

**THE ROLE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
PROGRAMMES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL BLACK WOMEN IN  
THE OMUSATI REGION IN NAMIBIA.**

**by**

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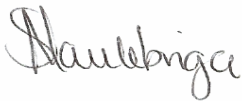
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## DECLARATION

I declare that **THE ROLE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL BLACK WOMEN IN THE OMUSATI REGION IN NAMIBIA** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE

(MS ST NAMBINGA)

23 November 2007

DATE

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Everything considered I wouldn't have done anything without **GOD** My creator. All the honour and glory to Him!

# **DEDICATION**

## **TO MY PARENTS**

“Without their guidance, love and care I would never come this far.”

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ABET	Adult basic Education and Training
EFA	Education for All
ASDSE	Adult Skills Development for Self-Employment
CCN	Council of Churches in Namibia
CEDAW	Convention on the Eliminations of all forms of Discrimination against Women
DABE	Directorate of Adult Basic Education
DWA	Department of Women Affairs
GAD	Gender and Development
NLPN	National Literacy Programme in Namibia
NLP	National Literacy Programme
NQA	Namibia Qualification Authority
RLO	Regional Literacy Officer
UN	United Nations



UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAD	Women Action Development
WID	Women in Development

## **SUMMARY**

The study aimed at investigating the role played by ABET programmes in the development of rural black women in the Omusati Region. The study was to determine whether the ABET programmes that are provided in the area are offering relevant education that helps the women of the area in their development.

The research findings indicated that the ABET programmes offered are not providing the relevant skills needed to develop the women participants. The programmes that are offered concentrate on literacy and numeracy, and it seem not to be very effective in making a difference to the women's lives. Women needs skills that can help them generate income to improve their living conditions. The study, in summary, established that the programmes offered by the ABET centres would be more effective if skills training is included to uplift and improve the lives of the participants on a social, economical as well as educational level.

### **Key terms**

ABET programmes; Income-generating skills; women development; rural black women; Pedagogy; Andragogy; Family commitment; Employment opportunities; ABET curriculum; Previous experience; Teaching methods.

# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

The debate about the provision of basic literacy to all people has been a bone of contention in today's changing world (UN Report, 2002:13). A number of United Nations Resolutions, International Conventions and Conferences ascertain the "Right of education for all" as a fundamental human right (UN Report, 2002:15).

A United Nations Report on education has shown that more than forty years ago, the nations of the world speaking through the Universal Declaration of Human rights asserted that "everyone has a right to education" (UN Report, 1990:21). It seems that many countries to date have failed to make this human right a reality, despite certain notable efforts by some countries around the globe to ensure the right to education for all (O'Malley, 2005:17).

According to Freire (1991:201), the following persists:

- More than 960 million adults, two thirds of who are women are illiterate, and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all countries.
- More than one third of the world's adults have no access to the printed knowledge, new skills and technologies that could improve the quality of their lives and help them shape and adapt to social and cultural changes.

- More than 100 million children fail to complete basic education programmes, millions satisfy the attendance requirements but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills.

All these realities in many countries have led to the establishment of non-formal education, which is an alternative branch to formal education to respond to challenges that have become a major priority in most African countries including Namibia (Davies, 2002:65). In Namibia, the enshrinement of Article 20, in the Constitution which states that: "All persons shall have the right to education..." The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990:12) shows the country's commitment to provide education to all Namibians. Though the provision of quality education remains the challenge, ensuring greater access, equality and equity is equally important to achieving education for all.

The launching of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia was an affirmation to the government's commitment to provide education for all. The objectives of this programme, among the others were to:

- Empower adults so that they can participate in a fuller manner in the general development of the country and their own personal growth;
- Correct imbalances in educational provision by providing Adult Education Programmes for those adults who were not admitted to, or did not complete primary school; and
- Narrow the educational gap between parents and their children, and render the more capable of a fuller participation in community life (Ministry of Education, 1993:98).

In the past the status of Namibian women was undermined, yet they have the potential to contribute to the country's economic and political sphere. Maseka and Makotong (1999:112) support the statement by pointing out that, Namibian women are indeed

gaining recognition through several structures including legislative structures such as, the Gender Equality and Affirmative Action Act, which were passed in 1999. However, women in the Omusati Region still lack the basic reading, writing and associated life skills, and are unable to effectively access benefits brought by these legislative reforms. Pre-independence governments denied black people access to free, compulsory and general education, and this leads to a high rate of illiteracy amongst blacks. The policies of the former government fragmented the education and training into different ethnic and racial sub-systems with unequal allocation of resources (Ministry of Education, 2003:21).

Namibia had inherited a differentiated educational provision system along colour lines. This had led to a segregated society and massive exclusion of adult black population especially women from taking advantage of whatever benefits modern education provided, in terms of skills, competencies and capacities for beneficial functioning in society.

Training in the past was transference of knowledge by one set of people to another. In such training programmes the trainees were merely passive receipts of whatever the trainers decided to give them. Freire (1991:73) has a differing perspective of adult education. According to him learning is not a quantity of information to be memorized or a package of skills to the students. Knowing, according to Freire (1991:73), means being an active subject who questions and transforms the world one is functioning in.

Rural black people are the most disadvantaged because of rural areas being so underdeveloped. Their lack of education contributes to their lack of employment, which results in poverty. Under the apartheid regime, women were discriminated against on the ground of their race, class, rural background and ethnicity (Maseka & Makotong, 1999:115). These days we hear a great deal about women's empowerment, women's liberation and women's rights.

Women historically had limited access to paid employment. Those women who were employed were in poorly paid jobs such as domestic work and child minding. According to McGivney and Sims (1996:187), women are six times less likely to be employed than men. Rural black women in particular are the most disadvantaged in terms of literacy and prospects for jobs. They often experience poverty more acutely than men. Even so, most households in rural areas are headed by women, who have less access to paid employment.

Women development is one of the issues that Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes have to address. The need for adult basic education and training is that it can contribute towards the economic growth, improved productivity and communication in the various regions where it is implemented. The study will investigate the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women in Omusati Region. Omusati Region is an area in northern (Owamboland) part of Namibia, close to a small township called Uutapi; with a population of about 50 000 of which 65% are women. The region has 70% illiterate women (National Planning Commission of Namibia, 2002:17). It is therefore evident that illiteracy is a major problem in the Omusati Region.

## **1.2. Background to the problem and research interest**

Like many other rural areas, the Omusati Region is underdeveloped and the majority of the permanent inhabitants are women and children, since most men migrated to cities or plantations in search of wage labour. Most of the males who migrate to cities establish new families there and no longer support their families left behind in the Omusati Region. Women are therefore in general, heading many of the local households, putting them under a great deal of strain as they are unemployed and lack income-generating skills (Tegborg, 1996: 33).

Although there are literates and some who are highly educated, the rate of illiteracy amongst women is very high. The problem of illiteracy has a definite impact on the lives

of people of this community. It makes it difficult for people to learn how to keep themselves and their families' healthy (McKay, 1995:29). Female education is seen as a health as well as a development issue. Some women work as domestic workers in the small neighboring township and earn an average income of N\$ 300.00 per month. Due to the lack of employment opportunities, the area is poverty-stricken and children are exposed to poverty related diseases. Women become the central focus in strategic planning programmes to overcome the hunger and malnutrition that accompany poverty because they and their dependent children dominate the poorest groups (Snyder & Tendesse 1995:12). Malnutrition and gastroenteritis are very common results of poverty.

There is a high rate (55%) of infant mortality in the area (National Planning Commission of Namibia, 2002:23). Some communities in the area have no health care centres. Mobile clinics are available to them only once a week. People experience problems when they are ill because they have to use public transport to travel to a clinic or hospital in the township, or else they have to wait for the mobile clinic. The high birthrate contributes to poverty in the area. Snyder and Tendesse (1995:17) support this statement when they state that, "poverty could be limited by limiting fertility".

Empowering women could lead to development of the area. Women in the Omusati Region need empowerment so that they can contribute to the political and economic development. Their lives should be transformed through various programmes that are relevant for women's empowerment. Women should learn what democracy could mean to them and not accept to be treated as subordinates. They should be made aware of their rights through the provision of relevant programmes.

Snyder and Tendesse (1995:42) see development for African women as a positive answer to the needs for food, water, health, education and employment. Education provided by ABET programmes should be relevant to the needs of the community. According to McGivney and Sims (1996:213), women need education or training, which offer opportunities to move them out of traditional female works. Literacy should relate

to other aspects of their daily life, such as health, family planning, money-making projects etc. Women need to be empowered to become economically independent and self-reliant. Education should empower them to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of their communities.

The scenario in the Omusati Region is typical of many rural settlements. In Namibia, it follows therefore logically that many rural women still need to be empowered to realize their potential. They need programmes that will empower them to be able to start their own businesses, gain skills that will enable them to be employed, form support groups and forums where they can discuss their family problems and how to overcome them. Since most of the women in Omusati Region are responsible for providing financial support for their families they encounter problems due to the lack of employment and income generating skills such as entrepreneurial skills.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

Although ABET centres have been implemented in Omusati Region, it is necessary that they should be investigated to determine whether they provide education that is relevant to the needs of that particular community. The study will identify the learning needs of the participants, as a result, it will help the facilitators to implement the three levels of a typical ABET curriculum such as Fundamentals, Core and Specialization/elective levels as stated by (Meyer, 2002:246). It is expected that the results of this study will benefit adult learners as well as facilitators/adult educators and the Directorate of Adult and Basic Education in Namibia. It could help them to re-examine the curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of the adult learners (women) in Omusati Region. Finally, the results of the study will contribute to the existing local and global literature related to the role of ABET in the development of rural women.



## **1.4. Research objectives**

### **1.4.1 Main objective**

The main goal of the research is to determine whether the ABET programmes offered in the area lead to the general development of women in the area.

### **1.4.2 Secondary objectives**

The secondary objectives of the study aim at finding out whether the programmes:

- offer income-generating skills and
- opportunities upon gainful employment in the Omusati Region for women participants in particular.
- meet the needs as expressed by the participants.

## **1.5 Research design**

The research will be undertaken in the form of a qualitative research design. Qualitative research happens in the form of an enquiry that is grounded on the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and these constructions normally tend to be transitory and situational (Creswell, 2003:62). Qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, observation and documents will be used to scientifically collect the required data. Four female learners will be selected from each of the four ABET centres. For the participants to rely on their experience and get genuine information a purposive sampling will be used in the selection of the sixteen participants. The data will be tape recorded and later transcribed. All data generated from observations, interviews (records & notes taken) and associated documents will be appropriately coded and categorised, in a scientific

effort to achieve the stated research objectives and to answer the stated research questions.

## **1.6 Current knowledge voids**

There is a wide range of research that has recently dealt with the subject of adult education. In the last decade we have witnessed a number of research studies, seminars, international conventions and debates on this issue. Despite large attention given to this issue, no research so far has been carried out regarding the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women in Namibia.

The available studies in Namibia conducted in the area of adult education have not specifically dealt with this topic. The role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women specifically has never been examined in these studies. Although three major evaluation studies were conducted between 1996 and 2005 respectively, namely views and attitudes of adult learners regarding ABET programmes in the Caprivi Region by Mpofu & Amin, the perception and delivery systems of adult learning in Namibia by Likando, and Adult literacy and empowerment in Caprivi Region by Tegborg, it was limited to the provider's perspectives.

Other studies that have been conducted in the area of adult education globally emphasised the importance of adult education in the community in general. Although the findings of these studies (especially those on Namibia) are useful in informing us about the Namibian situation in this area, they can only form a foundational background for this study. This is due to the limited nature of the findings of these studies on the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women.

Furthermore, the policy of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia, among other issues stresses the need for monitoring and evaluation of ABET programmes. But since the inception of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia in 1992, no study has been

conducted to investigate and evaluate the contribution of ABET programmes to the development of adult learners.

It is against this background that this study intends to thoroughly investigate the role of Adult Basic Education and Training programmes in the development of rural black women in Omusati Region.

## **1.7 General overview of the remaining sections**

The report consists of five Chapters.

- a. In Chapter One, the background to the study, motivation for the research, the aim of the research and the importance of the study is presented.
- b. In Chapter Two, the related literature on rural women development, community education and development and Adult Basic Education will be reviewed.
- c. In Chapter Three, the methods for collecting, analysing and interpreting data will be discussed.
- d. In Chapter Four, the research results, with a particular focus how data were collected, conceptualised, analysed, categorised and coded will be described.
- e. In Chapter Five, the findings will be discussed; conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter served as an orientation to the study. Firstly, the research problem and research question were set out, and these were followed by a statement of the aims of the study. The research question was then examined and motivation for the investigation was considered. Next, the selection of the research sample was explained and the overview of the methodology was provided. In the next chapter, the related literature will be discussed. It is imperative to know that the major objective of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in Namibia is to empower adults so that they can more fully participate in the general development of the country and in their personal growth. ABET programmes have an important role to play in developing women. The enquiry will be conducted on the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women in the Omusati Region of Namibia.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined the context and aims of the study. This chapter reviews the literature on the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:2), a literature review will enable the researcher to synthesise the literature topic and engage critically with it. This chapter begins with an outline of Adult Basic Education, exploring trends globally, in South Africa and within Namibia. In order to establish a framework for the research, the chapter explores theories relating to ABET, including definitions and outlines of ABET goals. A review of different perspectives on adult learners and the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women is also examined.

