

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO ADULT EDUCATORS'
KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION OF
THE PRINCIPLE OF LEARNER-CENTREDNESS IN ADULT
BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ABET) CENTRES IN
PIETERMARITZBURG, KWAZULU-NATAL**

By

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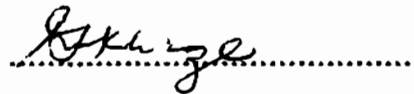
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is my own original work. It has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Vusi Mkhize', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

VUSI GARNET MKHIZE

MARCH 2005

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated ABET tutors' knowledge, understanding and application of the principle of learner-centredness.

The study was conducted at three adult education centres in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. Using questionnaires, interviews, classroom observation and analysis of documentary evidence such as learning programmes, tutors workbooks and learners' workbooks, the researcher was able to determine and assess the ability of ABET tutors to interpret and apply the principle of learner-centredness in practical classroom situations.

The study showed that not all ABET tutors base their learning programmes on learners' needs, which is a key principle of learner-centredness (Jarvis, 1985). The study showed that some ABET tutors are not conversant with the policy framework of ABET and that this seems to affect classroom practice.

The study revealed that Centre managers are not complying with Department policy with regard to monitoring and supporting tutors.

Furthermore, the findings from this study expose some of the flaws in the implementation of ABET, like the lack of professional competence on the part of some ABET tutors. This lack of professional competence is cause for concern and requires attention from the ABET Directorate at district level.

Key recommendations emerging from the study are that the ABET Directorate should conduct more monitoring of ABET centres and should provide more training for ABET tutors and centre managers, as proposed in the Multi-Year Implementation Plan of 1997. In particular, tutors could benefit from workshops on needs identification and analysis.

LIST OF ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND CONTRACTIONS

AAA	-	Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Technology
ABET	-	Adult Basic Education and Training
AHC	-	Ancillary Health Care
AMESA	-	Association of Mathematics Educators in South Africa
ANOVA	-	Analysis of Variance
C2005	-	Curriculum 2005
DoE	-	Department of Education
ERU	-	English Resource Unit
ESL	-	English Second Language
GETC	-	General Education and Training Certificate
IEB	-	Independent Examinations Board
KZN	-	KwaZulu-Natal
KZN-DoE	-	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture
LASMS	-	Learning and Support Materials
LLC	-	Language Literacy and Communication
MLMMS	-	Mathematical Literacy Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences
MTL	-	Mother Tongue Literacy
MYP	-	Multi Year Implementation Plan
NASA	-	Natal ABE Support Agency
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organisations
NLC	-	National Literacy Cooperation
NQF	-	National Qualification Framework
OBE	-	Outcomes Based Education
PALC	-	Public Adult Learning Centre
RPL	-	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SMME	-	Small Medium and Macro Enterprise
TLU	-	Thousand Learner Unit
UKZN (P)	-	University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg
US	-	Unit Standards

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title

An investigation into adult educators' knowledge, understanding and application of the principle of learner-centredness within Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Centres in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.

1.2 Rationale Behind The Study

The main rationale for conducting this study stems from my involvement in the Ithutheng Campaign of 1996 and the Rivoningo Project of 2000, both of which attempted to build the capacity of ABET tutors. This later led to an interest in examining the capacity of tutors within a small number of centres in Pietermaritzburg.

The formal provision of ABET via public adult learning centres in South Africa in 1992 emerged as part of broader redress adopted by the Government of South Africa. It seemed important to conduct research related to the problem of illiteracy that featured as a priority in the government's list of redress projects.

Finally, as an provincial ABET trainer I am interested in gaining a better understanding of ABET tutors' knowledge, understanding and application of key principles, such as learner centredness. Such an understanding could improve my own training of tutors.

1.3 Background To The Study

1.3.1 Illiteracy In South Africa

Historically, the majority of South Africans were denied access to free and compulsory education. Even when they did receive education, it was impoverished, racist and led to specific political, ideological and economic consequences. Illiteracy among the majority of South Africans is a direct result of the apartheid system of government. Illiteracy in South Africa, currently serves as 'justification' for racial discrimination and profound injustice in the country, and is also a growing threat to economic advancement. Illiteracy threatens the very fabric of our new democracy.

Illiteracy is inescapably intertwined with the social malaise such as increased poverty; massive unemployment, overcrowded housing and squatter camps, fragmented families, high infant mortality rate, increasing violence and death, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In September 2000, the Minister of Education in South African, Professor Kader Asmal, announced that the rate of illiteracy in South Africa stood at 16%. From the Minister of Education's statement it is clear therefore that all the South African citizens need to join hands and fight illiteracy. This call to use volunteers to "fight illiteracy" has drawn some critique and debate (Baatjes, Aitchison and John, 1999). It should also be noted that there has been considerable debate over the illiteracy figures for South Africa. Aitchison and Harley (2004) provide an interesting account on literacy statistics and claim that numbers of learners participating in ABET have been exaggerated.

This section serves as an attempt to describe the state of illiteracy in South Africa. As mentioned earlier it is every South African's responsibility to fight illiteracy so that South Africa will move from a state of illiteracy to a state of literacy. These goals are also part of the recently launched UNESCO Decade of Literacy.

What makes literacy important in South Africa is that it is expected to result in the acquisition of generic skills that could be applied across a range of contexts, and through the development of these skills to facilitate social, labour and technological mobility.

With the liberation of South Africa and the inauguration of the Government of National Unity in April 1994, the formation of a new system for education and training became a reality. It was then that the current system of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) was introduced in an attempt to redress discrimination and past inequalities with such relevance as to fully equip people for full and active participation in social, political and economic life.

The kind of education that aims at equipping individuals with relevant skills is said to be learner-centred because it tries to address the needs of individual learners. This implies that learners play an active role in the development of their learning programme. One can maintain that a learner-centred learning programme contributes to the development of an individual learner. It is clear that learner-centredness is a key principle that informs ABET.

The development of a comprehensive, cohesive and quality system of ABET is regarded as an important vehicle for the social, political and economic development of South Africa. It remains the role and responsibility of the Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) and other community centres to move ABET forward. Other government departments, such as Correctional Services and Health are also involved in ABET provision and delivery.

1.3.2 ABET Tutor Training Initiatives

As a gesture of contribution to ABET provision and delivery, the National Literacy Cooperation's Thousand Learner Unit (TLU)¹ project was launched together with the

¹ TLU – An initiative aimed at reaching a 1000 ABET learners per province in 1993. The National Literacy Cooperation (NLC), an umbrella body for ABET organisations in South Africa spearheaded the TLU campaign.

Ithuteng Campaign.² The Thousand Learner Unit project aimed to reach 1000 learners per province in the first phase of ABET implementation. Another ABET project that aimed at providing tutors with relevant teaching skills was the Rivoningo³ Project. It must be added that the Ithuteng project targeted Levels 1 and 2 tutors and learners, whereas the Rivoningo Project targeted Levels 3 and 4 tutors and learners (Land and Lyster, 1998).

The Final evaluation of the Ithuteng project revealed that communication between ABET centres, Department of Education and NGOs was a major limitation, that distribution of learning and support materials affected the performance of centres and that record-keeping at centres was weak. Importantly, the evaluation indicated that while the target number of teacher to be trained was reached, only half of them were actually competent to teach. The Ithuteng Project provided valuable lessons for ABET in KwaZulu-Natal (Land and Lyster, 1998).

1.3.3 Case Study: Tholumqhele PALC

As an ABET tutor myself, I organised and attended workshops on ABET instructional delivery (classroom interaction) and discovered that most ABET tutors find it difficult to base their teaching and learning activities on the principle of learner-centredness. The flaw mentioned becomes evident during lesson demonstrations. I also give myself time to visit adult learning centres in order to observe lessons, Communication in English Level 2, in particular. I do this to see how other fellow English educators do, and also as part of my networking mission as a KwaZulu-Natal provincial trainer.

One of the cases visited was Mrs Thusi⁴ of Tholumqhele PALC at Ngaphezulu. I visited Mrs Thusi's Communications in English Level 2 class just before the 1999

² Ithuteng Campaign - Department of Education campaign to transform Levels 1 and 2 ABET tutors and learners 1996.

³ Rivoningo Project - A campaign targeting Levels 3 and 4 tutors and learners - 2001.

⁴ Mrs Thusi - pseudonym

General Elections. I glanced at her learning programme and found nothing on voting. I felt it would be relevant to include such a topic, especially because in the class there was a councillor from Elandskop who told the researcher he didn't know a thing about voting.

Also surprising was that in Mrs Thusi's class about 40% of her learners were unemployed, but one could not locate topics like job seeking, application for employment, Curriculum Vitae, job creation, etc. from her learning programme. Instead there were topics like Present Tense, Past Tense and other topics that do not seem to link with the principle of learner-centredness. I asked Mrs Thusi if she was aware of the principle of learner-centredness, and she seemed to know what it meant. From this, I soon realised that there is a gap between theory and practice in as far as the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training is concerned. That is why I have undertaken to conduct this research focusing on investigating the gap between theory and practice in as far as the principle of learner-centredness is concerned (Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1997:12).

As stated in the research title, the present study will mainly focus on the principle of learner-centredness which is one of the most important principles underpinning instructional delivery, as stated in Chapter 6 of the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1997).

1.4 Significance Of The Study

I believe that the findings of this study could help the ABET tutors realise their strengths and weaknesses, in interpreting and putting the principles of the ABET policy in practice. The findings could motivate the ABET tutors to go out and seek information and skills from experts in Adult Education. The research findings could also serve as useful feedback to the Department of Education, especially the ABET directorate, to realise the strengths and weaknesses in policy design and policy implementation. Findings may identify areas where the Department of Education needs to provide in-service training and monitoring for the ABET tutors. It is hoped that the results of this study would eventually benefit both the tutors and learners.

1.5 Aims And Research Questions Of The Study

The study aims at finding answers to three critical questions, namely:

- How do ABET tutors understand the principle of learner-centredness?
- To what extent are ABET tutors informed about the ABET policy regarding the principle of learner-centredness?
- How is the principle of learner-centredness reflected in practice, that is, in curriculum design, assessment, needs identification and needs analysis?

1.6 Definition Of Terms

In order for the reader to have a clear understanding of the concepts and terms used in this study. I will define them. The terms to be defined are:

- The principle of learner-centredness
- The National Qualifications Framework
- Outcomes
- Unit Standards
- The Multi Year Implementation Plan
- ABET Act 2000

1.6.1 The Principle Of Learner-Centredness

According to the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1997) learner-centredness is the principle where the classroom interaction process puts learners first. The learning programme (curriculum) is based and built on the learners' knowledge, skills and experience. It aims at responding to the learners' needs, interests and aspirations.

The learning programme based on learner-centredness takes into account the general and specific characteristics of different groups of learners, noting in particular, how their different cultural values and lifestyles affect the way in which they construct knowledge. Furthermore, different learning rates and styles are acknowledged and accommodated in both the learning situation and in the attainment of qualifications.

An adult tutor who bases his or her learning programme on the principle of learner-centredness affirms adult learners' worth and demonstrates respect for their various languages, cultures and personal circumstances.

I believe that it is not easy to focus on the principle of learner-centredness without touching on the principle of relevance because if the learning programme is designed according to the needs, aspirations and experiences of the learner (learner-centredness), then it is regarded as relevant if the learner is happy with it and if it brings positive and expected results. The principle of relevance as dealt with in the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1997) maintains that ABET tutors must seek to equip learners with skills to participate in all forms of economic, social, political and cultural activities.

The focus of the present study is on the ABET tutors' ability to interpret and practically implement the principles of learner-centredness and relevance as articulated in the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training 1997. Evidence of such ability will be interpreted from the observations of tutor's lesson presentations and learning programmes, and from an analysis of learners' needs at three adult learning centres in the Vulindlela District of Pietermaritzburg.

1.6.2 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established by the South African Qualification Authority Act No. 5 of 1995. SAQA's purpose is to oversee the development of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) through consensual and consultative decision-making.

The key objectives of the NQF are:

- to create an integrated national framework for learning;
- to provide access, mobility and progression;
- to enhance quality in education and training and redress.

(Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1995:8.)

SAQA enables both public and private sector education and training providers to establish accrediting bodies to develop appropriate national standards in their specialist fields. Thus, providers will be able to have their programmes recognised according to such defined standards, and this will enable the learners to earn credits towards national qualifications. It must be noted that ABET, which is the focus of this study, falls within NQF Level 1.

1.6.3 Outcomes

Learning in the South African ABET system is directed by outcomes that are contained in unit standards. An outcome describes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that a learner must demonstrate by the end of a learning programme. In other words, outcomes describe what learners must know, feel and be able to do, in order to get credits towards a particular unit standard.

There are outcomes for each learning area, but there are also general outcomes called critical cross-field outcomes and developmental outcomes. These are outcomes that describe the underlying philosophy of our whole education and training system. They are supposed to underpin all learning in South Africa and reflect the abilities that it is hoped learners in the new system will acquire.

1.6.3.1 Critical Cross Field Outcomes

The critical cross-field outcomes are:

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions

using critical and creative thinking have been made.

- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community.
- Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environments and health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Explore education and career opportunities.
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

(Land, 1999:8)

1.6.4 Unit Standards (US)

Instead of having a syllabus that describes the content areas to be covered, ABET has unit standards that set out the outcomes and other details of a particular learning area. A unit standard is made up of components like: title, credit, level, purpose, specific outcomes and assessment criteria.

The most challenging part to understanding unit standards is that they have to be taught in an integrated way throughout the course. This means that ABET tutors have to plan their lessons so that they cover the different unit standards in many different ways and many times during a course. The unit standards are broad statements that should be interpreted and reflected in lesson plans in the light of learners' expressed needs.

In the context of South Africa with millions of citizens having been denied quality education, the NQF is claimed to afford each citizen an opportunity to progress and achieve educationally within a flexible and diverse range of possible learning pathways. The NQF is intended to promote lifelong learning (Education Information Centre, 1996).

1.6.5 The Multi Year Implementation Plan 1997 (MYP)

The Multi Year Implementation Plan (1997) is the policy document that provides a foundation for ABET. It aims to reverse the historic neglect of ABET, and sets clear targets and time frames. The Plan also provides a financial strategy for ABET. Most importantly, the plan is a national plan in which all stakeholders participate and have joint ownership and responsibilities.

The Department of Education defines ABET in South Africa as:

The general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and ideally provides access to nationally recognised certificates. (The Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1997.)

1.6.6 Adult Basic Education And Training Act 2000

The Department of Education released the ABET Act Number 52 of 2000 on the 15th December 2000. The Act seeks to regulate adult basic education and training; to provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public adult learning centres (PALCs); to provide for the registration of private adult learning centres; to provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in adult basic education and training; to provide for transitional arrangements; and to provide for matters connected therewith (Government Gazette No. 21881, Act No. 52, 2000 Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000).

1.7 Profiles Of The Three Research Sites

Table 1: Profiles Of The Three Research Sites

NAME	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3
STAFF SIZE	15 part time tutors	20 full time staff 35 part time staff	12 part time tutors
ENROLMENT	± 500 learners including Grade 12	± 700 learners	78 learners
CURRICULUM	ABET Levels 1-4 classes Grade 12 classes	ABET levels 1-4 Grade 12 classes Skills training classes	ABET levels 1-4 classes Grade 12 classes
FUNDING	Department of Education and Training & USAID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DoE - Rotary club - Embassy of Finland - Department of Labour - National Development Agency - Metropolitan Life - Argus Community Projects 	Department of Education and USAID
TUTOR TRAINING	Twice a year by ABET Provincial Training Team	5-6 times a year by NGO's like ERU, Tembaletu Training Team MASA, etc.	Twice a year by ABET Provincial Training Team
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES	SGB and SMT	Board of Trustees	SGB not functional
ASSESSMENT BODY	Department of Education and Culture	Board of Trustees	Department of Education and Culture
YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	1971	1963	1997

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUALISATION

2.1 Introduction

According to Bless and Achola (1990), literature review is the process of obtaining the background information necessary for conceiving the research topic in a way that permits a clear formulation of the problem and the hypothesis. The information is mainly obtained by reading published material that appears relevant to the research topic (Bless and Achola, 1990:22).

The purpose of this Literature Review is to:

- familiarise me with the latest development of knowledge in the area of ABET;
- identify gaps in knowledge as well as weaknesses in previous studies;
- study the definitions and characteristics of learner-centredness and relevance used in previous works;
- explore the concepts of learner-centredness and relevance;
- develop my understanding of the principle of learner-centredness.

This literature review will mainly focus on the educational principles of learner-centredness and relevance in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). The literature will be reviewed against the title of the present study, which is:

An investigation into adult educators' knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the principle of learner-centredness within the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centres.

The literature selected will also be reviewed against the three critical questions of the present study, namely:

- How do ABET tutors understand the principle of learner-centredness?
- To what extent are ABET tutors informed about the ABET Policy and the ABET Act regarding the principle of learner-centredness?
- How is the principle of learner-centredness reflected in practice, that is, in curriculum design, assessment, needs identification and needs analysis?

In an attempt to investigate the past, present prospects, scope, legality, theory and practice of the principle of learner-centredness within ABET, this literature review will be conducted according to the following areas:

- **The Theoretical Context**
 - Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa
 - Ideologies underpinning ABET-OBE
 - ❖ The Liberal Ideology of adult education in South Africa
 - ❖ The Humanistic Ideology of adult education in South Africa
 - Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)
 - ❖ The origins of ABET
 - ❖ People's Education
- **The Context Of OBE-ABET Implementation**
 - NQF Structure
 - ABET Learning Areas
 - Outcomes
 - Unit Standards (US)
 - Assessment in ABET
 - Critique of OBE in SA
- **The Concept Of Learner Centredness**
 - Learner-centredness, relevance and needs
 - Learner-centredness and curriculum/learning programme

- ❖ Introduction
 - ❖ Curriculum/Learning Programme Design
 - ❖ Curriculum Design Models
 - ❑ The Content Model
 - ❑ The Product Model
 - ❑ The Process Model
 - Learner-centredness and methodology
 - Learner centredness and assessment
 - Characteristics of learner centredness
- **Classroom Observation, Tutor Training And Support**
 - Tutor training and support
 - The Growth and development of ABET in KZN
 - The Ithuteng project
 - The Rivoningo Project
- **Overview Of Research Methodology**
 - Classification of research
 - Research Methods
 - ❖ Classroom observations
 - ❖ Interviews
 - ❖ Documentation analysis
 - ❖ Questionnaires

2.2 The Theoretical Context

In this section, I am going to discuss the principle of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa. While discussing OBE I shall also examine some of the critiques of OBE.

