

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

FROM THE ROOTS TO THE FRUIT  
A qualitative case study of internship

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# **FROM THE ROOTS TO THE FRUIT**

**A qualitative case study of internship**

by

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The whole of this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own and original work.

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Durban, August 1996

## **Abstract**

The dissertation describes a project to employ two young African trainees in the Centre for Adult Education at the University of Natal in Durban. The intention was to develop them as possible community adult educators, and a list of objectives relevant to such a role was developed. The trainees worked for ten months part-time, employed mainly on administrative and clerical tasks, as opportunities for directly educational work in fact proved to be limited.

The project did not achieve the objectives for the most part, at least to the desired extent, and the trainees progressed not to further community involvement but to tertiary education. It nonetheless assisted the trainees in clarifying their career goals and acting on them with considerable success. The particular frustrations and difficulties of trainees from a radically different social environment are recorded, as well as their growing confidence and changed perspectives as they began to form their own understandings of a tertiary context, and to reevaluate their own role as employees and later students. The nature of the learning that did take place is described in some detail, and the reasons are explored for the partial success and noteworthy failures of the project.

The study points to the need for understanding clearly the distinction between learning in formal education and informal and incidental learning in the workplace. It explores the differences between the two kinds of learning, and points to the need for further work to describe and analyse adequately learning that takes place outside formal education.

The project demonstrated the specific difficulties of the university as a site of workplace learning. It exposed the issue of content in adult education as an area which demands far greater consideration, especially in the training of adult educators, and the study underlines the need for learning of content to parallel learning of teaching method.

The major adult education needs of South Africa call for flexibility in developing adult educators, and the study aims to inform ways in which internship can be used to help meet those needs.

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## **Preface**

Thanks go first and foremost to the trainees, Bheki and Zanele, who were the dutiful subjects of this study, in particular thanks to them for suspending their doubts that the dissertation would ever see the light of day. Thanks also to Nhlanhla and Wanda Majuqalana, for demonstrating to me unequivocally how superbly and how rationally human beings can learn, even in the absence of a teacher. Thanks to John Aitchison for his occasional chiding and sympathetic redirection in the early days of struggling with this study.



## Introduction

This dissertation is a qualitative case study of an internship project. The project provided an opportunity for two young African trainees to learn some of the skills and understandings of adult educators through a ten month attachment to the Centre for Adult Education, a department at the University of Natal, Durban (the Centre has since become the Department of Adult and Community Education).

The questions that informed this project were these: What was the nature of the trainees' learning through this attachment, and what were the factors that either obstructed or facilitated their learning?

With regard to the *nature* of the learning that took place, was it of the kind that we would expect to take place in the context of a formal class, or were there skills and understandings of a different nature that would not be learnt in a class? For example, how would the learning relate to learning objectives of a kind that might be used in a class for adult educators?

With regard to the *factors* obstructing or facilitating learning, in what way did they impact on the learning? How did they relate to the context from which the trainees came, and how did they relate to the context in which they were placed - the way the project was conceived and organised, the organisational culture of the department, the relationships with others at work - or to initiatives undertaken by the trainees?

This project focused on the development of the trainees as community adult educators with reference to a specific set of competencies that were identified at the outset of the project. It took place shortly before the intensive policy work in the area of adult education led to the concept of education, training and development practitioners, frequently referred to as ETDP (National Training Board 1994: 123ff). It is worth noting that the role of internship as one route to proficiency is recognised within the proposals of the National Training Board (1994: 134), and the study provides relevant information on strengths and limitations of this approach.

Three issues that emerged from this study may be worth identifying at the outset. The first has to do with the kinds of learning that take place in internship and the way that this learning differs from the learning one expects to take place in formal or nonformal classes. The trainees participated minimally in formal classes, and while this would not be supported in future training programmes, it served to heighten this contrast between the two kinds of learning. In particular, while the project succeeded only in small part in terms of its formal objectives, it had unexpected successes in terms of the trainees' broader understandings of themselves and their careers.

The second concerns the emphasis in much adult education discourse on generalised methodology without reference to specific content and context. The internship was not linked to the learning of content that the trainees might teach, and the project exposed limitations in this way of framing the capabilities of adult educators when designing a training programme. It serves in part to remind of the importance of this area in the conceptualisation of the ETDP.

The third concerns the nature of the university as what is now referred to as a 'learning organisation' (popularised by Senge, 1993), and the ways in which its organisational structure impedes or facilitates learning. While this particular department has its own ways of doing things, much would be typical of university departments generally. An educational institution is not necessarily effective as a learning organisation.

## **Chapter One      Origins of the project**

The project consisted of a ten month part-time placement of two young trainees, Bheki and Zanele (both trainees have read the dissertation and agreed to the use of their actual names), at the Centre for Adult Education. Zanele was at the time an unemployed schoolleaver, having shortly before completed her final Matriculation examination: Bheki was in his second-to-last year at school. Both trainees reported to the researcher, who was at the time a lecturer within the Centre. The broad aim of the project was to develop the trainees as community adult educators, who could work within a non-governmental organisation or community-based organisation, or work with such organisations through the Centre for Adult Education.

This project resulted from the researcher's own curiosity in exploring how people learn outside the classroom. It coincided with increasing interest amongst adult educators and trainers in learning processes within the work environment, as the inadequacies of formal education in preparing people for the workplace have been realised (Candy and Crebert 1990). Nowhere is this more so than in South Africa, where the widespread collapse of school education has coincided with technological, economic and social changes that require rapid learning and relearning.

While the Centre for Adult Education was somewhat isolated from research work internationally as a result of the academic boycott, which ended effectively during 1990, the same interest was developing in the use of internship as had been developing elsewhere.

The idea for the project originated with concerns of the researcher, who began work in the Centre in 1983. My work (I shall use the first person in most cases) principally concerned the development of a programme of non-degree courses for community organisations in two areas - at first that of organisational management and development - for example meetings skills, planning and financial management - and later and increasingly the development of staff in community organisations who have some educational role within the organisation or in their activities of the organisation

(such as health workers, social workers, managers of sheltered employment projects, trade union educators).

In the mid 1980's increased State repression lead to increasing demands on the more liberal universities to provide resources to organisations that had been targeted by the State. With external funding available to employ staff, a wider range of workshops and courses was offered by the Centre. This included in 1987 and 1988 two intensive courses in organisational skills for youth activists, each over a four-month period. The context in the region was one of violent conflict between progressive Black groupings on the one hand and conservative Black groupings and the repressive forces of the State on the other. The staff mainly responsible for the courses for young Black people were the researcher and an experienced educator working on contract. The courses were disrupted by the violence, through injury to the participants, through injury to family members, and in some cases deaths, and by the detention of participants by the State, as well as continual though relatively minor problems of travel and accommodation. Nonetheless the courses generated much enthusiasm and sense of accomplishment amongst the trainers and participants. No formal evaluation was possible at that stage.

One question which concerned the staff was how we would replicate our capabilities in teaching such courses. In 1987 we began discussing ways of developing a larger pool of adult educators from those who might be new to the field but who could learn through working on courses run in the Centre for Adult Education.

### *An apprenticeship approach*

We developed a proposal for an apprenticeship scheme and selected three Arts graduates, two of whom were studying further, for part-time work with the staff. The students were asked to assist with administrative tasks during workshops, to observe what was taking place, and to identify further roles that they could undertake.

The scheme was not very successful. Two of the apprentices were unwilling to do work they saw as intellectually meagre, such as administration, and commented on

what we did in a critical way, but in a way which we felt was generally uninformed and reflected their lack of involvement in such work. The third demonstrated more interest in the organising of courses, and undertook a major part of the work in setting up a course, including publicising, recruiting and helping to administer the course.

Our impression was that the way the first two spoke and thought about the courses drew on their practices as university students. They prioritised observing and judging over involvement and self-reflection, and these activities were not useful without participation in the work - for example, their criticisms were not grounded in any 'feel' for what we were trying to do. For this reason, and because of the departure of my fellow worker, the scheme was not continued.

### *Experience of work placement*

In the second half of 1989 the researcher accepted secondment from the Centre to work for the university in the area of educational development, for a period of two years. The initial task I undertook was to organise a large conference, for over 300 delegates. At this time I was approached by a student who had been on the course for activists, and was now studying towards a diploma in public administration at a local technikon (the South African name for a tertiary technical college). His course required that he undertake work experience for three months. As I could identify many specific tasks at which the student could be of assistance, he was taken on at a small salary.

This attachment was successful both in terms of the work done by the student, which contributed significantly to the smooth operation of the conference, and in terms of his satisfaction at having undertaken a job of work and having learnt from it. His work included operation of a computer data base, dispatch of correspondence, filing, mailing, photocopying, organisation of venues, helping delegates with enquiries, and general assistance during the conference. After the conference he helped collate materials of the publication of the conference proceedings and organised the eventual distribution.

The student's work required that he learn a range of skills new to him - use of the computer, specific operation of the database software, a range of office operations and some skills in people handling. After leaving and completing his diploma, he secured a post at an organisation directed towards assisting communities in their planning and research activities, in part because of his prior work experience in the Centre. The skills he had learnt were general and administrative rather than specific to adult education, but the success of the placement encouraged me to seek further opportunities for internship.

At the end of 1991 I returned to the Centre and raised again my interests in work experience. At this time staff of the Centre involved in training programmes included the Director, myself and one other lecturer on formal establishment, and two contract lecturers working in the areas of adult basic education and community education.

The Centre had in place two training programmes for adult educators, the first being a formal postgraduate diploma, run on a part-time basis over two years, mainly for adult educators working in a wide range of educational, non-governmental and business organisations. The other programme was a nonformal course for community adult educators, who would be working usually at a more 'grassroots' level. Entrants needed only school-leaving qualifications and ability to use English as the formal entry requirements.

### *Forces for internship*

There was already a growing interest within the Centre in work experience as a way of developing adult educators. This was driven by two factors. The first was the awareness of the scale of need for adult education and the very limited production of adult educators through formal courses. At that time the demands on adult educators were changing. Our justification had drawn largely on our opposition to apartheid, and our willingness to support resistance politics by providing educational resources. With the collapse of the apartheid state, the pressures were now towards demonstrating our effectiveness in meeting the huge needs which apartheid had left.

Very briefly, the following statistics indicate the lack of educational attainment:

- In 1991, 43% of African 20-64 year-olds had no education beyond primary level.
- About 41% of African 20-64 year-olds were regarded as effectively illiterate.
- Only 7% of the entire population of the country had some kind of tertiary qualification.

(Source: National Training Strategy Initiative 1994: 46)

To make matters worse, these figures are better than they would have been had all the population been included - they excluded certain areas at that time regarded as 'independent' African areas.

The chart overleaf provides further evidence of both the low level of educational attainment and the racial imbalances in the system. These figures indicate that any serious attempt to provide education for adults would require a huge increase in the number of trainers and educators.

The other factor pushing for thinking about internship was a sense that we couldn't rely on formal courses - or formal courses alone - to develop the 'trainers of trainers' (like ourselves) that were needed. Work by a staff member in the Centre (Von Kotze 1992) revealed some of the routes followed into adult education by university-based adult educators in South Africa. This revealed that while many had previously been teachers in schools or tertiary education, the entry point for most into adult education was through voluntary work, through churches and through political engagement. The range of skills they needed as adult educators had been developed through educational and community involvement.

This route was slow and indirect, but the question arises as to whether it was in some ways more effective and held certain advantages that cannot be accommodated within a formal course.

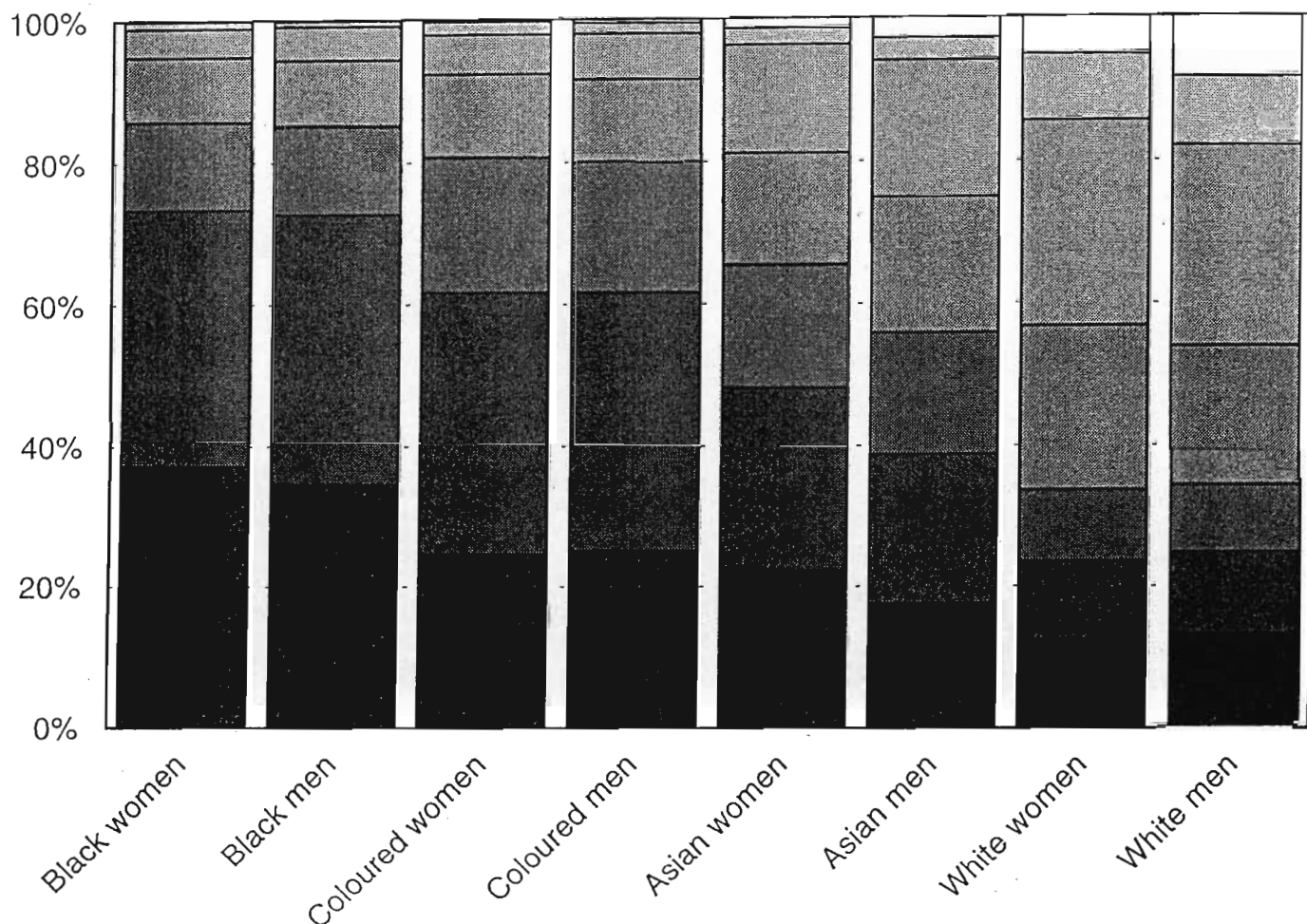
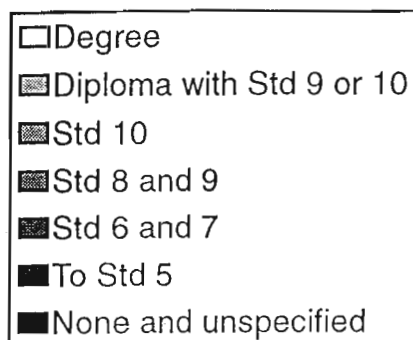


Figure 1.1 Education levels of population seven years and older: 1991 census (RSA Central Statistical Services 1992: level of education by development region, statistical region and district. No 03-01-07. Figures exclude the then Transkei, Bophutatswana and Ciskei territories)



Our interest in this area thus drew largely on the needs with which we as South African educators were faced, and the pressure on us to justify our work to the university and to donors in terms of those needs. If a country like South Africa is to address the growing demand for adult education of many kinds, can formal and nonformal education be sufficient to equip the trainers with the skills needed? Or could they be complemented by placement and internship schemes which would enable informal learning to take place?

Our interest also resonated with concerns being expressed elsewhere about the effectiveness of formal education in preparing people for the workplace - the adult education workplace being of course only one of many. The emerging theory relating to workplace learning is explored further in Chapter Four.

### *Apprenticeship revived*

Thus towards the end of 1991 the researcher raised again the possibility of an apprenticeship scheme. I proposed a scheme in which we would select perhaps two trainees who would work part-time in the Centre while studying part-time on university courses. It was aimed at young African school-leavers who would be able to finance their studies through their work, and who might at the conclusion of the scheme find employment in the Centre. This was in part motivated by concern in the Centre that we were failing to employ Black staff members, and that affirmative action was necessary.

The scheme would have necessitated careful selection at the outset, and a seven-year commitment by the Centre. The difficulties in selection and the long commitment envisaged were identified as obstacles by other staff in the Centre, who felt it was too ambitious. The plans were thus dropped. Instead it was suggested that I might develop a short-term trainee scheme as an alternative. The project was thus designed on this basis.

## Chapter Two: Research Methods

This chapter reports on and examines the methods used in the construction of the project and in the processes of data collection and analysis. It concludes with a critical overview of the project in terms of its design, and proposes an alternative design.

This dissertation is a qualitative case study of a project. Since the project was set up to provide information on the questions about learning, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish 'study', the recording and analysis of what happened, from the 'project', the actual internship. And the success of the study is, perhaps fortunately, not dependent on the success of the project. But in other ways the project and the study are not distinct. The processes of data collection, for example, were an integral part of the project, and decisions were made about the project on the basis of the data. The author's role was that of mentor as well as that of researcher, and the process of creating meaning from what happened was itself part of the project.

### *Defining the study*

Following Merriam (1988), these features define this as a qualitative case study:

- With minor exceptions, the data collected is qualitative, in other words, 'the paramount objective is to understand the *meaning* of an experience' (Merriam 1988: 16).
- It is a case study, bounded by the scope of the project, and almost (not entirely) by the duration of the project.
- It aims not to trace one particular variable, but to explore different dimensions of a phenomenon, and to describe what happened within that phenomenon.
- It emphasises processes of description and explanation rather than the testing of hypotheses.

- The researcher was integrally involved in the project that is reported.

### *The choice of research design: why qualitative?*

Such is the dominance of quantitative research models that it is still necessary to justify the choice of a qualitative approach. Typically, such justifications tend to emphasise the rich texture of data, as distinct from the more reductionist approaches in quantitative research:

Qualitative data .... are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations.... [the data] are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new theoretical integrations, they help researchers go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks. Finally, the findings from qualitative studies have a quality of 'undeniability', as Smith (1978) has put it. (Miles and Huberman 1984: 15).

.... most case studies in education approach a problem of practice from a holistic perspective. That is, investigators use a case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. (Merriam 1988: xii)

Generalisable statements and predictions are not the only contribution research can make. For example, a case study can expose the limitations of a particular assumption and serve to demonstrate the effects it had in a particular context. It can also generate critical questions for practice, and alert practitioners to concerns that may need to be addressed in other cases.