Literacy is freedom, according to the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire, but for hundreds of millions of the world's poorest people the opposite is also true, illiteracy is a tool of oppression (O'Malley, 2005:13). Lack of literacy skills resulted in a significant number of illiterate women being unemployed and poverty stricken. Their families were exposed to poverty related diseases, and the responsibility to fight hunger in their families became their exclusive task.

#### **2.2 The concept of development**

Development is the process of changing or growing from one stage to another. The term is used in different ways depending on the context. However, when this term is applied to a country, it means the process by which a country modernises. Meyer (2002:360) defines development as it occurs when ongoing learning opportunities are

created so that employees can improve and develop to maintain high levels of performance. In this study, development is defined as the process of improving the quality of life of rural women through education and training. According to Street (2002:29), rural development as a concept, connotes overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people.

For illiterate rural women to develop, they need empowerment that could be advanced through various programmes. ABET is one of the programmes that could offer skills that can transform their lives. Campaigns and transformations, according to Corner (2000:53), could also open up a wide range of learning opportunities and chances for women, which in turn could lead to income generating forms of employment. Literacy creates forms of communication, which is often at the core of progress and development. According Hinzen (1993:213), literacy combined with other skills such as income generation, has been found to be most effective in poor communities.

### **2.3 Nature of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)**

Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is a basic life skills education and training offered to adults. This type of education includes the acquisition of basic skills of literacy and numeracy; it also provides opportunities for life long-learning and development (Hinzen, 1993:215).

ABET encompasses a wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities undertaken by adults and out-of-school youth, resulting in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to enhance the quality of life (Ministry of Education, 2003:3). ABET provides adults with the necessary skills required to lead to a better life (Corner, 2000:55). Through ABET learners acquire knowledge and skills useful to their daily lives for instance health skills; safety skills and income generating skills.

According to Forest (1995:21), most ABET programmes that were offered eight years ago emphasised knowledge but neglected the skills needed to lead to a better life. When adults failed to improve their living standards, they tended to drop out of these programmes. According to Corner (2000:61), some of the fundamental factors affecting adult participation are certainly connected with employment, as this is the most important motivator for adults to return to education.

In the past, Adult Basic Education ignored prior learning or the experience adults already had. The syllabi and national core curriculum guidelines laid down what should be taught. The new approach to ABET emphasises the recognition of prior learning and experience which learners have obtained through formal, non-formal and informal learning or through experience (Forest, 1995:36). As such, education should be adapted to the needs of individuals at different stages in their development.

Today the education and training system is based on Outcome Based Education (Meyer, 2002:255). By attending classes, adults acquire new skills and develop their own abilities. Hinzen (1993:220) states that as people discover that they are indeed capable of mastering the skills of reading and writing, they should also rightly conclude that they can be bolder in tackling other obstacles to progress in their lives. This concept is similar to conscientisation, a concept that Paulo Freire made famous. On completion, adults participating in basic education and training are recognised with a certificate equal to the Namibia Qualification Authority (NQA) level one (Ministry of Education, 2003:5).

## 2.4 Definition of terms

This section describes operational concept that will feature prominently in this study.

- **Development:** Development means the improvement in economic, social, and political conditions of a whole society in terms of reduction or elimination of

poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity, ecological imbalances, and unemployment within the context of growing (Archer, 2001: 259).

- **Income generating skills:** The type of skills that will enable one to do useful work and earn money for himself or herself (Youngman, 2000:573).
- **Functional /Applied Literacy:** Functional literacy refers to 'life-oriented literacy' with programmes focused not only on narrow economic concerns, but also on other concerns related to daily living; for example: nutrition, health, family planning, and culture to mention just a few (Vanderveen & Preece 2006:76).
- **Adult Educator:** Adult Educator refers to Literacy Promoters, District Literacy Organisers and Regional Literacy Officers (Ministry of Education, 2003:3).
- **Andragogy:** Andragogy is a type of instruction for adults that focuses more on the process and less on the content being taught (Rogers, 1999:50).
- **Adult:** The psychological definition stresses that when we become "adult" is when we either become responsible for our own lives or become self-directed (Rogers, 1996:57)
- **Pedagogy:** Pedagogy is a type of instruction for children that focuses more on the content being taught and less on the process (Rogers, 1999:50).

## 2.5 ABET worldwide

The problem of adult illiteracy is a global concern. Although adult illiteracy rates are going down, the numbers of illiterate adults aged 15 years and above continue to rise in absolute terms. According to UNESCO (1993:21) in 1970 there were about 760 million illiterate adults aged 15 years and above while in 1985 the estimated number was 889 million. The total number of adult illiterates aged 15 years and above for 1990 was



estimated at 948 million and that for the year 2000 is estimated at 935 million (UNESCO, 1993:35). The increase in absolute numbers is a result of:

- high population growth rates,
- world economic recession,
- social-cultural factors,
- low primary school enrolments, and
- children dropping out of primary schooling.

The children who do not enrol in primary schools and those who drop out before consolidating literacy skills are counted into the illiterate adult population at the age of 15 years. Further, the adult illiteracy rates are highest in the countries of the developing world and among the poorest and most underdeveloped people. About 98% of the world's illiterates live in the developing countries with the highest rates in Africa (UNESCO, 2000:12). A UNICEF study in 1998 predicted that illiteracy rates could even grow during the 21 century after declining dramatically during the 20th century (Sharm, 2003:22).

Today an estimated 861 million adult including 140 million 15-24 year-olds world wide are illiterate, and two third of them are women, despite literacy being recognised as a human right more than a century ago. Of course, there is much to debate about how illiteracy is defined in different countries. But there is a widespread acceptance that if we are to live in a world where every man, woman and child can fulfil their potential as free human beings, illiteracy must be tackled (O'Malley, 2005:15). The most powerful engine of change is the worldwide commitment to achieve Education for All by 2015, made at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 (O` Malley, 2005:15).

The above statistics portray the global nature of the problem of adult illiteracy and point to a disturbing reality that not only is the phenomenon on the increase, but that its geographical configurations coincide with the geography of poverty, disease, hunger and other characteristics of underdevelopment. Adult illiteracy contributes to socio-

political and cultural problems of great dimensions, and therefore, requires extremely urgent solutions.

The problem of illiteracy among women is growing steadily around the globe. According to Lind and Johnson (1990:11), in 1960 about 58% of adult illiterates were women but by 1970 this figure rose to 60%, and by 1985, it went up to 63%. Lind and Johnson (1990:11) have found that many traditional and new roles prevent women from full participation in literacy classes. They have listed several constraints, a primary constraint being a lack of time because women are overburdened with domestic chores or tasks such as child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood and farming. The constraint of lack of time is imposed on women because of the division of labour which is based on one's gender or sex. The problem is exacerbated when literacy is taught in a second language and when women are discouraged by the attitudes of men, husbands in particular, towards their capacities to learn. Another problem is the unavailability of suitable reading materials that are designed for women's interests and needs. When women have become literate, sustaining the literacy skills acquired becomes difficult because of lack of suitable reading materials designed for women.

## **2.6 ABET: South African context**

ABET in South Africa has been one of the neglected aspects of educational development. With the coming to power of the new democratic government in 1994, things have changed. ABET has now become one of the priority areas targeted by the government.

Though adult education in South Africa has never reached the required scale to satisfy national need, it has had a rich history (French, 2003:27). It has been closely associated with (on both sides) national and local struggles for liberation. It supported, for a time, especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, a vibrant "establishment" of alternative educators in three major universities, as well as in a range of NGOs. It was the subject

of intensive and ambitious efforts in policy creation from 1989 to about 1997, all assuming the centrality of adult education to the task of equity and redress in a new regime. Proud achievement in developing, writing and publishing of adult learning materials was a great success.

Above all, South Africa has been struck by the transformative potential of the radical and humanistic traditions of adult education (French, 2003:28). This potential is not easily achieved but it has seen glimpses of its ability to change lives, and more especially, to shift the patterns of thought, selfhood and action that inhibit growth. French (2003:31) argues that the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), instead of serving the transformational goals of equity and redress, is more an instrumentalist strategy for servicing the skills needs of large-scale business and industry. A challenge to meet most major targets of job creation or wealth distribution is noticeable.

## **2.7 ABET: Namibian context**

The Directorate of Adult Basic Education was established in 1990 in line with the National Education Policy which was aimed at achieving the educational goals of access, quality, efficiency and democracy. The year 1991 was spent on designing the programme and putting the structure in place. In September of 1992, the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN) was launched by the Prime Minister with an initial enrolment of about 1300 learners - adults and youth. Since then, each year in Namibia, the first week of September is celebrated as National Literacy Week.

The main functions of the Directorate include the recruitment, enrolment and teaching of the adult learners; the training of staff through staff development programmes; literacy and materials development; production; credit facilities provision for small scale enterprises and monitoring and evaluation of the programme of the Directorate. Over the period under review, 90 129 learners were enrolled in Stage I for basic literacy in ten Namibian languages. They became literate in their own mother tongues. More than 62 400 went on to Stage II literacy in which they became more fluent in reading and writing

in their own mother tongue. Arithmetic was taught throughout all three stages of the NLPN. In Stage III, 60 717 learners were introduced to Basic English for Communication.

The NLPN developed the literacy curriculum for stage I - III to guide the directorate in literacy learning materials development. The curriculum was approved by the National Examination Board. As a result, literacy primers were developed and produced in ten local languages. A primer was developed in Basic English and three primers in mathematics for stage I, II & III respectively.

In total, fifteen titles were produced for the first three stages of the NLPN. The Directorate has also developed the Promoter's and District Literacy Officer's Handbook of Instructions and Methodology. Supplementary readers were also produced to help the learners retain their newly acquired literacy skills. These had to do with life skills, income-generation, civic affairs and public (primary) health.

Literacy in the historical context in Namibia denotes an ability to read, write and compute figures, as outlined in the missionary curriculum (Katzao, 1999:116). Although missionaries are regarded as pioneers in Namibia in the provision of literacy, it should be noted that their education was ideologically motivated rather than being created for empowerment. According to Katzao (1999:117), schools were established in order to supplement the work of Christianisation that is to give a rudimentary education to catechists and to change cultural patterns that were considered pagan. This left a vacuum as far as the political, economic and socio-cultural development of the people were concerned.

During the South African colonial rule, Tuchten (1995:240) claims, that illiteracy in Namibia was a result of apartheid policies which:

- Denied many people effective schooling.
- Denied communities the security and resources to ensure school attendance and resulted in extensive poverty.

Organisations such as the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) and the Namibia Literacy Programme (NLP) provided literacy to adults in black administration areas in Namibia. Small-scale community projects established by these organisations also provided alternative education in particular contexts (Hopfer, 1997:47). Although the work of these organisations is commendable, it was, however, not enough to meet the various needs of the Namibian society. The operations of NLP in particular, were limited due to the following factors. First, it had limited staff, so it could not respond to the learning needs of adult learners throughout the country; second, the NLP could only provide level one primers, consequently, those who went through the programme and were declared literate found themselves back in the same class after a few years since they had relapsed into illiteracy; third, pastors who acted as administrators did not have necessary training in the administration of the adult education programmes (Macharia, Mbumba and Buberwa, 1990:305).

The newly established Government of Namibia accepted the challenge and made adult education a priority in its educational plan (Hopfer, 1997:47). To this effect, the NLPN was born and officially launched. The aim was broadly defined in the Ministry of Education Policy Document as to provide equitable access and quality education to all Namibians (Ministry of Education, 1993:7). This paradigm shift from mere access to quality education aims at equipping participants with fundamental relevant skills and knowledge that would enable them to survive in a world that is now changing faster than ever (UN, 2002:34).

In fact, this was in line with *Article 20* of the Namibian Constitution, which states, “*All persons shall have a right to education...*” (Namibia Constitution, 1990:12). This provided the first framework which was needed to give adult and non-formal education a basis for compensating past injuries in Namibia and the provision of new knowledge and skills to fit the Namibian people in the new changing society and the world (Indabawa, 2000:55). According to Lind (1996:11), this was aimed at “...empowering adults to acquire skills, gain confidence in their own abilities and imagination and

exercise effectively their rights and responsibilities as Namibian citizens”, *It was then estimated that the literacy target of 85% would be reached by the year 2000*” (Ministry of Education, 1992:12). To this day, what also needs to be ascertained is the impact of ABET programmes on the lives of the adult learners in Namibia.

