



## CHAPTER 3

### **The importance of Outcomes-based and Competence-based Education to ABET**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A synthesis of information cited from various authors resulted into the establishment of the information requirements as part of the content analysis. The chapter serves also as additional discussion of the information introduced in chapter one of the study (see paragraph 2.2.5 in this regard). Furthermore, literature review helped the researcher to gain further insight into the study and to place the result of the study in a historical perspective. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:70) and Latham (2004:106), literature review has numerous benefits which could be highlighted as follows:

- Literature review creates shared quantity and contested nature of content
- It impact on the researcher and research as it can provide the researcher with new ideas and approaches
- Furthermore it can give insight on how others handled methodology issues and sources of data, in the studies similar to your own
- Finally it can help you to interpret the findings correctly.

Different definitions and descriptions of the concepts of content, competency and competencies addressed in literacy programmes as presented by different writers are discussed. Reference is also made to the outcomes-based education (OBE) policy introduced after 1994 and its influence on adult basic education and training (ABET). Since education system in South Africa changed from content-based to OBE it was necessary for the researcher to include this section in the study as it introduces the researcher to the issues that follow. In addition, a report on the investigation into the information needs analysis of the people of Damonsville and Onverwacht including learning programme design in order to assist with the design of suitable literacy programmes is made.

## **3.2 The issue of content: Some general principles of Content-based syllabuses**

Content may be described as the subject matter, ideas, skills or substance of what is taught. Content comprises an integral part of curriculum and include academic subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Languages, Social Studies, Creative Art, Business Education and recreational activities such as drama and sports (Nacino-Brown, Desmond and Brown, 1989:25). According to Spady (1993:3) and Kotze (2004:46) content involves knowledge derived from significant problems, and the challenges and opportunities people are likely to face after leaving school.

Content in labour practices consists of what students need to know and to understand about inter-personal relationships, work and resource management, and managing finances in order to be able to work and survive. Content may also refer to academic content or content in terms of cultural themes (Government Communication, 2002:1).

The programme of content-based syllabuses is usually built around chapters, units, blocks, and other segments that have little meaning within the particular occupation (Blank, 1982:5; Killen, 2004:68 and Reddy, 2004:31). Content-based programming places emphasis on covering a curriculum in which teachers teach a predetermined amount of content within each time period (Killen, 2000:7). The content which is taught is linked to a subject-based textbook. Characteristics of this type of programming generally focus on the following: spending a fixed amount of time studying certain subjects regardless of the volume to be learnt, what the learners knew prior to starting the course, the rate they are able to learn, and what they know at the end (Killen, 2000:7).

### **3.2.1 Characteristics of Content-based programmes**

The following are characteristics of content-based programmes:

- The time frames of the programmes are inflexible.
- The whole programme is examination-driven.

- Learning entails parrot-fashion drill and rote learning.
- Syllabuses are content-based and broken down into subjects.
- Rigid adherence to textbooks and worksheets, and thus completely focused on the teacher with the result that the learner perceives the syllabus as rigid and non-negotiable.
- Emphasis is placed on what the teacher hopes to achieve.
- The public at large is not encouraged to comment or contribute to the process of curriculum development.
- The teacher is responsible for the learning of the pupils therefore motivation depends solely on the personality of the teacher (Department of Education, 2002: 5; 1998:20; Naicker, 1999 and Van Etten and Smit, 2005:49).

Rademeyer (2003:13) and Olivier (1998:33), contributes the following to the list of characteristics of content-based education:

- There are only correct or wrong answers.
- Learners acquire knowledge solely in order to obtain a certificate which does not guarantee/mean that he/she is competent.
- Tests and examinations are used exclusively to measure the learners' progress and performance.
- Teachers are not overloaded.
- Teachers are in control of the class and learners are expected to listen and absorb/understand what is being taught.
- Teachers follow a curriculum that is broken down into a syllabus, a year programme, a quarterly programme and eventually a weekly programme. A section of work is then prepared to be taught to the class.
- The learners' performance is measured strictly by means of tests in order to ascertain whether they have understood the work. If they fail the test, the lesson will be repeated.

The characteristics of the content-based programmes listed above can best be summarised as programmes that are inflexible, consisting of learning methods that are

rigid, which implies the strict adherence to text-books, rote learning and the teacher being the only person who could take decisions.

Learners also rely on paper and pencil tests and each learner's performance is usually compared to the group norm (Blank, 1982:5; Olivier; 1998:32 and Van Etten and Smit, 2005:49). According to the above, Naicker (1999:93) and Anderson (2005:108), summarises the characteristics of content-based education as inflexible, oppressive and segregated in terms of disability and race. He maintains that content is determined by time (how much time to spend on a specific aspect), calendar (contents to be covered for the term or year) and the passing or failing of examinations.

### **3.2.2 Instructional methods related to Content-based Education**

In this approach, McKay (2004:151) says, the educator is the main source of information as well as the role model with regard to setting of norms and standards. According to Olivier (1998:30), the teacher determines the learning content and the pace of learning. The method of sharing and imparting information to the learners results in telling and demonstration sessions with the teacher as the focus of activities. The teacher is in control and learners absorb, interpret, understand and memorise the content.

According to Loubser (1999:2), Bhola, Impara and Buckendahl (2003:24) and Schwillè and Dembèlè (2007:50), the following are the most frequently content-based instruction methods used in content-based education:

- The teaching instruction is teacher-centred whereby the teacher transmits information to the students who are passive learners.
- Teaching style is rote learning without necessarily making sure that learners understand the contents.
- Learners all work at the same pace dictated by the teacher without taking into account the different levels of the learners' abilities.
- Learning expectations are not explained to learners.
- A single style of teaching is used and this style does not take into account any different styles of learning preferred by learners.

Ono and Ferreire (2010:62) specify that teachers` method of teaching was characterised by the, following:

- Teachers were trained to follows rigid patterns and prescribed classrooms.
- The above mentioned pattern of teaching resulted in passive learning by learners
- Centralised workshops or programmes were followed
- There was little inclusion of teacher knowledge and realities in the classrooms.

### **3.2.3 The characteristics of Content-based learning materials**

According to Olivier (1998:39) and Anderson (2005:109), content-based curriculum development was not open to the public which characterised the syllabus as a rigid and non-negotiable.

Typical content-based learning materials would for instance include the following:

- The textbooks are the most important learning material used by both teachers and learners in content-based education and concentrate mainly on presenting the content of the syllabus.
- The arrangement and complexity of the subject matter is in a fixed order that lead to a progressive line in the presentation of content, for example a strict, inflexible grading of material, for example, from simple to difficult.
- Facts have to be revised, especially before tests and examinations (Loubser, 1999:3).
- Blackboards are the main and most important teaching aid, and due to an inadequate infrastructure. Various departments of education supported this approach in the past (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:28).
- Worksheets were explained more clearly to the teacher with the result that the teacher perceived the syllabus as rigid and non-negotiable.
- Teachers alone are responsible for motivating the learning process, and for encouraging a love of learning. This in turn places great stress on the emotional reserves of the teachers and what they hope to achieve.



- In the transmission of content the teacher regards the learners as empty vessels that need to be “filled up with content” (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:28).
- There is little opportunity for creativity because only correct answers and model examples are given to learners.
- Comprehensive content emphasising the content or information and not how to obtain or use the information is given to the learner to enable the learner to gain insight into the underlying principles or process involved.
- Illustrations which are complementary to the text are provided, thereby making the content clearer and promoting insight
- Before tests and examinations are written facts are revised and memorised (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:28).

### **3.2.4 Assessment in Content-based Education**

The assessment of learning is an important and inevitable part of any educational activity, whether it is done informally or formally. Content-based assessment aims at determining to what extent the learner has mastered the teaching content. Assessment is therefore content-based.

