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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LEARNER AND MANAGEMENT
PERCEPTIONS OF ABET ENGLISH LEVEL 4 IN SELECTED
COMPANIES IN DURBAN**

**A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Community and
Development Disciplines, University of Natal, Durban, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education (Adult
and Community Education).**

**Bridget Campbell
November 2002
Durban**

Declaration

I, Bridget Campbell, declare that this dissertation represents original work that has not been previously submitted in any form to any university. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text.

Signed: Bridget Campbell.

Date: March 2003.

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Abstract

This is a qualitative, comparative study of management and learner perceptions of ABET English level 4 in a range of companies around Durban. South Africa's past is characterized by separate and unequal education and an ABET policy has been created in an attempt to address these educational inequalities. The legislation surrounding ABET creates a consistent approach intended to achieve economic growth and social transformation. During a long period of involvement in ABET, it appeared that the problems with and complaints about English level 4 were the same in all companies.

In order to investigate and compare learner and management perceptions and expectations, a qualitative study was conducted with interviews being the main means of data collection. Twenty-seven learners and ten managers participated in the research with education levels ranging from Standard 5 to a post matric qualification. The interviewees were drawn from employees within the manufacturing, shipping, commercial and hospitality sectors. It was found that the expectations of managers and those of learners are often unrealistic and are not aligned and there is disillusionment when these expectations are not met. There is a complete lack of understanding as to the nature of English level 4 and I ascribe this to the perennial problem of the perceived value of soft skills in this profit driven business and production environment. Recommendations are made as to how the expectations surrounding English level 4 can be more realistic and how the situation can be improved.

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Chapter 1

Rationale

1.1 Introduction

Steuart Pennington (1994) wrote, "The dawn of a new political dispensation is about to rise over South Africa. There are great expectations that a "new" South Africa will not only be more egalitarian, but will also address the economic decline, unemployment and widespread poverty that characterize our society. In order to address these aspects, socio-political development must provide high standards of living for the majority of South Africans. It is generally accepted by all the major stakeholders that human resource development is the central component of whatever economic strategy is to be followed. A South African Human Resource Development Strategy requires both that the legacy of the illiteracy and low skills of the majority of South Africans be overcome" (Pennington 1994, pg vi).

Apartheid laws and governance in the "old" South Africa systematically discriminated against all who were not white, and particularly against those who were Africans. For decades, apartheid reinforced the combination of low educational attainment, low income and low employment status as the lot of African people. These factors will undoubtedly continue to have negative effects on the educational achievements of African people and on their participation in adult education programmes (Harley et al 1996, pg 33).

In an attempt to overcome the unequal education of the past, an Adult Basic Education and Training policy has been created within South Africa. Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is much broader than basic literacy, and it incorporates the provision of functional general knowledge, education built on a foundation of literacy, numeracy and information gathering skills. UNESCO's definition of basic education is: "Education aimed at the acquisition of primary knowledge and necessary to life in society" (cited in Harley et al 1996, pg 20). The Department of Labour has a simplistic definition of ABET which states that it is learning designed for people who did not get basic schooling when they were children (Department of Labour 2001, pg 45).

In March 1995, the Government of National Unity published a white paper on Education and Training in which it was argued that Adult Basic Education is a right guaranteed to all persons by the Constitution because "our national development requires an ever increasing level of education and skill throughout society" (cited in Harley et al 1996, pg 174). Knowledge and skills had thus been integrated into what is referred to as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). This term - ABET - was then linked with the formal education system within the country.

1.2 Background and Context

In South Africa, a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been designed in order to make it possible for all learners in South Africa to get national qualifications. It is structured to cover all types of education and training through the setting of clear standards for all learning and it applies to adults, children, and all sites of learning. The key objectives of the NQF therefore are:-

- To create an integrated national framework for learning.
- To provide access, mobility and progression.
- To enhance quality in education and training and redress past discrimination (Land et al 1999, pg 3).

The NQF (see Appendix 1) comprises 8 levels and is like a ladder with different rungs. The idea is to allow for vertical and horizontal mobility. Traditionally, there was a gap between education and training with education viewed as academic theory and training seen as learning a trade within the workplace or at a Technikon. There were many people who had the necessary expertise and experience to carry out jobs within the workplace, but because of the fact that a theoretical test had not been passed, the training was not recognized as a qualification.

All education and training now falls within one framework and practical skills as well as theoretical training are recognized. Learners get credit for what they already know which is referred to as recognition of prior learning (RPL), and the qualifications are recognized countrywide and are transferable from one place to another. Recognition of prior learning exists more in theory than in practice. Real RPL candidates are rare and as yet, there is no acknowledged process in most organizations.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is responsible for ensuring that the NQF is implemented properly, for registering national standards and qualifications, and for ensuring that these standards are monitored (Land et al 1999, pg 134). There are 12 national standards bodies and each covers a different area of learning. They meet regularly in order to keep qualifications up to date. The National Standards Body No. 5 is responsible for Education, Training and Development. Anybody who has an interest in a particular area of study will get together in a standards generating body which will agree on the learning outcomes and it is these outcomes that the national standards body sends to SAQA for registration (Department of Labour, 2001, pg 21).

1.2.1 Unit Standards

Unit standards are nationally set statements of education and training outcomes as well as relevant assessment criteria for any courses which are registered on the NQF (Mercurio and Mercurio 1999, pg 60).

1.2.2 ABET and the NQF

ABET is divided into four levels which are sub-levels of Level 1 of the NQF (refer to Appendix 1). ABET Level 4 is the equivalent of Grade 9 within a formal schooling system and to complete ABET Level 4 or Grade 9, is to complete NQF 1. A General Education and Training Certificate, which is a national qualification and allows for progression to the next level of the NQF has then been attained. The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) is made up of fundamental, core and elective subjects with Language, Literacy and Communication, and Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy being the two fundamental areas. The core learning areas incorporate the following:-

- Natural Sciences
- Technology
- Human and Social Sciences
- Economic and Management Sciences
- Arts and Culture
- Life Orientation

The elective learning area is made up of:-

- Agriculture and Agricultural Technology
- Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
- Auxiliary Health Worker

(Land et al 1999, pg 35.)

Every level of the NQF is comprised of 120 credits and once these credits have been accrued, one has the qualification to progress to the next level. Appendix 2 is a table which clearly indicates how many credits each category of learning within the GETC contributes.

1.2.3 The role of English Level 4 in ABET

English Level 4 contributes only 20 of the 120 credits, which have to be accrued on NQF Level 1. Although English Level 4 is a very important and necessary component of ABET Level 4, it is not a qualification on its own. For adults who have not been to school and who do not have a basic education, ABET is the crucial stepping stone to the NQF. However, managers and learners often commit to English Level 4 with the belief that it is ABET Level 4. Their expectations are often unrealistic and an example of this is that managers have stated that they hoped that a spin-off of English Level 4 would be an increase in productivity. Learners have stated that they embarked upon English Level 4 in the hope of being promoted and/or earning higher salaries.

English Level 4 is teaching generic reading, writing, comprehension and oral skills and if managers were aware of this at the outset, they would not expect that English Level 4 will lead to an increase in productivity. Learners, on being made aware of the course content, would realize that these skills are an important part of becoming more competent within the workplace, and this should be combined with on-the-job training in order to be more beneficial within the workplace.

As indicated in Appendix 1, ABET is comprised of four levels. Learners who embark upon English Level 4 have often completed English Level 3 and are then automatically enrolled on English Level 4. The generic reading, writing, communication and oral skills have been learned in English Level 3, and English Level 4 expands upon these skills. I have questioned managers about why they view English Level 4 as a natural progression from English Level 3 and the answer is that their employees must have an NQF 1 Certificate. This is further confirmation that there is a belief that English Level 4 is ABET Level 4, which is equivalent to NQF 1.

1.3 Aim and Rationale

South Africa's past is characterized by separate and unequal education, and one of the ways of addressing the inequalities is to encourage adults to attend ABET classes. During the nine years that I have been involved in ABET, I have worked in various companies from different industries and generally find that problems with and complaints about English level 4 are the same in all companies. It appears that the learners and their supervisors and/or managers have certain expectations about English level 4 and they are disillusioned when these expectations are not met. Companies are increasingly insistent that there should be a direct, measurable link between their training investment and an increase in performance within the workplace. Once the training is underway, it appears that many people then realize that there is, in fact, little or no link between their training investment and performance within the workplace.

There are a number of stakeholders involved when ABET is implemented within companies. Firstly, there are the ABET providers who are providing a costly product and they generally have persuasive marketing strategies in order to sell their ABET courses to the companies. Secondly, there are the general managers, the human resource managers or the training managers who are responsible for buying into the programmes. Once the training is underway, these top managers are often no longer a part of the process. For the purposes of this study, the reference to managers encompasses supervisors, line managers, human resource managers or any other person in a managerial position to whom the learners report.

The managers need the learners on the shop floor and are thus reluctant to release them from the workplace, but they do so in the hope that performance and perhaps production will increase once the learners have completed English level 4. The final stakeholders are the learners who, in my mind, are the most important group involved as they attend the classes and have the most to gain from English level 4 within their personal lives as well as within the workplace.

I am interested in the perceptions and misconceptions which surround English level 4 as the managers and learners' expectations about the benefits of the course appear to be unrealistic, and are not aligned. The aim of this study is to establish what the perceptions are and to compare those of the learners with those of management.

The key issues to be investigated are as follows: -

- Where does English level 4 fit into ABET?
- Are the learners aware of the role that English level 4 plays in ABET?
- Are the managers aware of the role that English level 4 plays in ABET?
- Why did management implement English level 4 within the company?
- Why did the learners embark upon the course?
- What are the expectations of the learners in terms of: -
 - a. The English level 4 course content?
 - b. The benefits within the workplace?
- What are the expectations of the managers in terms of: -
 - a. The English level 4 course content?
 - b. The benefits within the workplace?
- Have the expectations of the learners been met? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
- Have the expectations of the managers been met? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
- If the learners had been aware of the content of the course at the outset, would they have enrolled?
- Knowing what they now know, would the managers offer the course again?

An investigation of these questions should point to the origins of the perceptions and expectations of learners and management. Attendance of ABET courses should be voluntary and I believe that learners are often coerced into signing up for English level 4 with promises that are never fulfilled. Are these promises made because the employers truly believe that English level 4 will benefit both the company and the employees, or is there a hidden agenda when it comes to the training of historically disadvantaged employees? Perhaps English level 4 is marketed in such a way as to make people believe that it is, in itself, a qualification that will be beneficial within the workplace. Any training which is undertaken leads to certain expectations, which should be voiced at the outset. The people marketing the courses should be aware of what people are expecting, and they should then disclose the nature of English level 4 and its position in the NQF.

It is often incorrectly assumed that to pass an English level 4 exam is a direct link to opportunities within the workplace. Competence in English is both beneficial and very relevant both within and outside of the workplace, but I am questioning if English level 4, on its own, is enough to meet the expectations with which it is associated. English level 4 does have benefits within the workplace but learners and management often fail to recognize them because their expectations were so unrealistic. The methodology chapter will explain why interviewing was chosen as my main method of data collection. In Chapter 3, the literature review covers the background to ABET, as well as the laws governing it within South Africa. Chapter 3 also discusses some of the benefits of literacy and literacy within the workplace. Human Capital Theory and Human Resource Development are also under discussion within this chapter. Chapter 4 deals with the research findings. Chapter 5 draws conclusions about the study and makes recommendations as to how the expectations surrounding English level 4 can be more realistic and how the situation can be improved.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Introduction to Methodology

Research is either qualitative or quantitative and within these broad categories are different ways of collecting data, conducting the research and analyzing the information that was gathered. My research was qualitative and interviewing was the main method of data collection with perusal of documents being secondary. The data was analyzed by comparing and categorizing the responses of the interviewees. The categories were determined by the questions which were being addressed, and the findings within each category were quantified by converting them to percentages. The quantified findings of the learners and of the managers were then compared.

Before writing a detailed description of the methodology used in my research, I will give an overview of the nature of research in order to explain my choice of methodology.

2.2 Classification of Research

There are many different definitions of research but all have one idea in common, which is that research is a systematic process after which we know more about something than we did before engaging in the process (Simpson 1995, pg 2). Several questions are important to the understanding of research. Where does knowledge come from? What is meant by systematically searching for knowledge and how and by whom will the knowledge be used?

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) have named three aspects of research: -

1. The methodology, which will either be qualitative or quantitative.
2. The reasons for the research, which will either be to increase human understanding of an aspect of society (basic social research), or to solve a particular problem within society (social research).
3. The demands of the research question which will dictate if the research is exploratory, descriptive, correlated or explanatory.

2.3 Qualitative versus Quantitative Research

Different styles, traditions or approaches to educational research use different methods of collecting data, but no approach prescribes nor automatically rejects any particular method. Quantitative researchers collect facts and study the relationship of one set of facts to another. They use techniques that are likely to produce quantified and, if possible, generalizable conclusions. Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis. They doubt whether social facts exist and question whether a "scientific" approach can be used when dealing with human beings. Yet, there are occasions when qualitative researchers draw on quantitative techniques and vice versa (Bell 1999, pg 7).

Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited in McKenzie et al 1997, pg 105) identify different underlying assumptions in qualitative compared to quantitative research. The first is that within quantitative research, the nature of reality is assumed to be single, tangible and fragmentable whilst in qualitative research, it is multiple and socially constructed. Secondly, in quantitative research, the role of the research and researched is independent whereas in qualitative research, it is interactive. Another difference is that quantitative researchers make generalizations at a population level which are deemed to be contextually free, whilst qualitative researchers emphasize the embeddedness of their results. Qualitative research emphasizes the interactive nature of causality, quantitative research aims to discover linear causal mechanisms.

Quantitative research methodology uses measurement to compare and analyze variables, and is represented by statistical data and qualitative research makes use of language to qualify and record data. The nature of qualitative research dictates that it is not one voice, but has taken many variables into account.