In this particular case, there were constraints which made a qualitative approach necessary. It was not logistically possible - in terms of finance, supervision or accommodation - to employ the large numbers of trainees that would enable a wealth of quantitative data to be generated. The hours worked by trainees was one set of useful quantitative data; there was little else that seemed to be relevant.

Furthermore, the fact that the trainee scheme brought together people from different backgrounds and different experiences of work argues for the use of data that would

reveal the perceptions of the different actors, for example through the use of diaries and discussions.

It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of a qualitative approach, and in particular this approach with such a small number of trainees. This can be illustrated by the issue of gender, for example. Clear differences between the two trainees emerged with regard to their orientation to work. These differences coincide with some formulations of the way men and women approach tasks. The temptation is to ascribe these differences to gender differences; such an ascription must though remain at the point of suggestion rather than generalisation, given the limited quantum of data. So while qualitative data can allow interesting possibilities to emerge that we may wish to test further, using qualitative data does not facilitate generalisation.

### *Philosophical underpinnings*

It is often thought, either by assumption or logical argument, that using a qualitative research approach of this nature commits one to a particular philosophical position in which 'reality' is what it is construed to be, and research a matter of revealing the different assumptions and meanings. This is variously described; Boshier (1994) refers to it as Interpretivist.

It is not central to this study to engage in much depth with this philosophical debate. I would argue that a qualitative research approach does not require an Interpretivist position on the part of the researcher. It is equally consistent with a more objectivist understanding of reality as something inherently complex and not susceptible to simple or quantifiable description. A judge who makes a judgement on the basis of the multiple interpretations of diverse witnesses is not thereby assumed to adopt a particular philosophical position.

The question is well handled by Smaling (1992), who argues for pragmatism in choosing between qualitative and quantitative methods of research, and **not** basing decisions on allegiance to a particular paradigm. In passing I would note that had this

particular enquiry been able to usefully yield more quantitative data, that data would have been used.

### *Why a case study?*

Merriam (1988: 9) presents four points that should inform a decision to choose an experimental or a nonexperimental research design. In brief, these are:

- 1      The nature of the research question
- 2      The amount of control
- 3      The desired end product
- 4      Whether a bounded system can be identified as the focus of the investigation.

In this project, the aim was to explore in depth a phenomenon, that of internship, which has been inadequately theorised and in which the categorisations used vary considerably. A case study offers the opportunity to survey in depth a particular instance rather than attempting to survey specific, clearly identified variables across a large sample, for example.

Furthermore, a low degree of experimental control was appropriate. In part this was because of the need to allow a fair degree of freedom to the trainees to explore what they chose to explore. In part this is because the project did not aim to focus on a limited number of variables, but instead aimed to allow the experience to develop and to understand what would emerge from that experience.

The end-product of the project was seen as greater clarity with regard to such concepts as 'learning', and factors that enabled or blocked such learning. The design was more suited to the production than the testing of hypotheses. And finally, the internship was bounded in time and space, thus serving to define clearly what it is that

we are studying, although some data gathered after the end of the actual internship has been included in the study.

### ***Data collection***

The following table sets out the written documentation available on the project, with dates where these are relevant. The mentor's journal contains not only a record of what happened, but also other comments made by Centre staff, for example.

Sources of data	Dates
Original statement of assumptions by mentor	January 1992
Applications by trainees	February 1992
Journal kept by mentor	February - December 1992
Journal kept by each trainee	February - December 1992*
Evaluation forms completed by trainees	June 1992 12 December 1992
Minutes of meetings with trainees	27 April 1992 18 May 1992 3 December 1992 29 January 1993
Minutes of meetings with staff of Centre for Adult Education	15 June 1992
Minutes of meetings with supervisor	4 May 1992 17 June 1992
Life histories written by trainees	July 1992
Formal interviews with trainees	30 September 1993 3 March 1994

\* The trainees' journals are very useful sources. However, it must be noted that neither was very enthusiastic about keeping a record. One trainee expressed herself more freely, but her journal entries end in August.

## ***Sources of data for the study***

### ***Data analysis***

The major task of analysis was a process of developing categories similar to that suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and described in Merriam (1988: 133ff). It involved combing all written documentation for data that met the criteria of being critical in terms of change, or representative of a common theme (for example, repetitive comments in the trainees' journals), or examples of a specific kind of

learning (for example, learning to use the computer), key metaphors, etc. This amounted to perhaps 30% of all written material.

Each passage (whether a phrase, sentence or paragraph) was then used as a separate record, and allocated a keyword or words that seemed appropriate to that passage. There was then a process of reworking keywords - few remained unchanged - to eliminate concepts that overlapped and to find more appropriate words, words that more accurately reflected what was common in a group of records.

The following 41 keywords were developed through this process:

Adult education	the trainees' understanding of adult education and the nature of adult education work
Autonomy	the extent of the trainees' ability to initiate or operate independently
Bheki	data relating specifically to the one trainee
Career	the trainees' career expectations and choices
Centre for Adult Education	the department within which the internship took place, and its organisational culture
Challenge	the challenge of unfamiliar work or of confrontation, and its relationship to learning
Computer	experience of using the computer and how it related to learning
Content	specific educational content in the internship
Contract	the original contract between the researcher and trainees, and related issues
Co-operation	the ability of the trainees to work effectively with each other and with other staff members
Disruption	the impact on the internship of societal disruption, especially on the lives of the trainees
Experiences	the role of experience in the trainees' learning
Exploration	the degree to which the trainees explored new situations and learnt from them
Failure	what the trainees experienced as failure in learning
Goals	the explicit goals set for the internship
Instruction	the role of specific instruction (often as opposed to learning through exploration)
Job	the trainees' understanding of what a job is in the workplace
Learning	all data on the learning of the trainees

Learning style	data indicating how the trainees learnt
Mentoring	the relationship of direction and support between researcher and trainee
Mentor's job	the trainees' perceptions of the mentor's job
Methods	data relating to research methods used
Money	the trainees' earnings, and handling money in the office
Office skills	skills such as filing, photocopying, faxing, use of telephone
Racism	the impact of racism on the internship
Reading	the extent to which trainees read books on adult education and their comments on what they read
Relationship	the relationship between mentor and trainees
Role	the role of trainees and of mentor
Schooling	the trainees' experience of school
Selection	issues relating to the selection of trainees
Self-assessment	the trainees' ability to assess their own progress
Sexism	sexism in the scheme or more generally in the lives of the trainees
Skills	the full range of skills identified in the goals and in the trainees' learning
Success	what trainees experienced as success in their learning
Theory	in particular, theoretical writings in adult education
Time	the time available and its implications for learning
Training courses	the use of nonformal courses in adult education
University	academic work and concerning university students
Work organisation	the way work was organised in the internship, and how it related to learning
Youth	events relating to the youth of the trainees
Zanele	data relating specifically to the one trainee

### ***Glossary of keywords***

Clearly the words reflect the concerns of the researcher and such a process of selection obviously has the danger of distorting data by including material that fits into the preoccupations or preconceptions of the researcher. The researcher thus reviewed all data that had been omitted to identify any other material that seemed relevant. This process validated the choice of these key words.

Such a process turned out to have more value than simply organising data more coherently. It was only by repeatedly working through the material that one key theme



emerged - that of the trainees' difficulty with content. This was a 'blind' area for the researcher, who had not picked up the trainees' frustration in the area, and the exercise was very useful in helping it to emerge from the data. In contrast some of the categories were not productive in revealing data despite the expectations of the researcher.

### *Issues of validity, reliability and ethics*

In considering these methodological issues, it is important to consider what the study is attempting to do, and not attempting to do. The study aims to describe a process, to illuminate the complexities of relationships between different kinds of learning and between people from very different backgrounds. It should be used to alert would-be mentors, for example, to consider certain questions that might otherwise be glossed over, to problematise the apparently mundane (Merriam: 165) and to explore certain paths that would otherwise not be considered. It should through its description enable comparisons to be made with internships in other contexts. It does not aim to produce findings generalisable to trainees in general, nor to test a specific hypothesis.

The difficulty in the concepts of validity and reliability applied to a study of a complex phenomenon such as the internship project is that they were developed within research in the natural sciences, where the idea of an unchanging reality has held sway. The phenomenon of internship in different contexts cannot be considered to be as universally consistent as that of the behaviour of electrons (even though the previous certainties in that area are also increasingly unstable). However, comparisons between specific cases of internship in different contexts might point to certain more general rules.

The most important consideration methodologically is whether the study illuminates the relevant issues and is true to what actually happened in the project. This emphasises the need for *validity*.

It says less about the need for *reliability* in the sense of the replicability of the findings. Unlike in the natural sciences, no-one would seriously consider replicating the project in this form. For one thing, if this study suggests that it could have been better designed (as it does), it would not be sensible or ethical to repeat it in that form. Nor is it possible to replicate such a project - it took place at a particular stage in the development of the country, a stage which is now past. The role of university adult education and the role of the 'community', defined largely at that time by the struggle against apartheid, have both changed.

A more appropriate conception would be the concepts of *dependability* or *consistency* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, in Merriam: 172). These emphasise rather the congruency of the findings with the data, that any informed observer would regard the conclusions as reasonable given the data available.

Of course, the concepts of validity and reliability are interlinked. One way of achieving reliability would be to ensure a high degree of validity, on the basis that the accurate report of a phenomenon will be the same as another accurate report of the same phenomenon, to the extent that the phenomenon remains the same. Thus accuracy in reporting should enable a degree of generalisability to the extent that generalisability is possible.

What measures then were taken in the study to ensure validity and dependability?

- Triangulation (i.e. the use of different kinds of data, to avoid the possible distortions from using one kind of data only): findings were developed from different sources of data - from the journals of people with different experiences of the project, from the records of meetings as well as journals.
- Through checking findings against the perceptions of those involved in the project who were not researchers - the trainees. This checking took place to some extent through informal and more formal meetings during the course of the project, and

more directly after its conclusion - both trainees have commented on drafts of this dissertation.

- Through collecting data over a long period of time. It was very helpful, for example, to test the perceptions of the trainees after the conclusion of the project (making a virtue of the delay in concluding the study). This was in fact a critical step to take as the new data forced a rethinking of what was in fact happening in the project.
- Clarifying the assumptions that were made, before the project began, and enabling a more critical review of whether these did or did not bias the findings.

### *The dual role of the researcher*

The researcher in the study was also the mentor in the project. In a seminar with other adult educators this aspect of the project was criticised, and the implications of participant observation need to be explored.

The disadvantages are the increased likelihood of subjectivity and bias, and the potential of conflict between the roles - the danger exists for example of asking probing questions to elicit information for the sake of the study, even if it were to undermine the confidence of the trainees. Furthermore, sometimes one may be so close to what is happening that you have a limited perspective and fail to notice key features.

There are though also definite advantages. First of all, you are familiar with what is happening in the project in a way that no independent observer can be, as well as the processes that led up to it. There is no way of documenting all the details that you are familiar with, and furthermore you have access to the 'underside' of the project in a way that an observer cannot. The relationship of trainee and mentor, if successful, in addition gives the mentor who is also researcher a degree of closeness and understanding that is very helpful.

Generally, the experience of the researcher was that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. However, it would have been more effective if certain changes had been made in the construction of such a project.

### *An alternative design?*

The need to understand such broad terms as 'learning', which are commonly used, but seldom clarified, would argue strongly in favour of a qualitative approach, where trainees' conceptions of learnings could be explored in interaction with a researcher. One such way might be to interview in depth trainees serving internships in different contexts - in medicine, in industry or commerce, in government, in tertiary education. These interviews would undoubtedly generate more generalisable findings concerning the kinds of learnings, and the relationships between learning in a formal context and in the context of work.

The limitation of such a design would be that it might fail to address the issues specific to internship in adult education - for example, a key issue that emerged in this study was that of content in the training of adult educators.

In retrospect, I would have designed the project in a fairly similar way. The major changes would be as follows:

- a different choice of trainee (see Chapter 8). This change would take place not because the project would necessarily yield much useful data, but it would be more productive in terms of adult educator training.
- a specific role for a mentor outside the Centre for Adult Education. Such a person would provide a more independent source of data on the process, as well as acting as a support for trainees frustrated by the limitations of referring to one mentor-researcher in the Centre. This would also have strengthened the data collection.

## Chapter Three Delineating the field

We live in a society in which *learning* is still largely understood to be a function of formal education. For many people, it is most easily described in terms of the curricula of school and tertiary education, and its attainment measured by success or failure in the ways in which such institutions assess learning. They will also tend to include in *learning* what is intended to take place in nonformal education or training, whether organised by industry, church, sport, NGO, or whatever.

When one moves beyond those bounds - for example, to the workplace or community life - questions of definition cannot be so easily ignored. How does learning take place, if the situation is not set up specifically to achieve learning? What about learning that is not 'approved', that does not form part of any curriculum?

Internship is a special case, because it takes place in a setting that does not exist for educational reasons, but is there because of its natural function in societal activity. However, the aims of internship always include learning, even if they also include other things. Doctors work as 'interns' to perfect their skills and understandings, while also being required to be productive (in fact they would complain that they are required to do far more work than most doctors would).

Internship has been subject to little theoretical scrutiny until recently, although we have at least two popularly understood and implemented models. The first emphasises *application*: learning to apply previous formal learning to specific contexts. Thus the doctor, lawyer or teacher, having gained knowledge, learns to apply that knowledge. The second emphasises *apprenticeship*, of learning knowledge through worked with a skilled person, using observation and imitation to learn the same skills, e.g. in craft apprenticeships, while professional training may be seen as employing both models, not necessarily only the first. The limitations of these conceptions perhaps need to be recorded here, as shown perhaps most effectively by Schon (1983 and 1987). Both of these popular conceptions tend to deny the value of significant learning from being

engaged in work itself and from innovation by the learner; knowledge is understood as something communicated either in prior formal education or by a 'master'.

To understand what is happening in internship in greater depth requires some overview of theories relating to learning in different contexts. The chapter will conclude with a definition of internship that I would find appropriate to most modern contexts of internship.

### *What constitutes 'learning'?*

Marsick (1987: 4) defines learning as follows: 'the way in which individuals or groups acquire, interpret, re-organise, change or assimilate a related cluster of information, skills and feelings. It is also primary to the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organisational lives.'

I will work within this definition, except in certain cases where I will use the word 'learning' in the special case used by Gee (*learning<sub>1</sub>* - see below). The implications of Marsick's definition are that:

- 1) It identifies learnings without reference to their relationship to educational objectives. They may be intended or unintended, on the part of either educator or learner. As this study aims to identify, describe and explain whatever learnings took place, whether on the list of objectives or not, this is appropriate.
- 2) The definition encompasses changes not only in terms of 'knowledge' in the sense of content, but also in the framework by which that knowledge is ordered. As will be recorded, the way the trainees understood the context, and the way they changed that understanding, are a key aspect of the study.
- 3) The definition does not imply an educational context; it is appropriate in considering a workplace setting where learnings outside the more directly 'educational' are equally valid.

Some contrasting definitions or categorisations of learning may clarify the implications of this definition, and the distinctions that need to be made between different kinds of learning. I will contrast Marsick's definition with three other definitions or descriptions of learning.

### *1 Learning theorists*

Traditional definitions by 'learning theorists' refer only to observable behaviour. Thus it is defined as 'a relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of practice' (Hilgard and Atkinson 1967: 270). This would include, for example, changing behaviour on the basis of fear of some object. Most educators would resist considering that as learning, but would exclude cognitive understandings that are not observable in behavioural change. The definition proposed by Marsick puts such behaviour in the context of 'information, skills and feelings.' It thus opens up a more complex world to be considered. Using such a definition in the context of the study would have severely limited the data available, by closing off consideration of changes that are reported rather than observable. It would also have made the trainees objects of study rather than participants in the research process, able to contribute directly through their own comments on that process. There are a number of other criticisms of this kind of definition, perhaps most effectively by Jarvis (1987: 3), who points out the logical fallacies that follow from it.

### *2 'Learning situations'*

Lawson (1974: 91) contends that there is no adequate definition of learning, but frames what we can usefully consider as 'learning' in the following way:

A learning situation is conceived in terms which involve the identification of **what** is to be learned. Goals have to be specified as do standards of attainment which count as **having learnt**. Appropriate strategies for learning which involve the active conscious participation of the learner also have to be worked out so that we are moving into the realm of teaching conceived as a system of planning objectives, setting standards and devising methods which will help the learner to realise the goals set for him or which he set for himself. In other words, we have arrived at a learning situation which is an educational situation . . .

This view of learning recognises it only within some form of education. It excludes those changes in behaviour which are often described as conditioning. But by excluding all forms of non-intended learning a cost is paid. Non-intended learning includes constructions that people make about their lives. These may be very powerful, and may have a major impact on their behaviour - for example on productivity at work, on relations with other groups of people, their self-esteem and so on. They may well include what we would consider to be **incorrect** learnings; for example, someone may reach the conclusion, and keep it, that 'black people are dangerous', a conclusion based perhaps on poor information and some hurtful experience. (See on such kinds of 'miseducative' learning Jarvis 1983: 24). Equally well there could be a conclusion such as 'When people behave destructively there are reasons for it which can be dealt with'.

The power of such learnings requires that we take them seriously, and make them available to reason and challenge, or use them as valuable resources. If we are, for example, concerned to improve the way that people interact and produce in their place of work, we need to become aware of how people reach these conclusions, and how they can be available to scrutiny, reflection and change.

Furthermore, the description makes it very difficult to describe what is happening within contexts such as the workplace which are clearly **not** included in 'educational situations'. The increasing interest in learning related to productivity, or related to social change, is in no way assisted by focusing on 'educational situations' and not 'learning situations'.

### **3**      *A categorisation of learning and education*

Adult educators in the British tradition tend to use a categorisation described by Groombridge (in Tight 1983: 6) to distinguish the situations in which learning takes place:



- 1 Formal education is that provided by the education and training system set up or sponsored by the state for those express purposes;
- 2 Non-formal education comprises the many deliberate educational enterprises set up outside the education system, e.g. by other ministries or departments (health, agriculture and others), or by agencies with primary objectives to which education is subordinate (churches, trade unions and others);
- 3 Informal education (which undoubtedly slides into unplanned, incidental learning) is that vast area of social transactions in which people are deliberately informing, persuading, telling, influencing, advising and instructing each other; and deliberately seeking out information, advice, instruction, wisdom and enlightenment.

This addresses education rather than learning, though informal education is seen as bordering on incidental learning. Within the definition a criterion for something to be 'education' is clearly that it is deliberate. We could then categorise learning in a related way, describing it as formal, non-formal or informal. For example, formal learning could be seen as the achievement of the goals of the formal curriculum. We could similarly use non-formal learning to mean the achievement of the goals of the non-formal curriculum, and informal learning as the achievement of the goals that drive informal education (however implicit).

The greatest difficulty arises in describing learning that may not be the intended result of a deliberate activity. Take the realisation by the student about the conflict between the overt goals of the course and the behaviour the course requires. Furthermore, such learnings may remain hidden and never articulated.