The following assessment strategies of content-based education may be identified:

According to Loubser (1999:3), emphasis could be laid on the assessment of facts and skills as provided in the textbooks, including the academic exercises where for example standardised tests and end of the year examinations which focus on retention of knowledge can be used. Written work is marked and the final result is calculated in numerical terms, e.g. pass or fail. These results are always adjusted to normal distribution using a curve which assumes that most of the population at any given time will gain an ‘average’ mark (Department of Education, 2002:54).

Sullivan (1995:3) and Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:29) regard assessment activities as being separate from the instructional process and direct reproduction of content is often required therefore the outcomes are likely to be derived from traditional subjects and assumed content rather than any analyses of the likely content

of performance. The fact that learners are sometimes required demonstrating competency after relatively small segments of instruction, they usually lack an understanding of the whole and that they may not see interrelatedness of the parts.

### **3.2.5 Disadvantages of Content-based Education**

According to the literature consulted (Loubser, 1999:3; Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:28 and Sullivan, 1995:1), the following disadvantages of content-based education may be identified:

Learners are often taught not to question anything they learn and as a result they do not learn to think for themselves. The learners also rely on a teacher for learning, thus the learners stop learning once they leave formal education. Furthermore mention is made on the fact that they cannot apply the knowledge they acquire in order to understand the societies in which they live (Loubser, 1999:3; Du Toit and Du Toit, 2004:12 and Olivier, 1998:33). Progression through the various subjects in schools is time-based, and as a result at any given time during the year the teacher is expected to be at a specific point in the textbook or course content, regardless of the progress of individual learners. The fact that the schedule requires everyone to move at the pace determined by the teacher, often lead to the detriment of certain learners because when a learner does not perform well in a test there is often little time for individual assistance as the teacher must move on, in order to adhere to the established time schedule.

### **3.2.6 Advantages of Content-based Education**

According to Fraser, Loubser and Van Rooy (1990:87) and Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:13), learning content plays an important role in all subjects that are taught at schools since content dictates the activities and must be taken into account during the design of the curriculum. The learning content determines the aims and teaching methods to be used in teaching the subject.

Despite the fact that there is much wrong with content-based education we must be careful not to overlook the importance of learning content. If a learner does not have a sound foundation of the content of a subject it will not be possible to apply problem-solving skills. There will also be a lack of a knowledge base and this will hinder the learner in developing the ability to transfer the acquired content to another context.

According to Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:26) and Spady (1994:53), content plays an important role in enriching student's lives through development of high level performers. Olivier (1998:33) suggest that even though the old curriculum was content-driven, many teachers managed to guide learners to a deep understanding and appreciation of their subjects, they managed to develop the skills required for research in various subject areas, and motivated learners to become reflective and skilled individuals.

### **3.2.7 The role played by content (information) in learning**

According to Fraser, Loubser and Van Rooyen (1992:128) and Clifford and Kerfoot (1992:181), no learning can take place without content, since content and skills are important in enriching learner's lives so as to produce learners with a high level of performance on a framework of culminating outcomes. Furthermore, Maree and Fraser (2004:6), suggest that successful learning should occur when content is meaningful, relevant and useful to learner's lives. Careful selection and use of subject content by a particular community should satisfy the needs of the communities (Clifford and Kerfoot, 1992:182).

### **3.3 The issues of Competency: some general principles of Competency-based Education and training**

Towards the end of the 1960s competency-based education was introduced in America in order to create an education system that would prepare for life after school (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:10). According to Harley et al. (1996:302) Blank (1983:8) and Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:9), the general approach to competency-based education and training was developed in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s. There is, however, a discrepancy in the actual date of implementation of the programme. This type of education aimed at teaching learners the actual skills they would need in the working world. Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:10); Blank (1983:7) and Olivier (1998:53) agree about competency-based education as focused on an integration of outcomes goals (in terms of specific skills), instructional experience



(to teach the outcome) and assessment devices (to determine whether the learners had mastered the outcomes).

According to Harley et al. (1996:302); Olivier (1998:52) and Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:10), competency-based education in South Africa is being utilised increasingly in industrial and commercial training, and is widely prescribed in ABE. Olivier (1998: 53) again touches on the issue of competency-based education when he says “competency-based education focuses mainly on the skills acquired by the trainees”.

The term “competency-based education” (CBE), indicates the different approach. Terms such as “learning activity” and “learning experience” refer to actions performed prior to the completion of a specific objective as opposed to “knowing” (Maritz, Poggenpoel and Myburgh, 2009:1 and Sullivan, 1995:2) the content of the learning materials. According to Pudi (2006:103); Blank (1982: 6) and Olivier (1998:52), there is also a lot of confusion, misinformation and preconceived notions about the competency-based approach in the education and training field today, and is due to the multiplicity of complicated definitions of competency in education and training textbooks.

For the purpose of this study competency-based education and training is viewed by Summerall, Lopez and Oehlert (2000:4), as helping to develop education and training programme that can be sustainable. Competency-based education and training is aimed at instructors, trainers, supervisors, commercial specialists, agencies and institutions. This approach to training may be referred to as individualised instruction, learning for mastery or programmed instruction.

According to Summerall et al. (2000:4), competency refers not merely to tasks, but also to the understanding of the tasks being carried out effectively. Competency-based education and training involves information as well as skills in applying acquired knowledge. Competency-based education has been defined in terms of three domains (Summerall et al., 2000:4):

- what the individual brings to the task
- what the individual does in the task

- what is achieved.

Thus knowledge, performance and outcome are all essential features of competency.

Fuller, Pillay and Sirur (1995:2) and Pudi (2006:110), define the term “competency” as “the state of being competent, having ability and skills”. Birkett, Barbera, Leithheid, Lower and Roebuck (1999:4), use the term “competency” to refer to the successful negotiation of performance through the use of appropriate capacity. The term refers to a relationship (successful negotiation) between performance outcomes (as defined), performance context (as specified), and appropriate or requisite capacities.

Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:30) and Birkett et al. (1999:5-6) suggest that to the term “competence” is used to refer to the overall set of capacities brought to performance situations, whereas the term competencies is often used to refer to specific skills or other attributes for example, knowledge, abilities and attitudes that might constitute components of an overall set of capacities. Most commonly, “competencies” and “skills” are used synonymously.

The term “competency standard” refers to an appropriate linkage between:

- what is to be performed, defined in terms of the substantive outcomes secured
- the context in which performances are to be conducted and the outcomes secured
- specified performance criteria, used to establish the quality of the outcomes to be secured
- the capacity required to secure substantive performance outcomes at the requisite level of quality (Birkett et al., 1999:4; Du Toit and Du Toit, 2004:9).

Blank (1982:7) and Maritz et al. (2009:4), defines the term “competency-based programmes” as those worthy accomplishments that render the employee valuable to the employer and that also render the employer valuable to the customer or consumer. He also distinguishes between characteristics of both competency-based programmes

and traditional training programmes. He reaches the conclusion that the differences between the two programmes are based on at least four primary differences:

- What it is that trainees/ learners learn?
- How they learn each task.
- When do they proceed from one task to the next?
- How we determine and report whether learners learnt each task.

Sullivan (1995:2) and Pudi (2006:100), use the following two key terms in competency-based education to indicate how the learners' progress is to be determined and reported:

- skill-tasks which are tasks performed to a specific level of competency or proficiency
- competency skills which are performed to a specific standard under specific conditions.