The problem of adult illiteracy in Namibia is persistent in spite of the sustained activities of the NLP since 1992. The 1999 census showed a total population of 1.2 million inhabitants of which 607,591 were ten years old or above. Of these 245,927 or 40.5% had never been to school and could, therefore, be considered illiterate. The first Namibia Literacy Survey of 2005 indicated a national literacy rate of 34.9%: 30.9% for females and 70.3% for males. Hence, the adult illiteracy rate for 2005 was 41.1%: 33.1% for males and 68.9% for females.

## **2.8 ABET in Omusati Region**

The Omusati Region is a rural area in the northern part of Namibia close to a small town called Uutapi Township. This town has with a population of 50 000 which includes 32 500 women. More than 75% of the population in the Region is illiterate, of which 70% are women. ABET centres have been established in the Omusati Region to address the problem of illiteracy. According to Claessen and Wesemael (2003:76), ABET programmes should not only teach women to read and write, they should also bring about changes in their lives in a positive way such as improving the conditions under which they live with their husbands and children. As a group which constitutes the majority of the population in the Omusati Region, the responsibility of supporting families lies with them. They need programmes that will empower them to be able to start their own businesses, form groups and forums where they will discuss their family problems and how to overcome them, and start their own projects.

Since most of the women are responsible for providing financial support for their families, they encounter a problem due to a lack of employment and income generating

skills e.g., entrepreneur skills. It is the role of ABET centres to offer these skills to women and empower them to change their living conditions. The researcher will investigate the role played by ABET centres in developing women.

The Omusati Region women face several obstacles in all spheres of life, including their economic, social and sexual lives. Rural women are the most disadvantaged as they are oppressed in the public and private sphere; they are expected to behave according to traditional prescriptions and have to accept the subordination of men (Snafik, 1996:48). Women in rural areas have fewer employment opportunities because of being illiterate and because of poor infrastructure in the rural areas. They are over burdened with household duties because their daily tasks include working in the fields, collecting firewood, fetching water and taking care of children.

According to Chlebowska (2000:64), women are more involved in housework, childcare and subsistence farming than men. They live most of their lives within the domestic sphere, while men on the other are usually associated with positions of authority and with the political life of the community. Women are often excluded from all levels of decision-making, and the need to control women has always been an important part of men's success in most African societies (Obbo, 2000:72). Decision-making is for men, while women are expected to accept everything without questioning. This has been a contributing factor to a high number of women being illiterate, according to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (1994:3). The low literacy of adult rural women limits their ability to participate in decision-making structures and to benefit from training and extension services.

## **2.9 Learning theories**

The importance of a theoretical framework in understanding the purpose of adult literacy in society as well as how and why adult learners participate in ABET programmes cannot be underestimated in our endeavour to fully understand the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women. It seems, in this case many

practitioners in the field of adult education carry out their work in the absence of a clear theoretical framework that might help them to understand adult learning needs and to provide a guiding principle for programme design. Theory forms the basis of any research or investigation, because it provides the researcher with a path to practice, as cited in Knowles (1996:3): *The research worker needs a set of assumptions as a starting point to guide what he does, to be tested by experiment or to serve as a check on observations and insights. Without any theory his activities may be as aimless.*

### **2.9.1 Andragogy as a theory**

The use of the word *andragogy* has been traced back as far as 1833, but Malcolm Knowles is generally credited with the popularisation of the term and the concept in the United States. Knowles (1970:38) defines andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” and contrasts it with “pedagogy”, which is concerned with helping children learn.

According to Knowles (1970:39), Andragogy is premised on at least four crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the assumption about child learners, on which traditional pedagogy is premised. These assumptions are that, as a person matures,

- his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directing human being,
- he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning,
- his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles, and
- his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of problem centeredness.



Although the word *andragogy* makes a neat contrast with the more familiar and traditional *pedagogy*, the contrast appears difficult to maintain. In his major book setting forth the theses of andragogy, Knowles (1970:38) writes: "I believe that andragogy means more than just helping adults learn; I believe that it means helping human beings learn, and that it therefore has implications for the education of children and youth" (Knowles, 1978:28). However, he refers frequently in his writings to the "*unique* characteristics of adults as learners" and to andragogy as a "comprehensive theory of *adult* learning thus, it is not really clear whether Knowles is advocating two distinct approaches to teaching, one for children and a different one for adults or whether he is suggesting that andragogy should replace pedagogy as a sounder approach to the education of both children and adults. In the latter event, we no longer have a theory of *adult* learning but, rather, a theory of instruction purporting to offer guidance to teachers in general.

Knowles' use of subtitles such as "Farewell to Pedagogy" (1970:37) and "The Millstone of Pedagogy" (1978:53) suggest that andragogy should replace pedagogy for both children and adults. However, in a recent clarification of the assumption of andragogy, Knowles (1979:40) acknowledges that it would have been preferable to recognise the continuity of human development by using the subtitle "From Pedagogy to Andragogy" rather than "Andragogy Versus Pedagogy," which implies a dichotomy between childhood and adulthood. The problem is that a continuum from pedagogy to andragogy really does not exist. Although some andragogical assumptions (such as experience) lie on a continuum, others (such as problem centered versus subject-centered learning) appear more dichotomous in nature.

Although in promoting andragogy Knowles is attempting to meet a quite legitimate need to provide a viable alternative to traditional "school-like" education, it seems exceptionally difficult to devise a workable definition of andragogy. In what may be considered, for the present at least, a summary statement on andragogy and pedagogy, Knowles (1979:53) says: "So, I am not saying that pedagogy is for children and andragogy for adults, since some pedagogical assumptions are realistic for adults in

some situation and some andragogy assumptions are realistic for children in some situations. And I am certainly not saying that pedagogy is bad and andragogy is good; each is appropriate given the relevant assumptions. "Thus, the current position seems to be that andragogy consists of a different set of assumptions from pedagogy but that it is neither uniquely suited to adults nor superior to more traditional education. While Knowles, as the foremost spokesman for andragogy in the United States, has performed a valuable service to the profession in at least setting forth a plan for critique and test in an otherwise barren field, the usefulness of andragogy as a set of guiding assumptions for adult education is at present up in the air.

A spirited exchange carried on in the pages of *Adult Education* shows just how up in the air it is. The confusion starts with the nature of andragogy. There is the question of whether andragogy is a learning theory, a philosophical position (McKenzie, 1997:221) a political reality (Carlson, 1979:45), or a set of hypotheses subject to scientific verification (Elias, 1979:43). McKenzie (1997:228) argues that, until andragogy is subjected to philosophical analysis, the proponents and opponents of andragogy will continue to "address the issue as if they were sitting around a cracker barrel". He contends that those who see no difference in the education of children and adults base their arguments in classical metaphysics, whereas the supporters of andragogy are approaching the question from the perspective of phenomenology. While McKenzie admits that intelligent and reflective educators can be found on both sides of the issue, he is convinced that there is support for andragogy in more sophisticated philosophical analysis.

Carlson (1979:55) thinks that analysis should proceed along political lines, on the grounds that the legal and educational rights of children are different from those of adults: "Politically it makes sense to set an age between 12-25, when one is considered an adult with the rights and responsibilities of an adult. Whatever age the society establishes politically for adulthood is a reasonable age for most members of that society to shift from engagement in pedagogy (education of children) to involvement in andragogy (adult education). To allow educators to 'teach' adults on social

psychological guidelines alone, including learning theory and socialisation theory, is a political act, in my view an unwise political act.” The dichotomy that Carlson wishes to maintain is probably more accurately between compulsory and voluntary learning than between children and adults, but the point is that the dichotomy is politically determined.

Elias (1979:255) takes the position familiar to most social scientists, contending that if andragogy is educational theory it should be validated on the basis of empirical evidence. His interpretation of the evidence is that andragogy “has been a helpful slogan in the adult education movement. But it is not to be taken seriously as education theory.

Still another interpretation question is raised by Kidd (1973:23), who suggests that the appropriate contrast in adult education is not between children and adults but between teaching and learning. He contrasts pedagogy (the science of teaching) with *mathematics*, which he defines as “the science of pupil’s behaviour while learning, just as pedagogy is the discipline in which attention is focused on the schoolmaster’s behaviour while teaching.” That position is appealing to most adult educators, who understandably wish to capitalise on the ability of adult learning to assume more responsibility for their learning than is possible with school children. The literature, as well as the practice, of adult education tends to be learner centered rather than instructor centered. Indeed, many adult educators are uncomfortable with the very concept of “instruction” because it suggests that the management of the learning situation is controlled, some would say manipulated by someone other than the learner. They want to invest the controls in the hands of the learner. Thus, Kidd’s call for a science that would help us understand how learners learn instead of how teachers teach seems appropriate enough. The problem is that, if an educator wants to know how to help a learner learn, he needs to know how teachers should behave in order to facilitate learning. That suggests that we do need a theory of teaching or at least a theory of facilitating learning.

Gage (1972:19) discusses the relationship between theories of learning and theories of teaching in this lucid passage: "Teaching becomes the process of providing for the learner what a given learning theory regards as essential. For the conditioning theorists, the teacher must provide cues for a given response and reinforcement of that response. For the modeling theorists, the teacher must provide a model to be observed and imitated. For the cognitive theorist, the teacher must provide a cognitive structure or the stimuli that will produce one." Against that description, andragogy is probably closer to a theory of teaching than to a theory of learning, since it consists largely of suggestions to teachers of adults about what they can do to help adults learn.

Whether andragogy can serve as the foundation for a unifying theory of adult education remains to be seen. At the very least, it identifies some characteristics of adult learners that deserve attention. It has been far more successful than most theory in gaining the attention of practitioners, and it has been moderately successful in sparking debate; it has not been especially successful, however, in stimulating research to test the assumptions. Most important, perhaps, the visibility of andragogy has heightened awareness of the need for answers to three major questions: (1) Is it useful to distinguish the learning needs of adults from those of children? If so, are we talking about dichotomous differences or continuous differences? Or both? (2) What are we really seeking: Theories of learning? Theories of teaching? Both? (3) Do we have, or can we develop, an initial framework on which successive generations of scholars can build? Does andragogy lead to researchable questions that will advance knowledge in adult education?

### **2.9.2 Humanistic theories**

The environment of adult education is, by history and structure, more accepting and less authoritarian than conventional education. Traditionally, adult education has regarded learners as volunteers, they learn whatever they want to learn without faculty committees' determining whether or not it meets externally imposed standards, and

there are no grades or examinations to serve as rewards or punishments. That environment springs largely from humanistic theories of learning.

The humanists assume that there is a natural tendency for people to learn and that learning will flourish if nourishing, encouraging environments are provided. Implementing humanistic theory in the learning society would mean providing multiple options of people, resources, and materials; making them freely available to everyone; helping learners to think through what they want to learn and how they want to learn it; and making few value judgments about the nature or quality of the learning experiences.

There is considerable support for this theory in the research of Tough (1981:56) on self-directed learners. Tough has demonstrated that there is indeed a natural tendency for adults to learn 90% or more of them do so. Although Tough and others interested in self-directed learning have made little effort to relate their research findings to any theory, their approach to the accumulation of knowledge is to find out how people learn and what they choose to learn when they direct their own learning. That is basically a humanistic orientation, since the implication is that educators should try to enhance or facilitate the natural leaning process without imposing their will on the direction that learning should take. The UNESCO report (1972:220) is another example of the strong humanistic influence in adult education. The authors recommend that educational activities should be centered on the learner in order to allow him “greater and greater freedom, as he matures, to decide for himself what he wants to learn and how and where he wants to learn it”.

The essence of humanistic approach concerns the freedom, dignity and autonomy of a learner (adults) in the process of learning (Rogers, 1996:89). In other words, the humanistic approach is concerned with the development of the whole person with a special emphasis on the emotional and affective dimensions of the personality (Rogers, 1996:115). Associated to the work of Maslow (1968: 217), Rogers (1996:120) and Knowles (1996:38) modern contributions in this area which put emphasis on the ‘needs-

meeting and student centered andragogical approach to adult learning' (Elias & Merriam, 1990:10).

According to Baumgartner (2001:3), instructors who favour the behavioural / mechanistic perspective provide students with plenty of opportunities for drills and practice. Using praise, grades, or some small prizes for their efforts positively reinforces learners. Students learn the appropriate response through reinforcement. They see development as correct behavioural responses. People's personalities are a series of habits, and the teacher's job is to get students to develop good habits. Learning is additive in nature. Each set of facts builds on previous knowledge, and this addition of knowledge can be accomplished with various types of reinforcement.