I chose qualitative research methods because "they are especially well suited for investigations in applied fields such as adult education and training, because we want to improve practice. The improvement of practice comes from understanding the experiences of those involved." (Merriam et al 1995, pg 97.) In this study, I feel that to understand the perceptions and expectations which surround English level 4, will be beneficial when I make recommendations as to how to improve practices in an attempt to encourage realistic expectations which can be met by the training.

2.4 Qualitative Research Methods

Merriam and Simpson (1995, pg 103) state that three common qualitative research methods are ethnography, case study and grounded theory. The ethnographic style was originally developed by anthropologists who wanted to study a society, or an aspect of society in depth.

Ethnography involves the study of behaviour in natural settings and the idea is that the researcher cannot have adequate knowledge of the social behaviour until he or she understands the world in which the subjects live. Goffmann (1961, cited in Merriam, S., and Simpson, L. 1995, pg 104) believed that every social group has something distinctive about it, and the best way to understand a group is for the researcher to become a part of the natural setting. The term ethnography covers the methods and techniques used to collect the data, as well as the written record, which is the end result of the data that has been collected.

Ethnographic studies interpret situations in terms of their cultural contexts, and the procedures used are participant observation, in-depth interviewing, life history, documentary analysis and investigation diaries which all involve the researcher participating within the culture under investigation. Participant observation is very time consuming and the researcher has to gain the trust of the group under observation, which could mean living within that community for a long period of time. An ethnographer will also interview people and evaluate documents.

Whilst many of the same techniques are used in grounded theory and case studies, a case study concentrates on a single phenomenon and looks at all variables within a single unit. Yin (1994, cited in Jankowicz 1995, pg 179) has written that "in general case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed when the researcher has little control over events when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context."

The first step in conducting a case study is to select the case to be studied, the raw data must then be collected and organized and the final step is to write the case study narrative. Merriam and Simpson (1995, pg 109), state that in a case study, the object of study is looked at as a whole and because the researcher is concentrating on something specific, it is possible to identify all of the processes, which are involved. It could be useful in providing additional information for a larger study and it offers a lot of information, which could be used to solve problems or to change policy. In a nutshell, a case study focuses on a particular situation, the end product is a description, which will add to the reader's understanding of the phenomenon, and it is inductive in that the researcher makes use of vague hypotheses or hunches to guide the research. The research is not formally structured and once data has been collected and analyzed, tentative explanations are offered.

Grounded theory is also developing theory and Merriam and Simpson (1995, pg 112) state that "as a qualitative, exploratory methodology, grounded theory is particularly suited to investigating problems for which little theory has been developed. The explanation of an area of human interaction or a social process emerges from a grounded theory study as credible, substantive or formal theory." Grounded theory is thus a method of generating and constructing theory. In a grounded theory study, one is constantly comparing groups in order to identify similarities and differences and to categorize the data. The categories are then tested by collecting data from different groups. The process of a grounded theory study is as follows: -

Collect data → transcribe data → develop categories → saturate categories → abstract definitions → theoretical sampling → axial coding → theoretical integration → grounding the theory → filling in gaps. (Bassey 1981 cited in Bell 1999, pg 9).

Grounded theory has been criticized for being undisciplined and impressionistic. It must be borne in mind that the researcher is formulating the theory through constant comparison and she must ensure that she records how the data was collected, how the coding was done and exactly how the categories and hypotheses emerged from the data. The onus is on the researcher to research the theory thoroughly and to make it credible.

In my comparative study, my research methodology was consistent with that of grounded theory and I investigated an area of Adult Basic Education and Training where I believed there was a problem and no theory had been developed around English level 4 and the perceptions surrounding it. My data collection method was interviewing and once categories had been determined, I compared groups in order to identify similarities and differences surrounding English level 4.

2.5 Methods of Data Collection

Merriam and Simpson (1995, pg 100) state that all qualitative research relies on three basic ways to collect data. Interviews, observations and documents are used and the data is analyzed as it is collected. The characteristics of qualitative research are that the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data, that fieldwork is conducted on site and that the research is inductive.

2.5.1 Observation

At first glance, observation appears to be a case of getting out there and watching. There is a lot involved if one wants to collect data in this way and the research must be carefully planned with the researcher observing people in their natural setting and recording what is relevant to the study. An obvious problem is that when people know that they are being observed, they behave differently.

Participant observation, on the other hand, involves the researcher becoming an insider and becoming part of the group. The problem here is that the researcher must bear in mind what the purpose of being there is, and must be as objective as possible. To become part of a group is to be accepted and trusted and I question the ethics of joining a group and then sneaking off to record what they are doing. The third type of observation is the laboratory situation where subjects are observed through one-way glass. Again, this is not ideal as the setting is not natural and the ethics questionable (Merriam and Simpson 1995, pg105).

The biggest problem with all types of observation is objectivity and the only way to truly be objective, is to have more than one person observing and to compare the results. Observation is also very limiting as there are many aspects of life that cannot be observed and it is not possible to observe beliefs and attitudes.

I intended observing the learners within their workplaces in order to gain some insight into what level of English is required. No learners were observed due to the fact that it was not practical. Within the manufacturing industry, the safety regulations were such that I was not permitted to spend a day following people around. Within the shipping industry, the learners tended to move from one site to another during the course of a day.

Another reason for deciding not to observe learners was that to observe individuals for one day, would not give a true reflection of literacy requirements within the workplace. It would also have been very time consuming to observe every learner whom I interviewed.

2.5.2 Documentary Sources

Documentary sources refer to records, documents, library material, census data, life statistics, diaries, autobiographies, letters, case studies, newspaper reports and films. To tap into the evidence is time consuming, as one has to locate it and then study it in order to identify the useful bits of information. The reliability depends on the source, and where possible, crosschecks should be made of the information, which has been gleaned.

I reviewed the content of an English level 4 course in order to ascertain if there was any correlation between what was taught in the classroom and the expectations within the workplace. If learners and managers had been aware of the course content at the outset, the expectations may have been more realistic.

2.5.3 Interviews

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000, pg 105) have identified different methods of interviewing: -

1. A non-scheduled interview involves asking interviewees to comment on something, which has been broadly defined by the interviewer. The interviewer asks for the interviewees' thoughts on an issue and then the interviewee is left to chat about it. No leading questions are asked and the interviewee will only interrupt if clarification is needed about something that has been said. It is almost impossible to find common ground as different people will have very different responses thus making it difficult to draw comparisons, and for this reason, the interviewing method within my study could not be non-scheduled.
2. A non-scheduled structured interview is conducted when there is a need for specific and detailed information. The interviewees are all asked the same questions, which are open ended, and the interviews are semi-structured, as opposed to the rigid structured interviews.

My interviews were conducted in a relaxed, semi-structured way and I worked within a framework of set interview questions. The questions for the learners as well as those for the managers have been included as Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.

3. A scheduled structured interview is very regimented in that the questions must be put to the interviewees in exactly the same way and in precisely the same order. The questions are closed and the interviewees do not have the chance to chat and to expand on their answers as the interviewer has an exact idea about what answers are expected.

2.6 Research Methods Used In This Study

In order to conduct a comparative study of management and learners' perceptions surrounding English level 4 in a range of companies around Durban, interviewing was my main tool of data collection. Learners from a range of companies were interviewed, as were managers who encouraged the learners to enroll for the course. Perusal of the course material was necessary in order to gain insight into what was being taught. When there was uncertainty as to whether or not there could be a link between the classroom and the workplace, the learners' job descriptions were studied.

In order to make observations of, and to draw conclusions about any group of people, the way to ensure accurate results is to study everybody within that group. Due to the fact that it was not possible to interview every person involved in English level 4 in the Durban area, I conducted a small-scale survey using a sample of the population. To be able to generalize about the entire population, I made the sample as representative as possible. A range of companies from different sectors of the economy were studied and the sectors selected were commercial, manufacturing, shipping and hospitality. All in all, seven companies were studied and the breakdown was as follows: -

- 2 Commercial
- 2 Shipping
- 2 Manufacturing
- 1 Hospitality

The companies were selected because I teach English within the four sectors and have contacts which enabled me to gain access to the interviewees. Chapter 4 tabulates the details about the interviews within each sector.

There are generally a small number of learners in the English level 4 classes and within each company, all of the learners were interviewed and the total number of interviewees was 27. Ten interviewees from the managerial level participated in the study. Wiseman and Aaron (1972, cited in Bell 1999, pg 135) liken interviewing to a fishing expedition, and in pursuing this analogy Cohen (1976, cited in Bell 1999, pg 136) adds that "like fishing, interviewing is an activity requiring careful preparation, much patience and considerable practice if the eventual reward is to be a worthwhile catch."

I did not conduct any group interviews. All interviews were one-on-one because I did not want learners to be influenced by the responses of other people.

2.7 Problems Encountered

Due to the fact that I am employed by an ABET provider (company A), I intended to interview people who were using other providers and thus different course material. This, however, proved to be an impossible task as in attempting to set up interviews, I was transparent and stated that I am employed by company A. People responded by saying that they would get back to me, and didn't, or stated that they did not have any English level 4 learners, or I was simply refused access to the learners. ABET is a highly competitive and often lucrative business, and companies are generally not open to discussion about their course material and their learners. I assume that people saw me as a threat and perhaps thought that I had ulterior motives in wanting to interview their learners. The interviewees are, therefore, all taught by company A which is possibly a good thing as all of them are thus on an equal footing in terms of the course material, content and teaching methods.

My first six learner interviews were people whom I teach, and I suspect that they were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. I then interviewed people who don't know me and an entirely different pattern began to emerge. These 6 interviewees have been included in the results chapter.

2.8 Data Analysis

The learners' interview questions and all of the individual responses to the questions were consolidated by tabulating them onto a spreadsheet. Managers' questions and answers were consolidated in the same way. Broad categories emerged for every question and similar answers were grouped into categories. The interview questions were all aligned with the main research questions, and the results were analysed by stating the broad research questions and categorising the interview responses within each of these broad questions.

The responses within each category were converted to percentages thus quantifying the qualitative research. The percentages, which emerged within the learners' categories were compared to the percentages within the managers' responses in order to compare the perceptions of learners and those of managers. A comment was written on the findings within each broad research question. This initial analysis proved that the expectations of learners and those of managers were not aligned with each other or with the course content.

In order to ascertain whether or not the expectations of learners within different sectors were aligned and to see if there were differences within different sectors, I categorised the learner responses to each broad research question into sectors. Comparisons were then drawn amongst the four sectors within the study. The same procedure was followed to compare managers' responses within sectors.

The general conclusion which I reached about learners and managers perceptions and misconceptions about English level 4 were thus obtained by constant comparisons of responses which had been categorized.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 A Brief History of Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa

During the apartheid era, adult education in South Africa was very limited. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Bureau for Literacy and Literature was permitted to work in the gold mines and at about this time, Operation Upgrade worked within community groups, teaching literacy to Blacks. In the early seventies, small university groups inspired by Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" which was banned, tried out literacy work which had little impact but their Freirean process of conscientisation that they advocated, did however, impact upon anti-apartheid movements (Aitchison 1997, pg 5).

Operation Upgrade was a religiously orientated literacy provider, which was based on the approach of Frank Laubach. He used literacy for the express purpose of winning people over to Christianity and he saw literacy as a primary weapon for the hearts and minds of the "sullen" and dispossessed billion illiterates in the world. Although the Laubach approach emphasized individual salvation in both a spiritual and secular sense, it nevertheless had a strong undercurrent of self-improvement and modernization (Hutton et al 1992, pg 30).

The Freirean approach to adult literacy bases the content of language lessons on the cultures and experiences of the learners. Learning to read and write flows from the discussion of themes of importance to adult learners drawn from the cultures of the participants. Freire argues that unjust social conditions are the cause of illiteracy and the purpose of adult basic education is to enable learners to participate in liberating themselves from the conditions that oppress them (D Spener cited in The National Clearing House on Literacy Education, 1990, pg 1).

People are no longer oppressed by legislation, but as a result of the policies of the apartheid era, they are disadvantaged within the workplace and within society because of the long term effects of having been denied education as children. The Freirean approach to literacy encouraged people to question their lack of status within the country and to discuss their oppression.

After the 1976 Soweto uprising, the literacy movement gained momentum, but it was only in the 1990's that literacy programmes really took off in South Africa. Up until this time, ABET policy was almost non-existent but with the prospect of a democratic government, it was felt that the new government would take ABET seriously and would be involved in the provision thereof. ABET policy is not neutral but is made up by parties, interests, influences, experts, public pressures and histories (French 1992, cited in Harley et al 1996 pg 149).

During 1990 to 1994, seven key policy documents were produced. It is thus obvious that the government and other concerned parties were attempting to establish ABET policy within the country. COSATU's Participatory Research Projects 1993 report possibly had the most influence on the implementation of policy and it argued for the following: -

- A national integrated framework for education and training.
- Creation of statutory bodies to develop overall policy frameworks, standards setting, accreditation and certification.
- Restructuring of training and grading systems and their integration with labour market planning.
- Creation of career path opportunities based on skills/training.
- Fair competency based assessments.
- Development of national competency standards in each industry or sector.
- All curricula to be rewritten in terms of competency outcomes.
- Training course curricula at all levels to include core educational skills such as literacy, numeracy, communication, problem solving, planning and the ability to undertake further learning.
- Accreditation of providers to ensure consistency in the quality and content of education/training courses.
- National certificates of competency at all levels of learning.
- Credit transfers and recognition of prior learning.
- The right to paid education and training leave to facilitate access to provision.
- Upgrading and expansion of trainer/educator workforce.

This proposal had a major effect on the 1994 National Training Board's National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) because labour and business were in agreement that to upgrade skills is important for economic growth. The policies, which have now been implemented, are much the same as those proposed by COSATU. In 1994, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) handed an ABET implementation plan to the Minister of Education and its proposals were influenced by the "need to sustain the national democratic movement that was built up in the struggle against apartheid to bring about the real involvement of the masses of our people in reconstruction" and by the "need to help build a new society through sharing knowledge and skills which help people to take control of their lives and help build new power relations" (CEPD 1992, cited in Harley et al 1996, pg 17).