Competency involves both the ability to perform within a given context, and the ability to transfer knowledge to new tasks and situations (Harley et al., 1996:65 and Daniels, 2007:24). Thus competency involves the ability or potential to do something rather than to know something. Competency/skills training is task-driven education. The learner should be able to understand the task theoretically as well as be able to apply the skills in performing a task, which involves the transfer of knowledge and skills from one task to another as well as to apply it in other situations (Strydom, 2001:3).

To summarise the term “competence” relates to what people do rather than to what they know. In order to obtain a reliable measurement of a person’s ability to do something there must be clearly defined competency standards by which performance is measured and accredited (Harley et al., 1996:16 and Van der Horst and McDonald 2009:30).

The National Training Board (NTB) that defines competency as capacity - in the sense of the potential to do something. The NTB identifies three components as the ability to apply a skill in order to perform a task, theoretical understanding of a task and the

ability to transfer knowledge, skills and understanding to other tasks and situations (Harley et al., 1996:135).

Two South African bodies, the National Training Board and the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) use a definition of competence that includes the following: competence recognises that performance is underpinned not only by skills but also by knowledge and understanding (National Training Board 1994:139 and Maritz et al. 2009:5).

ETD occurs with this and indicates that according to their understanding competencies are “the skills, attitudes and knowledge education training and Development (ETD) practitioners need to be able to produce specified outcomes in accordance with the required quality standards” (National Training Board, 1994:139). Furthermore competencies are not unique to a specific role, but cut across outcomes and roles (National Training Board 1994:139).

### **3.3.1 Characteristics of Competency-based Education (CBE)**

The information that students learn is based solely on specific, precisely stated outcomes that have been verified as being essential for successful employment in the occupation for which the student is being trained. According to Blank (1985:300) and Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:9), competencies are made available to all concerned and describe in detail what the students will be able to do upon completion of the training programme. Each learner has enough time to fully master one task fully before being allowed or forced to move on to the next task. It is required that each individual learner to performs each task to a high level of proficiency before receiving credit for the completion of the task. Harley et al. (1996:134), contend that “curriculum development” have basis as modular and outcomes-based approach which allows candidates to demonstrate through outcomes assessment.

Furthermore, the learner’s performance is compared to a preset, fixed standard consisting of competencies that are carefully selected. According to Sullivan (1995:4) and Anderson (2005:108), the learner’s knowledge and skills are assessed through a flexible training approach of which large, small and individual group activities are

important components. At the end, the satisfactory completion of training is based on achievement of all specified competencies.

According to Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:9) and Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:10-11), the following six critical components characterise a competency-based education programme:

- Learning outcomes that are explicit with regard to the required skills and level of proficiency
- Flexible time that suits the learners especially ABET learners
- Instruction which facilitates learning by means of a variety of instructional activities
- Criterion-referenced testing of required learning outcomes
- Certification which depends on a demonstration of required learning outcomes by the learner
- Programme adaptability which is managed to ensure optimum guidance to the learner.

### **3.3.2 Instructional methods related to Competency-based Education**

The educator who knows what he/she intends the learner to learn will provide the learners with high quality, carefully designed, learner centred learning activities, including media and material designed to help them master each task. According to National Training Board (1994), an integral part of the instruction for competency-based education is periodic feedback throughout the learning process with opportunities for learner to correct their performances. Blank (1982:5) and Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:60), state that “guiding interventions that enable the individual and/or group to learn in a group context and enable individual learning needs to be satisfied”.

### **3.3.3 Use of learning materials in Competency-based Education**

According to Harvey et al. (1996:166), learning materials contain standards which are concerned with the outcome of learning through certification. Materials that are used

in competency-based education should consist of content that clearly define what will be learned in order to achieve learning objectives. Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:11) state that programme adaptability is managed in such a way that it ensures optimum guidance to the learner and that the educator could also provide the most suitable conditions within which effective learning may take place. Materials are organised in such a way that each individual learner may stop, slow down, speed up or repeat instruction as needed in order to learn effectively. Detailed training materials are geared to the competencies to be achieved and are designed to support the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

### **3.3.4 Competency-based assessment**

Possible assessment strategies that may be used for competency-based education are listed below:

According to Blank (1985:335) and Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:16), assessment can be used on completion of a specific outcome provided that a mastery of a specific skill is demonstrated and attained by the learner. Furthermore, learners should be able to demonstrate what was presented and immediate feedback should be provided by the educator on the performance after completion of a specific outcome.

### **3.3.5 Disadvantages of Competency-based Education**

The following are disadvantages of competency-based education:

According to Harvey et al. (1996:184); Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:11), unless initial training and follow-up assistance is provided for the educator there is a tendency to slip back quickly into the role of the traditional teacher.

Loubser (1999:8) and Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:10), state that when little or no attention is given to the identification of essential skills the resulting training course is likely to be ineffective.

### **3.3.6 Advantages of Competency-based Education**

The following are possible advantages of competency-based education as viewed by Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:12) and Hutton (1992:184): “competency-based education focuses on the success of each individual learner” whereby participants will achieve competencies in the required performance in their specific areas as they will receive a list of the competencies they have achieved. Pudi (2006:109) states that more training and evaluation time is devoted to working with individuals or with small groups.

### **3.3.7 Competency-based Education and ABET**

The intention of the researcher to include this section was to link the competency-based education and ABET because it is argued that education system should concentrate on developing adult learner`s/people`s competencies, their skills, knowledge and values to enable them to move across jobs from one sector of the economy to another. As such, curricula for ABET should be redesigned along competency-based lines that allow recognition of existing competencies (French, 2002:15).

Adult educators often suggest that competent performances should be associated with familiarizing oneself with putting acquired skills into practice (Chopra, 1993:8). Another aspect is reflected in Collin (1991:47) and Killen and Van Niekerk (2000:96) where education of adults is related to training of functional skills that are relevant to the learners` respective activities which entails the necessary competences to be learned. ABET combines learning areas with vocational-focused training component with a view to meet the adult learner`s need for basic education and income generation. Competence-based education is an integral part of adult basic education and training. A careful reflection on activities aspiring to improve performance will, according to Spady (1999:33) speed-up the determination of competency-based education in adult-basic education. In building curriculum for ABET, both knowledge and competencies that are critical for learners will be developed and applied. Competency-based education is more relevant to the everyday lives and perceived needs of the target group.

### **3.4 Competency-based education and Outcomes-based Education**

Competency-based education focus on the achievement of specific competencies, whereas outcomes-based education focus on three aspects namely, intergration of knowledge, skills and attitudes/values (Anderson, 2005:107 and Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:4). There exists confusion in the usage of the terms “competency” and “outcomes-based education” because the two terms do have much in common. Most international writers use the term “competency” to refer to performance in context of preparing the workforce for the competitive global economy (Kerka, 2002:1). Harvey et al. (1996:83) make reference to the use of “competency” as a tool to redefine the framework of all education to encompass the development of work skills which combine theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Competency-based education focuses on the achievement of specific competencies (often only skills in isolation), whereas outcomes-based education focuses on knowledge, skills and attitudes.

### **3.5 The issues of outcomes - some general principles of Outcomes-based Education in South Africa**

Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:1) define the terms “outcomes-based education” as “an approach which requires teachers and learners to focus their attention on the desired end results of each learning process”. These desired end results are to as the outcomes of learning, and learners need to demonstrate that they have attained these outcomes. They will therefore continuously be assessed continuously in order to ascertain whether they are making progress.

Spady (1993:ii) and Willenberg (2005:165), maintains that “outcomes-based education means focusing and organising a school’s entire programs and instructional efforts around the clearly defined outcomes we want all students to demonstrate when they leave school”. He states further that “outcomes-based education is not a program, a package, a technique, a fad, a quick-fix, a panacea, a miracle or an event. Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:48), on the other hand, define “outcomes” as “the result of learning processes and refer to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values”.



