

Strategies for Facilitating Learning in Adult Basic Education and Training

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this dissertation submitted to the University of Pretoria in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Education is original work done by me. I further declare that the work has neither been submitted to any institution nor copied from existing dissertations and that all materials used herein have been duly acknowledged.

Amohelang Masibongile Machobane

Date

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABE	-	Adult Basic Education
ABET	-	Adult Basic Education and Training
CL	-	Cooperative Learning
LSF	-	Learning Style Flexibility
NQF	-	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	-	Outcomes-based Education
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SDL	-	Self-directed Learning

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Strategy: In this study strategy is used with a specific meaning and focus, namely to refer to all the procedures, methods, techniques and approaches of delivering instruction in ABET programmes.

Adult Education: Entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content and method, whether formal or otherwise, by which persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their academic qualifications (Braumoh 1994).

Adult Basic Education and Training: ABET is defined as education and training provision for people aged 15 and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and who have an education level of less than Grade 9.

Learning Style: Learning style is a biological and developmental set of personal characteristics that makes identical instruction effective for some learners and ineffective for others.

Self-directed Learning: A process, in which individuals take initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes.

Cooperative Learning: Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with learners of different learning styles, experience, thinking skills and levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategies used by facilitators at Adult Basic Education and Training Centre in order to determine whether the facilitators are responsive to adult learning principle and practices. If inappropriate strategies for the facilitation of learning are used, adult learners are likely to become bored, frustrated, overwhelmed or unable to cope with the challenges of learning. This may contribute to the high drop-out rate that many adult education programmes face. The failure to retain adult learners in ABET programmes may result in adult learners relapsing into illiteracy, which then poses a problem as the overarching goal of the South African government is to eradicate illiteracy. This study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of adult learners of the facilitation of learning in the programmes they are enrolled for?
2. What are the strategies used by ABET facilitators to promote cooperative learning?
3. How do ABET facilitators promote self-directed learning among adult learners?

The theoretical framework on which this study is based is constructivism. Constructivist theory advocates a paradigm shift from traditional methods of teaching to a more learner-centred approach of instruction and learning. Thus, constructivist theory embraces Outcomes-based Education that emphasises that active participation by learners should be the backbone of all learning activities. Both facilitators and learners are required to focus on the outcomes that should be achieved during each learning activity.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that includes quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research design for this study is the case study method. The population of this study comprises adult learners and facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre. A simple random sampling was used to select forty-seven adult learners to participate in this study. Convenience

sampling was used to select 4 facilitators. The methods of data collection used were questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observations.

The findings of this study are the following:

1. Facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre cater moderately for learners with different learning styles.
2. Learners are engaged in different learning activities, such as completing tasks individually, in pairs or in groups and are involved in research orientated activities in order to discover things for themselves.
3. Facilitators promote active participation during learning opportunities.
4. Most adult learners demonstrate responsibility towards their own work. However, some do not, and this may be attributed to many competing social roles that must be balanced against the demands of learning.
5. Learners are challenged to develop critical thinking, problem-solving and higher order reasoning skills.
6. Cooperative learning as one strategy of facilitating learning is not utilised to the maximum.
7. It has been observed that the lecture method is predominantly used by facilitators; this is not in line with constructivist learning theory as the latter emphasises the use of different methods of facilitation in order to accommodate learners with diverse learning styles.

The following recommendations have been made:

1. Facilitators with extensive teaching experience should be engaged to facilitate adult learning. However, they should be educated and trained in methods of facilitating adult learners.
2. Male adults need to be mobilised through mass literacy campaigns to join ABET programmes.
3. Learners should be given the opportunity to make an input in the development of strategies for facilitating learning.

Key words: Adult Basic Education and Training; Constructivism; Outcomes-based Education; Learning style flexibility; Whole-brain learning; Learning

styles; Roles of educators; Self-directed learning; Cooperative learning;
Adult learning.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a legislation framework for adult education and training as adults have a constitutional right to basic adult education. However, this right does not appear to be translated into adequate action to cater for about 7,5 million adults who need it (Rule 2003:27; Carstens 2004:460; Snoeks 2004:348).

According to the Department of Education (2004:5), more than a third of South Africans of sixteen years and older are illiterate. The Department of Education (2004:6), *Government Gazette* (1995) and *Government Gazette* (1998) also suggest that literacy should be alleviated through the provision of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) to redress discrimination and past inequalities. The Department of Education (2004:6) further states that the literacy programmes should be of such quality and relevance as to equip people for full participation in social, economic and political aspects of life.

Gervel (1992:13), Greenberg, Fredrick, Hughes, Trudie and Bunting (2002) mention that the lack of education and the illiteracy among adults inhibit their functionality at home, at work and in their communities. Gervel (1992:13), Greenberg et al (2002), Carstens (2004) and Vivian (2003) reveal that many illiterate adults are not able to sign documents, complete forms, read and complete employment contracts, deposit and withdraw money from banks, write and read letters received from family members or relatives without calling on a third party. Carron and Bordia (1997:325), Snoeks (2004), Beder (1999) and the DfEE (2001) add that without adequate literacy skills adults cannot provide efficient health, social or physical care for their families. Levine (1996:25), Kruidenier (2002), Dirkx and Crawford (1993) are of the opinion that illiteracy is a cause for adults' ignorance of their civil rights and inability to play an active role in family and community decision-making. It is therefore imperative that adults should have a basic literacy to improve their lives.

However, there are many anecdotal reports of poor attendance and high drop-out rates from adult basic education programmes. It is important, when working in adult education, that the approach to facilitating learning is appropriate and that the outcomes of the learning opportunities are interesting and useful to the adults.

When South Africa achieved its democracy in 1994, one of the challenges facing the Department of Education was to take responsibility for providing ABET for adults who have no schooling at all or inadequate educational experience. The acceptance of this responsibility is captured in the spirit of the new constitution which promises basic education for all, that is, children, youth and adults. The Department of Education established a Directorate for Adult Basic Education (ABE) in 1995 to show its commitment to ABE (SAQA 1997a, SAQA 1997b).

This Directorate has now been reconstructed and renamed the Directorate for Adult Basic Education and Training in order to merge ABE with training in the Further Education and Training (FET) band (Department of Education 1997a:27). The Department implemented this to ensure that ABET was not confined to the provision of mechanical skills of reading and writing but extends to other essential areas for the purposes of progress in careers, work and employment (Department of Education 1997a:27).

1.1.1 Conceptualisation of ABET

Since 1994 policy documents formulated by the South African Committee for Adult Basic Education (SACABE), the National Training Board (NTB) and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEDP) have suggested that Adult Basic Education should be understood as changing its meaning. ABE is rapidly being transformed into a concept which makes it an equivalent, in the range of knowledge and skills, to what is considered basic education within the school system. In formal terms, the achievement of ABE can be regarded as the equivalent achievement of a General Education Certificate (SAQA 1997a; SAQA 1998; Independent Examination Board (1996).

The SACABE, as cited by Harley et al (1996:20) in Zitha (2005:76) argues that ABE falls within the basic education phase in the provision of life-long learning. The final exit point in terms of certification from ABE should be equivalent to the exit point from compulsory education. In terms of content ABE should include a core of skills, knowledge and values. It should consist of levels of learning along the continuum assessed as outcomes. As its target, ABE should be aimed at adults who had none or very little formal schooling, those who do not have the equivalent of a school-leaving certificate and those who only require specific sections of ABE which meet their particular needs.

This description stresses the basic education equivalence element of ABE, although adults would not necessarily follow the same curriculum as learners in the formal school or be assessed as they are. The formal certification of ABE was subsequently reinforced by the interim guideline of September 1995 (Department of Education 1995). Current discourse in South Africa tends to be about ABET rather than about literacy. ABET is defined as education and training provision for people aged 15 and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and who have an education level of less than Grade 9 (Std 7). Thus, ABET is essentially an adult equivalent of the basic schooling (Department of Education 1995 & Phillips 1996).

Before the advent of democracy in South Africa, black people who were illiterate and untrained were kept in the lowest rungs of the economy by the Nationalist Party government (Bhola 2004:77). This state of affairs, amongst others, set the scene for the development of ABET. A second chance education had to be designed and delivered to those already in the economy. The type of education required by illiterate workers in the modern economy had to be more than literacy and numeracy, since the emphasis would be on training workers for the formal economy. The education provided had to include a strong training component so that those already in employment could be certificated and promoted (Bhola 2004:77; *Government Gazette* 1995; *Government Gazette* 1998).

In response to the need to educate and train illiterate blacks for the economy, ABE planners decided to link ABE with Training and the Recognition of Prior

Learning that could result in awarding a higher qualification. An overview of the ABET curriculum development process follows.

1.1.2 Curriculum development for ABET

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has adapted an eight level qualifications framework. The eight levels are divided into three broad bands providing for General, Further and Higher Education and Training. The following three major levels or exit points can be identified (Department of Education 1997a:27; SAQA 1997b:11; SAQA 1998:16).

- General Education and Training marks the completion of General Education, including the three ABET sub-levels;
- Further Education and Training (ABET levels 2 to 4) marks the completion of further education whether school-based or work-based;
- Higher Education (levels 5 to 8) marks the completion of College or University-based education.

The ABET Directorate of the National Department of Education has six learning areas for which ABET units standards have been developed. These learning areas are drawn from the twelve learning fields (Department of Education 1997a:30). The ABET learning areas are language, literacy and communication; mathematics literacy, mathematics and mathematical science; human and social sciences; natural sciences; technology and economic management sciences. The specific subjects that fall under these learning areas include languages, numeracy, mathematics, biology, accountancy, business economics/economics, history and geography. These subjects are taught from ABET Level 1 to Level 5. The table below shows the placement of ABET levels in relation to the equivalent school grades.

Table 1.1 Equivalence of ABET levels to school grades

ABET Levels	Equivalent school grades
Level 1	Grade 1-3
Level 2	Grades 3-5
Level 3	Grade 7
NQF 1 (Level 4)	Grade 9
NQF 2	Grade 10
NQF 3	Grade 11
NQF 4 (Level 5)	Grade 12

(Source: Department of Education 1997d)

One of the educational challenges of the 21st century is the need for an educational system that facilitates a process of life-long and self-directed learning. This need is vividly presented by the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education 1995a:21).

The overarching goal of the education policy is to enable all individuals to value, have access to, and succeed in life-long education and training of good quality. Education and management processes must, therefore, put learners first, recognising and building on their knowledge and experience and responding to their needs. An integrated approach to education will increase access, mobility and quality in the national learning system.

The education system must increasingly provide access to education and training opportunities of good quality to all children, youths and adults. The constitution of South Africa provides for equal access to basic education for all. The fulfilment of this provision must be reflected in the education policy. The education policy must provide an increasing range of possibilities, offering learners greater flexibility in choosing what, where, when, how and at what pace they learn.

The Department of Education also sees ABET as part of and a foundation for life-long learning. This is reflected in many of its policies concerned with an attempt to integrate ABET into life-long learning as a sustainable level of literacy, numeracy, basic general education and certificated career paths (Department of Education 1997a:3). The Department's vision for ABET is reflected in its policy as follows:

A literate South Africa within which all its citizens have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation (Department of Education 1997a:6).

In the light of the above exposition of the vision of the Department of Education on ABET, this study focuses on exploring the strategies for facilitating learning at one of the ABET centres, named Gaegolelwe Adult Centre in Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria, South Africa.

Having provided the background information to this study, the next section states the major problem that has instigated the study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Hertzog (1988), Dietrich (1994) and Cheek and Lindsey (1994) argue that, without the ability to read and write, illiterate adults are trapped in insecure and low-wage jobs. They receive the poorest remuneration for their services in comparison with other workers. Generally adults especially in the rural areas in South Africa lack knowledge and skills to cope at work and with their daily lives. Illiteracy inhibits many adults to reach self-actualisation, emancipation and efficient contribution and participation in the wider society. As such, illiterate adults are not able to participate effectively in training and development programmes due to the lack of literacy skills necessary for their full participation in these programmes (Angula 1996 & Ballara 1991).

Knowles (1980:47) reports that educators often assume that adults learn in the same way as the educators perceive children to learn. These assumptions and beliefs persisted through the ages well into the twentieth century. Only one theoretical framework was used in education-pedagogy in spite of the fact that pedagogy literally means the art and science of facilitating learning for children. Considering the fact that the education of adults has been a concern of the human race for centuries it is strange that there has been so little thinking, investigating and writing about adult learning until recently.

In schools and other educational settings adult learners have been disenfranchised and often denied the opportunity to participate actively as fully functioning individuals in the instruction and learning transaction. Criticism directed at adult basic education activities often reflects resentment on the part of learners for being omitted from the planning process or because of the way in which adult basic education activities are carried out. In either way the learner is treated as a child (Merriam 1993; Irby 1992 & Labuschagne 2000).

As adult education programmes are being established in various settings, it can be anticipated that consideration for the adult learner will increase and that andragogy which refers to the facilitating of learning for adults, will become a foundation for teaching and the basis for adult basic education and training. Andragogy requires that the unique learning styles of the learners serve as a foundation from which to develop learning opportunities (Merriam 1993; Meyer 1991 & Morrow 1995). It is therefore presumed that most ABET facilitators have not been trained for the facilitation of learning for adults. Therefore likelihood exists that current facilitators are still using pedagogic strategies instead of andragogic ones when facilitating ABET. For that reason this study aims to investigate the strategies used by ABET facilitators to facilitate learning.

As social systems become more complex, educational practices become more sophisticated. Andragogy places learning at the centre of the teaching-learning process and requires that teachers possess the flexibility in terms of being responsive to the learning needs of adult learners and the perceptiveness that

enables them to adapt to learners' diverse learning styles (Knowles 1990:69). The above stated problems have influenced the following research questions.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been identified from the statement of the problem:

1. What are the perceptions of adult learners of the facilitation of learning in the programmes they are enrolled for?
2. What are the strategies used by ABET facilitators to promote cooperative learning?
3. How do ABET facilitators promote self-directed learning among adult learners?

Having identified the above-mentioned research questions the purpose of this study is subsequently formulated.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies used by ABET practitioners to facilitate learning at Gaegolelwe ABET Centre and to examine how these strategies help to empower adults to become independent learners.

1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

I decided to undertake this study upon learning that many adults in South Africa are functionally illiterate. Illiteracy is a barrier in most aspects of human development (Levine 1996:19; D'Amico-Samuels 1991; Development Associates 1993; Rule 2003:27 & Carstens 2004:460). This study attempts to examine the strategies to facilitate learning at Gaegolelwe ABET Centre in order to determine

how facilitation of learning in accordance with the principles of andragogy promotes acquisition of basic literacy skills as well as independent learning.

A preliminary literature review carried out in this field by researchers such as Masilela (1988), French (1991), Kamushu (1992), Rule (2003) and Carstens (2004) focuses only on adult literacy in general without specific reference to the way learning is facilitated at ABET Centres in order to enhance learning. This study attempts to address the gap in these studies by examining the strategies used by ABET facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre to facilitate learning.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Examination of strategies to facilitate learning in ABET is an extensive area for study. It is extensive because it involves identifying suitable strategies for facilitating learning as well as other factors that could guarantee effective use of a particular strategy. This study focuses on recommended strategies to facilitate learning in an adult learning environment. The study is specifically designed to examine strategies best suited to an adult learning environment and to explore the strategies that the adults themselves prefer. However, this study is not directed at investigating other factors that could ensure the implementation of strategies for facilitating learning in ABET, such as the qualifications and training of the facilitators, remuneration of facilitators, the curriculum, etc. The study is limited by the fact that only the views of those adult learners and facilitators who were willing to participate were solicited. As a result the results emanating from this study cannot be generalised to all ABET centres. However, the study does provide one with insight into the processes of learning in an ABET Centre.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study ranges from the benefits that will accrue to the immediate university environment to the adult education centres, sponsors, stakeholders and all who are interested in adult education programmes. The outcome of the study will also benefit adult learners at both formal and informal

settings. Above all, the study will contribute to a specific body of knowledge on how learning should be facilitated in an adult learning environment. Furthermore, the study will be useful to policy makers, particularly in the South African government, as reducing the rate of adult illiteracy has been one of Government's development programmes and enhancing effective learning in ABET Centres will support this goal.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Data collection was done during the winter and owing to the cold weather, it was very cold in the classrooms, which were not heated. This led to the collection of incomplete questionnaires as some respondents completed the questionnaires in a rush so that they could finish quickly and go home. As a result some respondents failed to answer all the questions. Another limitation was that the time slot allocated for the administration of the questionnaire was not the best for the respondents. The instrument was administered during the last thirty minutes of the two hour contact sessions of adult learners and their facilitators. Naturally a learner's attention level is low at this time owing to the demanding activities that he/she has been involved in during the preceding two hour session with ABET facilitators. As a result when learners were approached to provide answers to specific questions their responses were not of good quality.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and cooperation of subjects who are to assist in the institutions or organisations conducting research. I therefore sought informed consent from the management of the centre where the research was conducted. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:73) contend that the principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom and self-determination. They further stress that being free is a condition of living in a democracy and when restrictions and limitations are placed on that freedom they must be justified and consented to, even in research proceedings.

Consent thus protects and respects the right of self-determination and places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong in the research. Another aspect of the right to self-determination is that the subject has the right to refuse to take part or to withdraw once the research has begun (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2002:51).

Another ethical aspect that was taken into consideration was the obligation to protect the anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential. The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity and thereby prejudice their conditions of employment. A participant or subject is therefore considered anonymous when the researcher or another person cannot identify the subject from information provided. Where this situation holds, a subject's privacy is guaranteed, no matter how personal or sensitive the information is (Cohen et al 2002:61). This imperative was upheld throughout the study. The questionnaires were compiled in a manner that would not reveal the identity of respondents in any way.

In addition to the foregoing, protecting a participant's right to privacy is paramount as stated by Cohen et al (2002:62). It is best promoted through the promise of confidentiality. This means that although the researcher knows who has provided the information or is able to identify participants from the information given, he/she will in no way make the connection known publicly; to ensure that the boundaries surrounding the participants identity were protected. In essence, the information provided by the participants was treated with utmost confidentiality.