As mentioned in the introduction, this study is mainly based within the context of adult basic education and training (ABET). It is for this reason that ABET is the focus of this section.

2.2.1 Outcomes Based Education (OBE) In South Africa

In South Africa outcomes based education is the curriculum style adopted by the new national curriculum, Curriculum 2005. Thus, OBE is officially followed both in school education and in adult education and training. It is therefore important to note that I will always discuss ABET within the framework of OBE, in other words OBE will be implied in all the discussions of ABET.

2.2.2 Ideologies Underpinning OBE-ABET

The literature on ideologies underpinning OBE-ABET in South Africa will provide this study with a theoretical framework and a philosophical background to the principle of learner-centredness. This will extend my understanding of the principle of learner-centredness within OBE, which will be discussed later in this paper.

Aitchison (1998) feels that the ideologies that could underpin the South African adult education are liberal, humanistic, technological and radical ideologies. These ideologies will be discussed below.

2.2.2.1 The Liberal Ideology of adult education in South Africa

According to Aitchison (1998) the liberal ideology of education sought the development of the intellectual, moral, spiritual, aesthetical and physical capacities of each individual. The pioneers and the advocates of this ideology are the Greek education philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle and Plato.

The ideology is driven by a search for 'truth' that is accessible through reason. Liberal education does not only value facts but general principles based on analysis and synthesis of empirical data. The ideal sought is that of wisdom, and wisdom is to be found through reason. Education in the liberal tradition is, in effect, an initiation into the world of learning. The educator serves as a guide to knowledge - someone who introduces the learner into the store of knowledge - and therefore someone with

superior understanding of that knowledge, who is able to impart it to the learner. The power of the liberal education discourse is pervasive and it exerts an influence on most forms of adult education practice (Aitchison, 1998:35-36).

The liberal education principles discussed above is consistent with ABET-OBE approach where learners are taught to be critical thinkers. As in ABET, the role of an educator is that of a facilitator. More on the significance of the liberal ideology in the present study as well as in adult education as a whole, will be discussed in the chapter on 'Findings and Discussions' of the present study.

2.2.2.2 The Humanistic Ideology Of Adult Education In South Africa

According to Aitchison (1998) humanistic educational ideology derives from the humanistic view of the world which places emphasis on the inherent capacity and potential of individual human beings and which locates responsibility for human endeavour in the hands of individuals and humanity as a whole. It insists on the dignity, autonomy and creativity of human beings and requires of social organisation that it creates the conditions which will allow expression of these qualities.

The autonomy and dignity of the humanity of the learner is respected by locating responsibility for learning with the learner and trusting the learner with this responsibility while at the same time accepting the need for a degree of encouragement. In this, it shares a similar point of view with radical ideologies which will be examined later.

The view of knowledge seems to place emphasis on the needs and interests of the individual learner rather than on an external body of public knowledge. The humanistic view stands in contrast to the liberal view which values the public body of knowledge.

The purpose of education is primarily concerned with the development of the whole person and particularly with the emotional aspects of personality.

In actual educational practice, the humanist view manifests in methodological processes that are referenced back to the individual, such as discovery learning and self-evaluation which allow for self-expression and rely on intrinsic motivation. The curriculum becomes a vehicle for the development of self-actualisation and is learner-centred.

The role of the educator is very much a facilitator - a helper or partner in the learning process. The role of the educator in humanistic ideology corresponds with the role of an educator in radical tradition to be discussed later in this study.

It is interesting to note that some of the principles of humanist ideology of adult education correspond with the principles of both ABET and NQF¹ to be discussed later in the present study. The concept of the principle of learner-centredness which is central to the present study fits into the humanist ideology.

2.2.3 Adult Basic Education And Training (ABET)

The Adult Basic Education and Training : Draft Policy of 1997 as quoted in the Multi Year Implementation Plan (MYP) of 1997, defines ABET as follows:

The general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and ideally, provides access to nationally recognised certificates. (Multi Year Implementation Plan, 1997:12.)

Adult Basic Education refers to the education base which individuals require to improve their life chances. Adult Basic Training refers to the foundational income-generating or occupational skills which individuals require for improving their living conditions. Together, Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) implies the foundational knowledge, skills, understanding and abilities that are required for improved social and economic life (MYP, 1997:13).

¹ NQF - National Qualifications Framework

The National Training Board (NTB) is a statutory committee set up by the government to advise the Minister of Manpower of issues relating to training. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) sits on the NTB along with the representatives of Sanlam, Transnet, the Building Industries Federation, the Chamber of Mines, Eskom and other major business representatives (National Training Board Annual Report, 1992:1, 6-7).

The NTB's report laid down the main features of a future Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) system. The main ideas of the NTB is that it will form the basis of nearly all the work done in ABET. These main ideas include that "Adult Basic Education should be more than just reading and writing, and should equip people to participate more fully in society" (NTB Annual Report, 1992:7).

The NTB document defined Adult Basic Education as:

The basic phase in the provision of lifelong learning, consisting of levels along a continuum of learning aimed at adults with very little or no formal schooling, having the equivalent of a compulsory leaving certificate. Adult basic education has the potential to embrace all aspects of training which enable learners to demonstrate technical and practical competencies. It includes a core of knowledge, skills, values, experiences and behaviours which form the basis of general education to enable individuals to:

- develop their full potential and continue their life long education and training;
- participate actively in society as a whole as well as in service, commerce and industry;
- develop communication and numeracy skills;
- develop critical understanding of the society in which people live;
- enable all people in South Africa to shape and develop economic policies to build a democratic society and enhance job creation schemes;
- stimulate development initiatives and build the understanding of true world of science and technology.

The NTB further suggested that Adult Basic Education should be tied to development, but tried to take into account the idea that ABET should develop critical thought and benefit the learners as well as the whole nation (Aitchison, 1998:71). Despite reference to principles contained in the Humanist Ideology, the work of the NTB was

strongly influenced by needs of the workplace and economy. As such, ABE was being driven by instrumental objectives.

The definitions discussed above are relevant to the present study because they remind the researcher that adult learning should be lifelong and developmental. It should also aim at making the learners fully competent, that is, learners should acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes. This poses a challenge to learning programme designers to consider the principle of totality when designing learning programmes.

The researcher is also reminded by the definitions that the kind of learning an adult learner receives should enable him or her (the adult learner) to take part in all the social, political, technological and economical activities his community is engaged in. This poses a challenge to curriculum designers to design the Curriculum according to the learners' needs.

The present researcher visited Public Adult Learning Centres to observe if the tutors meet the standards set by the above definitions. In other words, the above definitions served as the frame of reference for the study.

2.2.3.1 The Origins of ABET

When one closely observes the features and principles of ABET, one would notice that it originates from People's Education which will be discussed below.

2.2.3.2 People's Education

Kraak (1999) says that People's Education, as a phenomenon of the mid 80s, was primarily a political movement which viewed the school classroom as a central site of struggle against apartheid. However, in the period 1988 to 1990 it also came to represent a radical pedagogic alternative to that of 'Bantu Education' which had been imposed by the apartheid state since the mid 1950s.

Molobi, the first general secretary of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) as quoted in Kraak (1999), identifies the following main propositions of People's Education:

- The democratisation of education through the participation of a cross section of the community in decision-making on the content, quality and governance of education.
- Making education relevant to people.
- The achievement of a high level of education for everyone.
- The development of a critical consciousness.
- Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical life.

(Kraak, 1999:22.)

Like the principle of learner-centredness in ABET, People's Education put more emphasis on complete participation of learners in designing the learning programmes.

Kraak's proposition of People's Education which has to do with bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical life, appears to concur with the third critical question of the present study, which is:

How is the principle of learner-centredness reflected in practice, that is, in Curriculum design, classroom interaction and assessment?

Kraak (1999) discusses the key features or central principles of People's Education namely:

- The Political project
- Curriculum framework
- Role of a learner
- Role of a teacher
- Role of the community

In the South African political landscape, People's Education is regarded as an egalitarian project of social transformation. What this means is that learners should be provided with the kind of learning that might help them participate and make a contribution to their communities.

The second key feature of People's Education according to Kraak, is Curriculum Framework or the learning programme. People's Education adopts a radical curriculum approach as opposed to rote learning. It is based on critical thinking, independent work and integrated studies aimed at equipping learners to question and reveal the underlying causes of social inequalities.

The idea of radical curriculum corresponds with Freire and Macedo's concepts of 'Culture Circles' where people were made aware of their state of exploitation and the power they held to move against it. People were also afforded opportunities to articulate and share their problems and needs (Freire and Macedo, 1987:11).

Both the People's Education's view of Curriculum and Freire and Macedo's concept of 'Culture Circles' seem relevant to the present study since the researcher will be observing how the curriculum is designed and whether it does reflect the needs of the learners as it is intended to.

The third feature is the role of the learner. In People's Education, the learner occupies the central position in learning. In other words, the learning programme is learner-centred and learner-paced. The kind of assessment adopted is continuous assessment.

The above feature of People's Education relates to the present study since it puts emphasis on the principle of learner-centredness which is the main focus of the present thesis. In this study, the researcher has observed if and how tutors apply the principle of learner-centredness in their daily activities.

The role of the teacher is the other feature in People's Education. A teacher plays a major role in curriculum development. The emphasis is on group work, participatory learning, independent thinking and learners' inputs into the learning process.

The teacher, according to People's Education, plays the role of a facilitator of learning. In addition to that, learners are regarded as adults as well as equal partners in the learning process. This study examined the extent to which tutors from three adult basic education centres employed the ideas expressed in People's Education (Kraak, 1999:23).

2.3 The Context Of OBE-ABET Implementation

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) represents the culmination of a number of years of intense stakeholder debate and policy development in which the national needs for redress and access were addressed in respect of previously fragmented, uncoordinated and even non-existent human resources development strategies and practices for South Africa.

NQF represents a structural means for bringing about cohesion and coherence within learning provision and recognition of learning achievement. Flexibility is one of the principles of NQF, with multiple exit and entry points for learning. This is relevant to adult learners since they have different career interests.

Another key principle in NQF is the principle of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This principle adds to the flexible nature of the NQF in that learning acquired in any way could be given recognition should the learner choose to enter a recognised learning pathway. This seems relevant to adult learners since they come to the learning centre with knowledge, skills and attitudes that they accumulated over the years. NQF does not prescribe that all learning projects and programmes locate themselves within the structure. Rather it provides a mechanism for learning required in a variety of ways to be given recognition at the time appropriate to the learner or programme developer.

Underpinning the national vision for the NQF are five objectives. One of these objectives is:

- to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large (Multi Year Implementation Plan, 1997:4).

The aims of the NQF are relevant to the present study, in that they relate directly to the principle of learner-centredness in that the phrase 'personal development' is always dominant, even in the definition of NQF. This study thus also examines the extent to which the Adult Learning Centres meet the objectives of the NQF.

2.3.1 NQF Structure

The NQF is composed of eight levels with three bands namely:

- The General Education and Training Certificate
- The Further Education and Training
- The Higher Education and Training

ABET falls within the General Education and Training Certificate band of the NQF.

Table 2: NQF Structure

NQF LEVEL	Band	Types of Qualifications and Certificates
8	Higher	Doctorates, Further Research Degrees
7	Education	Higher Degrees, Professional Qualifications
6	and Training	First Degrees, Higher Diplomas
5	Band	Diplomas, Occupational Certificates
Further Education and Training Certificates		
4	Further Education	School/College/Training Certificates Mix of units from all (NGOs)
3	and	School/College/Training Certificates Mix of units from all (NGOs)
2	Training Band	School/College/Training Certificates

		Mix of units from all NGOs)	
General Education and Training Certificates			
1	General Education	Grade 9	ABET Level 4
	and	Grade 7	ABET Level 3
	Training	Grade 5	ABET Level 2
	Band	Grade 3	ABET Level 1

(Fotheringham, 2000:67.)

2.3.2 ABET Learning Areas

Instead of subjects, the new system of ABET talks about Learning Areas. There are different types of learning areas in ABET namely:

- Fundamental learning areas
- Core Learning Areas
- Electives

Fundamental learning areas form the basis of all learning. The fundamentals include Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC) and Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences (MLMMS) or Numeracy. LLC's purpose is to empower people to make meaning, access information and communicate under a variety of circumstances and in a variety of contexts. It includes all languages. On the other hand MLMMS deals with qualitative relationships of space and time. It is a human activity that deals with patterns, problem solving, logical thinking, etc. in an attempt to understand the world and make use of that understanding.

Core learning areas are considered to be important for providing a basic general education. Learning areas like Human and Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Arts and Culture, Economic and Management Sciences, Life Orientation and Technology all belong to the core learning area category.

Electives have been devised to make ABET more relevant and linked to income generation. The electives developed so far are Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (AAAT); Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME); and Ancillary Health Care (AHC). New electives are being developed (Land et al., 1999:5-7).

2.3.3 Outcomes

All learning in the South African ABET system is directed by outcomes as contained in unit standards. Outcomes describe the skills, knowledge and attitudes that a learner must have by the end of a learning programme. In other words, outcomes describe what a learner must know, feel and be able to do in order to get credit towards a particular unit standard.

There are outcomes for each learning area but there are also general outcomes called critical cross-field outcomes. These are outcomes which describe the underlying philosophy of the South African Education and Training System. They are supposed to underpin all learning in South Africa and reflect the abilities which it is hoped learners in the new system will acquire. These general outcomes are discussed in the introduction part of the present study.

2.3.4 Unit Standards (US)

The way outcomes for each learning area are written in ABET is through Unit Standards. Instead of having a syllabus which describes the content areas to be covered, we now have Unit Standards which set out the outcomes and other details of a particular learning area. Unit Standards are the basic building blocks of all qualifications.

The most challenging part to understand about Unit Standards is that they have to be taught in an integrated way throughout the course. This means that tutors have to plan their teaching so that it covers the different unit standards in many different ways and many times during a course.

The main components of a unit standard are:

- Unit Standard Title
- Credit
- Learning Assumptions
- Level
- Purpose
- Specific Outcomes
- Assessment Criteria
- Range Statements
- Date of Publication

(Land et al., 1999:8-15)

What makes the discussion on unit standards important to the present study is that all learning activities in ABET are supposed to be centred around unit standards. During the investigation, the researcher will observe whether or not the tutors from the three centres base their activities on the unit standards.

2.3.5 Assessment In ABET

In South Africa, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was set up in 1995 as a statutory body to establish a system of certification for education and training courses.

In order to make the national assessment and certification process possible, SAQA introduced Unit Standards for each learning area and level in ABET. The Unit Standards, discussed earlier on in this study, consist of a number of components, but the most important component is the outcomes.

In the mainstream education, the learning outcomes contained in *National Curriculum Statements (Revised)* are the reference point in designing the learning programmes, whereas in ABET, the reference points are *Unit Standards* which contain learning outcomes. ABET curriculum designers regard Unit Standards as important in shaping

the learning and assessment regime. There is a classroom interaction principle that says: "We teach towards Unit Standards and we assess against the Unit Standards" (Multi Year Implementation Plan, 1997:4-6).

There are three main categories of assessment namely:

- **Initial Assessment**, which is the type of assessment conducted at the beginning of the course to determine the learner's prior knowledge.
- **Formative/Continuous Assessment** which is the kind of assessment that takes place during a course.
- **Summative Assessment** which is the kind of assessment that comes at the end of the course.

(Land et al., 1999:77.)

The Assessment strategy adopted in ABET is the one known as Total Assessment which means that when assessment is conducted all the aspects of the learner's life are taken into consideration. Aspects like skills, attitudes, knowledge and values are taken care of during Total Assessment.

2.3.6 Critique Of OBE In South Africa

There has been much controversy regarding the implementation of Curriculum 2005, which is the South African version of OBE. Many curriculum specialists have opposed the hasty implementation of Curriculum 2005 in South Africa. Among those specialists are Holland (1994), Lucen et al. (1997), Brady (1996), Vithal (1997) and McKerman (1994). The most notable and the strongest opponent of Curriculum 2005 is Professor Jonathan Jansen, the former Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Durban Westville (TV Programme: 2000: Newsmaker).

Jansen's conference paper, 'Why OBE will fail', outlines some of his objections. His views have sparked much controversy in educational circles in South Africa. Most of his arguments are realistic when one considers the educational state of affairs in South Africa. He argues that pre-specifying the outcomes takes an instrumentalistic view of

knowledge. I think he does have a point there, especially with adult learners who come to class with specific aims and needs. Now they have to be pinned down by the prescribed outcomes. This also contradicts the principle of learner-centredness which is the focus of this paper.

He also argues that OBE does not define content. He says that outcomes cannot be learned in a vacuum; what is taught could depend on the very different political persuasions of teachers.

As a facilitator in both ABET and mainstream education, I agree with Jansen (1997) when he points out that the teachers are not provided with the subject content as it happened during the Christian National Education era. Teachers spend a lot of time trying to define the outcomes which are 'baseless'. He maintains that the issue of 'concrete' content in the present trend of education is the cause for concern. He also states the OBE requires that a number of other curriculum changes take place to support the change to OBE, e.g. new textbooks, retraining of teachers and principals and also forms of assessment.

I agree with Jansen's (1997) point that there are lots of changes and development to be made before the implementation of OBE is effected. When I visit some ABET centres in my capacity as an ABET-OBE KZN provincial trainer, I notice that in most centres teachers still use the materials used in the mainstream education, and even the methods they use are not suitable for adult learners. Such materials and methods often do not respect the knowledge and experience that adult learners bring to the classroom.

Jansen (1997), in his opposition to the implementation of OBE, argues that OBE will fail because the average South African teacher has not been able to participate in the development of the new curriculum. Mainly elite, well-trained teachers have been the ones involved in the process.