The following three different types of outcomes are identified in this regard - critical, learning and specific outcomes. Critical (essential) outcomes are general outcomes designed and approved by SAQA and apply to all learners or stated differently “broad statement of intent and of learning activity that will lead to the achievement of those results” (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:50).

The following critical outcomes may be successfully embedded within unit standards (Pahad, 1997; Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009 and Combrink, 2003:54).

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that decision, using critical and creative thinking, has been made.
- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community.
- Organise and manage oneself and one’s activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentations.
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, at the same time demonstrating responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

According to (Pahad, 1997:33), many of the critical or essential outcomes involve the way in which people approach a task, and their attitudes and values in relation to the environment. They also provide the skills needed in every learning area, for instance, the ability to solve problems, make decisions, and plan, organise and communicate effectively.

In South Africa critical outcomes has constituted the basis of the design for learning programmes and assessment thereof should ensure that learning experience is broad, relevant, meaningful and integrated. The focus is therefore on competence as well as on content.

Learning area outcomes is a more holistic approach endorsed by OBE and is an approach in which the integration of learning content is emphasised. Every learning area has its own broad outcomes (general skills, abilities and values) and a learner will be expected to demonstrate these broad outcomes in each specific learning area (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:48) and Olivier (1998:17). The following are the eight learning areas:

- Communication, literacy and language learning
- Numeracy and mathematics
- Human and social sciences
- Physical and natural sciences
- Technology
- Arts and culture
- Economics and management sciences
- Life orientation, personal and social development (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:48 and Olivier, 1998:15).

According to Vivian (2004:19), specific outcomes refer to “the specific knowledge, attitudes and understanding which should be displayed in a particular context” and these should function at the level of a classroom. The teacher thus needs to possess the following qualities in order to bring about the successful implementation of OBE:

- Knowledge and skills in the learning area as a whole.
- The ability to prioritise what is important and what is less important.
- Be able to consider the level of difficulty of the outcome.
- Know how to assess the elements of a learner’s achievement in the most effective way.

SAQA, with its NQF, sets the education and training system of our country on the road to outcomes-based education. As opposed to a content-based approach in which the educator plays the central role, an outcomes-based approach centres on the learner. The outcomes-based approach describes the form of behaviour which a learner must

display before credits may be allocated for the mastering of a particular skill or ability (Guide for Christian teachers, 1998: x and Van Den Berg and de Boer, 2000:107).

The National Qualification Framework has its origins in the proposal of the Congress of South African Teachers Union in the 1990s for career pathways for workers. In the form in which it has been adopted in South Africa OBE has been associated with learner centeredness', and the belief that everyone is capable of succeeding- this tied in with the emphasis on democratic participation and access (Young, 2001:33; Spady, 1994:20 and Coetzer, 2001:75).

Curriculum 2005 as OBE was implemented in schools as a new framework seeking to change the traditional approaches to teaching. The entire education system had to be reorganised with the shift of emphasis from teacher to learner.

The general shifts envisaged through the new curriculum were:

- From content-based to outcomes-based education
- From passive to active learning
- From examination-driven to ongoing assessment
- From rote learning to critical thinking, reasoning, reflection and action (Young, 2001:24).

The shift is in essence a shift away from the divided, fragmented and content-heavy, subject-based system inherited from the past to the learner-centred OBE model outlined in Curriculum 2005. The OBE model of has been adopted because it is new and it represents a break with traditional curricula, which are content-based (Young, 2001:33).

In accordance with Curriculum 2005 traditional school subjects were replaced by eight learning areas within which occupational and disciplinary knowledge is integrated.

Learning is relevant to real life situations and to the experience of the learner. The main focus is on the application of knowledge built on skills and knowledge already

acquired. Loubser (1999:2) states that cross-curricular integration of knowledge and skills to prepare learners for real life plays an important role in this regard.

Coetzer (2001:75-75) and Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:20-21) compare the differences between the old and new approaches to education as follows;

<b>Traditional education approach</b>	<b>New education approach</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus was content-based and broken down in subjects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of knowledge; learning is relevant and connected to real life situations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook/worksheet-bound and teacher centred</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner-centered; teacher is facilitator and constantly uses group and teamwork to consolidate the new approach</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus was seen as rigid and non-negotiable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning programmes are seen as guide that allow teachers to be innovative and creative</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are responsible for learning; motivation depends on teacher`s personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners take responsibility for their learning and are motivated by constant feedback and affirmation of of their self worth.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis was on what the teacher hopes to achieve</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis is on outcomes-what the learner becomes and understands.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content was placed in rigid timeframes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible time-frames allow learner to work at their own time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum development process was not open to public comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment and input from the wider community is encouraged</li> </ul>

(Coetzer, 2001:75-75; Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009: 20-21)

### 3.5.1 Characteristics of Outcomes-based Education

The learning outcomes of OBE are future oriented, teaching is learner-centred, and the major focus is on knowledge, skills and attitudes/values. This results in high expectations on the part of all learners which in turn serve as a base for further instructional decision making.

The learner is encouraged to achieve the outcomes and is actively involved in the learning process. According to Rademeyer (2003:11); Spady (1994: 21) and Olivier (1998:17), OBE is characterised by the following:

- It is a process-driven reliable assessment tool of learning.
- Learners master learning/competence in their own time.
- There are no correct or wrong answers, but answers may be interpreted differently.
- Over a period of ten years or more learners are exposed to competencies which play a meaningful role in their lives/contexts.
- Tests and examinations still play an important role in measuring what learners understand, but portfolios serve as showpieces of what he/she is able to do.
- Educators are expected to be creative and to make use of available resources.
- Group work is encouraged.
- Educators are expected to help learners achieve the expected outcomes. The methods used by the educator to help the learner achieve the outcomes depend entirely on the creativity of the educator.

Reddy (2004:31) and Baatjes (2004:14) mentions the following as characteristics of OBE:

- It creates more flexible delivery systems so that students of different ages are able to learn cooperatively.

- It replaces averaging systems and comparative grading with the concept of culminating achievement.
- It avoids a process whereby success requires that a given amount of time be spent attending a particular class.
- It equips educators to focus more on the learning capabilities of learners and less on covering a given amount of work.

### **3.5.2 Instructional methods as applied to Outcomes-based Education**

OBE uses the following two instruction methods/teaching strategies - the inductive and deductive approaches, although the inductive approach is often suggested as being the more suitable (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:124; Olivier, 1998:58 and Killen: 2004:70). The deductive approach which was founded by Aristotle is based on the principle of a prior logic which is generalised from general law to a particular case or from a case which is already known and understood to the effect thereof. The educator using this method begins with a general statement or principle and goes on to apply this general statement or principle to particular instances. The active participation of learners is confined to the application of the given statement.

On the other hand, the inductive approach should rather be used in those lessons where learners are required to make decisions for them. Curriculum 2005 emphasises the discovery in learning and this equated with the inductive strategy (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:127).

Co-operative learning as a teaching strategy is also encouraged. In co-operative learning learners work together in a group small enough so that each member of the group is able to participate in performing a clearly defined, collective task without direct immediate supervision by the educator.

Problem solving also engages learners in seeking knowledge, processing information, and applying ideas to real-life situations. Furthermore the educator is able to play an important role by using a variety of methods of instruction in order to help each learner to learn; no matter what each individual learner's most effective learning style might

be (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2004:146). Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:122) and Coetzer (2001:74), outline nine distinct instructional activities which the teacher may use to help learners attain the learning outcomes:

Learners are stimulated in order to gain attention as no teaching can be effective if the learner is not receptive and attentive in class. According to Harvey et al. (1992:62) and Coetzer (2001:75), learners should be informed of the outcomes of instruction so that they develop appropriate expectations. Activities carried out during lessons could also serve as reminders for learners of relevant previously learnt material, thus it would be expected of educators to present material clearly and distinctly too. Furthermore, learners could be guided by explaining until the learner understands the contents of the learning programmes. At the end, the educator could ask the learner to show that he/she is capable of using the new content by providing feedback about learning through assessing the learner's performance.