### ***An example of 'learning'***

To clarify the relevance of questions around what constitutes learning, let us take the example of learning within formal education, such as a university degree course. There is a set of explicit or implicit goals to formal teaching, and we could describe learning from the formal classes directed towards these goals as 'formal learning'.

But not all learning is a function of the organised teaching. There may be other organised activities aimed at supplementing formal classes, like a course in study skills run by a student counselling service, or other 'nonformal' education unrelated to the formal curriculum, like a workshop on meeting skills for student leaders.

Learning may also take place informally, by students asking each other questions about an assignment, and gaining an understanding they had not yet achieved. It could also take place in an unintended way, by students realising, for example, that what lecturers say about the purpose of the course (e.g. that it is to develop critical thinking) may differ sharply from the criteria needed to pass examinations (often mastery of content knowledge). Alternatively it could take place by learning something interesting while plagiarising some other student's work.

### ***Learning within specific contexts***

In adult education there is increased attention on understanding learning more broadly, specifically beyond educational contexts. According to Tuijnman and Van der Kamp (1992: 2) '... there has been a slow but significant shift in emphasis from 'adult education' to 'adult learning' ', while Jarvis (1987: 1) reports generally on a shift towards interest in learning generally in education. Much of this interest relates to the way people think and learn within specific contexts.

I have drawn largely on the work of five theorists in this area whose work I have found productive in describing and explaining the nature of learning within internship. The theorists employ similar but not identical approaches. They are Victoria Marsick (1987, 1990) and Karen Watkins (1990, jointly with Marsick), Chris Argyris (1982) and Donald Schon (1983, 1987), and James Paul Gee (1991), and a summary of some of the relevant concepts they have developed follows. These concepts were used not so much in the design of the project as in the analysis. Their work provides useful tools both to explain what happened in the project, what was learnt, and how it was learnt, and also to inform critical reflection on the design of the project. Finally, I will

consider pioneering work by Peter Jarvis in bringing together different concepts of adult learning within a wide variety of learning situations.

*Victoria Marsick and Karen Watkins: Informal and incidental learning*

The term **incidental learning**, a term used by various writers on adult education, is developed in Marsick and Watkins in their work **Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace** (1990). They do not employ the term 'non-formal education', and the learning they are concerned with is contrasted with structured educational events, whether certificated or not.

They define informal learning as 'predominantly experiential and non-institutional'. The learner exercises a high degree of control, and the goals are usually less predictable than those of formal teaching. Incidental learning is 'a subset of informal learning' and is unintentional, 'a by-product of another activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organisational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning.' (1990: 12). Incidental learning 'almost always takes place in everyday experience although people are not always conscious of it.' (1990: 12).

These conceptualisations include the full range of learnings that may take place. There are various aspects of this approach to learning I would emphasise:

- The focus is on learning in contexts such as the workplace where people are typically in a group and where patterns of group interaction may assist or block learning.
- Non-routine situations which require learning are seen as important.
- The perceptual frameworks which people develop through incidental learning are critical in determining how effectively they respond to non-routine conditions. New

learning may depend on the 'reframing' of these frameworks (for Argyris and Schon on this issue, see below).

- The **tacit** nature of incidental learning is emphasised, following Polanyi (1967).
- Unlike in most formal education, the role of emotions and the need to address their role in facilitating or hindering learning is recognised.
- Because informal and in particular incidental learning are not aimed at specific goals in the same way as in formal education, the learning that takes place, once identified, may be unintended. It may not always be seen as worthwhile or correct. The understandings formed by learners may be based on confusion and misinformation, and they may well not be subject to scrutiny. What matters though is that they **are** formed, and that they can have powerful positive or negative effects on other learnings.

Marsick and Watkins (1990: 24) argue for processes which surface tacit theories, and enable individuals and groups to develop and implement more effective conceptualisations of their work. This often requires letting go of existing ways of understanding which hinder new learning.

By directing attention towards this area, these authors raise questions about the kind of organisations in which people work, and the ability of such organisations, or lack of it, to enable learning. These concepts focus attention on the processes which foster or retard learning within organisations, and hence give some substance to the idea of a 'learning organisation'.

The work of these authors directs attention to the 'underside' of the project; not to the explicit goals so much as to the unpredicted learnings, and to the processes affecting learning; also to the organisational context in which the project was located.

### *Argyris and Schon: Learning and 'practice'*

These authors are well-known for their studies of professional education, and I would focus specifically on their work in two areas that relate to how one improves practice:

- Argyris' development (1982) of Ashby's concept (1952) of *single loop* and *double loop* learning. Single loop learning refers to predictable learning, within the framework of assumptions within which we normally work. Double loop learning refers to learning that takes place when our existing conceptualisations do not work, when outcomes are not as predicted, and when reworking of our existing conceptualisations takes place.
- The distinction they make between **theories-in-use** and **espoused theories**. Espoused theories are the public face of professionals, academics, etc, the worthy statements that individuals and organisations use to explain and justify their behaviour and their practices. Theories-in-use refer to the actual practices of the individuals and organisations. The gap between the two is not necessarily cynical and dishonest; it is often genuinely not seen. One of the roles of double loop learning is to enable people to identify and address this disjuncture.

The concepts of single and double loop learning are useful in distinguishing between different kinds of learning that took place amongst the trainees. The idea of 'reframing' is also relevant; it refers to a shift in perspective that gives a new understanding to a context that may previously have been seen as limited, routine and unproblematic. For example, Schon refers to a speech by Rogers in which he says he has 'lost interest in being a teacher', and describes it as follows: 'I would say, not that Rogers has lost all interest in being a teacher, but that he has *reframed teaching* in a way that gives central importance to his own role as a learner' (1987: 90-2).

Schon's **Educating the reflective practitioner** (1987), gives detailed studies of cases of professional education in which skilled professionals guide learners through demonstration, through challenging and through questioning. These are excellent

examples of apprenticeship at its best. However, his conception of learning goes beyond apprenticeship. He is particularly interested in such forms of learning as *reflection-in-action*:

A familiar routine produces an unexpected result; an error stubbornly resists correction; or, although the usual actions produce the usual outcomes, we find something odd about them because, for some reason, we have begun to look at them in a new way. . . . We may reflect on action, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome. We may do so after the fact, in tranquillity, or we may pause in the midst of action. . . . Alternatively, we may reflect in the midst of action without interrupting it. (1987: 26)

Such exploration opens up the area of learning in a way that is not constricted by context. It is particularly suited to the understanding of learning in the workplace.

*James Paul Gee: The distinction between 'acquisition' and 'learning'*

A major emerging line of research in the area of learning through internship derives from work in the area of learning of languages. The relevance of such research lies in the fact that we learn a mother tongue never through formal or nonformal education, but rather through being in a context in which meaningful language is used. The child learns the language by hearing and making sense of it, and through a process of imitation, trial, error and reflection constructs a model which enables it to produce the language.

Such a process is analogous to internship. Unlike any form of organised education, the learner 'picks up' the way things are done. Specific skills are embedded in a context of meaning. Internship uses modelling, trial and error, informal advice, whether or not it is supplemented by a more formal educational activity.

The contrast between these two approaches to learning, that of systematic and organised study and that of immersion, has received most attention in the area of language learning. For many people, but not necessarily, the first language is learnt through immersion and subsequent languages through more formal education.

In his book **The Input Hypothesis** (Krashen 1985: 1), Krashen describes a set of hypotheses concerning second-language acquisition. Amongst them, he includes the following:

#### The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

There are two independent ways of developing ability in second languages. 'Acquisition' is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilise in acquiring their first language, while 'learning' is a conscious process that results in 'knowing about' language.

Gee (1991: 154) uses the term *learning<sub>1</sub>* to describe learning in this specialised sense of the explicit and conscious process of learning. This distinction between two processes of learning is made similarly (and it seems to some extent independently) by other linguists, and referring not simply to second-language learning.

Chomsky's distinction between 'cognize' and 'know' is quite similar, if not identical, to the acquisition-learning distinction, 'cognize' referring to tacit, subconscious knowledge and 'know' to conscious knowledge (Chomsky 1975, pp 164-5, Chomsky 1980, pp 70-71, 128) (Krashen 1985: 24).

It seems however that Krashen divides these ways of learning from each other more sharply than Chomsky does. '...for Chomsky one can 'cognize' both what is accessible to consciousness and what is not (1975: 165), whereas for Krashen 'acquisition' refers only to what is subconscious.' (McLaughlin 1987: 23).

Krashen's interest is in second-language acquisition, and he does not extend the hypothesis to education generally. The question would then arise as to whether humans learn a language in a way unrelated to the way they learn other things, and whether the distinction can be extended to learning generally.

McLaughlin (1987: ch.2, ch.7) criticises Krashen's work on various points, amongst them the sharpness of the distinction made by Krashen between acquisition and learning<sub>1</sub>. Where his criticisms are relevant for the purposes of this study is that the distinctions are not water-tight, that learning<sub>1</sub> may for example lead to acquisition

(1987: 21-2). If one can extend the analogy to learning generally, one could acquire some of the same skills from teaching that one might through 'immersion'. However, McLaughlin acknowledges where he thinks Krashen is correct: 'the need to move from grammar-based to communicatively oriented language instruction, the role of affective factors in language learning, and the importance of acquisitional sequences in second-language development.' (1987: 57). By extension to education generally, these points would be evidence in favour of more attention to the context in which learning takes place, and support approaches such as internship.

It is however Gee (1991: 146) who builds on Krashen's work and makes such an extension explicit:

*Acquisition* is a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings which are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to so function. This is how most people come to control their first language.

*Learning* is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain life-experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This teaching or reflection involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter.

What makes Gee so relevant to this study is the relevance of this distinction to internship. Marsick and Watkins' *incidental learning* is very similar to Gee's *acquisition*. His *learning* is very close to Groombridge's *formal learning*, though it would not exclude some kinds of nonformal and even informal learning; the critical element is the analytical quality of the learning.

Having made this distinction, Gee proceeds to relate it to his notion of *discourse*. This is a concept that encompasses but also surpasses what we would understand by 'language' in the conventional sense of the word:



A *Discourse* is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'. (1991: 143)

He distinguishes between a primary Discourse and secondary Discourses. The primary Discourse is our socioculturally determined ways of thinking, feeling, valuing, and using our native language in face-to-face communication with intimates which we achieve in our initial socialisation within the 'family' as this is defined within a given culture (1991: 150).

The secondary Discourses 'crucially involve social institutions beyond the family. . . ' organisations that he refers to as ' 'secondary institutions' (such as schools, work place, stores, government offices, businesses, churches, etc).' These secondary Discourses 'involve uses of language, either written or oral, or both, as well as ways of thinking, valuing and behaving, which go beyond the uses of language in our primary Discourse, no matter what group we belong to.' (ibid).

Gee uses the distinction between acquisition and learning<sub>1</sub> in explaining how people come to learn a 'discourse':

### **The Acquisition Principle**

Any Discourse (primary or secondary) is for most people most of the time only mastered through acquisition, not learning. Thus literacy (fluent control or mastery of a secondary Discourse) is a product of acquisition, not learning; this is, it requires exposure to models in natural, meaningful and functional settings, and (overt) teaching is not liable to be very successful - it may even initially get in the way. Time spent on learning and not acquisition is time not well spent if the goal is mastery in performance.

### **The Learning Principle**

One cannot critique one Discourse with another one (which is the only way seriously to criticise and thus change a Discourse) unless one has meta-level knowledge about both Discourses. This meta-

knowledge is best developed through learning, though often learning applied to a Discourse one has to a certain extent already acquired. (1991: 154)

This distinction leads to a further distinction between *teaching<sub>i</sub>*, referring to 'overt teaching' (154), the kind of formal teaching that is generally understood, and *teaching<sub>a</sub>*, 'to apprentice someone in a master-apprentice relationship in a social practice (Discourse) wherein you scaffold their growing ability to say, do, value, believe, within that Discourse, through demonstrating your mastery and supporting theirs even when it barely exists.'

Here Gee speaks directly of processes of apprenticeship, in the sense of an active intervention by a 'master' in a particular form of relationship. 'Scaffolding' is a powerful metaphor, with its constructivist connotation. It fits well with Schon's descriptions of professional studio instruction (Schon 1987), for example. Could this serve as a definition of internship that would be of value to a study such as this one?

The distinction between acquisition and learning<sub>i</sub> has been used to a large extent by recent researchers addressing issues of learning within a workplace context, as distinct from those who learn skills through formal or nonformal teaching. See for example recent policy work on the education of adult educators in South Africa (Deal Trust 1994: 68).

The project described in this study is mainly about teaching<sub>a</sub>, a project aimed at the acquisition by the trainees of specific skills and practices of the university department. The aim though was also to achieve teaching<sub>i</sub>, in that they were intended to develop a critically reflective understanding of the project and their learning, through processes of analysis.

For these reasons Gee's description of the 'scaffolding' would not be adequate as a general definition of this kind of internship. It points however to a more fundamental criticism of the way in which Gee uses these notions of acquisition, learning and discourse. I find acquisition and learning as two useful concepts to distinguish

between two processes of learning, but Gee treats them rather as the routes to two different learning outcomes, determined by the process by which they are learnt. But as McLaughlin indicates (1987, 164-5), one can learn to speak a language using both approaches; the outcome may be the same even though the processes of learning differ. Similarly a process of internship probably naturally combines both processes of learning, and an interaction between acquisition and learning may be ideal, in which instruction and reflection inform exploration and acquisition. Acquisition may also involve acquiring the processes of critical reflection.

Furthermore, the language metaphor of *discourse* is at times unhelpful. Muller (1995: 19-20) gives an example of the learning of complex spatial abilities in an illiterate farmworker, and in passing mentions the difficulty of describing the learning in terms of Gee's concept of *secondary discourse*. This particular study aimed to achieve learnings which are not easily enclosed within the idea of discourse. The 'literacy of a worker in a department of adult education', may provide a stylish way of summarising the learnings intended, but is it not clearer to distinguish the different skills and understandings intended, some at a more specific, identifiable level, some at a deeper and more fundamental level?

### *Peter Jarvis: Adult learning processes*

Jarvis' work **Adult Learning in the Social Context** (1987) is not specifically related to internship, but his pioneering work in attempting to develop a comprehensive theory of adult learning is useful in analysing the various kinds of learning that take place. It synthesises where possible work done by theorists across a wide range of study relating to learning and education. The particular value of his work to the present study is that it avoids getting caught up in the usual tendency of educationists to describe learning within the context of education, with other learning as some sort of special case.

Jarvis distinguishes three major different kinds groups of responses to a situation in which learning is possible: not learning, learning but without a process of reflection,

and reflective learning. Within each group, he has identified three specific types of response:

<b>A Non-learning responses</b>	
Presumption	Presuming that the new situation is the same as previously encountered situations, and responding in the same way as in the past
Non-consideration	Failure to respond to a potential learning experience, e.g. because of distraction or pre-occupation
Rejection	Unwillingness to see opportunities for learning in a new situation
<b>B Non-reflective learning responses</b>	
Pre-conscious	Incidental learning, in contexts where the attention is not directed towards learning
Practice	The learning of skills through performance
Memorisation	The acquisition of information for later reproduction
<b>C Reflective learning processes</b>	
Contemplation	Consideration and intellectual decision
Reflective practice	Reflecting on a situation while still acting in it
Experimental learning	The generation of new knowledge through experimentation

***Responses to potential learning situations (after Jarvis, 1987: 28-35)***

The value of this schema is that it locates within one framework the different kinds of learning identified by other theorists, and work subsequent to this can also be related without difficulty. For example, Marsick and Watkins' *incidental learning* appears as

*pre-conscious learning*, while Gee's *acquisition* appears in the three non-reflective learning processes. Schon's *reflection-in-action* has been a valuable addition to our understanding of learning in work contexts, but here it has been brought together into an overarching framework in which all the other kinds of learning are accommodated. Hence the framework's ability to interrelate the work of different theorists makes it invaluable in categorising the various kinds of learning that occurs in internship, and the framework will be used in analysing the learning of the two trainees.

### *Attempting a definition*

My own definition of internship thus does not fit exactly within Gee's concepts in that it does not separate out acquisition and learning. It aims to describe the apprenticeship model of internship, while also accommodating internship in cases where previously acquired knowledge is meant to be applied:

*Internship is the placement of trainees within a work context, with the aim of using the daily experience of operating within the work environment for the learning of relevant skills and understanding, including the ability to reflect critically on the workplace and one's actions within it.*

This would not be appropriate for all cases of internship, as in some the element of critical reflection may be foreign. I would however contend that the inclusion of this element is increasingly important in workplaces that require intellectual mastery.

## Chapter Four    The context

This chapter describes some features of two contexts: the area from which the trainees come and the university in which they were placed.

### *Inanda*

Both trainees came from the area of Inanda, a sprawling area north of the central city of Durban. Inanda consists of many different areas, and has a population estimated at 750 000, the great majority being African and Zulu-speaking. Most of Inanda is made up of shack settlements, but Inanda Newtown was a site and service scheme developed by the State after a typhoid epidemic in 1980. Subsequently homes were built there by the Urban Foundation, a private-sector funded organisation that aimed to improve the quality of life in urban areas. It is from the area of Newtown A that both trainees came. Newtown now has small homes, pit latrines, paved roads and standpipes along the roads, which are often very steep.

The pattern throughout Newtown is of very modest houses, arranged as neatly as possible on the steep slopes, with shacks surrounding them - often the lower slopes were too unstable for building operations, and provided opportunities for people to build their shacks, and to benefit from the provision of water from the standpipes.

In the shack areas, the irregular jumble of houses, often with rusting roofs, and the haphazard clumps of bush may suggest that Inanda is an old area, but the overwhelming majority of the population moved there recently. An Urban Foundation estimate placed the population at 88 000 in 1979, and the growth has been massive. The population came largely from the inability of townships like Kwa Mashu and Ntuzuma, which are south of Inanda, to accommodate their natural increase in population, though a minority have come from rural areas.

One corner of the area was known as Phoenix Settlement, and was founded by Mahatma Gandhi in the early years of the century. It was here that he developed his

theories of non-violent action, and produced the newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, that disseminated the philosophy of satyagraha. The Settlement contained a valuable library, a clinic, a school and several homes.

In 1985 the area erupted into violent conflict, following the killing of the anti-apartheid activist, Victoria Mxenge, in Umlazi. The shops of Indian traders were burned, and there was violent conflict between the United Democratic Front, the organisation in the tradition of the banned African National Congress, and Inkatha, the Zulu nationalist movement headed by the KwaZulu Chief Minister. One of the events was the movement of people from Bhambayi, the shack area next to Phoenix Settlement, into the Settlement. Gandhi's home and furniture disappeared into the new homes of the people, and the library was taken over, although the clinic was able to continue:

The contest for political dominance in the area continued for the next three years, with security forces occupying parts of the areas, especially during the State of Emergency. Initially the one area, Mshayazafe ('Hit him till he dies') was the stronghold of the ANC-aligned youth. Then other areas became Congress areas, and Newtown A was subject to attack by people from surrounding shack areas, who were nominally at least supporters of Inkatha. Houses were burnt out, and some people had to flee. With the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990, negotiations took place, and some areas ended their conflict with their neighbours, and fell under Congress.

