



CHAPTER 2

Literacy and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in South Africa

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers an extensive literature review which included among others, books and journals whose aim is to attempt to define the terms “literacy”, “adult basic education and training” as well as “lifelong learning” practices. This is an attempt to investigate the qualities and teaching practices of ABET in relation to the above mentioned concepts as reflected in the learning materials. In establishing the nature of the content of the materials used, the contents of Curriculum 2005 and the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) documents on adult basic education and training (ABET) programmes will serve as a background study and will provide the basis for a content analysis of the content and competencies of three level 1 literacy programmes. The purpose of the chapter in the context of this study is an overview of literacy and Adult Basic Education in South Africa and a reflection of change in education policy in general.

2.2 Literacy and Adult basic education: Some general principles

2.2.1 The concept “literacy” in the context of adult education

Literacy is not merely the process of acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic – it also plays a role in the liberation of humans and their full development. It is also not an end in itself, but a fundamental human right and constitutes the first stage of basic education (Harley, Aitchison, Lyster and Land, 1996:3, Asmal, 2002a:10 and University of South Africa, 2002:5). According to Bischof and Alexander (2008:7), in South Africa, adult education needs emerged from the socio-political history, which is characterised by policies of separate education and unequal facilities

for South Africa`s different population group. An understanding of adult education is closely linked to an appreciation of political purposes of adult education.

In order to determine the number of adults who are illiterate or who lack basic education one needs to be able to answer the following questions:

- Who is an adult?
- What is literacy and functional literacy?
- What is basic education and training?

South African government statistics have tended to use 16 years and older in the definition of an “adult” because 16 years was the minimum school-leaving age in the white and Indian education systems (Harley et al., 1996:17). Ouane (2009:64), UNESCO (2008:12), defines the term an “adult” as a term comprising a wide range of concepts:

- The word may refer to a stage in the life of the individual (he/she) is first a child, then a youth and then an adult.
- It may refer to status - an acceptance by society that the person concerned has completed his/her novitiate and is now fully incorporated into the community.
- It may refer to a social subset - adults as distinct from children.
- It may include a set of ideals and values - adulthood.

Therefore the concept “adult” is not directly linked to age, but is related to what generally happens as a person grows older. In *Improving Adult Literacy* (1999:4) the term “Adults” is seen as “distinct from children and are not totally illiterate but are rather functionally illiterate because they lack the skills needed to take advantage of the full range of personal, social and economic options open to people with higher literacy skills”.

According to Chopra (1993: 24) and (Ridge 2000:28) “Illiteracy in any form denotes a level of education inadequate to equip the adult to meet his responsibility as a worker

and citizen in a democratic society, i.e. those adults who do not have any knowledge of literacy, numeracy and social awareness”.

In attempting to define the terms “literacy” and “functional literacy” one must take cognisance of the fact that it is impossible to arrive at a single definition of both terms as different countries use different tools to measure literacy. According to Harley et al. (1996:18) definitions of literacy have changed and developed over time. Soifer, Irwin, Crumirine, Honzaki, Simmons and Young (1990:1) define “literacy” as follows, “literacy does not simply mean acquiring or improving reading and writing skills”. According to the UNESCO definition of literacy as well as the definitions in Harley et al. (1996:18), Hutton (1992:10), UNESCO (2008:18) a person is considered semiliterate, if he is able to read with understanding, but not to write a short simple statement about his everyday life.

Darkenwald (1982:204) and Willenberg (2005:163), maintain that any definition of literacy may continually be in the developmental stages and be shaped by the changing types of literacy demanded by a changing world. According to Hutton (1992:12) and UNESCO (2009:6) definitions of literacy are more about what is regarded more possible than what is regarded as ideal.

On the other hand Aitchison (2001:143) says:

“Literacy definitions cover a wide continuum ranging from basic alphabetisation plus varying degrees of proficiency in workplace, language and basic life skills needed for effective functioning in society to literacy as a complex set of skills and behaviour embedded within the political, economic and social relations of a particular society”.

According to Cross and Beddie (2004:5) literacy is happening all the time when you watch Television or a film, when you send an SMS message or send an email, read a book, write a letter and so on. Literacy is the ability to make inquiries about the world in order to access information.

According to Hutton (1992:17) and Daniels (2007:24), literacy enables the following:



- *Empowerment of individuals*
- *promote self-reliance*
- *change thought processes*
- *accelerate economic development*
- *hasten modernisation*
- *narrow the gap between the rich and the poor*
- *make individuals more confident thereby allowing them to become more assertive.*

A more recent definition by UNESCO, quoted in Hutton (1992:10); Gboku and Lekoko (2007:5), define the term “literacy” in relation to its uses and purposes, “a person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities for which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community ‘s development”.

