

**A STRATEGY FOR ALLEVIATING ILLITERACY
IN SOUTH AFRICA: A HISTORICAL INQUIRY**

by

HLENGANA SOLOMON SIBIYA

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PROMOTER

PROF. DR. L. VAN ROOYEN

PRETORIA

2004

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Lucia and my late father, Joseph Sibiya. They have been a source of inspiration from my childhood, and have encouraged me throughout my life to reach greater heights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God who at all times has made it possible for me to undertake and complete this study.

Special thanks to my promoter Prof. Dr. Linda van Rooyen for her expert advice and guidance from the very beginning up to the completion of this research. Her constructive criticism and clear insight in this research have made it possible for me to complete this thesis.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. G. Reeler, Dr. G. Meter and Mrs. L. Boucher for their efficient way in which they did the proofreading and editing of my thesis.

My deepest thanks go to my wonderful wife, Millie, my children Jerome, Jesse and Melissa and my mother-in-law, Ms. Winnie Segabutle, without whose support I would not have completed this study. I wish to express my gratitude to my son, Jerome, for his endless efforts in typing the drafts of this thesis. He endured the frustration of reading my illegible handwriting.

To all those who deserve mention but have been inadvertently left out, I thank you for your support and encouragement.

---oOo---

DECLARATION

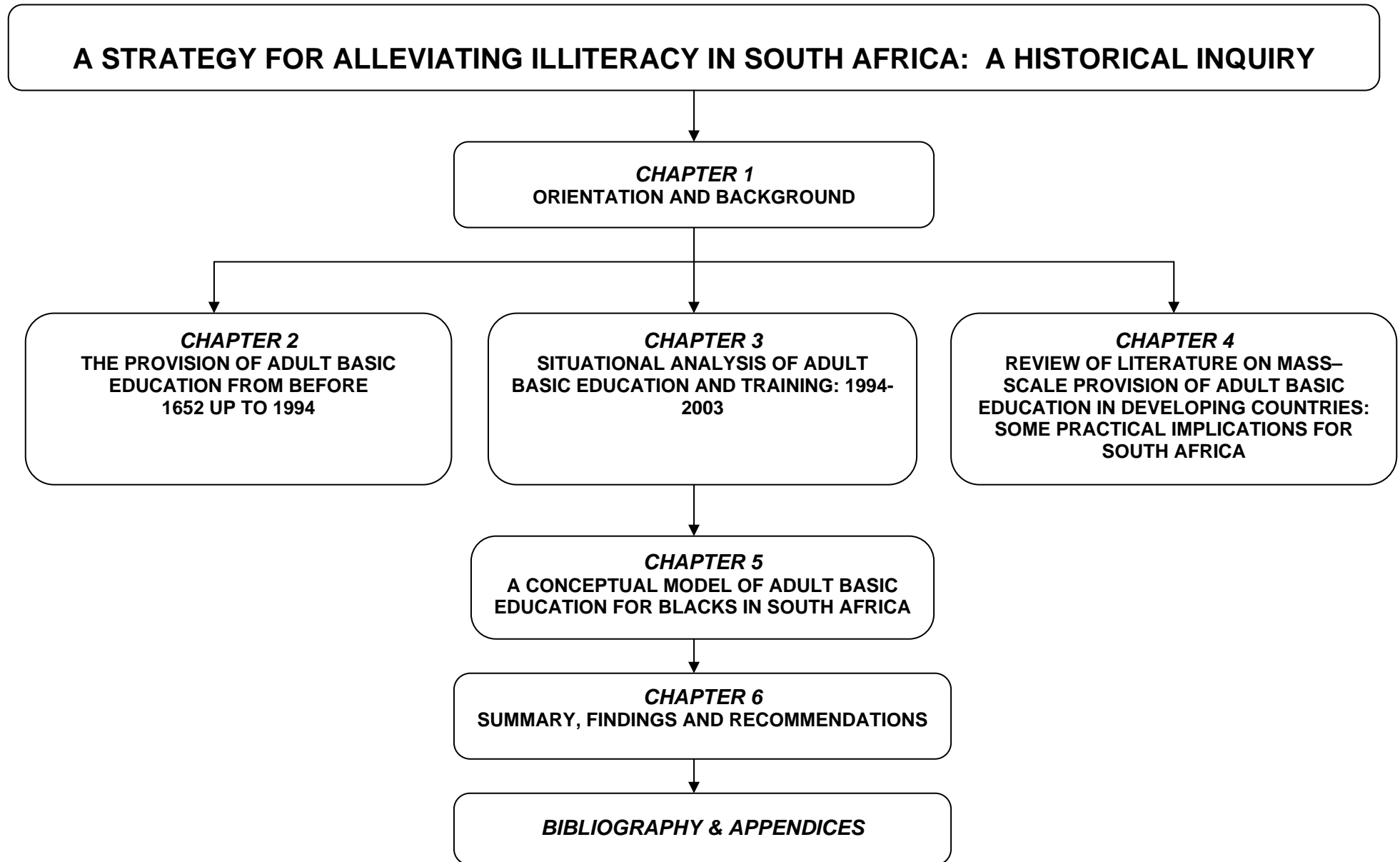
I, H.S. Sibiyi, hereby declare that

A strategy for alleviating illiteracy in South Africa: A historical inquiry

is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted from have been acknowledged by way of a complete list of references. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Signed: Mr. H.S. Sibiyi

Date



ABSTRACT

Illiteracy among black adults in South Africa has reached levels unacceptable for economic development in the country. The problem of illiteracy prevents adults and youth from contributing effectively and meaningfully to the social, economic and political life of the new democratic South Africa. As a result of the political change in South Africa, there is a growing awareness of the need to provide adult basic education and training to everyone who has had very limited schooling because of socio-economic problems – largely attributable to the legacy of apartheid. The goal of the then Government of National Unity was to ensure that all individuals received at least a minimum level of education as a matter of basic human rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

The main research problem of the study is, *What would be a suitable strategy to alleviate the high rate of illiteracy among blacks in South Africa?* From the literature study a mass literacy campaign was particularly identified as a suitable strategy for the alleviation of illiteracy among blacks in South Africa. It was therefore important to provide guidelines, which could facilitate successful implementation of a mass literacy campaign. The research underpinning this study in South Africa has revealed that it is not enough to embark on a mass national literacy campaign to alleviate illiteracy. A campaign, which does not address the social ills characteristically associated with people who are illiterate cannot be termed successful.

