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THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

AN ADULT AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

ON AN ISOLATED ISLAND

by

David Bermant
Student Number: 28706880

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Supervisor: Professor Juliet Perumal

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ABSTRACT

The island of Cascara[1] is a dependent overseas territory of a European metropole. Access to the island is currently only by sea though there are plans to construct an airport. To prepare the island for the economic-related activities that will arise from air access, an Adult and Vocational Education Strategy was developed. This Strategy paved the way for the establishment of the island's Adult and Vocational Education Service and informed the contents of the curriculum it provided. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges associated with implementing and sustaining the curriculum on this isolated island. In order to do this, the study examined the curriculum on offer; its current state of implementation and its associated challenges within the Adult and Vocational Education Service; it also investigated the extent to which the current curriculum met the needs of the island by aiding workforce development to support economic growth; and finally, it explored the challenges relating to the sustainability of the Adult and Vocational Education Service in providing a relevant vocational curriculum.

A qualitative research approach was adopted using case study methodology. The purposive research sample comprised stakeholders across the public and private sectors at various levels. Qualitative research elicitation instruments were employed to gather data. These included questionnaires, unstructured, semi-structured and focus group interviews. In addition to these instruments, various official documents were analysed and the island's local print and audio media were used to gather data.

The research findings indicated that there needs to be more integration of resources (human, physical and financial) in the provision of adult and vocational learning. The data also showed that the integration of available resources has the potential to aid in more sustainable and meaningful learning that will benefit both the individuals and the economy. The data further suggested that a collaborative approach should aid in stabilising and expanding the provision of

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[1] This is a pseudonym which is used to provide a level of 'veiled anonymity' to maintain confidentiality both on the island and abroad. This form of 'disguised observation' has been used to protect both the research participants and myself. The name was borrowed from the 1985 film 'Water', which is set on the fictional island colony of Cascara in the Caribbean. (The film was produced by Dick Clement and Ian le Frainais).

adult learning on the island. The need to improve the provision of distance learning opportunities with more internationally accredited courses being offered locally; the need for quality in the provision of learning to be formalised; and the need for the curriculum and staffing structures of the Adult and Vocational Education Service to be reconsidered were also highlighted. The research findings have already begun to serve as the basis for addressing the priorities of the Adult and Vocational Education Service on the island. By informing future learning policy and the contents of the curriculum on offer, the research findings could also potentially benefit the provision of adult and vocational education on other islands, small states and rural communities with limited human and financial resources.

KEYWORDS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father who died unexpectedly while this thesis was under examination.

Dad – I am so fortunate and proud to have had you as my father. Thank you for always encouraging me and for believing in me. Thank you for supporting me through – not only this PhD journey – but through the journey of life. Life with you was always interesting and exciting. You supported us in all of our ventures and you taught us to take risks and to chase our dreams. We all miss you more than words can say and the pain of your departure from us has been quite overwhelming. We hold you close to us in memory, thought and spirit. Your positive presence is sorely missed. I love you Dad.

This work is also dedicated to my wife Cindy and to my daughters, Hannah and Sarah – who have all sacrificed so much irreplaceable time with me.

Cindy, Hannah and Sarah – Thank you for all of your love, patience and support. I love you all so much.

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Cascarians – Thank you for the opportunity to conduct my research on your unique island. Thank you for trusting me enough to share your thoughts, ideas, successes and concerns with me. Thank you also for embracing and welcoming me and my family to your island, we are incredibly grateful for the warm sense of community that you have shared with us.

I would like to acknowledge my mother and my late father as well as my late grandparents who have all supported and encouraged me in so many different ways throughout my life. Their unstinting advice and support have been instrumental in bringing me to this point in my personal and professional life.

Thank you all – I am me because of all of you and I love you all for it.

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Finally, thank you to all of those who have supported and encouraged me on this journey. It was often those impromptu chats and words of wisdom that kept me going when the road looked at times intolerably difficult. Thank you many times over.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, David Bermant, student number 28706880, declare that:

1. I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of the University's policy in this regard.

2. I declare that this thesis titled: *The Challenges of Implementing and Sustaining an Adult and Vocational Education Curriculum on an Isolated Island* is my own work. Where the work of other people has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other), these have been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the departmental requirements.

3. I have not used previously produced work of another student or any other person to submit as my own.

4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own.

5. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

_____   _____

David Bermant   Professor Juliet Perumal
Student   Supervisor

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
AID	Agency for International Development*
AIG	Advice Information and Guidance
ANC	African National Congress
AO	Accreditations Officer
AVE	Adult and Vocational Education
AVEC	Adult and Vocational Education Centre
AVES	Adult and Vocational Education Service
C	Coloured (mixed race)
C & G	City and Guilds
CCC	Cascara Chamber of Commerce*
CCHS	Cascara Community High School*
CDB	Cascara Development Bureau*
CE	Continuing Education
CIE	Catholic Institute of Education
CITB	Construction Industries Training Board
CG	Cascara Government*
CLC	Community Learning Co-ordinator
CNT	Cascara National Trust*
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
CSkills	Construction Skills
CQF	Cascara* Qualifications Framework
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DHC	Deputy Head Curriculum
DfID	Department for International Development
E	English
ECDL	European Computer Drivers License
EDO	Executive Development Officer*
EDP	Education Development Programme*
EEO	Executive Education Officer*
EHRO	Executive Human Resources Officer
ELC	Education Learning Centre
ESP	Education Support Programme
ESSD	Employment and Social Security Department
EV	External Verifier
F	Female
FE	Further Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
H & S	Health and Safety
HR	Human Resources
IEB	Independent Examination Board
IPFSS	International Passenger and Freight Shipping Services*
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IOSH	International Online Health and Safety

IVQ	International Vocational Qualification
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Information Technology Co-ordinator
m	Million
M	Male
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MSD	Municipal Services Department*
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPTC	National Proficiency Tests Council
NTDL	Nelson Thornes Distance Learning
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OCA	Office of the Chief Administrator*
OU	Open University
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
QA	Quality Assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Co-ordinator (NVQ)
QCF	Qualifications Credit Framework
RES	Researcher
SA	South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
SMT	Senior Management Team
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
UIDT	Unit for International Development*[2]
UN	United Nations
US	United States
US$	United States Dollar
UK	United Kingdom
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VRQ	Vocationally Related Qualification
W	White
YT	Youth Trainee

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[2] * denotes the use of a pseudonym in the Acronyms and Abbreviations list.

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A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Before I proceed to the rationale and aims of my study, I provide a brief autobiography. This autobiography is presented so as to provide a trajectory of my personal and professional journey, while at the same time highlighting my interests and personal philosophies. To this end, my autobiographical journey and stance is presented in two sections: firstly, I provide an overview of my personal and professional journey; and secondly I make explicit my approach to knowledge acquisition.

i)   My Personal and Professional Journey

My autobiographical journey has for the most part, been an interesting, exciting and rewarding journey. I was born in Zimbabwe in 1969 and soon after moved to Zambia where I lived until I was seven years old. My family then moved to South Africa in 1976 and I grew up in greater Johannesburg where I completed my formal education.

After completing secondary school in 1986, I undertook an undergraduate teaching diploma at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Ever since graduating from teacher's training college in 1991, I have been involved in the Education sector. I initially taught in the primary and lower secondary school sectors, teaching the full range of subjects in these areas. In 1994 I completed a diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) through the Cape Town School of Languages. It was this certificate that gave me the opportunity to be appointed to a position in which I taught English to business people in Barcelona, Spain. On reflection, it was this rewarding experience that triggered my interest in adult learning.

I returned to formal teaching after my arrival back in South Africa and in 1999, I became involved with a non-governmental organisation (NGO) on a freelance basis. Working for this NGO, I developed numerous educational and teacher training materials and conducted workshops in South African townships, often over weekends and in rural provinces during school holidays. The literary levels

amongst the rural teaches with whom I worked began to both intrigue and perplex me.

It is well known, not unlike the situation in other developing countries, that many South Africans have low levels of literacy. These low levels of literacy are deemed to be a result of the apartheid era during which many people received very poor or no formal education at all.

Taking random census statistics, it can be seen that the South African National Department of Education estimated that 12 million adults in South Africa lacked a basic education (Department of Education, 2003: 63) and the census of October 2001 (Statistics South Africa 2003: 50) suggested that 34% of the South African population was functionally illiterate. Table 1 below summarises the findings of the 1996 and 2001census (in Aitchison & Harley, 2006: 9) and highlights the historical impact of education in South Africa, identifying race as the single most powerful variable in determining the educational levels of South African citizens *(ibid)*:

Race Group	Census Year	No school	Some/ Completed Primary	Some secondary	Grade 12	Higher
Black	1996	28.5%	25.3%	30.3%	14.8%	1.1%
	2001	24.2%	26.1%	33.3%	15.5%	0.8%
Coloured	1996	22.8%	31.4%	33.1%	11.2%	1.5%
	2001	10.1%	25.3%	39.0%	21.5%	4.1%
Asian	1996	8.8%	23.1%	27.8%	36.5%	3.8%
	2001	3.8%	19.6%	33.9%	37.8%	4.2%
White	1996	3.7%	13.9%	19.6%	41.1%	21.7%
	2001	1.4%	14.4%	21.3%	44.3%	30.1%

Table 1: *Level of education of South African population, Census1996 and 2001*

Against this backdrop and wanting to make a positive contribution, I applied for a position with a company that provided materials and services in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and in 2001 was appointed Project Manager. My responsibilities included overseeing the implementation and monitoring of ABET programmes through various Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs). The time spent in ABET affirmed my interest and commitment to adult and vocational education and learning. I increasingly found myself wanting to understand how and why adults learn. In my quest to gain a clearer

understanding of the dynamics of adult learning, I registered for a Masters Degree in Education through the University of the Witwatersrand in 2006 where I specialised in curriculum development. My thesis, *Why are some learners more successful than others in the completion of an ABET course – a case study at a publishing company*, explored the factors determining success rates amongst adult learners.