Of the different areas only one, ironically enough Mshayazafe, is now regarded as Inkatha territory. If one stands near the homes of the trainees in Newtown A you see the surrounding homes, quiet, with shrubs and banana trees. A standpipe in constant use sends a constant trickle down the road, lined with green algae. Ducks, chickens and the occasional goat or forlorn dog wander through. Across a steep dip are the homes that were burnt and have since been renovated. Down in the valley that leads east is the area's one soccer field, and above it Mshayazafe. In the distance to the South are the blocks of flats of the wealthy suburb of Berea that overlooks the central city. The distance to places of work means that people spend a large part of their

income on transport, and little is available for upgrading homes. Cars are rare, and transport is mainly by bus or by taxi; the taxi industry is highly competitive, and this occasionally leads to violent clashes.

Schools were the site of conflict in the 1980's, with school boycotts and attacks on schools by Inkatha impis (armed groups). One outcome was a change in the climate in schools, which had been previously very authoritarian and relied on much physical punishment. The local high school in Newtown A is fairly relaxed, crowded, though still desperately short of resources. New schools have been built; a major and well-built high school stands just next to the burnt-out school at what had been Phoenix Settlement, and another in what had been the no-go area between Newtown B Extension and Ezimangweni. But some schools are still disrupted over issues like school fees. The continual disruptions - boycotts, attacks, conflicts between students and teachers or teachers and educational authorities - have been one reason for the low educational standard of the schools.

### *The University of Natal*

The University was established in 1910. Its history would in many ways be typical of that of a university founded in a British colonial tradition. Natal ceased to be a colony in 1910 with the establishment of the Union of South Africa, but it is fair to say that the University, like many Natal institutions, looked to Britain as its model.

The University is based in both Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The present Durban campus was established in 1931 on a site donated by the Durban City Council atop the Berea ridge that overlooks the port, and the University gradually expanded in size with the enrolment of more and more students. Although not formally segregated, it was only in 1936 that classes aimed at students who were not White began, at a small city-based campus. Government legislation in 1959 formally segregated the University, and only the existing non-White students were able to continue at the city campus. The University was allowed to maintain its Medical School, with the proviso that it not



be allowed to admit any White students - 1995 was the first year that White students were admitted in small numbers.

Under National Party rule from 1948 to 1994 the University was regarded as a bastion of more liberal values, and student leadership was seen as often radical and subversive, in South African terms. It would be more accurate to say that the University represented the values of the White, middle-class, English-speaking South Africans from whom its academic staff were overwhelmingly drawn, with a minority of voices more actively challenging apartheid.

From the late 1960s Durban was the site of developments that were to be of long-term significance. Steve Biko emerged as a leader of students at the Medical School, and broke away from the liberal students organisation, the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). In the early 1970s some graduates and academics, amongst them the researcher's brother, began to expose the wages paid to African workers, in particular by British companies, and then began working to recruit workers into labour organisations. These soon evolved into the trade unions that formed the core of what is now the powerful Congress of South African Trade Unions - the previous unions for African workers had been crushed but not formally proscribed. In 1973 a wave of strikes erupted amongst unorganised workers, and the development of labour unions spread rapidly, first in Durban and then in other centres.

With the suppression of many of the university-related activists from 1974, the University continued in a somewhat indecisive way, trying to maintain an image both of high academic standards and liberal values. The restrictions on the entry of Black students into the formerly White universities in the 1980s gradually eased, and the student composition began to change. One index of change in the university is racial categorisation of students in residence. In 1988 73.9% of students in residence on the Howard College campus were White and 21.5% were African. In 1992 5.5% of students in residence were White and 84.9% were African (report by Development and Statistics Division, Student Affairs, University of Natal, 1994).

There was also increasing pressure from students for a more proactive response to the needs of the poor, marginalised and oppressed. In 1989 the University accepted a Mission Statement that committed itself both to high standards in all areas and increasing relevance to the needs of the society. How that would work out is still in 1996 the subject of continued exploration and contestation.

The Centre for Adult Education (which in 1995 became the Department of Adult and Community Education) began as a unit for extension activities. In the 1980s it began a programme for community organisations, and then a formal diploma in adult education in 1986. At the time of the study there were three permanent academic posts, three administrative posts, one staff member on what is called 'permanent contract', and others on temporary contract, amongst them the only African staff member at the time, who soon after left and is now a Member of Parliament.

The researcher himself is a product of the same environment as the University, having attended a private school modelled on the British public schools. He then studied at this University in the 1960s and was a member of a Students Representative Council that was suspended by a conservative principal, and active in NUSAS. He studied there again in the late 1970s, before joining the Centre for Adult Education in 1983. He also served as a city councillor in Durban for ten years.

He lives in a quiet, affluent area within walking distance of the university. It has broad, quiet and tree-lined streets, all amenities such as water, electricity, sewerage and so forth, and a small nature reserve of subtropical forest vegetation across the street in front of the house.

The contrast between these two worlds is typical of many cities in the Third World. This project brought the trainees from the one world into that of the University.

## **Chapter Five      An account of the project**

The chapter begins with an overview of the project, which records the mentor's initial assumptions, the selection criteria and process, the objectives, the contract with the trainees, the tasks and the hours worked. It then presents excerpts from the data in chronological order. Some analytical comments are made; the major themes are explored in greater depth in Chapter Eight.

### *Overview of the Project*

The project in the Centre for Adult Education began with the first trainee in February 1992, and ended in December 1992. Both trainees (Bheki and Zanele) were attached to me as the mentor, and most of the tasks undertaken related closely to the work I was doing over the period, except for October and November, when I was overseas on leave. My duties included teaching on an optional course in adult education in the Bachelor of Education degree and organising a conference of university-based adult educators in April. I was also appointed Deputy Director of the Centre in February, and this meant increasing administrative responsibilities.

### *Assumptions governing the training scheme*

Before the project started, I had developed a set of assumptions that I would make in running the scheme. They were as follows:

- 1      It is possible for people to learn significantly from an experience of doing work, especially work that is new to the person.
- 2      The trainees will have considerable ability to learn, and their ability will not be a limiting factor in their learning.
- 3      The organisational culture into which they come may have the potential to impede the trainees' learning.
- 4      The trainees' own assumptions about learning and about work, and their attitudes towards themselves may also have the potential to impede their learning.

- 5        The trainees' experience as Black, working class young people in South Africa will play a major role in developing the assumptions and attitudes they bring to the workplace. It may also play a major role in informing their strategies for coping in a new environment.
- 6        'The assumptions and attitudes of the supervisor are also relevant factors in the work experience, and as such will need to be examined and re-examined.

### *Selection*

Staff of the Centre met early in 1992 to identify the entry requirements for the training and what learning objectives we might set for the trainees. The approach was to describe roughly the skills and understandings that an experienced adult educator would be expected to command, and then to identify certain minimal requirements we would expect from a trainee entering the scheme.

The requirements were set as these:

Ability to speak and write English and Zulu  
Ability to work co-operatively  
Experience of meetings in organisations  
A sense of humour  
Stamina  
Self-reliance  
Curiosity about learning  
Interest in people  
Openness

The process of selection of the trainees began, following debate about how this should take place. After a brief period of considering advertising, it became clear that this would produce many applicants and generate both much work in attempting to select, and also much disappointment for the many trainees who would not succeed.

We thus relied on word of mouth and personal contact. This produced five applicants within about two weeks, each of whom was asked to fill in an application form. This consisted in part of some open-ended questions designed to assess the understanding of adult education and the motivation for involvement in the scheme. It was indicated

that successful trainees would be paid for their part-time work at a rate of roughly R8 per hour.

Bheki was the first to be selected. He was 17 years old, and was still at school, in his second to last year. He had already demonstrated much interest in learning to use the computer. Scholastically he did well; he also had previously served as the chairperson of a group known as the Inanda Young Pioneers, the youngest grouping in the local Youth Organisation. He lived with an aunt; his father had died before he was born, and his mother had left when he was young. He had been brought up by his grandmother until he was eleven, when she died. Bheki is quiet, humorous, and lightly built.

*Bheki's application form:*

*What 'adult education' means to me:*

Adult education is not the same as school education; most of the time people have to work on their own.

*Why I want to be part of this training:*

I am interested in working with adults and to get some skills in adult education.

*Some of the ways in which I could make use of this training:*

Helping in the night schools. Opening my own class for adults to help them with reading and writing.

Bheki had himself proposed a second person, a young woman, Zanele, who was then eighteen. She had also been prominent in the Youth Organisation - I had once met her when she was handling the organisation of a party for the members. She was also recommended as a solid worker by a friend of mine from the Crisis Committee of the Inanda Youth Organisation. Zanele, who is short, personable and lively, had passed her senior certificate examination but with not very good results; she was thus one of the many unemployed school-leavers in the society.

*Zanele's application form:*

*What 'adult education' means to me:*

It gives adults a chance to improve their knowledge of education.

*Why I want to be part of this training:*

Because I have seen that there is great need for people to help adults.

*Some of the ways in which I could make use of this training:*

I can open my own classes and give other people a chance to show the world their talents.

The comments of both applicants were perhaps framed with the desire to impress the reader rather than any realistic idea of what they would be in a position to teach at the end of the training - as seemed to be the case with the applicants generally. The comments were however less important than the information I had about the trainees from my contact, and thus the two applicants about whom I had personal information were at an advantage.

### *Objectives*

The same meeting early in 1992 had also determined the following objectives for the trainees' learning:

## ***Learning aims for the trainees***

### **Design**

Ability to think about a group needing education, and their educational needs

Familiarity with the kinds of issues that arise in educational events

Knowledge of how to collect and use resources

Knowledge of a wide range of techniques - and games

### **Research**

Ability to use the library

### **Organisational**

Basic office administration skills (photocopying, claim forms, collating etc)

Ability to file

Ability to type

Ability to communicate more effectively: ability to speak and write English, ability to write letters, ability to use the telephone, ability to write reports

Ability to organise your work

Ability to work co-operatively

Some budgeting and monitoring skills

Ability to assist in publicising workshops

Ability to use media for publicity

Practical ability with regard to equipment, etc.

Knowledge of the range of things that have to be thought about in adult education (publicity, venues, times) and remembering to think about them

Ability to organise enrolment and registration

Ability to prepare materials, including handouts

### **Teaching**

Ability to think from the perspective of participants

Ability to project a positive image about learning

Ability to present information effectively to groups

Ability to use media for teaching (e.g. newsprint, chalkboards, overhead projectors, videos)

Ability to initiate and present a wide range of techniques

### **Evaluation and assessment**

Understanding the evaluation process and its relation to objectives

Ability to reflect on an educational event in an analytical way (if possible)

Knowledge of what to evaluate

### **Understandings about adult education theory**

Understanding the need for transfer from learning to action

### **General**

Ability to think analytically (if possible)

Being able to organise one's own learning



## *The Contract*

Each trainee signed a contract, as follows:

- 1      The following is a contract between Crispin Hemson, organiser of the Research on Learning at Work Project ('the Project'), and Bheki Ndlovu ('the trainee'), a trainee on the Project, which is based in the Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Durban.
- 2      Mr Hemson undertakes to employ the trainee for the period 1 March 1992 to 31 December 1992. He undertakes to provide the trainee with a range of work experiences designed to facilitate learning skills and understandings relevant to adult education. The Centre for Adult Education will provide office accommodation and access to equipment and materials needed for the work.
- 3      The trainee undertakes to do the work provided, to be present for and to participate in meetings relating to the Project, to record accurately all work done and hours spent. Part of the work of the trainee is to keep a record of what he or she is learning in a diary, which will be available to Mr Hemson. The trainee will be present for work at times agreed between himself and the Project Co-ordinator. The trainee is required to do a minimum of 500 hours work in 1992. He will report to the Project Co-ordinator, Crispin Hemson, who will delegate this role to another staff member in his absence.
- 4      Payment to the trainee shall be R400 per month, (R320 salary and R80 transport allowance) to be paid at the end of each month, for the duration of the trainee's employment in the Project.
- 5      One aim of the Project is that the trainee will learn the full range of skills and understandings listed in the document headed Learning Aims, and both Mr Hemson and the trainee undertake to work to achieve those learnings.
- 6      Mr Hemson does not undertake to provide any further training or employment to the trainee after the end of the trainee's employment.
- 7      Mr Hemson shall not be responsible for the trainee's travel to and from the University, for meals, or for personal accommodation.
- 8      Mr Hemson undertakes to provide the trainee with a reference setting out the work done and skills learnt, at the conclusion of the trainee's employment.
- 9      The contract can be terminated by either party with one month's notice.

The other contract, for Zanele, was identical except that she was expected to work a total of 620 hours, with a commensurably greater payment.

One feature of the contract may call for explanation. The contract was between the trainee and myself, not between the trainee and the Centre for Adult Education. The reason for this was that there was a lack of support for the project within the Centre, and I had been informed that I could go ahead with it, but as a personal research project. This eventually had significant implications for the way the project developed.

### *Tasks undertaken*

Despite the objectives, the actual work undertaken by the trainees was as follows:

<b>Bheki</b>	<b>Zanele</b>
Office routines: word processing faxing phoning photocopying	Office routines: word processing faxing phoning photocopying filing
Recording discussion at workshops	
Attending the B.Ed classes	Attending the Certificate in Adult Education classes
Administration of the B.Ed: attendance marks receiving assignments preparing and handing out materials	Assistance with Certificate course: handouts general queries
Translating material in readers for newly literate adults into Zulu, checking translations, and testing translations with groups	
	Some reception work in the Centre
Helping prepare for Conference of Adult Educators: database, etc	Reception and practical arrangements at the Conference

***Tasks undertaken by the trainees***

### ***Hours worked***

Payment was made on the basis of hours actually worked, and the record of hours worked is as follows:

#### **Bheki**

	Hours	Difference from hours in contract	Cumulative surplus/ deficit
Mar	38:45	-11:15	-11:15
Apr	58:40	8:40	-2:35
May	36:10	-13:50	-16:25
Jun	33:25	-16:35	-33:00
Jul	59:40	09:40	-23:20
Aug	32:15	-17:45	-41:05
Sep	54:40	4:40	-36:25
Oct	22:10	-22:50	-59:15
Nov	00:00	-50:00	-109:15
Dec	35:00	-15:00	-124:15
Total	370:45	-124:15	

#### **Zanele**

	Hours	Difference from hours in contract	Cumulative surplus/ deficit
Mar	45:15	-16:45	-16:45
Apr	74:25	12:25	-04:20
May	37:00	-25:00	-29:20
Jun	65:55	03:55	-25:25
Jul	68:40	06:40	-18:45
Aug	48:55	-13:05	-31:50
Sep	74:50	12:50	-19:00
Oct	30:10	-31:50	-50:50
Nov	48:20	-13:40	-64:30
Dec	30:00	-32:00	-96:30
Total	523:30	-96:30	

### ***Hours worked by the trainees***

It is evident that although the hours contracted were quite limited, neither trainee reached them (assuming that they did not underrecord, and my impression was that they were fairly rigorous in their recording). This was less surprising for Bheki, who had to combine the work with his schooling.

### *Chronological account*

The preceding overview needs to be read in conjunction with the following chronological account, and the analysis that follows in Chapter Seven.

#### *January 1992*

At a meeting of staff it was decided that there was to be no formal commitment from the Centre to the project, but that I should go ahead with it as a personal research project. This arose because there was some opposition to whether this should be a project of the Centre. It related also to a tendency to work very much within the boundaries of personal programmes. Thus the Adult Basic Education Programme, the Extra-Mural Programme and the Community Adult Educators Training Programme were being run as separate entities within the Centre. I was not located within any particular programme, and as the trainees were linked to me personally, nor were they.

Bheki began work towards the end of the month. Because of his schooling he was able to come in only in the afternoons, and it was decided that he would work on Monday and Friday afternoons, and that his particular brief would be to assist with the Bachelor of Education class that met late on a Monday afternoon. In addition, he would assist with such work as typing, particularly relating to some evaluation work I was undertaking with university departments.

I had decided that I would first give the trainees opportunities to learn to handle the administrative tasks of the office, tasks that would normally take a fairly large part of my time. These included transcribing onto computer, faxing and photocopying.

## *February*

Bheki's typing (the one thing he had learnt at school that was very useful in the workplace) was still not fast enough, and he made use of self-teaching software that enabled him to practise with feedback.

Bheki began keeping his diary [note: Generally I have quoted verbatim from the trainees' writings, but there are a few cases where there were errors of grammar or spelling. Except where this might distort the meaning apparently intended, I have taken the liberty of correcting the wording]:

This was my second day doing recording at the evaluation workshop. I was so pleased to be there, because I saw that people were pleased to see me typing with the computer.

This day I was informed that I was going to help in a B.Ed course. I was so afraid I had about the kind of people which were going to be present. . . . At the end I was so happy to get to know about skills. I also did some typing. I also worked on DOS the Disk Operating System.

Although formal education was not part of the internship, the trainees were encouraged to sit in on the classes that were being run. Bheki attended most of the Bachelor of Education classes and played a role in photocopying when needed, or ensuring that people had materials. He took part in some of the group discussions. The 16 students enrolled in this course were mainly schoolteachers who were interested in adult education, but lacked specific experience of adult education programmes.

## *March*

Zanele began work. The intention was that she would begin with general administrative work, and then assist me with the workshops I expected I would be running over the course of the year. As the work needing to be done immediately involved using the computer, she had to learn to type, and to become familiar with the basic operation of the computer.

### *Zanele*

This was my first day at the Centre. I was so afraid that I have built images of what it would be like. To my surprise it turned out to be an enjoyable day. I did some photocopies and learning more about the machine itself.

### *Bheki*

I worked on the computer learning Word Perfect and DOS. I was so pleased about the way I learned it because I just went over workbooks and reference books and that helped.

But enthusiasm did not last that easily, for Zanele in particular. The work available mainly involved the computer, and meant that Zanele had to learn to type.

### *Zanele*

Working with the computer for a long time is a boring task. I just feel tired from head to toe. My fingers were numb and sore..... I did typing in the computer which I think nearly killed me. It was so difficult that even when I was showed how and what to do I failed. It needs more concentration than I have believed.

Zanele preferred less technical work:

Using the phone I think helps me in improving my communication skill. It help me to understand the different between formal and informal speaking. Speaking with someone who works is not like speaking with a friend over the phone. It is a sort of challenge, to prove myself that there is something I can do.

She was due to work on a flexible basis, usually for two days a week. Despite the obvious disadvantage of having one trainee come in only over two afternoons, including times when some people in the Centre would not be present, I soon found that the arrangements worked better with Bheki, as his attendance was more predictable and work could be left for him. It was not possible to know with any certainty from week to week when Zanele would be there, so sometimes tasks would be set for her, only for myself to undertake them because they needed to be done before she actually arrived.

At this stage the trainees looked to me for allocation of tasks, for guidance on how to do them, and for the resolution of problems they would encounter. Contact with other staff in the Centre was initially mediated by me, and it was only later that the trainees and other staff made significant contact with each other. This routing through me resulted from the terms of the contracts, and was further encouraged by the relationships within the Centre.

Zanele began attending the Community Adult Educators Certificate course. This course lasted for five months, and was held for six hours each week. There were 18 students, all of whom were actively involved in trade unions, health organisations, religious groups, and so on. All of them had some direct involvement in the teaching of adults.