This study has demonstrated that shortcomings in the formal education system, insufficient state commitment, inadequate funding and a lack of provision of other resources, not enough co-operation and co-ordination amongst the various providers of adult basic education and training and lack of universal primary school education are some of the main causes of illiteracy. These problems cannot be ameliorated by a mass literacy campaign.

The high incidence of illiteracy in South Africa calls for a comprehensive approach to the social, economic and civil relationships in the country: the universalisation of primary school education and early childhood development programmes, serious

government commitment and strong partnerships would be a good foundation for success. The alleviation of illiteracy requires an iron political will and national mobilisation of the masses to support a mass literacy campaign.

---oOo---

KEY TERMS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY

Adult basic education

Adult basic education and training

Alleviation

Blacks

Literacy

Illiteracy

Mass literacy campaign

Post-literacy

South African National Literacy Initiative

Strategy

---oOo---

ACRONYMS: CHAPTER ONE

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ABE	Adult Basic Education
DET	Department of Education and Training
GNU	Government of National Unity
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
RSA	Republic of South Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

---oOo---

ACRONYMS: CHAPTER TWO

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
CARW	Course to Teach Adults to Read and Write
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DEIC	Dutch East India Company
DET	Department of Education and Training
ISL	International Socialist League
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Centres
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
TWEA	Transvaal Workers' Education Association

---oOo---

ACRONYMS: CHAPTER THREE

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
CBOs	Community–based Organisations
CEDP	Centre for Education Policy Development
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
NGOs	Non–governmental Organisations
NLA	National Literacy Agency
NLC	National Literacy Co–operation
NQF	The National Qualifications Framework
NTB	National Training Board
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Centres
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACABE	South African Committee for Adult Basic Education
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SANLI	South African National Literacy Initiative
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
T&L Site	Teaching and Learning Site

ACRONYMS: CHAPTER FOUR

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
CCM	Chama Cha Mapindzu
EWLP	Experimental World Literacy Programme
SANLI	South African National Literacy Initiative
TANU	Tanganyika National African Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

---oOo---

ACRONYMS: CHAPTER FIVE

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
DET	Department of Education and Training
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisation
NLA	National Literacy Agency
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SANGOCO	South African Non-governmental Organisation Coalition
SANLI	South African National Literacy Initiative
UPE	Universal Primary Education

---oOo---

ACRONYMS: CHAPTER SIX

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
DET	Department of Education and Training
SANLI	South African National Literacy Initiative
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RSA	Republic of South Africa