According to the researcher, to be “functionally literate” could best be defined taking into account, to be able to utilise or understand the information confronted with at a given time, in a situation, for an example, being able to read a street name, price-list or a notification of a shop to be opened.

“Functional literacy” on the other hand is defined by Darkenwald (1982:204), Patwardhan (2005:363) and Habib (2007:130), as “the possession of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups to fulfil their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, job-holders, and members of social, religious or other associations of their choosing”.

Functionalities of literacy may according to Darkenwald (1982:208) and Wetsch (2001: 25), be described as those which relates to

- the world of work
- sex and age groups



- individuals and social values
- cultural development
- the right of the poor, illiterate, and exploited to organise themselves against the growing poverty within which they are living.

Literacy learners will be able to write letters whenever the need arises, fill out forms, help children with their home work, perhaps obtain a better job or more pay, be able to read the Bible in church, sign their names instead of making a cross, obtain a certificate or a qualification, and avoid being cheated (Hutton, 1992:17; Adjah, 2009:116). Adult illiteracy, on the other hand, is a serious problem, which negatively impacts on the economic and social wellbeing of communities across the country (Improving Adult Literacy, 2004:2).

Causes of illiteracy include poverty, learning disabilities, physical or mental problems, inadequate education, low parental education attainment, and a home environment in which parents are unable to instil basic literacy skills especially reading in their children (Cross and Beddie, 2004:6; Van Rooy, 2001:68).

The impact of illiteracy on the lives of such individuals may cause them to experience some or all of the following:

- restricted access to entry-level jobs, as well as few opportunities for job advancement
- greater chance of unemployment or dropping out of work
- reduced earning capacity due to infrequent employment
- increased chances of existing in poverty
- if employed they earn low income and often work part time
- high level of dependence on public assistance and other public resources
- decreased involvement in their children 's educational development
- increased health problems resulting, for example, from the inability to read medication labels properly
- increased chance of engaging in criminal activity and being imprisoned (Improving Adult Literacy, 2004:8).

The impact of illiteracy on the lives of people may, according to the researcher be generalized amongst other aspect, to loss of job which increase rate of unemployment and may lead to high rate of crime which may also in turn lead to poverty.

In South Africa definitions of literacy are further complicated by the fact that knowledge of a second language, usually English, is as essential for survival and development as the ability to read and write in an African language because the term literacy is often loosely used to include basic competency in English (Hutton 1992:12).

2.2.2 Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in South Africa

According to What is ABET (2002:1) and Harley et al. (1996:20), the concept ABET is uniquely South African. In the international world ABE means adult basic education. In the policy initiative of the early 1990s South Africa added the “T” for training so as to link education with income generation and the development of a National Qualification Framework (NQF).

- The reasons for adopting the term “training” were according to What is ABET, (2002:1), the following:
- Education, including adult education, had little relevance in life and work, while training entailed the drilling in routine jobs with no attention to the underlying knowledge and values. Adding “T” showed a commitment to integration and training as applied in ABET.
- ABET was meant to offer an appropriate adult route to a general education aimed at bringing about a significant improvement in the quality of life.

Aitchison (1999:143), Aitchison and Harley (2004), Desmond (2004:349) and Van Rooy (2001:62), define ABET as the “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 (Standard 7)”.

According to Prinsloo and Breier (1996:4) and Rule (2006:114) human resource development by the Congress of South African Trade Unions was involved in policy

work in education and in adult literacy planning. Literacy provision became part of adult basic education.

The National Adult Basic Education Conference of 12-14 November 1993 (Harley et al., 1996:20; Asmal, 2001:118 and Rule, 2006:115) defined ABET as:

- The basic education phase in the provision of life-long learning.
- The final exit point in terms of certification from ABET should be equivalent to the exit point from compulsory education (Grade 9/10).
- ABET should include a core of skills, knowledge and values.
- ABET should consist of levels of learning along a continuum assessed as outcomes.
- ABET would be aimed at adults who have had no or very little formal schooling, those who only require specific sections of ABE which meet their particular needs.

ABET is, furthermore, according to Aitchison (1999:143), “an adult education equivalent of the basic compulsory schooling that children now receive and is to be recognised by the award of a General Certificate in Education (GETC)”. According to Van Rooy (2004: 64), ABET also involves learning which serves as a foundation for further education or training.