*Zanele:*

I attended CAEC course and gained a lot, e.g. I now know that the word 'community' does not mean only people living together but it means a great many things. You can talk about a community of disabled people. . . I can now transfer the information from the disk and photocopy it. But if the menu is not displayed I can't.

But when she made tea one day she was relieved to be able to do something undemanding:

There is no other way of making tea so this is just an easy job to do. No problems no difficulties, it is just smooth and clean. . .



## *April*

### *Zanele*

I do not think I will do this kind of job because it is a job which demands energy. It is monotonous, it repeats itself. You count 1 up to 100 now and again [apparently some problem in photocopying]. Really I have not enjoyed it.

### *My journal*

I find having to provide work for Bheki and Zanele quite demanding, partly as there has not really been enough work for them. One problem is that the courses and workshops that we used to run for community and other groups we are not now doing. . .

This illuminates one problem in the design of the project. I had returned to the Centre after a secondment of two years, and in that period the work that I had previously undertaken with community organisations had been curtailed. I had expected to work with the trainees in that area, and it would have been appropriate at developing the trainees as community adult educators. But it proved difficult to resuscitate it as a major area of work, in part because other organisations had filled the gap we had left, and the area was not in fact resumed in a concerted way.

Both trainees were involved in preparations for a conference of university-based adult educators, held in April at an inland venue. Zanele attended, mainly to assist in arrangements, and enjoyed meeting new people. The project was the subject of a paper, and Zanele responded to some of the criticisms of the project by recording some concerns for her future:

What became clear for me is our future (trainees), that is not clear. What we learn at the Centre seems is it is going to be our knowledge only and no means of giving or sharing it with others. . . I think it is the Centre's responsibility to clear it, not just Crispin's job. It can be cleared maybe by asking the trainees about their future plans and from there something can be done. It may be the trainees need help in choosing a career, this can be a good chance for the Centre to help them or persuade them to enrol in education.

*Bheki:*

From the B.Ed class I learned about how education is evaluated and I also learned the characteristics of Adult Education [later] . . . discovered a little about the approach used in Adult Education, I think it is a problem posing approach, as I have seen people working on it through experience and their thinking.

Few of the comments about participation in the class really come alive. We have more the dutiful recording of the subjects covered, and occasionally some of the content discussed. There is never a sense that the classes are relating to their own experiences of learning. This is not to suggest that the classes were not useful for the students enrolled; it was rather that the trainees did not seem to make the links that the students did.

## *May*

### *Bheki*

I worked on translations for Elda [checking the Zulu of a series of readers for newly literate adults]. Translating about ten short stories for her. I also worked on my diary writing and I filled my salary forms and sended them to the Salaries Department. I was happy to do some work for Elda because I always wished to do work for other staff members. If I help others I always get something new of something that adds on what I have already known.

From the B.Ed class I learned about the differences between literate and illiterate, also the definitions. I am happy to help in the B.Ed class, because I always [learn] something new, and mainly based on Adult Education which I am interested in.

### *Zanele*

All I need is a task which will expose me to adult education theory not just something to keep me busy.

It was at times difficult to find the trainees work that would be sufficiently challenging to ensure that they were always learning. But isn't having to deal with frustration and boredom part of learning to handle a job?

Despite Zanele's erratic attendance, I felt that she was learning things that meant she could be productive in the Centre, even at a basic administrative level. She expressed more strongly than Bheki her frustration at the humdrum nature of administrative work, and clearly enjoyed far more interacting with participants on courses.

## *June*

Bheki made the most of a technical task:

I worked on an assignment form for the B.Ed class designing it and typing it up. After designing it I had to photocopy and also cut it so that I can have the space for another name which was left out.

And again:

Worked on the computer trying to learn graphics on WordPerfect and went to the end room to try and remind myself about WordStar 5. I also did some setting up on the printer.

Most of what Bheki did had to do with the computer:

Working on a new computer programme Q & A, learning about database designing and printing. I learnt a lot about this programme because I can manage yet another software programme.

### *From my journal*

I asked Zanele to rework her record of hours worked . . . Her hours include times like 5:95 or 6:90. When I . . . asked her to recalculate them, she said she did not have my calculator to do it. I said that a calculator was unlikely to be helpful. She said she did not know how to calculate the hours then.

I drew a time line on the board, and she was able to calculate an example correctly. I then got her to calculate the same example in the way she had used with the calculator, and of course the answer was different.

'So which is the best way (of the two)?' she said.

'One must be totally wrong,' I said. 'Did you not learn how to do this sort of thing in school?'

'I didn't do maths at school.

'But surely you must have done arithmetic and maths?'

'Only to Standard 5. I can't remember it now!'

It was almost as if her having done maths at school, and feeling that she didn't remember it, precluded her from trying her own solution.

... I worked out how many hours the trainees had worked in fact, and they were both quite far behind, especially Zanele. It is helpful having it as a quantitative record.

#### *Zanele*

Typing again which does not expose me to adult education. . . I think to make it a little clearer they [the trainees] should be presented with adult education theory. Maybe they can see the need of it and go for it next year or so. If nothing like that is done it means a waste of time and energy, having to work out something and afterwards that one throws what you have been teaching into the river and let that flow in the water.

A meeting held with other staff opened out some opportunities for the trainees to work on specific projects - Zanele to help with backup work for training sessions being run for another organisation, Bheki to take further his work on the translations. This was work that Bheki enjoyed - he continued to be intermittently involved in it including while I was away later in the project.

#### *Zanele*

The aim of the meeting was to arrange with them my job. Well, it went very well . . . These two are going to subject me face to face with Adult Education especially CAEC [the community adult educators course].

#### *My journal*

Zanele in again, and working well. I showed her the hours worked, and she winced a bit. She has said a couple of times that she wants to do certain things on the computer (like calling up files) without my showing her again. I showed her a few new things in Word Perfect that she didn't know, and also how to use the new printer which has been installed next to the computer. She was able to copy addresses from one file to the file of the letters to go out, but did not check carefully to see what form they were in, and they needed to be reworked.

#### *From Bheki's evaluation, at year-end*

June was excellent because I spent a lot of time in the Centre and I started setting goals for myself.

## *July*

Zanele spoke to me about the problems she was experiencing at home - her sister had been badly assaulted by her boyfriend, and was staying with her and her other sister, who were providing security. This was one of the events from outside that disrupted Zanele's participation.

One day Zanele was asked to act as receptionist when all the staff were away at a workshop:

The day when the staff was away at the workshop was my testing day. Anyway I expected hardship but to my surprise there were no difficulties. I did not have work to do so I just read and answered the phone. I thought it was very interesting because the time I came in I took out the note that was on the door [stating that the Centre was closed]. I wanted people to knock and come in and ask from me whatever they want. That was going to prove how I am with the work of the Centre. They asked about the courses and other things. Handling the phone was no problem, you know, I just talked and everything went well.

But most of the time there was frustration:

You know, I like something with a challenge. I do not like to go out and work without a certain qualification like a certificate. I like to learn and experience education, have it from the roots to the fruit not just to kid myself with the smell of it, like what I experience here. I hope you will understand what I'm trying to say anyway it is a sort of clumsy.

In this marvellous metaphor Zanele expresses a vision of education which is holistic, vivid and exciting. But she did not find expression for that vision in the work environment. Even when she was exposed to adult education content, through the CAEC course and through assisting a training course being run by two women on the staff, with whom she related well, she did not feel she was getting what she needed.

Zanele's life was disrupted again - this time she had had to travel urgently to Ulundi, some 200kms to the north, in an attempt to rescue her brother. Some people involved in a fraud

were trying to kill him because they thought he would expose them. As it happened, he managed to escape anyway.

I had attempted to find a role for Bheki in a community education project not far from his home, and he said he thought it was a good idea, but seemed incapable of following it through, although I assured him that the hours would count for payment. He told me that he was planning to teach in a Saturday school under the umbrella of a radical organisation, but that also did not eventuate.

Bhekis writing up of his journal had become desultory, and his thoughts are not available for July. However, both he and Zanele wrote their life histories, which was aimed at providing both them and me with a perspective on how the project fitted into their lives and careers.

#### *My journal*

I have had some difficulty in getting Bheki to do work apart from his fascination with computers. Yesterday I had to insist that he complete writing up his history, and not spend time learning yet another software programme. He recently got into XyWrite on the computer, and pressed enough keys until he got an understanding of how to operate it. . . I asked Bheki to spend a morning teaching Zanele how to do things in DOS, and to improve her understanding of Word Perfect.

This was one occasion (one I could usefully have reflected on with the trainees) when Bheki was in fact in an educational role.

#### *Zanele*

I am now more at ease with the work of the Centre. I know how it is run, who does what and so on.

Bheki taught me some important things about DOS. He encouraged me into taking a chance, like he said you don't have to look and read the book for hours, try what you see in the book like exercises.

*My journal*

At some point Zanele and I spoke in Zulu, and that set her off on using Zulu with me, teaching me words I don't understand. I was understanding most of what she said, more or less, but didn't have much grasp of the actual meaning of individual words, and she wrote some out for me and explained how else they are used. Obviously she enjoyed the reversal of roles.

Late in July I asked the trainees to evaluate their progress.

*Bheki's evaluation*

*What has surprised you the most in this work?*

The way I learned, I found it so fast and easy.

*What do you think helped you to learn?*

Going through workbooks and exploring, also asking questions about different things.

*What did you think prevented you from learning more?*

To work in one project and the time that I spend in the Centre.

*What learning goals do you wish to set for the rest of your time here?*

To be able to type 45 words per minutes. To study more about adult education. To make sure that on everything I do I am successful.

*My journal*

I disagreed with some of their assessments - in some cases they were too positive both in terms of where they are now and in terms of how far they have moved since they came. What struck me most was Bheki's reporting that the thing that had surprised him the most was how easy it was to learn.

*From Bheki's evaluation, at year-end*

July was very poor because I didn't have enough work to do and the B.Ed students were on holiday and some of the staff members.



## *August*

### *Bheki*

I had to play a big role in the class. I introduced the game called the musical chairs and I liked that very much and I also learned about the learning cycle of which the introduction was marvellous.

This was the only time I found Bheki a role in the class which interested him.

### *My journal*

I had to start the class on my own, and Bheki arrived late. He then didn't participate much. I sensed that his role was too unclear - is he a student or an assistant or a lecturer? But if he wasn't ready to work in front of the class he must at least participate. I said that to him, and he did a bit, but then wanted to slip out to continue doing some work for Thulani [the friend who had introduced him to me].

On the way to the bus rank I said to him that he was failing to learn what he could because he was excluding himself. He said, Yes, but he could not participate equally with the others because they knew what the subject was about. I said that was not true, they actually knew very little about adult education, and that he knew a lot that he was not recognising.

### *My journal*

Today Zanele said to me that she realised that one reason for her work being disorganised was that I didn't know when she was coming in. I agreed, and said that the other difficulty was not having a clear enough project for her to work on, and that Bheki benefited from having the B.Ed, even though he did not in my opinion use it always to best advantage. Oh, he does, she said, he has become very fast at things, and very clever. I agreed that he was more confident, and said that she also seems more confident to me.

### *Zanele*

I know you will wonder why I took so long a time to write but then the answer is simple. I sometimes don't write because I do not feel that I have learnt something, so it's sometimes look as if writing here is a hell of a job. . . Budgeting time and dividing my work wasn't something I care to think about, but here it is up to me to see what I do at what time.

But then she acknowledges:

At night time [when assisting on a three-day course] people used to come to me and ask many things about the task they were given. I just coped with everything and helped them easily. This to me means that I may not realise or recognise but I have learnt a lot.

Soon after that, Zanele's journal ends, and efforts to get her to write again failed.

Late in August the issue of the trainees' status came to a head in a staff meeting which was examining proposals for future trainee schemes. I was reminded that Bheki and Zanele were employed by me and were thus not staff members, even though they had to be appointed as staff members by the University in terms of payment, etc. I accepted that this is the way it was set up, but said that I thought it was problematic for future trainees, as it would cut them off from interaction with other staff.

What struck me was how this reporting structure makes learning in the Centre more difficult. We are appointed as people who are resources for learning, and it seems contradictory to impose structures which limit access by trainees to academic staff. An educational organisation is not necessarily an effective in enabling its staff to learn.

## *September*

My journal

When Bheki came in I had been working on a table in a file, after much difficulty in finding the right steps. I showed him how to use the function, and he laughed with much enjoyment, he had already learnt that some time ago.

Bheki

I worked on the comments made by different people about the books that I was working on with Nozi [the translations]. My job was to read and try fitting where they were needed and also to say my comments on their comments.

My journal

Zanele has been working on the proceedings. She did not come on Friday as planned, and when I asked why she said it was because her great-aunt had got sick and they went to see her before she died, on Saturday. It has been harder to identify work she could do in my absence, though there are some mainly practical things.

## *October*

Early in October I left for two months sabbatical leave. Zanele was left some work to do for me; in addition to work she was to do for other staff members. Bheki was responsible for assisting still with the remaining classes for the B.Ed, and was also helping test translations of the booklets with literacy classes.

Bheki came into conflict with the Director, who was teaching the remaining B.Ed classes. The conflict related to the fact that Bheki had become responsible for the administration of the class:

### *Letter to me from the Director*

I have made the point repeatedly that he is not a member of the Centre's staff and yet I discover that he plays a key role in the administration of the B.Ed class. . .

### *Bheki*

I felt like I wasn't taken as somebody who has the role to play in the B.Ed class. I even left before they finished. This day wasn't like the other days when I am in the class.

### *Bheki*

Worked on another book for Nozi and from working on this book I felt like I am learning something even if I wasn't sure whether I am really learning or what am I learning but I was learning something.

Maybe this reflected my incessant questions to Bheki about his learning, more than anything else.

Two weeks later he went on a holiday to Johannesburg. Zanele stayed at work.

### *Zanele's life history*

The problem now that I have is that there is not enough work for me at the Centre. Crispin is away on sabbatical leave, so I have to plan my own work. This is not the problem; the problem is there is no work to plan. What I think is central to this problem is a question of identifying my aims and objectives and I

think that in doing that I'll have to have clear and realistic objectives. What I've been working on were goals which have no time limit, not doing things from one up to three but from three to five which I think is one of the reasons I failed. And what I have learnt is that your personal aims must link to your work aims and you need to use your past experience. The last thing I ever wanted was to fail, I kept on telling myself that I can do something and the fear of failing hindered me so I have learn to accept failure as a form or part of a learning experience.

### *November*

No records were kept - Bheki was away, and Zanele's journal was not written up.

Without direct instruction, her impatience with recording her experience took over. What is interesting to note is that Zanele's hours, which had fallen in October, showed an increase. Either her measurement of her time had changed, or she was working additional hours. Since there was evidently much more work with other staff members, I think it was the latter.

## *December*

I was asked to run a workshop on counselling skills for a youth organisation, and Bheki and Zanele accompanied me. Soon afterwards had a meeting to review the whole project. Since this was the most thorough reflection on the project with the trainees, I will quote much of it verbatim.

A lot of the discussion concerned a sense from the trainees that the project had been a failure for them - they hadn't learnt about adult education:

*Bheki*

At the beginning there was a list of things that we were to learn.

*Crispin*

Have you learnt the things that were set out?

*Bheki*

At this point I don't think I'm learning anything.

*Crispin*

What could you do about that?

*Bheki*

It's late [in the project].

*Crispin*

When I asked you to do things on the B.Ed you said you didn't want to do them.

*Bheki*

It's because I didn't know them well, and I didn't want to be stuck.

*Crispin*

Wouldn't learning something like that mean having to take some risk?

*Bheki*

Not like the ones I would have had to do in the class. They had to write exams, there was not time to do things. You remember how long it took them to understand objectives - they would say fine, fine, then next week they would come back and say that they didn't understand them. So it was not easy for me to do things like that. . . If I had taught them something and they hadn't learnt it, we would have had to repeat it. I would have been embarrassed.

*Crispin*

But they took a very long time to learn from me, anyway.

*Bheki*

They wanted to be taught.

*Crispin*

What experience would have been more helpful?

*Bheki*

Having to read through books, then observing it, then trying it with people who have low standards, not with this class who were high school students etc.

The trainees kept emphasising the need for something concrete that they could teach others - particularly Bheki. He could not envisage for himself a role as 'facilitator' without some specific content knowledge.

*Zanele*

I have attended these different workshops, but haven't been given a chance to present or whatever.

*Crispin*

I can see that. What about other kinds of learning?

*Zanele*

I'm not sure. I went to different workshops. . .

*Bheki*

Come on, you've been exposed to different workshops. You could learn from that.

*Zanele*

I have learnt to fax, photocopy, almost learnt the whole office work.

*Bheki*

From what you have learnt, what have you learnt from hands-on practice?

*Zanele*

In most cases, I been told, press here, not there. . .

*Bheki*

Am I saying it wrong? I was asking if there were any other things you had learnt by hands-on practice, or just exploring them.

*Zanele*

To be fair, just nothing. I can't say I learnt the computer by exploring. Bheki helped me, but I had to learn it. I used the book.

*Crispin*

You not saying, Bheki, it's a rule that you have to learn it that way?



*Bheki*

No, I'm not, just asking.

*Zanele*

But it wasn't like school, being told to do this.

*Bheki*

For me, if I don't have anything to do, I would just do PC Fastype [the typing tutor], and type. I would find things I could learn from.

*Zanele*

I was asking Bheki if he means that it was helpful not to be told what to do and what is expected from you?

*Bheki*

No, it's not helpful. But you can be told to do something that will not take the whole day, and you can then use your time. And I don't think you always expected us to wait to be told.

*Crispin*

That's correct.

Bheki makes a fascinating distinction between what he seems to regard as the only true learning - something that is self-directed - and being taught by someone.

*My journal*

On reflection it seemed to me that his history is that of independent action - a very important survival strategy in his life - and he has always been impatient of direction. The strength lies in his ability to learn so much, and the weakness in the fact that he does not learn some things because he has avoided taking things of value from other people. So when I set a goal that the trainees would be able to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, I didn't realise that this might in fact feed into his pattern of isolated learning. Had I thought of this before, I might have usefully pointed this out to him, and been more insistent that he listen to what I and others here have to offer.

Discussion also focused on the aims set originally:

*Crispin*

We had a list of things we hoped you might learn. Maybe that wasn't the best way to do it.

*Bheki*

It was the best way, it was just fine. It made us aware that we were to learn those things, and going back to them when I had time to do things. We can plan ahead, like in typing.

*Zanele*

I think I agree, because if we had not been given those papers, we might do something that might not do things that were helpful. It gave us a sort of a guide.

*Bheki*

I think that you thought about your research, and knew what you wanted. We knew that you had the purpose that we would learn them.

*Crispin*

The alternative way would be to not to set objectives, but to set experiences. And at the end of the year look at what you have learnt.

*Bheki*

With experiences, what happens if I haven't learnt anything, or I've learnt only one thing? May be a combination, of having to check the experiences after 3 or six months, not right at the end. You could change the method before the thing finishes, if people are not learning from those experiences.

What had happened with Zanele in my absence?