Programmed learning is one method of instruction used by teachers who champion the behavioural/mechanistic approach to development. This type of learning involves assessing a student's prior knowledge about a topic, then basing individual programmes of instruction on the student's level of expertise, and then finally leading the student through a programme of instruction via a book, slides, or a computer programme. The material is divided into manageable portions called frames (Baumgartner, 2001:9). After each frame, a question is asked, and the student responds and receives immediate feedback. For example, learners in a research methods course may be presented with the explanation of a particular experimental research design. Next, they are asked a question about the information in the frame. After a correct response, the computer programme may respond "Great job!" An incorrect response may yield, "Nice try, but try again." This reinforcement results in retention of the information.

The implication here is that humanistic education is about the development of persons, persons who are open to change and continued learning; persons who strive for self-actualisation; and persons who can live as fully functioning individuals (Baumgartner 2001:10). In this case the humanistic approach to learning is applicable to adult learners who are likely to engage in independent learning that recognises their experiences. This idea is also firmly held in the progressivist approach which emphasises experience

centred education, vocational education and democratic education (Elias & Merriam 1990:122). The philosophy behind the establishment of ABET programmes can be further understood within the content of *Activity theory*. This theory was developed to allow programme planners to study Adult Basic Education and Training particularised in various human activities or social practices rather than in literacy in general (Canieso-Doronila, 1996:220).

The humanistic approach, though referred to in most literature as a philosophy, is a challenge to current approaches that are more applicable to children than to adults. One such approach, there is the behaviourist approach which attempts to explain behaviour in terms of the connection between environment and observable responses (Rogers, 1996:150). The problem with the behaviourists is that they ignore changes that cannot be observed; for instance, the learners' experiences.

Therefore, in an attempt to understand adult learners' views regarding ABET programmes, this study will employ theories that consider the humanistic approach to learning. Humanistic "theories" of learning tend to be highly value-driven and hence more like prescriptions (about what ought to happen) rather than descriptions (of what does happen). They emphasise the "natural desire" of everyone to learn. They follow from the idea that learners need to be empowered and need to have control over the learning process. So the teacher relinquishes a great deal of authority and becomes a facilitator.

This will help in determining the impacts these programmes have on learners. Some of the better known of these are based on Maslow's (1968:90) hierarchy of needs, Lewin's (1947:57) force-field analysis, and McClelland's concept of needs for achievement. These theories have their roots in the Social Constructivist theory, which has been adopted in this study as the appropriate theory in understanding the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural women. Constructivism is often articulated in stark contrast to the behaviourist model of learning. Learning is conceived as a process of changing or conditioning observable behaviour as result of selective reinforcement of

an individual's response to events (stimuli) that occur in the environment. The mind is seen as an empty vessel, to be filled or as a mirror reflecting reality. Behaviourism centres on student's efforts to accumulate knowledge of the natural world and on teacher's efforts to transmit it (Jonassen, 1991:52).

### **2.9.3 Development theories**

Another theoretical position that seems compatible with the environment of adult education is that of the developmentalists. Some developmentalists see the various stages and phases of human development as an inevitable unfolding or predetermined patterns (Snafik, 1996:101). While the environment may influence the rate of growth, it has little effect on form and sequence. Other developmentalists place more emphasis on the role of the environment in shaping growth. They are interactionists, who believe that education can play a critical role in "pulling" the individual into ever higher levels of development. Where environmental stimulation is lacking, the individual may stagnate at lower levels of development. Some developmentalists take the position that difficulties will occur if a given phase of development does not emerge "on time". Others, most commonly those concerned stages of development, take the position that rates of development show extreme variation. Indeed, most people never reach the highest stages of development. While the order of succession is common for all people, some people may pass through two stages of development in a lifetime, whereas others may pass through nine or ten stages.

Developmental interactionists are not as willing to suspend judgment as humanists are. While they too would give considerable attention to creating an environment rich in educational resources and encouragement, they would take a more active role in deciding what kinds of learning experiences are most likely to advance the individual to the next stage of growth. They would emphasise challenge and stimulation in the environment, whereas humanists would stress acceptance and encouragement. Despite some differences in the importance attached to environmental factors,



developmentalists subscribe to four basic presuppositions: (1) each stage of development is an integrated whole. (2) A particular stage is integrated into the next stage and finally replaced by it. (3) Each individual acts out his own syntheses; he does not merely adopt a synthesis provided by family or society. (4) The individual must pass through all previous stages before he can move on to the next stage.

There is plenty of support in the research literature for theoretical positions with respect to both phases and stages of adult development. Common plateaus have been demonstrated, transition points identified, and sequences documented. Moreover, research supports the notion that environmental challenges provide times when adults are especially receptive to new learning.

#### **2.9.4 Behaviourism**

While behaviourist positions of learning sometimes seem at odds with the well-publicised, student-centered attitudes of many adult educators, behaviourism is frequently the foundation for one of the largest segment of adult education, namely job and skill training. Many of the self-instructional packages prevalent in occupational and professional programs are direct applications of theories formulated by behaviourists. Such learning materials usually have the following characteristic, as Srinivasan (1977: 12) notes:

1. Objectives must be clearly stated in specific and measurable behavioural terms.
2. The learning tasks must be analytically designed in relation to desire and behaviours.
3. Content must be broken into small steps which are easy to master. These steps must be designed to encourage self-instruction and require an overt response by the learner (for example, filling in the blanks or selecting a response from multiple options).

4. The materials should provide a means for immediate feedback so that the learner will know if his response was correct and so that he can be aware of the pace of his progress.
5. The subject matter and activities must adhere to a set sequence and process conducive to mastery.
6. The successful completion of each step and the chain of steps must provide its own reward or incentive.
7. The responsibility for ensuring that learning takes place must rest with the materials themselves as learning instruments and not with any instructor, leader, or helper.

Programmed instructions, computer-assisted instruction, personalised systems of instructions (PSI) and other applications of behaviourism have been growing rapidly in traditional education, and their convenience for all-campus learners plus their general effectiveness with well-motivated, self-disciplined adults makes them likely candidates for growth in adult education as well. Although variations on the theme of programmed instruction are dramatic applications of behaviourism, the general principles of behaviourism are present in most skills training where the learning task is broken into segments or tasks and there is a “correct response,” which is rewarded. Such reward, according to behaviourists, assures learning and repetition of the desired behaviour.

### **2.9.5 Elementary function theory**

Vygotsky differentiated between our higher and lower mental functions. According to Vygotsky (1992:27) lower or elementary functions are genetically inherited; they are our natural mental abilities. In contrast, our higher mental functions develop through social interaction, being socially or culturally mediated. Behavioural options are limited when functioning occurs at an elementary level. Without the learning that occurs as a result of social interaction, without self-awareness or the use of signs and symbols that allow us to think in more complex ways, we would remain slaves to the situation, responding directly to the environment (Vygotsky, 1992:30).

Mediation occurs through the use of tools or signs of a culture (Vygotsky, 1992:37). Language and symbolism are used initially to mediate contact with the social environment, then within ourselves. When the cultural artifacts become internalised humans acquire the capacity for higher order thinking. Learning is a constructivist activity. According to Vygotsky (1992:60) cognitive development is a process in which language is a crucial tool for determining how the human being will learn how to *think* because advanced modes of thought are transmitted to them by means of words.

### **2.9.6 Experiential learning theory**

Carl Rogers is best known as an American psychologist and the pioneer of a form of psychotherapy which takes a “client-centered,” humanistic approach. His contributions to the field of adult learning include his experiential theory. The premise of the theory was that all human beings have a natural desire to continue learning (Rogers, 1998:134). Rogers divided learning into two categories: meaningless and experiential. According to Rogers (1998:134) meaningless learning refers to rote memorisation of things, such as the multiplication table. Significant or experiential learning is learning that involves using knowledge to address or fulfill the needs of the learner. This involves learning that can benefit the learner, such as a skill.

The job of the teacher is to facilitate experiential learning (Rogers, 1998:65). Ways in which to do this include setting a positive atmosphere for learning, and clarifying the objectives for the learner. The instructor must organise and make resources available to the learner, and when instructing must be able to balance both the emotional and intellectual components of learning (Rogers, 1999:66). Finally, the instructor should share thoughts and feelings with students but not be dominating, which rings in tune with Knowles` (1998:123) theory to respect adults. For the personal growth and development of the student, Rogers (1999:72) suggests significant learning takes place when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the student. In order to teach more difficult subjects, such as learning that changes attitudes and perspectives,

the best learning takes place when external threats are kept at a minimum. Learning increases fast when threats to the learner are minimised, when there is less at stake and when the topic is more agreeable to the student. One last suggestion Rogers (1999:87) made is that self-initiated learning is the most lasting and pervasive.

### **2.9.7 Theory applied to adult literacy education**

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator who had a theory named after him called the Freire approach, also known as the problem-posing approach, psycho-social approach, learner-centered approach, among others. It has been used in third world countries as an approach to improve literacy and in the United States in informal literacy classes to improve English literacy. Because of the many names to the approach, there are many educators around the world who do not realise their methods are influenced by Freire's theory. The approach involves teaching language based on the cultural and personal experiences of the learner (Freire, 1991:21).

Two of the most distinctive features in his theory include dialogue and problem posing. Dialogue refers to the interaction between students and teachers, where both parties discuss issues of concerns in their own lives (Freire, 1991:29). According to Freire (1990:76), sometimes classrooms are arranged in what are called "culture circles," where both student and instructor share information.

This feature came as a result of opposition to what Freire described as "the banking concept of education," where teachers simply spoke while students passively received information. Freire and his supporters were opposed to this idea. The second feature includes problem-posing, in which cultural themes are presented in the form of open-ended problems, are incorporated into materials like pictures, comics, short stories, songs, etc., and then are used to generate discussion (Freire, 1991:67).

This leads students to identify the problem in the material, go about discussing it, and finally propose a solution to the problem. Ideally, this will lead to actions where

students' reading and writing skills will be required and will give them a reason to increase literacy.

### **2.9.8 Practical/Contextual subtheory**

Sternberg's third subtheory of intelligence, called practical or contextual, "deals with the mental activity involved in attaining fit to context" (Sternberg, 1985:45). Through the three processes of adaptation, shaping, and selection, individuals create an ideal fit between themselves and their environment. This type of intelligence is often referred to as "street smarts."

*Adaptation* occurs when one makes a change within oneself in order to better adjust to one's surroundings (Sternberg, 1985:33). For example, when the weather changes and temperatures drop, people adapt by wearing extra layers of clothing to remain warm. Contextual subtheory's concept of pragmatic intelligence similarly supports the role of the environment in the process of learning (Sternberg's 1997:61). The contextual subtheory involves the ability to adapt to and shape the environment so that it fits better with one's skills, interests and values.

*Shaping* occurs when one changes their environment to better suit one's needs (Sternberg, 1985:47). A teacher may invoke the new rule of raising hands to speak to ensure that the lesson is taught with least possible disruption. The process of *selection* is undertaken when a completely new alternate environment is found to replace the previous, unsatisfying environment to meet the individual's goals (Sternberg, 1985:47). For instance, immigrants leave their lives in their homeland countries where they endure economical and social hardships and come to America in search of a better and less strained life.

The effectiveness with which an individual fits to his or her environment and contends with daily situations reflects degree of intelligence. Sternberg's third type of giftedness, called practical giftedness, involves the ability to apply synthetic and analytic skills to everyday situations. Practically gifted people are superb in their ability to succeed in any

setting (Sternberg, 1997:36). Sternberg also acknowledges that an individual is not restricted to having excellence in only one of these three intelligences. Many people may possess an integration of all three and have high levels of all three intelligences.

In this case, adults learn through social interaction and collaboration. This is in contrast to Roger's (1999:224) individual or radical constructivism in which more emphasis is placed on the mental processes of the individual than on the context in which individuals learn. It is for this reason that Vygotsky (1992:36) gives prominence to social factors in learning. Unlike Piaget who stresses the cognitive mechanisms of learning, Vygotsky (1992:41) locates the knowledge of an individual in a dynamic social context. Consistent with this, Gravett (2005:23) maintains: "social constructivists claim that the meaning-making activities of the individual do not take place in isolation, but instead are shaped by the context, culture and tools in the learning situation."

Here, Vygotsky (1992:45) refers to the role of language, dialogue and shared understanding as elements of culture that shape the learning situation. A negotiation, in this case, is a key word in the process of learning and serves two important functions, both of which are aimed at the development of a learning community (Gravett, 2005:25). These functions are:

- To establish norms of interaction that may govern how the members of the group relate to one another, and
- Help learners, by means of reasoning together, to move towards the view of reality shared by those who are viewed as experts in the field of inquiry.