ABET in South Africa was propelled into prominence in 1994 when apartheid era was brought to an end. On the one hand ABET was geared towards social and political transformation as its central goal (Baatjes, 2003:182 and Aitchison, 2003a:130). In South Africa ABET is defined as:

“ the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of context. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audience and ideally, provide access to nationally recognised certificates (DoE, 1997:6).”

The researcher's pragmatic synthesis on the issue of Adult basic education is that the ABET should offer training to adults that would be suited to the needs of the adults and

further agree with the suggestion made by Aitchison on the notion of awarding GETC at the completion of ABET level four (see 2.2.4 for more details in this regard).

2.2.3 Global perspective of ABET in South Africa

UNESCO, with its literacy programmes whose aim is to create a literate world and to promote literacy for all, has been the forefront of the global literacy efforts and is dedicated to keeping literacy high on national, regional and international agendas (UNESCO, 2009:1). The reason why this information is captured is to highlight the fact that South Africa was also involved in ABET issues globally.

According to Hutton (1992:14); Aitchison and Harley (2004:2) and Willenberg (2004: 162), the following table indicates world illiteracy figures and rates by date, and this emphasises the importance of literacy worldwide:

Table 2.1: Global Illiteracy figures and rates by date

Year	Total number over the age of 15	Total percentage of population
1970	960 million	33%
1980	894 million	29%
1990	882 million	25%
2000	871 million	22%
2008	774 million	20%

Sources: (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2008:1)

It is clear from the above figures in Table 2.1 that the percentage of illiterate people in the world is reducing over the years (33% in 1970, 22% in 2000 and 20% in 2008).

From a global perspective adult education is centred upon the learning in which adults are engaged. It dates back to the 18th century missionaries who taught people to read the Bible (Darkenwald 1982:205). According to Hutton (1992:32), Duke (2009:173) and Prinsloo and Baynham (2008:2), functional literacy was most often associated with

the work of the United Nation Education Science and Cultural Organisation when it was realized that the soldiers would be more efficient if they could read instructions properly, that is that national development could be accelerated if literacy levels were improved.

An overview of events and literacy international literacy is presented in the following table 2.2 with a view to inform us of the different development in adult education globally over specified period of years.

Table 2.2: International events that relates to international literacy

Year	Events and literacy
1920-1930	Post-war Bolshevik revolution
1919-1939	USSR literacy campaign
1930-1940s	Economic depression Laubach-missionary work in Phillipines: literacy work used to convert people to Christianity
1940-1950s	
1941	Laubach established committee on World Literacy and Literature
1945	UN established
1946	Unesco established along with an educational arm, two approaches to literacy which are: 1. human rights (moral growth), and 2. investment in human capital (material)
1945-1947	Mass literacy campaign in Vietnam
1950-1960s	Unesco's programme of basic education Start of antiliteracy in People's Republic of China
1955	Unesco abandons basic education in favour of development strategy Laubach establishes Laubach Literacy Inc.
Late 1950s	Decolonisation of Africa
1960-1970s	Literacy seen as an investment in development

Development decade	Criticism of ‘modernisation’
1961	Cuban literacy campaign Unesco’s 10-year programme to establish universal literacy
1964	Unesco-EWLP ‘functional literacy and skills training’: 11 countries funded by 50 billion dollars from UNDP
1967-1980	Brazilian literacy movement
1970-1980s	Spread of Freire’s ideas
1974	ELWP funding stopped
1975	International symposium for literacy, Persepolis - flexibility, Freirean - case-by-case approach
1975-1985	Unesco gives more attention to schools
1980-1990s	
1980	Nicaraguan literacy campaign
1990	International Literacy Year –decade of literacy declared
2000-2009	Education for All Global (EFA)
2000	Education For All Global monitoring report launched in Dakar, Senegal
2002	EFA global monitoring report- Is the world on track?
2003/4	EFA global monitoring report-The leap to equality.
2005	EFA global monitoring report-The quality imperative
2006	EFA global monitoring report-literacy for life
2007	EFA global monitoring report-Early childhood
2008	EFA global monitoring report-Education for all by 2015, will we make it?
2009	EFA global monitoring report-Examining the failures of the government across the world

Source: UNESCO (2009)

The above table 2.2 above can be summarily interpreted as follows: The international events between 1920 to 1942 was marked by war, literacy campaign, economic depression and missionary work that contributed in converting people to Christians. During the period 1940 to 1955 different literacy committees were formed for an example UNESCO whose approaches was human rights and investments in human

capitals. Development decade (1960 to 1970) was characterised by a continuation of literacy campaigns, criticism of modernisation and establishment of functional; literacy and literacy skills training. The period 1970 to 1980 the first international symposium of literacy which resulted in attention to be shifted to schools. 1990 was marked by the international literacy year-the decade of literacy declared. The period 2000-2009 was marked by Education for All launching and monitoring reports.