### **3.5.3 Use of learning materials in OBE**

Learning materials are any appropriate resources needed for the lesson and could range from specialist equipment to simple textbooks, worksheets and study guides that usually accompany the verbal information (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:134). The educator, as the most important resource in an OBE class as applied to ABET also, should devote sufficient time and attention to the selection, creation and presentation of the materials and media to ensure the success of a lesson. The use of inadequate and inappropriate resources will lead to the failure of the lesson. Furthermore, the educator has the freedom to select the most appropriate resources for his/her particular environment.

Selected resources should be readable, interesting and suitable for the class and be linked to the intended learning outcomes and content set out in the plan. To summarise, the materials and media to be used (also applicable to ABET) should be:

- accurate
- well laid out and readable

- interesting and varied
- linked to the contents, objectives and intended learning outcomes of the lesson
- used constructively (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:161).

#### **3.5.4 Assessment in OBE**

OBE is based on the achievement of outcomes and, as such, it consists of very clear outcomes, which are to be attained by the learners through assessment. Assessment in OBE comprises the methods used to gather information in order to prove whether the outcomes have been achieved satisfactorily. If the learner does not meet the criteria for attaining the requisite standard, he/she may apply for reassessment.

Assessment methods may include methods such as practical exercises, written tests, and oral tests and, where applicable, portfolios, peer assessment, interviews, reports and so on (Department of Education, 2003:58). The principle of assessment is to ensure that outcomes have been attained and should not disadvantage particular candidates. Furthermore assessment should happen on a continuous basis all year round.

The following are possible assessment criteria which are also applicable to ABET:

- The learners are assessed during lessons programme time, and at particular times when a lesson or programme has been completed.
- The learner's progress is based on his demonstrated achievement, which involves focusing on the learner's ability to use and apply acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Each learner's needs are catered for by means of a variety of assessment tools. Continuous assessment is thus used to provide information for further instructional decisions. Each learner is given sufficient time and assistance to fulfil his/her potential (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:14).

The following includes others forms of assessment used in OBE:



Diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, observation-based assessment, performance assessment and self-assessment (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2009:163 and Janse van Rensburg, 1999:29).

### **3.5.5 Disadvantages of OBE**

OBE consists of complex systems of curriculum tools. It is possible that educators will feel overwhelmed by the new tools and, as a result, over-specifying the requirements or learners in the form of tasks so that learners become task-oriented rather than syllabus-oriented, and the curriculum becomes no more learner-centred than the curriculum which it is replacing.

Critical outcomes remain generic and lack sufficient content specification to guarantee the learning that they seek to emphasise.

OBE is also extremely difficult for poorly resourced schools with under-qualified educators to deliver. Learners are always checked for providing assignments for each outcome but with no indication of how well the student has done (Young, 2001: 35).

For many educators the implementation of the new curriculum appears to be a difficult task and this may according to Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:244), result in resistance to change because a lack of planning and understanding of what OBE entails.

Rademeyer (2003:13) mentions the following disadvantages of OBE:

Learners lack background knowledge in subjects such as mathematics, technical subjects and computer science and those educators are very negative about OBE and are not able to utilise group work. Creativity in the development of study materials and many educators lack such capabilities.

### **3.5.6 Advantages of OBE**

In OBE teachers are forced to plan and prepare with a clear instructional purpose in mind. The learning outcomes guide the educator's content selection and strategic

planning. Learners know what is expected of them and measure their own achievements, thus enabling the learners to feel they are in control of their own learning. Schools are able to monitor the learner's progress accurately as suggested by Van der Horst and McDonald (2009:14-15), in terms of specific learning attainments. Permanent failure is eliminated. Rote learning is reduced and this makes the understanding of content more important than merely being able to reproduce the knowledge.

Rademeyer (2003:13) mentions the following advantages of OBE:

- Educators learn to function practically in doing things.
- Learners are able to produce what they have learned in the form of portfolios.
- Learners are able to mark other learners' work, and this encourages competition and participation.

### **3.5.7 Outcomes-based Education and ABET**

According to Shorten (2007:100), ABET forms part of the education and training system within the general education and training band of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). ABET was introduced into NQF in 2000 and consist of a variety of outcomes-based educational programmes that specifically target adult learners. Furthermore, Loubser (2006:25) on the other hand makes mention of the fact that, ABET consist of three sub-levels (ABET 1-3) with the fourth level set at NQF level 1 (see 2.2.8). ABET level 4 is equivalent to nine years of schooling and lead to the first qualification in the NQF (Mothata 1999:19).

As outcomes-based education is a process that focuses on what is to be learned as stated in Pretorius (1999:20), then the outcomes becomes a demonstrated learning. According to Loubser (2006:26) and Shorten (2007:101), ABET comprise outcomes that learners are supposed to know at the completion of their studies. Outcomes-based education is based on involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, parents, educators, learners etc., in determining the required outcomes. OBE which is also central to ABET, is focused on the future and can address the changing needs of the communities

to strive for excellence through planning. Identified critical outcomes and specific outcomes for ABET are identified in chapter eight of this study. (See par. 8.7.1 in this regard).

### 3.5.8 Myths/facts about OBE

Blank (1982:16) defines myths as “misconceptions and preconceived ideas about something”.

Rademeyer (2003:13) tabulates the differences between myths and facts of OBE as follows:

<b>Myths</b>	<b>Facts</b>
OBE cannot be applied in South Africa.	OBE is used worldwide
It promotes the present political ideology.	It is a teaching programme that encompasses education.
The learners are no longer taught how to memorise information.	Basic knowledge and competence are still important.
Parents play a decisive role in the child’s education.	Parents are not supposed to perform the task for their children but should support them.
Knowledge is necessary for the success of the programme.	The educators need appropriate training.
Learners who are taught through OBE know nothing.	Learners are expected to develop into critical thinkers so as to be able to make decisions on their own and to be able to solve their own problems.
OBE is going to fail.	OBE is a worldwide trend.
OBE has affected the general discipline at school.	Learners are expected to learn how to take responsibility for their own learning.

Competency-based approach is widely prescribed in ABET in South Africa as it allows the use of flexible curriculum development whose basis is a modular and outcomes-based approach which allows the learner to demonstrate through assessment, what they have achieved in respect of required standard at a particular level. In literacy materials, there occurs usage of exact definition of important generic competencies. As information is important in the development of learning programmes, an introductory inquiry into the information needs and curriculum design follows below.

### **3.6 Introduction into the information that can assist with the curriculum design of suitable literacy programmes**

Information needs assessment and programme design plays an important role in adult education because educators can be able to specify measurable outcomes when designing curriculum. Collins (1991:59) argues that information needs should not be overlooked in adult education literacy and community development as information is considerably significant to the task of engaging everyday living experience of the societies.

#### **3.6.1 Curriculum and instructional design**

##### **3.6.1.1 Introduction**

Curriculum and instruction refers to one of the largest and most diverse set of activities within the field of education (Connelly, Fang He, Phillion and Schein, 2008: ix). Curriculum process is, according to Glatthorn, Boschee and Whitehead (2006:93), Lovat and Smith (2000:2) and Dodge, Rudick and Berke (2006:21), a holistic process and includes the phases of planning, development, implementation and education and must take into account the development level of the child (Carl 2009:66; Connelly, Fang He and Phillion, 2008). On the other hand, instructional design is according to Glatthorn et al. (2006:93) and Reigeluth (1983:7), a “systematic development of instructional specification using learning and instructional theory to ensure quality of instruction”. The centralisation of curriculum design for ABET necessitated a core curriculum for adult learners. The government prescribed what should be taught and

how it should be taught. According to Moodly (1997:99) the curriculum favoured the requirements of a minority group, neglecting to develop the larger sector of South African society. The new education and training system for ABET is based on an Outcomes-based education and Training Curriculum Framework that will equip learners with the knowledge, attitude, skills and critical capacity to participate fully in all aspects of society.