1.10 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is structured into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 provides background information to the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, the purpose of the study, the rationale, scope of the study, the significance of the study and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework as a basis for the study and emphasises constructivism, outcomes-based education and the professional roles of educators, learning style flexibility, self-directed learning and cooperative learning.

Chapter 3 provides the research methodology of the study.

Chapter 4 presents analysed data generated from the study.

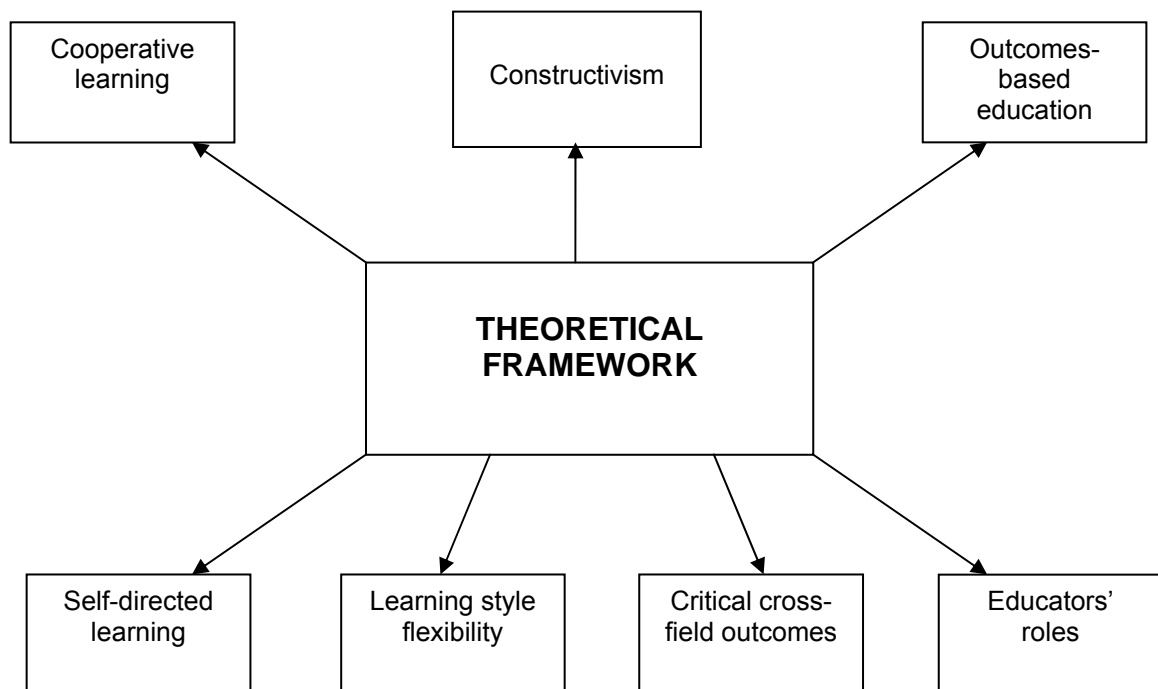
Chapter 5 concludes the study with findings, recommendations and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter a review of the related literature on some of the strategies that could be used to facilitate learning in order to be responsive to the diverse learning needs of adult learners is undertaken. Constructivism as core of the theoretical framework on which the study is based is explored and a brief overview of the roles of educators in general is delved into. This is followed by the approaches for facilitating learning that serve as the cornerstone of this study. The areas that are explored in the literature review are depicted in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 Concept map of the literature reviewed



2.1.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of learning that is used to explain the different dimensions of the learning process that range from learning at a personal level to learning within a social context. The strength of constructivism lies mainly in the possibility of applying it in practice within a classroom context. Basic to the theory of constructivism is the belief of the necessity for every human being to put together thoughts, interpretations and explanations that are personal to individuals in making sense of individuals' experiences and situations.

According to Watts in Gatt (2003:2) constructivist learning is always an interpretative process involving individuals' constructions of meaning relating to specific occurrences and phenomena. New constructions are built through their relation to prior knowledge. In a nutshell, constructivism refers to learning in the form of "making sense of". The person needs to go through a mental process in order to interpret and make sense of his/her surroundings. When this is applied to teaching and learning, it is important for the individual to be capable of understanding or constructing the concept that the academic community accepts as being true.

According to Marlowe and Page (1998:9), constructivism is a theory about how we learn; it is about the construction of knowledge. The main proposition of constructivism is that learning means constructing, creating, inventing and developing own knowledge. Others can give information, and information could be found from different sources, but as important as information is, receiving it, getting it and hearing it does not necessarily equal learning (Marlowe & Page 1998:10; Aldridge, Fraser, Taylor & Chen 2000:39). Learning in constructivist terms is both the process and the result of questioning, interpreting and analysing information; using this information and thinking process to develop, build and alter meaning and understanding of concepts and ideas; and integrating current experiences with past experiences and what is already known about a given subject. This view of Marlowe and Page (1998:10) and of Aldridge et al (2000:39) holds true, because prior experiences, knowledge and learning affect how people

interpret and experience new events. Interpretations people make in any given situation, in turn, affect construction of knowledge and leads to new learning. Duffy and Jonassen (1992:4), Kim, Fisher and Fraser (1999:242) and Johnson and McClure (2002) add that in a constructivist learning environment meaning is seen as rooted in and indexed by experience. Each experience with an idea and the environment of which that idea is a part become part of the meaning of that idea. The experience in which an idea is embedded is critical to the individual's understanding of and ability to use that idea. Therefore, that experience must be examined to understand the learning that occurs.

2.1.1.1 *Teacher as facilitator*

Constructivist theory acknowledges that the teacher is not a transmitter of knowledge but rather a facilitator and provider of experiences from which learners will learn. Similarly, learners are not absorbers of knowledge but active participants in constructing their own meaning based on strongly held preconceptions. According to the constructivist theory, then, knowledge is a social construct. Thus, one of the strengths of a constructivist approach is the emphasis that learners should be active in the teaching and learning process through the construction of knowledge and making meaning of the learning process. Students take primary responsibility for determining the methods of how to learn and the strategies or methods for solving problems.

Marlowe and Page (1998:11) and Kim et al (1999:243) argue that it is because we all make our own meanings and understandings of issues, concepts and problems that the emphasis in a constructivist classroom is not on transmitting information but on promoting learning through learner intellectual activity such as questioning, investigating, problem generating and problem solving. Duffy and Jonassen (1992), Fraser (1994), Idris and Fraser (1997) share the same notion in that they believe instruction should not focus on transmitting plans of action to the learner but rather on developing the skills of the learner to construct and reconstruct plans of action in response to situational demands and opportunities. Honebein in Wilson (1996:18) and Fraser (1998) also state that self-directed

learning is at the heart of the knowledge construction process. To achieve this, facilitators need to conceive learning activities that provide learners with a level of autonomy in the learning process. The educator should guide learners to pursue topics that interest them or are relevant to the learners and encourage them to experiment various methods of solving problems. This has bearing in the facilitation of learning in ABET centres in that facilitators should not just transmit information to learners but promote learners' ability to construct their own meaning of a learning event through problem solving, making discoveries and merging new knowledge with past experiences for better understanding of the new learning.

2.1.1.2 *Generative Learning*

Furthermore, Dunlap and Grabinger in Wilson (1996:67), Lederman and Niess (1997) and Lee and Fraser (2002) point out that an important requirement of constructivist learning environments is that learning must be generative. This means that learners are asked to take action to create meaning from what they are studying and as a result learners are required to engage in argumentation and reflection as they attempt to make sense of alternative points of view. In this case learners become investigators, seekers and problem solvers. Teachers become facilitators and guides rather than presenters of knowledge. In other words, learners learn how to use or apply the information in a variety of contexts; generative learning requires learners to take static information and generate fluid, flexible, usable knowledge.

2.1.1.3 *Thinking and analysing*

Constructivism is about thinking and analysing rather than about the quantity of information a learner can memorise and recite, or in the case of mathematics for example, about answers based on memorised formulas (Marlowe & Page 1998:11; Edusource 1997; Lederman & Niess 1997; Dryden & Fraser 1998). As Marlowe and Page (1998:11) indicate, in a constructivist classroom, a facilitator does not stand and deliver most of the learning material; learners rather uncover, discover and reflect on learning outcomes and their conceptions of such through

inquiry, investigation, research and analysis in the context of a problem, critical question, issue or theme. Steffe and Gale (1995:15), Nix, Fraser and Ledbetter (2003) and Poth and Fraser (2001) are in support of this view as they point out that learners are encouraged to develop through these processes, the ability to think for themselves and to think critically; that is, to discriminate between the relevant and the irrelevant, to look at issues from different perspectives, to interpret and analyse the learning material.

Fosnot (1996, 27), Nix et al (2003) and Sinclair and Fraser (2002) expand on this argument by asserting that constructivism is about understanding and applying, not repeating. Constructivism focuses on in-depth understanding, not regurgitating and repeating as it often happens in a traditional classroom or in the old teacher-centred teaching and learning paradigm. If a learner repeats information, it does not mean that he/she understands anything or can apply this information in any way; it does not demonstrate learning or understanding – it simply demonstrates the ability to regurgitate information. In a constructivist learning environment, learners demonstrate learning and understanding through various means such as solving problems, producing or creating something, compiling portfolios or undertaking research projects. As such, in a constructivist learning environment, facilitators are to deliver learning opportunities in such a way that learners are given tasks or activities which call for immediate application of what they have learned.

2.1.1.4 *Active versus passive learners*

Constructivism is about being active, not passive. To learn, a learner has to be mentally and physically active. Learning takes place when a learner discovers his/her own answers, solutions, concepts, and relationships and creates his/her own interpretations. In this way, learning becomes deeper, more comprehensive and longer lasting. Furthermore, the learning that occurs actively leads to the ability to think critically (Marlowe & Page 1998:12; Poth & Fraser 2001; Nix et al 2003).

From the constructivist point of view, learning is not a stimulus-response phenomenon. It requires self-regulation and the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction. Problems are not solved by the retrieval of rote-learned “right” answers. To solve a problem intelligently, one must first see it as one’s own problem; that is, one must see it as an obstacle that obstructs one’s progress towards a goal. To have searched and found a path to the goal provides incomparably more pleasure and satisfaction than simply to be told that one has given the right answer (Steffe & Gale 1995:14).

2.1.1.5 *Contextualised learning*

One of the strengths of using a constructivist approach in the classroom is that learning is embedded in realistic and relevant contexts. Dunlap and Grabinger in Wilson (1996:73); Thorp, Burden and Fraser (1994); Yarrow, Millwater and Fraser (1997) argue that in many situations, learning opportunities are often presented to learners in simplified de-contextualised, isolated chunks that promote memorisation rather than problem solving or higher level thinking. This kind of instructional process makes it difficult to help learners see interrelationships among learning areas. The inherent complexity of the learning opportunities and their applicability to actual problems and meaningful situations is also difficult to appreciate. In order to make learning meaningful for learners, a constructivist approach encourages learners to use their existing knowledge and by anchoring the instruction in meaningful and realistic contexts.

According to Dunlap and Grabinger in Wilson (1996:74); Prawat (1992); Thorp et al (1994); Diedericks and Reinecke (2000) and Moore (2000) knowledge comes from a continuous process of construction that builds on existing knowledge structures or what is already known. This means that the learning of new material is facilitated by calling upon existing knowledge to serve as a point of reference and as a foundation from which new knowledge structures are built. The implication of this constructivist view of learning is that it is necessary to engage learners in classroom activities that allow them to consider how their new learning is related to and supported by their existing knowledge. This means that

facilitators need to build opportunities for reflection on what learners already know into learning activities.

The notion that learners build on and use existing knowledge as a foundation is also shared by Jansen (2003:3). Constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed by learners as they make sense of new experiences and that learning is a cognitive process that results from the interaction of past experiences (prior knowledge) and new experiences (new knowledge) on the part of the learner.

Communication skills are an essential part of constructivist learning. To be able to communicate effectively using a constructivist approach to learning does not deny the importance of factual knowledge, but it emphasises that the best way for learners to retain and apply this knowledge is to put it into a more lifelike context that stimulates learners to reflect, organise and analyse (Killen 2000:22). Constructivist theories also believe learning must be embedded in the context in which it occurs. Cognition is situated in contexts; and therefore, education, training and development must be presented in those contexts (Schunk 2000:25). Constructivists believe that the ability to assimilate varies from learner to learner and that learning opportunities must be tailored to accommodate each learner's cognitive structure (Hergenthal & Olsen 1993:438). Accordingly, learning must be structured in such a way that learners' existing views can be used as a base for training (Gravett 2001:22).

2.1.1.6 *Facilitators as mediators*

Vygotsky's notion of Zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a key concept in understanding the process of knowledge construction. The ZPD is the space beyond a learner's current level of understanding and desired learning outcomes. It represents what learners are unable to understand independently, but can understand through proximal interaction with another person (Donald et al 2005; Ge & Land 2002; Lance & Coburn 2001). Facilitators who engage learners by challenging them can potentially move the learner into his/her ZPD. Ultimately, new levels of meaning and understanding can be achieved by learners through a

process of support (mediation). This highlights the important role that facilitators play in supporting the learning process through mediation. The crucial role facilitators have in this regard is also emphasised by Gagne's cognitive theory of learning, which thrives within a constructivist framework (Mwamwenda 2004). Cognitive learning theories claim that learners are capable of controlling their own learning activities and have an inherent capacity to learn (Mwamwenda 2004). However, the development of this process needs to be facilitated by some structure and guidance from facilitators who should strive to present learning material, learning outcomes and opportunities for which learners are ready. Learners cannot discover everything on their own; hence learning experiences need to be carefully planned by facilitators (Mwamwenda 2004 & Daniels 2002).

The notion that all educational endeavours should be on the construction of knowledge is underpinned on constructivism. This approach reasons that facilitators should not only focus on learning content per se; rather, the focus should shift to finding ways of enabling learners to find, identify, manipulate and evaluate existing knowledge, to integrate this knowledge into their world, solve problems and communicate the knowledge effectively to other people (Brown & Viljoen 2003). In this context, facilitators in ABET centres are seen as a significant potential source of knowledge. Their role is to support the learning process by assisting learners in the production of knowledge. As such, outcomes-based Education is embraced in constructivist learning theory.

2.2 OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION (OBE)

Outcomes-based Education (OBE) means clearly focusing and organising everything in an educational system around what is essential for all learners to be successful at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for learners to achieve, then organising curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure this learning experience ultimately happens (Spady 1994:1). In the past, education and training in South Africa, and therefore also at ABET centres, tended to be content-driven. The content-orientation of the curriculum and mode of instruction formed the basis for

designing learning materials, learning opportunities and activities. OBE moves beyond the content-driven learning opportunities.

OBE is underpinned by three premises:

- All learners can learn and succeed, but not on the same day in the same way.
- Successful learning promotes even more successful learning.
- Adult education centres control the conditions that directly affect successful adult learning.

Spady (1994:9) states that the first premise explicitly takes differences in learners' abilities and learning styles into account, not as barriers to successful learning, but as factors that must be designed into any sound instructional process. This is based on the view that all learners have the potential to learn and succeed given the necessary support. The second premise stresses that learning rests on learners having a strong cognitive and psychological foundation of prior learning success. The third premise highlights that conditions set by the learning institutions play an important role in promoting successful learning.

OBE, according to Spady (1994:10), is guided by four principles, which are clarity of focus, expanded opportunity, high expectation and designing down from culminating outcomes. These four principles are the core of OBE. Working together, they strengthen the conditions that enable learners and facilitators to be successful. The principles are discussed hereunder.

2.2.1 Clarity of focus on the outcomes

The word *outcome* is used broadly as an inclusive term, referring to everything that is learnt, including social and personal skills, the activities of understanding how to learn, understanding concepts, acquiring knowledge, solving problems, managing oneself, values and so on (Coetzee 2002:10). Clarity of focus helps facilitators establish a clear picture of what learners should achieve. Demonstration of performance by learners becomes the top priority for instructional planning and learners' assessment. The clear picture of the desired outcome is the starting point for curriculum, instruction and assessment planning,

all of which must match or align with the desired outcome. Outcomes-based systems exist to ensure that all learners will emerge as successful learners by achieving their predetermined outcomes. The same outcomes can be pursued through a variety of approaches and methods. In this regard, OBE facilitators are continuously encouraged to explore better ways of designing and delivering instruction, especially in the light of differences in learners learning abilities and styles. There are three types of learning outcomes, namely essential outcomes, specific outcomes and exit level outcomes (Spady 1994:11).

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) defines twelve essential outcomes consisting of seven critical cross-field outcomes and five developmental outcomes which should form the basis of all South African education and training programmes (SAQA 1998:41). ABET centres must therefore not only ensure that their learning programmes are developed according to their relevant subject and specific outcomes; the applicable essential outcomes must also be incorporated into their programmes and adapted for adult learning. These are outcomes that have transformational power in the sense that they are the critical skills that people should be able to acquire and do at a variety of levels in order to perform competently in different roles. A learning outcome is an achievement within a specific context, which can be demonstrated, following a range of learning experiences, which include supportive elements like acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as ways of executing activities or tasks. The challenge of outcomes-based learning is the rationale of achieving outcomes within a learning programme while developing within learners, the capability to think, reason, criticise, deliberate, think, socialise and apply knowledge and skills within a specific context (Olivier 1998:38). Below are SAQA's seven critical cross-field outcomes and five developmental outcomes.

2.2.1.1 *Critical cross-field outcomes*

- Problem-solving skills: Identify and solve problems in which the responses display that responsible decisions, using critical and creative thinking, have been made.