I am of the opinion that the above quote sums up one of the major myths surrounding ABET which, in itself, does not equip people to take control of their lives and to be actively involved in the reconstruction of the country and of the economy. My involvement in ABET has led me to become disillusioned about the role of adult education within our society. The prevailing attitude amongst learners is that becoming literate has not afforded opportunities to become involved in, or to benefit from the process of reconstruction within the country. On embarking upon ABET, the learners are of the belief that the training will improve their economic and social status and afford them opportunities which have previously been denied. ABET does not live up to these expectations, and disappointment and disillusionment often surround the training.

In March 1995, the Government of National Unity's White Paper on Education and Training was published in the Government Gazette and the section on ABET is as follows: -

Adult Basic Education and Training

The historic inadequacy of school education especially for black communities has ensured that a majority of the adult population, both in and out of formal employment, has had no schooling or inadequate schooling. This situation must be redressed, because basic education is a right guaranteed to all persons by the Constitution, and because our national development requires an ever increasing level of education and skill throughout society.

The Ministry of Education views Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) as a force for social participation and economic development, providing an essential component of all RDP programmes. The objective of policy is a national ABET programme, focused on particular target groups which have historically missed out on education and training, and providing an appropriate ABET curriculum whose standards will be fully incorporated in the National Qualifications Framework.

To avoid becoming educational dead-ends for separate groups or individual learners, therefore, ABET programmes should be designed around a common core of fundamental concepts, knowledge and skills on which further learning, knowledge and skill formation could be built. The expected outcomes, or learners' achievements, should therefore be formulated in progressive steps which are appropriate to the learners' circumstances and experience, which should encourage a large measure of self-learning, and which enable learners to be assessed and credited with nationally recognized standards of attainment.

The main organizational principle of the national ABET programme will be the building of partnerships of all constituencies with a vital interest in the ABET enterprise, including organized labour and business, women's and youth organizations, civics, churches, specialist NGO's, learner associations, all levels of government, media and other stakeholders. The partnerships are expected to undertake planning, arrange public advocacy, sponsor research and development, and mobilize financial resources for the programme. A representative national ABET Council is expected to be established as the authoritative voice of the field, and to advise the Minister.

A professional directorate for ABET is being established in the new Department of Education, in order to provide a rational focal point for the Ministry's commitment to the field, to undertake or sponsor research on structure and methods, develop norms and standards, and to liaise with the RDP office, the Department of Labour, and provincial departments of education. In the meantime, the Ministry of Education has established a national ABET Task Team, including provincial representatives, to carry forward the extensive preparatory work which has already been undertaken by the community of ABET stakeholders and practitioners and plan the RDP Presidential Lead Programme in this field in conjunction with counterpart teams in the provinces. The Department of Education will work with the Task Team to help translate proposals into implementable policy.

In general, ABET programmes can make more cost-effective use of available educational facilities. They do not require major investments in new buildings. In addition, they can exploit opportunities for distance education where appropriate. One institutional innovation, which the Ministry wishes to see investigated with some speed, is the idea of Community Learning Centres. These can be envisaged as a network of facilities, usually pre-existing, which offers regular support and services to students of all varieties in pursuing their learning goals. They would call for a new type of learning facilitator, and have the potential to be connected electronically to almost unlimited data sources and networks. Such centres would form an essential part of the infrastructure required for the realization of the open learning approaches throughout the education and training system.

Prototypes of such centres already operate in some South African communities. In collaboration with provincial Department of Education, other government departments and the array of stakeholders in youth and adult learning, the Ministry of Education wishes to explore their potential for shifting supported self-study into a new gear.

(Source: Harley et al 1996, pg 174.)

This document was repeating what had already been written about ABET, but what is important is that ABET was now formally linked to the National Qualifications Framework. It was also stated that the Department of Education, together with a national ABET Task Team, would work toward translating the proposals into policy which pointed to a state commitment to ensure that the previously disadvantaged had access to education. What was not mentioned in this document was who would finance the ABET programmes. It was stated that major investment in new buildings would not be required, but venues are not the issue with ABET. The training generally takes place on company premises or in existing schools. There are, however, many other costs involved such as the developing and publishing of the programmes as well as the implementation thereof. Once the training begins, ABET proves to be an expensive exercise with facilitators having to be paid and production time being lost within the workplace. The Skills Development Levies Act has been passed in order to encourage companies to embark upon training and this act is discussed in Chapter 3.2.1.

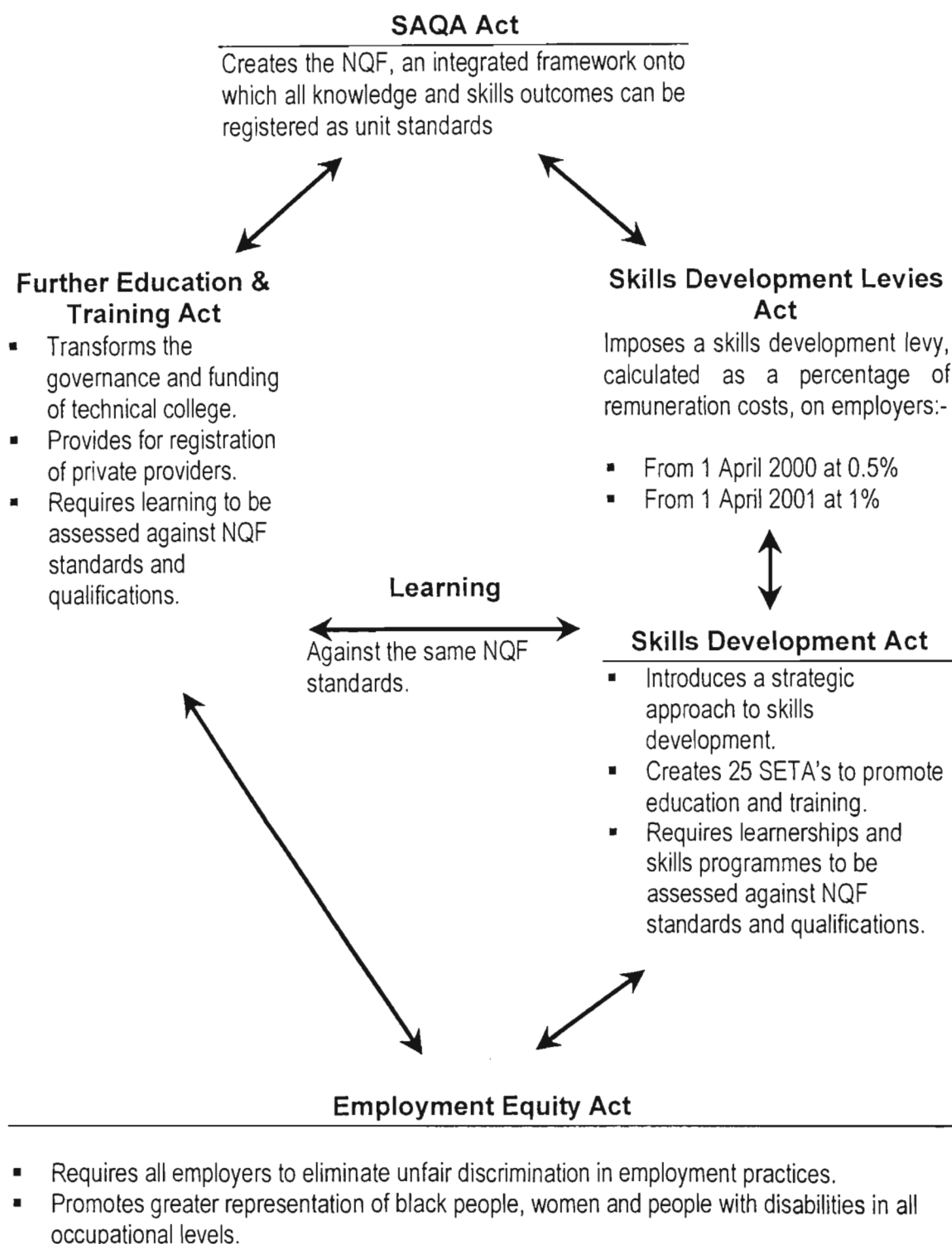
The Government of National Unity's White Paper on Education and Training (March 1995) gave the impression that ABET was a top priority and that it would take precedence with the Department of Education, but it was only in 1996 that a Director of ABET was appointed and unfortunately, due to a lack of funds and staffing, amongst other problems, there was very little progress in the ABET arena. In April 1997, a four-year implementation plan for adult education and training, provision and accreditation was presented, considered and criticized. A technical team was appointed to redraft the document and write a multi-year implementation plan, which paid attention to the systematic description of implementation steps (Aitchison1997, pg16).

The history of ABET in the 1990's indicates that there have been numerous proposals and documents written but that the implementation of ABET has been badly planned and co-ordinated and that it was only in 1997 that there seemed to be a move toward effective and realistic ABET policy within South Africa. The legislation discussed in the section below creates a coherent and consistent approach intended to achieve both economic growth and social transformation and the principles of equity, access and redress underpin the legislation which aims to ensure the redress of past unfair discrimination in learning and work opportunities.

3.2 The Laws

The framework below sums up the legislation, which governs, ABET and clearly indicates how the legislation is linked: -

The Legislative Framework



(Source: Mercorio and Mercorio 1999, pg 47)

3.2.1 The SAQA Act (Act No.58 of 1995)

The purpose of the South African Qualifications Authority Act (SAQA Act) is to ensure that the quality of education and training in South Africa is of a high standard and this act has created a single system of education and training qualifications in the country. The SAQA Act states that education and training are both recognized forms of learning and it is an attempt to end the divide that states that education is about academic theory and training involves practical skills. The SAQA Act states that people must be able to move about freely in the education and training system-they must not be stuck in on either side of an education and training divide. They must be able to use the learning from one side to go forward on the other side (Department of Labour 2001, pg 17).

The SAQA Act set up the NQF, which was discussed in Chapter 1 (see Appendix 1). The advantages of the NQF are: -

- Qualifications are based on clearly defined national standards.
- People who have no formal qualifications can earn credits towards them.
- Competence is recognized.
- There is flexibility in what, where and how to learn.
- There are greater opportunities for partnerships between providers of education and training.
- There is a shift away from learning that is institution centred and the learning now focuses on learners and their needs (Phillips 1996, pg 5).

The fact that the training is learner centred and not institution centred, makes it possible for adults who have never been to school to participate from within the workplace. Whereas in the past, there was only one chance to gain an education and recognition of prior learning did not exist, lifelong learning is now encouraged and all prior learning is recognized. As stated in Chapter 1, RPL exists more in theory than in practice.

Whilst the SAQA Act is about the quality of all education and training within South Africa, the main aim of the Skills Development Act is to improve the skills of the workforce in order to make the economy grow. The idea is that once this happens, the lives of all South Africans should improve.

3.2.2 The Skills Development Act (Act No.97 of 1998)

The Skills Development Act has five principle objectives:-

- To provide an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sector and workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce.
- To integrate those strategies within the NQF.
- To provide for learnerships that lead to recognized occupational qualifications.
- To provide for and regulate employment services.
- To provide for the financing of skills development by means of a levy financing scheme and a National Skills Fund (Mercorio and Mercorio 1999, pg 50).

The Skills Development Act has created 25 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA's) to promote education and training. SETA's have been established by the Act to function as intermediaries on education and training between stakeholders in economic sectors and the Department of Labour. The economy has been divided into 25 functional sectors, each of which will be served by a SETA (Mercorio and Mercorio 1999, pg 56).

The SETA's functions are to:-

- Develop a sector skills plan.
- Establish learnerships.
- Approve workplace skills plans.
- Allocate grants to employers and providers.
- Monitor the education and training in the sectors.
- Identify workplaces for practical work experience.
- Support the development of learning materials.

(Mercorio and Mercorio 1999, pg 56.)

The SETA's functions are thus to involve themselves in every aspect of education and training within companies in order to ensure that training is taking place.

3.2.3 The Skills Development Levies Act (Act No. 9 of 1999)

The Skills Development Levies Act imposes a Skills Development Levy calculated as a percentage of remuneration cost on employers. The Act states that all employers who pay R250 000 or more in monthly wages, must pay 0,5% of their monthly payroll to the South African Revenue Services (SARS) from 1 April 2000. From 1 April 2001 the percentage increased to 1%. The money is given to the Department of Labour and 20% goes into the National Skills Fund, whilst the remaining 80% is given to the appropriate SETA's. Up to 10% of the money granted to the SETA's can be used to cover administration costs and the rest is used to pay grants to employers and to encourage training. Levy grants are based on whether an employer pays the levy, and if certain conditions such as producing a Workplace Skills Plan are met, the SETA will pay a percentage of the levy back in the form of a grant. The first grant is equal to 15% of the levy paid, whilst a second grant will be paid out to employers who report on the progress of their Workplace Skills Plan. An employer can get back 50% of the levy paid in 2001/02, and in 2002/03 this will drop to 45%.

Discretionary grants are not linked to the levy and they are cash grants made to employers. There are three types of discretionary grants:-

- Learnerships
- Skills programmes
- Priorities that a SETA has set for its sector

The discretionary grants make it possible for employers to claim back more than what they paid out in the levy (Department of Labour 2001, pg 37).

It has been legislated that every company within South Africa must submit a Workplace Skills Plan to the Department of Labour. The purpose of this is to outline the training and development which is to take place within the company. This plan qualifies companies to claim for grants from the relevant SETA's. Mokgadi Pela, who is the Director General of the Department of Labour, stated that for development to succeed, "we need to align education and training to employment growth strategies in ways that we have never done before. We are trying to link our national growth and employment agenda to our education and training system agenda" (Sunday Tribune 13 October 2002).