### **3.6.1.2 Curriculum design defined**

The term “curriculum” means different things to different people. A number of definitions has been cited in Smith (2000:9) as “curriculum which should consist entirely of knowledge from the discipline”, “curriculum as experiences all learners has under the guidance of the school”, curriculum as intentions which comprises a progressive plan of areas of learning for an individual and group, incorporating a set of objectives, learning experience and outcomes”.

It is problematic to define the term “curriculum” because the term is used in many different ways but the definition can be narrowed to use as in Zais (2001:5); Collins (1991:66) and Hoadley and Jansen (2002:25), who attempt the definition of the term “curriculum” as the plan for teaching and learning activities as well as content that will be taught and it includes the following aspect:

- The list of content and concepts to be learned
- The organizing and sequencing of learning
- Ideas are provided about how learners should learn and teachers should teach.

Curriculum design can according to Tanner and Tanner (2007:102), Ornstein and Hunkins (1998:199) and Glatthorn et al. (2006:145), be classified as modification and/or combinations of the three basic categories namely subject centred design, learner centred design and problem centred design.

### 3.6.1.3 Theories of curriculum and instructional designs

There are various approaches to the process of curriculum design, amongst others, academic approach, experiential approach, technological approach and pragmatic approach which can be summarized as follows in a table below:

**Table 3.1: Approaches to curriculum design**

<b>Academic approaches</b>	<b>Experiential approaches</b>	<b>Technological approaches</b>	<b>Humanistic approaches</b>
This type of approach follows a systematic process guided by academic rationality and theoretical logic in educational decision making (Carl 2009:50)	Lays emphasis on teachers and learners and their co-operative decision on the curriculum.	Regards curriculum in terms of systems, management and production.	This type of approach follows instructional lessons based on life experiences, group games, group projects etc. These activities include creative problem solving and active student participation which emphasizes socialization and life adjustment of learners (Ornstein and Hunkins 2009:8)

Source Glatthorn et al. (2006:96)

In developing curriculum for ABET, experiential and humanistic approaches will be suggested as the best possible options as these approaches see curriculum development

as a process which put emphasis on teachers and learners and their co-operative decision-making on the curriculum issues as well as instructional lessons which are based on life experiences of learners. Furthermore, these approaches will foster inclusion of creative problem solving and active student participation which will contribute to socialization and positive life adjustment of learners (Rothwell, 2008:15)

#### **3.6.1.4 Criteria for curriculum design**

To ensure that learning process takes place effectively, the curriculum must comply with the so-called level of proximity, repetition, reinforcement and preconditioning. The curriculum development process begins with an extensive needs analysis during which the research attempts to uncover themes of interest to the learners, through questionnaires. The themes identified will form the basis for curriculum (Bock, 2000:38). Carl (2009:68) goes on further to give some general guidelines which will serve as criteria for the curriculum as follows:

- “The interdisciplinary nature of curriculum design must be acknowledged
- There must be a child-directedness, which takes the child’s level of development into account
- Planning must be purposeful
- Method must be an important characteristic of the design
- There must be relevance in regard to practice orientation and needs
- Comprehensiveness must be a characteristic of the design
- Didactic demand must be taken into account
- The demands of subject sciences must be taken into account
- Note must be taken of educational administrative demands
- The demands and needs of the broad community must be considered
- Effective evaluation must be an inseparable part of curriculum design
- There should be a balance in regard to the attention received by the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, with a view to contributing to the development of the child’s full potential”.

Thus, curriculum design requires thorough planning and knowledge of curriculum models, decision-making, relevant criteria, the subject and the child (Carl, 2009:70). Glatthorn et al. (2006:280) on the other hand, mention the following as the guiding principles for curriculum planning which are not mentioned above and would possibly play an important role in curriculum design for ABET as follows:

- Community involvement in planning and implementing the use of integrated curriculum as a high priority for schools
- Planning for effective teaching strategies which must receive attention
- Emphasis which should be laid at incorporating learning centres into classrooms
- Curriculum should use technology, but not to be driven by it
- Planning and implementation should include assessment and evaluation standard

### **3.6.1.5 Some basic steps for curriculum design**

Carl (2009:70) identifies inductive approach consisting of five steps that could be used for curriculum design as follows:

Step 1: Design of experimental instructional-learning units for a particular subject/standard are:

- Determine the needs (see 1.6.2 and 3.7.2 where information needs are discussed)
- Formulate the objectives and goals
- Selection of contents
- Classification/organisation of content
- Selection of learning experience
- Classification of learning experiences
- Evaluation
- Control for balance and sequence

Step 2: Testing of experimental instructional-learning units

Step 3: Review and consolidation



Step 4: Development of a frame of reference

Step 5: Establishment and dissemination of units

A more deductive approach would then according to Carl (2009:71) include the following steps which include instructional-learning in addition to the ones that have been mentioned above as follows:

- Specify needs of society and community
- Specify instructional goals and instructional strategies
- Evaluate curriculum and instruction and make adjustment (See 3.7 in this regard)

Steps or phases with their corresponding actions of curriculum designs also have different interpretations due to different propositions and models ranging from international to national accepted opinions as reflected in Carl (2009: 53), and can best be summarised as follows:

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Action</b>
1. Initiation	Introductory investigation is launched.
2. Planning	Situation analysis which include formulation of goals, determination of goals and planning of design.
3. Development	Selection and classification of learning content.
4. Testing	Instructional design, evaluation and review of learning content.
5. Implementation	Dissemination of learning content.
6. Evaluation	Final evaluation of the programme.

### **3.6.1.6 Steps involved in instructional designs**

Instructional design is an important part of planning, implementation and evaluation of curriculum (Null, 2008:478) (See also 3.7 in this regard). According to Glatthorn, Boschee and Whitehead (2006:93), “instructional design” which is a systematic development of instructional specification using learning and instructional theory to ensure quality of instruction uses the following process:

- a) Designing of needs: the process involves the analysing of learning needs and goals



- b) Development: developing of delivery systems to meet the activities
- c) Implementation: delivering the planned subject matter
- d) Management: Keeping a balance between relationship with other sub-disciplines
- e) Evaluation: Trying out and evaluation of all instructions and learners activities.

Approaches to curriculum development can, according to Carl (2009:58); Ornstein and Hunkins (1998:240) and Zais (2001:5) begin with the empirical analysis of the needs whereby the teacher will identify the needs of the students for whom the curriculum is to be planned and formulation of the objectives will follow based on the identified needs. The objectives selected suggest the subject matter or content of the curriculum and should always match, followed by determining the validity and significance of the chosen content. The selected content should be organised and thereafter be presented to the learners using the relevant instructional activities and evaluation methods should be implemented. Needs assessment is according to Carl (2009:60) the point of departure because as soon as the needs are identified, they are then concerted into measurable, observable objectives.

Carl (2009:93), suggest that curriculum must reflect needs of the community because the school does not exist in a vacuum and may inter alia be regarded as an agent for the community. It should therefore be linked to the expectation of the community. In addition, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs which include amongst other aspects such as the need for food, safety, love and self actualization as reflected in Ornstein and Hunkins (1998:125) as needs that have implications for teaching and learning. If such basic needs are not met, proper learning will not take place.