- Teamwork: Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and/community.
- Self-responsibility skills: Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Research skills: Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Language skills: use language to communicate in the modes of oral and/or written presentations.
- Technological and environmental literacy: Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
- Developing systems thinking: Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

2..2.1.2. Developmental outcomes

- Learning skills: Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Citizenship: Participate as a responsible citizen in the life of local, national and global communities.
- Cultural and aesthetic understanding: Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Employment seeking skills: Explore education and career opportunities.
- Entrepreneurship: Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

2.2.2 Expanded opportunity and support for learning success

Expanded opportunity requires facilitators to give learners more than one chance to learn important things and to demonstrate that learning. Spady (1994:15) contends that in OBE learners must meet all criteria of a defined performance to a defined standard and that if the standard is not met; the learners are still responsible for meeting such a standard. Furthermore, the conditions for meeting

the criteria must be established at the onset of a learning experience. Most OBE systems expect learners to earn the right to receive expanded opportunities by having them consistently do the work and practise, which makes the improvement possible. It can be argued that, if this principle can be embraced in adult learning, it could significantly reduce learners' drop-out rate which is experienced by adult centres. The necessity for coaching, guiding and mentoring learners throughout the learning programme should not be underestimated.

2.2.3 High expectations for all to succeed

High expectations means increasing the level of challenge to which learners are exposed and raising the standard of acceptable performance they must reach for success. This implies having a desire to have learners perform at higher than initially exhibited levels and working with them to increase the likelihood that it happens (Spady 1994:17). The expectation must be that all learners are able to achieve the specific outcomes. However, all learners are not expected to achieve the outcomes in the same way or at the same rate. In order for adult learners to meet the expected learning outcomes, ABET programmes need to be designed in a way that enables adult learners, despite differences in their social backgrounds, learning styles and abilities to achieve the desired learning experiences.

2.2.4 Design down from ultimate culminating outcomes

The curricula approach in this OBE principle is the requirement for facilitators to start at the end of a learning experience, its culminating point, and determine which critical components and building blocks of learning (enabling outcomes) need to be established so that learners can successfully reach that point. This process might involve eliminating parts of the programme that are not significant enabling outcomes. In essence, all learning programmes should be built on the basis of the desired outcomes and the vision of what the learner should progressively achieve up to the end of the programme. ABET facilitators should therefore have a clear vision of what they want their learners to achieve at the end of the learning experience and decide on the curriculum components that will enable learners to pursue and achieve such desired outcomes.

2.3 PROFESSIONAL ROLES OF EDUCATORS/FACILITATORS

The introduction of OBE necessitated that the Department of Education reviewed the roles of educators in order to facilitate the implementation of OBE. According to the Department of Education (1997) there are norms and standards that educators have to follow for effective teaching and learning in their respective professions. The following are the roles of educators:

❖ Learning mediator

The educator will mediate learning in a manner that is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners including those with barriers to learning. With reference to this study the learning needs would be those needs related to learning style preferences of adult learners. The educator will construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational; communicate effectively showing recognition of and respect for the differences of others. In addition, an educator will demonstrate sound knowledge of subject and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate for a specific context.

❖ Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials

The educator will understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning. The educator will also select as well as sequence and pace the learning in a manner sensitive to the differing needs of the subject/learning area and learners.

❖ Assessor

The educator will understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process and how to integrate it into this process. The educator will have an understanding of the purposes, methods and effects of assessment and be able to provide helpful feedback to learners. The educator will design and manage both formative and summative assessment in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the

requirements of accrediting bodies. The educator will keep detailed and diagnostic records of assessment. The educator will understand how to interpret and use assessment results for the improvement of learning programmes.

❖ Learning area/subject/discipline specialist

The educator will be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to the learning area/subject/discipline of study or professional or occupational practice. The educator will know about different approaches to teaching and learning and how these may be used in ways that are appropriate to the learners and the context. The educator will have a well-developed understanding of the knowledge appropriate to the speciality.

ABET facilitators are expected to perform the above-mentioned roles of facilitators just like any other facilitator in order to be effective in their teaching and learning processes. Amongst the above-mentioned roles of educators, this study focuses on the role of an educator as a learning mediator. The study accentuates that an educator must have the ability to accommodate learners who come to a learning situation with different learning styles. Most importantly, facilitators have to know the different approaches for facilitating learning in a manner that considers the diverse needs of learners. For the purpose of this study, I focus on the approaches suggested by Silverman and Cassazza (2000), Dunn et al (1990), Pintrich (1995) and Du Toit (2002) which are learning style flexibility, cooperative learning and self-regulated learning.

2.4 LEARNING STYLE FLEXIBILITY

Facilitators are encouraged to structure their facilitation of learning in such a way that it engages learners with diverse learning style preferences in different types of learning activities. One approach that can be used to achieve this is using the whole brain learning approach (Silverman & Cassazza 2000: 187). The following is an examination of the distinction between left-brain and right-brain processing and how the differences relate to learning styles.

Individuals who seem to be left-brain dominant tend to process information in a more linear, analytic manner similar to a computer, whereas those who seem more right-brain dominant process information in a more holistic, visual manner similar to a kaleidoscope (Silverman & Casazza 2000:187). Dunn, Sklar and Beaudry (1990:284) add to the understanding of these approaches by listing descriptors for the two hemispheres. They describe left-brain tendencies as analytic, successive and inductive and right-brain approaches as global, simultaneous and deductive. They contend that both sides of the brain are involved with reasoning but they reason differently.

According to Dunn et al (1990:285) there are three ways in which the two hemispheres differ. These are:

- Each is more sensitive to different stimuli;
- Each processes the same stimuli differently; and
- They both respond differently to the same stimuli.

Dunn et al (1990:285) further clarify these distinctions by giving examples from the field of mathematics. First, students who process from a left-brain approach in geometry will understand a theorem after studying definitions and proof from related theorems, whereas the right-brain dominant students will understand more readily by studying related geometry pictures. Second, when asked to solve a problem, the left-brain dominant learner will most likely outline each step carefully to come up with a solution; the right-brain dominant learner will probably read the problem several times, look at notes, appear to be idle while mulling over the possibilities and then reach a solution. Third, the left-brain dominant learner will tend to explain how he has reached a solution, whereas the right-brain dominant learner will probably draw a picture to show his/her processing.

Dunn et al (1990:285) point out two areas in which hemispheric preferences directly influence learning processes. These are language style and interpersonal interaction. In the area of language style, left-brain dominant learners tend to be more successful with abstractions and vocabulary development, as they use

words to give meaning to abstract concepts. Those who show a right brain dominance are more apt to construct meaning through visual cues and by relating concepts to a personal context. Meanings for these learners are stored in memory with no verbal labels, so there is often a delay in answering when they are asked to respond quickly as they first translate the stored picture into words. While completing this process, it may seem to the facilitator that they are talking around the answer when they are actually processing the question in an unanticipated way.

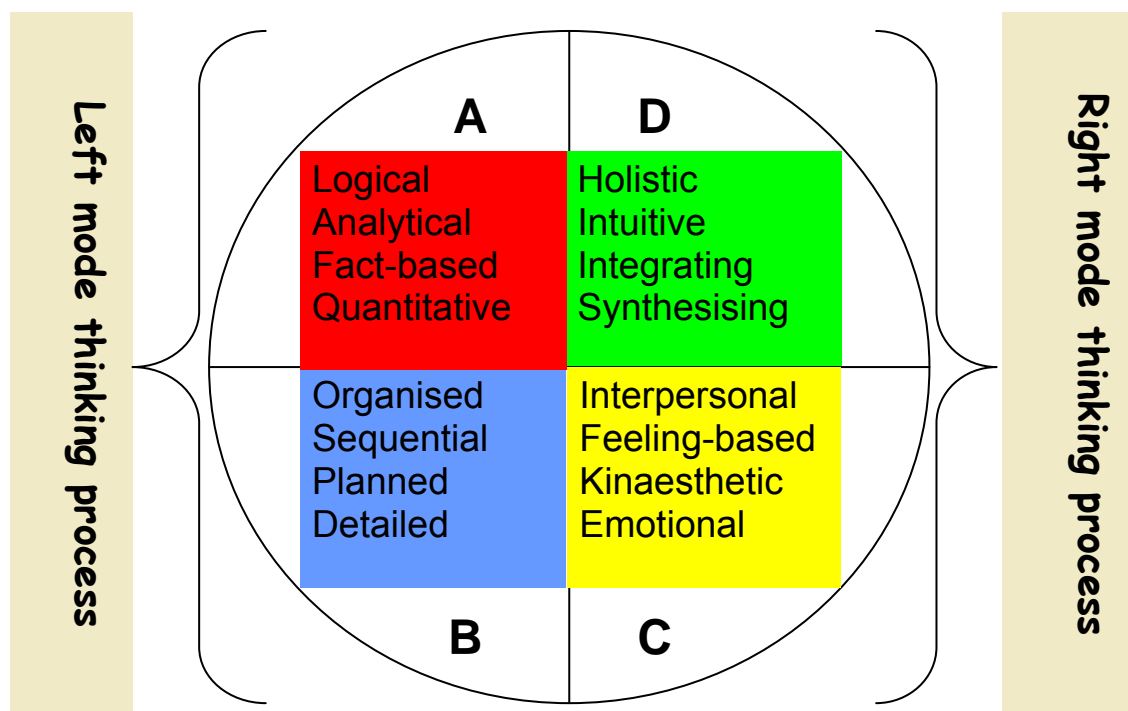
Referring to facilitator-learner interaction, Dunn et al (1990:286) state that learners with a left-brain disposition more often relate to a facilitator impersonally, work more independently and seem very task-orientated as they strive for personal recognition. Those with a right-brain preference seek out a more personal relationship with the facilitator and prefer to avoid competition. Overall, the social environment in the learning setting is more important to these learners. It is therefore important for facilitators to take cognisance of learner preferences to problem solution, information processing and learners response in social settings in order to enable them to achieve learning outcomes.

Much of the work on hemispheric dominance examines the relationship between teaching style and learners' preferences for achieving a specific learning task. Dunn et al (1990:286) found a significant positive relationship between hemispheric preference and achievement when learning interventions were tailored to complement the learners' styles. Working with mathematics learners in a technical college, they discovered that when learning interventions were delivered in a global format (including visuals and personalised associations) to simultaneous (right-brain dominant) learners, their test scores following these interventions improved significantly. When analytic (left-brain dominant) learners experienced learning activities that followed a successive or sequential format, their test scores also went up. This was because learning opportunities were offered in a step-by-step manner, with details leading up to general concepts (Dunn et al 1990:286). From this exposition, it can be concluded that all learning interventions should be delivered using a strategically selected combination of both formats in order to reach as many learners as possible.

Rose (1992) recommends that specific skills need not be presented in isolation but rather as part of a continuous flow of experiences. Pieces of information leading up to abstract concepts need to be presented together so that the right-brain learners can see connections and get the whole picture. She also suggests personalising the learning environment: having the learners relate personal experiences to learning opportunities before assigning any readings and using as many visuals as possible (for example, charts or graphs).

Herrmann (1998) expanded on the works of Dunn et al (1990) by developing a whole brain model through categorising the specialised functions of the human brain into four quadrants, namely A, B, C, and D. Figure 2.2 depicts the functions in the four quadrants.

Figure 2.2 Herrmann Whole Brain Model



Adapted from Herrmann Whole Brain Model (Herrmann 1998)

According to Hines (1991), Du Toit (2002:37), Carter (2000) and Meneely and Portillo (2005), the four quadrants represent the four thinking structures of the brain. Each quadrant has very distinct clusters of cognitive functions. Preference for the A-quadrant means that a person favours activities that involve logical, analytical and fact-based information. Such a person would prefer learning from lectures and textbooks.

A preference for the B-quadrant means that a person favours organised, sequential, planned and detailed information. A person with this preference would learn best through a methodical step-by-step testing of what is being taught as well as practice and repetition to improve skills and competence.

A preference for the C-quadrant indicates favouring information that is interpersonal, feeling-based and involves emotion. A learner with this preference would learn best through group discussions, sharing and expressing ideas, hands-on activities and being emotionally involved.

Individuals with a preference for the D-quadrant favour a holistic and conceptual approach in thinking. Thus learning for a learner with this preference takes place through visualising and synthesising the information or through the understanding of concepts holistically or intuitively (Hines 1991; Du Toit 2002:37; Carter 2000 & Meneely & Portillo 2005).

The preceding arguments have evidenced the positive effects on learners when facilitation of learning incorporates all four quadrants or modes of the brain. However, because learners generally process information in a variety of styles, it is important not to look at individual styles too rigidly. The more difficult the task, the more apt learners are to choose a style that works best for them. It is important therefore that facilitators should structure educational activities in such a way that they accommodate learners with preferences in all four quadrants so as to develop the learners' full potential. The significance here is the importance of integrating different approaches. Rose (1992), Dunn et al (1990), Du Toit (2002), Carter (2000) and Meneely and Portillo (2005) suggest that facilitators should ensure that facilitation of learning reaches out to all styles of learning and

does not favour a style simply because it is the most familiar or reflects the facilitator's own style. It is in this context that this study investigates the strategies used by facilitators at Gaegolelwe ABET Centre for facilitating learning. The following is a discussion of cooperative learning, which is one of the strategies that are related to the above-mentioned C-quadrant learning style preference.

2.5 COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams each with learners of different levels of ability and/or learning style preference use a variety of learning activities to improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as motivating one another. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping team members learn, thus creating an atmosphere of mutual achievement. Learners work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it (Kagan 2001; Aldridge, Fraser & Sebela 2004).

Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit so that all group members (Kagan 2001):

- gain from each other's efforts (your success benefits me and my success benefits you);
- recognise that all group members share a common fate (we all sink or swim).
- know that one's performance is mutually caused by oneself and one's team members (we cannot do it without you);
- feel proud and jointly celebrate when a group member is recognised for achievement (we all congratulate you on your accomplishment).

The introduction of OBE necessitated a shift from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach with the focus on facilitating learning. This demands an awareness of different learners' needs and different styles of learning. Facilitators therefore have to adapt to different styles of facilitating learning of

which groupwork is one. As Du Toit (2002:52) indicates, in order to promote independent learning, interdependent learning is imperative. This argument holds true as adults learn best if they are given an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences in a groupwork situation. Du Toit (2002:52) further states that to become a lifelong learner, different learning skills, including higher-order cognitive skills are required for learners to think critically. It is this higher-level reasoning that could be brought about by the interactive element of small-group work. Small-groupwork not only provides an opportunity for learners to improve their social skills, but also promotes the development of judgement and the ability to interpret by the exchange of different points of view.

More and more facilitators are using classroom discussions and small-group exercises to help learners utilise their knowledge and to develop thinking skills. These are techniques that help to involve learners in the learning process and prepare them for a group situation they may encounter on the job or in the community. The main purpose of forming small-groups within a learning programme is to provide and improve self-directed learning activities of the group members. Small-groups could be used to guide the learner to become a self-sufficient learner. Such a learner can understand, monitor and control his/her thought processes in relation to specific tasks (Du Toit 2002:52; Coelho 1996; Millis 2002; Gillies 2004).

Johnson and Johnson (1999:69); Kagan (2001); Aldridge et al (2004) and Coelho (1996) highlight the importance of structuring small-groups to promote learning. This includes ensuring that the following key elements are evident: task interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction and training in the social skills to facilitate group interaction. Moreover, Lou, Abrami, Spence, Poulsen, Chambers and d'Apollonia (1996:435) state that the benefits of small-groups are enhanced when groups do not exceed four members, groups are gender-balanced and generally of mixed ability and with different learning styles. As such, learning experiences are tailored to the needs of the group, and facilitators are trained to implement small-group work as part of facilitating learning. Furthermore, the more opportunities given to learners to work together on structured task activities, the more cooperative the groups become, as

members will increasingly strive to facilitate one another's' learning by offering and receiving assistance within the team.

Shachar and Sharon (1994:327) found that increased participation in cooperative small-group discussion resulted in more frequent use of cognitive strategies and greater ownership of the material being discussed, and that it is these conditions that contribute to the higher levels of achievement. Shachar and Sharon (1994:27) further point out that when learners work cooperatively, group members often act as mediators of learning by explaining ideas and information, drawing one another's attention to aspects of interest and encouraging one another to investigate new perspectives.

For cooperative learning to be more successful, Melroth and Dearing (1994:148) suggest that group activities should be designed in such a way that they encourage learners to think more deeply about problems they are trying to solve. In this way the learners will be challenged to engage in more meaningful interactions with one another and it is these interactions that, in turn, contribute to the learning gains or achievements.

Cooperative small-group learning is also embraced by Gillies (2003:35) with a view that it is widely recognised as a strategy that promotes learning and socialisation across a range of curriculum areas. Gillies (2003:35) and Adam and Slater (2002:385) argue that when learners work cooperatively, they learn to give and receive help, share their ideas and listen to other learners' perspectives, seek new ways of clarifying differences, resolving problems and constructing new understandings and knowledge. The result is that some learners who prefer to work in groups attain higher academic outcomes and are more motivated to achieve than they would be if they worked alone.

2.6 SELF-REGULATED/DIRECTED LEARNING

Self-regulated/directed learning occurs when learners are actively in control and aware of how they process information. Garner (1987:322) talks about it in terms of comprehension, and describes it as an interaction among three variables: the

individual, the task, and the repertoire of strategies available to the individual. Pintrich (1995:7) describes self-regulated learning as an active process that is goal-orientated. He adds that in order to regulate behaviour learners must have control over resources, which could mean having the repertoire of strategies that Garner refers to.

Self-regulated learners as Pilling-Cormick (1997) describes are those learners who are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviourally active participants in their learning. Metacognition is the component that directs planning and one's learning so that a learner can organise, monitor and evaluate his/her learning process. Motivation relates to high self-efficacy and attribution as well as an intrinsic interest in the learning task. Behaviour is the process for selecting, structuring and creating an environment that is optimal for learning. These three factors are basic to the process of self-regulated learning.

Pilling-Cormick (1997) asserts that although everyone uses some regulatory process, true self-regulated learning occurs when learners are able to see the relationship between a particular strategy used and learning outcomes to be achieved and then use that knowledge to work towards their goals. In his summary of the research in this area, he determines that this awareness of learning outcomes is critical to the continued use of self-regulated strategies.