---oOo---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER ONE	
ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND	
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 POSING OF THE PROBLEM	4
1.3 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH	7
1.4 DELIMITATION OF THE FIELD OF RESEARCH	7
1.5 METHODOLOGICAL ACCOUNT	8
1.5.1 APPROACHES	8
1.5.1.1 The problem-historical approach	9
1.5.1.2 The socio-andragogical approach	9
1.5.1.3 The metabletic approach	10
1.5.2 RESEARCH METHODS	10
1.5.2.1 The historical-educational research method	11
1.5.2.2 The Descriptive Method	13
1.5.2.3 The Analytical Method	14
1.5.2.4 The Chronological Method	14
1.5.2.5 Case Studies	14
1.5.3 TECHNIQUES IMPLEMENTED IN THE RESEARCH	14
1.5.3.1 Interviews	14
1.5.3.2 Personal observation	16
1.5.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	17
1.5.5 DISCUSSION OF SOURCES	22
1.5.5.1 Primary sources	22
1.5.5.2 Secondary sources	23
1.6 PLAN OF STUDY	23

	Page
1.7 EXPLICATION OF CONCEPTS	25
1.7.1 THE CONCEPT “STRATEGY”	25
1.7.2 THE CONCEPT “HISTORICAL-ANDRAGOGICAL STUDY”	26
1.7.3 THE CONCEPT “ALLEVIATION OF ILLITERACY”	27
1.7.4 THE CONCEPT “LITERACY” AND “FUNCTIONAL LITERACY”	27
1.7.5 THE CONCEPTS “ADULT AND ADULTHOOD”	28
1.7.6 THE CONCEPT “EDUCATION”	29
1.7.7 THE CONCEPT “ADULT BASIC EDUCATION”	30
1.7.8 THE CONCEPT “ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING”	31
1.7.9 THE CONCEPT “LIFELONG EDUCATION”	32
1.8 CONCLUSION	32

	Page
CHAPTER TWO	
THE PROVISION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE FROM BEFORE 1652 UP TO 1994	
2.1 INTRODUCTION	33
2.2 ADULT BASIC EDUCATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE TRADITIONAL PHASE (BEFORE 1652)	35
2.2.1 INTRODUCTION	35
2.2.2 AIMS	35
2.2.3 CONTENT	37
2.2.4 METHODS	40
2.3 ADULT EDUCATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE UNDER DUTCH RULE (1652-1806)	41
2.3.1 INTRODUCTION	41
2.3.2 AIMS	43
2.3.3 CONTENT	43
2.3.4 METHODS	44
2.4 ADULT BASIC EDUCATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE DURING THE MISSIONARY PHASE (1799-1953)	45
2.4.1 INTRODUCTION	45
2.4.2 AIMS	47
2.4.3 CONTENT	48
2.4.4 METHODS	49
2.5 ADULT EDUCATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA UP TO THE BANTU EDUCATION ACT OF 1953 (1910-1953)	51
2.5.1 INTRODUCTION	51
2.5.2 AIMS	55
2.5.3 CONTENT	57
2.5.4 METHODS	59

	Page
2.6 REACTION TO AND OPPOSITION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACT 47 OF 1953 REGARDING ABE	61
2.7 ADULT BASIC EDUCATION FOR BLACK PEOPLE AFTER THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA (1954-1994)	63
2.7.1 INTRODUCTION	63
2.7.2 AIMS	66
2.7.3 CONTENT	67
2.7.4 METHODS	70
2.8 A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROVISION OF ABE FOR BLACK PEOPLE FROM BEFORE 1952 UP TO 1994	71

	Page
CHAPTER THREE	
SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING: 1994–2003	
3.1 INTRODUCTION	74
3.2 THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF ADULT ILLITERACY	75
3.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF ABET	76
3.4 FORMULATION OF THE ABET POLICY	78
3.4.1 INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE PROVISION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING	79
3.4.2 POLICY DOCUMENT ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING	80
3.4.3 A NATIONAL MULTI-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING: PROVISION AND ACCREDITATION	81
3.4.4 THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	82
3.5 CURRENT STATE OF ABET PROVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA	83
3.5.1 THE STATE AS ABET PROVIDER	83
3.5.2 THE NLC AS ABET PROVIDER	89
3.5.3 THE BUSINESS SECTOR AND ABET	91
3.6 THE FUNDING OF ABET	92
3.7 THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL LITERACY INITIATIVE (SANLI)	95
3.7.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	95
3.7.2 THE STRUCTURE OF SANLI	98
3.7.2.1 The National Office	99
3.7.2.2 Provincial coordinating agencies	100
3.7.2.3 The objectives of SANLI	100
3.7.2.4 Overall objective	100
3.7.2.5 Sub-objectives	100
3.7.3 BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT	101