*Crispin*

I would say, Zanele, that my experience of going overseas was helpful for you.

*Zanele*

Yes.

*Bheki*

Why?

*Zanele*

That was the time I started setting goals for myself, doing things on my own, . . .

*Bheki*

Going back to the meeting we had last time, what Zanele said doesn't link up.

*Zanele*

It was a good time to do things on my own. That gave me an opportunity.

*Bheki*

What did you learn?

*Zanele*

To budget my time, to go to Pauline and Astrid and chat to them.

*Bheki*

That's not work.

*Zanele*

I did learn from them, gave me some idea of what they were doing [Bheki expressed some scepticism].

Again, Bheki tends to devalue the importance of Zanele's approach to work. At another time, Zanele said to me about the time I was away, that she had finished the tasks I had set her, and then sat 'waiting for me to come back.' Finally she had faced up to the reality that I was not going to be there to direct her for some time, and had set about organising her work.

*Crispin*

I think it was helpful for you to set up your own links independently of me. I think it has been a problem that it was set up this way.

*Zanele*

Do you think we should not blame the staff members for not taking responsibility for it?

*Crispin*

I don't think it's a matter of blame. We eventually got to the point where they started to see you as a resource. . . I think you in this discussion are looking at the project like researchers yourselves. . .

*Zanele*

In the contract it was said that in my absence another staff member would take responsibility. So I was expecting that we would have a meeting say with the Director every two months to evaluate things.

*Crispin*

So you thought there would be joint responsibility?

*Zanele*

Yes.

At the end of the project both trainees completed evaluation forms. What emerged in their responses was that the greatest single complaint by the trainees concerned their isolation from other staff in the Centre, and the fact that everything had to be routed through me:

*Crispin*

What has disappointed you most, and why?

*Bheki*

The staff not interested in our presence and work we do around the Centre. Because I think this is a quite useful scheme for the Centre as a whole.

*Zanele*

It was the lack of interest from some of the staff members. It caused me to feel sort of an outsider, someone who does not fit in. . .

What has been the least successful aspect of the scheme for you, and why?

*Zanele*

Trying to read handouts and books. I think things like action research were not of any interest to me. And I wasn't given any explanation of what importance the readings were.

So what Zanele had wanted earlier when she wanted theory on adult education is not being met by the reading. In part this seems to be because it is not integrated with her own processes of learning; in part it may be an illusory something that she didn't know how to express.

In response to two questions asking whether race or sex was an issue in the project, both answered that they felt it was not. These issues are dealt with again in Chapter Nine.

### *Year-end*

The project ended inconclusively. Although the meeting in December had identified some useful learnings, there was generally a feeling from the trainees that the project had not succeeded in meeting their expectations, that they had not learnt to become adult educators, and that the project had not advanced.

## Chapter Six      Subsequent events

Zanele had used her time at the University to make contact with the Teach-Test-Teach Programme, a programme of dynamic assessment aimed at bringing into the University of Natal students who had passed their Senior Certificate with results which would normally not be good enough for selection, but who seemed to have the potential to succeed in tertiary work. She was admitted to the Programme, and began first-year courses in February 1993.

I interviewed her in September 1993. The following are excerpts from the interview:

*What did you learn from the project?*

I didn't see it at the time, it was difficult for me to say, you just came in here and asked me what I was doing or would be doing. I had to arrange my own work, I had to arrange my own work on the computer. I have to arrange my own lectures in my work now. I know how to make my timetable, even if I don't attend I know how to or when to pick up that lecture that I missed.

It's different from the other students. They came fresh from school, they didn't know what university was. They thought it was like school. They didn't know that it was a demanding task to be in a university. At the beginning of the year I was so anxious to start my lectures, because I saw it was getting late. They were just happy; they didn't attend, they were just moving around, visiting their friends and going to town, just like that. I set clear goals for myself, I knew what I wanted, I knew where I was coming from and where I was going to.

I remember the course that said that the goals must be clear and realistic. I began by doing that. I knew that if I wanted to be a industrial psychologist, I must start here and go through the different stages.

When I attended the courses that I attended last year, they exposed me to a lot of things. I didn't think like a student anyway, just like to be at the university, the idea of being a university student didn't interest me at all. I knew I had to work hard. I am not interested in being a student; I am looking forward to what I will be doing in a later stage.

When I was here you always here emphasized how this would help you in a later stage, a person mustn't do it just for today.

*Are you different from other students?*

I am a lot. They are always panicking; if you have an assignment, it is not just that you have one assignment. They always look at the immediate issue, they just want to do the immediate work, they don't keep a balance in what they are doing. I learnt here to balance things, working on the computer and reading some papers, I had to prepare for those courses.

*I didn't think of that.*

Other students are just reading, they don't think how they will be using what they are learning, they just read it and . . .

*They don't put it in a context? Is it about organising what you are doing, and seeing the way ahead?*

Yes, the way ahead. I learnt to be patient; at times when I was trying to do things like learning to use the computer it took time. It was a matter of being patient and consistent; I knew that at the end I would learn it. That is what is keeping me going now; if it is difficult I will keep doing it and I know that I will succeed. As time went on I mastered it. So now I don't have a problem using the computer, I just go in and use it and print out my work.

When I was here I didn't take note of filing; I didn't see that I was learning that I was learning to keep my work organised. Now I organise my things, I keep things in order in my room.

*Looking back at the scheme, do you think the scheme was different for you in that you were African?*

It's a difficult question; if there was a white person the same age as me, and if they treated her differently I could say they were treated differently to me. There are some staff members who distanced themselves from the scheme, its 'his or her thing'. Working here you have to be up to date, you have to know what you are doing, so if someone asks you what you were doing you could tell them. You had to build their trust, get their advice, or whatever.

Unlike the majority of students at the University, Zanele passed all her courses in her first year, second year, and first half of third year, and is likely to complete her degree within three years, at the end of 1995. This was despite the continuation of very difficult personal circumstances. In 1994 her fiancé was murdered when he entered an area controlled by hostile political forces, immediately before the April elections.

Bheki had also been pursuing a career as a student. Following the interest he had developed in graphics, he had identified a course at a local technikon that offered a

bridging programme for students who had not done art at school, and was accepted into that. In 1995 he was accepted into the normal first year programme, where his progress has been good.

As I was busy in 1993 and early 1994 with research projects, and needed clerical assistance which was not easily available, I gave him work, initially of typing material, and then of transcribing material from audio-tapes, and keying in data from survey questionnaires. He proved very adept at this, and able to think critically about the accuracy of what he was typing. He was paid at considerably more than the rate of the internship. Later he undertook the typographic preparation of materials for a publication, which required developing some proficiency in desk-top publishing. Early in 1996 he served for a month as acting assistant administrative officer in the School of Education, and did that very effectively.

I interviewed him early in 1994:

*What did you learn on the scheme?*

Mostly administration skills, with a little bit of adult education.

*What sort of things around adult education?*

The approaches used in adult education - the kind of learning which is experiential learning, which is mostly used in adult education.

*In terms of administration?*

I learned about the office environment. I learnt more about office equipment, like the transcriber, photocopying, the use of a transcriber. A little bit, I learnt more programmes on the computer.

*Was the scheme successful? In producing young adult educators?*

In that way it was not successful, because the aim was to produce young adult educators. What we learnt was more administrative skills.

*Why not?*

Because we were not told where to learn about adult education, we tried to explore things, we did not attend lectures. We were also not told about books and which books to read and books which were helpful.

*Why books?*

I would have gained some techniques, teaching techniques. I would have practised that in the B.Ed class.

*On what?*

On one or two simple things that were being done in the class.

*Simple things?*

When students were asked what they had learnt and what helped them to learn, that sort of thing.

My impression was that he had learnt a large number of technical skills, skills that are in short supply. For example, I had not been able to find university students able to work effectively on such tasks as transcribing and basic desk-top publishing.



## Chapter Seven What the trainees learnt

This chapter seeks to answer the first part of the original question: 'What was the nature of the learning of the trainees through this attachment?' It sets out the nature of that learning, and explores the ways in which we describe it.

Despite the feelings, both of the mentor and the trainees, at the end of the project that not much had been achieved, both the later interviews and the evidence from observing their work and their later development indicate that Bheki and Zanele learnt various things, not necessarily to the same degree:

- Skills related to office work, including typing, using the phone, filing, and minor routines such as faxing, photocopying.
- Skills in using the computer employing various software packages, particularly Bheki.
- Some reception and customer skills - in particular learnt by Zanele.
- Administrative skills, in organising classes - seeing to preparation and issuing of materials, informing students, setting up equipment, recording information and making notes.
- Some specific concepts in adult education, from their involvement in classes and from their limited reading.
- A sense of the different operations that together make up the work of a university department - see the comments by Zanele, for example.

- An understanding of what is involved in a 'job', in the organisation of work towards certain goals (Zanele's comments in July).
- The ability to make decisions about one's future career, as demonstrated by the choices the trainees made at the end of the project.
- Most importantly perhaps, an understanding of how to think about one's role in a work context, and how to guide oneself towards achieving goals - to some extent work goals, perhaps to a greater extent personal goals - and the confidence associated with these understandings.

What were clearly **not** learnt were the skills related to the teaching of adults, and design of programmes. The activities of a 'community adult educator' proved to be fairly distant from the activities of the office environment within which the trainees spent most of their time, and the learnings reflect that.

The greatest frustration mentioned by the trainees related though to what they expressed as 'adult education theory' or 'knowledge about adult education'. The project failed to enable the trainees to theorise sufficiently about the learnings that were taking place, and to thereby provide access to a greater wealth of concepts about learning and education. Thus the content picked up in classes was not integrated, and was not available to interrogate what was happening in the project, nor was subject to critical scrutiny by the trainees - at least during the project. Zanele's use of what she had learnt about goal-setting later indicates that some of this learning was integrated later.

In Jarvis' terms these failures to learn are not 'non-learning responses to potential learning situations'; rather they reflect a failure in the structure of the project.

Skills learnt by trainees	Responses to the potential learning situations
Office work	Mainly practice and memorisation, with some degree of experimental learning
Computer skills	Practice and memorisation, and a fairly high degree of experimental learning. To some extent, rejection by Zanele
Reception and customer skills	Practice and reflective practice (Zanele)
Administrative skills	Practice and memorisation, with elements of reflective practice and experimental learning
Specific concepts in adult education	Memorisation, practice and contemplation
Understanding the university department	Pre-conscious and contemplation
Understanding a job	Pre-conscious, contemplation and reflective practice
The ability to make career decisions	Pre-conscious, contemplation
Understanding one's role in a work context, goal-setting and confidence	Pre-conscious, contemplation, experimental learning

***Analysis of trainees' learning, following Jarvis (1987: ch2)***

These distinctions cannot be clear-cut. Memorisation is obvious in some responses, but there is at least some involvement of memory in all learnings. Reflective practice may occur in relation to even a very limited 'manual' skill, such as photocopying, but it is most clearly evident in tasks requiring a higher level of integration.

The learnings will further be explored with regard to the **level** of the learning, to their **career** relevance, and to the distinction between **formal and informal learning**; those

learnings which require or involve a higher degree of reflectivity are then examined in more depth.

By **level** I refer to the degree of competence at which skills were learnt. There are those which can now be employed with confidence and flexibility, such as Bheki's skills in exploring and using computer software and his understanding of office systems and routine. For Zanele, her particular strengths were in handling students and clients of the Centre, and, as emerged later, in her sophisticated understanding of work in a university context. Bheki's learning in those areas appeared to be relatively limited, as were Zanele's learnings with regard to use of the computer.

Both trainees learnt skills that are marketable in **career** terms. Bheki in particular could have been productive within a range of jobs quickly, given his strength in the computer area, and in fact while studying he has continued to secure fairly well-paid employment from time to time. Neither though could have worked as a community adult educator on the basis of this experience; they would still have been trainees. The kinds of employment that might have been possible would ideally have been within a university context, and would have been in such areas as research and administration.

The learnings can be explored with regard to whether they were **formal, nonformal or informal** (see Chapter 3), bearing in mind the limitations recorded there in describing learning in these terms. Few of the learnings on the listing could be described as formal, given the very limited exposure to formal contexts. Both trainees learnt some things to do with adult education specifically - ideas on working with groups, concepts concerning needs, ways of setting goals, some grasp of the relationship between theory and practice. These were though learnt in various ways - through conversation, through participation in or observation of the few classes they attended, through the limited reading they undertook. But however learnt, they could be considered formal on the grounds that they were part of the formal curriculum of our courses.

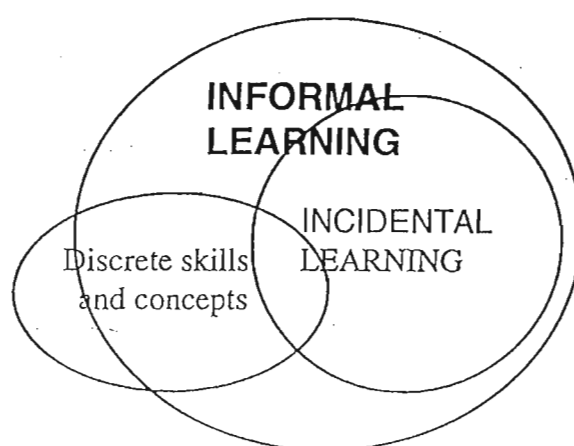
How do we judge whether this 'formal' learning entailed more than memorisation - did it entail something that they trainees might deploy in a practical context, or use as part of an intellectual project? The only evidence for their deployment is in the interview with Zanele after the internship, where she reported using the concept of 'clear and realistic goals'. She had transferred this to a different context, not of teaching but of self-study. The abstract concept, with which she had not engaged as a teacher, now resonated with her in a different context.

Bheki never used such concepts in his writing, in discussions concerning his learning, or later in his occasional work for the Centre. Thus, seeing that such learning were envisaged as part of the objectives set for the internship, this was generally an area of failure, presumably because of the lack of opportunities to make these learnings concrete through application, either in teaching or reflection.

The distinction between formal and nonformal in Groombridge's sense (p27 ) is of very limited utility here. The organised instruction fell partly into a 'formal' category, partly into a 'nonformal' category, mainly on the basis of which was accredited. For that matter, the one course that was then taught as nonformal is now a formal programme. I consider it more helpful here to use the term 'formal' to include the full range of organised education.

If so little of the learnings listed are understood as formal, the vast bulk was informal. It drew on one-to-one guidance, on trial, error and reflection, on practice, on occasional reading, on conversation. Within the informal area, though, lie two further distinctions - that between incidental learning and other forms of informal learning, and that between more specific, discrete skills and broader, more integrative skills.

Following Marsick and Watkins' distinction between informal and incidental learning (1990: 6-7), I would locate the discrete learnings in these terms:



*Figure 7.1 How the discrete skills and concepts related to other learning*

The specific skills and concepts, such as 'Basic office administration skills', or 'familiarity with adult education theory' can easily be described as discrete elements. However, the remaining learnings that fall under incidental learning are not so easily described, while they are, potentially at least, equally valuable. It is these that require some more intensive processes of reflection.

Specific skill or concept	Deeper-level learning
Typing	Understanding the interrelated operations needed for the Centre to do its work
Photocopying	Understanding the relationship between personal work and organisational mission
Concepts in adult education	Ability to move beyond personal frustration in work to action to address frustrations
Skills in handling clients entering the office or phoning	To understand that one's role is that of actor and not someone to be acted upon

*Examples of specific and more general learnings*

It is important first to emphasise that this distinction is perhaps a matter of different points along a continuum. Secondly, it does not necessarily parallel a distinction between formal and informal. The specific skills and concepts were learnt in informal contexts, as much as the deeper-level learnings. However, the former are undoubtedly easier to address in a

formal context, and it is a strength of internship that it facilitates the learning of the deeper-level learnings.

It is necessary to set out more specific evidence for the development of deeper-level learnings.

A typical entry in Zanele's diary, in March, was this:

On this date I again did some photocopying and learned how to transfer information from the disc to the paper. This was one of the most difficult things in my life. I keep forgetting what comes first, what or which button to press, so it gets stuck.

And from Bheki:

I did photocopying and typing up notes for the B.Ed class and collating. I worked on the computer learning WP and DOS. I was so pleased about the way of learning it because I just went over workbooks and reference books and that helped. From WP I learnt how to print and from DOS I learnt how to format a disc.

In August Zanele is writing:

I know you will wonder why I took so long a time to write but then the answer is simple. I sometimes don't write because I do not feel that I have learnt something, so it's sometimes looks as if writing here is a hell of a job. I may learn something at some stage without realising it, only to see later that I have gained.

Bheki has far fewer such reflective comments in his diary, but the December consultation indicates that he has formed some quite powerful understandings about learning, even though they may need some challenging:

Bheki

From what you have learnt, what have you learnt from hands-on practice?

Zanele

In most cases, I've been told, press here, not there. . .

Bheki

Am I saying it wrong? I was asking if there were any other things you had learnt by hands-on practice, or just exploring them.

Zanele

To be fair, just nothing. I can't say I learnt the computer by exploring. Bheki helped me, but I had to learn it. I used the book.

Crispin

You not saying, Bheki, it's a rule that you have to learn it that way?

Bheki

No, I'm not, just asking.

Zanele

But it wasn't like school, being told to do this.

Bheki

For me, if I don't have anything to do, I would just do PC Fastype [the typing tutor], and type. I would find things I could learn from.

Zanele

I was asking Bheki does he mean that it was helpful not to be told what to do and what is expected from you.

Bheki

No, it's not helpful. But you can be told to do something that will not take the whole day, and you can then use your time. And I don't think you always expected us to wait to be told.

The progression these examples from focus on the activity involved in learning a new skill to focus on deeper and more general issues concerning learning serves as an indication of the development that is under way. The deeper-level learnings are less easily described but more significant, because if successful they should facilitate further learning by providing a framework of meaning within which it should take place.

A later example of how such a framework is put to use emerges in the interview with Zanele later, where she sets out the perspective that she takes in comparison with other students who have not had the experience of internship:

It's different from the other students. They came fresh from school, they didn't know what university was. They thought it was like school. They didn't know that it was a demanding task to be in a



university. At the beginning of the year I was so anxious to start my lectures, because I saw it was getting late. They were just happy; they didn't attend, they were just moving around, visiting their friends and going to town, just like that. I set clear goals for myself, I knew what I wanted, I knew where I was coming from and where I was going to.

That the difference is real and not simply a matter of Zanele's perception is indicated by some interviews I undertook in the next year with a group of first-year African students, as part of an evaluation of educational development in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences.

One of the questions asked was 'What was it like coming to university?'. The overwhelming response was that it was **confusing**:

We had been told that the university was a different place to be, but not that much kind of fear - there was the pride of wanting to be at university. Once we arrived, we experienced fear. [agreement from others].

*Fear of what?* Fear of talking in class. Fear of criticism, humiliation.

There is another kind of fear, of failure, that can disturb your studies. We come from a low socio-economic status; we are a bit disturbed when you get a bad result. We have a fear of exclusion - it is a difficult one.

I was excited before my arrival, but confused when I got here.

A lot of pressure, confusion.

When asked what was confusing, students listed such factors as the use of English, the difference from school, and the amount of work:

White lecturers speak English differently [from school teachers].