Knowles (1990) and Long (2000) are of the opinion that for self-regulation to be used effectively, learners need a certain amount of background knowledge of the subject matter. They expand on this as they discuss the potency of subject matter knowledge and the individual interest level of the learner in the process of self-regulation. In the model they refer to as the domain model of learning, they describe three stages: acclimation, competence and proficiency. At the acclimation stage, learners have a low knowledge of the subject matter and their motivation is often restricted to the task at hand. For learners enrolled in entry-level coursework, the acclimation stage places high demands on their general cognitive processing and the required tasks may seem overwhelming rather than stimulating. Knowles (1990) and Long (2000) stress that while learners may

attempt self-regulation at this stage, it will be less frequent and less rewarding. They add that facilitators should not hold them to unattainable standards.

At the competency level, Knowles (1990) and Long (2000) assert that learners become more independent as they are able to organise information around significant concepts. Their efforts begin to relate to realistic goals and their processing strategies become more appropriate for the subject matter. Finally, at the proficiency stage tasks are frequently self-determined and the learner contributes new knowledge to the field. Goals become internally constructed and self-regulatory behaviour operates at an optimal level.

Paris and Newman (1990:87) add that effective self-regulation includes active participation and collaboration on the part of the learners. They contend that one way of facilitating this is through peer tutoring. When learners exchange ideas, they develop more of a personal commitment to the strategies they are helping one another with. Learners could be convinced to use their talents and strengths to facilitate learning amongst themselves. In this case there would be a likelihood of an increase in their own sense of control in the learning environment and feelings of self-efficacy may increase.

Closely linked to Paris and Newman's (1990:87) opinion that learning experiences cannot be facilitator-driven is the argument of Talbot (1996:76) and Boyer (2003) who assert that facilitators cannot teach self-regulation; rather, they act as "mediators". They contend that behaviour must be elicited from learners who experience an ownership of the process which then becomes meaningful to them because of their personal involvement, and the facilitator's role must be to increase learners' awareness of the connections between their intentions and the actions they take.

Talbot (1996:208) framed his work around learners who are learning-orientated or goal-orientated. Learning-oriented learners are intrinsically motivated, independent learners who are curious about learning and meeting their own learning outcomes whereas goal-oriented learners are more bound by external expectations, class requirements and assigned tasks. Thus the learning-

orientated approach is more related to a self-regulatory process but facilitators often unintentionally reinforce the goal-orientated learners by unilaterally setting all the standards and expectations for the class. It is therefore logical that sharing some of the control within the instructional setting, making it clear that knowledge can be generated collaboratively with the learners, and reinforcing the setting of personal goals, should in turn facilitate mediation toward learners feeling more responsible for their own learning.

In order to foster successful learning, the facilitator should assist learners in learning how to set appropriate learning outcomes, which then forms the foundation for self-regulatory learning. This involves deliberate facilitation that is related to outcomes setting. Learners must learn how to develop personal standards and levels of achievement. This may involve a review of earlier learning outcomes in order to direct their new learning activities. According to Talbot (1996:78) once learners begin to develop satisfactory self-regulated strategies, their feelings of self-efficacy will also be strengthened and lead to higher levels of achievement.

The role of the facilitator in promoting self-directed learning among learners is highlighted by Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998:83) who state that self-directed learning is seen as a goal, an underlying assumption of andragogy and a prevailing philosophy for adult education by many in most parts of the world. Knowles et al (1998:83) also mention that learners can be assisted to become increasingly more self-directed when given appropriate learning tools, resources, experiences and encouragement. For facilitators this involves helping learners participate in various activities, including the assessment of personal needs, planning subsequent learning activities, securing or creating necessary learning resources and assessing personal progress in achieving learning outcomes.

The argument of Knowles et al (1998:83) is supported by Brockett and Heimstra (1991:105). They believe that there are many different roles a facilitator should assume including that of a leader, collaborator or colleague in promoting varying types of self-directed behaviour. In other words, a facilitator is not just a classroom educator, but can also be a counsellor, consultant and resource

locator. This is supportive of the aforementioned role of a facilitator as an interpreter and designer of learning programmes. One of the responsibilities for performing this role is to identify the requirements for a specific learning context and provide appropriate resources for learning to take place. However, Brockett and Heimstra (1991:105) state that for such activities and roles to be successful, a partnership must be developed between learner and facilitator. They argue that this is important so that issues like the quality of the experience, a personal desire to continue learning activities and obtaining the necessary support, are considered. Such a partnership involves mentoring, building collegiality, helping learners free themselves from expected dependent relationships with educators and developing greater learner independence.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 discussed constructivism as the theoretical framework on which this study is based. It also examined relevant concepts such as outcomes-based education which is embedded in the constructivist theory. OBE is underpinned by three premises: all learners can learn and succeed but not on the same day and in the same way; successful learning promotes even more successful learning; learning institutions control the conditions that directly affect successful learning. The four OBE principles discussed are clarity of focus on the outcomes; expanded opportunity; high expectancy for all to succeed and design down from ultimate outcomes.

Chapter 2 highlights the important role of learning style flexibility; it emphasises the incorporation of a whole brain learning approach in the facilitation of learning. The chapter deals with cooperative learning, as a strategy for facilitating learning that engages small teams, each with different learning styles and levels of ability. The teams use a variety of learning activities to improve their knowledge and skills, develop critical thinking skills, social skills and higher order reasoning skills. This process engages learners in a more effective interaction with one another.

Another important concept dealt with is self-regulated learning, which occurs when learners are actively in control and aware of how they process information and have control over resources. The professional roles of facilitators as learning mediators, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, assessors and learning areas specialists are also reviewed.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this chapter the research design and methods employed in carrying out this study are discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A mixed-methods approach, that is, both qualitative and quantitative was employed in this study to examine the strategies used by ABET facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre to facilitate learning. A mixed-methods approach is a procedure for collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell 2002:510). I decided to use a mixed-methods approach because using both quantitative and qualitative data provided better insight into the research problem than each type on itself.

According to Angelo and Cross (1993:47) a qualitative approach is a more flexible and dynamic research approach. Employing a qualitative approach enabled me to explore and get insight into the way in which learning is facilitated at an ABET centre as it allows for deeper understanding of the situation or problem under study.

Employing a quantitative approach in this study also enabled me to ask specific questions to obtain measurable and observable data on variables. Data collection involved the use of relevant instruments to measure those variables and gather numerical data.

The research design for this study is the case study. According to Winegardner in Jaeger (1997), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. It is an intensive, holistic

description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon and social unit. Cohen et al (2002:180) add that the single instance is of a bounded system and it could be an individual child, a class, a specific programme or an organisation. Cohen et al (2002:180) further point out that contexts are unique and dynamic; hence case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance.

Cohen et al (2002:182) contend that case studies strive to portray “what it is like” to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and thick description of participants’ live experiences, thoughts and feelings for a particular situation. By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity, I was able to take a holistic view of the situation and uncover the interaction of significant factors and characteristic of the phenomenon. A case study focuses on holistic description and explanation and its purpose is to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process (Winegardner in Jaeger 1997).

The foregoing summarises the research design employed in this study. The population of the study is presented next.

3.3 POPULATION OF STUDY

The population of this study comprised 115 adult learners and 9 facilitators. Of the 115 adult learners, 83 were female and 32 male. There were nine facilitators of which four were female and five male. The sample and the sampling procedures that were employed in this study are presented below.

3.4 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sampling according to Bong and Gall (1995:216) means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population.

3.4.1 Sampling of adult learners

The sample of adult learners was selected through employing stratified random sampling. From the total population of 115 adult learners at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre, 47 adult learners were thus selected. Nineteen adult learners were selected in ABET level 3 while 28 adult learners were selected in level 4. The simple random sampling procedure was done using the registration list of learners in ABET level 3 and level 4. The reason for selecting learners who were in level 3 and 4 was that these learners had been in a programme longer than the other levels and as a result had more experience of the way in which learning is facilitated in their centre.

3.4.2 Sampling of facilitators

The total population of facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre was nine. There were four female and five males. Convenience sampling procedure was employed to select the sample size of 4 facilitators, two males and two females to participate in the study, in order to avoid a gender bias. I chose to use convenience sampling procedure because I wanted to interview facilitators who had the most experience in teaching in an adult learning environment at the centre, the assumption being that they were conversant with the principles and premise underpinned in adult learning and in particular the way learning has to be facilitated. I identified the four facilitators through the discussion I had with the deputy principal. The next section presents the processes I followed in the preparation for data collection.

3.5 PREPARATIONS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Before going out on field work to collect data, the University of Pretoria required me to follow specific procedures to ensure implementation of the research ethics. Accordingly, an application was made for ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee. Another application was lodged with the Department of Education for permission to conduct the research in the Gauteng

Province. In the same vein permission was sought from the Management of Gaegolelwe Adult Centre to conduct research in their Centre. A participant's consent letter was also prepared in anticipation of initiating the process immediately. Regulations pertaining to research ethics were all complied with.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observations in order to ensure triangulation. Self-administered questionnaires were used in this study to gather information from adult learners on how strategies used to facilitate learning helped them to achieve their learning goals. For the purpose of validating the questionnaire as the tool for data collection, a pilot study was conducted.

3.6.1 The pilot study

In order to enhance the quality of the research, I constructed the questionnaire as a research tool used to collect quantitative data. I conducted a mini pilot study by administering the questionnaire to 10 adult learners who were at level 3 and level 4 of their learning programme. The reason for validating the questionnaire was to test whether it was measuring what it was intended to measure, that is, whether or not the questions elicited the appropriate response, and other factors such as whether it was appropriate for the sample, and comprehensive enough to collect all the information needed to address the purpose and goals of the study.

According to Creswell (2002:512) in quantitative data, validity might be ensured through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatment of the data. I therefore gave the respondents the questionnaire to complete to monitor whether they would be able to comprehend the content of the questionnaire and understand the instructions given on how to complete the questionnaire. I observed their behaviour during that process of filling in the questionnaire. Some of the learners requested assistance on the interpretation of the question items and questionnaire rating scales, to which I responded by providing as thorough explanations as was necessary. This assisted my effort to

refine the questionnaire as well as supported my choice of self-administering the questionnaire rather than posting it or leaving it with the respondents to complete on their own. This decision is supported by Oppenheim (1992:103) who asserts that self-administered questionnaires permit interviewer assessment of the situation and provide a chance to make necessary explanations as well as giving the benefit of a degree of personal contact with the respondents.

To ensure that the questionnaire was of acceptable quality a copy was given to two facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre to critique and provide comments regarding its structure and the relevance. The facilitators proposed some modifications to the questionnaire such as simplifying the language. For example, instead of using the term 'learning style' they thought it would be best to refer to it as 'different ways of learning' to avoid misunderstanding. They also made me aware that statements on questionnaire item 8 (b) and (c) were the same, and that they should be merged and rephrased to make a single statement. Apart from these and other corrections, the facilitators reassured me that their learners would be able to comprehend the content therein even though they could still need some clarification here and there. For that reason the facilitators encouraged me to administer the questionnaire and thereby provide an opportunity for interaction with the respondents.

Based on this, amendments were made resulting in the refinement of the questionnaire. Most of these were taken into account when the questionnaire was finalised. I changed the rating scales from a five scale attitude measure to a four scale as the former seemed confusing. I also rephrased some questions and statements that were not clearly understood and discarded irrelevant questions or statements. I also avoided using ambiguous words and ensured that the language used was appropriate for the respondents.

The discussion on the validity of the questionnaire is followed by an account of how the questionnaire was administered.

3.6.2 Administration of the questionnaires

The Management of the Gaegolelwe Adult Centre granted me permission to conduct the research. Discussion was held with the deputy principal to determine the appropriate time to administer the questionnaire. In order not to jeopardize learner-educator interaction time the research was allocated the last 30 minutes of a two hour session twice a week for a period of three weeks. This was to be within the Gaegolelwe Adult Centre weekly class schedule of Monday to Thursday, from 6.00pm to 8.00pm. The deputy principal introduced me to the facilitators who then took over to introduce me to the adult learners.

The questionnaire and interviews were used for data collection from 51 study participants (47 learners and 4 facilitators). A self-administered questionnaire was given to adult learners at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre to examine strategies used to facilitate learning. The purpose of the research was explained and how the questionnaires were to be filled was explained to the adult learners. Questions that arose while the respondents were filling in the questionnaires were immediately attended to. Adult learners were allowed opportunity to respond to questions on the learning style that they preferred as reflected in questionnaire items 7 (b) and 7 (g), approaches for facilitating learning that suited them and the activities they engage in to develop self-directed learning.

The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and assurance was given that the information provided would be treated as confidential. They were also informed that they were free to decide to participate or not to participate in the study. Those who voluntarily chose to participate were given a participant consent form to sign and date. The questionnaire forms were distributed to the respondents to complete after which they were collected immediately.

Semi-structured interviews that were also used for data collection in this study are discussed here below.

3.6.3 Administration of interview schedule

Semi-structured interviews were more appropriate for this study as they could capture the specificity of a particular situation (Cohen et al 2002:268), that is, they enabled me to obtain rich personal data from the participants. Because of its advantages, the interview proved to be a suitable method that I used to gather information regarding the strategies used for facilitating learning at Gaegolelwe ABET Centre.

According to Oppenheim (1992:31) the greatest advantage of the interview in the hands of a skilled interviewer is its flexibility. This enables the interviewer to make adjustments as the situation requires. As mentioned above semi-structured interviews were used for their appropriateness to this study. They allow for greater depth as the interviewer is free to modify the sequence of questions, change the wording, explain or add to them. In addition, in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is able to answer questions concerning both the purpose of the interview and any misunderstanding experienced by the interviewee, for it sometimes happens that a question may have different meanings to different people.

Semi-structured Interviews were also used to solicit information from the facilitators. The facilitators were requested to answer the following two open-ended questions:

1. What are the facilitation approaches applicable in your adult literacy programme and the benefits thereof?
2. What measures do you take to ensure that learners have the necessary skills to implement the approaches and improve learning?

The interview schedule was designed based on the research questions. Four sub-questions were developed from each main research question and other questions emerged through probing. The introductory questions elicited information on the professional background information of the participants, less complex questions in order to establish rapport. These were questions such as participants' teaching experience, number of years teaching in ABET, subjects

they taught and the number of learners in each subject. These provided the springboard from which the researcher proceeded to the main content of the interview schedule.

3.6.4 Conducting the interview

Appointments were made with the participants to conduct the interview when I had completed administering the questionnaires. Interviews were conducted during the fourth week of data collection. Each interview was allocated the last 30 minutes of the two hour class sessions. An audio cassette recorder was used to record the interviews. Notes were taken during the interview to complement the tape recorded information. The recorded information was transcribed verbatim and the resulting text analysed and interpreted. The analysis and interpretation of transcribed data is discussed under the data analysis section of this study.

3.7 VALIDITY OF DATA

In this study validity of data was established through the application of the following methods: triangulation, respondent validation and data trail.

3.7.1 Triangulation

Triangulation as a multi-method approach of data collection and data analysis was used in this study. Triangulation is a method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data (Cohen et al 2002; Altrichter, Posch & Somekh 2006). O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) refer to triangulation as an attempt to map out, or to explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. The aforementioned writers contend that triangulation gives a thorough, detailed and balanced picture of the situation being analysed. It has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter in section 3.1 that this research study employed a mixed methods research approach (quantitative and qualitative). According to Creswell (2002), the quantitative and qualitative data can both be collected and analysed sequentially or concurrently. For this study, the data were collected and

analysed sequentially; first the quantitative data (from questionnaires) then the qualitative data (from interviews). The data were then integrated into a coherent whole according to the research questions and thus interpreted. As such, each set of the data complemented the other. For example, a question which solicited information on the participants' preferred method of facilitating learning was asked to both adult learners and facilitators.

3.7.2 Respondents' validation

Data validation was conducted by verifying the information with participants during and after the data analysis. The intention was to determine whether the analysis represented the respondents' responses in both the questionnaires and the information obtained during interviews. Each respondent was given the script of the analysed data to verify if those were their responses. In the same vein participants (facilitators) were also given the interview transcriptions to verify if they reflect their true responses to the questions. This was to establish the trustworthiness and validity of the results.

3.7.3 Data trail

In order to allow other researchers to interrogate the findings from this study, a hard copy of the research report is kept in the Department of Library Services of the University of Pretoria so that it is accessible. The research can also be accessed through the electronic publication of the University.

The previous discussion on data validation is followed by an account of how data were analysed.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Creswell (2002:56) points out that in qualitative studies the researcher analyses the data by dividing them into themes and determining the meaning of those themes to describe the central phenomenon under study. In conformity with this

process data were transcribed from the interviews into text analysis through coding and categorisation. Basit (2003:144) views the role of coding as noticing relevant phenomena, collecting examples of those phenomena and analysing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures. This technique helped me to compare similarities and disparities across data, to change or drop categories and to make a hierarchical order of the categories. During this process, emergent themes from the data were identified and were used in generating findings.

Data from the questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis. This involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The technique of descriptive statistics included the ordering and summarising of data using graphs and calculating descriptive measures. Statistical inference embraces drawing meaningful conclusions relating to the population from which the sample was drawn (Bong & Gall, 1995).

3.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 provides information on how a mixed-methods approach that included both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed in generating data for the study. The chapter justifies the use of a mixed-methods approach and stresses how it provided better insight into the research problem while highlighting the advantages of qualitative and quantitative instruments used for the study. The questionnaire and interviews were used for data collection from 51 study participants (47 learners and four facilitators). The quantitative data were analysed by subjecting the data to statistical analysis involving the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative data were analysed qualitatively by transcribing data generated through interviews and developing themes through coding and categorisation.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data collected for this study are discussed. As explained in chapter 3, the research approach selected for this study is a mixed–method approach; I employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This chapter illustrates and explains the analysis and interpretation of data generated through both approaches. The first part of this chapter focuses on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter consists of sections A, B, C and D. Section A presents data on biographical information. Section B presents the analysis of data about learners' perceptions in relation to the facilitation of learning. Section C presents data on self-directed/regulated learning while section D highlights responses that focused on cooperative learning.