I feel there is a lot of sense in what Jansen says in the above argument. Firstly, as professionals, teachers need to be involved in all the stages of the curriculum development in order for them to claim ownership of the curriculum. The Department

of Education tends to rely more on the cascade model for in-service training of educators. This model is not properly structured as one group is trained for only one week and then expected to cascade the information to the next group. One cannot be expected to grasp what is often a year's work within one week. This indicates as Jansen (1997) states, that there is a big rush with regards to the implementation of OBE. This is not good for our education.

Jansen also cites the issue of the large amount of confusing jargon that South Africa's version of OBE contains. The teachers spend a lot of time trying to come to terms with the new jargon. Like Jansen, I also feel that the jargon needs to be minimised. I am glad that Professor Kader Asmal has appointed a special team of educationists to review the entire Curriculum 2005. To me this is a step forward.

Jansen's critique of OBE makes a lot of sense to me as an ABET trainer. The implementation of OBE should not be an event but it should be a process if positive results are expected. I suggest that teachers be trained for the whole year or even longer if necessary. I am saying this from experience, during the Ithuteng Project I was trained for the whole year in ABET-ESL. It was after that year's training that I was able to implement OBE-ABET.

Jansen's critique of OBE has added some investigating dimension to this study in that I investigated the extent to which the OBE-ABET facilitators implement the OBE theory in practical situations. In other words, Jansen's critique helped develop the checklist used during my visit to the three Public Adult Learning Centres. Among the things investigated was whether the tutors received any training in OBE and whether the tutors had gained any insights into OBE. Another issue investigated was the extent to which both tutors and learners had been involved in the designing of the learning programme.

2.4 The Concept Of Learner-Centredness

In order to develop my own understanding of the principle of learner-centredness I need to review literature on the concept of learner-centredness. I will then be in a

position to draw a list of characteristics of the principle of learner-centredness. These characteristics have served the purpose of informing and directing my research.

The National Department of Education in the Policy Document on ABET (1995) advocated the principle of learner-centredness in order to encourage quality instructional delivery. According to the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1995), learner-centredness is the condition where the instructional process puts learners first. It recognises and builds on the learners' knowledge and experiences and responds to their needs. It takes into account the general and specific characteristics of different groups of learners, noting in particular how their different cultural values and lifestyles affect how they construct knowledge.

Different learning rates and styles should be acknowledged and accommodated in both the learning situation and in the attainment of qualifications. Affirming adult learners' worth and demonstrating respect for their various languages, cultures and personal circumstances are prerequisite for all learning and development (Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1995:29).

Kraak et al. (1999) concurs with the Policy Document on ABET (1995) and maintains that the principle of learner-centredness occupies the centre stage in the outcomes-based education and training approach to education. He says this principle puts learners first. According to him, this learner-centred approach has entailed a paradigm shift in the approach to learning and teaching, away from the traditional syllabus-oriented, control-based transmission model of teaching and learning to one based on outcomes. Treating learners as "empty vessels which have to be filled with knowledge", and regarding learners as passive recipients or rote learners, deprive many learners of adequate opportunities to realise their full potential (Kraak, 1999:43).

Kraak's perception of the principle of learner-centredness is consistent with the definition of learner-centredness provided by the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1995) because both emphasise putting learners first. This research investigated if learning programme (curriculum) designers put learners first in the teaching-learning situations.

According to the above literature on learner-centredness, 'putting learners first' means basing the learning programmes on the learners' needs, involving learners in all the decisions pertaining to their learning and involving them in designing their learning programmes.

2.4.1 Learner-Centredness, Relevance And Needs

In my view once learners are put first, that is recognising their knowledge, experiences and needs, even the learning programme becomes relevant to the learners, the principle of 'relevance' is implied in the principle of learner-centredness.

The principle of relevance is defined in the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training as:

Relevant learning programmes appropriate to the current and anticipated future needs of individuals, society and the formal and informal economy are promoted through the development of skills such as planning, critical evaluation of information and complex decision-making. ABET seeks to equip learners with skills to participate in all forms of economic, social, political and cultural activities (Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1997:29).

There are a number of reasons why we should look at the concept of 'need' in adult education. Firstly, the concept has played a vital role in adult education practice and has traditionally been the base upon which the curriculum in the education of adults have been constructed (Jarvis, 1985:217). The concept of need has been seen as vital in the 'learner-centred' approach that is widely used in adult education: the teacher is to build on what the learner currently knows and needs. Many Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) courses, for example, have claimed to be needs-orientated. If, for example, there is a class of unemployed learners who wish to start businesses, those learners need to be provided with skills like designing a business plan, etc.

One of the characteristics of adult learners is that they come to class with intentions and needs and they should be encouraged to state their learning needs. Need relates to

the learners' motivation to learn. If learners see that their needs are met by what they are studying, they will be more motivated to learn (Knowles, 1978:24).

A needs assessment can be an important tool for any teacher planning a course for adult learners. A needs assessment can help develop a learning programme based on the real needs of the learners that it is serving. As time is often limited in ABET classes, a learning programme which takes learners' needs into account, can ensure that what is most useful for learners is covered (Fotheringham, 1998:1).

Jarvis introduces the idea of defining the concept of needs. He argues that the concept of 'need' is ill defined and, therefore an inadequate basis for curriculum development (Jarvis, 1985:18). What Jarvis means is that the adult educators should have a clear understanding of what needs are: they should be able to identify, analyse and assess the learners' needs and use them as a basis for learning programme design. Jarvis concludes that "the need to learn, as recognised by the potential learner, is a better basis for the education of adults and perhaps learning needs rather than educational needs and more significant" (Jarvis, 1985:219). From the above assessment, learning needs would seem to come more from the learner and educational needs would seem to be more of a prescription from the teacher about what is needed, Jarvis raises an interesting point in this paragraph. He, in my opinion, raises the question 'whose needs' are recognised when designing the learning programme? My experience has taught me that most adult educators give learners a chance to articulate their needs but the main questions are: Do they consider the shy learners as well? Which methods do they use? What do teachers do if the learners do not articulate their needs? Do they (the teachers) resort to educational need? My answer to the previous questions is that some teachers do not give learners a chance to articulate their learning needs; which does not augur well with the principle of learner-centredness. In the long run, the learning programme that is not based on the learners' needs, becomes irrelevant and as a result the learners drop out.

Knowles (1978) who is regarded by many adult educationists as the father of andragogy, distinguished between the way in which adult learners and children learn. His contribution is relevant to the present study because it reminds the tutors or learning programme designers to be aware that adult learners need to be treated as

adults since they know what they need in life. They come to class with the purpose to gain knowledge and skills that will enable them to make a contribution in their community. Their expectations force the tutor to base his activities on the learners' needs, which in a way implies the principle of learner-centredness.

I agree with the educational theorists cited in this chapter that needs form the cornerstone of the principle of learner-centredness: they make the difference between relevant and irrelevant learning programmes. During my visit to the three Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), I investigated whether adult educators conduct needs identification, needs analysis and needs assessment.

In conclusion, I would like to share Fotheringham's (1998:20) guidelines for needs assessment, that might assist the adult educators to use learners' needs effectively in order to sustain the principle of learner-centredness during the implementation of the learning programmes. They are:

- Assess whatever educational needs (rather than other needs) are a priority.
 - Determine whose needs are being expressed.
 - Collect your information from as many sources, from as wide a base and in as many and varied ways as possible.
 - Be careful of putting words into learners' mouths.
 - Check (and recheck) your understanding with learners.
 - Don't stop at superficial understanding of needs. What are learners telling you? Probe and question why they feel they need something.
 - Determine who can reasonably be expected to meet the needs. Tell learners whether you can or cannot meet their needs. Negotiate the needs.
- (Fotheringham, 1998:20).

Fotheringham's guidelines for needs assessment have served as a frame of reference during interviews with ABET educators when I visited their centres.

2.4.2 Learner-Centredness And Curriculum/Learning Programme

2.4.2.1 Introduction

Previously, Curriculum was defined as a list of subjects taught in a learning situation. The academic trend is how to define curriculum in its broadest sense which goes beyond a locus on programme planning to looking at the underlying values and assumptions of the curriculum. It must be noted that the two terms, curriculum and learning programme will be used synonymously. They both mean the broad plan of the learning situation. Different educationists will be studied in order to have a broad view of curriculum theory.

First, Fotheringham (1998) states that the traditional approach to curriculum, based on rationalisation theories with a hierarchy of knowledge, would ask “what knowledge is of most worth?” and “what should be taught/learned?” The sociology of knowledge perspective, however, asks “who has the right to say what may count as knowledge?” and “whose interests are being served?” by a particular curriculum being adopted (Fotheringham, 1998:22).

Fotheringham (1998) raises the issue of content or subject matter. She asks which is the relevant subject matter and how it is formulated or drafted. The first question of ‘which subject is relevant’, relates to the present study because it seeks to find out if the content or subject matter delivered in the PALCs² is relevant to the target group, that is, the adult learners. The second question which is ‘whose interests are being served’ raised the question of whether the learning programme has been based on the learners’ needs because if it does not serve the learners, then it ‘does not fit’ into the principle of learner-centredness.

² PALCs - Public Adult Learning Centres

Fotheringham's (1998) discussion has been used as a tool when collecting data because her argument relates to the three critical questions underpinning this study. The questions she asks were used during my visit to the three PALCs.

Jarvis (1985) argues that curriculum theory in the education of adults has changed greatly in recent years and that discussions about the curriculum in the early 70s and 80s appear extremely dated (Jarvis, 1985:192). He says that the idea of 'need' has traditionally been the base upon which curricula in the education of adults have been constructed, although it will have become apparent...that this now appears to be changing and ideas about market demand have come to the fore (Jarvis, 1985:217). Jarvis' arguments here relate directly to the learners' needs which are regarded by the ABET Policy (1995) discussed in the introduction, as the basis for learner-centredness. The researcher has observed whether the ABET tutors base their learning programmes on learners' needs. It was also seen as important to observe if and how ABET tutors conduct needs identification, needs analysis and needs assessment. Of central interest, was whether learners were given a chance to articulate their needs and whether tutors responded to such needs in the activities they conducted with learners in the classroom. These questions are answered in Chapter 4 of this document.

2.4.2.2 Curriculum/Learning Programme Design

Taba (1962) quoted in Jarvis (1985:192) has this to say about Curriculum:

A curriculum usually contains a statement of aims and of specific objectives; it indicates some selection and organization of content; it either implies or manifests certain patterns of learning and teaching, whether because the objectives demand them or because the content organization requires them. Finally, it includes a programme of evaluation of the outcomes. (Taba, 1962)

He further states that the above basic list can be elaborated to suit the needs of individual curriculum designers, but however detailed the design, the design process is built around the four basic elements.

Taba's argument is relevant to the present study in that it relates to the aims and specific objectives which are regarded as the directing elements in the teaching of

adult learners. What makes the argument relevant to the ideas of learner centredness and relevance is that the aims and specific objectives of the learning programme stem from the learners' needs which is one of the characteristics of the principle of learner centredness.

Davies (1976) quoted in Jarvis (1985:194) takes the argument further by categorising objectives into five types, namely:

- Instructional objectives
- Teaching objectives
- Learning objectives
- Behavioural objectives
- Expressive objectives

Eishner (1969) as quoted in Jarvis (1985:194), regards expressive objectives as evocative rather than prescriptive. According to Eishner, evocative implies the learners' active participation in the designing of the learning programme, which includes the principle of learner-centredness.

Taba's second curriculum design element is the subject matter or the content. In most learning/teaching situations, the content is regarded as the binding element between the learner and the tutor.

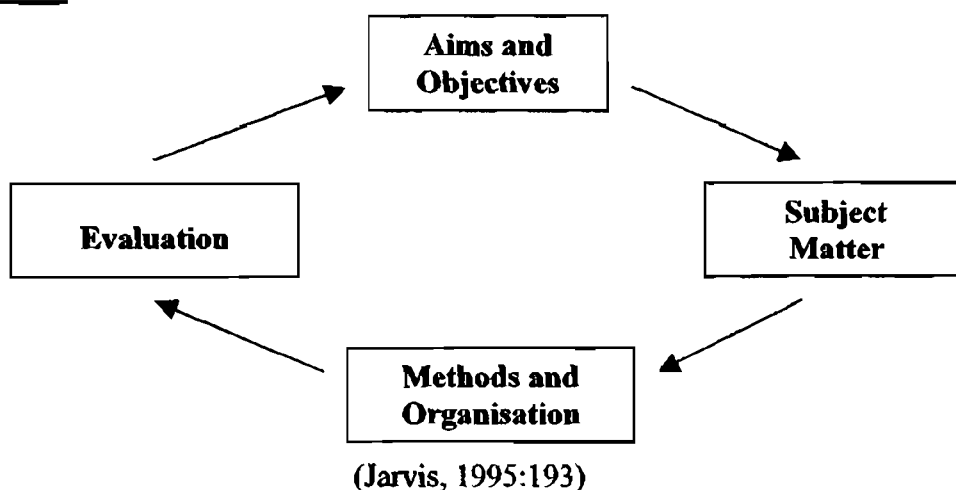
Taba (1962) as quoted in Jarvis (1985) identifies organisation and methods as the third element in learning programme design. He says the classroom should be organised in a way that suits the adult learners. The researcher will observe if Jarvis' ideas on organisation and methods are put into practice.

Taba's (1962) fifth and last element in curriculum design is evaluation. He says evaluation should not be undertaken by educators themselves in adult education, the learners should be full participants in the evaluation process. The fact that Taba regards learners as the ones to do evaluation, indicates that he regards them as the main role players in the learning process. Educators who regard the learners as the

stakeholders in the training learning situation, are said to be conscious of the principle of learner-centredness (Jarvis, 1985:195).

Taba's ideas can be clearly illustrated by the following illustration, which he calls 'A learning and teaching process model for the education of adults':

Diagram 1:



Newman (1979) further stresses the importance of the principle of learner-centredness in the learning process when he states that: "Adult education is a cruel test of the tutor's skills. It is a sink or a swim business. If the tutor does not have what it takes, people stop coming. The learners vote with their feet" (Newman, 1979:66). The message or warning from Newman is that ABET tutors must base all their learning programmes on the learners' needs and aspirations if they want to keep learners in their classes. If learners' needs and aspirations are not catered for in the learning programme, then the learners will stop attending ABET classes. This poses a challenge to all the people interested in adult education to try and answer the three critical questions of the present study.

McGrath (1995) as quoted in Fotheringham (1998:17) argues that outcomes and competence play a big role in curriculum design. He maintains that in this approach, the curriculum is designed backwards from exit outcomes. He says the first task is to determine what outcomes are needed and how they can be assessed. He says that this is the 'standard setting' process. He maintains that standards are crucial for how to measure the learner's performance at the end of the course. The next step is the curriculum development process which considers how skills and knowledge can be

developed to meet the competence requirements. An important aspect of the outcomes based approach is that in its pure form, it does not prescribe content or teaching methods. There are a number of ways the outcomes can be met. Thus, for a course planning model, it offers much help as a starting point.

Since outcomes are broad statements which still need to be narrowed and interpreted further against the learners' needs, it was important to find out how the ABET tutors translated outcomes against the learners' needs when they designed the learning programmes. This concern will be addressed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, titled, *Research Findings And Discussions*.

Boone (1985) introduces what is called programming in adult education. He says programming is proactive in that it is always futuristic in its thrust. He further states that it is a system that links the adult education organisation with learner groups and systems in a collaborative effort to identify group members' needs, to assess and analyse those needs, to design and implement learning programmes relating to these needs, and to gather and report evidence of the extent to which the programme addresses those needs. The planned educational programme is intended to produce behavioural change in adult learners (Boone, 1985:41). What Boone is saying is that a learning programme where the learners take part from the beginning to the end, is based on the learners' needs being the relevant one and it is said to be learner-centred since it is the one that 'will' produce behavioural change in adult learners.

Fotheringham (1998) provides another overview of the elements of the curriculum that looks as follows:

Diagram 2:

(Fotheringham, 1998:6.)

How? Training Methods Teaching Strategies Activities	By whom? Teacher Facilitator	To whom? Learners	What is taught? Content Subject Matter
With what? Resources Books Textbooks Materials Equipment	CURRICULUM		Assessment Certification
When? Timing Amount of time	Where? Teaching venue Classroom	Why? Rationale Aims/Objectives	What do we want the Outcomes to be?

2.4.2.3 Curriculum Design Models

According to adult educationalists like Fotheringham, curriculum designers employ certain curriculum design models when they design their learning programmes. The following Curriculum design models will be examined in order to determine where the principle of learner-centredness fits.

Fotheringham (1998) discusses three types of Curriculum design models, namely:

- Content model
- Product model
- Process model

2.4.2.3.1 The Content Model

The content model's main focus in design is on what content is to be taught. Other design components such as objectives and teaching methodology are given less consideration. The focus is on knowledge. The purpose of teaching is seen as simply to transmit the content to the learners in the most effective way.

There is a danger that an extreme version of this approach may be adopted in practice. It could become a rigid body of content to be transmitted, with little regard for the

best way to teach it and little real consideration for how learners will interact with the content.

With the adoption of outcomes based approach in ABET, one would not expect to witness this approach in ABET Curriculum design. It would be interesting to observe that there are ABET curriculum designers who still adopt this design model (Fotheringham, 1998:9-10).

2.4.2.3.2 The Product Model

The product model emphasises what is to be achieved through instruction: the products of instruction. This type of model is usually detailed and offers the curriculum planner clear steps and procedures to follow.

The main features of this model are objectives, systems approach and outcomes and competence. The starting point of curriculum planning with the objectives approach is an identification of objectives of the curriculum. The next step is to identify what subject matter or content and activities will cover the objectives, and what teaching strategies and methods to use. Available resources, needs of the learners and other aspects are sometimes also considered. Actual implementation of the curriculum follows and the last step is to evaluate the success of the course in light of whether it met the objectives (Fotheringham, 1998:9-11).

The scope of ABET which includes Unit Standards, Principles of OBE and the National Qualifications Framework fits into the product model or curriculum design.