On completing those studies, I continued to work in adult education, sharing my time between the ABET company and the NGO. My work included e-learning approaches for adult learners; implementing learnerships and apprenticeships; developing and implementing foundational programmes in literacy, numeracy and life skills; training teachers in pedagogy and second language instruction; and exploring the relationship between the workforce, the economy and education and learning. Working across these two organisations, my responsibilities included both teaching adults and developing learning materials that would be used by adults. I also managed ABET and other development projects and programmes on behalf of international funders and also for the South African Department of Labour and the South African Department of Education.

In January 2007 I was appointed to the position of Adult and Vocational Education Adviser on Cascara Island. My duties required assisting in instituting sustainable and relevant learning programmes that would increase registrations and develop the economy of the island. After assuming these responsibilities, I became perplexed by the difficulties associated with the implementation of an adult and vocational education curriculum in the unique and isolated context that characterised Cascara. Wanting to come to grips with the difficulties and also possibly being able to offer solutions to a sustainable and relevant adult and vocational curriculum on Cascara, prompted me to register for a PhD in Education through the University of Pretoria in 2008.

ii)   My Approach to Knowledge Acquisition

Although my stance in relation to knowledge acquisition is eclectic, it is predominantly constructivist in nature. I believe that knowledge is created through our experiences and that by continually reflecting and acting on them, we assimilate these experiences and use them to make sense of the world. Piaget (1950) suggested that constructivism is a theory of epistemology based on humans generating knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Possibly contradictory to a constructivist view is also my belief that knowledge is often innate, or instinctive, and that we use our experiences together with our innate knowledge to create our understanding of the world in which we live. Although, I believe that knowledge is both innate and instinctive, I also see the process of knowledge creation as a fluid and non-static activity. I believe that just as our DNA creates certain structures in our bodies that perform specific functions, the physical responses of these structures are a form of physical knowledge. The responses can be mechanical, chemical, electrical, organic and genetic forms of memory and processing. Each type of knowledge is distinctive and builds onto responses from previous interactions and exposures. In engaging with our environment, our perceptions about the world are constantly being shaped and formed; how we construct knowledge through our *experiences* is largely informed by who we are: what talents and skills we are born with. While I believe that human beings have similar basic instinctive capabilities, I also believe that learning ability is (in most cases) correlated to capability at a certain age.

In my research, this constructivist view is supported by my approach to the study in my attempts to understand the *what*, *why* and *how* of implementing a sustainable and relevant curriculum on the island of Cascara. My research is a qualitative case study which through immersion in the context enabled me to construct my own understanding of the environment in which my research was conducted. In order to achieve my goals of deepening my understanding of the learning challenges facing the island, my family and I lived on Cascara Island for three years while I worked and collected data for this study. This experience was to affirm my premise that knowledge has also a *cultural* context which needed to be considered when formulating views or making assertions about learning on

the island. An observation and respect for cultural difference has been central to the way in which I approach my work – not only in this study but in all of the development work that I have done. Particularly in the context of my research on a remote island, I had to be mindful of the fact that I was an outsider from another part of the world and that the legitimacy of my research largely depended on my respect for the culture and context in which I found myself. I was also mindful that the level of trust that I developed with the research participants, the wider community and the stakeholder group would also impact on my study.

I always aim to be open-minded and sensitive to the context in which I am operating, observing respect and showing consideration for the customs and cultures contained within it. In this research, I acknowledge that a qualitative case study is in itself a celebration of subjectivity. I attempted at all times however, to handle the data gathered through the process as open-mindedly as possible. This required remaining sensitive and flexible to nuances and situations that may arise and call for a change in an approach or action. This supports my belief that you 'are' before you 'know': how we operate in the real world determines how we construct and use knowledge. I believe that an open-minded approach in which, where necessary, a degree of adaptability is exercised, can result in a meaningful study of how the real world can exist independently of the enquirer's mind.

As I consider myself a gregarious person, my pedagogical (or for the purposes of this study grounded in adult learning – andragogical) approach was participatory and consultative. Whilst the use of these two approaches may seem contradictory – a participative approach may include consultative exercises. My approach was participative in so much that by engaging stakeholders I was allowing them to inform the decisions that I reached and the recommendations that I made. I consulted with my research participants, in so much that I brought them together to share information and negotiate different ideas and ways forward. The aim of my consultations was to share ideas and to ultimately achieve better decision-making by relevant stakeholders.