4.3 An overview of the Quantitative Data

The sample for this study included 47 adult learners at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre at Atridgeville, Pretoria (Tshwane South District). These learners were requested to complete the questionnaire. Out of the 47 learners, 19 were enrolled in level 3 and 28 in level 4 learning programmes according to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) classification.

Section A

4.4 Biographical Information

In this section information gathered regarding the respondents background is presented.

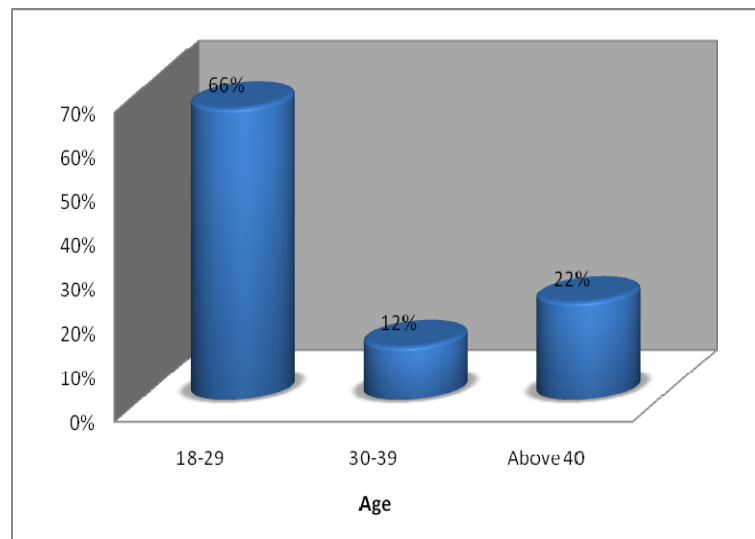
4.4.1 Place of residence

The first question asked was about the place of residence of the respondents. The reason for asking this question was to determine the respondents' geographical distribution which might have had an influence on their attendance

patterns. For instance, if most of them resided far away from the Adult Centre, their attendance might have been more challenging and could result in poor attendance – a problem experienced by many Adult centres. From the results of the data, it was clear that the majority (80%) of the respondents resided within Atridgeville which then eliminated the hypothesis that distance from or to the Centre might contribute to poor attendance. It was expected that other reasons such as the adult learners’ social roles competing for their time might come to the influence. The second question was about the respondents’ age. Figure 4.1 show the results from this question.

4.4.2 Age

Figure 4.1 Age of respondents (n = 47)



The above figure depicts that 30 respondents (66%) were between the age of 18 and 29, 6 (12%) were between the age of 30 and 39, while 11 (22%) were above the age of 40. These figures reflect that the majority of adult learners at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre are young adults. This shows that these adult learners did not have access to a formal education system and they are now being offered a second chance to fulfil their aspirations. The respondents were then required to provide information on their occupations.

4.4.3 Occupation of respondents

In response to this question, the results reflect that adult learners are engaged in various occupations ranging from being a domestic worker to being a police

officer. This is in line with the view of Knowles (1990) when he asserts that adult education caters for people from all walks of life. Figure 4.2 below shows the different occupations of the adult learners who participated in this study.

Figure 4.2 Occupation of respondents (n = 44)

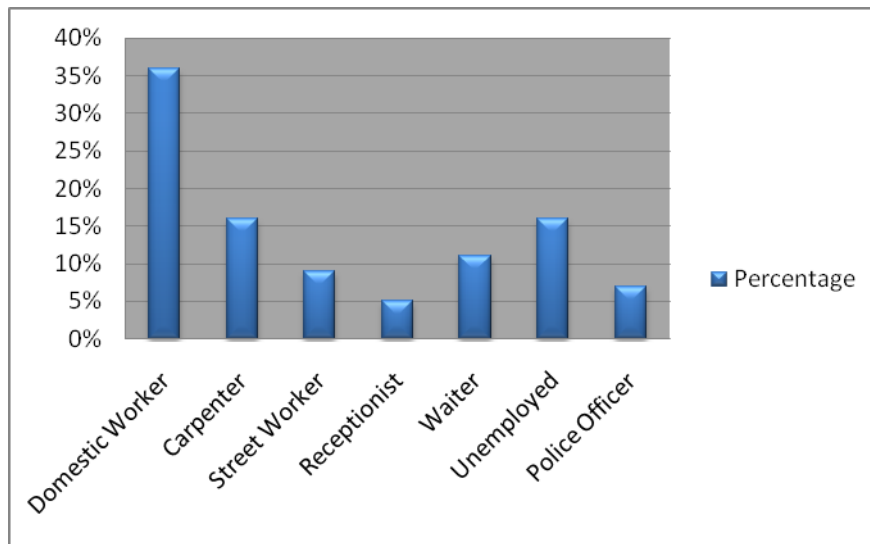
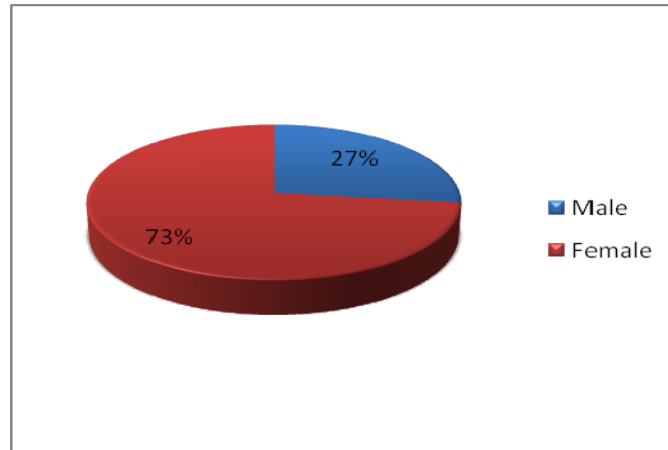


Figure 4.2 indicates that the majority of adult learners at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre are domestic workers; this can be attributed to their lack of education due to various reasons such as financial constraints among others that made it impossible to access formal education. Domestic work therefore seemed to be one of the few jobs they are capable of doing. As indicated 16 (36%) of these learners work as domestic workers, 7 (16%) have entrepreneurship skills as carpenters, 4 (9%) are street vendors, 2 (5%) occupy the position of receptionist in their respective workplaces and 5 (11%) work as waiters. Seven (16%) of these adult learners are not employed, 3 (7%) work as police officers while the other 3 did not respond.

4.4.4 Gender

The gender of the respondents is depicted in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3 Gender of respondents (n=47)



This figure illustrates the gender of the respondents at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre. Like every other adult education centre, Gaegolelwe Adult Centre is populated by female learners. This may support the claim that adult learners tend to be more females than males (Department of Education 2004, Masilela 1988).

Section B

Perceptions of adult learners of the facilitation of learning

Following the information about the participants' biographical data, the participants were asked questions which aimed at answering the following research question:

What are the perceptions of adult learners of the facilitation of learning in the programme they are enrolled for?

The restructuring of education in South Africa has embedded the principles of an Outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning (Olivier 1998:21). In reiteration, an Outcomes-based approach intends to focus on the output of the learning process, which is the final outcome, result or end product. As it has been highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 2, certain processes are identifiable as appropriate for learners to achieve the outcomes. These processes are interpreted and categorised according to the four quadrants of the Herrmann

(1998) whole brain learning approach: critical thinking, problem solving, application, analysing, synthesising, evaluation of information, teamwork, communication and socialising.

The afore-mentioned processes essential for the achievement of learning outcomes necessitates that in making learning possible for all learners to succeed, educators/facilitators are faced with the challenge to structure, design and deliver any learning opportunity in such a way that it is whole brained in order to meet the diverse learning and thinking styles of the learners. Thus, the first part of this section tries to explore whether the facilitators of Gaegolelwe Adult Centre incorporate the whole brain learning approach in their teaching and learning processes. In this study the whole brain learning approach is referred to as 'Learning Style Flexibility'.

4.5 LEARNING STYLE FLEXIBILITY

The participants were asked whether their facilitators engage them in different learning activities such as class exercises, tests etc. Their responses are shown in figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4 The extent to which the facilitators engage learners in different learning activities (n = 44)

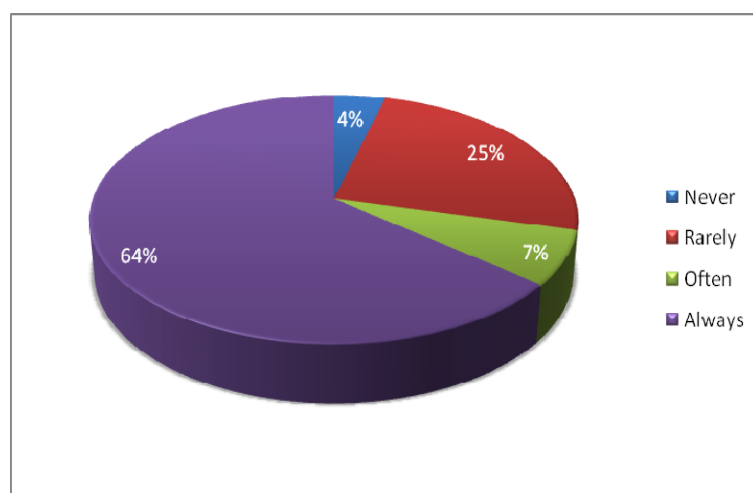


Figure 4.4 indicates that out of 44 adult learners 2 (4%) thought that the facilitators never engage learners in different learning activities, 11 (25%) of them

responded that the facilitators rarely engage them in different learning activities, while 3 (7%) thought that the facilitators often vary the activities. Sixty-four percent (64%) thought that the facilitators always engage them in different activities. This is in line with the view of Biggs (1987) when he said that learning opportunities should be planned in such a way that they challenge learners to learn in ways they would naturally avoid. A similar question was asked to the facilitators when gathering qualitative data through interviews.

Some adult learning theorists say that adults learn differently. How do you make sure you cater for each learner's different style of learning?

One of the facilitators responded with the following statement:

I make notes from the textbook and write them on the chalkboard for them to copy. We do some exercises together in the classroom, like solve some problems/equations together. If after presenting a topic I see that there is a learner who did not understand, I sit down with him/her and explain further.
Another facilitator continued:

I engage them in action research and tell them to compile portfolios. I ask them to go out, find information, and collect pictures, posters for their portfolios. Like now we are doing "food pyramid", so that they should know that they should eat healthily. So I asked them to bring pictures of different foods to make that pyramid. I do this because there are some learners who learn best if they do their own discovery, that is, through discovery learning.

The data presented above indicate that these facilitators engage learners in hands-on activities. This is in line with the learning style flexibility in that it caters for those learners who prefer to learn by doing.

Data from the 47 questionnaires regarding the adult learners' ways of learning, interests and background are depicted in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 The extent to which the facilitators determine adult learners' learning styles, interests and background (n = 45)

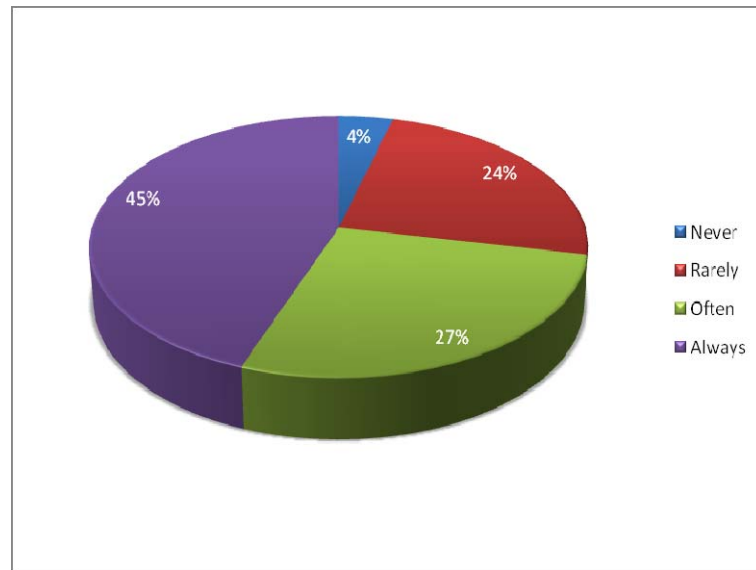


Figure 4.5 shows that 2 (4%) of the 45 participants indicated that the facilitators never took initiative to find out about the way in which they learn; 11 (24%) said that it rarely happens, 12 (27%) said the facilitators often try to find out how they learn and 20 (44%) were of the opinion that this always happens. Two participants did not respond. The facilitators get to know their learners' different learning styles through class discussions and various tasks assigned to learners. Data regarding whether the facilitators contextualise the learning opportunities to the learners background are depicted in Figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6 The extent to which facilitators select learning content/readings related to learners' backgrounds (n=46)

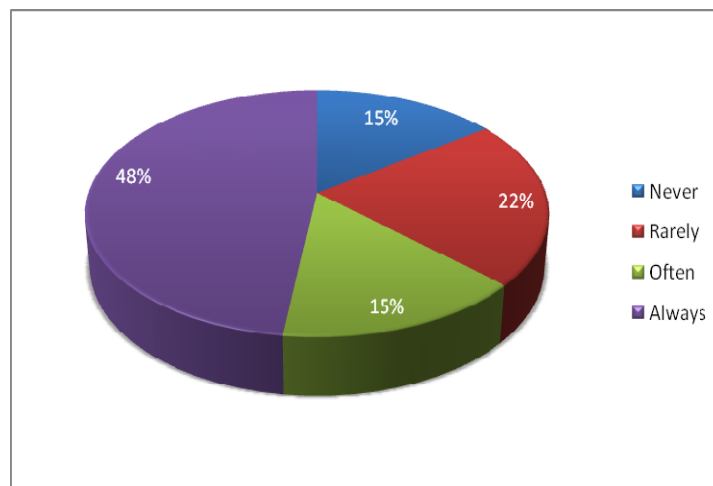


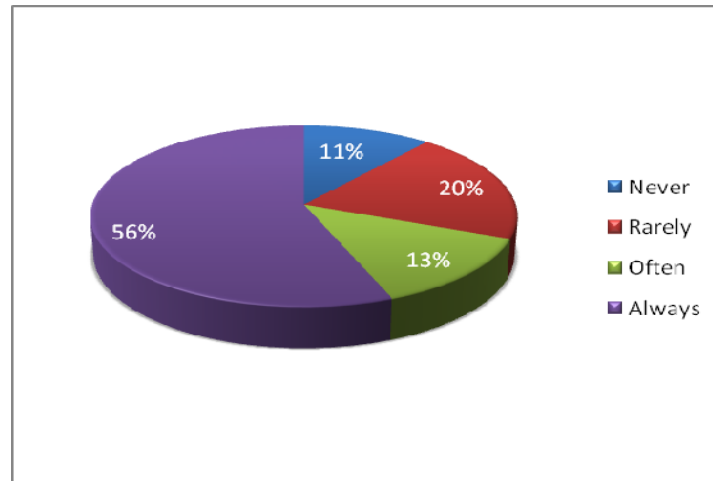
Figure 4.6 shows that of the 46 participants, 15% noted that the readings and the learning content selected by the facilitators are never related to their background; 22% stated that they rarely select readings related to their backgrounds, another 15% said that the facilitators often assign readings or select content which is within their social context. Close to 50% of the respondents, that is 48%, indicated that the facilitators always select readings and learning content related to their background. One participant did not respond. From the results it is clear that the learners are of the opinion that the learning content is related to their backgrounds or derived from their social settings. This finding is complemented by the data that emerged from the interviews. The facilitators confirmed that the learning content is related to learners' social settings through answering the question about the techniques they used to find out what the learners already knew about the topic to be taught (prior knowledge).

In reaction, one of the facilitators explained: "I ask them first if they know something about the topic. For example, if I am going to teach about HIV/AIDS, I ask them if they have heard about it and ask them to tell me what they know about it or understand about it. When they have given me the information about it, I add on what they have said or I could even ask them to go the clinics to get information and also to look for information from newspapers, magazines and TV and then bring all that information into the classroom and we discuss it.

The above actions are to ensure that they are involved in the learning process, not just to spoon-feed them. I want to know from them what they already know because they are adults, there are a lot of things they already know, for example, some have experiences, maybe they had an HIV/AIDS infected person in their families or in their communities and in that way they know something about it. I ask them a question first related to that topic before I teach them to find out if they know something concerning that topic. If I know that I am going to lecture on a certain topic the next session, I give them an assignment to go and investigate about that topic, either on TV, books, magazines or newspapers and then during that lesson they should first tell me what they have gathered.

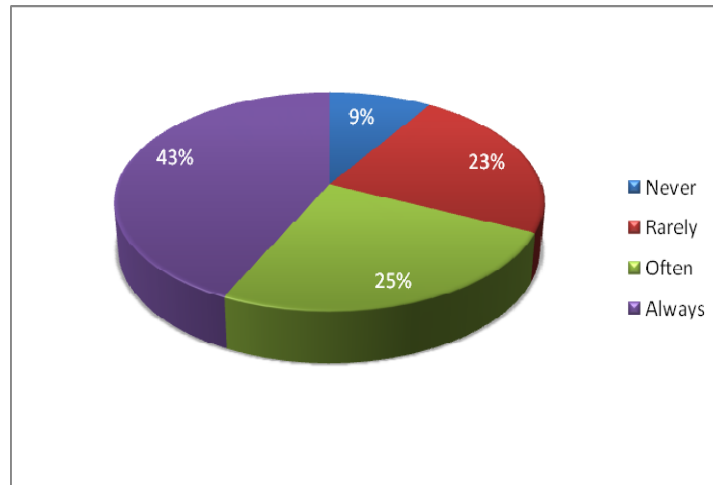
The participants were asked a follow-up question regarding whether their facilitators encourage them to challenge some ideas presented in readings, learning content or other learning materials. The findings are shown in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 The extent to which learners are encouraged to challenge some ideas in the learning materials (n=45)



Fifty six percent (56%) of the 45 respondents indicated that their facilitators do urge them to challenge some ideas in readings or learning materials as well as other learners' ideas; 13% indicated that their facilitators often encourage them to be active in their learning by questioning some ideas presented in the learning materials while 20% stated that this rarely occurs. Only 11% stated that it never occurs. Two participants did not respond. Another question that the participants responded to was whether they are given real-life situations to analyse. The results are depicted in Figure 4.8.