2.4.2.3.3 The Process Model

The process model offers less a set of steps and procedures to follow than a set of principles to guide the learning/teaching process. What happens during the process is dependent on the learners themselves, their needs and the issues raised during the learning process (Fotheringham, 1998:9). The process model of curriculum design places more emphasis on the learners' needs, aspirations, experiences and interests, which makes it relevant to the principle of learner centredness.

2.4.3 Learner-Centredness And Methodology

In the previous section on learner-centredness and learning programme it was maintained that the learning programme that appeals to the target learners is the one that is based on the learners' needs and interests. The same thing applies to the methodology, the method that is said to be learner-centred is the one that suits the learners, not the one that suits the educators. Learner centredness and methodology, will be discussed using the ideas of a few curriculum theorists.

The ABET teachers should encourage learners to think independently and bring forward their (the learners') inputs into the learning process. The mostly employed teaching method is group work, this statement indicates the involvement of learners and the use of methods that mostly suit the target learners (Kraak, 1999:23).

Fotheringham (1997) dismisses a number of teaching approaches. She argues that some teaching methods are part of the teachers' hidden curriculum. She says that selecting a teaching method is not a question of choosing from a possible menu of methods. Decisions about which methods to use, and how to use them, often relate to the teacher at a very personal level (Fotheringham, 1997:3).

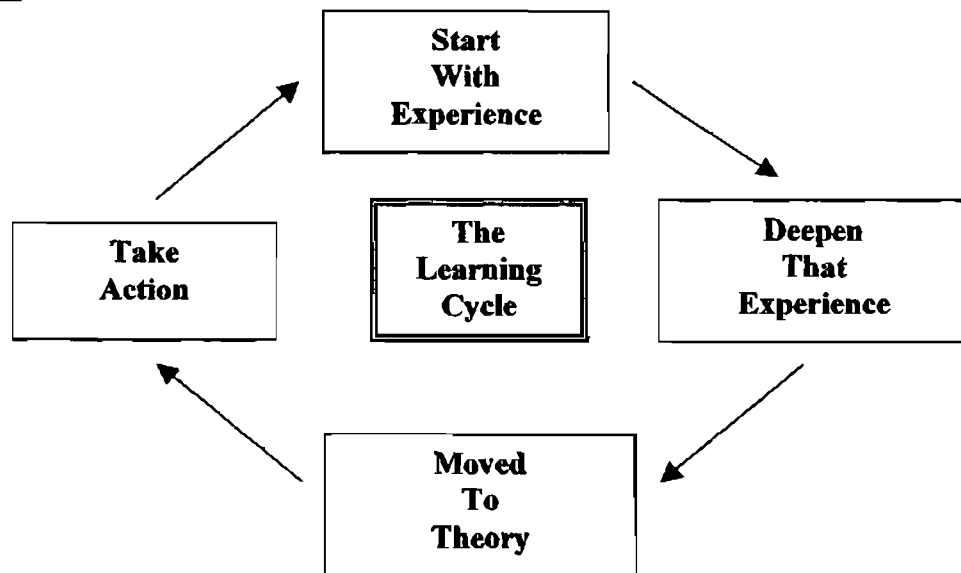
The reason why I include Fotheringham's argument, is that it provides the contrast or the 'don'ts' of the principle of learner-centredness. She has a point in that selecting a teaching method is not a question of choosing from a possible menu of methods. I totally agree with that. But I maintain that decisions about which methods to use should not relate to the teacher at a personal level because in the principle of learner-centredness, teaching methods chosen should relate to the learners' abilities and pace. With more experience and training, teachers become better able to employ methods that are suitable for their learners. The readers will understand this argument better if they read it in conjunction with the characteristics of the principle of learner-centredness to be discussed later.

Experiential learning is often associated with ABET. Experiential learning is an approach which favours using the learners' experience as a basis for teaching and is based on a particular theory of how adults learn. Experiential learning involves moving from the known to unknown, and from experience to reflection, analysis and theory. This can be seen in contrast to the more traditional content-based approach to the curriculum which moves from theory to application of that theory in the learner's own situation. Titmus et al. (1979:45) define experiential education thus: "Learning that derives either from the general life experience or from specific activities of the learner. Learning derived from the feelings and thoughts aroused in the learner while or after undergoing such experiences."

Advocates of the Experiential Learning often include a model of the 'learning cycle' that appears in a large number of adult education guidebooks and is used in countless educational event designs.

Observe the learning cycle from Pitt and Michell (1992:128) in Kraak (1999:25) below:

Diagram 3:



The above learning cycle seems relevant to adult learners since they come to class with a great deal of experience. It is fitting to this study since reference to learners'

experience when designing learning programmes is part of the principle of learner-centredness.

The implementation of the learning cycle in an ABET class can be demonstrated by the following example of a Human and Social Sciences lesson on “Types of social settlements”:

1. Start with Experience: The tutor asks the class to mention the kinds of areas where they and their relatives live.
2. Deepen that experience: A list of all responses is written on newsprint. A learner may say, “township” and learn of other areas from listening to fellow learners.
3. Moved to theory: The tutor organises the list of responses from learners into 3 categories, namely, urban, peri-urban and rural.
4. Take action: The tutor then lets the class discuss the differences between the different settlements and sets learners the assignment of interviewing someone from a settlement different to their own, in terms of how people live in such a settlement.

Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997) argue that education involves an engagement with teachers, learners and knowledge. Education for adult learners must have purpose and direction (Usher, Bryant and Johnston, 1997:25). Usher and company conclude by stating that education must necessarily be for betterment but it does not follow that there is only one kind of betterment or that the tutors always know what it is in advance. Education does involve the gaining of new insight and understanding.

In the above section, theorists like Usher, Knowles, Pitt and Michell all maintain that the teaching methods the teacher employs do not come from the air, but it is the learners' state of learning that determines the teaching methods to use. Using the teaching method that is learner friendly is part of the principle of learner-centredness.

2.4.4 Learner-Centredness And Assessment

In ABET, learning and assessment activities should evolve around the Unit Standards. ABET curriculum designers regard Unit Standards as important in shaping the learning and assessment processes.

At face value, the principle of Unit Standards mentioned earlier, looks too prescriptive and irrelevant for the principle of learner-centredness, but to me as an ABET tutor, it is relevant to the principle of learner-centredness, providing the programme designer with the basis for his or her programme, i.e. on the needs of the learners. As indicated earlier, Unit Standards are broad statements which need to be narrowed and interpreted in the light of learners' expressed needs. Unit Standards contain assessment criteria that specify what a learner must know, do and feel in order to be judged competent. Such assessment is thus criterion-referenced as opposed to norm-referenced assessment where the level of competence is judge against norms established for a said learner group.

Fotheringham (1997) states that at the heart of an outcomes-based education and training (ABET) system is the demonstration of competence in terms of criteria established by the relevant education authority. Two central features of outcomes models are highlighted here: performance standards and criterion-referenced assessment. Outcomes-based systems are founded on criterion-referenced assessment. This assessment method is distinct from the more traditional norm-referenced system that compares the abilities of an individual learner against the abilities of other learners. The key feature of the criterion-referenced assessment is assessment of the learner's ability against the given task (Fotheringham, 1997:40).

To me the criterion-referenced assessment method is more suited to the principle of learner-centredness because it gauges the strengths of an individual learner against the given task. In other words it assesses competence of an individual learner against the given task. This assessment system can be compared to the characteristics of the principle of learner-centredness (Lubisi et al., 1998:22).

In conclusion, one may point out that in principle, outcomes based assessment is learner-centred because all the assessment procedures including the what, the when and the how of assessment should be negotiated with the learners. But experience has taught me that it is not usually the case with some ABET tutors - they make assessment decisions without consulting the learners. This study examined whether ABET tutors negotiated assessment with the learners.

2.4.5 Characteristics Of Learner-Centredness

The literature on the concept of learner-centredness has helped me to formulate the characteristics of the principle of learner-centredness. These characteristics have given direction to my study. They are as follows:

- Putting learners first in planning and implementing learning programme.
- Considering learners' needs in planning, implementation and assessment of the curriculum.
- Recognition of learners' prior learning.
- Considering learners' experiences.
- Listening to learners' views and ideas.
- Considering learners' cultures, values and lifestyles.
- Considering learners' learning styles and learning rates.
- Recognising learners' worth.
- The principle of relevance is implied.

2.5 Classroom Observation, Tutor Training And Support

To me, classroom observation is the most important and authentic method of investigating the extent at which the ABET tutors observe the principle of learner-centredness during teaching and learning. I visited these Public Adult Learning Centres to investigate how the tutors teach and how the learners perform during classroom interaction.

2.5.1 Tutor Training And Support

A crucial influence on how teachers respond to innovation is the degree of support which they receive during and after the implementation of the innovation. Kelly (1989:139) argues that "there can be no curriculum development without teacher development".

In the ABET field, most teachers receive an initial training of one or two weeks, and there is a great need for ongoing support after this training.

French argues that the ABET teachers' support is the most important factor in the success of the programme:

Back-up is probably more important than the initial training programme itself. Experience in teacher upgrading projects has shown again and again that whatever enthusiasm and commitment is generated in training courses is soon lost if there is not frequent, well-directed and supportive back-up for teachers in their classrooms. (French, 1988:15.)

What Kelly (1989) and French (1988) say in the above arguments is very important to this study because what they say corresponds with questions on this study, which is to investigate how well the tutors perform in the adult centres. It is imperative for ABET teachers to receive relevant training and support.

In the next discussion, I shall try and show how the KwaZulu-Natal ABET Section has tried to meet the 'demands' tabled by Kelly and French.

The following topics will be discussed:

- Growth and development of ABET in KZN
- The Ithuteng Project
- The Rivoningo Project

2.5.2 The Growth And Development Of ABET In KZN

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZN-DEC) was proud of the fact that Adult Basic Learning Centres had grown in numbers from 468 in the year 2000 to 603 in 2002. In 2004 this number had grown to 681 (Department of Education-KZN, 2004).

The staff contingent has also expanded accordingly. There are now dedicated ABET co-ordinators in almost all the districts that provide support to all ABET centres in the province. These coordinators provide training and empowerment to the ABET tutors. In KZN there are two categories of coordinating. The first category comprises of a group of senior tutors who conduct Provincial, District and Circuit workshops. They work on a voluntary basis. The second group of coordinators are the former college lecturers who have been roped into ABET. This group of coordinators get paid for their jobs. The second group of coordinators visit PALCs for monitoring and evaluation purposes. They report to the Chief Education Specialists and Deputy Chief Education Specialists. The PALCs are managed by centre managers. In 2002 the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture had 421 ABET centres and 182 ABET satellite centres that were operational. In 2004 there were 681 centres. There were approximately 28 906 ABET learners in KwaZulu-Natal in 2002. This figure of learners rose to 38 745 in 2004. Aitchison and Harley (2004) have challenged the official figures on ABET learners and claim that such figures have been inflated as part of deliberate misinformation.

The following table provides the statistics of ABET educators, centres and learners in KZN in 2004.

Table 3: ABET Educators, Centres and Learners in KZN, 2004

DISTRICT	EDUCATORS	CENTRES	LEARNERS
Empangeni	725	81	6228
Obonjeni	532	39	3066
Vryheid	229	51	3199
Umlazi	528	58	2849
Ilembe	487	93	3714
Pinetown	645	68	3951
Kokstad	285	45	1211
Vulindlela	266	47	2799
Port Shepstone	668	85	4916
Umzinyathi	293	58	3007
Othukela	177	31	1828
Amajuba	134	29	1749
TOTAL	5024	681	38745

Source: Department of Education-KZN, 2004

Although the majority of educators at the centres do not have ABET qualifications, some have enrolled with UNISA. A number of educators were trained by Operation Upgrade, Tembaletu and English Resource Unit (ERU) during the Ithuteng project which will be discussed below (Education Indaba No. 2 May/June 2002:KZN).

2.5.3 The Ithuteng Project

The Interim Education Guidelines (1995) precipitated the formulation of a strategy for mass delivery of ABET programmes in South Africa. On 11 February, 1996, the then Minister of Education, Professor Sibusiso Bengu, launched the Ithuteng "Ready to Learn" campaign in order to improve the quantity and quality of delivery to adult learners at the lowest levels of provisioning.

It is at ABET Levels 1 and 2 that the greatest fragmentation and lack of cohesion in delivery has been experienced and it is learners at Levels 1 and 2 who experience the most acute need to access further learning which they lack a foundation for. This campaign was launched as a Presidential Lead Project with an overall budget of R50

million and a target population of 10 000 learners per province and a total population of 90 000 learners throughout the country.

Other government departments such as Correctional Services, Transport and Health were also involved in ABET provisioning and delivery as part of the Ithuteng Project..

The National Literacy Cooperation's (NLC) - Thousand Learner Unit (TLU) Project was also launched with the Ithuteng Project in 1996. The NLC's programme aimed to reach 1000 learners per province in their first phase of implementation.

Objectives of the Ithuteng Campaign were:

- to reduce the adult illiteracy rate in the provinces of South Africa;
- to improve the quality of ABET delivery;
- to provide training programmes to adult education tutors at state learning centres;
- to introduce appropriate learning materials at learning centres;
- to introduce democratic governance structures to transform state adult learning centres;
- to build the capacity of communities to drive their own development through upgrading education and skill levels in communities.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture - ABET Section stated four goals in 1997, namely:

- To train 240 educators (80 in English Second Language, 80 in IsiZulu mother tongue language and 80 in Numeracy).
- To teach 4800 learners (1600 in each learning area).
- To train 25 Management Staff in project management training and information systems.
- To evaluate the entire project.

The centres and educators taking part in the Ithuteng Campaign were selected from all eight regions of the KZN province. The regions were: Durban South, North Durban,

Empangeni, Ladysmith, Pietermaritzburg, Port Shepstone, Vryheid and Ulundi (Aitchison et al., 1999:12).

The KZN Department of Education and Culture contracted five non-governmental organisations to provide training to ABET centres.

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) contracted were:

- The English Resource Unit (ERU) for English Second Language (ESL) training.
- Operation Upgrade for IsiZulu Mother Tongue Literacy (MTL).
- Thembaletu Community Education Centre for Numeracy Training.
- The National Literacy Cooperation (NLC) for Management Information Systems Training.
- Natal ABE Support Agency (NASA) for Project Management and IEB training.

NASA was responsible for the evaluation of the project but NASA contracted the Centre for Adult Education and Department of Adult and Community Education of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (UNP) to carry out the evaluation process.

According to Aitchison (1998), in the two provinces which commissioned Ithuteng Project evaluations (KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape) both provinces failed to reach their targets. Originally each province was meant to recruit 10 000 learners. In KwaZulu-Natal, the target was reset to 4800. In fact slightly more than 1634 learners sat for examinations and only 752 learners passed. In the Western Cape, an estimated 7522 enrolled, 1490 wrote examinations and of the known results, only 760 learners passed (Aitchison, 1998:15).

What makes the Ithuteng Campaign relevant to this study is that the present researcher was part of the Ithuteng Project. He was trained in English Second Language (ESL) by the English Resource Unit. It is the knowledge and skills he received from ERU that enhanced his appointment as an ABET Provincial Trainer in KwaZulu-Natal under the management of Mrs N.C. Ndlela who was the Chief Education Specialist in ABET. The researcher will observe the extent to which the

objectives of the Ithuteng Project, mentioned earlier, are met at the Adult Learning Centres.

2.5.4 The Rivoningo Project

Rivoningo is a Venda word which means the light that shines through darkness. This project was launched by the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal in 2000. Five centres in the KZN province were involved in the Rivoningo project. The ABET training provided by this project has assisted the centre's governing bodies, principals (centre managers) and educators to discharge their roles, functions and responsibilities more effectively. The focus on educator training was on ABET Levels 3 and 4. The centres also received training in Centre Management, Financial Management, Fund-raising and School Governance.

Almost all ABET educators have been trained in OBE through the cascade model. As indicated earlier, the cascade model was not sufficiently effective. The districts are therefore supplementing the cascade training with workshops on learning areas during weekends and school holidays. All the centres are now using the Unit Standards, OBE principles and methodologies in their teaching. The training workshops gave educators the confidence to improvise in their classes. There is a need for ongoing training to ensure that the momentum of empowerment is maintained.

2.6 Overview Of Research Methodology

In this section, I shall give a brief overview of the research methodology employed in this study. Firstly, I will make an attempt to fit my study into the relevant research classification, and secondly, I will give a brief discussion on the research methods I used for this study.

2.6.1 Classification Of This Study

Research is often classified as either Qualitative or Quantitative research. These are two broad approaches that are often pitted against each other in research debates. The

difference between Qualitative research and Quantitative research is often expressed in terms of the philosophical assumptions underpinning each approach. These two research approaches are often contrasted through comparisons drawn between the questionnaire method (representing quantitative research and the interview method (representing qualitative research). The nature of the data and the problem for research dictate the research methodology. If the data is verbal, the methodology is usually qualitative, if it is numerical, the methodology is usually quantitative (Leedy, 1993:139). See Table 4 for a more detailed comparison of quantitative and qualitative research.

Strauss and Gorbis (1990:17) define qualitative research as “a kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” In this view it is the ‘non-mathematical’ nature of the analysis that makes a study qualitative. A very common approach in elaborating the distribution between quantitative and qualitative research involves listing adjectives describing various aspects of the two approaches. Below is an example of such a list by Aitchison (1998:3):

Table 4: Quantitative And Qualitative Research

QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Scientific	Naturalistic
Variable-based	Holistic
Hard data	Soft data
Experimental	Naturalistic
Hypothesis testing	Interpretative
Universal	Case Study
Establishing law	Descriptive
Context free	Context dependent
Objective, value free	Subjective, value-laden
Generalisation, large sample	In depth, small sample

The research methods used for this research are interviews, observation, documentation analysis and the questionnaires. The first three methods namely interviews, observation and documentation analysis qualifies this research study as a qualitative study according to Table 4 above.

I would say that the data gathered is naturalistic because real people with real stories were interviewed within specific contexts, that is, ABET centres. All the data collected was interpreted against the title, the research questions and the relevant ABET policies. A small sample was selected.