	Page
3.7.4 PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION MODEL-STRATEGY	102
3.7.4.1 Who is SANLI targeting	104
3.7.5 PROSPECTS FOR SANLI	106
3.8 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CURRENT ABET PROVISION	107
3.8.1 THE STATE OF ABET PROVISION	108
3.8.2 NATIONAL LITERACY PROJECT	109
3.8.3 POLITICAL WILL	111
3.8.4 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE	111
3.9 CONCLUSION	112

	Page
CHAPTER FOUR	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON MASS-SCALE PROVISION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA	
4.1 INTRODUCTION	114
4.2 A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF LITERACY AND ILLITERACY	118
4.2.1 DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPT “LITERACY”	118
4.2.1.1 Traditional literacy	119
4.2.1.2 Modern literacy and functional literacy	119
4.2.1.3 Measurement of literacy level	122
4.2.1.4 What is the current state of the literacy definition?	122
4.2.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPT “ILLITERACY”	123
4.2.3 WHO IS AN ILLITERATE?	124
4.3 LITERACY APPROACHES	125
4.3.1 THE “FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION” APPROACH	125
4.3.2 THE “FUNCTIONAL LITERACY” APPROACH	126
4.3.3 THE “CONSCIENTISATION” APPROACH	126
4.3.4 THE “MASS CAMPAIGN” APPROACH	127
4.4 FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL LITERACY PROGRAMMES	128
4.4.1 THE FACTORS BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF THE LITERACY CAMPAIGNS	128
4.4.1.1 State involvement	129
4.4.1.2 Mobilisation of the state and the masses	129
4.4.1.3 Linking literacy to man’s fundamental needs	130
4.4.1.4 A clear-cut language policy	130
4.4.1.5 Establishment of administrative structures	131
4.4.1.6 Planning of post-literacy activities	133
4.4.2 THE FACTORS BEHIND THE FAILURE OF THE LITERACY CAMPAIGNS	133
4.4.2.1 Lack of clear expression of the political will	133
4.4.2.2 Lack of universal primary education in South Africa	134
4.4.2.3 The choice of language	134
4.4.2.4 Lack of post-literacy programmes	135

	Page
4.5 A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF SOME SELECTED INTERNATIONAL LITERACY CAMPAIGNS	135
4.5.1 THE MOZAMBICAN LITERACY CAMPAIGN: 1978-1981	136
4.5.1.1 Historical Overview	136
4.5.1.2 Political will and mobilisation	137
4.5.1.3 Pedagogical aspects	139
4.5.1.4 Post-literacy planning	140
4.5.1.5 Summary	141
4.5.2 THE TANZANIAN LITERACY CAMPAIGNS: 1971-1981	142
4.5.2.1 Historical Overview	142
4.5.2.2 Political will and mobilisation	143
4.5.2.3 Pedagogical aspects	144
4.5.2.4 Post-literacy planning	146
4.5.2.5 Summary	147
4.5.3 THE CUBAN LITERACY CAMPAIGNS: 1961	147
4.5.3.1 Historical Overview	147
4.5.3.2 Political will and mobilisation	148
4.5.3.3 Pedagogical aspects	149
4.5.3.4 Post-literacy planning	150
4.5.3.5 Summary	150
4.6 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LITERACY CAMPAIGNS: SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA	151
4.7 CONCLUSION	153

	Page
CHAPTER FIVE	
A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA	
5.1 INTRODUCTION	155
5.2 BARRIERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCREASED ABET PROVISION AMONG BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA	156
5.2.1 UNSATISFACTORY MEASUREMENT OF LITERACY LEVELS	157
5.2.2 LACK OF UNIVERSAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE IN SOUTH AFRICA	158
5.2.3 LACK OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA	159
5.2.4 LIMITED RESOURCES	160
5.2.5 SOCIAL ATTITUDES	161
5.2.6 ABSENCE OF POLITICAL WILL	162
5.2.7 ABSENCE OF CO-ORDINATED AND COHERENT GUIDANCE TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	162
5.2.8 OVER-AMBITIOUS TARGETS	163
5.2.9 INADEQUATE MOBILISATION OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES AND POSSIBLE RESOURCES	163
5.2.10 INFLEXIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES	164
5.3 A MODEL FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF A LITERACY CAMPAIGN	165
5.3.1 STUDY AND DIAGNOSIS OF PRE-CONDITIONS	168
5.3.2 ARTICULATION OF THE POLITICAL WILL	169
5.3.3 INSTITUTIONALISATION OF POLICY INITIATIVES	171
5.3.4 ACCEPTABLE MEASURING CRITERIA AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO DETERMINE LEVELS OF LITERACY	171
5.3.5 AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TOWARDS THE ALLEVIATION OF ILLITERACY	172
5.3.5.1 Provision of pre-school programmes for all children	172
5.3.5.2 Improving accessibility and equality of primary school education	173
5.3.5.3 Provision of adult literacy	174