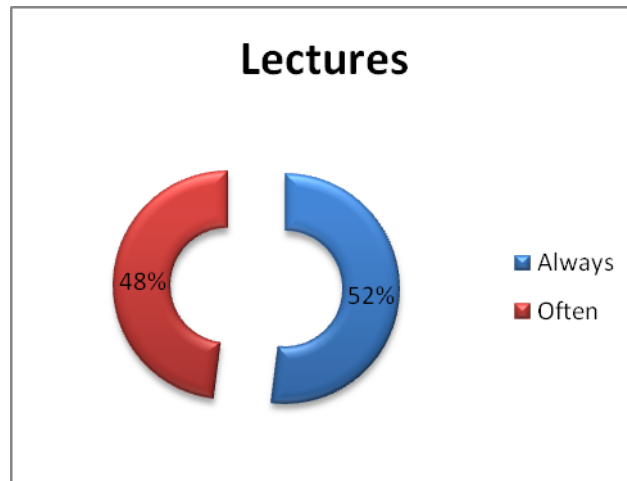
Figure 4.8 The extent to which learners are given real-life situations to analyse (n= 47)



Data analysis in Figure 4.8 indicated that 43% of respondents are of the opinion that they are always given real-life situations or problems to analyse both in the classroom situations and in their assignments. Twenty-five percent (25 %) indicated that they are often asked to analyse real-life situations which reflects that to some extent, the learning content is contextual. Twenty three percent (23%) of the respondents stated that being asked to analyse real-life problems was a rare occurrence while 9% were of the opinion that it never happened.

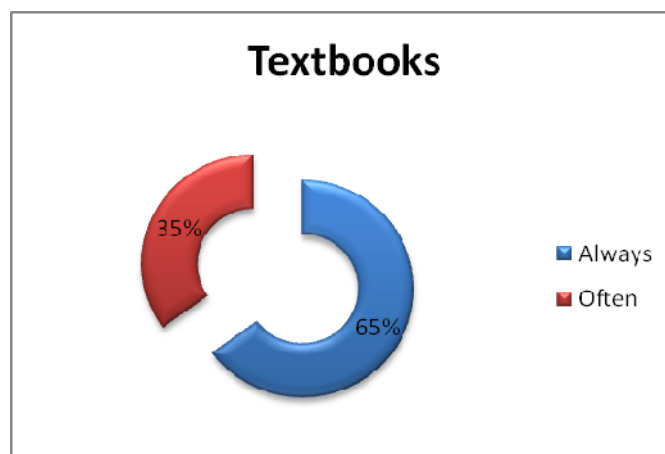
The respondents were further asked about the methods of facilitation their facilitators used mostly. The results are depicted in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9 The extent to which facilitators use the methods of facilitating learning (n = 47)



The results in this figure reflect that 52% of the respondents indicated that lectures as one method of facilitation of learning are frequently used by their facilitators. Forty eight percent of the respondents indicated that lectures are often used to facilitate learning. This implies that the facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre are not in line with the constructivist approach in that they use one method of facilitation predominantly, which is in contrast with what is advocated by constructivist theory. Figure 4.9 (a) shows the extent to which the facilitators use textbooks as one method of facilitating learning.

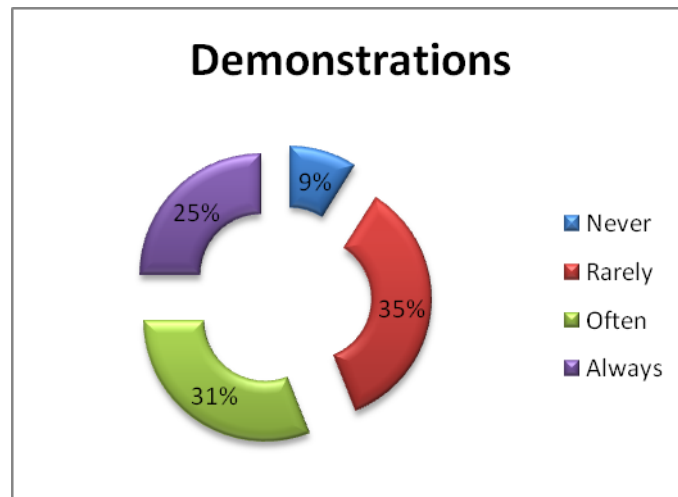
Figure 4.9 (a)



The above figure reflects that 65% of the respondents are of the opinion that textbooks are always used to complement lectures in the facilitation of learning as they give learners an opportunity to get further clarification of the issues

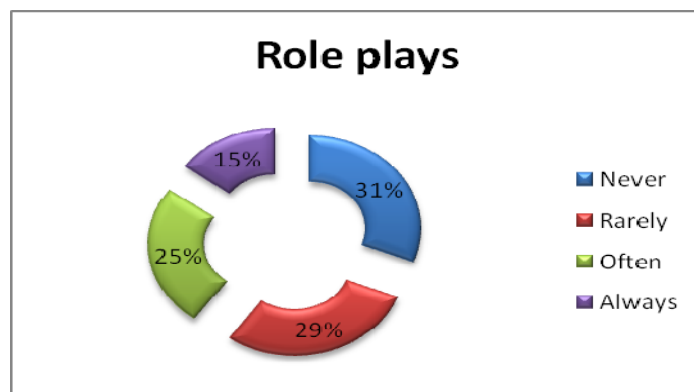
discussed in the lectures. Thirty five percent of the respondents indicated that textbooks are often used in the facilitation of learning. The extent to which demonstrations are used by facilitators to facilitate learning is portrayed in Figure 4.9 (b).

Figure 4.9 (b)



Data from Figure 4.9 (b) reveals that 25% of the respondents stated that demonstrations are always used by their facilitators to facilitate learning, 31% stated that demonstrations are often used. Thirty five percent (35%) of the respondents indicated that their facilitators rarely use demonstrations while 9% said they are never used. Figure 4.9 (c) illustrates the extent to which facilitators use role play to facilitate learning.

Figure 4.9 (c)



The results in Figure 4.9 (c) reflect that 15% of respondents indicated that role play as one method of facilitation of learning is always used by their facilitators, 25%; indicated that their facilitators often use role plays, 29% are of the opinion that role play is rarely used while 31% indicated that role-play is never used. This could be attributed to the fact that role play consumes relatively more time which is a constraint in most adult learning programmes. Data from the interviews confirmed what the learners indicated when they pointed out that their facilitators use lectures more often than other methods of facilitating learning.

In answer to the question regarding the method of facilitation that facilitators use mostly and whether that method help their learners understand better facilitators unanimously agreed that lectures and demonstration are the most commonly used methods. While reacting to the second aspect of the question, some of the facilitators explained as follows

We use lecture mostly and complement it by writing notes on the chalk board for learners to copy. Usually after teaching, we give them something like class work to test their knowledge or understanding. Through these ways, we are able to find out if they understood what we have taught them. Again, because some have left school a long time ago it is difficult for them to understand some things easily.

A follow-up question was asked regarding respondents preferred method of facilitation of learning. The results are shown in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10 Respondents preferred method of facilitating learning (n=47)

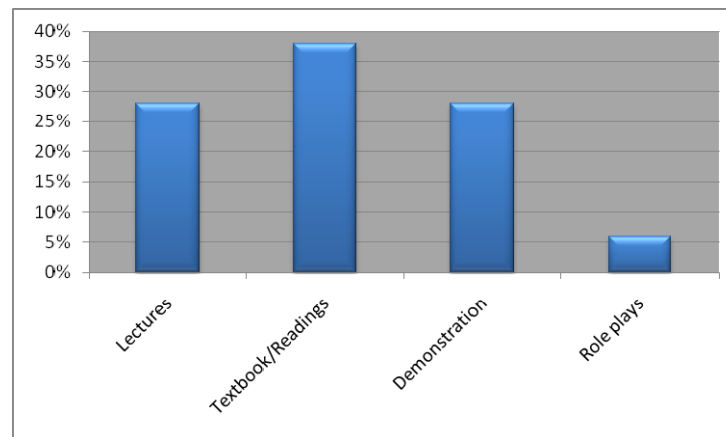


Figure 4.10 depicts that 28% of respondents prefer lectures as one method of facilitating learning because they indicated that they understand better when a facilitator explains some concepts during lecturing. They further stated that the lecture method gives them a chance to ask questions during and at the end of the lecture to clarify the areas where difficulties are encountered. Thirty eight (38%) agreed that they learn best from textbooks/readings because these allow them to have a better understanding of what has been taught in the classroom and also to gain more knowledge as well as to use them for referring back to the reading material. Another 28% of adult learners indicated that they prefer demonstrations because they are able to follow after have been shown how to do a certain task. Only 6% selected role play as their preferred method of facilitating learning because it is easy to remember an activity which has been role-played. Apparently role-play is not the method of facilitating learning most often used by the facilitators as depicted in Figure 4.10 above.

Section C

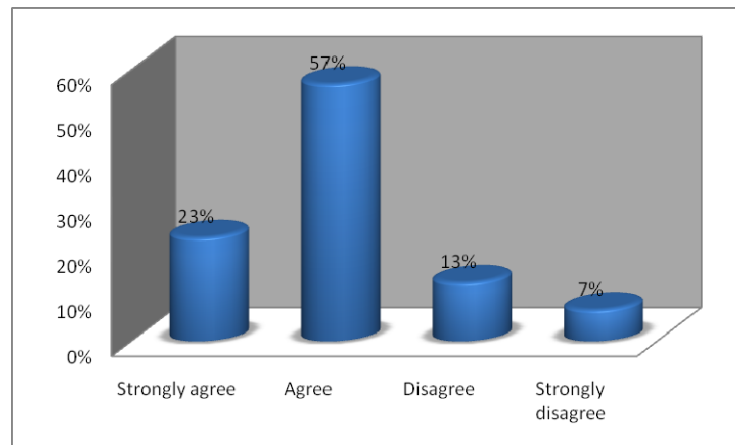
4.6 SELF-DIRECTED/REGULATED LEARNING

In this section of the study I analyse and interpret data that were gathered in order to answer the second research question which reads as follows:

How do ABET facilitators promote self-directed learning amongst adult learners?

The respondents were asked whether their facilitators help them set challenging, and realistic goals for their own learning. The data results from this question are illustrated in Figure 4.11.

Figure 4.11 The extent to which facilitators help learners to set challenging, and realistic goals for their learning (n=47)



Data analysis reflected in Figure 4.11 shows that 23% of respondents strongly agreed that their facilitators help them set realistic goals for their own learning; 57% agreed, while 13% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. These results suggest that 80% of the respondents agree that they do set challenging but realistic goals for their learning with the help from their facilitators.

On the basis of these results, the findings are that the facilitators of Gaegolelwe Adult Centre are working towards the implementation of OBE as described by Spady (1994:1). OBE training programmes should focus around what is essential for all learners to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning opportunities. This begins by making learners aware of the specific learning outcomes they have to achieve during the learning process as well as the exit level outcomes. In this regard, learners should know what they should aim to achieve with their learning experiences, what assessment criteria will be used and where they stand in relation to achieving their outcomes.

The respondents were further asked whether their facilitators communicate clearly the amount of time required to understand complex learning material or master a skill. The results are illustrated in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12 The extent to which facilitators communicate clearly the amount of time required to understand complex material (n=45)

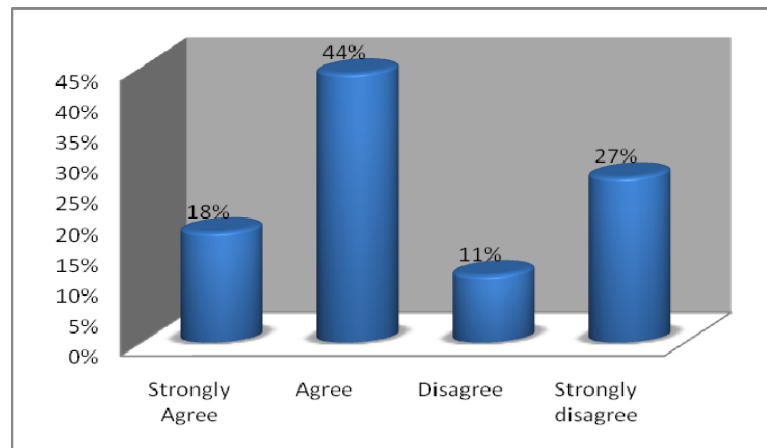
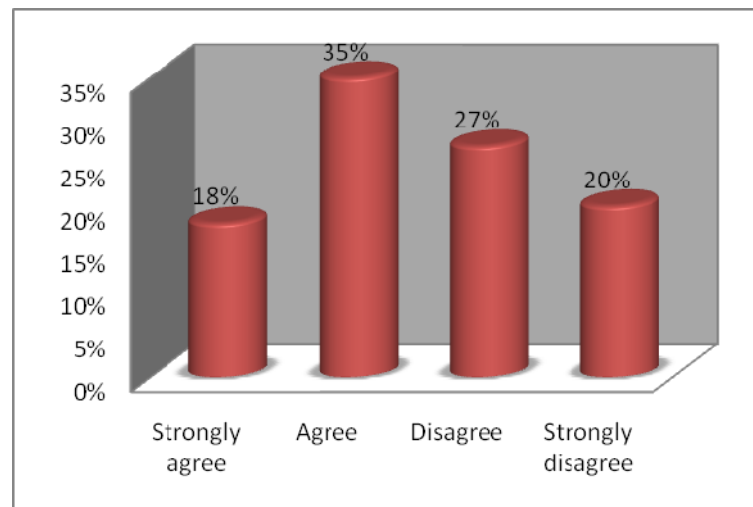


Figure 4.12 depicts that of 45 respondents, 18% strongly agreed that their facilitators make them aware of the amount of time they need to spend in order to understand some complex aspects of the learning content or to master a certain skill; 44% agreed, 11% disagreed while 27% strongly disagreed. Two respondents did not respond. All in all the results reflect that over 60% of respondents agreed that they are being helped to get an understanding of the amount of time they need to fully comprehend some complex materials or master a skill. This suggests that facilitators try to instil some independence amongst adult learners by developing time management skills that will enable them to distribute their time accordingly as some learning areas require much time to prepare for.

Another question which elicited information about developing self-directedness in adult learners was about whether the facilitators meet with adult learners who fall behind to discuss problems pertaining to their studies. The results are shown in Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13 The extent to which facilitators meet with learners to discuss problems pertaining to their studies (n = 47)



Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents strongly agreed that their facilitators do meet with learners who fall behind to discuss problems pertaining to their studies; 35% agreed, 27% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed.

From the data analysis presented in Figure 4.13, 53% of respondents agreed that facilitators avail themselves to find out about what could be the contributing factors for those learners who are not making adequate progress. According to Misanchuks (1992), facilitator–learner frequent contact in and out of classes seems to be the most important factor in learner motivation and involvement. Adult learners who have problems or learning difficulties and who are on the brink of quitting are motivated to continue learning by sharing those problems with their facilitators. A facilitator who shows concern helps learners get through rough times and keep on being motivated to learn. This finding supports Misanchuks' observation that without feedback and interaction instruction suffers. This is also in line with constructivist learning where a facilitator becomes a mentor, coach and advisor. The need for frequent interaction between learners and their facilitators is essential; this has been supported by Knowles (1990:83) that learners can be assisted to become more self-directed when given appropriate learning tools, resources and encouragement.

The respondents were asked whether or not the facilitators require them to make up for lost time if they have missed some sessions. Their responses are illustrated in Figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14 The extent to which facilitators require learners to make up for lost time (n=44)

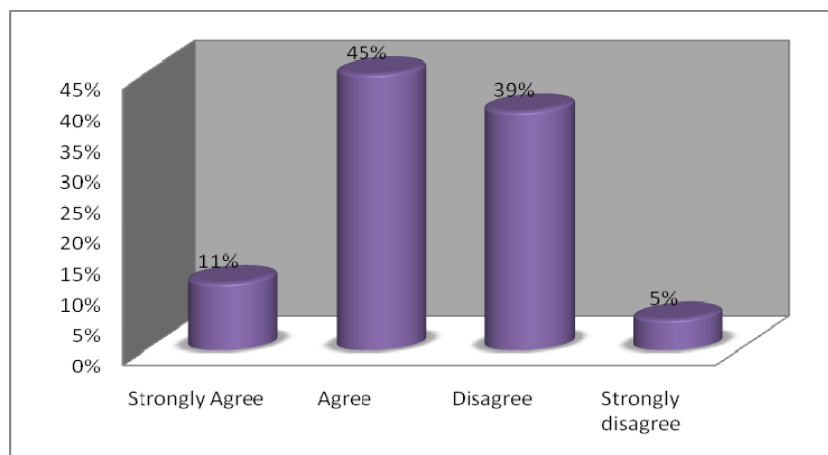


Figure 4.14 shows that among 44 of 47 respondents, 11%, strongly agreed that their facilitators require them to make up for lost time if they missed some sessions; 45% agreed. The figure further reveals that 39% disagreed while 5% strongly disagreed.

On the basis of the results, the findings are that facilitators do make learners aware that they should ensure that they meet all the demands of the learning experiences. The above data reveal that more than half of the respondents are of the opinion that they have been urged to make up for lost time with regard to missing sessions, tests or other activities. This helps to foster learners' commitment as well as responsibilities in the learning process. For example, if a learner who has failed to attend a class session or written a class test and consulted a facilitator for briefing or arranging to write the test missed, such a learner has a sense of self-directedness and also portrays some control over his/her learning.