The link between national growth and employment agenda, and education and training system agenda is taking place on paper when the Workplace Skills Plan is submitted, but the reality is often that after submission, the plans are not implemented. There is a gap between policy and what is happening on the ground, but the state is aware of this and has pledged to fine offenders (see Appendix 6).

The Skills Development Levies Act is relevant to my study because I suspect that many companies offer ABET courses in order to claim money back from the SETA, rather than because they are genuinely attempting to empower their previously disadvantaged employees and to make up for the atrocities of the past. If ABET courses are completed and learners write and pass exams, the companies are able to claim discretionary grants. It is thus in the interests of the companies to offer ABET courses. ABET is relatively uncomplicated training which causes minimum disruption within the workplace. The teaching occurs on site and learners are required to attend classes for 4 to 6 hours a week. Employees are often encouraged by employers to enroll on the fundamental subjects, which as discussed in Chapter 1, are English and Numeracy. The employees do so in the hope that on completion of the courses, they will benefit within the workplace. However, the employers often have their own agendas when offering ABET courses.

The fact that the company is able to claim money back for every learner who passes an exam, means that in terms of monetary gain, it is in the employers' interests to encourage learners to write an exam and to then enroll for the next level. I am of the opinion that learners often embark upon English level 4 unnecessarily because it has been encouraged by the employers. The employees are unaware of the fact the employers are able to gain financially if the training is undertaken and they believe that the completion of level 4 will directly benefit them in terms of promotion or monetary gain. As discussed in Chapter 1, English level 4 is not a qualification and there are employers and employees who are not aware of this fact.

English level 3 equips learners to cope adequately with written and spoken English and unless English level 4 is an entry requirement for job related training, I feel that it is a waste of time if it is not coupled with core and elective subjects which will ultimately lead to a qualification. (Refer to Appendix 2.)

3.3 Learnerships

Learnerships build and improve upon apprenticeships and as with apprenticeships, learners will spend some time working under the guidance of a skilled worker, and some time learning theory. But, unlike apprenticeships:-

- Learnerships apply to all parts of the economy.
- Learnerships fit into the NQF. They give the learner a qualification registered by SAQA.
- Learnerships be based on an agreement between the learner, an employer and a training provider (Department of Labour 2001, pg 26).

Learnerships are thus skills based and directly related to the job, whereas English Level 4 is more generic, with an indirect relationship to the workplace. A qualification is gained on completion of a learnership and the benefits are measurable within the workplace, whereas it is difficult to assess the impact of English Level 4 within a company, and as discussed, English Level 4 makes up a small part of a qualification.

Preliminary inquiries as to why companies have invested in English level 4 courses indicate that, in many cases, the plan is to enrol people on learnerships. There are, in fact, very few learnerships which require English Level 4 and in some instances, it is stated that the entry requirement is English Level 2 or that the learner must be literate in English. It has been legislated that every company within South Africa must submit a Workplace Skills Plan to the Department of Labour. This Workplace Skills Plan is divided into four tables.

Appendix 5 outlines the basis on which a workplace skills plan is compiled. Tables 3 and 4 (refer to Appendix 5) which indicate training priorities, are where planned ABET courses are listed. Training and life long learning are central to growth and development, and whilst English Level 4 benefits learners in a personal capacity, there is often no growth and development within the workplace. I am of the opinion that when a Workplace Skills Plan is drawn up, there are work related courses that would be more likely to benefit the employees than English Level 4.

Mercorio and Mercorio (1999, pg 4) state that learnerships combine structured learning or theory with practical work experience in which skills are developed and consolidated. A learnership must lead to a qualification on the NQF and prepare the learners for an occupation which the labour market demands. Expectations surround any learning and I feel that if learners are able to read, write and comprehend English, learnerships or other job related training will be far more beneficial than English Level 4 and that learners expectations will, perhaps, be realized.

3.4 Literacy and Adult Basic Education

Lyster (1992,pg 11) writes that the term literacy is increasingly used to refer to the basic education of adults rather than to the strictly technical skills of reading and writing and it incorporates other areas of skill, behaviour and knowledge. The International Symposium for Literacy, meeting in Persepolis in 1975, unanimously adopted a declaration which considered literacy to be:-

....."not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development. It should open the way to a mastery of techniques and human relations. Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right." (Bataille cited in Lyster 1992, pg 11.)

This definition points to the fact that literacy is so much more than simply learning to read and write and states that literacy is about power and that every human should have this power to participate in and to transform the world in which we live.

Lyster (1992) states that there is no single, simple, individual competence which we can call literacy but that it is a continuum ranging from the first hesitant formation of the letters of ones' name to the ability to read and write abstract texts.

In addition to this, it has been argued that literacy is able to:-

- Empower individuals.
- Cement socialism.
- Change thought processes.

- Accelerate economic development.
- Hasten modernization.
- Narrow the gap between rich and poor countries.
- Make individuals more confident, able and assertive.

One must question how teaching people to read and write will lead to all of the above. On an individual level, I do believe that literacy empowers individuals and makes them more confident, able and assertive. Adults who are taught to read and write gain the power to control their own lives within a social and an economic context because they no longer have to rely on others to read and write for them. It is my experience that adults' confidence and self-esteem increase when they are able to read and write.

The learners see literacy as important to their lives because:-

- They can write letters.
- They can fill in forms.
- They can help their children with their homework.
- They can get a better job.
- They can read the Bible.
- They can sign their names.
- They can get a certificate.
- They can avoid being cheated.

(Lyster 1992, pg 17.)

Lyster is highlighting the huge discrepancy between learners' expectations and the grandiose arguments which surround literacy. The learners' motives for attending literacy classes are personal rather than economic or political and it cannot be denied that for an individual, English Level 4 literacy has the power to deliver the personal expectations.

Wagner (1993, pg 17) states that there is no proof to support the fact that literacy changes thought processes and that this myth is used as an excuse for colonial discrimination against unschooled people in the third world. In terms of modernization and development, Wagner (1993) argues that in studying literacy and modernization, literacy has rarely been separated from schooling. Studies have determined that years of schooling lead to involvement in the development process, but has the schooling affected people's attitudes, or has it simply opened up more opportunities to individuals?

Other unsubstantiated claims about literacy are that it fosters democratic ideals, increases national productivity and that illiteracy will be eradicated by the year 2000. Wagner(1993) states that it is the myths which surround literacy that help to sustain political and social support for literacy work.

ABET implies a commitment to providing adult learners with a broad, general education, which forms the foundation for life long learning. ABET'S broad aim is to enable individuals to:-

- Develop their full potential and continue with life long learning.
- Participate actively in society as well as in the business environment.
- Develop communication skills in a particular environment.
- Develop numeracy skills.
- Develop abilities for critical thinking, interpretation and understand (Pennington 1994, pg 15).

I believe that within South Africa, there is a commitment to ABET and that the NQF has been set up in order to address the educational inequalities of the past, both on an individual and a national level. I am also of the belief that the expectations of ABET are often unrealistic. Wagner (1993, pg 23) states that "literacy work hides no magic answer for any society, but is part and parcel of what human development is required for all aspects of national development. Future literacy work will require sustained and concerted effort."

3.5 Literacy and the Workplace

Global competition has dictated that many companies worldwide have redesigned their factories as high performance workplaces and constant learning is the central activity. Due to the educational inequalities and to the high rate of illiteracy in South Africa, there is concern as to whether this workplace revolution includes increasing the literacy skills of individuals.

"Workplace literacy is a hybrid. It offers instruction in basic skills applications, generally perceived to be education, using the vehicle of those technical job tasks the skills support, perceived to be training." (Philippi 1994, pg 21) Education and training must thus work together within the workplace.

Hull et al (1996, pg 34) state that it is not enough to simply be able to read and write and their study indicated that literacy at work included complex literacy (which is what English level 4 is teaching) and that a literate identity is to "dip appropriately and as needed into a wide and deep repertoire of situated ways of using written language and other forms of representation in order to carry out a work related activity."

3.6 Human Capital Theory

Basic education can be analyzed according to a human capital framework. The theory of human capital was developed by economists from the 1960's and put simply, it encapsulates "the idea that people spend on themselves in diverse ways, not only for the sake of present enjoyments, but also for the sake of future pecuniary and non-pecuniary returns." (Blaug 1992, cited in Tight 1996, pg 74.) People are thus investing in their own futures in the hope that there will be a return on the investment. Governments and companies are investing a lot of money in ABET in the hope that there will be a return on their investment.

According to Human Capital Theory, it is important that people are developed if they are to make a contribution towards economic growth and to share in the wealth of the country. There is overwhelming evidence that investment in human capital is instrumental in improving the quality of labour (Lighthelm 1993, cited in Van Dyk et al, 1997, pg 25).

The investment that the concept of human capital refers to is education, training or any other activity that will raise future income. Generally ABET is paid for by the employers of the learners and it is thus the companies who are investing in people and not the individuals investing in themselves.

Woodhall (cited in Helsey et al 1997, pg 219) states that economists use the term investment to refer to expenditure on assets which will produce income in the future and that traditionally physical capital such as machinery is what increases the productive capacity of a factory. It was pointed out by economists that education helped to increase the productive capacity of workers. Malcolm Tight (1976, pg 73) states that the link between education and the economy can be seen on the individual level, the organizational level and on a social level. On an individual level, the chances of employment and higher earnings increases. On an organizational level, profits could be maximized whilst society as a whole should benefit from the increased productivity of the workers.

There are seven assumptions made by human capital theory and Bouchard (1998, pg 130) has reviewed these and their relationship to the workplace:-

1. Human capital is an investment for the future. This is obviously stating that the training which takes place today should be in preparation for future economic needs. How does one forecast the labour requirements for the future? Bezdek (cited in Bouchard 1998, pg 130) analyses three methods of forecasting future economic needs:-
 - Forecasting by surveying employer estimates. Bezdek states that employers are concerned with short-term results, and that they will react to environmental changes rather than planning ahead for them.
 - Forecasting by using a combined indicator approach groups indicators by economic sector. The problem with this approach is that the assumption is that past trends will continue.
 - Forecasting by stating economic goals and inferring future labour needs does not take into account the current educational needs of the workforce. Certain goals are better matched than others to the capacity of the workforce. The Workplace Skills Plan is an example of planning ahead by looking at future educational and labour needs.
2. More training leads to better work skills. There has been a move from task specific definitions of training to generic training as it has become difficult to predict future technology shifts. The move is toward training for competencies across a wide range of tasks. One does, however, need to know which competencies will be required in the future. Within the South African context, one needs to teach people the fundamental competencies before the elective competencies come into play.

3. Educational institutions play a central role in the development of human capital. Due to the fact that job specifications are rapidly changing, people are learning through on-the-job training and self-directed autonomous learning is encouraged. It has been argued that the traditional approaches to education no longer fit the demands of the workplace and that rather than being dispensers of knowledge, schools, colleges and universities should teach people to negotiate the paths of changing information and learning. Within South Africa outcomes based education is an attempt to move toward institutional teaching which will benefit people within the workplace.
4. Employees need to improve their skills. The problem with increasing people's skills is that a lot of money is spent on training, only to find that employment opportunities are limited.
5. Training enhances employability. It is assumed that to be educated is to find a job. This is, however, not always the case.
6. Training can compensate for skill shortages. Training is often seen as a way to bridge the gap between offer and demand by providing the human capital that is needed. However, the problems of matching jobs to people are not only due to the fact that there is a lack of skilled people. People sometimes do have the necessary skills, but the expectations of their potential managers are different to what the employee has to offer and there is a "mismatch".
7. Employment and unemployment are economic concepts. There are other issues such as social issues, demographics, culture, race, gender and class that come into play and must be considered when looking at employment and unemployment.

Bouchard (1993) is saying that the adherence to the notion that education and training is a subset of human capital theory is not, in itself satisfactory. "Rather than blindly subscribe to the idea that economic prosperity depends on more education and training, perhaps we had better look into the nature of training programmes, their modes of organization and their real, rather than imagined, effects" (pg 136).

3.7 Human Resource Development

Human resource development may be seen as the process by which human resource capital is developed, and Nadler (1990, cited in Tight 1996, pg 78) portrays human resource development as "organized learning over a given period of time to provide the possibility of performance change or general growth of the individual."

The above very general definition of human resource development applies to ABET as the idea behind it is to make the individual grow and to have the opportunity to improve workplace performance. ABET has the ability to provide a platform for developing learners and then allowing them to use their potential. From a company point of view, an investment in human resource development will lead to greater productivity, which will in turn lead to higher profits.

In its quest to establish a competitive economy, South Africa is faced with the challenge of developing its people in order to allow them to make a meaningful contribution towards economic growth and eventually wealth creation - but also to allow them to share in the wealth created by participating in the economy. Van Dyk et al (1997, pg 15) state that the country needs people who are:-

- Literate and numerate.
- Skilled at various levels in order to make the country's production processes more cost effective.
- Enterprising and willing to take charge of their own development.
- Proud to be citizens of South Africa.

To become literate and numerate equips people to be more enterprising and to thus become more skilled. Any learning brings with it a sense of achievement pride and confidence and people will in turn be more motivated at work and be proud of the contribution they are making.

Brookfield (1987, pg 214) states that "significant personal learning entails fundamental change in learners and leads them to re-define and re-interpret their personal, social and occupational words." When employees undertake ABET courses within the workplace, it is not simply a matter of their lives being re-defined by themselves. The employers have paid for the training and are very much in control of what occupational benefits follow the training. Brookfield goes on to state that: "In the process, adults may come to explore affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains that they previously had not perceived as relevant to themselves. But to establish a set of objectives where attainment determines the format and focus of the teaching/learning transaction is to make it impossible for learners to reformulate their goals and make them correspond more closely with their new perceptions of the world. This is one reason why the idea of negotiation and re-negotiation is stressed so strongly as a feature of effective practice. Only if this re-negotiation is possible, can one abandon previous formulated goals as these become demonstrably irrelevant and begin to formulate ones that will allow learners to explore new directions that appear to them to be more meaningful than those identified in advance by somebody else."