2.2.4 Establishment of ABET in South Africa

2.2.4.1 Introduction

Adult basic education and training (ABET) is provided in order to redress discrimination and past inequalities, and to promote such qualities and relevance which will equip people for full participation in social, economic and political life (Department of Education: Directorate of Adult Education and Training, 1997:2). According to Tight (1996:6) and Aitchison (2001:144) ABET is “the basic phase in the provision of lifelong learning, consisting of a continuum of learning aimed at adults with very little or no formal schooling, not having the equivalent of a compulsory school leaving certificate”. ABET has the potential to embrace all aspects of training which enable learners to demonstrate technical and practical competencies, participate actively in society, develop communication skills, develop numeracy, develop a critical understanding of the society in which people live, and be able to contribute in shaping and developing the economy of South Africa (National Training Board, 1994:148), Baatjes and Mathe (2004) and Badroodien (2004).

According to Morphet (1992:97), 6 million of the South African population could not read and write which placed us at 93% literacy in the country and through mobilization via the Service Association and Trade and Industry in South Africa we would be able to reach 100 percent literacy rate.

The objectives of the National Qualification Framework pertaining to ABET in affording every person access to learning are to

- create an integrated national framework for learning achievements



- facilitate access to, and mobility and progression in respect of education, training and a career path
- enhance the quality of education and training
- accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities, and thereby contribute to the social and economic upliftment of the nation at large (Department of Education: Directorate of Adult Education and Training 1997:4), Bhola (2004:15).

On the other hand The Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa: Draft Policy Document (1997:5) and French (2002:5), contains the following information on the vision of the Department of Education for Adult Basic Education and Training:

“Literate South Africa by means of which all its citizens have acquired the basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation”.

According to Barosso and Morgan (2009:20), ABET should provide a platform where learners know what they do and do not know, thus providing the context to make what is learned in the class-room meaningful.

South Africa has never had an adequate policy for Adult Basic Education. Up to 1994 it has never been the case, because after 1994 ABET policies did receive attention. Adult illiteracy was an important way of controlling the black population. According to Hutton (1992:33), Cross and Beddie (2004:4) and Kraak (2008:197), “adult illiteracy” is a growing problem despite efforts to curb it because of million adults who are considered to be functionally illiterate. Adults who are functionally illiterate are those who according to Hutton (1992:34) have a fully developed language system but experience fear of failure in teaching-learning situation, have low self-esteem and self-confidence. Although they may lack formal schooling many have educated themselves through life experience. In September 1995, just more than a year after the inauguration of the new South African government, the Minister of Education declared the Interim Guidelines as policy for ABET. On the basis of the policy initiative the Department of Education launched the Ithuteng “Ready to Learn” Campaign in order

to test the curriculum outcome statements. Department of Education, research combined with other empirical evidence in the form of submissions made by stakeholders from the field during 1996/7, resulted in the development of the ABET Policy which has replaced the Interim Guideline.

The ABET policy seeks to establish an enabling environment in which it is possible for high quality ABET programmes to flourish. It is envisaged that policy will be an ongoing process influenced by lived experiences, ongoing discourse and systematic reflection on implementation (Department of Education, 1998:4 and Baatjes, 2004:6). There exists a linkage between ABE and the mission of Further Education and Training (FET) in that both aim to “foster mid-level skills, lay the foundation for higher education, facilitate, the transition from school to the world of work; develop well-educated, autonomous citizens and provide opportunities for continuous learning, through the articulation of education and training programmes (Department of Education, 1997:7 and Maile, 2004:45).

2.2.4.2 ABET- its origin to 2010

According to French (1992), Kraak (2008) and Harley et al. (1996), ABET originated in the 1930's and was driven by mission schools, church groups and the Communist Party. In 1946 legislation was promulgated to support and organise night schools. The Nationalist Government undermined these night schools during the 1950s. “Operation Upgrade” was established in 1966. In the 1970s centres of concern in local churches led to the establishment of first government night schools and many non-governmental organisations centres, for example, Project Literacy, Learn & Teach, English Literacy Project, Use, Speak and Write English, Continuing Education Project among others. The unions also began to investigate more effective programmes.

In 1989 most English language universities established adult literacy units or departments within the faculties of Education. In the early 1990s, the Independent Examination Board (IEB) set the first adult examinations. During this period massive injections of foreign and local funding took place and the Joint Education Trust was asked to compile a discussion document for the distribution of donor funding because provinces were asked to submit criteria to that effect. The National Qualification

Framework (NQF) endorsed a path for lifelong learning and Recognition of Prior Learning.