I was confused by the timetable, and didn't know where to go.

I was confused by senior students, who threatened me. They told me negative comments about the hard work, and I felt I wouldn't fit.

I was very lost at first, lectures were very different from school.

There is confusion of what is expected of you.

First year was heavy going, too much. . . Lots of homework, lots of readings, essays to write.' 'Something you haven't experienced before from school - you are expected to do your own work.

The failure they report I would understand as in part simple lack of familiarity, but more fundamentally the failure of the deeper-level understandings they have formed about

learning, from their experience of years of schooling in a system based on a very limited and distorted understanding of learning. Their own internship is one that has disabled their learning, not enabled it.

This mismatch between schools in what had been the system of Bantu Education, and university education, has been thoroughly described and analysed - see the work by Craig (1987, 1988, 1989 and 1991), Griesel (1991 and 1993), and Miller (1992). Their work has revealed the ways in which schools have systematically prepared students in cognitive styles that directly disadvantage them in tertiary education.

Interviews conducted at the same stage with staff raised concerns almost exclusively with the weakness of students in content areas, in their lack of preparation in the foundations that should lead to university study. The students though focus not on the content of their knowledge, but instead on the whole experience of the institution.

One way of understanding the experience is in terms of Gee's notion of *discourse*. Gee writes of the primary discourse of non-mainstream students, who are at a considerable disadvantage in handling the secondary discourse of the school (or in this case of tertiary education) compared to mainstream students.

Many black people are part of a primary Discourse that puts a high premium on mutual participation, cooperation, social networking, not intervening in others's affairs, and not privileging authoritarian texts, or outside (often white institutions, or the written word, over people's voices. . . . On the other hand, the 'rationalistic' and 'privatised' features of thought and interaction that we see in the case of the white student and his group have been associated with the growth of the Western middle class and modern capitalism. . . . (1991: 190)

Here he refers to students in North America, but at least some of the same divides must apply in South Africa. In these terms, what the experience was ultimately for Zanele was not learning the skills of the community adult education; it was learning the discourse of the institution, and learning it very effectively. This would be Gee's *acquisition* of a

*discourse*. In addition, her ability to reflect on the experience in critical terms provides an indication that 'teaching<sub>1</sub>' also took place, in other words, analytical reflection on the project. So Zanele is not colonised by the institution, but can both operate effectively within it and comment critically on it. Her experience echoes a comment by Gee (1991: 148):

The difficulty of accommodation can certainly give rise to large problems in gaining the social goods that the society ties to mastery of mainstream Discourses, but it can lead to reflective insight and meta-knowledge (even in the absence of equitable or successful classroom teaching).

Is she learning the (secondary) discourse of the university through the internship, and then acting within that discourse as a student? This may be too facile an account; it relies on a continuity of the discourse from the role of a (mainly) administrative worker in a university centre doing non-formal work to that of a university student involved in formal study. The roles are so different that it may be better described in terms of the *transfer* of learnings from one secondary discourse to another (Gee, 1991: 152).

Two other theorists seem relevant for this kind of development in Zanele's thinking. The first is Mezirow, with his concept of *perspective transformation* (1981, p7).

Perspective transformation is the emancipatory process *of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings*. It is the learning process by which adults come to recognise their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them.

Unlike the other students, Zanele does not see herself as passive in the role of student, but as an actor helping to determining the outcome of her time as a university student. That is a major shift from her initial dependent and passive role as a trainee.

Brookfield's frame of *critical thinking*, a frame that brings together various concepts developed by writers on adult education, also seems relevant. He (1987, 26-7) summarises the phases he sees in the accounts of how people become critical thinkers, phases which have 'remarkably similar' components in different writers. These are *trigger event*, *appraisal*, *exploration*, *developing alternative perspectives*, and *integration*. In terms of Bheki and Zanele's development through and following the internship, his model might look like this (the descriptions under 'Elements' are direct quotes from Brookfield:

Phase of development	Elements	Bheki and Zanele's development
Trigger event	Some unexpected happening prompts a sense of inner discomfort and perplexity.	While not unexpected, the internship certainly generated these, until towards the end.
Appraisal	A period of self-scrutiny and appraisal of the situation follows the trigger event.	In the latter stages of the internship, a more reflective process seems to be underway; it is has been achieved by the December meeting.
Exploration	Having admitted to anomalies or discrepancies in some aspect of life, we begin to search for new ways of explaining these discrepancies or accepting them.	There is some evidence for this phase in the discussion at the December meeting - for example, in Bheki's description of self-directed learning.
Developing alternative perspectives	Arising out of the testing and exploring of alternatives come ways of thinking and acting that we feel 'make sense' for our situations.	Zanele at the interview after the project gives an account of how her thinking and acting had changed. For Bheki the evidence is more limited, but the action he takes to choose a different career and to begin a long programme of study seems to derive from increased confidence and determination.
Integration	Having decided on the worth, accuracy, and validity of new ways of thinking or living, we begin to find ways to integrate these into the fabric of our lives.	Zanele last interview itself demonstrates the integration of the perspective she has developed - her ebullience matches Brookfield's 'rush of self-affirmation and a sense of pleasurable satisfaction at having achieved this stage' (Brookfield, 1987: 28-9). Is this stage fully achieved by Bheki?

The project thus succeeded in terms of the development of the trainees' thought, more than we expected to achieve, while it failed to provide relevant opportunities to learn some of the major goals we had described.

## Chapter Eight Factors impacting on learning

The second part of the major research question was, 'what were the factors that either obstructed or facilitated the trainees' learning?' The key factors that I have identified as impacting most on learning, or factors that need to be explored as likely to impact on learning, were as follows:

- 1) the conception of the project and choice of trainees
- 2) the relationship between mentor and trainee
- 3) racism
- 4) gender
- 5) reading and studying
- 6) youth
- 7) emotions and reflection
- 8) the environment of the Centre and its location within the University
- 9) the lack of emphasis on the learning of content

Beyond tracing the impact of these factors on learning, this chapter explores some of the (in this project often unrealised) potential of improving internship through responding to these factors more effectively.

### *1 Conception of the project and the choice of trainees*

The project demonstrates the power and effectiveness of internship; it also indicates the limitations of such a project in terms of the original aims. Three critical problems obstructed its effectiveness: they relate to the project's design, to selection of the trainees, and to the way in which one formulates the objectives of internship.

The long-term internship programme, allied to formal university courses, that was initially proposed was rejected as being too long in execution, and this project was implemented instead. In retrospect the original design now seems educationally more viable as a development programme for potential academics, provided it was clearly understood as the aim. It would have delivered both considerable educational value and the accreditation that this project lacked. The lengthy period it entailed now

seems realistic in terms of its aims, which were ambitious but necessary if the University is to take affirmative action seriously.

The project of this study though was not aimed at the production of academic adult educators, and the trainees were not selected accordingly. In the end tertiary education proved a more understandable and pressing option for ambitious young trainees than a future in some community educational project, which would deliver neither a guaranteed job nor any accreditation.

In comparison, a later project within what is now the Department of Adult and Community Education, beginning in 1993, has involved a two-year programme of internship in an ABE organisation, linked with an intensive formal course leading to a postgraduate diploma in ABE. It admits Black graduate students who may have had no prior experience of ABE, and aims to produce in time leaders in the field of ABE, particularly for non-governmental organisations. The experience of this project has been very positive in terms of its ability to develop leadership qualities; there is however a high rate of dropout, usually for such reasons as family problems or competing job opportunities. Possibly such developmental programmes inevitably require both a long time period, and also an acceptance that one cannot guarantee that the trainees selected will stay the full course.

A further problem relating to the design was the limitations inherent in using internship in a tertiary institution to produce community adult educators. Not surprisingly, it instead produced people who had learnt some of the skills and understandings effective in a tertiary institution. That is not to say that many of the skills and practices learnt would not be useful elsewhere, but some critical areas of learnings which were originally identified as essential to community contexts were clearly not achieved. Had my own work consisted much more of such community-related work, my original expectation - meeting with groups to plan programmes, identifying aims and objectives, designing workshops and so on - and had the trainees assisted that work, it

would seem reasonable to assume that the trainees would have developed those skills more readily.

Furthermore, the internship might have been of greatest benefit in developing community adult educators if we had selected trainees who were already in that role, and whose experience would then have been supplemented with a more formal and academic internship of this kind. Apart from ensuring a context in which the skills would be relevant, they might also have had appropriate content knowledge, a point picked up below.

Thus the project had problems relating to design and selection. A third problem is likely to be shared with many such programmes. The listing of objectives that was used was of a nature more suited to classroom instruction than an unpredictable programme of internship. Bheki and Zanele found the listing of objectives to be useful as a reminder of what the project was meant to achieve. Its limitation is however shown by the fact that it does not describe what I consider the most important learnings: the reframing that did take place.

In a personal communication Karen Watkins noted

I have doubts about the extent to which you have a formal curriculum in mind. It is better to have a set of experiences rather than goals, and to review them yearly as things change..... If we tick off skills on a listing, we have to be aware that it means different things for people of different ages. For example, Bheki and Zanele may follow the listing of skills set, but will interpret them at a more shallow level.

I would now consider the best way of conceiving of such a project would be in terms of the **role** that is being learnt, and the experiences should be selected according to their value in enabling learning of the different aspects of that role. That is not to assume that when the role is that of academic adult educator or community adult educator, the trainee should be acting only in that role; experiences of formal education may be of vital importance, as well as experiences relating to administrative work. We would expect that some quite specific skills will be learnt, but the



conception of a role is more holistic and accommodates more easily the less easily identified and deeper-level understandings.

Thus, the project was flawed in its design and in the selection of trainees, and this is I believe limited the effectiveness of the learning. That they nonetheless learnt some important things speaks to the potential of an internship programme.

## **2      *The relationship between mentor and trainee***

On the face of it (as discussed in Chapter Three) it is problematic for a mentor to be researcher - the potential conflict of role is obvious. However, I would consider that the relationship worked generally well, and that my role as researcher did not significantly constrain my role as mentor. Both Bheki and Zanele expressed their views and frustrations freely; communication was easy. The relationship was informal; Bheki was in fact a friend of mine, while Zanele kept the relationship mainly to work issues, but both expressed their views and frustrations without reserve. They would spend time talking to me rather than reporting to me formally - even in a more formally organised meeting, as the transcript on p indicates, they would speak directly.

The trainees were allowed more flexibility than would normally be allowed in a work context; the requirement that they learn limited the emphasis on productivity. I consider my rather relaxed approach to be appropriate as a mentor. I felt about the relationship in a way similar to that of a mentor on a training project that I evaluated soon after this project, a mentor who was judged by her trainees as having been very successful: 'Mentoring to me is a relationship that one strikes with someone who **wants** to have that relationship, one has a personal kind of stake in the whole thing.'

On reflection though I would usefully have balanced this rather easy and informal relationship with more challenge to the trainees in specific areas - for example, pushing Zanele harder to be independent and to rely more on her own resources, pushing Bheki to work in closer contact with myself and with Zanele. The balance between engagement and disengagement, the balance between encouragement and criticism, are

critical in such a relationship, and I consider that I too readily accepted what was comfortable for the trainees.

What was as relevant as the relationship between mentor and trainees for the major part of the internship was my absence towards the end of the project for seven weeks. An internship without the mentor both tests what has already been learnt and challenges the trainees in a different way. I believe that for Zanele in particular the experience of being on her own and having to construct her own job was very helpful. It confronted her with the way in which she had set up a somewhat dependent relationship on me, and I was not there to be drawn into attempting to placate or reassure her. My absence confronted her with the fact that she had sat 'waiting for me to come back,' and had forced her into taking responsibility for her work.

For Bheki on the other hand, my absence was not helpful - he benefited more than Zanele from interaction and direction, and on his own he either continued pursuing his interests (often quite successfully and effectively) while at work, or went off from work. Despite his independent style of operating, unlike Zanele he maintained close contact after the project, and continues to acknowledge the mentoring aspect of the relationship.

### **3      *Racism***

To what extent was racism a factor in the project? It would be hard to envisage a South African context in which it was not an issue, and there were indeed perhaps two occasions where a failure of communication resulted from racism, that I became aware of. And of course the whole situation is one which has resulted from racism - the nature of the educational system from which Bheki and Zanele had come, the result of directly racist planning, the gulf of experience between working-class young African people and a university environment with White leadership and in reality slower to change its staff structure than many other areas of South African society.

Yet despite this it is striking, how little information emerged concerning issues of racism. During the project neither trainee volunteered any concerns regarding race, nor did they say much in response to questions. For example, in response to this question in the final evaluation, 'What difference does it make being Black in this situation?', Bheki simply responded, 'No difference'. However, in the interview with Zanele nine months after the project ended, she responded more cautiously:

*Looking back at the scheme, do you think the scheme was different for you in that you were African?*

It's a difficult question; if there was a white person the same age as me, and if they treated her differently I could say they were treated differently to me. There are some staff members who distanced themselves from the scheme, it's 'his or her thing' ....'

Had the trainees instead been White, or the staff Black, would the pattern of relationship between staff and trainees have been different? The only evidence for this was that Bheki worked easily with the one African staff member on a specific project. But both trainees also gave some positive comments about their relationship with White staff members. My own view is that the lack of enthusiasm amongst some staff member had little or nothing to do with racism, and much more to do with their feelings about the value of the project.

One explanation for the lack of response from trainees to questions concerning racism might be that the divide between skilled White staff and unskilled Black trainee was one that accommodated rather than challenged patterns of racism, and so the racism was present but hidden from view. Another might be that there was on the contrary an understanding amongst staff of the problems that result from such a divide, and a commitment to address the difficulties that flowed from it.

I tend to this latter conclusion, but consider that the main reason racism was not raised as an issue is that the areas of tension were more about such factors as age, work organisation, and levels of skills, while there was in fact a fairly high degree of sensitivity in the Centre to do with issues directly related to race. And of course the whole project was one that aimed to provide opportunities which would otherwise not

have been there for young Black people - to that extent it aimed to address some of the problems brought about by racism. Thus racism was not in itself a factor that obstructed the project.

#### **4      *Gender and learning style***

There was a striking difference between the two trainees regarding the way they learnt. It was articulated directly by Bheki in the final meeting of the project, where he lays a claim to learning as learning in a particular style:

*Crispin*

What experiences were helpful to you?

*Zanele*

I have attended these different workshops, but haven't been given a chance to present or whatever.

*Crispin*

I can see that. What about other kinds of learning?

*Zanele*

I'm not sure. I went to different workshops. . .

*Bheki*

Come on, you've been exposed to different workshops. You could learn from that.

*Zanele*

I have learnt to fax, photocopy, almost learnt the whole office work.

*Bheki*

From what you have learnt, what have you learnt from hands-on practice?

*Zanele*

In most cases, I been told, press here, not there....

*Bheki*

Am I saying it wrong? I was asking if there were any other things you had learnt by hands-on practice, or just exploring them.

*Zanele*

To be fair, just nothing. I can't say I learnt the computer by exploring. Bheki helped me, but I had to learn it. I used the book.

*Crispin*

You not saying, Bheki, it's a rule that you have to learn it that way?

*Bheki*

No, I'm not, just asking.

*Zanele*

But it wasn't like school, being told to do this.

*Bheki*

For me, if I don't have anything to do . . . I would find things I could learn from.

*Zanele*

I was asking Bheki, Does he mean that it was helpful not to be told what to do and what is expected from you?

*Bheki*

No, it's not helpful. But you can be told to do something that will not take the whole day, and you can then use your time. And I don't think you always expected us to wait to be told.

*Crispin*

That's correct.

In this interchange, Bheki articulates what had until then been an implicit standard of his, that **real** learning is arrived at by exploration, not by mediation or direction.

Zanele in contrast was perhaps too ready to see her learning as depending on her relationship to other people.

Was this difference related to gender difference? Karen Watkins, in a personal communication, spoke of the ways in which men are socialised towards independent action, and women towards nurturance. She related this to Bheki's way of taking responsibility for his own work and learning, and to the expectation that Zanele, seeking to maintain the relationships around her, provide support for family members, which she saw as an obstacle to her making full use of the experience.

An advantage of a qualitative approach is that it reveals the texture of such differences with regard to approach; a disadvantage is the difficulty of making a general conclusion about whether the difference was related to gender or to do with personal circumstances and characteristics of the trainees that were not related specifically to gender.

The experience of working on her own in my absence provided, without design, some degree of challenge to Zanele's approach (she had to develop new relationships to enable her learning). Bheki however needed more attention to bring him into relationship with the work of others - Zanele, myself, other staff - in the Centre, and for the most part the project failed to do that.

On balance, then, it may be that the impact of gender on the way the trainees learnt was a mixture of positive and negative. The role it seems to have played was not seen clearly enough and early enough to have been made use of in developing more effective strategies of learning.

## **5      *Reading, studying and teaching***

The trainees would sometimes express their frustrations at not learning what they needed to learn by saying that they needed to read on adult education theory.

However, when they were set an assignment to read and write comments on an article, neither sustained any interest in it. At another time Zanele commented to me that I was not busy - I had spent an hour or so reading a paper. She clearly did not see reading as part of my work, and that perhaps is equally a comment on my own work as on her understanding of the role of an academic.

The absence of reading relates also to their limited engagement in classes - Bheki's being very limited indeed. The way that they alluded to it was in terms of 'learning about' something from which they were distanced. This distancing follows I think from the problems in the conception of the project. The emphasis on 'community adult educator' I had conceived of too narrowly as teaching in a community context and the trainees' own experience of learning was insufficiently recognised as a source for their understandings about adult education. Thus there were too few points at which connection could be made between their experience and adult education theory.

So neither the reading nor the classes succeeded in relating sufficiently to the trainees' experiences in the Centre. Discussions and meetings with the trainees were more

effective in encouraging some critical reflection on those experiences, and the records of these discussions indicate that some useful realisations were achieved in them. This is not particularly a criticism of the classes that Bheki and Zanele attended - they did focus more on the contexts from which the other participants came. But the question arises as to what formal or nonformal teaching would have been appropriate? In Gee's terms, what teaching<sub>1</sub> should have taken place - bearing in mind that the reflection at meetings was also a form of teaching<sub>1</sub>?

Formal education could have provided useful opportunities for reflection on the informal learning that was taking place in the project, and there was thus a failure to develop this link between the formal and informal. It might also have been that Zanele would have learnt some skills - like filing or computer skills - more effectively in a formal situation.

In conclusion, I saw the meetings with trainees and other times which facilitated reflection, as valuable to their learning, but more formal study had little impact on their learnings.

## **6 Youth**

What was the impact of the trainees' youth on the outcome of the project? I would conceive of very different outcomes had the **experience** of the trainees have been different - for example, if we had taken trainees with some significant experience as teachers in community adult education, or if we had taken graduate students. The latter for example might have been much clearer from the outset about the way the university works, and the role of formal learning within such a project. The former might have been much clearer about what they wanted to learn, and how they would use the resources available.

Apart from the issue of the relevance of experience, were there other issues relating to the trainees' ages that had an impact on the project? Would the work of a theorist like Erikson on psychosocial stages of youth (1980) offer any insight into this aspect of the

project? Were the trainees struggling with issues of intimacy and solidarity versus isolation, for example, to use one of Erikson's stages?