2.6.2 Research Methods

In this study the research methods used to collect data from the three adult education centres namely: Manaye, Zamani and Tembaletu, were:

- Classroom observations
- Interviews
- Analysis of documents
- Questionnaires

2.6.2.1 Classroom Observations

According to Bless (1990) observation is the recording of events as observed by an outsider. People who feel they are being observed might change their behaviour, become uneasy or stop activities altogether (Bless, 1990:80). The reason why I used this method was that it gives one the feel of what actually happens. One was able to observe everything including the responses and attitudes of people.

2.6.2.2 Interviews

Bless (1990) says that an interview involves direct personal contact with the participant who is asked to answer the questions. The interviewer is present to record the information (Bless, 1990:88). One of the reasons why I chose interview as one of

my data collecting methods was because I found it the best way to tap into a person's thoughts, opinions and feeling about a certain topic. The groups of interviewees contacted were the learners, the tutors and the centre managers.

2.6.2.3 Analysis and Interpretation of Documents

Analysis and interpretation of documents was conducted prior and during classroom observation. As the topic suggests, the documents, the educators' workbooks and learners' workbooks were observed, analysed and interpreted against the ABET policies, the unit standards and the research questions. The qualitative nature of the data I collected, make my study fall into the qualitative form of research as per Aichison's (1998) description of qualitative research on the previous pages.

2.6.2.4 Questionnaires

Bless (1990) defines a questionnaire as a tool for gathering information from a large population without actually making personal contact with the respondents, usually using paper and pencil. The reasons why I chose a questionnaire was that I found it cheap and easy to administer.

It must be noted that this section on research methodology was just an overview. More discussion will be conducted in the next chapter entitled 'Research Methodology'.

2.7 Conclusion

The literature reviewed provided a solid basis to embark on fieldwork for this study. The information and references compiled in this literature review was used by the researcher to inform other chapters such as Data Collection, Findings and Recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will:

- Introduce and discuss data collection methods.
- Give reasons why the methods were chosen.
- Discuss sampling matters.

There are several methods for collecting data. Quite often, more than one method would be suitable for a particular research problem. The reality of the research enterprise necessitates that one also considers what resources are available when choosing a method for collecting data. The time and money available for a research project will often dictate the research methodology as much as the nature of the data and the problem would (Leedy, 1980:139).

In this study the research methods used to collect data from the three ABET Centres were:

- Questionnaires for learners
- Interviews with learners
- Interviews with tutors
- Interviews with centre managers
- Lesson observations
- Analysis of documents

The research tools used in this study are provided at the end of this chapter as Appendices A, B, C, D, E and F.

In discussing each of the research methods, a reason will be provided for its selection and use in this study. Literature relevant to each method will also be discussed. Some reflections on the effectiveness of the different research tools in terms of answering the three research questions that underpin this study will be shared.

Assumptions surrounding the use of a tool will be discussed. Finally, advice on the use of research tools will be provided to future researchers.

3.2 Research Methods Employed In This Study

3.2.1 Questionnaires

Bless and Achola (1990) defines a questionnaire as a tool for gathering information from a large population without actually making personal contact with the respondents, usually using paper and pencil. A questionnaire has to be presented to each respondent in exactly the same way to minimise the role and influence of the interview, and to enable a more objective comparison of the results (Bless and Achola, 1990:89).

Mouton states that although the term 'questionnaire' suggests a collection of questions, an examination of a typical questionnaire will probably reveal as many statements as questions (Mouton, 2001:233).

3.2.1.1 Advantages And Disadvantages Of Questionnaires

I chose a questionnaire as a data collection tool for this study because of the advantages provided by the method. Some of these advantages include:

- It is relatively inexpensive as a method of gathering information.
- It is reasonably easy to administer and to collect.
- All respondents are asked the same questions in the same way which assists with reliability and validity.

- Respondents can complete questions at their leisure and take more time to think them through.
- A large number of people can be contacted at one time.

However, questionnaires do carry some disadvantages as a method. In this study, I had considered the following drawbacks of using questionnaires:

- It takes time to design a good questionnaire.
- Questions or instructions may be misunderstood.
- There is no opportunity to clarify or probe responses.
- The 'wrong' person may complete the questionnaire.

(Marshall and Rossman, 1995:24)

A questionnaire helped me gather both quantitative and qualitative data from 30 ABET learners from 3 different ABET learning centres within a short space of one week. Given the resources available for this study this, to me, was an efficient way to gather data.

3.2.1.2 Questionnaire Design and Piloting

The design of the questionnaire was guided by purpose of the study and three critical questions discussed earlier. I was also aware that the class being targeted was Communications in English Level 2. In order to ascertain the correct language level, I referred to the Unit Standards (US) of ABET Levels 1-3. The Unit Standards helped me determine the level descriptors of Level 2 learners. Despite this measure, using a questionnaire with new literates carries considerable risks. This concern created the need for careful design and testing of the questionnaire before it was implemented.

To test the adequacy of the language used, a draft of the questionnaire was given to a group of ABET Level 2 learners in a class that I teach. At the same time this draft questionnaire was handed to four tutors who teach ABET Level 2 classes. The feedback received from these individuals helped me to refine the language used in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Once the language concern was resolved, I trialed the suitability of the questions in the questionnaires with a non-participating centre called Ndabambi PALC in Richmond. This pilot exercise helped to identify several questions that could pose difficulties for learners to respond to. These questions were then edited and simplified.

When I distributed the questionnaires to the participating centres, I also requested that the tutors were to go through the questions with the learners. I believe that this strategy together with the piloting exercise helped the learners to understand the questions better.

3.2.2 Interviews

Bless and Achola (1990) describe an interview as involving direct personal contact with the participant who is asked to answer questions. The interviewer is present to record the information. The interviewer's presence may enhance comprehension and objectivity in the recording of information, but it can also cause interviewed people to refrain from expressing their real opinions or true feelings (Bless and Achola, 1990:88).

Gilbert (1993) suggests that interviewers need to be provided with some form of document to guide questioning, this may consist of both pre-coded and open-ended questions. Interviewers may record responses directly onto an interview schedule by pen or use a tape recorder to record the interview for later transcription (Gilbert, 1993:97). In this study I conducted the interviews and recorded responses directly on the interview schedule.

3.2.2.1 Advantages And Disadvantages Of Interviews

I chose to use interviews as one of my data collecting tools, because of the following reasons:

- A lot of information can be shared in confidence within a short time.
- The interviewer can modify questions or change the style of the interview to fit the individual or the situation.
- It provides opportunity for in-depth probing.

I was aware that interviews introduce disadvantages such as:

- The interviewee may not answer the questions openly or fully.
 - It can be affected by interviewer bias.
 - It can be affected by the relationship between interviewer and the interviewee.
- (Bell, 1993:25).

3.2.2.2 Sample For Interview

As listed in the table below, eighteen interviews were conducted in this study, with 12 learners and 3 tutors of the English Level 2 classes, and with the centre managers of the three ABET centres.

Table 5: Breakdown Of Interviews Conducted

	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3
Learners	4	4	4
Tutors	1	1	1
Managers	1	1	1
Total	6	6	6

3.2.2.3 Learner Interviews

Questions in interview schedule for Learners were very similar to the questions in the questionnaire discussed earlier. The intention was to ask similar questions via two different methods as a means of checking the quality of the data provided by the learners, that is, for triangulation purposes. The four learners interviewed at each

centre were selected randomly from a list of all learners who had filled in the questionnaire. The questionnaire and the interview schedule for learners tended to focus on Critical Question 2 of the present study which is: 'How is the principle of learner centredness reflected in practice?' See Appendix B for the interview schedule for learners.

3.2.2.4 Tutor Interviews

I interviewed one English Level 2 tutor per adult learning centre. The interview for tutors was coupled with the lesson observations to be discussed later in this study. The aim of using the interview and the lesson observation research tools was to obtain similar data via different methods. The questions in the interview schedule for the tutor emerged from the 3 critical questions underpinning this study. See Appendix C for the interview schedule for tutors.

3.2.2.5 Centre Manager Interviews

I interviewed one centre manager from each of the three adult learning centres. The aim of interviewing the centre managers was to gather general data about the centres. In other words, it was more of a situational analysis of the three centres. I wanted to find out how well the adult centres are managed and administered because I believe that a well managed and well administered centre results in good learner and tutor performance. Each interview with centre managers lasted for almost two hours. The interview schedule for centre managers appears in Appendix D.

3.2.2.6 Interview Process

The following process and considerations apply to all the interviews conducted. I believe that this process and considerations helped improve the quality of data collected.

3.2.2.6.1 Prior To The Interview

- I revisited the research purpose and the three critical questions.

- I prepared drafted interview schedules and tried them out with my colleagues at school.
- I sent the interview schedules to my supervisor for comment.
- I made appointments with interviewees two months prior to the interview.
- I visited my prospective interviewees two weeks before the interviews to meet them and to explain the nature of the study. This was important in order that interviewees understood that I was not intending to conduct an inspection on behalf of the Department of Education.
- I phoned and confirmed the dates and times of interviews with the centre manager and the interviewees.

3.2.2.6.2 During The Interview

- I went to the centres half an hour before the scheduled time of the interview.
- I greeted the interviewees in a friendly manner and eased any tension through casual conversation and some jokes. The aim was to establish further rapport with the interviewees.
- I explained the purpose of the interview and what the data will be used for and what the benefits will be for the centre.
- I stressed the guarantee of confidentiality.
- I then proceeded with the interview allowing the interviewees sufficient time to think. I gave the interviewees an option to answer in IsiZulu if they found it difficult to answer in English.
- I recorded their responses verbatim.
- I then asked the interviewees if there was anything else they would like to tell me.
- I thanked the interviewees and closed the interview in a friendly manner.

3.2.2.6.3 After The Interview

- I sent thank you cards to my interviewees.

3.2.3 Classroom Observations

According to Bless and Achola (1990) observation is the recording of events as observed by an outsider. People who feel they are being observed may change their behaviour, become uneasy or stop activities altogether. Thus, although the observation is sometimes conducted on the assumption that the observer merely records facts without interaction with the observed, in reality the observation itself introduces biases by the very fact of the observed person's awareness of being observed.

The observations that I conducted were guided by the following advice:

- Observations serve clearly formulated research purposes, thus observations must be planned systematically, specifying what and how to observe.
- Observations should be recorded in a systematic, objective and standardised way.
- Observations should be subjected to control in order to maintain a high level of objectivity, i.e. many observers should be able to record the same phenomenon or events.

(Bless and Achola, 1990:86-87.)

3.2.3.1 Sampling For Observation

I observed each of the three tutors for five consecutive lessons. A total of 15 lessons across the three centres were therefore conducted. While observing the tutors in action I observed a total of fifty-seven (57) learners participating in class.

The preparation of the observation schedule was largely guided by the focus on the principle of learner-centredness. The aspects of classroom action considered for observation were:

- Seating arrangement
- Tutor's workbook
- Learners' workbook

- Teaching methods
- Learning and Support Materials
- Lesson presentation
- Individual attention
- Relationship between learner and tutor
- Learner motivation
- Learner participation
- Classroom atmosphere
- Assessment strategies

3.2.3.2 Design Of Observation Schedule And Process

Before engaging in the design of the observation schedule, I revisited the purpose and the three critical questions of this study. I then prepared a list of observation items and discussed these with my ABET colleagues. I prepared an observation schedule that included two columns for items for observation listed on the left hand side and spaces for comments on the right hand side. In addition to the written comments I included an Assessment Key that appears on the lesson observation schedule in Appendix E.

In preparation for observation I followed the same procedure as for the interviews. I first consulted the centre managers who facilitated appointments with the respective tutors. I reminded the tutors one week before my visit. I observed the tutors' workbooks a day before the visit. Unfortunately, I could not get a workbook from one tutor until the second day of observation.

During the first two lessons in almost all the centres, both the tutor and the learners were not at ease, that was against my assumptions that tutors are confident to teach even in the presence of an outsider. I believe that the process of observing five lessons helped to improve the quality of the data collected.

3.2.3.3 Sampling consideration

ABET is defined by Baatjes and Mathe as:

The general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs or particular audiences and ideally provides access to nationally recognised certificates. (Baatjes and Mathe, 2004.)

Aitchison et al. (1999) defines a sample as a small part of the population. Bless (1990) explains sampling as the study of the relationship existing between a population and the samples drawn from it. Gilbert (1993) introduces two types of sampling methods namely: probability sampling and purposive sampling. Since the aim of research was exploratory, the 3 ABET centres were purposively chosen such that both government- and NGO-run ABET institutions were included.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Bless and Achola (1990) argue that respondents must be assured that the information given will be treated with confidentiality. That is, they must be assured that data will only be used for the stated purpose of the research and that no other person will have access to data. Assured of these conditions, a respondent will feel free to give honest and complete information. In general, researchers should accept responsibility for protecting their participants' identities (Bless and Achola, 1990:84).

Bless and Achola (1990) stress the importance of including a note of confidentiality with the questionnaire. I included such a note with my questionnaire. I went to the extent of explaining the questionnaire to the respondents. I stressed the confidentiality part. The learners had an option to write their names, but it was not compulsory. I assured the respondents of all the centres that no one except me would have access to their responses.

3.4 Assumptions And Quality Check

My choice of a questionnaire as a data collection tool with learners was based on the assumption that learners at English Level 2 are able to read and write English. I timed my use of questionnaires very well since it was a month before the 2001 ABET Provincial Examinations. My assumption was that the Level 2 English teachers had covered English Unit Standard 2 Outcomes one to four which deal with reading instructions and responding to them. I had great expectation that learners would have no problems filling in the questionnaires. I assumed that the tutors were professional enough not to fill in the questionnaire for learners. However, to my disappointment, it seemed that the tutor at one centre dictated responses to some of the learners. These questionnaires were not used and replaced by a new set of questionnaires.

3.5 Measures To Check The Correctness Of Data

One of the ways I used to ascertain that the data that I collected was correct was to collect the questionnaires from the learners myself. I collected the questionnaires before the lesson from those who came early and, on the same day, after the lesson from those who came late to class. I even went to the respondents' workplace to collect the questionnaires. While collecting the questionnaires I orally asked the respondents a few questions in IsiZulu from the questionnaire with the aim to check if their written responses matched their oral responses.

The other strategy I used to ascertain the accuracy of data was to use similar questions in more than one tool, that is, triangulation. I included some of the questions in both the Questionnaire for learners and the Interview for learners. For example:

Questionnaire: (Refer to Appendix A)

- What have you learned in your English class, that you feel has made a difference in your life?

Interview for learners (Refer to Appendix A)

- Have you learned anything that has really made a difference in your life? What?

Using the comparative strategy helped me identify incorrect data. I would advise prospective researchers to try the strategies I employed as they worked well for me and I am convinced that the data I collected is correct.

3.6 Research Methodology Summary

Table 6: Research Methodology Summary

RESEARCH AIM	To investigate how Adult Education Educators know, understand and interpret the principle of learner-centredness in adult basic education and training (ABET) centres in Pietermaritzburg				
RESEARCH APPROACH	Qualitative				
RESEARCH METHOD	Case Study				
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	Sources of Information	Techniques of collecting data	Research tools	Likely Problems	Assumptions
1. How do ABET tutors understand the principle of learner-centredness?	Literature of the principle of learner-centredness Own experience ABET tutors	Interviews Lesson observation	Interview Questions for tutors Interview questions for centre managers	Some of the tutors might not know or understand the principle of learner-centredness	Most ABET tutors who had undergone training should understand the principle of learner-centredness.
2. To what extent are ABET tutors informed about the ABET policy and the ABET Act regarding the principle of learner-centredness?	Centre Managers ABET directorate ABET tutors Literature on learner-centredness Own experience	Interviews Document Analysis Comparison with Literature findings	Interview Questions for tutors Interview Questions for learners	The interviewees might be intimidated by the researcher. The ABET tutors might dictate the Questionnaire responses to the learners	All 3 tutors to be investigated were informed
3. How is the principle of learner-centredness reflected in practice, that is, in curriculum design, assessment needs identification and needs analysis?	ABET tutors ABET learners Own experience Information from Manaye, Tembalelu and Zamani ABET centres	Lesson observation Document analysis Interviews	Lesson observation sheet Questionnaires for learners Literature	Pre-taught lessons might be taught. Tutors might feel uncomfortable. Learners might not perform well because of the researcher's presence.	The 3 tutors will perform satisfactorily since they have attended most ABET workshops.

3.7 Conclusion

The research strategies I used to collect data namely: Questionnaires, Interviews and Observation worked well for me. I was able to collect the data I required for my study. I am now in a good position to answer the three critical questions. More details on the data collected will be discussed in the next chapter titled 'Research Findings'.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a presentation and discussion of the research findings based on data that was collected from three ABET centres in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.

Given that a small number of centres was studied in an in-depth manner, the data provides a window into three ABET classes and cannot be seen to be representative of the entire ABET field. The data collected provides answers to the three critical questions of the present study, namely:

- How do ABET tutors understand the principle of learner-centredness?
- To what extent are ABET tutors informed about ABET policies and the ABET Act regarding the principle of learner-centredness?
- How is the principle of learner-centredness reflected in practice, that is, in curriculum design, classroom interaction, assessment, needs identification and needs analysis?

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part One (under section numbered 4.2) deals with the three critical questions stated above. Part Two (under section numbered 4.3) will provide a broader analysis and discussions using a combination of different findings. The bulk of the findings of this study will be analysed in terms of the principle of learner-centredness, learners' needs and the Unit Standards (Department of Education, SAQA, 2000) introduced in earlier chapters.

4.2 Tutors' Understanding Of The Principle Of Learner-Centredness

A basic principle in ABET is that the learning programme should be informed by the principle of learner-centredness which includes consideration of learners' needs as discussed earlier. According to the ABET Policy Document (1995), learner-centredness is the principle where the classroom interaction process puts learners first. The learning programme is based on the learners' knowledge, skills and experience. A learning programme should aim at responding to the learners' needs and aspirations (Department of Education, ABET Policy Document 1997:13). An analysis of the learning programmes of the three ABET centres and how such programmes originated is presented below after a discussion on the tutors' understanding of the concept of learner-centredness.