### **2.9.9 Relevance of learning theories to this study**

This overview of some of the more prevalent learning theories does not pretend to be a comprehensive review of all the theoretical formulations that might contribute to the development of theory to facilitate adult learning. Indeed, with the exception of

andragogy, there is no assumption that the characteristics of the learner need to be considered.

Most existing learning theories are more easily applied to what is learned than to who is doing the learning. Whereas it would be naive to argue that adults should be approached with humanistic, behaviouristic, or developmental learning theories, it does make sense to argue that humanistic theory appears relevant to learning self-understanding; behaviourism seems useful in teaching practical skills; and developmental theory has much to offer to goals of teaching ego, intellectual, or moral development. Thus, the theoretical orientation of teachers may be related more to the characteristics of their subject matter than to the characteristics of their students. I believe, however, that the profession of adult education will be advanced if adult educators are encouraged to think about the special characteristics of adult learners and the text in which learning takes place.

## **2.10 The social context in which learning takes place**

Most learning theory in adult education draws heavily on a psychological perspective, since education deals with both adult development and traditional approaches to learning (Jarvis, 1987:2). It is therefore important to understand the social contexts in which learning takes place. The social milieu in which adult learning takes place has many facets to it. Socialisation can be seen as encompassing all these forms of which cultural beliefs and traditions, the societies in which we live, relationships within the workplace and also the social roles and personal experiences that we share with others all form part of the learning situation.

Learning does not occur in isolation from the world in which the learner lives, but rather, it is intimately related to that world and affected by it. This is consistent with the view expressed by Jarvis (1987:19) in which he states that "learning of all kinds begins with direct perception of something in life".

Women's learning takes place in a variety of social contexts: in community groups, in the home, in religious associations and in more formal educational settings. This literally implies that learning takes place in every context of their lives. Unfortunately, formal scholarship on women's learning paints only a partial picture of these diverse environments in which learning takes place (Hayes, 2000:23). Despite the fact that it is possible to say much more about formal education in describing the social contexts of women's learning, I wish to stress and acknowledge the significance of all social contexts in understanding women's learning. These relate to settings, climate, prior knowledge and experience, as well as cultural interaction in the learning situation.

In order to have a greater understanding of how women learn within these settings we must understand how women respond to other issues related to these particular settings, for example, race, gender, class and other structures. Hayes (2000:26) states that in the past it was assumed that women experienced oppression uniformly across social contexts. However more recent feminist theories suggest that the complexity of individual situations and the interaction of multiple social factors lead to greater diversity in women's experiences and their response to dominant social structures. Radical and liberal theories shape both our external circumstances and our internal consciousness (Hayes, 2000:26). However, women have to become aware of these social forces and need to act in opposition to them.

As stated before, past experience and prior knowledge are seen to be rich reservoirs for future learning. All learning begins with experience in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Adult learning can thus be viewed as being both an experiential and a reflective process. Several studies done (Knowles, 1980:66; Knox, 1996:125) indicate that adult learners possess a reservoir of experience and that they can be viewed as rich resources in the learning situation.

Adult learners are seen to have a problem-centred approach to learning and are therefore motivated to learn by internal factors rather than external factors. In utilisation of this experience, adults are thus able to form a basis for future learning. However,



Knowles (1980:76) states that experience may only be used if the learner is enabled to capitalise upon it and this may depend upon the situation in which a new learning experience occurs. Hence, the social situation in which the learning experience is provided may determine the extent to which previous learning is used, and this is a significant factor in adult learning.

Despite possessing past experience, the social context in which learning takes place allows learners the opportunity to give their input in terms of settings climate, content required and expectations in relation to the environment. It is important to note the role of emotions in the education process. An emotional climate that is perceived by the learner as hostile or fiercely competitive is not the best place for most adults to learn. If the atmosphere is seen to be tense and facilitators demand high standards of performance before adult learners can adjust or settle in, this could lead to an early drop-out of learners. It is therefore important for facilitators to make learners feel welcome, and perhaps to give them assistance with study skills.

By creating a climate in which each participant feels comfortable, secure and safe teachers create conditions for successful learning to take place (Knox, 1996:125). In this way, learning becomes more stimulating and challenging. This view is consistent with the view expressed by Knowles (1980:66) in which he emphasises that adult learners are diverse in nature, owing to their vastly different experiences. By creating a social climate which will enhance learning, one is not only able to acknowledge certain assumptions about experiences that particular women may have but more importantly that these assumptions be shared with other women. It should not be difficult to provide a learning environment that is welcoming and supportive, with rules that are made in negotiation with learners and administered for the welfare of the learner and not for the comfort of the personnel in the educational institution.

If facilitators develop a sound relationship with their learners, based on a one-on-one situation, it allows for immediacy as questions are answered or issues confronted as they arise. There is also better engagement; as such a situation allows programmes to

meet the needs of the learners. This type of relationship will allow for opportunities of disagreement in a friendly relationship that also invites honest opposition. In developing a sound relationship it is important for facilitators to acknowledge and affirm at all levels, the response that learners give. Affirmation is not always affirmation of the idea but always of the person (Vella, 1994:70). This will therefore assist in helping the learner to learn and develop. These views are consistent with those expressed by Gravett (2001:35) and Knowles (1980:67) in which they state that there needs to be freedom of expression, dialogic participation, mutuality of responsibilities in determining specific goals, activities and evaluation. As stated before, learning is a social process. It is therefore important for women in a learning environment or educational institution to have their experiences acknowledged, as learning would be regarded as one of the multiple roles that women perform within their daily functions.

## **2.11 ABET curriculum design**

Curriculum design in adult education is more diverse than school-centred education in terms of aims, content and methods. There exists very little material related to adult basic education in terms of curriculum design, as most of the work done on curriculum development has been done in relation to school-based education (Griffin, 1998:26). The present design concentrates more on the philosophical contents of the curriculum and therefore tends to neglect the more practical aspects of the curriculum, which is of greater relevance to the adult learner. There is a concern that most ABET materials and teaching have focused on the basic education and literacy components of ABET and have not incorporated the skills training aspect which should be aligned with an ABET programme. This view is consistent with those of both Morphet (1996:56) and Walters (2007:99) in the sense that it limits the appeal of potential learners, who see ABET as assisting them in attaining a better life and in particular, earning a better living.

Although ABET curricula may currently be viewed in a negative light, the need exists for curricula to be redesigned so that they meet learners needs and standards, rather than

the standards of faculty committees and institutional requirements. The interim guidelines regarding ABET learning programmes is viewed mainly as concentrating on issues related to numeracy and language which tend to be based on outdated materials (Morphet, 1996:261). These curricula are therefore regarded as not being sensitive to the needs of women or adults in general and are often seen as reinforcing stereotypes. These stereotypes are evident in the subjects that learners do. An example of this is that women learners were seen to be doing domestic subjects such as home economics rather than engineering (Morphet, 1996:261).

Although research by Wolpe (1997:151) has shown that women learners express more interest in learning than men do, males consider their own needs first and tend to ignore the needs of females when designing curriculums. Within the institutions the male teachers are viewed by some of the female learners, as being the sole authority and in which grades and credits are used to assume conformance to certain standards. This view has been advanced by Wolpe (1997:161) in which he argues that adult programmes are developed to benefit schoolteachers and institutional aims, rather than the learner's requirements. Teachers are also not trained to handle specific gender issues thereby not making them sensitive to women-related issues in particular. This includes issues such as sexism, bureaucracy and equality between learners. It is for these reasons that feminist writers often challenge the design of curricula.

Hayes (2000:26) examines the structural oppression of women and encourages women to equip themselves with the tools to challenge their oppression. Women who attend these programmes should not only concentrate on the technical skills that they learn in these programmes, but also encourage them to work towards their strategic needs by encouraging them to question curriculum designs and programmes. Strategic needs such as unfair labour practices, equality within management positions and equal opportunities in both public and private spheres are often totally ignored. This can be seen as an approach to reconstructing the curriculum so that issues of gender are at least recognised and perhaps explored. Areas such as attitudes, language and power in

relation to the curricula need to be changed to provide an emancipatory framework for women learning.

Curricula are still designed so as to domesticate women in the sense of teaching them courses like home economics instead of sciences. The challenge that confronts ABET programmes at this point is to consider how the design of a curriculum that can transform attitudes towards gender, which may be experienced as oppressive, and which may have limiting effects on the future possibilities of peoples' lives especially women. An important factor to consider is the analysis of the social milieu in which education is set.

The curriculum tended to limit the articulation of positions that are construed to be oppositional to the dominant discourse (Weil, 1998:54). Participants noted that the state argued that learners had common concerns and were passive consumers in order to legitimate its tight control over the curriculum development process.

Planning ABET programmes could also be transformative if it is based on networking with learners and potential learners, across the various geopolitical and social contexts in order to make it learner-driven. Planners should establish networks in all divisions in society such as women, the poor and cultural minorities in urban and rural areas to collectively determine the learner's needs. This approach necessitates collaboration between the various sections of the community in the planning process. The planning would be reflective of the existence of the communities in Namibia rather than resorting to an expert-based technical planning exercise. According to Boler, Imbrahim and Shaw (2003:165) networking would facilitate learner participation and challenge pre-existing structural inequality by empowering learners to challenge their domination through a participatory ABET programmes. It is also suggested that ABET should employ participatory techniques to enable learners to challenge social inequalities beyond ABET skills (Boler et al., 2003:170).

## **2.12 ABET teachers and teaching methods**

Kanpol (1995:67) observes that teachers must use the learner's experiences to allow a mutual connection between curriculum content and the history of learners. They must create empathy for the learners and allow students to engage in collective interpretation of their realities in a non-threatening and noncompetitive atmosphere. Teachers should adopt the Freirean approach based on working with learners to engage in open and collaborative discussion of issues. The dialogue should facilitate growth and learning of both teachers and learners (Freire & Macedo, 1997:45). Teachers should work with learners to interrogate issues they have hitherto taken for granted about their lives in order to raise their consciousness. ABET teachers should also be cultural workers sympathetic to the cause of those people's knowledge and symbols of learning.

Lake (1999:78) cautions that the selection of literacy textbooks are part of the selective tradition which privilege certain cultural constructs at the expense of others. Textbooks should be scrutinised based on how they reflect both local and national issues. They should enable learners to access alternative ways of interpreting reality. The teachers' task is primarily to help learners dialogue about issues and make choices independent of the teachers' ideological persuasions. They should provide alternatives and not impose solutions on the learners. Texts are not neutral assemblages of knowledge that suddenly appear in the literacy program. They facilitate hegemonic control by the dominant group. Education is invariably implicated in the politics of domination and resistance (Apple, 1996:79).

Literacy instruction should be designed to maximise the potential for learners to empower themselves. The lessons are based on a series of prepackaged sequentially primers. Most teachers have a minimum qualification of standard seven and do not have sufficient insights or the training to empower learners (Maruatona, 1995:123).

Of recent, pilot training programmes that have been conducted in countries such as El Salvador, Uganda and Bangladesh, have revealed that the level of ABET workers

education varies (Torres, 2002:30). Although these research studies on one hand, confirm that there is no uniform qualification required for one to become a promoter, on the other hand, they reveal that there are qualities that organisers and promoters should possess. These qualities include: basic literacy skills, commitment or dedication to work, familiarity with learners' socio-economic level, good communication skills and respect of learners (Torres, 2002:36).

Although these qualities have also been identified as guiding criteria for the selection of Literacy Promoters in the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN), the evaluation study by the Directorate of Adult Basic Education in 1999 revealed that 29, 2% of Literacy ABET Promoters lacked training, and those that received training lacked technical skills to handle certain topics. Most of the teachers in the ABET training are not well trained to teach adult learners. They were recruited to provide employment for the teeming youths who were unemployed. Therefore, they only attended workshops organised by counselor associations occasionally, which meant they required more training to suit the purpose of ABET programmes for rural women.

Rogers (1999:221) identified six literacy approaches. These are:

- *Approach to literacy is Positive not Negative:* The real literacy approach does not start off by stressing the disadvantages of being illiterate nor does it exaggerate the benefits of learning to read and write skillfully. It starts by saying that every person, whatever the level of literacy skills (even entirely non-literate), is engaged in literate task activities during their lives (Rogers 1999: 223).
- *Learning from real Literacy Tasks:* the term 'Real' refers to the activities that go on in the real world outside the classroom. In this context the 'real literacies approach' starts with real literacy tasks which individuals undertake in their own lives rather than with generated literacy tasks set out in a primer.

- *Adult Experiential Learning*: this idea has been widely discussed in Knowles (1998:198). The 'real literacies approach' asserts that adults learn from their daily experiences rather than from pre-set prescribed learning programmes. Rogers also made significant contributions to the field of adult education, with his experiential theory of learning. Rogers maintained that all human beings have a natural desire to learn. He defined two categories of learning: meaningless, or cognitive learning (e.g., memorizing multiplication tables) and significant, or experiential (applied knowledge which addresses the needs and wants of the learner, e.g., performing first aid on one's child).