I enjoy both verbal and written communication and subscribe to interactive engagement. My approach to data collection, as with most of my other work, has been 'hands-on' and I communicated openly with research participants throughout the process. I also believe that any teaching, training or participatory intervention needs to be meaningful and relevant to all concerned. Thus, my research sought to develop practical knowledge about how a sustainable and relevant adult and vocational education curriculum could be successfully implemented and delivered on the island of Cascara.

PREAMBLE

i)   Aims of the Study

The scope of a study of this nature is vast and for this reason it was imperative that clear parameters for the study be laid out at the outset. The Adult and Vocational Education Service (AVES) is a relatively young organisation within the Education Department on the island of Cascara. It was established through consultation with stakeholders across the public and private sectors to provide a vehicle for local skills development given the metropole's Agency for International Development's (AID) decision to construct an airport[3] on the island. The funding allocation and stakeholder consultation, led by the AID AVES Consultant, resulted in the development and subsequent approval of a Strategy that laid down the framework for the provision of adult, vocational and lifelong learning on the island. The Strategy outlined particular areas of curriculum focus and was supported further by an Operations Manual which was approved by the island's Education Committee following the adoption of the Strategy. The Operations Manual further provided impetus for the actual curriculum content and implementation within the Service. The curriculum on offer is fairly broad in content and encompasses a range of formal, informal, accredited and non-accredited learning – with a bias towards learning areas that will support activities associated with the air access project and its related economic activities. These include construction related activities, travel and tourism, automotive vehicle maintenance and customer care. (See Appendix 1 for the content of the AVES curriculum as it was at the time of my study).

In aiming to deliver this curriculum, and in its constant efforts to provide the island with relevant adult and vocational learning opportunities that could grow and develop the labour market, the AVES faced many challenges. Many of these challenges arose from the historical and socio-economic factors that brought Cascara to the point at which air access to the island is imminent. Such a

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[3] In June 2009, while I was undertaking my fieldwork, the AID announced a 'pause' in respect of the construction of an airport on the island. This decision was attributed to the world economic situation and the AID's need to reduce funding streams to dependent territories. However, in September 2010, the 'pause' decision was reverted and in December 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the government of the mother-country and the Cascarian Government. The MOU requires that the Cascarian Government achieve certain deliverables by April 2012. At the time of concluding this thesis in September 2011, the Cascarian Government was working towards fulfilling the requirements of the MOU.

pervasive change to the accessibility of the island would bring with it many deeply incisive changes that would dramatically impact on all spheres of life. I was interested in understanding what the challenges associated with these challenges might be. With this in mind, I posed my main research question:

What are the challenges of implementing and sustaining an adult and vocational education curriculum on an isolated island?

To assist me to answer my main research question, I framed the study with the following three main aims:

- to examine the current state of curriculum implementation and its associated challenges within the Adult and Vocational Education Service;
- to investigate how the current curriculum is satisfying the needs of the island by aiding workforce development to support economic growth on the island; and
- to explore the challenges relating to the sustainability of the Adult and Vocational Education Service in providing a relevant vocational curriculum.

These aims are explored in relation to the critical questions presented below.

ii) Critical Questions

The critical questions that follow have been clustered under categories so as to support the main aims of the study:

Questions about the current state of the implementation of the curriculum:

- Who are the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the curriculum and who are the beneficiaries of the learning opportunities?
- What are the central design and content features of the curriculum?
- Why have specific learning opportunities been included in – or excluded from the curriculum?

- How is the curriculum operationalised?

Questions about how the curriculum is satisfying the present and future needs of the island:

- Who are the curriculum stakeholders?
- What skills are currently important to the Cascarian workforce?
- Why are these skills important in meeting the changing economic needs of the island?
- How can/does the current implementation of the curriculum support the economic growth of Cascara Island?

Questions about the sustainability of the Adult and Vocational Education Service:

- Who are the stakeholders required to ensure the sustainability of the Adult and Vocational Service, and ultimately the implementation of the curriculum that it offers?
- What are the difficulties associated with sustaining the Adult and Vocational Education Service?
- Why is it important that the Adult and Vocational Education Service provides a relevant and sustainable curriculum?
- How can a relevant curriculum be sustained?

iii)   Rationale for conducting the study

The rationale for my study is presented from three different perspectives, these include:

- an overview of Adult and Vocational Education and the Cascarian context;
- my personal motivation for embarking on this study; and
- what I deem the significance of this study to be.

a) Adult and Vocational Education and the Cascarian Context

The overall concept of education encompasses teaching and the learning of specific skills, knowledge, values and attitudes. On a less tangible but more profound level, it is concerned with the exchange of knowledge, good judgement and wisdom (Rughooputh, 2008), which should ideally be centred on a dialogic process between two interested parties. Another fundamental goal of education is to maintain culture across generations (*ibid*) and for the purposes of this study, it is worth considering how in a small isolated context like Cascara, culture is also embodied in the work and vocational activities of the people of the island.