4.2.1 ABET Tutors' Views On Learner-Centredness

The principle of learner-centredness is intended to inform all the ABET learning programmes. It was important to investigate if the tutors of the three ABET centres know and understand the principle of learner-centredness. Below is what the three ABET tutors reported:

Centre 3: "Yes, I think I know. It means paying more attention to a learner when teaching."

Centre 2: "Mh... It means consulting the adult learner in all that you do... even before assessment."

Centre 1: "Learner-centredness means putting learners first. Basing all the teaching and learning on the learner. It is like Batopele¹. I have to plan together with my learners."

¹ Batopele: The S A Government's initiative of putting people first.

The above responses from the three ABET tutors, indicate the tutors do, in fact, know what the principle of learner-centredness is about. However, it is interesting to note that when tutors were asked if they had indeed considered the learners' needs, a central feature of learner-centredness, when designing their learning programmes, the tutors from Centre 2 and Centre 3 said they had not done so. This interesting finding will be discussed more fully later.

4.2.2 ABET Learning Programmes

An analysis of the learning programmes of the ABET centres was seen to be important in that they provide a good indicator of learner-centredness in ABET practice. The content or topics included in learning programmes and the process used to construct learning programmes offers an opportunity to assess the extent to which the curricula at the ABET centres had considered the learners present in these centres. This part of the chapter therefore takes an in-depth look at the learning programmes in the centres and compares these programmes with learners' needs, interests and hobbies.

4.2.3 ABET Learning Programmes Topics

Among the topics that formed the learning programmes of the ABET Level 2 English in the three learning centres visited were:

Table 7: Learning Programmes Across All Three Centres

<u>LIFE SKILLS TOPICS</u>	<u>BUSINESS/WORK TOPICS</u>
Filling- in forms	Providing transport to community
Reading newspapers	Small Business
Speaking English	My Work
Compiling a CV	Budgeting
Interpreting Pictures	Domestic work
Budgeting Application Letters	Work History Tenders (Application)
Greetings	Job description
Deposit Slips	Pay Slips

Using an ATM Advertisements	Work Hours and breaks Leave Job advertisement
<u>SOCIAL PROBLEMS</u> HIV/AIDS Cholera Drugs Unemployment Street children Pollution Rape	<u>GENERAL TOPICS</u> Human rights Tenses Other countries Seasons of the year/Calendar Compiling a project Voting
<u>PERSONAL PROFILES</u> Myself/Autobiography My family Curriculum Vitae	<u>MEDIA NEWS</u> Newspapers Television Radio

The table above reflects topics in the learning programmes of the three ABET centres arranged into six categories. Just over half the topics covered by the three ABET centres relate to Life Skills and Business/Work. The topics in these categories are about improving the livelihoods of learners and this could explain their prominence in the learning programmes. Social Problems was the next largest category of topics, followed by General Topics such as human rights, seasons, voting, etc.

Table 8: Topics Included In Learning Programmes Of Individual ABET PALCs

CENTRE 1	CENTRE 2	CENTRE 3
* Application letters * Advertisements * HIV/AIDS	* Letters * Advertisements * HIV/AIDS	* Letters * Advertisements * HIV/AIDS

* Street children	* Street kids	* Street kids
* My work	* Myself	* Myself
* Work hours & breaks	* Work	* Working hours
* Rape	* Rape	English
Using ATM	Leaves	Leave matters
Filling in forms	Maps	Greetings
Small business	Pictures	Pictures
Compiling CV	Application letters	Family violence
Tenders (applications)	Pay slips	Diseases
Job description	Reading English	Transport
Pay slips	Speaking English	Tenses
Picture codes	Unemployment	Language structures
Leave matters	Slips	Projects
Diseases	Greetings	Work matters
Budgeting	Tenses	My family
Drugs	Calendar/Seasons of the	My friend
Autobiography	year	Calendar
Deposit slips	Transport	Television
Pollution	Radio	Life history
Human rights	Television	Debates
Disasters/Accidents	Reading	Past tense
Domestic Violence	Videos	Future tense
My family		Nouns
Calendar		Verbs
Newspapers		
Television		
Radio		
* = Most common topics		

Looking across the learning programmes of the three centres it is noted that all three ABET centres have topics that relate to social problems such as HIV/AIDS, rape, street children and domestic violence. The reason for such inclusion may be because ABET tutors presume that ABET learners would be interested in such social problems

given the high prevalence of these problems in the communities where learners come from.

Work related topics like “my work”, “hours of work”, “unemployment”, “application letters” and “curriculum vitae” are common topics across the three centres. The reason for this might be that most learners across the three centres are employed persons. Those that are not employed are likely to be looking for work, hence, these are topics that would help them with this task.

Topics relating to media such as radio, television and newspapers are also common among the three ABET centres under study. The reason for such inclusion may be that the ABET tutors from the centres use media as part of their learning and support materials.

4.2.4 Abet Learners' Needs

Given that 2 tutors had not conducted a needs assessment, the data in Table 9 was recorded during interviews with learners from the three centres.

Table 9: Abet Learners' Needs (Articulated by learners)

CENTRE 1	CENTRE 2	CENTRE 3
Speaking English HIV/AIDS Reading newspapers Filling in forms Know about work Know ATM Compiling CV Budgeting Application letter Television	Speaking English HIV/AIDS Reading English Reading Pay Learn about work slip Forms Tuberculosis (TB) Cholera	Speaking English HIV/AIDS Reading English Helping with children's homework

Radio		
Street children		
Drugs		
Domestic Violence		
Work		
Myself		

It is clear from Table 9 that there are common needs among the learners across the ABET centres. As would be expected in ABET classes, learning to speak and read English is a common need. Most learners are workers and it may be that in the workplace they are sometimes faced with the challenge of speaking and reading English. Becoming competent in the language of the workplace may also be seen as important for better positions.

The other frequent learners' need expressed, is learning about HIV/AIDS. This is probably because the ABET learners might be directly affected or infected by HIV/AIDS or they have family members or friends who are.

It is evident from the data collected, that learners have a variety of needs which the tutors must identify, prioritise and analyse, otherwise if the learners' needs are not catered for in the learning programme, then they drop out of school (Rogers, 2004).

Newman (1979) stresses the importance of learner-centredness in the learning process when he states that "Adult education is a cruel test of the tutor's skills. It is a sink or a swim business. If the tutor does not have what it takes, people stop coming. The learners vote with their feet" (Newman, 1979:66). The warning from Newman is that ABET tutors should base all their learning programmes on the learners' needs and aspirations, if they want to keep learners in their classes. Newman implies that the learners should be taught using the correct and relevant learning and support materials.

4.2.5 Comparisons Of Learner Needs And Learning Programmes

Eishner (1996) believes that the principle of learner-centredness involves the learners' active participation in designing the learning programme. The wide range of needs stems from the fact that adult learners are mature enough to know what they want in life and it is for that reason that they should be fully involved in all the activities pertaining to their learning. That is what the principle of learner-centredness is all about (Eishner 1969:24).

A comparison of learners needs (Table 9) and learning programmes (Table 8) provides an opportunity to assess the extent to which learning programmes are learner-centred.

It has been shown earlier that all three tutors understood to some extent the principle of learner-centredness. In an attempt to establish if the ABET tutors were aware of the learners' needs, I asked for the learners' needs assessment records. I discovered that the learners' needs assessment records were not available in Centre 2 and Centre 3. This state of affairs indicated lack of knowledge and lack of awareness of the ABET Policy (p.7) by the two tutors. When the tutors of the three centres were asked whether they thought it was important to base the learning programme on the learners' needs, they all said they thought it was important. But two of them reported that they had not conducted needs analysis, needs identification and needs assessment in their classes. Only the tutor from Centre 1 reported to have formally conducted needs identification, needs assessment and needs analysis. The tutor from Centre 1 based her learning programme on the learners' needs as articulated by the learners. This is the reason why there is very little difference between the needs table and the tutor's learning programme for Centre 1.

The tutors from Centre 2 and Centre 3 reported that they had not conducted needs identification, needs assessment and needs analysis. A comparison of the learning programmes of these two centres (Table 8) with the expressed needs of learners in these centres (Table 9) shows a strong overlap between learning programmes and needs. In Centre 2 the learning programme addressed nearly 75% of the learners'

needs. In Centre 3, the learning programme that had been developed in that Centre covered close to 100% of learners needs, although the list here was very short. This finding was surprising as I had expected that the lack of needs identification, assessment and analysis in Centres 2 and 3 would have led to learning programmes that were not related to learners' needs.

There are several possible explanations for this finding. It is possible that tutors past experience and intuition have made them intimately aware of learners' needs and this has allowed them to develop learning programmes without having to assess needs. While in this instance they had achieved a state that I would call *coincidental learner-centredness*, this process or lack of process can carry risks. Not all learner groups are the same. It is possible that a new group may have specific needs that previous groups did not have. Furthermore, not all tutors may have such an intuitive command and centre managers should not allow for needs analysis to be dispensed with. A further possible explanation, is that tutors may have been assessing learners needs informally. For example, a tutor was aware that someone in the class was raped and that another learner was a victim of domestic violence. This is a more subtle needs assessment and a form of *indirect learner-centredness*. I found this finding to be an interesting lesson for a new researcher. Some answers to questions need to be probed or checked against other data. This is the value of triangulation in research.

A further interesting finding, is that when I asked learners if the ABET tutors had asked them about their needs, most of the learners indicated that they had been consulted in this way. I view the responses from learners as stemming from the expert and professional power the tutors have over the learners. The learners have high respect for the tutors. The learners would do everything in their power to save their tutors' image, especially in front of a stranger like myself. A learner regards the tutor as a person who knows everything. This kind of power could have possibly affected the validity of this part of my data. I advise future researchers to be careful of the tutors' expert and professional power when conducting research.

I also suspected that some learners were not free to articulate their needs because the tutors asked them to articulate their needs in English, the language most learners are not very conversant with. Some learners were not happy to articulate their needs in

front of the other fellow learners because they thought other learners might laugh at them. Others thought their needs were their secret. One learner from one ABET centre once said, "How can I reveal my secret in public"? Interviews with learners confirmed that they were not comfortable speaking in English. From this finding it would then be advisable for future researchers to conduct needs analysis in the learners' home language. My assumption about the learners' English language competence was not justified.

When I asked one learner from one of the other ABET centres to articulate his need to me, he asked "Why should I tell you my needs? How are you going to help me? My teacher asked me one day, but I could not answer him".

The responses from the above learners were an indication that the tutors concerned did not sit down with the learners and explain the significance of needs identification.

Knowles argues that:

One of the characteristics of adult learners is that they come to class with intentions and needs they should be encouraged to articulated their learning needs. Need relates to the learners' motivation to learn. If learners see their needs are met by what they are studying, they will be more motivated to learn. (Knowles, 1978:24.)

Fotheringham (1998) supports Knowles by stating that needs assessment can be an important tool for planning any learning course for adult learners. A needs assessment can help develop a learning programme based on the real needs of the learners that it is serving. As time is often limited in ABET classes, a learning programme which takes learners' needs into account can ensure that what is most useful for learners is covered (Fotheringham, 1998:1).

One of the main principles in the ABET Policy Document (1997) is that all the ABET activities should be informed by the learners' needs. In other words learners' needs should form the basis for all the learning activities (ABET Policy Documents, 1997:12).

The implications of the above principle is that the ABET Directorate must make an effort to develop ABET tutors on needs' identification, needs assessment and needs analysis. The learning programmes should stem from learners' needs. If the ABET tutors do not take learners' needs seriously, they might find themselves without jobs because learners might drop out if their needs are not addressed in class (Rogers 2004:28). Despite the teachers not finding out what the learners' needs were, their lessons appeared to coincidentally match the learners' needs. Centre managers should play a role in ensuring that tutors conduct fresh needs analysis with each group of learners coming to their class.

4.2.6 Topics Most Liked And Topics Which Impact On Learners' Lives

Learners were also asked about which topics in their learning programme they had enjoyed the most and which topics had made an impact on their lives. Tables 10 and 11 contain learners' responses to these questions.

Table 10: Topics Liked Most By Learners

CENTRE 1	CENTRE 2	CENTRE 3
HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS
Autobiography	Autobiography	Autobiography
Kokstad bus accident	Unemployment	Debates
Ellis Park disaster	Advertisements	Transport
Discussions	Grammar tables	Cholera
Filling in forms	Calendar	Diseases
My work	Maps	
Street children		

A number of factors influence the appeal of any given topic, including teaching approach, learning support material, enthusiasm of educator etcetera. There was a fair amount of variation in terms of learners most favourite or enjoyed topics. Only two topics appeared in the lists of all three centres and these were 'Autobiography' and

‘HIV/AIDS’. The popularity of ‘Autobiography’ as a topic is especially relevant to this study as it indicates that learners enjoy topics in which all of them talk or write about themselves. This is a topic that creates an opportunity for everyone to participate equally, as every learner could be considered to be an expert on the topic. More importantly, given the focus of this study, what learners are indicating in this selection is that learner-centred topics are what they enjoy. ABET tutors and managers of ABET centres should take note of this and maximise that inclusion of such learner-centred topics in the programmes offered at their centres.

The other frequently liked topic is that of ‘HIV/AIDS’. As indicated earlier, this social problem is very common in the lives of most South Africans. Learners in these centres could be indicating that they enjoyed the inclusion of a topic of such relevance and importance. If this is so, then learners are once again pointing to the need for learner-centred learning programmes. It is noteworthy that the topic ‘HIV/AIDS’ that was voted as a ‘most liked’ topic, was also listed as a learning need by learners, as reflected in Table 9.

In addition to the topics ‘Autobiography’ and ‘HIV/AIDS’ it would appear that learners enjoyed topics of a contemporary nature, such as recent disasters and accidents, and debates.

Table 11: Topics Which Impacted On Learners' Lives

The data on topics which impacted on learners' lives, was captured from ABET learners' responses during interviews (refer Appendix B) and from responses to Questionnaires (refer Appendix F).

CENTRE 1	CENTRE 2	CENTRE 3
Myself/Autobiography Reading newspapers Writing projects Budgeting	Myself Reading newspapers Speaking English well Project	Myself Reading newspapers Reading and writing English

HIV/AIDS Advertisements ATM Filling in forms	Job advertisements Comprehension Test	Bank deposit slips
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From the table above, topics which had the most impact on the learners' lives are 'Autobiography/Myself' and 'Reading newspapers'. The popularity of 'Autobiography' as a topic has been discussed in the previous section. That this topic has been mentioned as having impacted on the learners' lives could be because it allowed for learners to be affirmed and to get to know each other.

Reading newspapers, such as Ilanga, Sowetan, Echo, The Witness and The Mirror, was also listed as having had an impact. This could be because of the sense of accomplishment learners feel in being part of a literate society (Rogers, 2004). It was also noted in the previous section that learners tended to enjoy topics of a contemporary or newsworthy nature, such as disasters and accidents, and debates. There the learners enjoyment of such topics would support the indication that reading newspapers does impact on learners' lives.

It should also be noted that 'Reading newspapers' and 'Reading English' was listed as needs by learners (see Table 9). When learners' needs are addressed by a learning programme it is expected then that they would experience this as having an impact on their lives. This is why learner-centred programmes are important and experienced as meaningful by learners.

4.2.7 Learners' Hobbies

I thought that it would be interesting to collect data on learners' hobbies. Hobbies are of a personal nature and provide a good indicator of what a person is interested in. In this way, hobbies could be a good source of information when developing a learning programme, especially if one is aiming for learner-centred programmes.

Below, are some direct quotes from learners about their hobbies :

THEMBA (Centre 1)	:	I like listening to Gospel music and going to church.
MAUREEN (Centre 1)	:	I like reading and watching TV.
MAGEBA (Centre 2)	:	Thisha, I like playing soccer.
DORRIS (Centre 2)	:	I visit friends, watch TV and read newspapers.
NDABO (Centre 3)	:	I visit friends and go hunting with my dogs.
DARLY (Centre 3)	:	I go to movies, listen to music and watch TV.

Note: fictitious names used.

The table below provides a fuller picture of learners' hobbies from the three ABET centres.

Table 12: ABET Learners' Hobbies

CENTRE 1	No.	CENTRE 2	No.	CENTRE 3	No.
Music (listening)	6	Music (listening)	4	Music (listening)	5
Music (singing)	5	Watching TV	4	Watching TV	4
Watch TV	5	Playing sport	3	Playing sport	4
Playing sport	5	Reading	3	Reading	4
Reading	4	Writing	3	Writing	3
Drawing and writing	4	Visiting friends	3	Movies	3
Movies	3	Going to church	3	Visiting friends	3
Visiting friends	3			Hunting	1
Going to church	2				
Gardening	1				

The table above indicates that the two most popular pastime activities among the learners of Centre 1, Centre 2 and Centre 3 are listening to music, watching television, playing sport, reading and visiting friends. Given that most of the learners are employed, it is not surprising that learners enjoy taking part in relaxing activities like watching TV, listening to music, reading newspapers, and many more. Including

these pastime activities in learning programmes would indicate observance of the principle of learner-centredness as Eishner (1969) has argued. When going through the learning programmes (Table 8), I could locate only three of the hobbies listed above, namely, watching TV, listening to the radio and reading. This indicated that the tutors may not have treated the hobbies of learners as important aspects to be included in their learning programmes.

The above findings pose a challenge to the designers of learning programmes to consider the learners' hobbies as well when designing learning programmes. One would recommend that the facilitators in the ABET learning centres include aspects like hobbies during the needs identification exercise. This could be done by raising awareness to learners that a human being is made up of a number of life aspects such as the social aspect, recreational, historical, religious, technological, economical, etc. Learners should then indicate what their needs are in all aspects of their lives.

4.2.8 To What Extent Are ABET Tutors Informed About The ABET Policies And ABET Act Regarding The Principle Of Learners-Centredness?