According to Rogers (1969:76), the role of the teacher is to facilitate experiential learning by:

- setting a positive climate for learning
  - clarifying the purposes of the learner(s)
  - organising and making available learning resources
  - balancing intellectual and emotional components of learning and
  - sharing feelings and thoughts with learners but not dominating
- 
- *Contextualisation and Decontextualization*: the "real literacies approach" argues that literacy is not just decoding words and sentences it is rather finding out the meaning of those words to create meaningful messages.
- 
- *Real Literacy Material or Real Literacy Tasks*: In the traditional approach to literacy learning, materials are special teaching/learning texts which providers prepare and issue or are pieces of writing created specifically to help people to learn something; for example, books, booklets and other printed materials. But in the real literacies approach materials are not specifically written for learning. They are authentic written or printed texts, which exist in the local community. For instance, these materials may include election posters, bank forms, religious materials, calendars, newspapers, and so forth (Rogers, 1999:81).

According to Knowles (1998:43) ABET facilitators should apply the principles of adult learning as they follows:

- Adults are *autonomous* and *self-directed*. They need to be free to direct themselves. Their teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them. Specifically, they must get participants perspectives on what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests. They should allow the participants to assume responsibility for presentations and group leadership. They have to be sure to act as facilitators, guiding participants to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts. Finally, they must show participants how the class will help them reach their goals (e.g., via a personal goals sheet).
- Adults have accumulated a foundation of *life experiences* and *knowledge* that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education. They need to connect learning to this knowledge/experience base. To help them do so, they should draw out participants experience and knowledge which is relevant to the topic. They must relate theories and concepts to the participants and recognise the value of experience in learning.
- Adults are *goal-oriented*. Upon enrolling in a course, they usually know what goal they want to attain. They therefore, appreciate an educational programme that is organised and has clearly defined elements. Instructors must show participants how this class will help them attain their goals. This classification of goals and course objectives must be done early in the course.
- Adults are *relevancy-oriented*. They must see a reason for learning something. Learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them. Therefore, instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before the course begins. This also means that theories and concepts must be related to a setting familiar to participants. This need can be fulfilled by letting participants choose projects that reflect their own interests.



- Adults are *practical*, focusing on the aspects of a lesson that are useful to them in their work. They may not be interested in knowledge for its own sake. Instructors must tell participants explicitly how the lesson will be useful to them on the job.
- As do all learners, adults need to be shown *respect*. Instructors must acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom. These adults should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge and allowed to voice their opinions freely in class.

### **2.13 ABET programme and women empowerment**

As mentioned previously, the social contexts or social situation in which one finds oneself plays an enormous role in terms of self development, gaining of self confidence and also strengthening one's relationships with other women. Within the social milieu that women find themselves, research indicates that a definite connection begins to develop between women who have had similar experiences. In a relationship in which women can speak freely and hear their own voices clearly, they are allowed to build a sense of confidence within themselves (Gilligan, 1993:5). Because of similar past experiences, a special connection and a relationship develops between numerous women as it allows them to share their past experiences. According to Belenky, Bond and Weinstock (1996:24) this occurs across all races, class and culture, thereby establishing an inner strength within women to develop from being an object to a subject.

What then does the term "voice" signify in terms of women learning? According to feminist authors such as Belenky et al. (1996:17) the word voice is seen as being a powerful metaphor for women's intellectual development. This view is consistent with the views expressed by Hayes et al. (2000:79) in that the term voice is associated with communication, is seen as a means of connecting with other people, it assists in developing ones identity and most importantly it is seen as a means of developing

personal power. When a woman says that she is "developing a voice," it is likely she is claiming the power of her mind and thus becomes more self-directed (Belenky, et al., 1991:7). When this occurs it is likely that the woman is becoming more aware of the collaborative nature of her construction of knowledge. This view is consistent with the views of Belenky et al. (1996:8) in which they state that people who struggle against oppression often link the development of voice with the development of mind.

For human development to be successful, it must begin with the individual. If women as individuals are not inwardly motivated, then efforts to promote change will not be sustainable – they will remain under the power of others and be oppressed. In trying to attain personal development women as individuals need to develop a sense of self-respect, and thus become more self confident, self reliant, co-operative and tolerant of others. This is achieved by becoming aware of their shortfalls as well as the potential that they see in themselves which will cause a positive change in their life. It is therefore evident that the term "voice" is closely related to the term "self". Only through working with others, and acquiring new skills and knowledge they are able to move from been seen as an object to becoming a subject. The significance of development or developing a voice is that one has the ability to explore one's thoughts and feelings to be heard, noticed and understood by others.

In developing a voice, one transcends from being an object to being a subject. For some women this transformation could take a lifetime while for others it could occur much sooner. When women as individuals are regarded as being an object it signifies that she could be associated with silence, lack of dialogue and relationships with others, and being "objects" possess all their intelligence, however because they have not yet developed a voice for themselves, they are afraid to express their views as they feel they will make mistakes and be laughed at. They need to understand that by making mistakes they are in effect learning from their mistakes (Belenky et al., 1996:24). Most of these women are metaphorically referred to as being "Deaf and Dumb" (Belenky et al., 1996: 26). "Deaf", in the sense that they feel they cannot learn from the words of others or are afraid to learn as they feel inferior. "Dumb", because they feel voiceless.

They are unable to express themselves in a discussion or in dialogue. It is not that such women are seen to be "stupid", it is merely that they are afraid, have no self-confidence and at times are silent by nature or silenced by other factors such as been discriminated against by males or other females. Some of these women perceive of words as weapons. Words are used to separate and diminish them, instead of connecting and empowering them (Gilligan, 1995:56). Words are therefore used as a form of oppression to silence such women. While they feel passive, reactive and dependent, they see authorities as being all powerful. Their actions are thus in the form of unquestioned submission to the immediate commands of authorities, which could be their opposing gender or other dominant women.

Belenky et al. (1966:13) asked the question, "Suppose we asked ourselves, what does a women need to know?" The answer to this was stated as follows, that women need to know that the mind makes mistakes and in making mistakes, they are actually learning. Mistakes are therefore part of the learning process and women must not regard themselves as been "stupid" when they make mistakes. However according to responses from different women in a study by Belenky et al. (1996:17) regardless of their age, their social class, race or academic achievements, all argued that women need to know that they are capable of intelligent thoughts. It is therefore only through development of their inner voice and the ability to express themselves that these intelligent thoughts are heard. The knowledge gained through life experiences is thus a rich resource not only for themselves but for others as well.

How and where can women start developing the inner voice that can lead to liberation, emancipation, increased power, identity and independence? If women as individuals are able to understand, remember and interpret what they have learnt, they tend to begin to think of themselves as a learner for the first time, who is developing into a person capable of making decisions for themselves. In developing this inner force, one notion is that women need to form a connection or a relationship with others. In most situations, women feel closer to other women as this makes them feel safe. The essence of a relationship is therefore characterised by a connection between people of different

cultures, levels, and backgrounds. It is through this connection with others that women are able to learn from each other. A connection that is established between women can be seen as their best protection against the risk of disconnection and psychological dissociation. It is therefore through dialogue, accompanied by critical thinking, that many women are encouraged to think critically. Without dialogue, there is no communication and without communication, individuals are not able to acquire new skills or knowledge. Every woman no matter how submerged she may be in a culture of silence is capable of looking critically at situations and by means of dialogue should be able to express her views concerning a specific situation. However, only if women appropriate the proper “tools” i.e. support systems, materials etc. for such encounters or challenge that face them, will they become more aware of both personal and social realities and their own perceptions. In many cases women may already have these tools but in order to give optimal means to use these tools, society's structures need to be changed so as to advance women's learning.

However, women learners need to guard against being only recipients of knowledge. Women who rely on received knowledge only think of words as central to the knowing process. They merely learn by listening to others instead of partaking in the discussion. Many reasons have been offered for such a situation among them being a lack of confidence, being immersed in a culture of silence for so long, a lack of trust in themselves or being afraid of criticism by others. Belenky et al. (1996:37) views are consistent with this, as they state that although women may tend to take in what others have to offer, they may have little confidence in their own ability to speak. Such women may only learn in the true sense if they are listening, engaging in dialogue, constructing and interrogating the knowledge, translating it, understanding it and possibly applying it. It is only through these steps that they can begin to strengthen and empower themselves and others. This may enable better problem solving for themselves and the opportunities to discover and critique the limits of received knowledge.

Moving from a mode of silence into a mode of speech as a gesture of defiance is crucial for the oppressed, the exploited and those who struggle. Through developing a voice,

women are seen as entering a new life and thus developing themselves. It is through developing a powerful voice, and by being able to talk back that they are able to transcend being perceived as an object rather than as a subject. By taking action and not being static, moving from a mode of silence to outspokenness, they are able to develop an inner source of strength. They become their own authority. Women need to discover an inner power, which exists in all of them. This transformation in women is commonly associated with changes in their personal lives. This new approach or position that women adopt is seen as a means to redefine the nature of authority. The internal voice is seen as becoming a sense of self for her and developing a sense of control. In perceiving themselves as subjects, women see this change as an intuitive reaction. It is seen as a change that they feel, rather than actively pursued or constructed. However, their goal is to have first hand experience of knowing what they want.

As women begin to restructure their lives and form new perceptions, males tend to play a less prominent role in their lives. Women need to recognise that the male voice is no longer central or the sole voice of authority. Subjectivity can thus be seen as an adaptive move accompanied by an increased experience of inner strength, self-value, possessiveness and optimism. Although such women may feel that they are intellectually or emotionally isolated from others, they begin to actively analyse their past and current interactions with others, to the ultimate benefit of their own learning and empowerment.

It is a common experience that illiterate people, due to their uneducated state, keep quiet and let those who are educated participate actively in economic activities. It is the role of ABET programmes to empower such people through the offering of literacy and other skills so that they can enter into the socio-economic and political sphere of the Namibian society (Ministry of Education, 2003:26). Women expect to receive education, which will help them improve their quality of life. It is therefore very important that women are offered skills that will help them cope in this changing society. With technology advancing every day, those who cannot handle reading, writing and

arithmetic are usually the poorest in the society and they will continually find themselves at a disadvantage (Hinzen, 1993:258). Hutton (1992:43), states literacy is a vital component in development and transformation.

According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (1994:4), the low literacy of adult women, particularly in rural areas, limits their ability to participate in decision-making structures and to benefit from training and extension services. Through acquisition of literacy, women could become self-confident, critical and boldly exercise their rights and responsibilities as human beings. The real aim of education must be to liberate women from their helplessness. The poor should be liberated. However, literacy cannot liberate them if they are only made literate, which means that literacy should be accompanied by life skills. Through educational empowerment they will know their rights. Claessen and Wesemael (1992:81) also state that literacy should be related to other aspects of the learner's daily lives.

Literate women are more likely to ensure that their children attend school and since they are able to help their children at home, their children will learn to read at an early age. These children can also enjoy better health which can greatly affect their prospects in life. Robinson-pant (2005:4) has a similar view when he encourages parental involvement in school matters, where he talks about parents visiting schools and becoming acquainted with classroom procedures. Parental involvement, which usually rests on the shoulders of mothers, can only be effective when parents are literate. Women need to be literate in order to be involved in school matters that affect their children's education.

## **2.14 Poverty and illiteracy**

Poverty and illiteracy are closely linked. Both poverty and illiteracy are part of the system of deprivation and discrimination. Literacy leads to better health, better nutrition, lower infant mortality, better child education and fewer children. According to Street (2002:31), illiteracy is the cause of the impoverishment, exploitation and oppression of

the poor. In Africa, according to Hutton (1992:19), black people were not given access to literacy on an effective scale. Mostly, they were actively discouraged from becoming literate. He also stated that the problem has been worsened by policies which led to the creation of restrictive education systems such as Bantu Education, which deliberately limited the participation of blacks in the modern industrial literate world.

Poverty reinforces illiteracy while economic well being strengthens the educational base. According to Suratwala (2002:19), the economic conditions of the poor families in rural areas require not only the husband and the wife, but also the small children to work either full or part-time either as labourers on the farm, in factories or forests. They have to be active in the handcraft trade and services for the survival and livelihood of the family. In most families, girls stay at home to look after the children and to help their mothers with household duties. Those children, who somehow manage to enroll at school, cannot attend classes regularly because of poverty and lack of educational aids.

Poverty is broadly conceptualised. George and Wilding (2002:323) argue that poverty should be broadly conceived as a deprivation of basic capabilities. To them illiteracy is among other human risks which can be used to measure the human poverty state. Other aspects of measuring the human poverty index are: a long and healthy life, knowledge, economic provision and social exclusion. Therefore, a person who is illiterate and lacks knowledge is poor because of his/her low productive capacity, which leads to social exclusion. This implies that illiteracy has a big impact compared to other human risks.

