme that learners particularly enjoy?

11. List the difficulties experienced by learners in the programme?

Facilitators	
The ABET programme	
Time	
Other (specify)	

12. Are there resources available at City Power to assist learners in their studies?

Yes	
No	

13. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, what are the resources?

Computers	
Library	
Other (specify)	

SECTION C: SUPPORT/ PERCEPTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS OF ABET PROGRAMME

14. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how would you rate support from:

a. Managers/Team leaders

Managers/Team leaders	
Specify	

15. What reasons would you offer for the learners who complete the ABET programmes?

Promotions	
Recognition	
Other (specify)	

16. What reasons do you offer for learners who do not complete the ABET programmes?

Insufficient Time	
Low levels of motivation	
Other (specify)	

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Learners from the ABET level 3 group were randomly chosen for the focus group discussion.

The subject discussed: Learners were asked to provide detailed information on the possible barriers that they experienced in their participation of the ABET classes.