In 1994 ABET received much attention in certain White Papers (*White paper on Education No 1; Education White paper No 2-3* (Aitchison, 2004:518), education and was listed as a presidential lead project in the Reconstruction and Development Programme. In 1995 the Ithuteng campaign was launched together with the publication of an official interim guideline by the DoE. Learn and Teach was closed in 1996. In 1997 ABET led the way in establishing NQF standards and SAQA standards development. The University of Natal undertook the first survey of ABET in South Africa ABET (Harley et al., 1996; Hutton, 1992; Aitchison, 1999 and What is ABET? 2002).

In 1998 the National Literacy Cooperation collapsed. The University of Natal survey was published in 1999. The University of South Africa (Unisa) set up a portfolio-based assessment as an alternative to the IEB. The Ikhwelo Project was also initiated in 1999.

The Adult Basic Education and Training Act 52 of 2000 came into force in 2000 and focused on the management of public adult learning centres (night schools). ABET featured in Minister Asmal's call for renewal or "Tirisano" (working togetherness). The South African Learning Initiative (SANLI) was also launched in 2000.

In 2001 the Adult Educators' and Trainers' Association of South Africa collapsed and in 2002 certain Sector Education and Training Authorities initiated projects aimed at the provision of ABET. SANLI projects also took off in partnership with Unisa at the beginning of 2004 whose aims were as follow:

- To reduce illiteracy levels in each province by at least 35 percent by 2004
- To enable majority of newly literate adults to take up referrals to further education and economic opportunities
- To ensure that 60 percent of new literate adults maintained their skills through keeping contact with, and accessing materials in, the local resources centers and community development projects (Prinsloo et al., 2008:8 and Bordia, 2003:32)

According to Baatjes (2003:7), SANLI had very little to achieve and had reduced to poorly funded provincial projects.

In 2006 negotiations were entered into establishing Kha ri Gude (Let us learn) mass literacy campaign and was approved by 2007. The campaign was launched in 2008 which is believed will enable additional 4.7 million South Africans to achieve literacy by 2015. This campaign is supported by the full range of government departmental initiatives.

Umalusi was established to assure quality, General Education and Training and FET bands including ABET (Harley et al., 1996; Hutton, 1992; Aitchison, 1999; What is ABET?, 2002).

The educational reform required in South Africa was based on the attitudes and values of many of adults South Africans were formed in the apartheid era where emphasis was laid on content-based education. Learners did not receive adequate educational and training opportunities (Van der Horst, 2004:4). Competency-based education was then introduced so that learners could be taught the actual skills that they needed in a working world whose focus was on outcomes achieved.

2.2.5 Decision to move from content-based education to competence-based education (CBE) as a reflection of change in education policy in general

According to Harley et al. (1999:164) and Rule (2006:126), “competence-based education is a subset of outcomes-based education” Competence is an outcome of learning has three main components that are, knowledge, skills and attitude.

Changes implemented since 1994 include developments in a new curriculum framework for learning and teaching. Prior to 1994 there were 16 departments of education catering for the four provinces, the so-called independent homelands, the four official population groups and various combinations of these (Harley et al., 1996:6, and Maile, 2004:58). The reason for this was that South Africa was

characterised by the legacy of apartheid, the presence of trade unions and community groups, extremely high levels of unemployment, and large, informal and rural sectors (Kraak and Young, 2001:21).

After 1994 a shift took place from a divided, fragmented and content-based system to the learner-centred outcomes-based education (OBE) model, Curriculum 2005 (Kraak and Young, 2001:20). A paradigm shift constitutes changes in the thinking and behaviour within organisations, institutions, and industries and cultures - a change in the fundamental nature of everything known and done previously (Spady, 1997:2 and Oxenham, Diallo, Katahoire, Apetkova-Mwangi and Sall, 2002:36). According to Naicker (1999:93), the new, liberating system of education constituted a meaningful paradigm shift in South African education.

The first democratic election in South Africa took place in 1994 and brought about a radical change in the education system. The new Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) came into effect as a system that operated at all levels of education in South Africa and in the interest of all South Africans. “The system addresses educational problems such as provision of equal access to schools, equal educational opportunities, curriculum, inadequate facilities, shortages of educational materials, the enrolment explosion and adequate qualified teaching staff” (Van der Horst and MacDonald, 2009:5). This educational change provided equity in terms of educational provision and training opportunities for all people who need to learn not only scholars but also adults and youth who have already left school in order to promote more balanced critical thinking powers and problem-solving abilities (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:5).