Another question the respondents were asked concerns undertaking independent study and being responsible for their own learning. The results are shown in Figure 4.15.

Figure 4.15 The extent to which facilitators urge learners to undertake independent study and be responsible for own learning (n = 44)

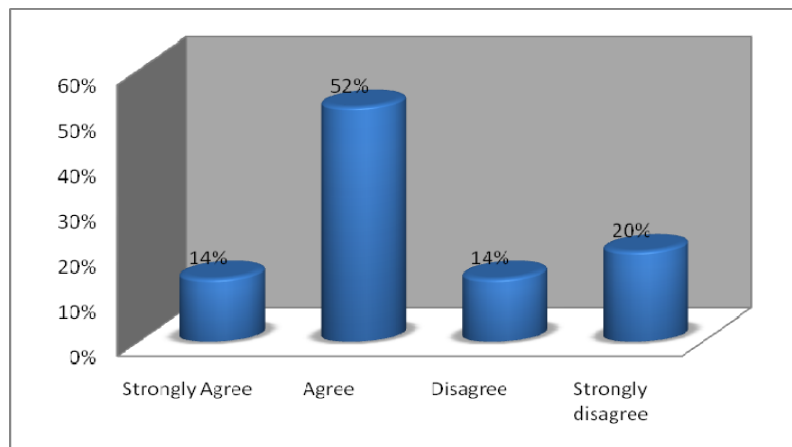


Figure 4.15 illustrates that among 44 of 47 respondents, 14%, strongly agreed that they are being urged by their facilitators to undertake independent study and be responsible for their own learning; 52% agreed, 14% disagreed while 20% strongly disagreed.

It is evident from the data analysis that adult learners are urged to undertake independent study and be responsible for their learning as the results suggest that 66% of the learners agree that they are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. This means that adult learners are expected to work hard and to be dedicated in their learning process in order to achieve learning outcomes. Responsibility and ownership in the learning process are demonstrated when learners make an effort to accomplish given tasks, hand-in assignments timeously and consult whenever encountering learning problems. However, this can be sustained if self-directedness is instilled in adult learners. To achieve this, facilitators need to conceive learning activities that provide learners with a level of autonomy in the learning experiences. Moreover, Burge (1993) shares the same notion through agreeing that learning that is challenging and relevant to the needs of learners fosters responsibility of learners in their learning endeavours and they therefore become independent and self-directed.

The facilitators responded to a similar question about adult learners' characteristic that has an influence on their learning.

What is the characteristic of adult learners that has a great influence on their learning?

Facilitators reacted in the following statements.

I would say it's responsibility. Some do show a sense of responsibility. They would hand in their assignments the day I asked them to hand them in. For those who do not bring their assignments on the deadline, I try to talk to them, let's say I give them another task or assignment and if they do not bring it on time I talk to them again and try to encourage them and show them that they are wasting their time.

Another question that followed was the following:

These people are adults, they made a choice to come to the centre, and do they really portray that in their learning? One facilitator reacted as follows:

Yes, because some are serious about their work. They know why they are here and they are eager to learn new things. It's just that some take a long time to grasp some concepts.

The respondents were further asked whether or not their facilitators helped them to develop time management skills. Their responses are shown in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16 The extent to which facilitators help adult learners develop time management skills (n = 43)

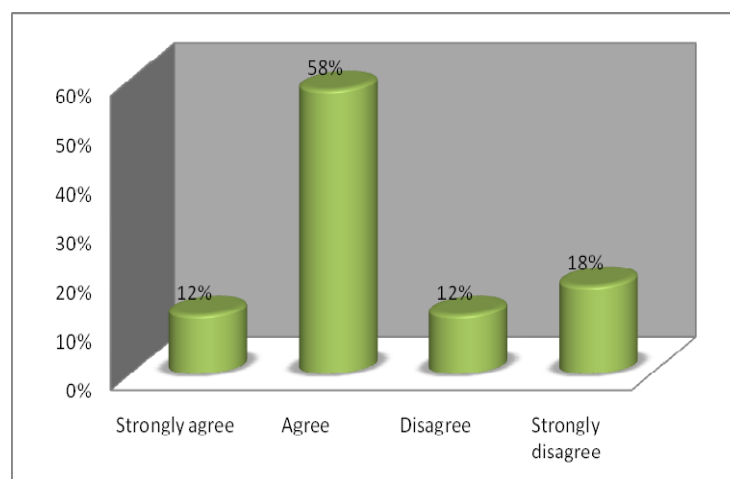


Figure 4.16 illustrates that of 43 of 47 respondents, 12%, selected 'strongly agree' to the statement which sought information on whether or not they are being helped on how to develop time management skills. Fifty eight percent (58%) of the respondents selected 'agreed', 12% selected 'disagree' and 18% selected 'strongly disagree'. Four respondents did not respond.

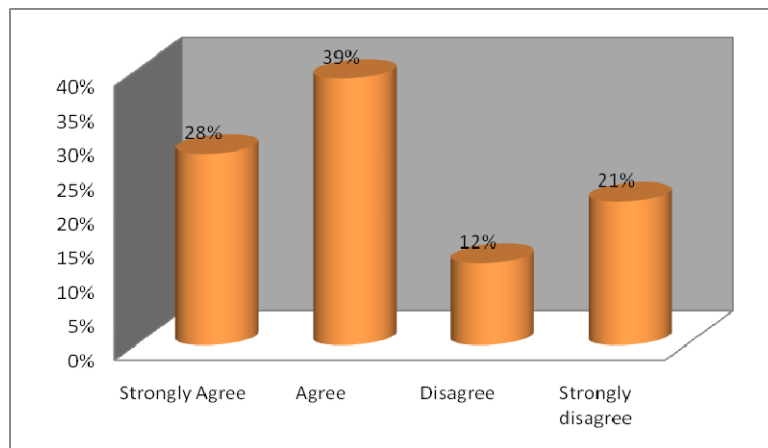
The data analysis reflects that the respondents are guided to develop time-management skills as 70% of them gave a positive answer in this regard. The learners are advised to allocate time to spend on a particular activity and ensure that they adhere to that. Adult learners really need some guidance towards how best to manage their time as they have various social roles to perform that compete for their time. Adult learners have to allocate time for studies as well as perform other activities in the family, community and at the work place. Du Toit (2002:13) commented on the development of time management skills. Du Toit also shows that learning to use one's time well is critical for learners and professionals alike. The issue of the development of time-management skills is crucial in adult learning. Adult learners are faced with a problem of time constraints as featured in the data gathered from the interviews.

The third question asked solicited information on the difference between teaching in a formal school system and in an adult learning environment.

One of the facilitators said: In ABET Centres, each subject is taught once a week and for 2 hours whereas in a formal school, a subject is taught everyday and they have 8 hours per day. This means that adult learners have to do a lot of work on their own and have to create time for that.

The respondents were asked whether or not their facilitators serve as mentors or informal advisors. Figure 4.17 depicts the results.

Figure 4.17 Facilitators' roles as mentors or informal advisors (n = 43)



The results shown in figure 4.17 reflect that of 43 respondents, 28% strongly agree that facilitators serve as their mentors or informal advisors, 39% agree and 12% disagree while 21% strongly disagree. Four respondents did not respond.

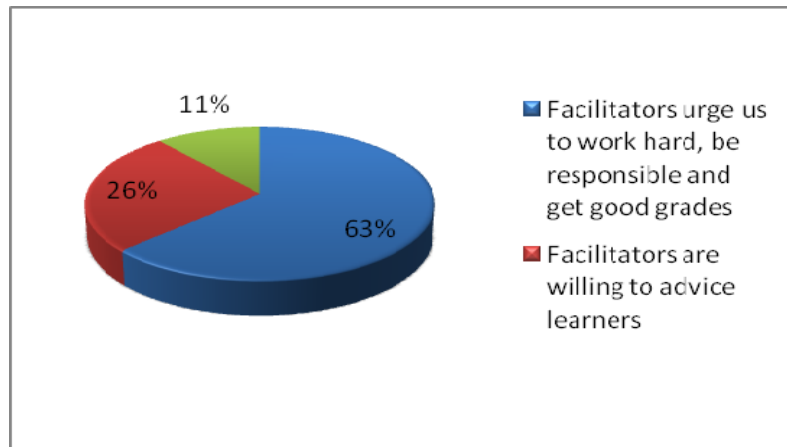
This suggests that more than half of the subjects of this study (67%) are of the opinion that facilitators act as mentors and advisors. This therefore brings to light the fact that the facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre fairly embrace the constructivist and OBE ideals enshrined in a paradigm shift from the old traditional methods to the learner-centred methods. The traditional methods are characterised as authoritarian and teacher-centred whereby learners were not given the opportunity to exercise their full potential through being active in their learning processes. In the same vein, curriculum 2005 advocates the use of constructivist teaching methods to ensure a more learner-centred approach to teaching and learning (Department of Education 1997a). It is highlighted in the curriculum that typical roles for instructors in constructivist learning environments are facilitator, mentor, coach or consultant. However, it is sometimes challenging to the young facilitators to gain trust and be seen as mentors from the onset. They have to prove themselves first. This was revealed from the interview with one of the facilitators in the following statement:

Most of the learners here are older than me. They look at me and see me younger than them, at first they didn't have confidence in me, they would say: what does he know when he is so young, is he a real teacher? These

are some of the problems we face sometimes, but after I had taught a few lessons they then gained confidence in me.

The respondents were asked to make comments on self-directed learning. Below are the results of those comments as shown in Figure 4.18.

Figure 4.18 Respondents' comments on self-directed learning (n=47)



The results from Figure 4.18 reflect that out of 47 respondents 63% remarked that facilitators urge them to work hard and be responsible for their own learning in order to get good grades; 26% of the respondents indicated that facilitators are always willing to assist and provide advise with regard to their learning experience, 11% stated that they need to be given more time to understand some concepts in the learning material.

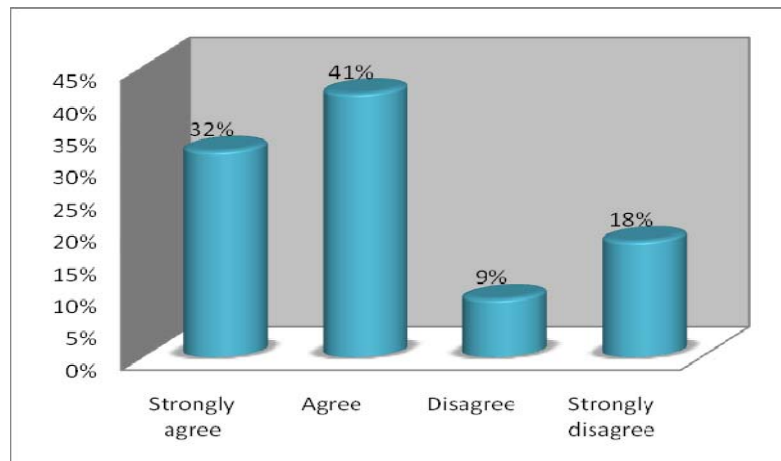
Section D

4.7 COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Section D of this chapter deals with how cooperative learning is integrated in the facilitation of learning at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre. The questions which the respondents were asked aimed at gathering information to answer the following research question: What are the strategies used by ABET facilitators to promote cooperative learning?

The respondents were asked whether or not they were given assignments/projects to do together with other learners. Their responses are illustrated in Figure 4.19 below.

Figure 4.19 The extent to which adult learners do assignments/projects together with other learners (n = 44)



The responses in figure 4.19 above revealed that of the 45 respondents, 32% strongly agreed that they were given opportunities to work together with other learners doing assignments, projects or class activities; 41% agreed in this regard, 9% disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed. Three respondents did not respond. Facilitators were also asked a question on cooperative learning.

Do you incorporate cooperative learning (CL) in your teaching strategies, in other words do you sometimes give them tasks/activities to do in groups?

I do give them exercises to do in groups.

Interviewer: How do you see that working?

It is working well because they do certain tasks together, they discuss the task, do it together and after that we do corrections. It's helpful because they learn from each other and help one another.

Interviewer: How do you form the groups?

I ask them to form the groups themselves and sometimes to work in pairs. Yes, I do. I sometimes tell them to form groups and then do the work together.

The facilitators were further asked if learning is enhanced when learners are involved in group work.

Do you think they learn better or faster in groups?

One of the facilitators had this to say:

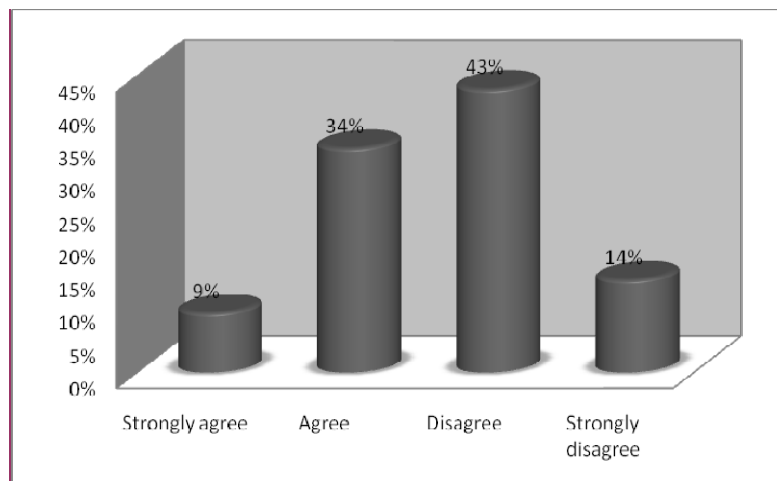
They learn better, because usually I give them work to do in groups and then leave them in the classroom and go out, so that they will be free to discuss with each other, especially give those who are shy to express their opinions when the facilitator is around or in large groups, like in a class a chance. On the other hand, there is a problem with group work because they take time to complete the work and always want more time. They also copy from other groups, because after completing the work the answers will be the same.

A follow-up question was asked about whether learners do form study groups without being encouraged by their facilitators.

They haven't formed them because most of them are working during the week and on weekends they have other commitments, but if they encounter problems when they are studying on their own they always call me or come to me to help them out.

The respondents were further asked whether they were expected to engage in peer tutoring of other learners in a group. The results are shown in Figure 4. 20.

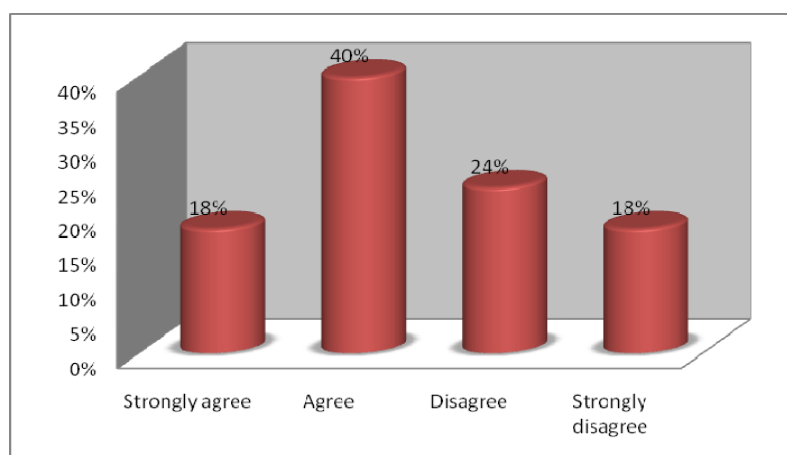
Figure 4.20 Engagement of adult learners in peer tutoring (n = 44)



The responses of adult learners as depicted in Figure 4.20 above indicate that of the 44 respondents, 9% strongly agreed that they are expected to explain difficult concepts/issues to other learners in peer tutoring in order to enhance learning. Thirty-four percent (34%) agreed, 43% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. Three respondents did not respond.

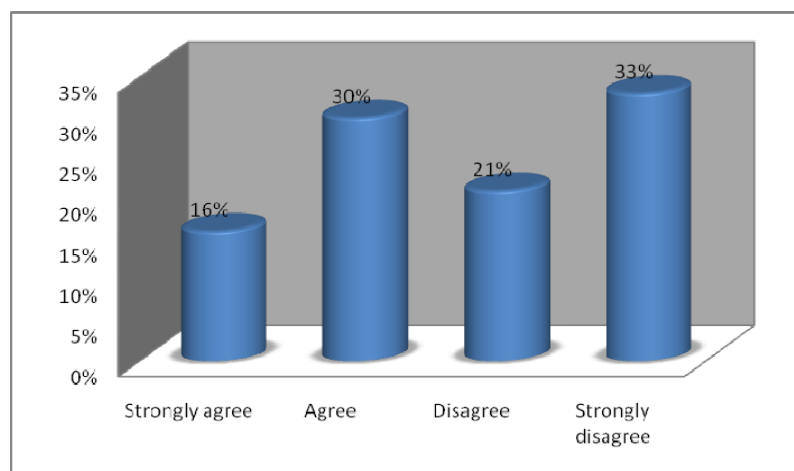
The respondents were further asked to what degree they exchanged ideas with learners whose backgrounds and viewpoints were different from their own. Figure 4.21 below displays the results.

Figure 4.21 The extent to which adult learners exchange ideas with other learners (n=45)



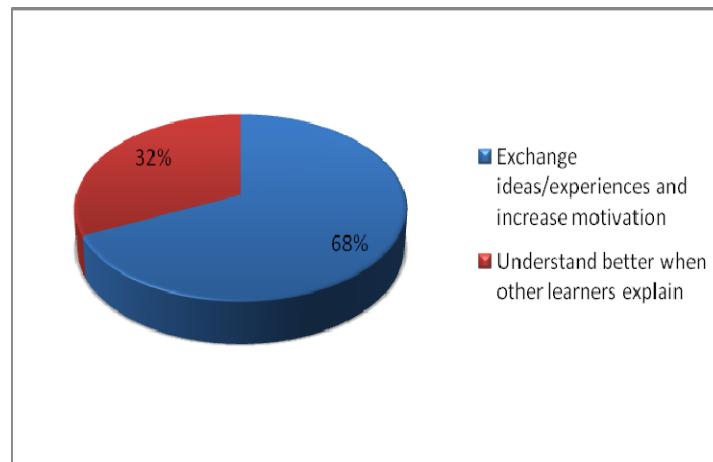
The data analysis presented in figure 4.8 above portrays that of the 45 respondents, 18% strongly agreed that they do exchange ideas with other learners who have different backgrounds and viewpoints, 40% of the respondents agreed, 24% disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed. Two respondents did not respond. The respondents were further asked if their facilitators encourage them to form study groups in order to enhance learning as well as to increase their motivation. Figure 4.22 below illustrates the results.