	Page
5.3.6 MOBILISATION OF THE MASSES AND RESOURCES	174
5.3.7 STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS	177
5.3.8 ESTABLISHMENT OF FLEXIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES	178
5.3.9 CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL GOALS FOR THE LITERACY CAMPAIGN	179
5.3.10 SETTING OF REALISTIC TARGETS	180
5.3.11 MOTIVATING ADULT LEARNERS	180
5.3.12 POST-LITERACY AND LIFE-LONG EDUCATION	182
5.3.13 EVALUATION AND INFORMATION FOR MANAGEMENT	184
5.3.13.1 Evaluation by specialists	185
5.3.13.2 Evaluation by learners, volunteer educators and supervisors	185
5.3.14 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR ABET	187
5.3.15 FUNDING	190
5.4 CONCLUSION	191

	Page
CHAPTER SIX	
SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
6.1 INTRODUCTION	194
6.2 RETROSPECTION	194
6.3 FINDINGS	196
6.3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION DURING THE TRADITIONAL ERA (BEFORE 1652)	196
6.3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION FROM 1652 TO 1994	196
6.3.3 PROVISION OF ABET AFTER 1994	197
6.3.4 A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF ABET PROVISION	197
6.3.5 UNSATISFACTORY MEASUREMENT OF LITERACY LEVELS	197
6.3.6 LACK OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE ALLEVIATION OF ILLITERACY	197
6.3.7 LIMITED RESOURCES	198
6.3.8 ABSENCE OF POLITICAL WILL	198
6.3.9 INADEQUATE MOBILISATION OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES AND POSSIBLE RESOURCES	198
6.3.10 ADULT LEARNERS WERE NOT ADEQUATELY MOTIVATED	199
6.3.11 NO CLEAR LINK BETWEEN LITERACY AND THE BASIC NEEDS OF HUMAN LIFE	199
6.3.12 INFLEXIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES	199
6.3.13 SYSTEMS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARE LACKING	199
6.3.14 THE TIMING OF THE CAMPAIGN CAME YEARS AFTER ATTAINING DEMOCRACY	200
6.3.15 OVER-AMBITIOUS TARGETS	200
6.4 CONCLUSION	200
6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS	201
6.5.1 ACCEPTABLE MEASURING CRITERIA OF LITERACY LEVELS	201
6.5.2 AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TOWARDS THE ALLEVIATION OF ILLITERACY	202

	Page
6.5.3 MOBILISATION OF THE STATE RESOURCES AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS	202
6.5.4 ARTICULATION OF THE POLITICAL WILL	202
6.5.5 A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LITERACY	203
6.5.6 MOTIVATING ADULT LEARNERS	203
6.5.7 ESTABLISHMENT OF FLEXIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES	203
6.5.8 MODEL FOR ABET PROVISION	204
6.6 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE STUDY	204
6.7 SUBJECTS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH	205
6.8 CONCLUSION	205

---oOo---

<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	207
<i>APPENDICES</i>	227

---ooOoo---

FIGURES

	Page
FIGURE 1.1: Distribution of the population aged 20 years and above by highest level of education completed	2
FIGURE 3.1: Education Regions in South Africa	84
FIGURE 3.2: Implementation Model of SANLI	103
FIGURE 5.1: A Model for the planning and implementation of a literacy campaign	167

TABLES

	Page
TABLE 2.1: Enrolment for the years 1984-1988	65
TABLE 3.1: Official estimates of learners at Public Adult Learning Centres	88
TABLE 3.2: Learner participation in ABET in 1994/95 and 1998/99	93
TABLE 3.3: Learner participation in ABET since 1999 to 2002	93
TABLE 3.4: Percentage of the population aged 20 years or older with no education in each province	105
TABLE 5.1: The structure of the National Qualifications Framework	189