The Cascarian context is currently an interesting and volatile one: Cascara is a dependent overseas territory of a European metropole and lies a five day voyage away from the coast of Africa, its nearest landmass. Access is currently only by sea but there are plans to construct an airport on Cascara in the near future. The island's population has declined by a fifth in the last ten years to less than 4000 individuals. Presently, the workforce between the ages of 20 and 34 comprises 500 adults (Cascara Sustainable Development Plan, 2007: 7). Financial aid from the metropole is the equivalent of 75% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and exports are insignificant in comparison to grant-in-aid funding (*ibid:* 8). The education system is modelled on that of the metropole and since 2006, much funding has been provided to Cascara for the expansion of adult and vocational training and development in preparation for the construction of the airport.

The announcement by the government of the metropole that funding will be provided for the construction of an international airport on the island, was well received by most Cascarians. The funding provision for air access is subject to a Memorandum of Understanding being agreed and signed between the AID and the Cascara Government. Until now, access to the island has only been by ship and the airport construction will undoubtedly lead to far-reaching and deeply impacting social and cultural change. This change will be informed by the social and economic opportunities and challenges that air access will ultimately bring to the island.

As it is the responsibility of a nation to invest in the education of its people, the government of the metropole has funded the development of an Adult and

Vocational Education Strategy specifically designed to address the expected escalation of social and economic change. In addition to this initial funding, the government of the metropole has also provided funding for the subsequent implementation and delivery of an appropriate adult and vocational curriculum on a recurrent basis. The introduction of air access to Cascara Island calls for adult learning opportunities that will enable Cascarians to market themselves so that they can enjoy the economic benefits that may arise as a result of air access (Brookes[4], 2005: 4).

One of the biggest problems with the creation and implementation of industry-specific learning opportunities in insular and remote contexts, is the maintenance and improvement of education relevant to the diversity and innate nature of the people themselves (UNESCO, 2004: 1). This is further complicated by the need to retain regional and international recognition for the courses made available (*ibid*). As such, a high level of mobility outwards to other shores for education and work is a characteristic of many small island states (Gamerdinger, 2009: 13). In addition to this, it is also important that the education on offer meets the needs of the economy. Gamerdinger (*ibid:* 14) observes that:

> ... [island] nations moving from good to great require not only a healthy environment for employment but also a skilled workforce. The mix is delicate. Making the process work can promote a growing economy. Getting it wrong can result in not only a lack of employment opportunities but a probable national exodus of its talented workforce.

Garmerdinger's observation also emphasises the need for small island states to draw on the educational experiences of other islands to improve the provisioning of lifelong learning. Often it is difficult for island nations to sufficiently prepare their workforce for the labour market because they lack financial and human resources. This is compounded by the lack of private sector employment opportunities that often exists in small island states. Cascara Island, as is the case with many islands, small states and rural areas, is suffering an economic decline brought about by the migration of its people who leave to further their

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[4] This is a pseudonym.

education and to seek employment at wages higher than what the local economy can offer.

The new strategy of the Adult and Vocational Education Service on Cascara Island lays down a curriculum that is broader than just serving the current economic needs of the island. It sets down a platform that covers the broader notion for lifelong learning in a variety of disciplines (Brookes, 2005: 3). These disciplines are presented in the AVES Curriculum shown in Appendix 1. The strategy seeks to establish an ethos of lifelong learning that presents opportunities that are relevant to the needs of individuals and to needs of the island. The underlying aim of the strategy is to make opportunities that will support economic growth on the island available. My research explored the challenges associated with the implementation of an appropriate, relevant and sustainable curriculum for the Cascarian context, given the insular and isolated positioning of the island.

The main focus of the Adult and Vocational Education Curriculum on Cascara is on vocational and work-based learning that will aid economic activity and improve worker competency. Due to the unique location of the island, the sustainability of the curriculum was (and still is) impacted by many factors that are not always relevant in mainland contexts – these include vocational learning needs specific to the island at any particular time. For example, at the time of my study the adult and vocational curriculum was biased towards activities that would support the construction of the airport as well as the subsequent potential opportunities in tourism that may arise as result of the improved access to the island. Other challenges that relate to the implementation of a relevant and sustainable adult and vocational curriculum on the unique island of Cascara include: limited human, physical and financial resources; challenges with local leadership; the legacy of colonialism; financial dependency; and geographic insularity and isolation. These factors all impact on the provision of adult learning in the Cascarian context and are explored at length in Chapter 1. With these factors in mind, I deemed it necessary for an investigation into the challenges of implementing and sustaining a relevant adult and vocational curriculum within an isolated island context.