Smith and Ragan (1999:32) attach another definition of needs assessment as process of investigations, examining potential users/learners, the environment and the perceived need for the institution whereupon instructional needs will be based on the requirements which are from societies (see also 3.7 in this regard). Most important, needs of the communities plays a role in the learners' individuality as it shapes the learning experience and thus correlates with the aim of this study (see chapter one in this regard). The contents of the literacy programmes designed for the identified

communities will rely on the identified information needs derived from the responses from the questionnaires (see chapter five and seven in this regard).

According to my point of view, needs assessment plays an important role within the scope of this study as needs assessment will help the researcher to determine whether there is a need for new instructional materials to be developed.

### **3.6.1.7 Selection of content**

Selection of content involves according to Caffarella (2002:172), choosing what will be learned during a learning activity. Steps for selecting learning content are identified as follows (Caffarella, 2002:173; Farquharson, 1995:31 and Carl, 2009:71):

- a) Select the learning objectives and content that is interesting and relevant that supplements the essential materials
- b) Sequencing the content that should flow from general to specific or vice versa, or content that could emanate from abstract to concrete. Furthermore, the ordering of content could depend either on the participants' knowledge and experiences, the required level of achievement and learning styles of those involved.

Fraser, Louser and Van Rooy (1992:119) identified a number of criteria which could be used to select learning content for instructional purposes as follows:

- **Applicability:** Content should be applicable to the needs and interest of learners
- **Validity and significance:** Content selected should be relevant to the learners
- **Learnability:** Select content that should coincide with the learners intellectual ability and level of development
- **Durability:** The content which involves the changing and adapting subject curricula on a regular basis so as to make provision for change
- **Viability:** Content selected should play a major role in moulding and developing a learner.

### 3.6.1.8 Ordering of subject content

The necessity of ordering of learning content is to emphasise and facilitate instruction and learning. Fraser, Loubser and Van Rooy (1992:123) identified a variety of principles or ordering of learning content as follows:

- a) Chronological ordering which involves ordering of facts in time and sequence
- b) Spiral or concentric ordering whereby the same theme or component is repeated in different years, but at different levels of complexity
- c) Logical or conventional ordering which involves the ordering arrangement of subject content in such a way that the content starts with first component of a particular series and ends with the last component that follows the first in logical sequence
- d) Divergent ordering whereby theme is extended in different directions to deal with the topic as a whole
- e) Linear ordering which involves the arrangement and teaching of the content in the same sequence that leads to the beginning of the next occurrence
- f) Heuristic ordering whereby the learner must be able to discover the truth by means of logical arguments.

### 3.6.2 Information and development

It is difficult to define or to arrive at a single definition of the term “information” as the basic nature of information is used in a variety of contexts (Wilson, 1981:3; Prasad, 1991:1). Information is defined by Kaniki (1999:191) as “ideas, facts, and imaginative works of the mind and data of value potentially useful in decision-making, question answering, problem-solving”. Alperstein (2007:64) and Prasad (1991:1), on the other hand regards information as one of several basic resources needed and utilised by human beings in their development, and their power and prosperity, and therefore arrived at the following possible definition of information - “recorded or communicated knowledge gained by man through experience, observations and experiments”. Boon (1992a:228) and Wilson (1981:3) define information as “any

input that can be processed intellectually or cognitively for the development of meaning”.

As with the concept “information”, it is not possible to arrive at a generally acceptable definition of the concept “development” because it is possible to define the term from different perspectives, for example an academic perspective, a political perspective, an ideological perspective and a personal perspective. Boon (1992a:64) attempts to define development as “a process, a condition or the combination of the two or can be seen as synonymous with transformation” and this definition will be accepted in this thesis. Transformation in this regard must revolve around individuals and communities so that they may be empowered to make their own decisions, thereby giving full vent to their possibilities.

People who are in the process of development cannot develop without information. The information provided to them should be read and understood correctly. By reading and understanding the information people will then be in a position to manage their financial assets, as they will be able to access welfare grants, loans, and pensions. These people will also be able to exercise some form of control in respect of their families and communities, thus enhancing participation. They will be able to understand the messages disseminated by radio and television. Their use of health and nutritional practices will be enhanced and this will be of benefit to their families (Scott-Goldman, 2001:12).

There is thus an urgent need to develop a systematic approach to information and communication so that the needs of the people and their quality of life can play a central role in the of development plan (Du Toit, 1997:610).

### **3.6.3 An explanation of the role of information in the empowerment of people**

The term “empowerment” is often used in a developmental context. According to Deepa (2002:16), empowerment is “an expansion of the assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, control and hold accountable the institutions

that affect their lives”. Empowerment has to do with power (Cook, 1997:286). If people are empowered they will be able to do the following:

- have access to basic services
- be in a position to improve local and national governance
- be able to access financial and security services (Deepa, 2002:19).

In order for people to be empowered they need to have relevant information at their disposal and be able to use this information effectively to improve their lives. As relevant information is a vital tool for sustainable development (Akhtar and Melese, 1994:314) people can be empowered only if:

- information is accessible to everyone
- people are included in participation
- feedback is provided for the developing people
- the networking capacity of poorer people’s organisation is enabled thus improving investment for them (Deepa, 2002:25)
- the government develops effective policies and plans that can be understood and used by the people concerned (Akhtar and Melesse, 1994:32).

If information is to be employed effectively in order to empower people then this information needs to be interpreted and evaluated by those for whose help it has been designed. The information used should address the issues that affect the relevant individual’s lives (Debate and Development, 1998:2).

According to Boon (1992a:69) information can play the following roles in the empowerment of people:

- development cannot take place without a core infrastructure, which will comprise staff and informed people because people and organizations constitute the core of development. A poor information infrastructure and underdeveloped information sectors often leads to the failure of development projects

- there should be sufficient data available, and this data should be organized in a meaningful way. The data should be processed in order to provide information for a variety of information services and products according to the development milieu
- the availability and ability to handle and use information will lead to the ability to generate welfare
- libraries should provide information to everyone, even those who have not had the privilege of higher education. In this way libraries will be making a contribution to the development of literacy.

### **3.6.4 The role of literacy in empowerment**

As with information, literacy also plays an important role in the empowerment of people. According to Blake (2002:11) and Collins (1991:94), literacy is “a continuum of skills, including both reading and writing”. This means procedural knowledge that is being able to do something in a social setting, the ability of an individual to make sense of the material printed in most newspapers. Cross and Beddie (2004:5) define literacy as “an ability to inquire about the world, to access information, to share ideas and to speak up”. According to Scott-Goldman (2001:11), literacy falls under human capital, which is a key tool in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to pursue different livelihood strategies, i.e. management of diseases, and health and family planning.

Literacy gives people power and access to the knowledge and skills which an active citizen needs in the modern world (Aitchison, 1999:143).

Literacy also has a key role to play in empowerment. According to Cook (1997:288) and Baantjies (2003:182), literacy may play the following roles in empowerment:

- Literacy is crucial for the empowerment of people because it increases their ability to act effectively in meeting the challenges they face in life.
- Through literacy people are enabled to invest in the development of the economy.



- In political terms, literacy empowers people to be prepared for adult participation in the political processes as citizens in a democratic country.
- Literacy enables people to lead fuller and richer lives.