Traditionally, women in black societies are compelled to be financially unusually dependent on their husbands. Should a husband die, the family's future is threatened. According to Sloane (1990:57), female-headed families have a much higher incidence of poverty than male headed ones. There are four groups amongst black women that are most likely to find themselves in difficulties; they are widows, divorcees, wives of migrants and all women who head their own households. Life becomes difficult for a widow that is used to receiving a regular allowance from her husband. Wives of

migrants also suffer from poverty because they do not receive financial support every month and when sent money; they receive a small share of their husbands` income. This is worse if the husband has started a new family in the city. The cost of living in cities is very high and the city family`s demand may drain his financial resources.

According to Bholá (2005:407), poverty reduction cannot be actualised without education. Appropriate adult education can be responsive to the needs of the poor and can be immediate in bringing knowledge and skills to women. Women play a vital role in national development; they are not only users of basic services, bearers and socialisers of children and keepers of the home, they also represent a product potential, which is not being fully tapped (Chucks, 2004:231). Adults with limited skills are more likely to live in poverty, draining local resources to provide benefits and services (Clair, 2007:67).

## **2.15 Motivation and barriers to ABET participation**

Adult learner`s motivation to participate in literacy education has been the subject of several decades of research and theorising in adult education. We now have a variety of valuable conceptual frameworks explaining adult learner`s varied motivations to participate in literacy education (Mezirow, Darkenwald & Knox, 1995:98). Adult`s motivation to participate in continued learning is of immediate interest, as lifelong learning is considered as the solution to the pressing problems of unemployment.

Many literatures concerning motivation and adult education maintain that individuals are innately motivated to learn and conclude that motivation problems result from various dispositional, situational and structural impediments (Ahl, 2006:20). If such barriers are removed, adults will be naturally motivated to educate themselves. Barriers to participation are found to be of several kinds:

(a) *Cultural*: common patterns in role and status of women emerge across countries, despite widely different circumstances. They reflect the cultural and cross cultural social



norms and traditions by which the subservient status of women is maintained. In some societies these create "almost insuperable obstacles to women's participation in education" (Evans & King, 1991:54). Analyses of participation rates in different social and cultural contexts show that they reflect closely the relative status of women and the power of tradition.

(b) *Attitudinal*: perceived differences in male and female roles and capabilities, inculcated through socialisation in the home and family, reinforced through schooling, through vocational/career guidance services, through experiences in the workplace, peer pressure and through absence of female role models. Enormous motivation and self-confidence is needed to break through these barriers. Lack of confidence and self esteem is itself a major barrier, and one which every successful initiative in this field has found it essential to address directly and specifically (Evans & King, 1991:67).

(c) *Situational*: the barriers faced generally by women in attending courses apply: family commitments, lack of partner support, financial, living in rural/isolated areas. Fees requirements are major barriers where women do not have independent control of resources, where they are dependent on male partners who are unsupportive. Male partners are more likely to be unsupportive of entry to non-traditional, male oriented spheres (Evans & King, 1991:68). Women who do have their own source of income are also, on average, lower paid than their male counterparts. Poverty is a major situational factor in many regions. Trivedi (1999:190) states that the combined effects of poverty and social/cultural sanctions create almost insuperable barriers.

(d) *Institutional barriers*: these are barriers which arise because of the ways in which institutions make their programmes available. Significant general barriers which apply to women are well documented:

- fixed hours;
- substantial attendance requirement;
- lockstep approach to curriculum; makes missed sessions hard to catch up on;

- lack of child care facilities;
- off putting, "unfriendly" course information;

Cox (1992:166), identified three reasons why adults participate in education or training: redress, revision or retraining. They are seeking to redress the balance or catch up with an education they failed to obtain when younger. McGivney and Sims (1996:75) also identified three types of participation in adult learning: goal-oriented participants, where learning is undertaken in order to achieve objectives; learning-oriented, where the knowledge gained is of prime importance; and activity-oriented, where participation is for reasons other than the purpose or content. When learners attend ABET classes they expect to improve their quality of life. When interviewed, the female learners also raised their concerns as to be educated and live better lives like others (McGivney & Sims 1996:79).

According to Hinzen (1993:67) non-formal education should be accompanied by a transformative vision. Coombs (1998:22) views non-formal education as a systematic way of communicating skills, knowledge and attitudes which are attained outside of the formal school or the conventional educational system. It is thus seen as a deliberate and systematic transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills with the emphasis on developing skills. This view is consistent with that of Rogers (1996:120) in which non-formal education is seen as been related to social realities and group activities. It is also associated with consciousness-raising through information gained from real life problems, which emerge from individuals' historical and cultural experiences. Individuals' experiences can thus been seen as instruments of change, be it related to behavioural, institutional or social structures. This individual change allows one to appropriate new knowledge, skills and attitudes (Coombs, 1998:22). Acquiring handwork skills would enable them to make their own articles and sell them, which could fight poverty in their families (Hinzen, 1993:101).

## 2.16 Income generating skills

Nations and their governments have responsibility to take care of all citizens (World Bank, 1991:19). There are disadvantaged people in the community who, if provided with support, could become self-supporting. In other words they could begin to generate sufficient income to provide for themselves and, their families. It is for these people that income-generating programmes are required.

Income generation takes many forms. Originally it was a term used only by economists to explain the intricacies of a nation's economy (Luisella, 1992:38). However, it is now quite widely used to cover a range of productive activities by people in the community. Income generation simply means gaining or increasing income. According to Dixon (2001:19) there are three ways an income can be generated. Firstly, income generation does not *always* mean the immediate getting of money, although in the end we use money to place a measurable value on the goods and services people produce. An example of income generation which does not lead to getting money would be a situation where a productive person produces enough food to feed him/her and the family. Skills have been used to meet immediate needs and thus savings have been achieved. A money value can be placed on the food produced and so the food can be seen as an income.

A second way a person can generate an income is by astute investment of existing resources. An example can be a development of a piece of land through planting a crop for sale. The money gained is an income. An indirect form of investment is to bank savings or to purchase part ownership (shares) in a productive enterprise such as a business. Money generated from such investments is income. A third way to generate an income is for people to use their skills by serving other people who pay for the use of those skills.

According to Mellard, Patterson & Prewell (2007:89), education level tends to affect reading practices and ability as well as occupational ability and attainment, thus affecting income level and quality of life.

The offering of numeracy is also important in empowering illiterate women, especially those making a living in the informal work sector (Townsend, 2004:82). They will learn skills of calculations, which will help them to calculate their profits, and do their own personal financial planning when they run their businesses. According to Nafukho, Amutabi and Otuga (2005:5), by offering income-generating skills and business skills, women are enabled to start their own businesses. As there is a scarcity of jobs in Namibia, the offering of income generating skills in ABET centres is very important. With relevant skills women can become self-employed and alleviate poverty in their families (Townsend, 2004:85).

The main purpose of an IGP therefore is the promotion of a better quality of life for all citizens. In order to achieve this there is a need to develop vocational skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values, and to ensure that these are used to generate income. The central focus of IGPs as required in the Omusati is to alleviate poverty and to contribute to the development of human resources. This is achieved in the following ways:

- ✓ By empowering people to identify their economic needs and explore ways and means of fulfilling those needs;
- ✓ By developing self-confidence and ability to undertake income generating activities through appropriate and adequate training and motivation;
- ✓ By providing opportunities for continuous upgrading of vocational knowledge and skills for gainful employment;
- ✓ By developing a team spirit for working together for sustainable social and economic growth (Costa-Pinto, 1999:12).

Researchers and policy-makers increasingly agree that rural women are “the poorest of the poor” often trapped in conditions that leave them worse off than their compatriots (Charlton, 1995:126). He further stated that, the individual status of rural women depends on variety of factors: culture, changing modes of agricultural production, the availability of public services such as education and credit, migration, political instability, communication systems and so on. But as a group, rural women are often caught in the down ward economic spiral, a spiral that is fuelled, a need for cash that outstrips the ability to earn it. To be successful women should be empowered to be able to engage in a productive activity that will allow them some degree of financial independence. The offering of literacy and numeracy is not enough; they should also be accompanied by the teaching of income generating skills.

## **2.17 ABET and family health**

It is important to analyse how health literacy is defined. A common definition is: “health literacy is a constellation of skills, including the ability to perform basic reading and numerical tasks required to function in the health care environment” (Parker, Williams and Weiss, 1999:553). According to this definition, consequences of health literacy problems include problems such as overdoses, inappropriate uses of medical supplies, and not following safety warnings on chemicals (Kappel, 1998:132).

An advantage of the above definition is the inclusion of numeracy as part of the skills necessary to navigate and utilise health-related information. Often people neglect the numerical skills critical for health literacy, and frequently only focus on the reading aspects. Reading blood glucose levels, taking one’s temperature, knowing how many pills to take, understanding the difference between a tea-spoon and tablespoon, are all examples of critical health numeracy skills (Giorgianni, 1999:76).

According to Shah (1996:50) many adults with low literacy have difficulty reading and understanding directions for taking medications, do not know how to complete medical consent forms, have problems with the intricacies in accessing health care for

themselves and their families and dealing with a variety of other health-related issues. Health literacy involves more than just the ability to read and understand words and procedures associated with health care. It involves comprehension, communication and appropriate action (Evans & King, 1991:70). There are both direct and indirect consequences of low health literacy. Direct effects include non-compliance or medication errors. The indirect effects are harder to measure, but may include insurance issues, accessibility to health care and poor health behaviour choices (Shah, 1996:65).

Papen (2005:36) stated that women are important healthcare providers in the community; thus it is imperative for them to be provided with skills, which will enable them to take adequate care of their children, their families as well as themselves. The high birth rate in rural areas also contributes to poverty in the rural family. It is very common for husbands not to allow their wives to use contraceptive in rural areas. This is one way of ensuring that their wives remain faithful. Some women who stay with their husbands and those who are not married just ignore modern contraceptive methods (McKay, 1995:45).

Because of the inadequacy of health care units in rural areas, women should have knowledge of first aid and also of what to do when a child gets sick. Illiterate rural women need to learn about the benefits of hygiene habits for the family's well being (Papen, 2005:38). Many, for example, do not know the importance of covering food and the importance of washing hands, such education should be provided in ABET classes.

Poverty in rural areas leads to poor health, which retards development. Where there is poverty there are cases of malnutrition, which make children to be exposed to diseases such as gastroenteritis, pneumonia and tuberculosis (McKay 1995:31). Illiterate rural women bear many children, making the mortality rate higher for their families. According to Scanzoni (1995:54), bearing and mothering children are important rituals, which serve as proof of femininity. Low fertility resulting from poverty and poor health of women causes unnecessary family tension and divorce.

According to Papen (2005:33), the high rate of consecutive births coupled with high rate of maternal and child mortality are very common patterns in Africa. Children born in this pattern have a very low chance of surviving. Because of having many children over short periods and having a heavy workload, women have no time or strength to care for or educate toddlers. Spacing of children is very important in healthcare. "Better-educated women space births, which is good for maternal and childbirth" (Institute of Basic Education and Training 1999:24). Maternal education is closely related to the child's health and also to the child's intellectual development.

Uneducated girls marry or fall pregnant earlier, repeating the poverty cycle of their families. Teenager's childbearing often leads to poor quality of life for the baby and the mother. McKay (1995:39) supports this statement when she says that teenagers who fall pregnant often experience serious problems when they give birth. This raises the importance of ABET classes providing family planning education too. Women should be advised to give such education to their children of both sexes.

## **2.18. Conclusion**

In this chapter, various literature on Adult Basic Education was reviewed. This included a description of the theoretical assumptions behind ABET in modern society worldwide, in South Africa and within Namibia. It is evident from the literature that when women are empowered, it can lead to social change in the community and society, and it can lead to traditional black men and women viewing life in a different way. Women's empowerment has an effect on the general pace of community development, and when a woman is educated the whole nation benefits.

Chapter Three will describe the research design, research methodology, population, sampling procedure and sample size of the study. The data collection procedure, data analysis, research ethics and trustworthiness of the research will also be discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter two reviewed the literature on Adult Basic Education. This included a description of the theoretical assumptions behind ABET in modern society, both worldwide, in South Africa and within Namibia. In this chapter, the researcher focuses on the research design and methodologies used to determine the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women in Omusati Region. This study employs qualitative research strategies. The investigation took place in the Omusati Region area. For this study, four villages, which are closer to Uutapi Township, was selected as the setting for the research. The villages are Ouma, Onavivi, Nakayale and Anamulenge.

**Ouma Village** is eighteen kilometers from the small township (Uutapi) in the region. Many families in this village are poor and have no other source of income.