b) My personal motivation for conducting this study

In January 2007 I took up the position of Adult and Vocational Education Adviser on Cascara Island on a 12-month contract. The Adult and Vocational Education Service (AVES) was newly established at that time and I worked alongside a local manager towards completing the terms of reference as outlined in my contract, namely:

- identifying adult and vocational learning needs across the island;
- strategic planning for work-based, secondary and community learning provision to meet all learning and training needs (including apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications, Vocationally Related Qualifications, generic short courses and distance learning opportunities);
- developing engagement activities to attract people back into learning;
- evaluating the effectiveness of work-based, secondary and community learning opportunities;
- establishing appropriate learning structures and networks to ensure long term sustainability of the delivery of appropriate academic, vocational and community focussed education programmes;
- developing and implementing a learning framework and quality assurance processes;
- controlling the recurrent and aid funded financial budgets; and
- providing advocacy, liaison and reporting to stakeholders, including local government and funders.

I returned to South Africa in December 2007 and towards the end of 2008, the Cascarian Government invited me to return to the island – this time to fill the position of Adult and Vocational Education Manager. To this end, I signed a two year contract and took up the position in January 2009.

The Executive Education Officer (EEO) on the island encouraged and welcomed the research that I had proposed to undertake – citing the advantages that such research could have for the sustainable and relevant provision of adult, vocational and lifelong learning on the island. She was particularly interested in

probing the sustainability of the AVES Curriculum, given the availability of human and financial resources. Further to this, she was also keen to have the relevance and sustainability of the AVES Development Project funded through the metropole's Agency for International Development (AID) interrogated. This project comprises the following components:

1. Apprenticeships in construction; hospitality and catering; travel and tourism; and automotive vehicle maintenance through awarding bodies in the metropole.
2. The establishment of a Health and Safety Training Card scheme.
3. The training and retraining of local tutors.
4. A National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Business and Administration at Level 4.

I accepted the Cascarian Government's invitation to return to the island for two reasons: firstly the terms and conditions of the contract had been much improved, and secondly during my initial 12-month contract in 2007, I faced many difficulties and challenges in respect of the delivery of an appropriate and sustainable curriculum for the island. These difficulties and challenges perplexed me and I often found myself contemplating what sort of curricular intervention or approach would best address the unique challenges faced on the island. Conducting this doctoral research gave me the opportunity to uncover and explore problems and solutions in relation to the implementation of an appropriate and sustainable adult and vocational education curriculum on Cascara Island. The process that I have undertaken, and which has culminated in this thesis, provided answers to many of my own unanswered questions. My findings are documented in this thesis in the hope that they will be of benefit to the AVES on Cascara and to other similar learning contexts and environments.

c) The Theoretical, Methodological and Practical Significance of my study

My research findings have the potential to make a contribution at three levels. These areas of significance are:

- Theoretical
- Methodological; and
- Practical

Theoretical Significance

As this study is an investigation into an educational intervention on a small island, it therefore contributes to the literature in respect of education policy and practice in a context that is isolated and remote.

This study is also of importance to the field in so much that it is a description of the atypical socio-political and economic context of Cascara, as a contemporary 21st Century colony of a European metropole. The study also extends the theoretical debate into issues associated with neo-colonialism as the relationship that Cascara has with its metropole is unique. Cascara is also one of the few remaining overseas territories that is entirely dependent on a colonial power.

This study also highlights the consequences associated with geographical isolation and how these impact on the provision of learning.

Methodological Significance

The unique setting of Cascara provided an interesting backdrop in which the research could be conducted. In respect of methodological approach, this study is unique in so much that the fieldwork conducted as part of the case study took place within the clearly defined limits of the island. Whilst a qualitative case study is not a unique research method, the insularity and isolation of Cascara render the case more uniquely challenging and interesting. This was especially pertinent to issues relating to consent, anonymity and confidentiality, as these concerns had to be approached very sensitively and innovatively.

My personal position in the context highlighted the insider-outsider role of the researcher and how my role as an employee and potentially also as the driver of the intervention under study, enabled access and perspectives that would not in all likelihood, have been made available to anyone else undertaking the study.

My classification as either an insider or outsider-researcher was made more complex by my social positioning on the island. Within the context of work, I might have been classified as an insider, whilst as an expatriate government employee; I might have been classified as an outsider. Although an insider in the context of my work as AVES Manager, I had to be mindful of methodological and ethical issues as taking on the role of researcher within the workplace can create a barrier that separates the insider from those in the research setting.

The challenges associated with me having to ensure my distance to the object of study, given my position of manager within the AVES, were carefully considered and further enhanced the originality of the study.