Unfortunately, I don't think that previously formulated goals for adult learners are often reformulated during the training process. The learners are expected to follow the educational and occupational path that somebody else has chosen for them. I suspect that at times, no path has been identified for the learners, which must frustrate people who, as they become educated and more enlightened, have more confidence to reformulate their lives.

There are criticisms of human resource development, and one objection is that it is demeaning to consider people only in terms of their prospective economic productivity. Another objection questions how many organizations or employers are currently using human resource development in the "textbook" way. In the absence of a strategy based on human resource development, most organizations continue to respond in a piecemeal fashion (Tight 1996, pg 80). This is what I feel is taking place in the South African context. Companies are attempting to respond to their employees needs and to improve their workforce, but it is not always a worthwhile effort.

Philippi (1994) outlines the critical role of adult educators in re-training the workforce. She points out that adult educators must be proactive in networking with employers and together determine the skills and knowledge needed for competent workers. Adult educators must then develop or tailor education and training needs of employees. For success, these adult education and training programmes must have essential employee/employer commitment and the appropriate instructional resources. Teachers must sense that the "teachable moment" is now. Employers and employees need to work together if all stakeholders are to benefit from the training.

Chapter 4 examines the marketing strategies of the course providers and reviews the course content of an English level 4 provider. This chapter is also an analysis of the findings and discussion about managers and learners expectations surrounding English level 4.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

4.1 Background To Companies within the Study

The interviews were conducted within seven companies, from four sectors of the economy and the breakdown was as follows:-

- Commercial Sector: 2 companies
- Shipping Sector: 2 companies
- Manufacturing Sector: 2 companies
- Hospitality Sector: 1 company

The first company from the commercial sector became involved in ABET in 1996 and it was stated by the training manager that the only problems with the courses have been that during the last six years, the ABET provider has sent six different facilitators to teach the learners. They have, nevertheless, had six learners successfully writing IEB examinations after completing the course. There is one learner currently on the English level 4 course.

The second company within the commercial sector has offered ABET to their employees since the year 2000. The human resources manager stated that the learners do not appear committed and that the drop out rate has been high. Two learners have completed English level 4 and passed and at present, there are no English level 4 learners within the company.

The one company within the shipping sector has had ABET courses on site since 2002. There are currently 3 English level 4 learners. One learner had completed the course by November 2002 and has written the exam. The second shipping company has been running ABET courses since 1999. Five learners have successfully written the English level 4 exam and there are currently no learners enrolled on an English level 4 course.

The first company within the manufacturing sector has been conducting ABET courses since 1999. This company started out with an in-house facilitator who had no teaching background and was reluctant to take on the teaching responsibility. He was uninterested, incompetent and unreliable and was thus relieved of his teaching duties. This company now operates the ABET courses with an external facilitator who is employed by the ABET provider. There has been a high drop out rate within this company and two English level 4 learners decided not to complete the course. One learner has written English level 4.

The second company has been offering ABET courses to the employees since 1998, with little success. The training manager refused to be interviewed and he stated that "I have no idea what this is all about." I was referred to a supervisor who feels that the training is unsuccessful and the drop out rate high due to the fact that the line managers refuse to allow learners to attend ABET lessons. In four years, not one learner has sat an exam!

One company within the hospitality sector participated in the study and this company has been running ABET classes since 1996. There have been three different providers during this time. The first provider unreliable and the facilitator seldom arrived to teach the lessons. Provider number two had a facilitator whom the learners viewed as incompetent and who did not have the basic English knowledge to teach English level 4. The exam results were disappointing and a third provider was thus engaged. Four English level 4 learners have now written and passed the course.

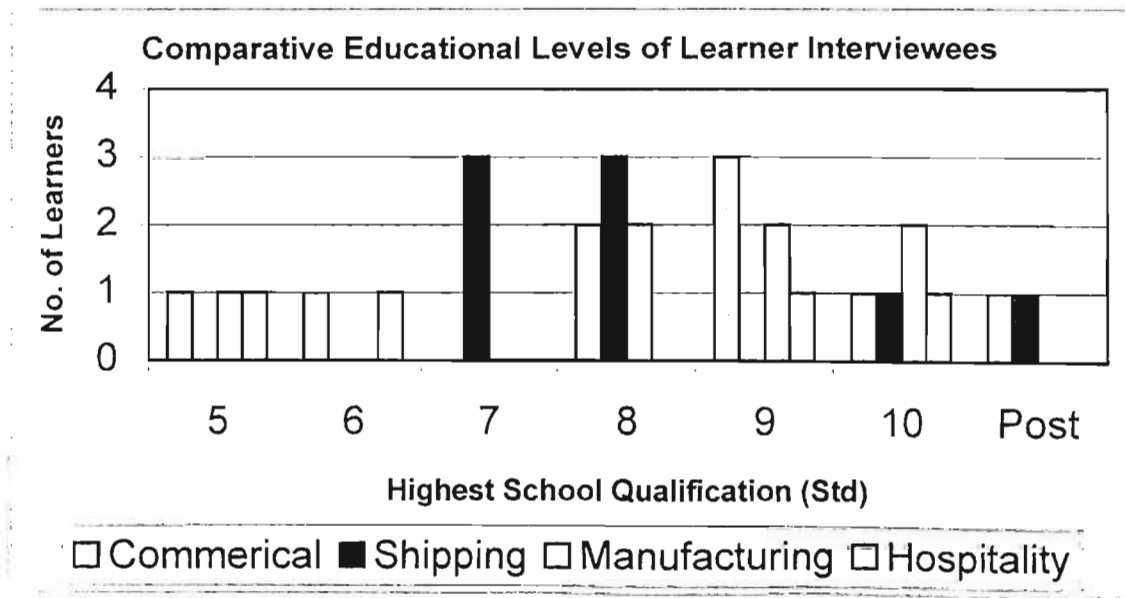
4.2 Background to Learner Interviewees

As stated in the methodology chapter, 27 learners were interviewed in total and the breakdown within sectors was as follows: -

- Commercial Sector: 9 respondents
- Shipping Sector: 7 respondents
- Manufacturing Sector: 7 respondents
- Hospitality Sector: 4 respondents

The following graph indicates a comparison of educational levels of the interviewees across the four sectors:-

Graph 1



It is interesting to note that despite the fact that English Level 4 is equivalent to a Std 7 school level, the interviewees within all of the sectors had learners who had completed Std 7, 8, 9 or 10. Within the commercial and shipping industries, two learners have post matric qualifications. The graph does not indicate any significant differences which would have impacted upon the study.

The following tables indicate the gender, ages, highest schooling qualifications and occupations of the learners interviewed within each sector of the economy: -

4.2.1 Commercial Sector Interviewees

TABLE 1			
Gender	Age	Highest School Qualification	Occupation
Male	33	Std 10 (+ N2 from Tech.)	Supervisor
Female	34	Std 9	Works in Mail Room
Female	38	Std 9	Assistant in Kitchen
Male	39	Std 8	Messenger
Male	40	Std 9	Driver
Male	40	Std 10	Supervisor
Female	40	Std 8	Caterer
Male	50	Std 6	Messenger
Male	56	Std 5	Clerk

It is interesting to note that it is the people who are over 50 years of age who have the lowest school qualification. All of the other respondents were at school during the apartheid era and when questioned, stated that they attained Std 8, 9 and 10 certificates by studying part time.

4.2.2 Shipping Sector Interviewees

TABLE 2			
Gender	Age	Highest School Qualification	Occupation
Male	21	Std 10 (+ N2 from Tech)	Registration Clerk
Male	34	Std 8	Customs Clerk
Male	40	Std 8	Assistant - Invoice Dept.
Male	43	Std 8	Customs Clerk
Male	46	Std 7	Filing Clerk
Female	46	Std 7	Filing Clerk
Male	51	Std 7	Messenger

The 21-year-old male could not find a job anywhere else and is a registration clerk in a shipping company. He is embarking upon English level 4 due to the fact that his manager has stated that if he does not attend the course, he will not be registered on a learnership and will never be eligible for promotion. It is interesting to note that he has been to Technikon and qualified to register on the learnership on the strength of this.

The general school exit standards, which are standards seven and eight, are lower within this sector than within the commercial sector, where the interviewees had completed either standard nine or ten. The lowest school qualification within the shipping sector is Std 7, which is higher than within the commercial sector where it is Std 5.

4.2.3 Manufacturing Sector Interviewees

TABLE 3			
Gender	Age	Highest School Qualification	Occupation
Male	33	Std 8	Driver
Male	39	Std 8	Preps & Moulds Product
Male	40	Std 10	Supervisor
Male	40	Std 9	Factory Clerk
Male	45	Std 10	Supervisor
Male	54	Std 9	Dispatching Clerk
Male	55	Std 5	Dispatching Clerk

It is not the norm for an historically disadvantaged person who is 54 to have completed Std 9. Generally, it is the younger people who have higher school qualifications and when I questioned the respondent, he stated that he attended night school at the age of 50. The 38 year old "prepper and moulder" came across as ambitious and has a dream to eventually become a manager within his company. He is currently studying at night school.

4.2.4 Hospitality Sector Interviewees

TABLE 4			
Gender	Age	Highest School Qualification	Occupation
Male	40	Std 9	Supervisor
Male	40	Std 10	Supervisor
Female	41	Std 5	Cleaner
Female	46	Std 6	Cleaner

Overall, 21 male learners and 6 female learners were interviewed. The highest school qualification was Std 10 and the lowest Std 5. The ages of the respondents ranged from 21 years of age to 56 years of age.

4.3 Background to Managerial Interviewees

A manager from each of the seven companies was interviewed and within some companies, two people from the managerial level participated. Thus ten managers were interviewed in total. One of the respondents was a black female under 40 years of age, whilst the other nine were all white males over the age of 40. The female was the most enlightened respondent in terms of the nature of English level 4. She had career and learning paths mapped out for the learners. I noted that the learners within her company did not have unrealistic expectations of English level 4 and were aware of the fact that this course was a foundation for further learning. The training managers of the shipping companies also had an idea as to where they wanted their learners to be in the future.

4.4 Results

See appendices 3 and 4 for the interview questions

4.4.1 Learner responses to where English Level 4 fits into ABET.

Learners were asked where English level 4 fits into ABET and the responses were as follows: -

TABLE 5	
%	Learner responses to where English Level 4 fits into ABET.
41%	It will enable me to go into tertiary education of some kind.
23%	It will give me ABET level 4.
18%	Nothing on its own.
18%	I do not know.

The literature review indicates the role of English level 4 within ABET and explains that it is only part of a qualification. Of the learners interviewed, only 18% of the respondents were aware of the fact that on its own, English level 4 has limited value. The word qualification was not used by any of the respondents but 18% had the correct notion of the fact that English level 4 is not a qualification by stating that it is worth nothing on its own. However, they did not know that it is part of a qualification or how they could go about attaining the whole qualification. There was an awareness that to pass English level 4 does not automatically lead to better jobs or more money, and it was stated that English level 4 is a foundation for further learning by most of the respondents.

18% of the respondents answered that they do not know where English Level 4 fits into ABET. However, the 41% who stated that they could go into tertiary education, and the 23% who stated that it would give them ABET level 4 also fall into this category. Thus, in reality, 82% of the learners interviewed have embarked upon a course with incorrect ideas about where it will lead.

4.4.2 Manager responses to where English Level 4 fits into ABET.

Managers were asked where English level 4 fits into ABET and the responses were as follows: -

TABLE 6	
%	Manager responses to where English Level 4 fits into ABET
50%	ABET level 4.
33%	I have no idea.
17%	Standard 7.

50% of managers believe that English level 4 is ABET level 4 whilst 17% stated that English level 4 equals Standard 7. They are saying the same thing because as stated in Chapter 1, point 1.2.1, Grade 9 (which is Standard 7) is equivalent to ABET level 4 which are in turn, both equal to a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). 33% stated that they have no idea, but in reality, 100% of managers interviewed had incorrect ideas about the role of English level 4 in ABET.

In comparing managers' responses with those of the learners, it becomes clear that neither group truly understands the role of English level 4 on the NQF. The perceptions of the managers and those of the learners are the same in that the majority of interviewees in both groups believe that English level 4 is a qualification. It is surprising that of the two groups, 18% of the learners answered correctly, whilst the managers had no idea whatsoever. I expected managers to have a better idea as to the role of English level 4 in ABET.

The learners' expectations tend to be higher than those of managers. Some of the responses are as follows: -

- a. "I will be able to enroll at university."
- b. "I was not qualified to go to university and think that this will bridge the gap."
- c. "I will be able to further my studies."

The following was written by an English level 4 learner and sums up the expectations of so many people who embark upon English level 4: -

SEKUNJALO - NOW IS THE TIME
I am working for the company called
I have worked for ten
years without being promoted. I have
been told that I could not get promotion
in the company because my standard of
education was too low. Now that I have
struggled very hard to learn until that
I have passed my LEVEL IV, I feel
very happy, for my life will change
since LEVEL IV Certificate will enable
me to go for a Diploma or Degree
courses which will also enable me to
get better position in the company.
Before I started learning, my communication
in English was very poor, but now I
communicate with our clients with ease.

The man who wrote "Sekunjalo" is a 43-year-old customs clerk within the shipping sector who has passed Standard 8. In terms of ABET, he has in fact passed English level 4 and not ABET level 4. He is of the belief that on the strength of this, he has qualified to enter a tertiary education institution, which will in turn mean that he will be promoted.

He believes that English level 4 has improved his communication in English, which is the aim of the course. His expectations mirror those of many other English level 4 learners.

A level 4 learner who is a 39-year-old male with a Standard 8 certificate and is employed as a messenger within the commercial sector, was asked how English level 4 would be of benefit to him. His answer was as follows: -

I expect to have confidence in me. To be able to face with any challenges in life. To be able to express myself with confidence. I will be able to see myself who I am. It will help me at work to have a better understanding with my colleagues and my manager. It can help me for a promotion to become a manager one day because at that time I will have a better education. I would like to do Hotel Management because if this English I am doing now will help me to have a thorough understanding of courses I will be doing.