The aim was also done to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that would improve their living environment. Teachers, on the other hand, would be able to take responsibility for the careful planning and management of the learners` learning environment. The parents would become involved in motivating their children and facilitating their learning. In this way South African and its entire people will benefit if all parties work together.

According to Spady (1994:2) and Maile (2004:43), an outcome is defined as a demonstration of learning that occurs at the end of a learning experience, as a visible

and observable demonstration of knowledge, competence and orientations. Orientation is regarded as “attitudinal, affective, motivational and relational elements that constitute a performance” (Jeevanatham, 1998:218). According to Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:6), the change to OBE was therefore aimed at focusing on learners and their needs, acknowledging human diversity, and promoting participatory democratic decision making in education by teachers, learners and parents so as to allow learners to achieve their full potential.

Changing to an outcomes-based approach was therefore mainly driven by the aim of emancipating learners and teachers from a content-based model of operation, and also as a response to international trends in educational development.

2.2.6 The relationship between education and training

In the previous education system, education had been separated from training. Education focused on knowledge while training focused on skills.

Education may be defined as “the conscious, purposive intervention by an adult in the life of a child with the aim of guiding him to responsible adulthood” (Fourie et al., 1990:2) and Baatjes (2008:208). Madaus, Kellaghan and Schwab (1989:10-12) define the term “education” as an activity which brings about a change in a desired direction, that is, after being educated a person should have a wider range of skills or behaviour at his or her disposal than before being educated. Furthermore (Chopra, 1993:1 and Nambinga, 2007:35) defines the term “education” as “an instrument of social change and development in a society based on technology and science”. He continues by outlining the following three criteria for education:

- Education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to that which is worthwhile.
- Education must involve knowledge and understanding.
- Education rules out certain procedures of transmission on the grounds that they lack voluntariness on the part of the learner (Chopra, 1993:15).

Education is concerned with the content of the syllabus of each subject which had to be taught to learners, while training teaches a basic understanding by the person performing a skilled task (Loubser, 1999:1, Department of Labour, 2004: 8).

Fourie et al. (1990:15) and Baatjes (2008:209) define the term “training” in regard to coaching and drilling. The Department of Education (1997:4) provides two definitions of the term “training”:

- An employment related interpretation,
- A wide range of skills and expertise that includes technical skills, such as plumbing, dressmaking and the like, specialised skills such as conflict management and negotiation and creative skills such as dance and praise poetry.

Gravett (2001:ix) refers to the term “training”, as a systematic development of skills pattern required by an individual to reach a particular level of competency or operative efficiency to perform adequately a specific vocational task.

Chopra (1993:19), Aitchison (2003:126) defines training as “the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts or attitudes that result in improved performance in the work situation”. He further outlines the following views of training shared by people in general:

- That the term training refers to much narrower set of activities than those understood by training professionals
- That for most people training is that which happens in formal courses
- That activities included in the definition of training will vary across subgroups of the population
- That for most people training is vocationally linked (Chopra, 1993:21; Department of Labour, 2004:9 and Department of Education, 2002:17).

The Department of Education now follows the integrated approach in education and training as it regards this approach as a vital underlying concept for a national human resource development strategy. An integrated approach implies a perception of

learning which rejects a rigid division between academic and applied education, and theory and practice (Department of Education, 1995:7, Department of Labour, 2004: 8). Training is now a vital part of many learning programmes administered in schools, and tertiary institutions thus creating a close link with education.

The National Training Board, which is a consultative and research body, has made a major contribution to the national training strategy initiative. The Department of Labour is actively involved in labour market policies, which promote skills development outside the formal system of education and training.

2.2.7 The inclusion of the concept of Lifelong Learning

Apart from the shift from content-based to outcomes-based education and the inclusion of training in education, another major change introduced by Curriculum 2005 was the endorsement of the concept of lifelong learning. This meant that all people (including adults and youths who have already left school) who need to learn should be given an opportunity to do so. All people should be granted the opportunity to develop their potential to the full, either by means of formal or non-formal schooling (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:5).

The new approach to education is based on the supposition that education and schooling start at a very early age, and never actually come to an end during one's lifetime. This presupposes the provision for education for young children as well as for adults and those with special needs (PU for CHE, 1998:x).

According to Tight (1996:15), Bhola (2002:235) lifelong learning is

- a type of learning that would last the whole life of each individual
- a type of learning that would lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as they become necessary in response to the constantly changing conditions of modern life,
- the ultimate goal of learning, which would be to promote the self-fulfilment of each individual so that he may be able to engage in self-directed learning activities

- a type of learning that would acknowledge the contribution of all available educational influences including formal, nonformal and informal.