Significance in respect of Policy and Practical Application

The most significant contribution of the study is on how the findings would inform future policy so as to ensure that policies and applications translate into a practicable, relevant and sustainable curriculum.

Of further significant importance is the extent to which this research could make recommendations for the improvement of the curriculum and supporting services currently offered by the AVES on Cascara.

The research findings will not only benefit the government, businesses and the people of Cascara, but could also be used to inform other islands, small states and rural communities with typically limited human and financial resources in their provision of adult and vocational education. Sharing the Cascarian experience and the valuable lessons learnt in the process of curriculum implementation, could extend the scope of adult and vocational training on Cascara as well as in similar initiatives offered in other small and remote locations.

iv)   **Parameters of the Study**

There are five main parameters to this study:

- The Adult and Vocational Education Service on Cascara Island is not typical of any other post-secondary or further learning organisation identified in the literature. It was therefore difficult, on a theoretical level, to make direct comparisons to other island contexts.

- Much of the literature reviewed was not written specifically about isolated and insular island contexts, with a unique colonial legacy such as that of Cascara.

- The decision by the Agency for International Development (AID) to 'pause' the construction of the airport while I was conducting my fieldwork impacted (mostly negatively) on the attitudes of my research participants. The study and this thesis proceeded on the premise that air access would eventually be granted to the island. The AID reversed their 'pause' decision in September 2010, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the AID and the Cascarian Government was subsequently signed in December 2010. The MOU requires that the Cascarian Government meet certain deliverables within agreed timeframes before the airport construction project can commence.

- The purposive sample might have excluded stakeholders who could have provided additional valuable insights that related to my study. An attempt was made to negate this limitation by issuing open questionnaires through the local print and audio media.

- To respect the confidentiality of the research participants in the small Cascarian context, member checks were not conducted amongst participants.

v)   Chapter Outline

This thesis is presented in five chapters:

Chapter 1: Adult Curriculum, the Workforce, Sustainability and Change

This chapter of the thesis reviews the literature relevant to my study.

The first part of this chapter focuses mostly on the trajectory of the provision of adult and vocational education on Cascara Island. Firstly, I introduce the concept of adult and vocational education and then provide a history of its provision on Cascara leading up to the time of my study. This section is concluded with an exploration of adult theories of learning and an investigation into the facilitation of adult learning.

The second section focuses on curriculum, social movements and curriculum change. I review the literature in relation to educational and curriculum change, focussing on stakeholder mobilisation, actual implementation and the institutionalisation of a curriculum. Following on from this, I explore four curriculum development models: essentialism, encyclopaedism, polytechnicalism, pragmatism and curriculum reconceptualisation. Thereafter, I investigate four approaches to curriculum delivery namely: curriculum as transmission, curriculum as product, curriculum as process and curriculum as praxis. I conclude this section by exploring a reconceptualised view of the curriculum.

The third area of the literature review focuses on the relationship between the curriculum, the economy and the workforce. In this section, I explore four economic development theories: economic base theory, competitive industry clusters, entrepreneurship and post-secondary and further education. I then review the literature on capacity building, human capital development and social capital theory. This section concludes with an exploration of the relationship between learning and work, and the role of the employer in changing times.

The final section of the literature review explores historical and local issues that impact on the sustainability of the AVES Curriculum. These issues include local leadership, colonialism, financial dependency and geographic isolation and insularity. This section concludes with brief case studies of the approaches used in adult and vocational education in five dependent islands: the Tokelau Islands (New Zealand); Montserrat Island (United Kingdom); the Falkland Islands (United Kingdom); Norfolk Island (Australia); and Christmas Island (Australia).

Chapter 2: Methodological Account: A Qualitative Island Case Study

This chapter of the thesis presents details of the qualitative research approach and the case study methodology that I adopted in planning, conducting and writing up this study.

In documenting the processes undertaken, I first embark on a detailed account of how I approached ethical issues in my research. To this end, I reflect on my position within the framework of the study – both as the manager of the AVES and as a postgraduate fieldworker. I then provide details of how I addressed issues of consent, confidentiality, anonymity and the use of pseudonyms. I also provide details of how the research data will be stored.

Following on from this I present details of the research design. In doing this, I provide particulars of, and a justification for, the selection of research participants in my purposive sample. I also outline the research timeframes.

Next, I provide a detailed account of the data elicitation techniques used. These include: document analysis; questionnaires; unstructured, semi-structured and focus group interviews; workshops; and the use of local print and audio media.

With the research instruments outlined, I provide details of the data analysis process that I undertook, focusing on: transcription, content analysis (coding and categorisation) and discourse analysis.

The final section of this chapter contemplates the trustworthiness (validity and reliability) of the data and is presented in the following sections: descriptive validity; interpretive validity; member checks; triangulation and crystallisation.