I cannot help feeling that this represents a crisis that might be encountered elsewhere, but was not relevant to the trainees. The issue of whether they were dependent on their mentor before they could derive meaning from the workplace, was certainly relevant. It could well however be equally relevant to an older trainee who came with similarly limited skills and lack of experience, given the structural relationships of the society.

What strikes me as relevant though is the relative fluidity of the trainees' lives - neither had settled on a career, and it was premature to expect them to move into a career as a community adult educator. Even now that they are studying formally, there are many diverse career paths open to them - including that of adult educator! There is a question for internship programmes of the balance between sufficient length to enable a programme to develop the full range of skills, and the need for trainees to be at a point where they are committed to a career. I pursue the issue further when considering the implications for future programmes.

The project was useful to them in two specific ways, irrespective of whether they become adult educators or not. First, many of the skills learnt, whether specific, marketable skills or deeper understandings of the organisation of work, are useful in a wide range of jobs and will assist the trainees in their careers. Secondly, they were able to understand career choices more effectively - Bheki made an explicit choice in favour of a career in design and the visual arts, Zanele decided to pursue university study as the means to a career possibly in human resource development.

*At the December meeting:*

*Zanele*



I'll be studying. I won't need to attend courses like computers and filing because I will have acquired those skills. Bheki: This has made me think about which field is going to suit me - it will be the technical area.

The concept of 'marginalised youth' has entered sociological language - the concept that the greater part of a generation of African young people have been marginalised in the society, denied access to the formal, productive and income-earning sectors of the society. This would include even those who have been relatively slightly privileged by achieving matriculation - so Bheki and Zanele were potentially at least part of this group. Whether or not one accepts this concept, the project served the trainees as an induction into a different world, and, perhaps more positively, provided some confidence in crossing the disjuncture between both worlds. For young people for this background, internship may carry the danger of raising and then dashing expectations, given the insistent concern for getting a job. However, in the process it is likely that important learnings will be made. Internship may lead to some gaining a job; it is also though unlikely simply to be a mechanism to select some at the expense of others.

In general, internship projects have the potential for many unintended consequences. Career development was not an aim of the project, but it was a consequence, which might have not occurred with other trainees. Other projects of this nature need to consider the extent to which they can or should address this issue.

## **7      *Emotions and reflection***

Most considerations of learning tend to ignore the role of emotion, either as facilitator of learning or as block to it. Adult educators usually develop skills in creating a supportive emotional climate in a classroom context, but we may be unprepared for creative a similar climate as managers in the workplace, where affective issues naturally tend to arise - relating perhaps to questions of conflict, or passivity, or dependency. Thus theoretical work relevant to such contexts has tended to include the affective domain. For example, Mezirow's theory of reflectivity incorporates both cognitive and affective elements (Jarvis, 1987: 91).

Weissglass and Weissglass (1987: 1) deal specifically with the negative impact of feelings on learning:

Change requires re-evaluating previously developed concepts and interpretations. It often necessitates re-examining attitudes, opinions and past experiences. Personal change and development are frequently accompanied by feelings of resentment, frustration, fear or grief. *As a result, to successfully teach adults requires sensitivity to their feelings.* Time must be provided for reflection about new information and for planning. Time must also be set aside to *deal with feelings* that may otherwise inhibit, change and achievement of future goals.

It is not surprising that feelings can interfere with learning in adults. Keep in mind that each adult you teach has a 'learning history'.

For Bheki and Zanele, that learning history is largely of a school system in which passivity and rote learning were criteria for success. To adjust to a work context which expected initiative and some degree of independent action towards commonly understood goals might be expected to generate feelings of insecurity and resentment. Such emotions were expressed fairly freely by the trainees, in meetings and in their diary entries, as some of the excerpts have shown. That they were expressed easily and without disruption to the project is some indication of an underlying degree of trust between mentor and trainees. But did they hinder, or even facilitate learning?

There seemed to be a progression in the emotions expressed by the trainees. Initially written comments expressed hopefulness and excitement:

*Bheki*

I am happy to help in the B.Ed class, because I always learn something new...

This often gave way to much frustration at the difficulty of doing simple but new tasks, such as photocopying, and occasional pleasure at succeeding, followed by frustration at doing something which was not leading to any new learning - or of not being limited by one's own lack of learning:

*Zanele*

There was nothing to write because I was only typing, filing, photocopying. All this is just a repetition of something which I now know.

*Bheki*

Helping on the B.Ed class doing preparations and photocopying handouts for those who were left behind. I didn't learning anything.

*Zanele and Crispin*

'I didn't do maths at school.'

'But surely you must have done arithmetic and maths?'

'Only to Standard 5. I can't remember it now!'

'Well, you did it from Class One to Standard 5.'

Then there was more general frustration at the apparent lack of progress:

*Zanele*

If nothing is done [to improve the project] it means of waste of time and energy, having to work out somebody and afterwards that one throw away what you have been teaching in the river and let that flow in the water.

At the time of the December meeting with the trainees, there was still an underlying resentment about the project and its apparent failure, though there were also some more reflective comments that indicated a more complex awareness of the trainees' own roles in ensuring success or failure (see pp70-75).

The final interview with Zanele (Chapter 6) was emotionally far more positive, including this comment from Zanele, a counterpoint to some of her complaints about not learning:

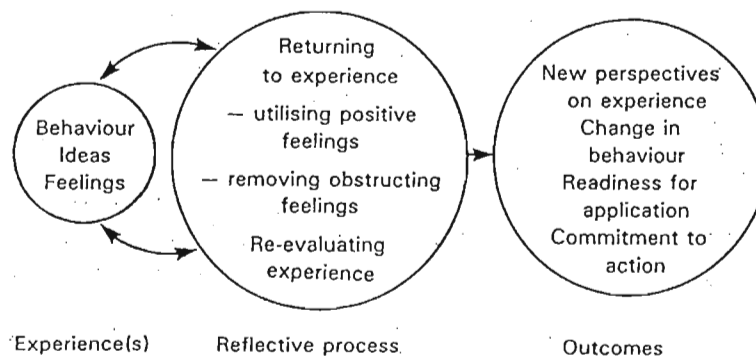
I learnt to be patient; at times when I was trying to do things like learning to use the computer.

As this comment suggests, it is also an important learning that one is not always in the workplace dealing with something exciting and stimulating, and we have to have ways of dealing with this fact, either through changing the task or through acceptance and patience, knowing that it leads to fulfilment of some greater aim. Some of Bheki's later comments were also more positive about the whole experience.

Of course, the emotions were not only those of the trainees - the mentor also had to deal with frustration at failure of a trainee to arrive, at the difficulties of making a project work, of disappointment when it seemed that nothing was developing.

It would in my view have helped the project had the assumptions listed included the understanding that negative feelings would be encountered, and that such feelings are a natural part of a workplace setting, where personal feelings are often at odds with the need to produce effectively. Had the frustrations been addressed in their own terms, it might well have led to an understanding of the nature of negative feelings - are they a sign that one is up against some personal block to moving ahead, or are they an indication that something is wrong in the context that needs change? Attention to them might have led in the first case to assistance in dealing with the feelings, and in the second to replanning and reformulation of the goals to meet the changed situation. Either response could have been an important part of the process of reflection.

Boud makes the link between dealing with feelings and reflection explicit, in his model of reflection (reproduced in Jarvis, 1987: 97):



**Figure 8.1** *The process of reflection following Boud et al. (Boud, 1985: 36 reproduced in Jarvis, 1987: 97)*

Specific ways of assisting in the re-evaluation of negative feelings would be using meetings to hear them out, the use of Weissglass and Weissglass's support dyad (1987: 4), as well as discussing the issue of negative emotions and work. The design of internship programmes needs to address this issue, otherwise negative emotions tend to emerge either in a more disruptive and unproductive way, or remain hidden, encouraging passivity and dependency.

## 8 *The environment of the Centre and the University*

The trainees' experience was in part shaped by the decision of the Centre to make this an individual project of the mentor, rather than a project of the Centre. They were linked to the mentor in a way that initially at least restricted their access to other staff in the Centre. This was the feature of the project that they most resented:

*Bheki: evaluation form*

*What has disappointed you most, and why?*

The staff not interested in our presence and work around the Centre.

I think the trainees, who come from a background where people are expected to interact constantly with each other, read an organisational culture in more personal terms. What they experienced was the consequence of the programme boundaries that had been set up in the Centre and had become more rigid as a result of conflict within the Centre. At the same time it is important in considering the prospects for internship in a university to recognise that a high degree of fragmentation of activity is normal, at the level of faculties, of departments, or divisions within departments. The strength of this fragmentation lies in the opportunities it offers individual staff members to pursue their academic interests wholeheartedly; the limitations lie in the way that staff can become cut off from useful interaction with each other, to an extent that is unusual in most work contexts. See for example Van Vught (1989), who surveys a wide range of research relevant to innovation in higher education:

... in higher education institutions the knowledge areas form the basic foci of attention. Areas of knowledge are the 'building blocks' without which higher education as an organisation cannot exist. This principle shapes the typical organisational structure of higher education institutions. Fragmentation is abundant: everywhere specialised cells exist which are only loosely linked. Higher educational institutions are then 'loosely coupled systems' (Weick, 1976). (1989: 258)

Such an organisational culture disadvantages staff entering the institution who need to be able to learn the skills and practices of good academics, by limiting their access to models of such practices and to interactions which would facilitate learning. It is ironic that an organisation formally dedicated to learning should have a specific disability as a 'learning organisation'.

This fragmentation need not be universal in tertiary institutions, but it forms a kind of default position, to which people may revert especially during times of conflict, or when there is a lack of a common vision. Van Vught records the advantages of such an institutional structure as, for example, enabling the development of new fields of study without requiring agreement across the institution - and for that matter the fading of disciplines that are undermined by developments in human thought.

However, it poses some specific disadvantages to internship. Those who enter the institution needing easy access to models of academic practice are limited in that access. Such limitations can be overcome by organisation, for example, through seminars and other collaborative activities. A specific advantage of internship in tertiary institutions is that such activities are understood and promoted. However, for such reasons as the constant pressure of nonformal work and a history of limited research production in the Centre, there was little such activity at the time.

Such a context of individual isolation disadvantages entrants from a more communal background, such as young working class African students. The development of internship within universities needs specific attention to such issues, and calls for deliberately organised contact with a broader range of staff. Such contact might entail specific assistance to a staff member on a project on which he or she is engaged, or observation of that member's work, or being set a task by the staff member and receiving feedback on its conclusion. 'Contact' is not cheap, and forms part of the costs of internship, as it is unlikely that the costs in staff time will be met by production by the trainees.

## **9      *The lack of emphasis on the learning of content***

What on reflection appears as a striking omission, but which was not clear at the time when the objectives were listed, was any reference in them to issues of content. Only late in the project, when the trainees had persistently expressed a need for 'adult education theory', did the omission become obvious. As has already been reported, access to such theory did not in fact satisfy that need. The prior issue, as I now

understand it, was the need to address what it was that we expected the trainees to teach.

Of the skills which the trainees brought to the project, perhaps only Bheki's typing and their common ability to read and write might have been relevant. The question of content also relates to the inappropriateness of the context. Had the trainees served in a community adult education setting, the content they would teach might have been more obvious, and we would presumably have addressed it more directly. In an academic context, what would they know that they could teach others - either students on nonformal courses, who had existing experience of adult education practices, or B.Ed students, graduates who usually lacked such experience? To have asked Bheki, for example, to read and to present a session on Freire unaided would have been inevitably a disaster, as it could only have been a presentation divorced from concrete engagement with the issues on which Freire wrote, and probably a classic example of what he attacked.

Two areas of content might have succeeded - the first being literacy. Relevant content in this area is not so much the ability to read and write (widely available but not for that reason any less an achievement of learning); it would include knowledge of relevant theory and the associated debates, and knowledge of different methods of teaching literacy. Bheki's work on the testing of books being produced for newly literate adults could have been a useful experience in developing his ability in this area, but it would have required a far more comprehensive, and probably formal, programme of exposure.

The second would have been to focus on some of the areas in which the trainees were now learning - specifically those relating to office work - and to set up workshops in these areas, so that they would be developing methods while teaching in an areas in which they had some degree of content knowledge and the confidence it would engender. That would have meant for each trainee work on a project of further enquiry in the areas both of content and method.

More fundamentally, why was the issue of content not addressed? How could we consider a long list of objectives without recognising its total omission? In comparison with this programme, which like conventional teacher training is one of career development, albeit of very different structure, the former addresses content very directly, even if not necessarily with great effectiveness. Why should such an omission occur so easily in adult education?

Such an omission is not peculiar to the planning of this project. Examine the curricula of professional diplomas and postgraduate degrees in adult education, few of which, at least in South Africa, make explicit provision for the learning of content within the programme, or as part of some parallel requirement. It also would seem to have a long history: a paper by Martin Chamberlain in Brookfield (1988) reported the views of 90 adult educator leaders about the competencies they think adult educators should have. Out of 45 statements, second to last was 'Is competent in a particular discipline or field of study.' (Brookfield, 1988: 148).

The lack of attention to content is echoed in the frequent indication by would-be students that they want to become adult educators, without any sense that they should have something that people would need to learn from them.

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to explore in depth the origins, problems and responses to the focus on process unfettered by a concomitant exploration of issues relating to content. I have written elsewhere on the issue (Hemson, 1995). In brief I would suggest that it arises for a combination of reasons:

- Adult education as a movement developed while focusing in the main on areas where content was less obvious, though no less real. For example, until recent theoretical development in ABE, the relevant content was little engaged with, the ability to read and write being sufficiently widespread and learnt early in life by most people. Of course, content is just as critical in this area as in any other,



illustrated by the absurdity of a suggestion that a person who could not read or write could teach others to do so.

- Another major area has been that of community education, where the informational content is either relatively meagre as against the complex and not-so-obvious skills that are key to the effectiveness of community education, or it is so diverse, depending on context, that educators are left to their own devices in learning it.
- Adult education as an academic activity is so young, while simultaneously covering so diverse a range of contexts, that the initial impetus was to give attention first to the common and general properties that seemed to distinguish it from other fields of study in education, and to downplay issues of content. The limitation of such an approach have become soonest apparent in the area of literacy, where specific attention has been paid to social and psychological aspects of the learning of spoken and written language.

A concept that might help in the case of projects of career development is that of *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman, 1986: 9). I understand this as the learning of foundational content that would equip the teacher to be effective in the relevant area of content, plus possibly additional content to achieve a sufficiently expert and confident mastery. The term 'pedagogical' in such a term should not exclude adults, on the grounds that I can see no reason that adults would need content less than younger people - in fact, it is usually schooling that is seen as providing the generalised learning that assists later more context- and content-specific learning.

The National Qualifications Framework, informed as it is by a commitment to integrate education and training, conceive of learning as taking place simultaneously in three areas: 'learning to learn', i.e. general information, concepts and skills, secondly content-specific knowledge, and thirdly an understanding of the broader context. The 'content' area in the case of the education of adult educators should not in my view

include only expertise in method but also content knowledge in the relevant area of teaching.

How then should a programme of internship for adult education address the issue of content? One option is an element of instruction as an ancillary to internship. In a tertiary context this might entail a course of accredited study linked to internship, whether or not the intercept is formally accredited. A third option would be to select trainees who already had the requisite content knowledge. Another would be a process of reflection and self-study to extend learning already gained in the internship - as proposed in this case.

## Chapter Nine      Implications for Training

Internship is a powerful generator of learning. How can its strengths be utilised in the most effective ways? Furthermore, what would an analysis of this project suggest for the training of education, training and development practitioners in South Africa?

The points made are listed in brief, and are intended for use mainly as a checklist:

### *Internship in general*

- Select opportunities for placement in contexts that are either identical to the context for which training is intended, or else similar in specific ways. Design the internship on the basis of contexts and experiences rather than on the basis of specific objectives as one would do in formal education.
- Where time and access permit, it may be helpful to set up more than one placement within a single organisation, or placements across organisations, to enable comparison between different work environments. If so, there should be some continuity in the tasks to be performed, even if they are directed towards different purposes.
- Develop an understanding of the discourses both of the trainees and of the organisation. Ideally, trainees will learn to operate within both discourses while also developing a critical understanding of discourses and their limitations.
- Ensure opportunities for systematic reflection and for relating experience to relevant theory. These opportunities may or may not be within formal education. These opportunities may consist of meetings to review the internship, seminars on related issues, writing journals of experience, and reading on relevant issues in learning.

- Ensure a clearly identified mentor, but locate responsibility for the placement with the organisation, not with an individual. There should if possible be a second mentor independent of the organisation, to enable further reflection and if necessary the resolution of problems.
- Judge whether some of the skills needed in the placement (especially of discrete concepts or skills) are more easily handled formally than through exposure in the workplace - if so, make use of formal or nonformal training.
- Recognise that trainees have their own histories related to learning and to education, which may be seen as their own learning style. Find ways of building on that style and where necessary challenging it.
- Recognise the impact both on the trainees and the organisation of oppressive forces such as racism and classism, and design and implement programmes in a way that challenges these forces and limits their capacity to block learning - for example, encouraging trainees to speak out on issues affecting them, encouraging them to take on roles outside those normally assigned them.
- Talk with trainees about how emotions will inevitably be part of their experience. Reassure them that frustrations and disappointments do often happen, in both unproductive and productive workplaces, and raise the question of whether such feelings are an indication of the need to change the processes of the internship. Encourage processes that allow trainees to express emotion and to re-evaluate their experiences.
- Clarify that the purpose of the internship is learning rather than production, but that much of the learning will come through work. Be as flexible as the circumstances allow in changing work arrangements if that will facilitate learning; where that is not possible it may be an important learning for the trainees.

- Note that the effectiveness of internship relates to the question of whether for all staff there are ample opportunities for learning through reflection on practice.

### *Internship and the education of Education, Training and Development Practitioners*

Internship can take many forms; the following are some of the key questions that would need to be answered in designing an internship programme:

Are the trainees people with existing experience as adult educators, trainers or development workers - or are they new to this area? In the former case, internship can serve to extend experience into different contexts, and to develop further certain existing skills. For example, internship in another context - industrial, academic, commercial or community - may be valuable to someone whose experience is limited to one context. In the case of entrants into the profession, internship may need to be longer in duration - the range of learnings addressed in this project, for example, could not be achieved in a month or two.

For both groups of potential trainees, how will the issue of content learning be addressed? A couple of years experience in health education may not ensure that the trainee is knowledgeable about health issues, for instance. Does the trainee bring existing content knowledge that can be built on, and would further content learning be achieved through formal education. Is the placement itself intended to provide those opportunities for learning?

A related question applies to the selection of trainees. Is the internship intended for trainees with existing formal education - either matriculation, or first degree? Or is experience seen as the key criterion? In what way will formal learning be integrated with the learnings from the placement?

What is the commitment of the host organisation? Is it to provide a career path into its own ranks, or into some other organisational context? Is internship seen as a possible supplement to the organisation's formal training work?

Answers to these questions should determine the duration of internship, the way the internship is organised, the selection of trainees and the way placement is related to formal education.

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