On a more practical level, Learning to Read in South Africa (2000:1) identifies the following roles played by literacy in empowerment:

- Older people will be able to calculate their pension money and also count their change after making purchases. This will help them to avoid being cheated.
- Their literacy skills will enable them to help their children with their homework and consequently they will enjoy increased respect from the children in the house.
- Skills acquired through literacy will help the people in their daily lives, that is:
  - in church and community meetings
  - when shopping
  - at health clinics
  - when cooking
  - when withdrawing money at ATMs.
- People will be in a better position to access their rights, for example the right to education, social grants, health matters, a place to stay, and to access information.
- People will be able to write letters to their community leaders voicing their concerns.
- They will be able to contact health authorities expressing their concern about the treatment that they receive.

Darkenwald (1982:130) and Rothwell (2008:5), list the following reasons why/how literacy plays a role. Through literacy people are able to do the following:

- To be better informed
- To be able to achieve their personal goals, for instance, they are able to apply and obtain new and, probably, better jobs.





- To be able to achieve their community goals. This makes them better citizens who understand the problems of their community, for instance being aware of which places to go to, and who are the relevant people to contact in connection with their needs/problems
- To be able to attain their religious goals through serving a the church
- are able to meet educational standards thereby satisfying their employer and for themselves, achieve a higher lifestyle.

Empowerment has to do with the power that operates at various levels, that is, within a person, between people, and within and between groups (Cook, 1997:286). Through literacy people may be empowered so that they are more able to direct their own lives and more likely to succeed in whatever they attempt. When people learn a skill, for example how to use an automatic teller machine (ATM) to withdraw money, and are able to use the skill they learned to access information, their participation in financial matters is heightened (Cook, 1997:294).

### **3.6.5 A participatory approach to empowering people via literacy**

Participation in general terms has to do with people having a say in what is happening in their lives. There has been a range of interpretations of the meaning of the term “participation” as is illustrated by the following discussed in Learning to read in South Africa: Empowering older people through Literacy in South Africa (2000:12) and Maepa (2000:16);

- Participation is concerned with the organised efforts to increase control over resources in a given social situations on the part of groups excluded from such control.
- Community participation is an active process by which beneficiaries or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project to enhance their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self reliance, and/or other values they cherish.

- Participation may be seen as a process of empowering the deprived and excluded based on the recognition of differences in political and economic power among different social groups and classes.
- Participation includes the involvement of people in a decision-making process.
- Participation is a process whereby stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them.

When applying these general principles of participation to literacy it is assumed that learners will be involved in the creation of their own learning material that is they should become participants in designing the content of the learning material (Wedepohl, 1988:10).

Soifer, Irwin, Crumirine, Honzaki, Simmons and Young (1990:x), contend that building a programme based on the learners' home language, and also on the learners' background, interests and needs is an effective way to respond to the challenges of adult literacy programmes. This idea is also supported by Lord (1994:7), who argues that the more closely a programme is tied to the information needs of the community it is designed to reach, the better the programme serves the community, and the better its chances of survival.

### **3.7 Information needs**

#### **3.7.1 Introduction**

In order to empower people through education, the information needs of these people should be met (see also 3.6.1.6 in this regard). The identification of people's information needs is essential for designing information in general, and for providing effective information services in particular. The information needs identified will then be used to design the content of the literacy material for the particular community.

#### **3.7.2 Information needs defined**

The concept of "information needs" has proved to be a difficult concept to define, isolate and measure because researchers have used the term in a variety of ways, for

example as needs, demands and wants in an interchangeable manner, although they may not necessarily be identical (Rohde, 1986:52 and Vivian, 2004:19).

People in their daily lives need, from time to time to know about issues such as the availability, quality and cost of things, e.g. health and welfare services, education and training, consumer goods and services, etc. They may also need to access the practical information contained in public notices, directory information, for example telephone services, personal announcements, holiday accommodation, goods and services for sale, job vacancies and so on (Vickery and Vickery, 1992:17 and Reitsman and Mentz, 2009:17). In order for people to perform efficiently and effectively in a society, they need to be well-informed so that their information needs may be met.

An information need arises when a person recognises a gap in his/her state of knowledge and seeks information to bridge that gap (Derr, 1983:273; Hewins, 1990:165; Nicholas and 1996:7) or, in other words “the information that individuals ought to have to do their jobs effectively, solve a problem satisfactorily or pursue a hobby or interest happily” (Nicholas 1996:3). Prasad (1982:34) defines “information needs” as “a condition in which certain information contributes to the achievement of a genuine or legitimate information purpose”. Rohde (1986:53), on the other hand, defines an information need as “a subjective, relative concept existing only in the mind of the experiencing individual which prevents him/her from making progress in a difficult situation”.

According to Prasad (1992:36) it is possible to divide information needs into the following categories required as part of the ABET programme:

- Social information needs: These needs refer to the information which is required to cope with the day to day life, thus implying that such information should form part of the literacy programmes.
- Recreation information needs: These needs refer to the information needed to satisfy the recreational and cultural interests of an individual, which in turn plays an important role in keeping children busy and minimises the chances of their being involved in alcohol and/or drug abuse.

- Professional information needs: These needs refer to the information required for competent functioning within a business or professional environment, and thus information forms the core in the establishment of ABET programmes.
- Educational information needs: These needs refer to the information which is required to satisfy the academic requirements at an institution or with regard to different projects.

According to Nicholas (1996:13) the following comprise certain characteristics of information which may be applied within the scope of this study:

- Subject: Subject is the obvious and immediate characteristic of information needs. It entails the arrangement by subject of the information which will be used when planning the literacy programme.
- Function: Function is the use of the information identified. Each individual and each community puts information to work in different ways. The relevant community will be able to use the identified information needs to design a programme that will suit their needs.

Mention is made by Nicholas (1996:15) of the following functions as characteristic of the information needs that are relevant to this study:

- ✓ Fact-finding function  
These functions aim at providing answers to specific questions. These functions facilitate the identification of the needs of people.
- ✓ The current awareness function  
These functions keep the community identified and up to date with daily events through awareness programmes.
- ✓ The research function  
The research function drives the investigation into an identified field of study.
- ✓ The brief function  
These functions refer to the briefing of the communities identified about the background of the research undertaken.

My understanding of information needs as it is applied to this study implies the information needs of the identified communities which would refer to among others, information needed for daily activities that will impact on established beliefs of the communities. As such need analysis will help with the generation of factors that could influence the design of instruction of ABET programmes.

### **3.7.3 Information needs assessment**

A needs assessment is a component of citizen involvement. “Citizen participation in decision making is the essence of needs assessment” (Summers, 1987:3). A needs assessment is conducted in order to uncover the preferences of those who for some or other reason are unwilling or unable to speak up on their own (Kellerman, 1987: x). Sometimes this can create a problem as this is often precisely the population that is generally the least well-equipped to recognise and articulate what it lacks, even when questioned directly.

An information needs assessment should be undertaken prior to changing systems in order to provide users with what is needed. According to Nicholas (1996:2) an information needs assessment is crucial for an evaluation of the users and for running information systems such as libraries and on-line services.

Nicholas (1996:12) and Smith and Ragan (1999:35) identified the following as a framework for assessing information needs:

- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing information systems.
- Detecting gaps in information provision.
- Designing an on-going information support system for the individual.
- Introducing, evaluating and justifying the new information product.
- Insuring that interviews are conducted.
- Bringing the user and the information professional closer together.

For the purpose of this study, information needs assessment will communicate that which could be used as content to produce specific ABET materials (see also chapter one in this regard).

### **3.8 Summary**

From the preceding chapter an attempt was made to define the terms “content-based”, “competency-based” and “outcomes-based education practices”. Different definitions and description of the concepts of “content”, “competency” addressed in literacy programmes as presented by different writers were discussed. Reference was also made to the outcomes-based education policy instituted after 1994 and its influence on the adult basic education. In addition, mention was made of a participatory approach to empowering people via literacy. Furthermore an introduction was also made on the information needs and learning programme design.