Figure 4.22 The extent to which adult learners are encouraged to form study groups (n = 43)



From figure 4.22 the results show that of the 43 participants, 16%, strongly agree that they were being encouraged to form study groups by their facilitators, 30% indicated that they agree, while 21% of the respondents stated that they disagree and 33% said they strongly disagree. Four participants did not respond. The last question sought the respondents' opinions on how group work helps them in their studies.

Figure 4.23 The extent to which group work helps adult learners in their studies (n=47)



Out of 47 adult learners who responded to this question, 68% expressed that group work helps them to exchange ideas and share experiences and advice with other learners. They also indicated that interacting with other learners increased their motivation to learn, that is, advice from other learners gave them the encouragement to pursue their learning even at those times when motivation was very low. Thirty two percent (32%) indicated that group work enhances their learning because they understood better when some concepts/issues were explained by other learners rather than the facilitators. This was so because they point out that they felt free to ask questions in a smaller group as it is less intimidating due to the absence of an authority figure like the facilitator.

The facilitators were asked if learners do form study groups on their own.

One of the facilitators remarked as follows:

They haven't formed them because most of them are working during the week and on weekends they have other commitments, but if they encounter problems when they are studying on their own they always call me or come to me to help them out.

From the data analysis I discovered that CL as perceived by adult learners is minimally incorporated at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre as a strategy of facilitating learning. This opposes the argument made by (Kagan 2001; McAuliffe & Eriksen 2002 & Adam & Slater 2002) that CL promotes student learning and academic

achievement, increases retention, enhances learner satisfaction with learning experiences, develop learners' social skills and promotes learner self-esteem. Moreover, group work advocates such as Livingstone and Lynch (2000) argue that almost any topic can be made more interesting by actively involving learners in the topic through some form of collaborative learning of which group work is just one strategy. This means that if learners are not actively involved in group work, they are not presented with all the opportunities that can help them become better achievers. Furthermore, CL is underpinned in social constructivism in that the idea of working in groups develops social skills and also increases the potential for better interaction between facilitator-learner and learner-learner, supporting the scaffolding process through discussion and sharing of ideas. This is inhibited due to the minimal use of CL at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 presents data analysis and interpretation. Data have been analysed and interpreted based on constructivism as the theoretical framework of this study. Quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires that had been administered to adult learners were integrated with qualitative data gathered through interviews with the facilitators. Responses from adult learners on how learning is facilitated at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre were presented in charts and then analysed. Information provided by facilitators on the strategies they use to facilitate learning was presented in verbal quotations. It can be concluded that facilitators do cater for adult learners with different learning styles through engaging learners in different learning activities. However, cooperative learning as one strategy of facilitating learning is utilised minimally. Facilitators tap learners' previous experience to make learning become more meaningful to them. Some learners are responsible for their own learning which implies that self-directedness is, to some extent, instilled into adult learners, even though this needs to be improved.

Knowles (1990:71) believes that adult learning should be facilitated in a different way from formal teaching and that andragogy should form the basis of facilitating learning in adult education. One of the premises about adult learners that the

researcher would like to draw attention to is that “adults are likely to indicate what and how they are to be taught” (Knowles 1990:72). This suggests the involvement of adult learners in the development of the curriculum and its implementation which might not be the case. A practical challenge of the education system is how facilitators at ABET Centres would follow the principles of adult learning while they are delivering the curriculum that is designed and developed to meet the needs of young learners in the formal education system.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five concludes the study with the discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations. The concluding remarks are categorised into strengths and weaknesses of the facilitation of learning strategies employed by the facilitators. The recommendations and findings are based on the data collected through the mixed-method approach.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on data gathered to determine whether facilitators of Gaegolelwe Adult Centre utilised different strategies to facilitate learning, it was found that the facilitators of Gaegolelwe Adult Centre can be creative including expanding on their approaches for facilitating learning. This is evident in their engaging learners in different learning activities. However, this does not imply that they incorporate the constructivist approach when offering learning opportunities and this need to be improved. For example, I observed that after introducing a topic, they attempt to determine what learners already know about that topic by asking them questions related to that topic, which could be considered a step towards constructivism. This is a brainstorming activity which stimulates learners cognitively and encourages them to become involved in the learning process. They also gave learners a general idea of the learning opportunity and guided them step-by-step until they understood the concept. In this way they give their learners opportunities to exercise the functions in the four quadrants of the human brain as depicted in Herrmann's whole brain model, hence the view by Buzan (2001:4) as cited by Voges (2005:51) that effective learning takes place when the whole brain is involved in the learning process. As such, no one method or technique can therefore adequately cover the variations of the human brain by itself.

The facilitators acquainted themselves with the learners' learning styles, interests and backgrounds to a certain extent. Bearing in mind that adult learners bring a considerable amount of experience into the learning process, which then calls for facilitators to tap on such experiences in order for new learning to take place, the study indicates that this approach is not optimised. Furthermore, according to the constructivist learning theory, that serves as the basis for the analysis and interpretation of the study data, cultures and societies to which people belong influence their views of the world around them and therefore influence what they 'know; hence, the understanding that people's reactions are largely consistent within a given culture and society (Gravett 2001:20).

The findings from the data analysis reveal that close to 50% of adult learners believe that the learning content is contextualised that is, it is based on their cultural backgrounds and societal values. This is a pertinent finding as, according to Schunk (2000:25), learning is an active process of constructing meaning and transforming understandings in interaction with the environment. As such, new learning builds on and is constructed through the learners' existing frame of reference. This is also in line with the constructivists' view that learning must occur embedded in the context in which it occurs.

From the data analysis it is evident that adult learners at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre are encouraged to question facilitators' and other learners' point of view to develop critical thinking skills. This is in line with constructivist learning theory, which stresses a shift from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach, and suggests that facilitators should promote in their learners critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, reflection and action.

The lecture method of facilitating learning seems to be the most regularly used method by facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre as compared to other methods such as role-play or demonstrations. This is not in line with the constructivist theory, which suggests that different methods should be used that allow learners to develop problem-solving, critical thinking and higher order reasoning skills. As a result learners are able to take part in the construction of knowledge. The respondents (adult learners) also rated the lecture method as the second best method but preferred textbooks/readers as their best method of learning. They

viewed textbooks/readers as providing them with better understanding of the subject matter in addition to using them for reference purposes.

The findings culled from data analysis on cooperative learning (CL) reveal that adult learners are given opportunities to work together in small groups to do assignments or projects. In this analysis, 68% of learners responded positively to the question whether they are given tasks to do together in groups. However, when asked if they were expected to explain difficult concepts to each another (peer tutoring), the majority indicated that they were not expected to engage in peer tutoring.

The facilitators use different methods to find out what learners already know about the topic which is to be discussed. They all said that they use the brainstorming technique to get to know what learners know about a certain topic. They ask learners a question related to that topic to try to find out if learners know something about it. Another way of doing it is to prepare learners well in advance for a specific topic and also to involve them by asking them to go and look for information before the topic in question can be discussed.

The facilitators do accommodate learners with different learning styles. It became apparent during the interviews that learners are involved in other activities like compiling portfolios. This accommodates those learners who are creative, visual and prefer to engage those functions which fall under the A and D-quadrants of the whole brain learning model.

Cooperative learning, according to the facilitators, is used as one strategy for facilitating learning at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre, even though the outcome of the complete interview and data analysis suggests that this is done minimally.

It is evident from the data analysis that adult learners are urged to become independent and show some responsibility in their learning as the results suggest that 62% of the learners agree to a certain extent that they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. This means that adult learners are expected to make an effort and be dedicated in their learning process in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

Responsibility and ownership in the learning process is demonstrated when learners make an effort to accomplish given tasks, hand in assignments on time and consult whenever encountering learning difficulties. However, this can be sustained if self-directedness is instilled in adult learners and to achieve this, facilitators need to conceive learning activities that provide learners with a level of autonomy in the learning experiences, which facilitators at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre still need to work on.

5.3 CONCLUSION

A final conclusion drawn from the discussion of the findings is presented in the next table showing the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies for facilitating learning at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre.

Table 5.1 Strengths and weaknesses of facilitation of learning

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators accommodate adult learners' different learning styles to a certain extent, e.g. they employ whole brain learning approach through engaging learners in different learning activities. • Facilitators stimulate learners' cognitive abilities by using the brainstorming technique. • Learners are encouraged to become active learners. • Facilitators utilise experiences that learners bring into the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal utilisation of cooperative learning. • Facilitators do not optimally tap learners' experiences. • Lecture method is extensively used compared to other methods of facilitating learning, to the disadvantage of learners who prefer other methods of facilitation. Moreover, this is not in line with the constructivist learning theory. • Some learners are not so effectively committed to their



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning opportunities are based on real-life situations and prepare adult learners for the world of work.• Facilitators embrace the new paradigm shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach, e.g. learners do projects and compile portfolios.• Learners are challenged to develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills and higher order reasoning skills.• Facilitators are willing to pay learners who have learning difficulties more attention.• A great number of learners show a sense of responsibility and do their work reasonably well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners are not given the opportunity to develop practical and time-management skills.
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5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having discussed the findings and concluded, in the above tabulation, on the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies for facilitating learning at Gaegolelwe Adult Centre, the following recommendations geared towards facilitation of learning in adult education are outlined:

- From the findings it was noted that most of the adult learners would prefer facilitators with experience in processes for facilitating adult learning. Based on this, I recommend that adults with extensive teaching experience with training and education in facilitating adult learning, need to be engaged to facilitate adult learning processes.

- It has also been observed that the majority of learners are female. Based on the percentages of literacy among male and female populations, efforts should be made to encourage higher participation of male learners in the adult learning processes.
- It is acknowledged that learning strategies employed by facilitators are well received by learners. However, it is recommended that the centre should consider an increased input from learners in developing and reviewing facilitating strategies.

5.5 SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

- Investigation of the impact of facilitator training in a constructivist approach in ABET Centres.
- Exploration of whether ABET programmes open opportunities for employment and/or promotion for adult learners.
- Exploration of the level of proficiency of adult learners who have completed ABET level 4 and the learners who have completed Grade 9 in the conventional education.
- Determination of the reasons for the low male participation in Adult Education Centres and exploration of possible ways of increasing their participation.

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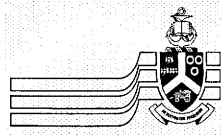
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Annexure A



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

DEGREE AND PROJECT

INVESTIGATOR(S)

DEPARTMENT

DATE CONSIDERED

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE NUMBER :

CS08/04/01

MEd in Adult and Community Education and Training.
Strategies for facilitating learning in Adult Basic Education and Training.

Amohelang Machobane

Early Childhood Education

28 November 2009

APPROVED

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE

Dr S Bester

DATE

28 November 2009

CC

Dr PH du Toit
Ms J Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

GAEGOLELWE ADULT CENTRE
LEARN AND LIVE

Our Ref: 231696
P.O.BOX 83
ATTERIDGEVILLE
0008
Tel: (012) 373-8803

1A MOTSEPE STREET
ATTERIDGEVILLE
0008
Tel/Fax (012) 373-8803
19.02.2008

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Confirmation that Mrs A. Mochobane visited our Centre

This letter serves to inform or confirm that **Mrs Amohelang Machobane** has been granted permission at our centre, namely **Gaegolelwe Adult Education Centre** to collect data regarding information on the strategies for facilitating learning in an Adult Teaching Environment.

Yours truly
C.M. PULE


.....
(SUPERVISING TEACHER)

GAEGOLELWE ADULT CENTRE
PO BOX 83 ATTERIDGEVILLE 0008
TELEFAX 012 373 8803
GAUTENG
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

All correspondence to be addressed to the Principal

P. O. Box 14834

Lyttelton

0140

28 May 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Participant consent letter

I am currently registered as a student at the University of Pretoria working on a MEd dissertation in Adult Basic Education and Community Training in the Department of Curriculum Studies.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies used for facilitating learning in the programme you have enrolled for/are involved in. Your participation in this study is very important as the information you will provide will help to improve the way learning is facilitated in this programme and as a result your learning/professional needs will be met. You will therefore be expected to complete a questionnaire or provide information through an interview and I guarantee that the information you are going to provide will be treated as confidential.

Please be informed that you are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study or not to participate and that you can withdraw at any time during the study. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time you are participating. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research has been completed. However, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way and your identity as a participant will be known only to the researcher.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of this study.

Signature

Date

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING LEARNING IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Questionnaire for Adult Learners

PART ONE

Please tick in the box or write in the provided space

1. Where is your place of residence?

.....

2. Age:

- a) 18 – 29
- b) 30 - 39
- c) Above 40 years

3. Gender:

- a) Female
- b) Male

4. Occupation:

.....

5. In what Level are you enrolled currently?

- a) Level 1
- b) Level 2
- c) Level 3
- d) Level 4

The purpose of this section is to gather information regarding the ways your facilitators use to facilitate learning in your Centre. Please feel free to give your perception on the different aspects.

Please complete this section of the questionnaire using the following scale: 1- 4 where: 1 = never, 2 =rarely, 3 = often, 4 = always.

1	2	3	4
Never	Rarely	Often	Always

Please tick or circle the number on the right side of this paper which best explains your opinion.

7. LEARNING STYLE FLEXIBILITY

- a) The facilitator involves learners in different types of learning activities to cater for all learners 1 2 3 4
- b) The facilitator tries to find out about his/her learners' ways of learning, interests or background 1 2 3 4
- c) The facilitator selects readings and learning content that are related to my background and that of other learners 1 2 3 4

- d) The facilitator encourages me to challenge his/her ideas, other learners' ideas or those presented in readings or other learning material 1 2 3 4
- e) The facilitator gives me concrete, real-life problems to solve. 1 2 3 4
- f) To what extent does your facilitator use the following methods of facilitating learning? 1 2 3 4
1. Lectures 1 2 3 4
2. Readings/Textbooks 1 2 3 4
4. Role play 1 2 3 4
5. Demonstrations 1 2 3 4
- g) Which of the above-mentioned methods of facilitating learning do you learn best from? Please explain. 1 2 3 4

.....

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8. SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Please answer questions 8 and 9 using the following scale:
1 - 4 where :

- 1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Disagree
4 = Strongly Disagree

- a) The facilitator helps me set challenging, but realistic goals for my own learning. 1 2 3 4
- b) The facilitator makes clear to me the amount of time that is required to understand complex material or master a skill. 1 2 3 4

- c) The facilitator clearly communicates to me the minimum amount of time I should spend preparing for a learning activity. 1 2 3 4
- d) The facilitator emphasises the importance of regular work, self-pacing and making a study time-table. 1 2 3 4
- e) The facilitator meets with learners who fall behind to discuss their study habits, time-tables and other commitments. 1 2 3 4
- f) If I miss some sessions, the facilitator requires me to make up lost time. 1 2 3 4
- g) The facilitator asks me to undertake independent study and be responsible for my own learning. 1 2 3 4
- h) The facilitator helps me to develop time-management skills. 1 2 3 4
- i) The facilitator serves as a mentor or informal advisor to me. 1 2 3 4
- j) The facilitator suggests extra reading for more understanding. 1 2 3 4

k) COMMENTS

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9. COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- a) The facilitator allows me to do assignments/projects together with other learners. 1 2 3 4
- b) The facilitator asks me to share experiences in relation to the topic under discussion. 1 2 3 4
- c) The facilitator expects me to explain difficult ideas/issues to other learners. 1 2 3 4
- d) The facilitator asks me to assess other learners' work. 1 2 3 4



e) The facilitator encourages me to praise other learners' for their accomplishment. 1 2 3 4

g) The facilitator asks me to exchange ideas with other learners whose backgrounds and viewpoints are different from my own. 1 2 3 4

h) The facilitator encourages me and other learners to form study groups. 1 2 3 4

i) What exactly do you gain from studying with other learners? Please elaborate.

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Thank you for your time and contribution towards the completion of this questionnaire

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ON THE STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING LEARNING IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. For how long have you been involved In ABET?

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2. What is your highest academic qualification?

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3. In which ABET level/s are you a facilitator?

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4. How many learners do you have in your class?

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STRATEGIES USED FOR FACILITATING LEARNING

1. LEARNING STYLE FLEXIBILITY

- a) What are the methods/strategies you use for facilitating learning?
- b) How do you find out about your learners' different ways of learning?
- c) What kind of activities do you engage learners with to cater for their different ways of learning?
- d) How do you find out about your learners' background and interests?
- e) How does your understanding of learning style flexibility impact on your classroom practices?

2. SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

- a) What do you regard as the most characteristic of adult learners that would have a great influence on their learning?
- b) State some principles that could be linked to self-directed learners.
- c) How do you differentiate your facilitation of learning for adults from those teaching in the formal school system?
- d) How do you instil self-direction in your learners?
- e) Outline your role as a facilitator.

3. COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- a) How do you incorporate cooperative learning in your facilitation of learning?
- b) What is the ideal number of members in a group for effective group learning?
- c) What should the groups compose of? (e.g. gender, learner ability, etc.)
- d) What are the benefits of using mixed or structured groups?
- e) How do you ensure that all members in a group participate equally?
- f) How do you reinforce active learning, especially when you realise that some learners' participation is minimal?
- g) How do learners help one another in group discussions?
- h) How important is cooperative learning in terms of developing learners higher order reasoning and critical thinking?
- i) Would you say cooperative learning improves learner performance?
- k) What is your opinion about the essence of cooperative learning?