Chapter 3: Data Representation and an Analysis of the AVES and the AVES Curriculum in the Cascarian Context

This chapter reflects on the notion of change within the dynamic and fluid context of Cascara. An analysis of the data provides insights into how the AVES Curriculum could be sustainably delivered to support this change.

Firstly, the analysis explores the AVES as a state apparatus; it then incorporates the responses of research participants to the AVES Strategy and its supporting curriculum. The contributions of research participants are presented in relation to their responses to socio-economic and curricular change.

I then present the data and analysis in respect of the current curricular content under the AVES and I also identify gaps in the current provision. Following this, findings regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of the AVES Curriculum are presented, particularly around: accredited learning, unaccredited learning, the AVES AID Development Aid Project and e-learning. After this, I present the andragogical experiences and expectations of AVES learners and other AVES stakeholders.

The chapter concludes with my analysis of numerous sustainability areas that present risks to the ongoing provision of learning under the AVES. These include operational issues, historical and local nuances, and the need to integrate lifelong learning on Cascara Island.

Chapter 4: Rising to the Challenge: Recommendations to the AVES

This chapter has been designed so that it can stand-alone as a separate recommendations document. The chapter brings together all of the data collected through the research process and it is presented in such a way that it may serve as review document for the AVES and its associated stakeholders.

The chapter presents numerous recommendations that include: pressing priorities for the AVES; the notion of Integrating lifelong learning so that resource utilisation is maximised; the content and the delivery of AVES learning areas; the AVES staffing structure; the quality of learning programmes; leading the AVES Strategy; AVES Charging Policy and funding; information, advice and guidance; and the next steps for the AVES.

This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Epilogue: Cascara, the AVES, My Study – A Final Reflection

This chapter brings the thesis to closure and offers a final reflection which focuses on the island of Cascara, the AVES, the curriculum and my study. In this brief chapter, I reflect on the literature reviewed, my methodological approach and my findings in relation to the change underway on the island of Cascara. I also reflect on the theoretical; methodological; and the policy and practical significance of my study.

vi) Introductory Description of the Socio-Political and Economic make-up of Cascara Island

To help my readers contextualise the island of Cascara, I provide some important characteristics about the country so as to present an overall picture to the context in which I conducted my study. In doing this, I focus mainly on broader characteristics that are either peripheral or historical to my study. These include governance; population; religion; education; language and literacy; infrastructure; entertainment; and civic society.

Governance: The Chief of State is the monarch of the metropole. The local head of government is a Governor appointed by the monarch. The cabinet consists of Executive Council: the governor, 3 ex-officio officers and 5 elected members of the Legislative Council. The unicameral Legislative Council comprises 17 seats, including a speaker and deputy speaker, twelve elected members and three ex-

officio members. Members are elected by popular vote to serve a term of four-years.

Population: The Island has a population of about 4000 and this is declining for numerous reasons that will be discussed in this study. The indigenous people of the island descend from slaves from West Africa, Madagascar and the Maldives. Additionally there were workers from Europe, South Africa and from China. Gene pools were mixed so that ethnically a number of the islanders came to resemble, so called, Cape Coloureds – people of mixed race in South Africa.

Religion: The majority of people belong to the Anglican Faith. Other Christian denominations on the island include: Roman Catholics, the Salvation Army, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, New Apostolics and Jehovah's Witnesses (the second largest religion on the island). The Baha'i Faith also has a following on the island.

Education: Education is free and compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16. There are three primary schools and one secondary school for 11-18 year olds. The AVES is the only avenue on the island for tertiary education.

Language and Literacy: The official language of the island is English – which is spoken in a dialect unique to the island. Literacy levels are high at 97%. Most citizens have, at the very least, basic literacy and numeracy. Literacy levels are higher in girls than in boys; and in adults than in children.

Infrastructure: The Island has a good network of hard-surfaced roads that on some turns and steep inclines reduce to single lanes only. Government provides water and electricity at advertised rates. Good telecommunication networks exist with access to the World Wide Web.

Entertainment: By first world standards, activities on the island are limited. There are numerous outlets for the hiring of DVDs and videos. Picnicking, hiking and walking are also very popular. The island also has a nine-hole golf course. There are also numerous sporting organisations that include: cricket, football, volleyball and shooting. There is one Olympic-sized swimming pool and boating,

deep-sea diving and fishing are also popular. There are many bars and public houses which arrange regular social functions.

Civic Society: As stated above, there are numerous churches and sporting societies. There is also a women's orchestra and a Lady's Corona Society. Trade unions exist for the building trade, with a Chamber of Commerce that represents the private sector. The Chamber of Commerce works with the Cascara Development Bureau to support private sector growth and development. There are no political parties. There is a state owned media corporation (print and audio), as well as an independent press that is outspoken on island issues.