In looking at his response, he does not believe that English level 4 will automatically afford him promotion but that it will assist him to attain a better education, and he states that English level 4 will help him to have a thorough understanding of future courses onto which he may embark. His expectations are more realistic than the "Sekunjalo" writer, as he views level 4 as giving him the confidence to embark upon other challenges. He was one of the respondents who when interviewed stated that he expected some improvement within the workplace.

4.4.3 Learners’ motives for embarking upon English Level 4

Learners were asked about their motives for embarking upon English level 4 and their responses were as follows: -

TABLE 7	
%	Learners motives for embarking upon English Level 4
47%	To upgrade skills at work.
35%	For self-improvement.
18%	To upgrade English skills.

47% of the learners wanted to upgrade their skills at work and had embarked upon English level 4 in order to achieve this. When prompted to be more specific about what skills they believed would be upgraded within the workplace, all of the respondents stated that they had hoped to learn more about their specific jobs and to improve their general skills on the shop floor. The 35% who stated that they had enrolled for self-improvement can be coupled with the 18% who wanted to upgrade their English skills; as to upgrade English skills is part of self-improvement.

4.4.4 Managers' motives for implementing English Level 4

Managers were asked about their motives for implementing English level 4 courses and their responses were as follows: -

TABLE 8	
%	Managers Motives for implementing English Level 4
32%	To improve English skills.
17%	It was initiated by the union.
17%	To claim money back from our SETA.
17%	As a social responsibility.
17%	To enroll employees onto a learnership.

It surprised me that 32% stated that English level 4 was implemented in order to improved English skills which is precisely the aim of the course. I was assuming that very few of the managers had any idea that their employees were being taught English skills only. English level 4 is meant to improve communication, reading, writing and general comprehension skills.

17% stated that they wanted to enroll employees onto a learnership. There are, in fact, very few learnerships that require English level 4 and often the prerequisite for enrollment is a level 2 or level 3 certificate. There are learnerships that state that the learners must be literate in English in order to enroll.

17% stated that they encouraged enrollment on English level 4 courses as a social responsibility. This in itself is not a bad thing, but some learners were not told this and were under the impression that there would perhaps be rewards within the workplace. This suspicion is supported by the fact that 52% of the learners expected to be promoted and 32% stated that they expected some improvement within the workplace (see Table 10). I am of the opinion that more than 17% of managers are offering level 4 courses because they want to claim money back from the SETA's through discretionary grants, which were discussed in the literature review.

I found the general attitude amongst managers' very off-hand and some of them confessed that they have shown no interest in the course or in the progress of the learners. As stated earlier, the only manager who shared a true interest in the learners was a black woman who had career paths mapped out for the staff. The managers within the shipping industry had a reason for encouraging learners to embark upon English level 4 as discussed in detail in Section 4.5.

In comparing managers and learners responses, it can be seen that the two groups had differing motivations for embarking upon the course and that whilst English level 4 is essentially about improving English skills, only 18% of the learners were motivated by a desire to improve their English skills, whilst 32% of the managers had this as a motivation.

4.4.5 Learner expectations in terms of (a) the course content and (b) benefits within the workplace.

The learners were asked what their expectations were in terms of (a) the course content and (b) the benefits within the workplace. Their responses were as follows: -

TABLE 9		
%		Learner expectations of course content
a.	100%	Expected it to be work related in some way.

The responses to this question contradict the earlier responses wherein there were 47% who expected to upgrade skills at work. 18% of the respondents had, earlier stated that they wanted to upgrade English skills and there was no mention of embarking upon the course because it would be work related.

The fact that 100% of the learners expected some work related teaching confirms my assumption that the workers were not briefed about the course content. Is this due to the fact that their managers were also misinformed about the content or was it deliberately encouraged because there was a hidden agenda in getting employees signed up for the course? The literature review has discussed the skills development levy and this could explain why companies have a lot to gain by having as many Adult Basic Education learners as possible.

TABLE 10		
%		Learner expectations of workplace benefits
b.	52%	Expected promotion.
	39%	Expected some improvement within the workplace.
	9%	Didn't know.

52% of the respondents expected promotion within the workplace. Had they been briefed about the course content and the nature of English level 4 courses, they might not have expected to be promoted as a direct result of the course.

The 40-year-old female who is a caterer stated that she enjoyed the course and benefited in a personal capacity. However, she expressed disappointment that she did not benefit within the workplace. She has been given a small salary increase, which she would have received, regardless of whether or not she completed English level 4, but was not promoted. Her prime motivation in enrolling on the course was to get out of the kitchen and become a trainee secretary. Her supervisor refused her request to move to another department, as she is too valuable within her current position.

The 38-year-old female who was a kitchen assistant contacted me after the interviews to inform me that she has been transferred to another department and is now a junior secretary. She attributes this move to the English level 4 course.

The 34-year-old female who is a mailroom assistant has been applying for jobs in other companies, as she would like to upgrade her job. She believes that her English level 4 certificate will stand her in good stead in her quest for another job.

Within this sector, the females showed a greater desire than the males to advance within the workplace.

4.4.6 Manager expectations in terms of (a) the course content and (b) benefits within the workplace.

The managers were asked what their expectations were in terms of (a) the course content and (b) the benefits within the workplace. Their responses were as follows: -

TABLE 11		
%		Manager expectations of course content
a.	50%	No idea.
	34%	Expected comprehension and oral skills.
	16%	Expected general life skills to be taught.

50% had no idea as to the course content and together with the 16% who expected general life skills to be taught, 66% of managers invested in a course without any idea as to what it was all about.

34% expected oral and comprehension skills and this is consistent with the 32% who, when asked why they offered the course to the employees, stated that they wanted to improve English skills.

TABLE 12		
%		Manager expectations of workplace benefits
b.	52%	Expected an increase in production.
	32%	Expected the standard of English to improve.
	16%	No expectations.

32% of managers had expectations of the standard of English improving. This is consistent with the 34% who expected comprehension and oral skills to be the content of the course and the 32% who offered the course purely because they wanted to improve the standard of English within the workplace. It becomes obvious that one third of managers interviewed were clear as to what English level 4 is about.

52% of managers expected production to increase and yet, they had little idea as to the nature of the course. Managers are the people responsible for briefing the learners about the training and for encouraging them to attend classes. In comparing the responses of managers and those of the learners, it is not surprising that so many learners are ignorant as to the benefits of English level 4, when their managers do not know what they have bought into.

4.4.7 Extent to which learner expectations were met.

The learners were asked if their expectations in terms of (a) the course content and (b) the benefits within the workplace had been met. Their responses were as follows: -

TABLE 13				
		Learner expectations of course content	Expectations met?	
			YES	NO
a.	100%	Expected it to be work related.	21% (indirect link)	79%

Of the 100% who expected the content to be work related, 21% stated that there was an indirect link. When asked about the meaning of this, they stated that the content itself was not directly related, but that they had transferred the generic skills from the classroom to the workplace and had thus made the link themselves.

The 79% of the 100% who expected the contents to be work related and found that there was no correlation, stated that there was no reason for them to read and write at work and that they had expected to learn more about their jobs. The people who were disappointed not so see some improvement within the workplace, were mostly expecting their efforts to be acknowledged and to be given more responsibility.

TABLE 14				
		Learner expectations of workplace benefits	Expectations met?	
			YES	NO
b.	52%	Expected promotion.	16%	84%
	39%	Expected improvement within the workplace.	35%	65%
	9%	Had no expectations.		

52% of the learners expected promotion and whilst 16% of the 52% were promoted, they seemed to be of the opinion that they would have been promoted regardless of the training and that the promotions were not as a direct result of English level 4.

35% of the 39%, who expected an improvement within the workplace, stated that this had indeed happened. This could have been as a result of the generic skills being transferred from the classroom to the workplace or it could have been due to the fact that going to "school" and learning something had boosted their general confidence and self-esteem and this attitude had been transferred to the workplace. This is consistent with the supposed positive spin-offs of literacy and the individual benefits, which were discussed in the literature review.

4.4.8 Extent to which manager expectations were met.

Managers were asked if their expectations in terms of (a) the course content and (b) the benefits within the workplace had been met.

The responses were as follows: -

TABLE 15				
%		Expectations	Expectations met?	
			YES	NO
a.	50%	No idea.	100% answered that they have no idea as to the content of course - cannot comment.	
	34%	Expected comprehension and language skills.	100% answered that they have no idea as to the content of course - cannot comment.	
	16%	Expected general life skills to be taught.	100% answered that they have no idea as to the content of course - cannot comment.	

100% of the managers stated that whilst they had expectations, they had no clue as to the course content and could not comment about whether or not their expectations had been met. I find this a contradiction! This suggests that the attitudes of managers is one of absolute lack of interest. Not one of them had taken the time to peruse the course content and yet had expected benefits within the workplace.

TABLE 16				
%		Manager expectations of workplace benefits	Expectations met?	
			YES	NO
b.	52%	Expected an increase in productivity.	0%	100%
	32%	Expected standard of English to improve.	88%	12%
	16%	None.		

The primary aim of English level 4, as discussed in Chapter 1, point 2.2, is to improve general English oral, written, reading and comprehension skills. 52% of managers expected an increase in productivity and none of these managers had these expectations met. This is not surprising when one looks at the nature of English level 4. 32% expected the standard of English to improve and 88% of these managers had their expectations met. One manager noted that there had been an improvement in reports submitted by an English Level 4 learner. He also commented on the fact that the learner’s spoken English had improved. Another manager stated that a supervisor had commented that his two English Level 4 learners were more confident when communicating in English. This could bear witness to the fact that English Level 4, on its own, is beneficial. It could also mean that their expectations were more realistic.

In comparing learners and managers’ expectations with regard to the benefits within the workplace, it can be seen that of the two groups, the learners were more disappointed in terms of not having their expectations met. This could be due to the fact that the learners had more to lose within a personal capacity. They had invested time and effort into the training believing that they would ultimately benefit within the workplace, only to discover that this was not the case.

4.4.9 Learner responses relating to the question of re-enrolment.

The learners were asked if they would re-enrol knowing what they now know. The responses were as follows: -

TABLE 17		
%		Learners were asked if they would re-enrol
YES	89%	Because any education is better than nothing.
NO	11%	Disappointed. A waste of time.

89% felt that they would re-enrol and some of the responses are listed below: -

- Yes, I would. I have more confidence.
- I would still choose ABET. I tried something else to study and it was a waste of time. I'm preaching it, not recommending it to people.
- Of course. Skills that I had thought I had forgotten were brought back.
- I would and would recommend it to others.
- Yes, I cannot proceed without English.
- Yes, I like to learn. It doesn't matter what.
- Yes, my English skills have improved.

Despite the fact that people were disappointed in terms of not having their expectations within the workplace met, an overwhelming majority of 89% would re-enroll as they benefited in some ways. This confirms what was written in the literature review about literacy having the power to deliver positive results to individuals.

The negative responses from respondents are as follows: -

- Having completed English Level 3, I would not do English Level 4, as I learnt nothing new.
- No I would rather go to college. It will not help me to get a better job. If a learner has achieved a good English mark at school, why bother with it?
This response was from the 21-year-old male who has matriculated and who was forced to enroll by his supervisor.
- No, I did not benefit in the workplace. I only write in a registration book and read delivery notes. Did not need this.

4.4.10 Manager responses to the question of re-enrolment.

Managers were asked if they would offer English level 4 again and their responses were as follows: -

TABLE 18		
%		Would managers implement English Level 4 again?
YES	50%	There have been benefits.
NO	50%	The training was of no benefit to the company.

50% of managers would offer the training again and some of their responses are as follows: -

- Yes, I see a new level of confidence in the learners.
- Yes, there has been an improvement in the general English skills.
- Yes, the learners appear to have enjoyed it and are motivated at work.
- Yes, good value for money as a training tool.
- What is noticeable is that the learners appear to be more motivated and positive than they were prior to the training.

50% of managers would not offer the training again and some of the reasons are as follows: -

- No, I don't see the point.
- No, it has added no value to the company.
- No, where are we going with this training?

The man who responded that it had added no value to the company was one of the people who expected productivity to improve but had no idea as to the content of the course.

In comparing the learners' and managers' responses, it is interesting to note that after buying into the programme and investing a lot of money, half of the managers feel that it was a waste of time and of no benefit to the company. Surely the learners are the people who have wasted their time, and yet, the majority would enroll if given the chance again, even if they were aware of the true nature of the course. They have realized that they must take the opportunities, which come their way in the workplace, and this is possibly in the hope that at the end of the day, they will benefit in some way. The harsh reality is that the managers ultimately decide who enrolls for which training courses and despite the fact that the learners would enroll again and enjoyed the course, 50% of managers would not offer the course again. They cannot see beyond the fact that their perceived benefits within the workplace were not evident.

4.5 General Comparisons of Learners and Managers Responses

In drawing general comparisons between learners and managers responses, it can be seen that there were some commonalities. When asked where English level 4 fits into ABET, 23% of the learners responded that it is ABET level 4 and 50% of managers had the same response. One would have expected that managers would have been informed as to the position of English level 4 on the NQF and yet, not one had the correct understanding as to the worth of English level 4. The learners' expectations were higher than those of managers, with 41% stating that they could go into tertiary education courses after English level 4.

Whilst 18% of the learners stated that they wanted to upgrade English skills as their reason for being enrolled in English level 4, 32% of managers stated that they had offered the course in order to upgrade employees' English skills. The other learner responses as to the reasons were consistent with self-improvement and they either wanted to upgrade skills at work or to generally uplift themselves.

Managers' responses were more varied and mostly related to the work environment. 17% of managers stated that they offered the training as a social responsibility, which is consistent with the 35% of learners who stated that they were motivated by self-improvement. I say this because when asked to explain what they meant by social responsibility, the managers stated that they wanted to give their employees the opportunity to improve themselves.