Spady and Schlebusch (1999:57) define lifelong learning as “a principle for a country which offers all its citizens a new set of prospects”. On the other hand, Field (2000:vii) defines “Life long learning” as “People who are learning throughout their lives and thus enabling them to play a full part in their lives and promotes active citizenship”.

The role of ABET in lifelong learning is, according to Field (2000:113), to create a curriculum which provides a general education as a platform for lifelong learning and which cuts across the traditional divisions of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, in lifelong learning ABET should promote critical thinking and empower individuals to participate in all aspects of society. In making ABET the first stage in the process of lifelong learning for adults the following objectives must be realised:

- to develop an interface between the ABET levels on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the General Education and Training (GET) so as to provide a learning path into Further Education and Training (FET)
- to make provision for the ongoing application of skills and knowledge acquired by those learners who do not choose or do not have access to continuing (on the formal) education pathway. (Department of Education and Training, 1997:16 and Walters, 2006:11).

Since the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) adult literacy has been regarded as a prerequisite for the transformation and development of South African society (Isaacs, 2004:17). This development brought about the establishment of the Standard Generating Body (SGB) for ABET practitioners, the main function of which was to produce unit standards and qualifications that would enhance the learning effectiveness and experience of adult learning (Isaacs, 2004:17). The SGB’s task team was registered in August 1999. On 11 October 2000 the task team was registered in the National Qualification Framework for a further 3-year period. Thereafter it was registered for a further three-year period until 2006.

Furthermore SAQA is also ensuring that ABET learners are brought into the mainstream of education through the recognition of a qualification which starts at NQF level 1 and which introduces the learners to a culture of learning and provides them with a foundation for acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for social and economic development, justice and equity (Isaacs, 2004:17). It is also the gateway to further and higher education and training and enhanced employment opportunities.

2.2.8 Characteristics of ABET

ABET may be seen as providing people with a basic foundation of education for lifelong learning. A national adult basic education programme should consist of four levels on a continuum of learning and should provide access to education and training opportunities for all to a level of the equivalent of the end of compulsory schooling without discrimination of any kind. It should be integrated with the mainstream provision of education and training. Strydom (2001:1); Rule (2006:126) and Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:5). Ahl (2006:44), equates the four levels of ABET to the levels within the existing primary and lower secondary school system as follows:

- ABET 1: Takes learners from Grade 1 to 3 (read, write, numbers)
- ABET 2: Takes learners from Grade 4 to 5 (life skills added)
- ABET 3: Takes learners from Grade 6 to 7 (specific skills added)
- ABET 4: Takes learners from Grade 8 to 12 (specific skills added).

ABET should also be linked to employment creation initiatives, further education and training opportunities and allow for career pathing. The curriculum for ABET should promote critical thinking and empower individuals to participate in all aspects of society. Prior learning and experience obtained through formal, nonformal and informal learning and/or experience should be given recognition (National Training Board, 1994:151 and Bhola (2005:33).

2.2.8.1 Instructional methods associated with ABET

According to Department of Education (1997:29) the process of the instructional delivery of the ABET system follows a path which addresses the developmental needs of all adult learners whether unemployed or self-employed in either the formal or informal business sector. The Department advocates that the following principle be followed in order to encourage quality instructional delivery:

The learner is allowed to internalise the subject matter more easily because he/she can relate to it. Assessment is continuous within outcomes-based education, where learners are important as the end product. Furthermore the learning process is self paced which allow as fast trackers to achieve and not be held back. Naicker (1999:95) and Department of Education (1997:29) suggest that the curriculum instruction and assessment be flexible as to allow diverse needs of learning population. Mckay (2004:150) indicated that types of audio-visual media such as Audio recordings, video, slides, radio, television overhead projector and charts are used most frequently in ABE classes.

2.2.8.2 Use of learning materials in Adult Basic Education

According to Lord (1994:10) and Baumgartner (2001:13), well-designed learning programmes and materials are essential for the success of an ABE programme. Learning materials may include a variety of texts, books, newspapers, posters, magazines, tapes and radio and television programmes. Mention is made in Department of Education (1997:27) and Rule (2006:124) of learning and support materials as vital tools which inform learning, enrich the teaching/learning encounter, and signal a move away from the primacy of specific content-driven texts to the idea of a range of materials that will help learners attain the required outcomes.

ABE materials should be modularised rather than presented as a full course in order to allow for variety in the use of learning materials that may be integrated to meet the needs of a diversity of learners. Materials and media developed need to effectively contextualise the learning outcomes and must be based upon an accurate analysis of the learners' needs, and an assessment of their capacity and prior knowledge. Teachers are permitted to use low-cost, innovative and well-designed materials for their classes.