In order for ABET tutors to be competent in the field of ABET, they need to be familiar with the ABET documents. During my visit to the ABET centres, I investigated if the ABET tutors are in possession, and know the contents of ABET documents, like the ABET Policy Document of 1995 (Department of Education), The Multi-Year Implementation Plan of 1997 (Education Department), ABET Procedures of 1998 (Department of Education), ABET Act of 2000 and the Unit Standards Documents of 2000 (SAQA 2000)

I discovered during my visit to the centre, that two tutors, from Centre 2 and Centre 3, did not have copies of the ABET Policy Document of 1995 which is the basic ABET document. Only the tutor from Centre 1 was in possession of the ABET Policy Document of 1995. The centre managers of the two centres should follow the ABET Procedures Document of 1998 which expects the managers to provide induction for the new tutors at ABET centres. It is also the managers' responsibility to provide the

new tutors with the relevant materials. This brings me to recommend that the ABET coordinators and Education Specialists should visit PALCs to monitor if the ABET tutors have all the necessary ABET Policies at their disposal, and to ensure that the tutors understand such policies.

4.2.9 Supervision of Learners' Workbooks

I noted that when it comes to the supervision of learners' workbooks, two of the tutors used red pens when marking learner's workbook. I found this to be a deviation from the ABET Procedures Document of 1998 which recommends that a lead pencil be used when marking ABET learners' work. The other tutor used a lead pencil as recommended. According to the policy document when a lead pencil is used a learner has the option of rubbing out the lead pencil markings if he or she chooses to. The most important reason for using a lead pencil is to acknowledge that adult learners are adults who don't need to be embarrassed with comments and marks made in red pens as is the case in the mainstream schools.

I found the issue of marking with red pens quite interesting and then decided to find out how learners from each of the three ABET centres feel about the red pens, and this is what they had to say:

Sthembile Nkosi from Centre 1: "Ma'm always marks our books with a lead pencil. Most of us wonder why because all the schools use red pens for marking. I would like my work to be marked in red pen."

M. Goba from Centre 2: "Our teacher started by using a lead pencil, but we all insisted that she uses a red pen. She did and we are all happy."

G. Mkhize from Centre 3: "The teacher has always used a red pen for marking and we like it."

What makes the above finding more interesting is that the ABET tutor from Centre 1 who tends to follow the ABET policies and meets the ABET learners' needs, finds

herself in a position where she has to ignore the learners' requests to use a red pen, and to abide by the ABET Procedures Document of 1998 which recommends the use of a lead pencil, even though the learners do not like it. On the other hand the other two ABET tutors, one from Centre 2 and one from Centre 3, satisfy the requests of their learners by using red pens, at the expense of the recommendation from the ABET policy.

The above finding raises the issue that not all ABET policies satisfy ABET learners' needs or requests even though they are intended to improve the functionality of ABET centres. This will put ABET tutors into the difficult situation to choose between abiding by the ABET Policy and ignoring the policy and satisfying ABET learners' needs.

Newman (1979) and Rogers (2004) remind ABET tutors to base all their programmes on the ABET learners' needs if they want to keep learners in their classes, because if they don't cater for the learners' needs the learners will stop attending because learners vote with their feet (Newman, 1979:66; Rogers 2004:63). What the finding on use of red pens indicates, is that sometimes responding to learners needs may bring tutors into conflict with policy and their employers. Learner-centredness must therefore have limits.

4.2.10 ABET Learner Admissions

The youngest learner from the ABET centres was 18 years old. The oldest learner was 50 years. The appropriate age range of learners at the three centres visited, is an indication that tutors admit the correct ABET target age group which is 16 years and above. This implies that ABET tutors were aware of the Policy regarding age (ABET Act of 2000). This relates to critical question three of the present study, and provides possible evidence for the question, 'To what extent are ABET tutors informed about the ABET Policy and the ABET Act?'

4.2.11 ABET Tutors' Workbook

I analysed the ABET tutors' workbooks as part of the research. The purpose of including this form of document in my study was to investigate if the tutor has a workbook where he or she keeps all teaching materials such as learners's profiles, learning programmes, lesson plans, learners' needs, year planner and assessment records. The availability of the workbook with all the required terms would possibly indicate that the ABET tutor complies with the Pietermaritzburg Region ABET Procedures Documents (1998), which states that all the ABET tutors should be in possession of a workbook consisting of the items that appear in Appendix E of this study.

At Centre 1 the tutor's workbook was available from the first day. From the other two centres it was available on the second and third days. The reasons cited by the two tutors for not having their workbooks at the time, ranged from forgetting it at home to having loaned it to a colleague from the other ABET centre. What I read from the unavailability of tutor's workbook was that they might not be aware of the ABET programme Procedures Documents 1998, which clearly states that a tutor should always have his or her workbook when he or she goes to class.

4.2.12 Class Visits By Centre Managers

I also discovered that the supervisors of the two ABET centres do not visit classes often and do not check the tutors' workbooks. After the first lessons I went to the supervisors and asked them when last they had visited classes and had checked the tutor's workbooks. One supervisor said that he has never visited a class. The other one said he does it every two months. My interpretation of this state of affairs was that the ABET tutors from the two ABET centres and supervisors do not implement the ABET Procedures Document 1998 which clearly states a supervisor has four periods for supervision per week. The effects of this might be a drop in the teaching and learning standards. Also the tutors might not do their work professionally which might result in the learners becoming demotivated and dropping out of the ABET centre which could eventually lead to the closure of the ABET centre.

4.2.13 Choice of Learning And Support Materials (LASMs)

When the tutors from Centre 2 and Centre 3 were asked about the learning and support materials they use, they said that they sometimes use the books used by children in mainstream education, such as English Learners' Books for Grade 7 and Grade 9. I found the use of children's books for teaching adult learners a serious contradiction of the ABET Act of 2000, which states that appropriate books for ABET learners should be used. The use of children's books could be seen as a serious move away from learner-centred ABET practice. Tutors indicated that the lack of supply of relevant ABET material forced them to use school texts.

4.2.14 How Is The Principle Of Learner-Centredness Reflected In Practice

Table 13: Occupations Of Learners In Sample

	Domestic workers	General Assistants	Skilled	Unemployed
Number of learners	10	14	4	2
Percentage	33.3%	46.7%	13.0%	7.0%

Ten of the thirty learners involved in this study are domestic workers from the city, suburbs and the townships. Fourteen of the thirty are general assistants including messengers, office cleaners, gardeners, handy people and street cleaners. Four of the thirty learners are skilled workers including a machine operator, two drivers, a motor mechanic and a plumber. Two learners are unemployed. Of the two unemployed, one has been retrenched and one has never worked.

All three tutors stated that the occupations of learners was most influential when designing the learning programmes. Two tutors confirmed that their learning programmes are job-related. The question that becomes important here is whether the

tutors consider the aspects of learners' lives, such as Hobbies, Social Activities, etc. when designing ABET learning programmes. The principle of learner-centredness implies looking at each learner as a total being, meaning that all aspects of the learner's life should be taken into account. The emphasis on the occupation of learners has led to the oversight of the aspects of the learners' lives, for example, Hobbies, which was discussed in detail earlier. This means that tutors were failing to fully practice the principle of learner-centredness.

I subsequently discovered that the learning programme topics given by two of the tutors were largely influenced by the learning and support materials used by the learners and tutors. I discovered that the tutors used the prescribed textbooks and workbooks to design their learning programmes. The danger with the textbook approach is that learners might be taught what they don't want to learn because the contents of the books might not relate to their needs. That might lead to learners dropping out of school. The quality of the learning and support materials used such as "ABET Functional English Level 2, was good and they were arranged according to the Unit Standards that give direction to all the ABET learning activities. But it does not matter how good the book is, if it is not relevant to the learners' needs, it will not be appropriate and meaningful for learners.

It should be recalled that of the three tutors observed and interviewed, only one tutor (from Centre 1) was able to reflect the principle of learner-centredness in practice in terms of her ability to identify, analyse and assess the learners' needs. Her ability to use such information to design a learning programme was completely relevant to the learners and was reflected in her ability to properly manage learners during classroom interaction. The learners in this tutor's class tended to contribute in classroom activities freely and readily. They seemed free to attempt things. The attendance in this class was also very good, even during bad weather. At the beginning of the year there were 25 learners in this class. At the time of conducting the research, this tutor had 38 learners in her class, which is a big class indeed. The learners seem to be satisfied with what they were offered in class. I recorded one learner commending the teacher. The learner said, "Do you know what, because of our teacher's good work I am now able to fill in a bank withdrawal slip. I filled it in without any assistance this morning".

The above comment indicates that the learners are satisfied with what they learn in this class. Reflecting on my observations and interview with this tutor from Centre 1, I believe that this tutor stands out because she always consults her learners, which indicates that she treats them like adults. Also, this tutor visits other centres to learn how other tutors do their work. She also consults ABET trainers and coordinators for advice. She reads a lot of ABET books from her bookshelves. I saw about ten books on ABET on her shelves. Various observations made me believe that this ABET tutor showed signs of good professional practice and the ability to apply principles of learner-centredness in practice. Such a tutor could be a role model for other tutors. In terms of future research, it would be interesting to conduct some case study or life-history research with such a tutor to more fully understand what makes her such a good tutor.

From the data I collected from the three centres, and from my experience as an ABET Provincial Trainer, I would like to recommend that the ABET tutors visit other centres for networking purposes and also to consult Provincial Trainers for professional assistance in an attempt to be in a position to reflect the principle of learner-centredness in practice. The Department should also consider creating opportunities for tutors to network and learn from each other. Tutors who are good role models may be able to assist in the development of other tutors. There is also the need for more in-depth studies that could clarify an understanding of the elements of good practice and what creates good practitioners.

4.2.15 Learner Workbooks

I was happy to discover that tutors in all three ABET centres had given learners written work. In two of the centres the written work in the learners' workbooks was evidence of what the learners said when asked about the lesson topics they had learnt. The other centre had written work, but the work in the workbooks did not exactly match with what the learners and the tutor said. I then concluded that the tutor did not have proper planning after looking at her Year Planner which was distorted.

As mentioned earlier, the advantage of the two centres that had proper learning programmes was that the LASMS they use are relevant to the learners' needs. The kind of workbooks they use is the primer material, that is learners read and write in the same book. I found this kind of workbook very suitable for the adult learners, because the questions and answers are in the same book, and there is no chance of separating the two. When responding to questions they respond to relevant questions. Over and above the primer workbooks, the learners had extra exercise books for journal entries. This is good practice for the skill of diarising.

4.2.16 Class Seating And Interaction

When observing lessons at the three centres I saw how the tutors dealt with aspects like seating arrangements, teaching methods, introductions, lesson steps, lesson conclusion, content, individual attention, relationship between learner and tutor, learner motivation, learner participation and assessment strategies. The way the tutor handled the learners and lesson as a whole, provided me with an indication of whether the tutor is able to reflect the principle of learner-centredness in practice, that is, in the classroom situation.

Taba says that the classroom should be organised in a way that suits the adult learners (Taba, 1979:62). From the three centres visited, the most common seating arrangements were:

- Sitting in pairs
- Small groups of 3 or 4
- U-shaped (horseshoe)
- Semi-circle

The tutors mixed with the learners during lessons, that is, they sat with the learners and discussed the learning material with them.

I found this kind of seating arrangement suitable for adult learners. It allows the tutor to see all the learners. It is easy to identify a learner that has a problem with a certain

activity. It promotes freedom to express oneself. I found learners feel free to try new things without fear that the larger class might laugh at him or her. In one of the classrooms there was a lady who could not speak in front of the whole class, but once she got into smaller groups she expressed herself freely. The learners feel the tutor is one of them. Some of the comments I heard from learners were: "She is one of us," "She understands us," "She is always with us," "She is one of us. She treats us like adults," "What can I say about her? She is down to earth".

I noticed a great deal of individual attention taking place in this kind of seating arrangement because once a tutor notices a learner who seemed to experience problems, she immediately moved straight to the learner to assist him or her. In one of the lessons I noticed one ABET learner who could not spell the word 'because'. The tutor went close to him and provided him with the correct spelling.

These kind of seating arrangements observed at the three centres, are recommended in the ABET Procedures Document of 1998 because they are said to be learner-friendly. They make it possible for the tutor to listen to the learners' views and ideas which is one of the characteristics of the principle of learner-centredness.

During the class observation I noticed that the three ABE tutors I observed, related more to male learners than female learners. That had a bearing on the classroom interaction. I asked the tutors why the males were given more attention. One tutor said, "the females are scared to speak in the whole class, they prefer smaller groups". The other tutor said, "The females are clever, it's only that they are lazy to talk". The third tutor said, "It is easy to attract female learners to class, but it is not easy to attract male learners to class, so if males have come to class, one needs to make all the means to retain them." The ways in which gender affects tutor-learner interaction and learner-learner relationships is a worthwhile area for future research. The ways in which traditional gender relations in society affect classroom interaction worthy of investigation in South Africa.

4.2.17 Teaching Methods

The success and failure of any lesson depends on the teaching method used by a tutor (Fotheringham, 1998:22). The teaching methods used in the three ABET centres visited are displayed in the table below.

Table 14: Teaching Methods Used At The Three ABET Centres

Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3
Group work Telling Discussion Panel Interviews Research	Group work Telling Discussion Question and Answer	Group work Telling Discussion Question and Answer

Group work is one of the teaching methods that is encouraged in the new educational teaching approach known as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (1995). Group work is also recommended in the ABET Procedures Document of 1998. When one looks at the table above one notices that the method of group work was used in all three ABET centres visited.

Referring to Table 14 above, one notices that another popular teaching method in the three centres visited is the 'discussion method'. This method is highly recommended for adult learners by both the ABET Procedures Document of 1998 and The Policy Document on Adult Education (1997). Use of this method at the three centres is testimony that the three tutors reflect the policies in practice. The three tutors' use of the discussion method supports Bergevin's (1963) argument that the discussion method is one of the most frequently employed teaching methods in the education of adult learners. Whilst the learners were discussing I noticed that they were free to express their ideas and their views. The learners were from time to time called upon to share their experiences with other fellow learners. The consideration of learners' views, ideas and experiences by the tutors in the ABET centres during discussion makes the discussion method relevant to the principle of learner-centredness since the

values of learners' views, ideas and experiences form the basis for the principle of learner-centredness (Bergevin, 1963:95).

Even though the tutor from Centre 3 used two methods, namely group work and discussion methods, she often used the telling method. In this method, the tutor is the one speaking most of the time. The learners were passive for almost 90% of the lessons I observed where the telling method was used. Kraak (1999) condemns the use of the telling method. He argues that treating learners as empty vessels that have to be filled with knowledge and regarding learners as passive recipients or rote learners, deprive many learners of adequate opportunities to realise their full potential. I also feel that using the telling method for ABET learners does not allow for the principle of learner-centredness to be put into practice (Kraak, 1999:43).

At one of the centres, the lesson topics started with the learners. The English Level 2 tutor used to start by writing the topic on the board and then asked the questions:

- What do you know about this?
- What can you buy?
- Say something about this.

Her approach invited the learners to participate fully in the lesson. I think it is relevant to the Policy Document's (1995) definition of learner-centredness. It says learner-centredness is the condition where the teaching process puts learners first. It recognises and builds on the learners' knowledge and experiences (Policy Document of ABET, 1995:29).

At the conclusion of each lesson she gives learners an opportunity to evaluate the lesson. She asked questions like:

- Did you enjoy the lesson?
- What exactly did you enjoy or not enjoy?
- If you were to improve the lesson, what would you do?

The other two tutors did a bit of learner involvement as the above-mentioned tutor did, but not as comprehensively as she did. For instance, the other two tutors did not prod the quiet learners into being part of the lesson and they did not give the learners the opportunity to evaluate the lessons, like she did. I found the practice of according the learners an opportunity to evaluate lessons fitting into the principle of learner-centredness because, for the tutor to ask for comments, it means that she recognises the learners' worth and sends them a message of respect. Recognising learners' worth and respecting them as adults is one of the characteristics of the principle of learner-centredness.

4.2.18 Enrolment And Changes In Class Size

Reference has been made to the finding that learners vote with their feet (Rogers, 2004). It was therefore important to consider learner enrolment and subsequent changes in class size. I noted significant changes in class size at the three centres. At Centre 3 there were twenty-two learners at the beginning of the year but during my visit at the centre there were only eleven learners remaining - a drop-out of 50%. The enrolment at Centre 2 had dropped by only two learners. At Centre 1 the enrolment went up by 52%.

Possible reasons for drop-out might include a range of barriers faced by adult learners, loss of interest by learners, tutor's negative attitude or lack of preparedness. I also discovered that tutors are exhausted when they arrive at the ABET centres. The three tutors involved in this study go to ABET centres after a long day at mainstream schools. During one of the sessions at Centre 3 I found the tutor sleeping at her table. She explained that she usually arrives at the ABET centre very tired after seven hours of work in a mainstream school. While this tutor was asleep, the learners were working on their own. Not being available to learners while they work may cause them to feel neglected and unwanted which may in turn lead to learner drop-out. It is noteworthy, that this centre experienced a 50 % drop-out during the year. This finding raises the question of the suitability of recruiting school teachers employed in the mainstream school system for PALC. This tutor recruitment policy was revised in 2003 whereby mainstream teachers are no longer appointed at PALCs.

4.2.19 Conclusion

The data collected provided me with some insight as to how the ABET adult tutors from the three ABET centres know, understand, interpret and practice the principle of learner-centredness. I am now in a better position to comment on what the three ABET tutors know about the principle of learner-centredness and whether or not they are able to understand and interpret the principle of learner-centredness.

The data collected also puts me in a better position to argue that two of the three ABET tutors in this study do not put much effort into identifying the needs of the learners and, finally, both ABET tutors and ABET centre managers need to take the issue of implementing ABET policy more seriously.

The final point is that ABET tutors may be drawing on their experience of past learner groups which is why their learning programmes coincidentally match learners' expressed needs. However, no two learner groups are the same and ABET tutors should conduct needs assessment for each new learner group as per the ABET ACT 2000 (p. 48).

What I noted from the study is that the evidence was at times mixed, that is, the tutors would at times show evidence of knowledge and/or application of learner-centredness and sometimes not. It was therefore decided to summarise the findings and present them in a table in order to determine if there were any patterns that emerge. This summary table is presented below.