There were no commonalities in the expectations about the course content. Managers' expectations were far more realistic in that 34% expected comprehension and oral skills and 16% expected general life skills. 50% stated that they had no idea, which points to the fact that they were ignorant as to the nature of their investment. The learners all expected work related content which was very unrealistic, as it is an English course.

52% of the learners expected promotion within the workplace, whilst 52% of managers interviewed expected production to increase. The course content points to the fact that these expectations are unrealistic. Despite the fact that their expectations were not met, 80% of the learners realized that there were other benefits, which were not related to the workplace, but to their personal lives and for this reason, they had benefited from English level 4 and would do the course again. 50% of managerial respondents also realized that although their expectations in terms of increased productivity had not been met, the learners had benefited in individual, personal ways and they would thus offer the course again. One of the managers stated that "a more confident, positive attitude from the learners could ultimately be of benefit to the company." This attitude is consistent with Human Resource Development which was discussed in the literature review.

4.6 General Observations in Relation to the Different Sectors

There were no marked differences in learners and managers responses within the manufacturing sector, the commercial sector and the hospitality sector. However, the shipping sector was vastly different to the others. Within this sector English level 4 has benefited the learners and managers. The reason for this is that the motivation for enrolling learners on English level 4 was to qualify them to be enrolled on a shipping course for which English level 4 is an entry requirement.

Table 8 indicates that 32% of managers wanted to improve employees' English skills. The two shipping managers interviewed were within this 32%. Table 7 indicates that 47% of the learners wanted to upgrade skills at work and that 18% wanted to upgrade English skills. The shipping industry respondents make up a part of these groups. Once the work related course has been completed, the learners will benefit within the workplace as will the workplace itself. The expectations of learners and managers within this sector were realistic and should, ultimately be realized. It is noteworthy that even these learners who were informed as to the nature of the course, expected a connection between the course content and the workplace.

4.7 Analysis of Marketing Interview

Whilst analyzing the results, it became clear that people were ignorant as to the nature of English level 4 and that they had possibly not been informed about the course when they committed themselves to it. My suspicion was that ABET providers do not always inform people about the true nature of English level 4, as on its own, it is not a qualification and that insufficient information was revealed by marketing people. I thus interviewed a person who is employed to market ABET for one of the providers.

In interviewing the marketing person for company A, my aim was to ascertain whether or not the presentations to the companies include information about the NQF and whether they take the time to explain the small part that English level 4 has to play in NQF band 1.

She stated that prior to July 2002, the English and Numeracy courses were marketed and sold as a package. The NQF was mentioned only in the context of how important the ABET level of the NQF is. The information given to prospective clients was basically that once learners had completed ABET level 4; they had the freedom to move onto NQF 2. However, no information was given about what ABET level 4 entails. This was due to the fact that nothing had yet been legislated and there were no guidelines available.

This excuse is rather thin, as long before the guidelines were available, it was known that ABET entails a lot more than English and Numeracy.

The GETC has been discussed in Chapter 1, point 1.2.1 and in July 2002, Umalusi, which is the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), was formed. This body then informed all of the training providers about the points system and what subjects are needed to make up the 120 points for NQF level 1. The presentations which are now given by Company A include this information and people are made aware of the fact that ABET level 4 is a lot more than English and Numeracy level 4. The points system is explained so as to make people realize that English level 4 is a small part of ABET level 4. Once clients have bought into the programme and their facilitators attend training courses, this information is relayed to the facilitators. People are thus more informed than they were prior to July 2002. The learners and managers whom I interviewed all started pre-2002, which could explain why they are not aware of the role of English level 4 and why their expectations of the course are often unrealistic and are not being realized.

4.8 Review of the English Level 4 Course

As discussed in the literature review, unit standards have been set for the various learning areas on the NQF and it is these unit standards that ensure that all courses, which are registered by SAQA, are following the same basic standards and requirements. It thus means that all English level 4 courses are structured in much the same way.

The course content that I examined is that of Company A because all of the interviewees had this company as their ABET provider. The English level 4 course is comprised of 30 lessons, and the course spans a time of 80 - 100 hours. The teaching generally takes place during working hours on company premises and it is recommended by Company A that learners attend 2 to 3 two hours sessions per week.

Lessons 1 - 10 are all divided into a comprehension component, a language component and a writing component. Lessons 21 - 24 are comprised of writing exercises, and lessons 25 - 28 concentrate on oral communication as well as writing, whilst lessons 29 and 30 are exam preparation. In addition to completing the 30 lessons, the learners are also required to submit a project, which should be 4 - 5 pages in length.

The comprehension passages are very long and, in my opinion, there are only three, which are relevant to the everyday social and working lives of the learners. There is a comprehension called "Raising Debbie" which is about a young woman whose younger sister left the rural areas and went to live with her in the city in order to attend a city school. Learners are able to relate to this story, as well as to a tragic story about a young man with AIDS and to a comprehension about Josiah Thugwane. Appendix 7 is an example of a passage which is difficult as well as totally irrelevant to the learners' lives.

The language, which is taught, includes puns, figurative language, irony and sarcasm and there is no connection whatsoever to the workplace. Appendix 7 is an example of the language in level 4. In looking at the comprehensions and the language in relation to learners and management's perceptions, one realizes that their expectations of improvements within the workplace as a direct result of English level 4 are unrealistic. It is, however possible to customise the course content so as to make it more meaningful and relevant to the workplace.

The writing exercises in lessons 21 - 24 are far more beneficial to the learners than the comprehensions and language, as the writing skills, which are taught, can be transferred to the workplace as well as being beneficial within a wider, social context. Table 13 indicates that 100% of learners expected the teaching to be work related and that 21% of the 100% stated that there was an indirect link. These learners had taken the generic skills which had been taught, in the classroom, and transferred these skills to the workplace. 52% of managers expected an increase in production and I question how the contents of English level 4 can possibly have a direct link to production?

In looking at the course content, it is obvious that there is nothing within the course that is directly work related. It is up to the facilitators to make the connection where possible. The problem is that the facilitators are often not trained teachers and do not have the experience which enables them to transfer the generic skills that are being taught, into specific work related issues. The facilitators who are teaching for Company A attend a week's training course and they are then deemed competent to teach the course material.

The unrealistic expectations of learners and of managers stem from a number of sources and Chapter 5 briefly sums up the conclusions that can be drawn in relation to the expectations. Recommendations are made as to how the expectations of managers and learners can be more in alignment with their needs and with one another.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Had the learners and the managers been informed about the content of the course before they bought into the programme, the results would have shown that 100% of the learners and 100% of managers would have expected an improvement in English skills, because English level 4 is designed to improve communication skills. The expectations would thus have been aligned with the course content and the expectations of learners and managers would have been the same. Instead, the learners and managers were ignorant as to the nature of the course and their expectations were unrealistic and differed from each other. Both groups had initial expectations without having any idea as to the nature of the course. The learners generally realized early on in the course that the content was not what they had expected, whilst managers who were generally far removed from what was happening in the classroom, expected on completion of the course, to see some benefit within the workplace.

When training is undertaken, it brings with it expectations, and 100% of the learners expected work related training material which would lead to work related spin-offs such as promotion or an increase in salary. Managers had, however, offered the training for different reasons with over half of managers having the expectation of an increase in productivity. Although there were managers who had the learners' interests at heart, not one stated that the intention was to promote learners on completion of the course. When the learners' expectations were not met, there was disappointment because they were personally affected. Managers who had company gain in mind were not personally affected when their expectations were not met.

An overall conclusion about managers and learners expectations with regard to English level 4 is that both groups had unrealistic expectations in terms of the course content and workplace benefits. As a result, these expectations were not met. English level 4 was however, beneficial to the learners within their personal lives and the training was not viewed as a waste of time. This was supported by the fact that 89% of the learners would re-enroll even though their expectations were not met.

5.2 Recommendations

My point of view is that transparency will go a long way in ensuring that the expectations of the learners and those of the managers are realistic and aligned. The transparency should begin with the marketing of the English level 4 course. The people attending the presentations should be informed as to the structure of the NQF. They should be told about the 120 points and should be guided as to how to use this system to truly empower their workers. The way to achieve this is to buy into more than just the English level 4 course. The managers who are embarking upon the training purely to claim their money back from the SETA's must be made aware of the fact that to commit to more than simply English, will ultimately allow them to claim a substantial amount of their levy back. Learners, on being made aware of the course content, would realize that these English skills are an important part of becoming more competent within the workplace and that they should be combined with on-the-job training in order to be more beneficial.

Once the managers have decided to embark upon the programme, they need to identify which individuals will truly benefit from the training. If there will be no benefit to the learners within the workplace, the managers should investigate learnerships or other work related training that will ultimately result in benefits to the learners, managers and the workplace.

Every company that embarks upon training of any description should conduct a needs analysis within their organization in order to establish company and individuals needs. The needs analysis could take the form of individual interviews, observation within the workplace and by analyzing data related to productivity and profit. Within my study, the only manager who had conducted a company needs analysis was the female training manager within the hospitality sector. If the needs analysis was conducted before the drawing up of the Workplace Skills Plan, the person responsible for who learns what would be informed as to individual wants and needs. They would also know what skills are required within the workplace and the training would be useful and beneficial to employees and to the company. Once the needs analysis has been conducted, the workers should be involved in the planning of their own learning. I have questioned managers about why they view English Level 4 as a natural progression from English Level 3 and the answer is that their employees must have an NQF 1 Certificate. This is further confirmation that there is a belief that English Level 4 is ABET Level 4, which is equivalent to NQF 1. If benefits within the workplace are sought by learners and managers, once the fundamental language and mathematical skills have been mastered in ABET Level 3, it would be beneficial for employees to embark upon learnerships.

There is a demand for ABET within companies and if English level 4 is required as a foundation to further learning, learners should be made aware of the fact that on its own, English level 4 makes up a small part of a qualification. They must know how to go about attaining the entire qualification in order to empower themselves to benefit within the workplace. This will ensure that the expectations of the learners are not unrealistic and that they realize that English level 4 is a small, albeit a very important part of a whole. The prospective learners should be given the opportunity to peruse the course content in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to enroll.

The course developers also have a role to play and the contents of the courses should be reviewed and updated so as to be useful within the workplace. The writing exercises teach formal and informal writing and deal with aspects such as format and tone. It is possible to substitute the topics with work related exercises and with real work issues in order to bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace. In addition to the letters and memos, the learners write four 500-word essays, as well as a project. The essays can be useful in terms of general life skills if the facilitator substitutes the given topics and "customizes" them for each learner. The writing practice is very useful to those learners who write reports in the workplace.

In order to effectively transfer the general skills from the classroom to the workplace, the learners need to be willing to take on different behaviours and attitudes, and the managers need to afford the learners more responsibility in the workplace. If English level 4 learners were able to transfer their skills to the workplace, they would perhaps realize some of their expectations. It could happen that there is an increase in productivity, which would mean that one of the expectations of managers would then be realized.

It is possible to customize the course in order to suit the learners needs, but this entails a fair amount of work for the facilitator. The facilitator training should be for a longer period of time, and should include all of the information about the NQF, as well as training on how to go about making the course material relevant to every learner. The facilitator should make the effort to become acquainted with the nature of all of the learners' jobs in order to tailor make the lessons effectively. This is not an impossible task due to the fact that there are not many people who undertake to study English level 4.

It is often the case that the in-house facilitators are given this job due to the fact that they have some free time at work. If the course is to be taught with dedication and commitment, the facilitator should view the teaching as a top priority. Facilitators are often sent on facilitator training and it turns out that they themselves need the teaching. In order to ensure that the course is taught competently and effectively, course providers should insist that in-house facilitators do not teach learners once they are on level 4 of any of the courses. The ABET providers should insist that companies outsource the teaching to their own, experienced teachers.

Managers also play an important role in any training which is undertaken in the workplace. It is their duty to be fully aware of the course content so as to know the benefits of the training for the company as well as for the learners. They should inform learners as to why the training is taking place and their involvement should continue once the training has commenced. Most importantly they need to be committed and enthusiastic about the programme in order to ensure optimum results for the learners and for the company.

The literature review states that education and training must work together within the workplace. If learners undergo on-the-job training as well as embarking on English level 4 many of the managers' and learners' expectations will be met.

English level 4 provides a solid foundation in terms of oral, comprehension, reading and writing skills, as well as being the medium of instruction for the other NQF subjects and any other training. At the outset of the training, it must be understood that English level 4 is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

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Appendix 1

National Qualifications Framework

NQF Level		Band			
8	Higher education and training	Post-doctoral research degree	Universities Technikons Colleges		
7		Doctorates			
6		Masters degrees			
5		Professional qualifications			
		Honours degrees			
		National first degrees			
		Higher diplomas			
		National certificates			
Further Education and Training Certificate					
4	FET	School/college /trade certificates	Private schools	Technical, community some police, some nursing, private colleges	RDP and labour market schemes, unions, workplaces, etc.
3			Government schools		
2					
General Education and Training Certificate					
1	Std 7/Grade 9 (10 years)	ABET level 4	Formal schools Urban, rural, farm, special schools	Occupation, work-based training, RDP, labour market schemes, upliftment programmes, community programmes	NGO's, churches, night schools, private ABET programmes, unions, workplaces, etc.
	Std 5/Grade 7 (8 years)	ABET level 3			
	Std 3/Grade 5 (6 years)	ABET level 2			
	Std 1/Grade 3 (4 years)	ABET level 1			
	1 year reception				

(Source: An Introduction to the Skills Development Strategy. Department of Labour, pg 20.)

Appendix 2

Proposed Unit Standards-Based GETC

ABET Level 4

Unit Standards-Based GETC		
Categories of Learning	%	Credit
Fundamental <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Language, Literacy and Communication▪ Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy <p>[Selection to include US from both Sub-fields of Learning]</p>	30	20
		16
		Total 36
Core <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Natural Sciences▪ Technology▪ Human and Social Sciences▪ Economic and Management Services▪ Arts and Culture▪ Life Orientation <p>[Selection of US from a minimum of 4 Learning Areas (chosen in relation to Elective) out of the 6 specified Learning Areas]</p>	45	54
Elective <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Agriculture and agricultural technology▪ Small, medium and micro-enterprises▪ Auxiliary health worker	25	30

(Source: Land, S., et al. 1999, pg 35.)