2.2.8.3 Assessment in Adult Basic Education

According to the National Training Board (1994:162) and Larney (2006:45) the assessment procedure should comprise the following:

- initial (based on recognition of prior learning and experience)
- formative (ongoing, during a programme)
- informal (subjective, continuous on a day-to-day basis, integrated to teaching) and if necessary
- formal (more objective, administered at intervals, often externally devised and produced)
- summative (at the end of a programme) and
- flexible and allow multiple entry into various ABE levels to maximise the horizontal and vertical mobility of learners.

The Department of Education (1997:44) and Gravett (2001:55) gives clear guiding principles for effective assessment as follows:

Table 2.3: Guiding principles for effective assessment

Principle	Definitions
	Assessment must:
Access to assessment	Be convenient and available to adult learners;
Developmental	Yield results that candidates, programme planners and others may use as part of developmental processes to improve the performance of learners;
Fairness	Use methods, instruments and processes which are sensitive to various forms of bias and discrimination, such as cultural values, language, etc;
Integrative	Assess the skills, knowledge and value outcomes of learning in an integrative manner and not in isolation;
Multilingualism of assessment	Yield valid and reliable results which are of high quality across all sectors. The Education and Quality Assurer (ETQA) shall moderate the work of education



	and training assessors according to the guidelines of the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA);
Outcomes-based assessment	Be based on learning outcomes, range statements and assessment criteria stated in the unit standards;
Recognition of prior learning and experience	Recognise people's current knowledge and skills through the outcomes, statements and criteria stated in the unit standards and give credit accordingly;
Relevance	Focus on skills, knowledge and values that are relevant to the learning outcomes; and are appropriate to and approximate the ways in which people learn and how they will use or apply the skills and knowledge being assessed;
Reliability	Be reliable, that is, the assessment must produce similar results consistently, regardless of assessor or context;
Transparency and democracy	Be clear and understandable to the candidate, in terms of what evidence of competence will be collected; and what it will be used for. National stakeholders must be involved in decision making about assessment policy;
Validity	Be valid, that is, the assessment must test or examine what it is intended to.

Adapted from Gravett (2001:55).

The above table 2.3 suggest that guiding principles for effective assessment in Adult Basic Education should be able to improve learner's performance, it should be fair, integrative, be based on outcomes, recognise prior learning and experience, be relevant, reliable, and valid and most of all be understandable to the learners.

2.2.8.4 Disadvantages of Adult Basic Education and Training

The following are disadvantages of ABET:

- Inadequate resources and management of resources, e.g. inadequate funding, wastage, inadequate guidelines, insufficient venues, lack of involvement of national stakeholders and interested groups in decision-making and minimal State commitment.
- Inadequate planning, for example lack of information pertaining to informed planning, inadequate link with formal education and training sector, lack of relevant national certificate, no national standards and failure to ensure sufficient number of trained personnel at all levels, for example trainers, policy planners, and material developers.
- Learner problems, for example insufficient suitable reading materials as part of ongoing support, high dropout rate, and inadequate participation of women and rural people (National Training Board, 1994:159 and Larney, (2006:39).

2.2.8.5 Advantages of Adult Basic Education and Training

The ABET project enabled a large number of uneducated or under-educated people to receive an education, thus transforming them into an educated population which is able not only to contribute to the development of the economy of the country, but also to the improvement of their own quality of life. ABET project also addresses the inequalities of the past as adults learn not only to read and write, but take control of their everyday lives through activities like banking, filling forms, reading instructions and voting. It also renews sense of confidence in the adult's own abilities.

2.3 Summary

An attempt was made into the inquiry of the general principles with regard to literacy and adult basic education and training with special reference to the definition of the term "Literacy" as well as the characteristics of Adult Basic Education. Global perspectives of ABET was done in order to emphasise the importance of literacy worldwide. Information pertaining to the establishment of ABET from its origin to 2010 was also included in this chapter. I argue that the conception of lifelong learning

in adult education will help build on all the existing educational providers and extend beyond the formal education to encompass all individuals involved in learning activities. Some reflections of changes in education systems from content-based education to competency education and outcomes-based education was introduced in this study in order to reflect on the changes in education policy in general. Furthermore, the importance of Inclusion of lifelong learning was also taken into consideration in this chapter which meant that all people including adults and youth who have already left school and needed learn could be given an opportunity to do. A useful guideline was provided on a notion of competencyThe next chapter deals with the value of outcomes-based and competence-based education to ABET.