4.3 Summary Of Findings

In 4.2 this Chapter, an attempt was made to answer the three critical questions of the study. Here I present the Summary of Findings, which will be presented in the form of a comparative table (Table 15) of the three ABET centres under investigation.

Table 15: Summary Of Findings

FINDINGS	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3	Relevant Critical Question
Knowledge of learner-centredness	YES	YES	YES	Knowledge and understanding of learner-centredness
Explanation of learner-centredness	YES	YES	YES	Knowledge and understanding of learner-centredness
Knowledge of ABET Act	YES	YES	NO	Awareness of policy
Knowledge of ABET Policy	YES	YES	NO	Awareness of policy
Knowledge of PMB Document	YES	YES	YES	Awareness of policy
Availability of ABET documents	YES	NO	NO	Awareness of policy
Attendance at workshops	YES	YES	YES	Knowledge and understanding of learner-centredness
Support from centre managers	YES	YES	NO	Knowledge and understanding of learner-centredness
Needs identification, analysis and prioritisation by tutor	YES	YES	NO	Learner-centredness in practice
Learning programmes reflect needs	YES	NO	NO	Learner-centredness in practice
Learning programmes reflect hobbies	YES	YES	NO	Learner-centredness in practice
Learning programmes reflect work	YES	YES	YES	Learner-centredness in practice
Relevant learner support material	YES	YES	NO	Learner-centredness in practice
Classroom atmosphere	YES	YES	NO	Learner-centredness in practice

Seating arrangements (ideal)	YES	YES	YES	Learner-centredness in practice
Class visits by centre managers	YES	YES	NO	Awareness and practice of policy
Using lead pencil for marking	YES	NO	NO	Learner-centredness in practice
Updated tutor files	YES	YES	NO	Awareness and practice of policy
Correct ABET admission age	YES	YES	YES	Awareness and practice of policy
Changes in enrolment	YES Higher	YES Lower	YES Lower	Learners vote with their feet

The top level of the table, that is, the level above the thick line, presents the set of findings that broadly indicates ABET tutors' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the principle of learner-centredness and their exposure to learner-centredness. This is interpreted from their responses to questions around knowledge and understanding of different policy documents like the ABET Act of 2000, the ABET Policy of 1997 and the Pietermaritzburg ABET Procedure Document of 1998. Their abilities to interpret these policy documents are also reflected. The set of findings also include reports of tutor-development activities such as ABET workshops and professional support from ABET centre managers, which could be interpreted as exposure to good practice.

The bottom level, that is, the level below the thick line of the table relates more to the ABET tutors' practice. This level includes practices like ABET learners' needs identification, needs analysis and needs prioritisation. The learning programmes are the product of the ABET tutors' knowledge and understanding of ABET policies. The selection of ABET learners' learning and support materials indicate the ABET tutors' awareness of ABET learners who belong to this level.

From the table above one would notice a very interesting pattern in terms of theory and practice in the three ABET centres under investigation. The pattern that develops is that an ABET educator who has knowledge and understanding of ABET theory,

tends to perform well when it comes to actual work, that is, practice. It is clear from the table that ABET tutors from Centre 1 and Centre 2 know and understand the principle of learner-centredness and they are also exposed to ABET Acts and Policies. They attend ABET workshops and meetings which provides them with professional knowledge and skills. Their ABET centre managers provide support to them. The knowledge and skills mentioned above seem to provide them with enough skills and impetus to perform well in their ABET classes as one can note that on the practice level they have more 'Yes' than 'No' entries in the table. This state of affairs indicates that an ABET tutor who has sound theory of ABET is more likely to perform well in class. Research with larger numbers of centres and tutors would be needed to verify such a finding.

On the other hand, it appears (from the table) that the ABET tutor from Centre 3 seems not to have enough knowledge and skills in ABET, that is, she seems to lack a grounding in ABET theory and this is matched by poor performance in practice.

The effect of the lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding of ABET policies, followed by poor practice in terms of learner-centredness, is reflected in the change in enrolment, in the final row of the table. In the top part of the table, the tutor from Centre 3 has a lot of 'No' entries. This is matched by a large number of 'No' responses in the bottom part of the table. It should be recalled that the enrolment at Centre 3 dropped by 50%, that is, of the 22 learners at the beginning of the year only 11 learners remained at the time of the research. It would appear that learners dropped out of the class because their needs were not satisfied in class as Newman (1979) stresses that if learners are not satisfied with what is delivered to them, they simply drop out of class.

A teachers effectiveness and popularity among learners must depend on a range of factors. It would be interesting to see if the indications of patterns or trends which emerged in this study also emerge in a larger scale study involving a large number of ABET tutors and ABET centres. The findings in this thesis have provided several useful criteria for monitoring the functionality of ABET centres. The Department of Education could improve practice at ABET centres by checking on tutor practices and the extent to which they are learner-centred. For example, they should be ensuring

that learning programmes at PALC are designed around learners' full needs, not just those related to their occupations. This research has also pointed to the need to check the appropriateness of LASMs used at PALCs. The role and practice of centre managers is also an area which seems to require some attention from the Department.

Finally, this study has been useful in identifying areas of need in terms of tutors professional development. Workshops on ABET policy, needs identification and analysis and programme design are some of the areas of in-service training that are needed. This study has this been useful to me in terms of the role that I could play with regard to supporting and developing tutors at PALCs that I am responsible for.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to convert some of the findings discussed in the previous chapter into useful information for all ABET stakeholders, as well as other interested people. It is my belief and hope that the information and recommendations provided here would help to improve ABET provision at public adult learning centres. The data I collected from the three ABET sites, the information I gathered from different interviews and the literature review on the principle of learner-centredness, provided me with valuable insight on the principle of learner-centredness in the field of ABET. With the amount of knowledge and experience I gained from this study, I now feel that I am in a good position to provide the following recommendations.

To begin, let me refer to the data in Chapter Four, which highlight some areas where there is room for improvement. In particular I would make mention of the following three points:

- The finding regarding the use of red pens versus pencils for marking indicates that policy needs to be constantly appraised and revised where necessary. It is important for both learners' and tutors' views to be considered when such policy is revisited.
- The findings indicate that Centre managers are not playing the role that they should be and that this impacts on tutor performance and morale. The ABET Directorate should organise ongoing capacity building workshops for Centre managers.
- It could also be beneficial to centres if the ABET Directorate could create opportunities for tutors and centre managers to meet other tutors and centre managers on a regular basis. Such networking could create a support community for tutors and for managers.

In addition, the study has revealed that some tutors do not base the learning programmes on the learners' needs. This state of affairs could have led to some learners dropping out of the centres because they felt that their needs were not addressed. It was evident from the ABET tutors' responses and performance that they lacked knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Needs identification
- Needs assessment
- Needs prioritisation

Given the above finding, it is recommended that workshops on learners' needs at centre, circuit, provincial and national levels be organised to assist ABET tutors to base their learning programmes on learners' needs so as to attract more learners to adult centres.

What has emerged from the study was that the tutors' standards of teaching at the three different ABET institutions ranged from poor to very good. It also emerged that this performance gap resulted from the lack of development in areas such as classroom interaction and unpacking of Unit Standards. In order to set and maintain the good standards and also to develop individual ABET tutors, it is recommended that:

- ABET centres network with other neighbouring centres for support purposes.
- ABET provincial trainers to visit ABET centres for support purposes.
- ABET educational specialists to organise workshops and classroom interaction.
- ABET Directorate to establish ABET educators' forum where ABET tutors will air their views and concerns.

It has emerged from this study that some educators do not update their professional workbooks, meaning that they do not plan their lessons regularly. That was a clear sign that some ABET centre managers do not comply with the ABET Procedures Document of 1998, which requires ABET centre managers to conduct classroom

visits and check the tutors' workbooks on a regular basis. Two ABET centre managers complained that they had not had a workshop since 1998. They also admitted that they could not remember seeing the ABET Procedures Document of 1998. In view of the above findings it is recommended that the ABET centre managers conduct regular classroom visits. It is also recommended that ABET centre managers be trained and workshopped in ABET leadership, management and administration.

The present study revealed that interpreting and unpacking Unit Standards of different learning areas seemed a challenging task to some ABET tutors. In order to address this challenge I would recommend that the ABET Directorate establish Learning Area Committees at all ABET levels of operation. It is also recommended that the Provincial ABET section of Education appoint ABET learning area advisors to liaise with the National Department of Education on ABET needs and concerns.

It surfaced from this study that some ABET tutors did not have important ABET documents such as the ABET Policy Document of 1997, ABET Procedures Document of 1998 and ABET Act of 2000 in their possession. This, to me, is a very serious state of affairs because most of the ABET tutors' practices are guided and monitored by these legislative documents.

The responsibility cannot be passed entirely onto the tutors, but should also require attention from the ABET centre managers who are accountable for the ABET centres. From the above findings, it is recommended that the centre managers conduct induction and orientation courses for the newly employed ABET tutors. Every ABET centre manager should also make sure that all the tutors in his or her centre are provided with the legislative documents mentioned above.

From the statistics on ABET centres, ABET tutors and ABET learners, it is clear that the number of adult learners is growing. The curriculum develops day by day. The fast growing transformation in ABET needs to be managed with commitment and monitored constantly. ABET is quickly becoming a recognisable wing of education. In order for ABET to grow and be sustainable, I recommend that full-time ABET tutors be appointed at ABET centres.

I believe that if the above recommendations are taken into consideration by the Department of Education, there could be a great improvement in ABET.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

NOTE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Please be assured that the information collected from this questionnaire will remain with me, I shall not pass it on to anyone. Even your teacher will not see it. I shall keep this information as confidential as possible.

- NAME (OPTIONAL)
- ID NUMBER
- GENDER
- OCCUPATION
- HOBBIES
- ADULT CENTRE
- Please tick the appropriate block:
AGE: ☐ 10-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40
 ☐ 41-60 ☐ 50 and above
- Do you enjoy your English class? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Which topic/lessons have you enjoyed in your English class this year?
- What have you learned in your English class, that you feel has made a difference in your life?

- What other topics would you like to learn in your English class in future?
- What do you think other learners in your class need to learn in order to improve their lives?
- Do you think your teacher did give you a chance to tell him/her what you and your classmates want to learn?
- How did you tell your teacher what you want to learn? Explain.
- Can you remember some of the things that you could not do when you first came to the English class that you are now able to do?

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS (ESL LEVEL 2)

- Name
- Age bracket
- Gender
- What do you do for a living?
- What do you do during your spare time?
- Do you hold any position in your community? Which?
- Do you read newspapers? Which ones?
- Do you check your children's homework?
- How long have you been in this adult centre?
- Why did you attend at this centre?
- Have you learnt anything that has really made a difference to your life?
What?
- Have you been able to tell your teacher what you want to learn?
- What did you want to learn and why?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TUTOR

- Name
- Age bracket
- Experience in ABET
- Gender
- How do you design your learning programme? Why?
- Are you familiar with the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1977?
- Do you consult the Policy Document mentioned above when you design your learning programmes?
- What do you understand by the principle of learner-centredness?
- Do you think it is important to base the learning programme on the learners' needs? Why do you think so?
- What would you say are the five most common topics that your learners wish to learn?
- Have you received any training in Adult Basic Education and Training? Where? When?

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CENTRE MANAGERS

PROFILE OF THE ADULT CENTRE

- Centre Name
- Physical Address
- Postal Address
- E-Mail Address
- Telephone No. Fax No.
- History and Origin
- Achievements of the Centre
- Management and Staff Establishment
- Mission Statement
- Courses Offered
- Teaching Approaches and Principles
- Staff Developmental Programmes
- Examination Bodies
- Controlling Body
- Financial Sources and Status
- General Comments

APPENDIX E

LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET

Assessment key:

- A -** Compliant with the principle of learner-centredness
- B -** Partially compliant with the principle of learner-centredness
- C -** Not compliant with the principle of learner-centredness

1. Sitting arrangements	
2. Tutor's Workbook	
2.1 Year Planner	
2.2 Themes/programme organisers	
2.3 Lesson Plan	
2.4 Learners' Needs	
2.5 Learner's Profiles	
2.6 Tests	
3. Learners' Workbooks	
4. Teaching Methods	
5. Learning and Support Materials	
6. Introduction	
7. Lesson Development	
8. Conclusion (lesson)	
9. Content/type	
10. Individual Attention	
11. Relationship between learner and tutor	
12. Learner Motivation	
13. Learner Participation	
14. Classroom Atmosphere	
15. Assessment Strategies	

APPENDIX F (I)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

NOTE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Please be assured that the information collected from this questionnaire will remain with me, I shall not pass it on to anyone. Even your teacher will not see it. I shall keep this information as confidential as possible. *(Researchers' Note: For the purpose of recording this information in this study, the Names and ID Numbers have been removed.)*

1. NAME (OPTIONAL) _____ Ref: Z-6 _____
2. ID NUMBER _____
3. GENDER _____ Female _____
4. OCCUPATION _____ N/A _____
5. HOBBIES Gospel music, watch T.V. & watch stage players
6. ADULT CENTRE Zamani Adult Centre
7. Please tick the appropriate block:

AGE	<input type="checkbox"/>	10-20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	21-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	31-40
	<input type="checkbox"/>	41-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 and above		

8. Do you enjoy your English class? ☒ Yes ☐ No

9. Which topics/lessons have you enjoyed in your English class this year?
Debate, Project, Aids, Transport, Virus diseases, cholera,
Autobiograph,

10. What have you learned in your English class that you feel made a difference to your life?
I can fill an application form
I can fill a bank deposit slip
I can try to speak english
I can read newspapers
I can understand english without help.

11. What other topics would you like to learn in your English class in future?
_Tuberculosis, Cancer, drugs. Include to previous_____ topics._____

12. What do you think other learners in your class need to learn in order to improve their lives?
_I think other learners need to practice english in order to improve their lives, so that it can be easy to read, write, speak and understand english. As practice make perfect._____

13. Did you think your teacher did give you a chance to tell him/her what you and your classmates want to learn?
_____Yes_____
14. How did you tell your teacher what you want to learn? Explain.
_The teacher gave us a chance to discuss what we want to do. If we are finish we choose one member of the class to tell the teacher what we want._____

15. Can you remember some of the things that you could not do when your first came to the English class that you are now able to do?
_I was unable to speak well english._____
_I was afraid to ask some questions to the teacher or class members. I was too shy to other people, I thought they will laugh at me if I speak my poor english._____

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX F (II)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

NOTE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Please be assured that the information collected from this questionnaire will remain with me, I shall not pass it on to anyone. Even your teacher will not see it. I shall keep this information as confidential as possible. *(Researchers' Note: For the purpose of recording this information in this study, the Names and ID Numbers have been removed.)*

1. NAME (OPTIONAL) _____ Ref: M9 _____
2. ID NUMBER _____
3. GENDER _____ Male _____
4. OCCUPATION _____ Machanic assistant _____
5. HOBBIES _____ To be sick, Fighting Roest food. _____
6. ADULT CENTRE _____ Manaye P/C _____
7. Please tick the appropriate block:

AGE ☐ 10-20 ☐ 21-30 ☒ 31-40
 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 50 and above

8. Do you enjoy your English class? ☒ Yes ☐ No
9. Which topics/lessons have you enjoyed in your English class this year?
 We was discussing about Elispark - disester and Kokstad Bus
 accident _____

10. What have you learned in your English class that you feel made a difference to your life?
 To read and write English by words _____

11. What other topics would you like to learn in your English class in future?

Family Planing

12. What do you think other learners in your class need to learn in order to improve their lives?

Aids topic how get affected in your body by its, And how to
start your own bussinnes

13. Did you think your teacher did give you a chance to tell him/her what you and your classmates want to learn?

Yes

14. How did you tell your teacher what you want to learn? Explain.

I raise up my hand in the class and teacher give me the chance to
talk.

15. Can you remember some of the things that you could not do when your first came to the English class that you are now able to do?

To read news paper and to complete forms for applications.

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX F (III)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

NOTE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Please be assured that the information collected from this questionnaire will remain with me, I shall not pass it on to anyone. Even your teacher will not see it. I shall keep this information as confidential as possible. *(Researchers' Note: For the purpose of recording this information in this study, the Names and ID Numbers have been removed.)*

1. NAME (OPTIONAL) _____ Ref: T10 _____
2. ID NUMBER _____ - _____
3. GENDER Female _____
4. OCCUPATION Domestick worker _____
5. HOBBIES Movies _____
6. ADULT CENTRE Thembaletu _____
7. Please tick the appropriate block:

AGE ☐ 10-20 ☐ 21-30 ☒ 31-40
 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 50 and above

8. Do you enjoy your English class? ☒ Yes ☐ No
9. Which topics/lessons have you enjoyed in your English class this year?
 Grammar tables, anunemployment people,
 Adverts, community map and etc. _____

10. What have you learned in your English class that you feel made a difference to your life?
 I learned how to write a project, I feel has made a difference
 in my life because I did not know how to write a project but now I
 know everything about a project, like a job advertisement in my
 project/housing _____

11. What other topics would you like to learn in your English class in future?
 ___One of South Africa's biggest killers is a topic that I learned that they tell us who's that killer the is a Tuberculosis (TB) They taught us how it start and how we can prevent this dangerous sickness. Another topic is no more cracks, they taught us how to fix a ugly cracks._____
12. What do you think other learners in your class need to learn in order to improve their lives?
 __I think they must work very hard and they must do they work to get success and a t last they could improve their lives and their dreams._____
13. Did you think your teacher did give you a chance to tell him/her what you and your classmates want to learn?
 _Yes She alway asked us first before she gave us a classwork_____
14. How did you tell your teacher what you want to learn? Explain.
 _I excuse her and I tell her that please teacher can you teach us to learn about this about topics like child abuse. If she agree we can learn about this topic all class._____
15. Can you remember some of the things that you could not do when your first came to the English class that you are now able to do?
 _There are nothing that I could not do when I first came to the English class I learned all thing from the beginning to the end we learned how to write a letter, verb, nous, adjectives, conjunction and we came up to adverts and the project._____

Thank you for your cooperation.