Appendix 3

Interview Questions for the Learners

1. Where does English level 4 fit into Adult Basic Education?
2. Why did you enroll for English level 4?
3. What did you expect from the course in terms of:
 - a. the course contents, and
 - b. the benefits within the workplace?
4. Have these expectations been met?
 - If yes, in what ways?
 - If no, why not?
5. Is there any correlation between the course and the workplace?
6. What is your opinion of the course content?
7. What qualification (if any) does English level 4 lead to?
8. Knowing what you now know about the course, would you enroll again? Why?

Note: Question 8 was often re-phrased as: Would you encourage your friend to enroll?

Appendix 4

Interview Questions for the HR Managers, Training Managers and Supervisors

1. Where does English level 4 fit into Adult Basic Education?
2. What benefits did you expect for:
 - a. the company, and
 - b. the learners?
3. Have the expectations for
 - a. the company, and
 - b. the learnersbeen met?
4. Do you have any idea as to the content of level 4?
5. What are the learners aspirations?
6. What qualification (if any) does English level 4 lead to?
7. What feedback (if any) have you had from:
 - a. the learners, and
 - b. the supervisors or managers?
8. Would you offer the course again?

Appendix 5

Basis for Compilation of Workplace Skills Plan

Four tables are to be completed. Data is to be expressed in terms of occupational groups, gender, race and disability	Workplace Skills Plan
	Grant B, for 10 per cent of the levy paid, is made on submission of a workplace skills plan to the SETA.
	Four tables are to be completed. Data is to be expressed in terms of occupational groups, gender, race and disability.
	Table 1: Number of people trained between 1/4/1999 and 31/3/2000
	This provides baseline date of how much training the company did before the skills development levy was introduced. The number of new recruits who received training is to be indicated.
	Table 2: Strategic skills development priorities from 1/4/2000 and 31/3/2001
	Strategic priorities of the company are listed in priority order. Skills development needed to achieve the priorities is listed. Companies are to indicate if they have been unable to fill any vacancies and whether they intend to recruit in the next year.
	Table 3: Education and training required to achieve priorities
	Beneficiaries of education and training are listed per occupational group. The nature of the learning provided is described, including in-house or external training or enrolment at an education institution. Costs are calculated for both internal or external training.
	Table 4: Summary of training skills assessment needs
	The number and characteristics of people to be trained from 1/4/2000 to 31/3/2001 are listed in terms of occupational groups, gender, race and disability.

(Source: Mercorio, and Mercorio, 1999, pg 132)

Appendix 6

Mokgadi Pela – Sunday Tribune, 13 October 2002

Offenders will be 'fined to bankruptcy'

Implement job equity or face the state's wrath

MOKGADI PELA

The department of labour would come down heavily on companies that failed to implement the Employment Equity Act and the Skills Development Act, a conference of the Black Management Forum heard in Midrand on Friday.

Rams Ramashia, the department's director-general, said: "When faced with companies that drag their feet on this issue, we will not hesitate to act. We will fine them to bankruptcy. We are at a stage when we focus on substantive compliance with the acts."

Despite the fact that many companies had submitted their skills development plans, there were those still opposing the acts, he said.

"To expect that these acts will not be opposed by those who benefited from apartheid is to be naive."

Ramashia called on the labour movement to campaign for the training of their members in order to ensure that those "who are sweepers or cleaners do not remain in those positions forever, but can benefit from legislation".

There were several ways in which individuals could contribute to the success of the human resources development strategy, he said.

"Individual employers can advance employment equity and black economic empowerment by taking on people in learnerships to expand access to work skills, forming partnerships with local colleges, and exporting more value-added goods and services," he said.

For development to succeed, "we need to align education and training to employment growth strategies in ways that we have never done before."

"We are trying to link our national growth and employment agenda to our education and training system agenda," he said.

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, the public service and administration minister, said her department was trying to be more responsive to the needs of citizens by being more efficient, ensuring that the right professionals were properly located and by establishing the competency base.

"Contrary to the commonly held view, our public service is not bloated. The challenge for underperforming staff should not be ignored," said Fraser-Moleketi.

Building capacity meant using the best technology available to extend services to the most remote villages in the country, especially in information technology, she said. Johannesburg

Appendix 7

Lesson Example

Comprehension Skills

Talking of cats

"Where on earth have you been? I've been worried sick," my elderly grey tabby cat complained as I opened the front door of the semi we share in outer suburbia.

"That makes a change," I said. "The boot is usually on the other foot. But, I've only been away for a couple of hours - and if you must know, I've been to a Cat Show."

Abruptly she stopped rubbing herself against my legs as the news of my apparent treachery sank in. "You've been WHERE?"

"It was the Natal Cat Clubs 68th All Breeds Championship Show," I said. Then, noting her pained expression, "Judging from the face on you, I take it you don't approve."

"You're surely not thinking of having anyone else to share this hovel?" Cat cast a disparaging glance around her as she minced along the passage into the living room.

"Hovel?" I exclaimed testily as I followed.

"I'm just letting you know there's no room for anyone else on four legs, though what you may do in regard to that young lady who comes to dinner with you on Tuesdays and Fridays is entirely your own business."

"I should hope so," I said. "However, to put your mind at rest, she's no longer exactly young and I have no intention of adding to the number of mouths to feed."

"Then why attend a cat show?"

"I happen to like cats."

"In that case," said my feline as she closed her eyes dreamily, "I shall expect an immediate improvement in the variety and choice of gastronomic provisions, with special emphasis on lobster and chicken."

"Count your blessings," I said, producing the Newsletter of the Natal Cat Club, which I'd picked up at the show. "It says here that last year the SPCA admitted 4 378 stray cats, of which only 41 were claimed by owners."

"What happened to the remaining 4 337?"

"I'll give you 4 337 guesses."

"Oh dear, I only hope you've brought some brighter news from the show."

"They've started a ***Lover's Corner for Lonely Ladies*** I offered."

"For the cats or the exhibitors?" Cat tittered.

"You really are wicked," I said. "There's a whole list of phone numbers offering the stud services of gentlemen cats from Abyssinia, Burma, Devon, Persia and Siam, and it says they reserve the right to refuse services to any queen they find unsuitable, so that eliminates you."

"You're a pain in the neck, but no I didn't see anyone quite like you. They were all much younger, of course."

"Younger?" Cat hissed indignantly. "I suspect you're being rude."

"No, merely being honest." I replied. "There's a lot to be said for the more mature female, be it feline or human."

"Like a fine wine?" Cat said, apparently appeased, as she rolled to a more dignified position.

"Precisely."

"Or a delicate piece of bone china..."

"Er, yes."

"Deserving of special consideration..."

"Uh-uh."

"And thoughtful treatment?"

"Look, where is this all going?" I demanded suspiciously.

Cat regarded me with soft green eyes that affected innocence. "I was just thinking that in a way, your ladyfriend and I have something in common."

"Oh?"

"Well we're both mature and we obviously both enjoy the good things of life".

"So?"

"So I thought I'd just let you know that I would have no objection if you decided to have a *menage a trois*. With a woman in the kitchen, a more considerate cuisine might be possible.

I grunted my disapproval. "You're thinking of yourself and big eats again, as usual," I said.

"Nonsense!" Cat retorted. "Going to cat shows at your age is ridiculous. You need a good woman about the house, not another cat. You're far too tense."

"Tense? I'm not tense." I snapped.

"Now you're bad tempered, too!"

"No I'm not. But by the sound of things you should take advantage of those phone numbers for *Lonely Ladies*."

"Now you're being catty - if you'll excuse the pun! You should put out two saucerfuls of milk next time - one being for you."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" I said as my feline companion started to head for her cat door with haughty tread. "Come back and be friends again."

She looked at me coldly over her shoulder and pouted. "No I won't," she said.

"You must be made to suffer."

And of course I did. Don't all of us, who fondly imagine we can keep a cat in the style to which it has become accustomed? Especially those who consider themselves to be princesses!

Comprehension

1. **Why has the writer's cat been worried?**
The writer's cat had been worried because the writer had been out and the cat did not know where he had gone.
2. **Explain the expression "the boot is usually on the other foot."**
The expression "the boot is usually on the other foot" means that a situation or circumstances have been reversed / turned around.
3. **Why is the cat shocked to hear where her owner has been?**
The cat was shocked to hear where the owner had been because she assumed that her owner was possibly thinking of bringing another cat into the household.
4. **Why does the cat not want any new cats around?**
The cat doesn't want any other cats around because she believes there is insufficient room for more cats in the house.
5. **Rewrite the line: "I shall expect an immediate improvement in the variety and choice of gastronomic provisions, " in your own simple words.**
I expect you to give me a bigger choice in the type and availability of food.
6. **What does the advice "count your blessings" mean?**
"Count your blessings" means that you should be grateful for all you have eg: your possessions, your skills, your health, your family or friends.
7. **What sad news did the writer read in the Newsletter?**
The sad news the writer read in the newsletter was that the SPCA admitted 4378 stray cats, of which only 41 were claimed by their owners. The balance of 4337 were put down/put to sleep.
8. **What do the more mature female and fine wine have in common, according to the cat in the passage?**
The more mature female and fine wine both improve with age, according to the cat in the passage.
9. **What does the cat have in common with the writer's lady friend?**
The cat and the writer's lady friend have in common, maturity and appreciation of the good things in life.
10. **How old do you think the writer is? Give reasons for your answer.**
The writer is probably a senior citizen (over the age of 60) because he does not work, so he is possibly retired. His ladyfriend is of mature age, so he obviously mixes with people of similar age grouping.

11. Do you think he is married? Why

No, the writer is not married, because he has a lady friend who comes for dinner twice a week. He should not have a wife with this type of arrangement. There is no wife because Cat felt that things would improve in the kitchen if a woman rather than a man (her owner) prepared the meals.

12. Why would the cat not object if the writer's lady friend moved in?

The cat would not object to the writer's lady friend moving in because the quality of the food would improve.

Figurative Language

1. Explain the pun "Now you're being catty – if you'll excuse the pun!"

The pun is the play on the word 'catty'. The cat tells her owner that he is being catty or horrible.

2. Explain the expression: "To take a cat nap"

To take a short sleep or "forty winks"

3. Explain the expression: "To let the cat out of the bag"

To let out a secret or confidential information.

4. What is a cat burglar?

A burglar that clambers along walls or buildings to reach the place he wishes to burgle.

5. What is a catwalk?

A narrow footway along a bridge, or in the roof of a theatre or warehouse, or on an oil rig.

Reported Speech

1. Rewrite lines 1 – 5 in reported speech.

As the author opened the front door of the semi he shared with his elderly grey cat,
As the author opened the front door of the semi he shared with his elderly grey cat, in outer suburbia, his cat complained and asked where he had been. The cat said that she had been worried sick about where he had been.

2. Rewrite lines 38 and 39 in reported speech.

Cat asked her owner why he had attended a cat show. Cat's owner replied that he happened to like cats.

3.* Three dots, or full stops, are called an ellipsis and are used to show omitted words to mark interruptions or indicate words understood. Explain the ellipses in lines 85 and 87.

The ellipsis in line 85 indicates that the cat had left out words. She had been interrupted by her owner.

She also understood what her owner was saying about the mature female. In line 87 words were left out, because Cat did not have to give any further explanation about the value of maturity.

- *ellipsis – singular
- *ellipses - plural

3. Explain the use of the dash in line 120.
The use of the dash in line 120 is for emphasis and to create dramatic effect. The cat does not state the obvious that one saucer of milk is for her. This omission is indicated by the dash.

Puns

1. Notice on the back of a wedding care: Aisle
 Alter
 Hymn
- The notice on the back of the wedding car is a play on the words "I'll alter him". I will change him. This is a humourous way of a bride saying that she is going to change her husband, which is probably impossible, because you cannot change a person.
2. Advertisement for Kenna ground coffee: Ground will always be a good investment.
The pun is a play on the word "ground". Land is a good investment (ground).
- ground - crushed
 ground - land
3. Advertisement for overnight cream: Don't take our word for it, sleep on it.
The pun is a play on the word "sleep". Do not believe what the advertisement says, but rather use the cream while you sleep and you can see what it can do for you. Sleep on it also means to take time to think over something.

Puns (Cartoons)

- 1a. Trunk has two meanings. What are they.
An elephant has a trunk in order to draw water. A trunk is used to carry luggage when travelling. Humans and animals have a trunk which includes the body without the head, limbs or tail. The main body of a tree is a trunk.
- 1b. Explain the pun.
When one travels, one carries luggage or trunks. The trunks have stickers on the outside for easy identification. In order to identify where a mammoth has travelled, it is necessary to look at the labels or stickers on his trunk. The trunk could mean his luggage, or the upper part of his body or his snout. Up until the early 1980's all countries to which one travelled gave out stickers which one stuck on luggage to show where one had been. Usually pictures of a well-known monument/site/building and the I.D. letters of the country eg. UK - United Kingdom
 ZA - South Africa
 D - Deutchland (Germany)
- very much like Internet abbreviations.

2a. Creamed has two meanings. What are they?

It can be a special food dish with cream as an ingredient, eg. creamed spinach or creamed chicken. "Creamed" – colloquial meaning for beat/win "We creamed them in the last match."

2b. Explain the pun.

The guest ate creamed chicken and when the waiter asked him how he'd enjoyed the meal, the guest asked the waiter how the chicken has been slaughtered or "creamed".

Puns (cont.)

1. Complete this pun, the pun word is -Hi and -High. Here is the situation. There are two tourists on top of the Carlton Centre.

Tourist 1 - "Hi"

Tourist 2 - Yes, it is very high

2. Now make up your own pun situation:

The clerk says to one of his colleagues before morning tea, "Lets brake before the tea break because we have both been working very hard".