**Onavivi Village** is roughly five kilometers from the main tarred road to Ruacana. Most people in this village are illiterate and unemployed and as a result are poverty stricken.

**Nakayale Village** is very close to Uutapi Township. The village has many unemployed adults. Most of them make a living by selling fruits and vegetables. The roads in this village are in a bad condition.

**Anamulenge Village** is also close to Uutapi Township. All villagers share poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.



### **3.2 Research approach**

The research will be undertaken in the form of a qualitative research design. The research design is the description of the way in which a study is developed and also of the way it will be presented to its readership (Henning, 2004:32). Research design refers to the detailed plan of how research will be conducted. It provides the framework according to which data are to be collected in order to investigate the research question (De Vos & Fouche, 1998:123). According to Rubin (1995:35) the design should utilise the techniques that best fit the problem in order to ensure the most reliable and valid data. The researcher used qualitative methods in order to obtain insight into the engagement of adult learners with computers during an ABET programme. Rubin and Rubin (1995:46) state that the researcher might begin with examining the relevant literature, filling in personal knowledge of the subject to select a research design. A qualitative research approach may be adopted when a researcher wants to discover information and knowledge, and analyse the data about the nature of the reality of the world. The researcher used this approach as a way of approaching the empirical world (Schurink, 2002:243). Mason (1996:4) writes that qualitative research is concerned with how the social world is interpreted and understood. This study is, therefore, naturalistic or interpretative research undertaken within the habitat of the participants, so that meanings and intentions that underline human action are understood and interpreted in relation to their context (Schurink, 2002:240).

The purpose of qualitative research is to describe, interpret, verify and evaluate (Hittleman, 1997:42). In this research, the researcher collected data in order to reveal the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women.

Patterns, themes and categories will arise from the words and meanings that form the data and these will be reported on as the findings, in a descriptive manner, in Chapter Four.

The researcher is concerned with understanding people's experiences in context. Qualitative research happens in the form of an enquiry that is grounded on the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and these constructions normally tend to be transitory and situational (Creswell, 2003:356).

### 3.2.1 Why qualitative approach:

**The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach are:**

**First**, I selected a qualitative approach because the research questions often start with a *how or what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on. This is in contrast to quantitative questions that ask why and look for a comparison of groups or a relationship between variables with the intent of establishing an association, relationship, or cause and effect (e.g. did variable X explain what happened in variable Y?). **Second**, I chose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be *explored*. By this I mean that variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behaviour of participants or their population of study, and theories need to be developed. **Third**, I use a qualitative approach because of the need to present a *detailed view* of the topic. The wide-angle lens or the distant panoramic shot will not be sufficient to present answers to the problem or the close-up view will not exist. **Fourth**, I chose a qualitative approach in order to shield individuals in a natural setting. This involves going out to the setting or field of study, gaining access and gathering material. **Fifth**, I employed a qualitative approach to emphasise the researcher's role as an active learner, who can tell the story from the participant's view rather than as an "expert" who passes judgment on participants.

According to Bryman (2006:56) qualitative research uses methods that generally attempt to:

- understand the issues from the view points of the participants, although the researcher and the participants are involved in interpreting the data;

- describe the social setting of the participants so that the participants' views are not isolated from their contexts;
- understand the participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviour and these are examined along a developmental or temporal continuum.
- conduct research in a relatively unstructured manner.

These methods focus on describing, giving meanings, and understanding what is being studied. They favour in-depth analysis, examining the dynamic interaction of both the individual and the context and interdisciplinary research.

**The following qualitative research methods were used:**

**In-depth Interviews** were conducted with sixteen female ABET participants from four different ABET centres mentioned. An interview guide was employed to assist the researcher in focusing questions and collecting the relevant data. A tape-recorder was used to record the data. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and assured the participants of complete anonymity. She also explained that they should feel completely free to express their true feelings and opinions without fear of victimisation as their responses will be recorded.

**Observation:** According to Merriam (1998:94), observation is one of the most important data collection techniques that are used by a qualitative researcher. Merriam argues that observational research takes place in a natural context and that observations can be used in conjunction with other research tools like interviews. Observational research enables researchers to experience the phenomenon. The researcher sees things first hand and uses such experience to record the events as they unfold. Furthermore, if used with other research tools, it allows researchers to look at the subject of investigation in a holistic manner.

In this study, direct observation was employed in order to observe first hand information and adult learners during an ABET programme. Indirect observation, the subject of

investigation knows that he or she is being observed. In addition, there is a continuous monitoring and recording of the behaviour patterns that unfold (Payne, 1992:67). Lastly, there is a time allocation which involves researchers recording behavioural patterns within a given time framework. Adult learners were observed in the ABET centre over a period of three months.

Observation was conducted in a classroom setting at these centres. According to Welman and Kruger (2001:193) the data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of programme activities, participants` behaviours, staff actions and a full range of human interaction that can be part of the programme experience.

**Documents** such as the attendance register, learning materials and learner's work were analysed for the purpose of investigation. In addition, one facilitator per centre together with the supervisor and the coordinator were the key informants to the study.

The sampling was done according to geographical location, and the mentioned four villages (ABET centres) were selected because they are closest to Uutapi township, which is the centre of the Omusati Region.

Although the research design consists of a number of strengths, as will be discussed, it also has some drawbacks. According to Struwig and Stead (2003:213) qualitative research design consists of a number of strengths and weaknesses:

### **Strengths of using qualitative research design**

The qualitative research design:

- allows the participants to describe what is meaningful or important to him or her using his or her own words rather than being restricted to predetermined categories; thus participants may feel more relaxed and candid.
- provides high credibility and face validity; results “ring true” to participants and make intuitive sense to lay audiences.

- allows interviewer to probe for more details and ensure that participants are interpreting questions the way they were intended.
- interviewers have the flexibility to use their knowledge, expertise, and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by participants.

### **Weaknesses of qualitative research design**

It is:

- more subjective than quantitative interviews because the researcher decides which quotes or specific examples to report.
- analysing and interpreting qualitative interviews is much more time-consuming than analysing and interpreting quantitative interviews.
- may be more reactive to personalities, moods, and interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee than methods such as surveys.

The strengths are quite relevant to my study because for me to get detailed and valuable information from participants, I have to be flexible enough to ensure an in-depth discussion and probe more details. It is my task to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that accurately and thoroughly represents their point of view about the program.

The above shortcomings have been managed, I made sure that I had enough time to analyse and interpret data; and all relevant quotes have been highlighted in the report. Quotations reveal the respondents level of emotion, the way in which they have organised the world, the thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and their perceptions (Struwig & Stead 2003:216).

### **3.3 Sampling procedures**

According to Welman and Kruger (2001:63), the power of purposive sampling is in its focus on natural, ordinary events and natural settings, helping to create a strong idea of what “real life is like” for respondents of qualitative research.

Extreme case sampling was used to select four female learners from each of the four ABET centres. Frequent attendance was one of the characteristics used. For the participants to rely on their experience and to get genuine information a purposive sampling was used in the selection of the sixteen participants. The sampling was done according to geographical location, and the mentioned four villages (ABET centres) were selected because they are closest to Uutapi township, which is the centre of the Omusati Region.

### **3.4 Pilot study**

Four women (ABET learners) were sampled before the actual interviews for the researcher to get a feel for important issues and to use this information to construct a semi-structured interview. This exercise served to determine whether the participants understood the topic and questions and whether they found them to be useful. It, therefore, contributes to the interviewer reliability (Silverman, 2000:17).

### **3.5 Procedure**

To obtain access to the four ABET centres included in the sample, permission was obtained from the Regional Director of Education, Regional Chief Education Officers and the Regional ABET Organiser. The interview questions were translated from English into Oshiwambo and back into English to ensure the conceptual equivalency. Personal interviews were conducted, whereby questions were read loudly to the

respondents and the answers were tape recorded verbatim. These answers were transcribed later.

To obtain a better understanding of the people to be interviewed, **observation** was done in one class in each of the four centres, in order for the researcher to establish a good relationship with participants because it might have been difficult to provide information to a stranger. This helped to make the conducting of interviews to be easier.

Documentation such as attendance registers, learning materials and learners` work were studied. The learning materials were studied to determine the content of the courses that are being offered. By checking the attendance registers, the researcher could determine how frequent learners attended classes.

As mentioned in the research proposal, qualitative interviewing was used as it allows the participants to describe what is meaningful or important to them using their own words rather than being restricted to predetermined categories; thus, participants may feel more relaxed and candid. It also allows interviewers to be flexible enough to use their knowledge, expertise, and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by participants.

At the beginning, the interviewer explained the purpose of the study to the participants and sought their cooperation. The researcher indicated how long the interviews would take. Participants were assured of complete anonymity and were encouraged to feel completely free to express their true feelings and opinions without fear of disapproval or condemnation from the interviewer. The interviewer neither approved nor disapproved of the participants` actions but was understanding.

### **3.6 Data collection**

The information was obtained by means of semi-structured interviews. The interviewer adapts, develops and generates questions as the interview progresses. Appropriate questions are asked as the interviews progress. Semi-structured (semi-standardised) interviews include pre-determined questions that are presented to all interviewees systematically and consistently. The interviewers are permitted to probe and deviate from these questions (Berg, 1995:56). The interviews were conducted over a period of 10 days, and each interview lasted for two hours. The interviews were conducted individually with each participant. In addition, the researcher made notes about her feelings and observations during the interviews and on-site experiences. The participants were encouraged to interpret their feelings and behaviours regarding the issues being discussed as precisely as possible (Kvale, 1996:240). The researcher did not offer opinions on the topic but encouraged the participants to provide detailed information. In addition, available documents such as attendance registers and study materials were examined.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:221), the aim of the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations and understanding. Creswell (1994:153) states that data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other sources or materials that can accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others.

Thus, qualitative research is concerned with meanings (patterns of behaviour) and the way people understand things. However, Creswell (1994:153) urges that it is important to note that the process of data analysis is eclectic; in other words, there is no right way of analysing data. In addition, data analysis is the last stage of research (Rubin & Rubin,



1995:226). It is concerned with making sense and interpreting the data collected so that they are stored and easily accessible for later use.

With regard to qualitative data analysis, Silverman (2000:19) pinpoints that “The move from coding to interpretation is a crucial one... Interpretation involves the transcendence of “factual” data and cautious analysis of what is to be made of them.” He continues and suggests that “data analysis should consist of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.” Implementing these steps implied that the data assembled had to be coded on the basis of a theoretical scheme from where the link between these elements was found, slowly narrowing the focus during the fieldwork phase. This is in line with the grounded theory approach where the aim is to construct frameworks from the data rather than from pre-established assumptions, utilizing the constant comparative method (Schurink, 2002:142).

The term ‘grounded theory’ has since its inception signified a number of different things. Not only does it refer to the **theory** grounded in qualitative data, but it also describes the **method** of grounded theory referring to the methodology for the systematic analysis of unstructured data (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997:256).

Grounded theory is described as “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:24). Furthermore, “data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. Consequently, grounded theorists search for social processes present in human interaction. The aim is to *“discover patterns and processes and understand how a group of people define, via their social interactions, their reality”* (Cutcliffe, 2000:176).

Grounded theory is responsive to the situation in which the research is done. “*An underlying assumption in grounded theory is that social phenomena are complex*” and the steps needed to study these complex phenomena have to be flexible. For this

reason there can be no rigid rules on how to conduct grounded theory research (Lee, 1999:45).

What most differentiates grounded theory from other research is its explicitly emergent nature. It does not test a hypothesis; it sets out to determine which theory accounts for the research situation as it is. In this respect it is like action research, the aim is to understand the research situation, or as Glaser stated, it aims at discovering a theory that is implicit in the data (Dick, 2002:312). This requires the researcher to “*absorb the data as data, to be able to step back or distance oneself from it, and then to abstractly conceptualise the data*” (Glaser, 1992:11).

Grounded theory begins with a research situation where the researcher’s task is to understand what is happening in a particular social setting, and how the various research participants attach meaning to it and manage their roles. Data is collected in the natural context using methods such as interviews and observation. After each session of data collection, the researcher notes key issues (i.e. note-taking).

The researcher describes the analysis and collection of data as a set of structured and systematic procedures called the **constant comparative method** (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:54), being at the heart of the process. This is an iterative process that involves the concurrent collection and analyses of data “*with the ultimate aim of generating a theory that is grounded in the natural context in which the inquiry takes place*” (Priest et al., 2002:31). The “*emergence of theory is in actual fact a result of a constant interplay between data and the researcher’s developing conceptualisations*” (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997:255). The process commences with a comparison of an interview (or other data) with another interview (or other data). “*Constant comparative method and theoretically driven sampling provide the procedural foundation for the development of theoretical elements. The constant comparative method is a procedure in which two activities, naming data fragments and comparing data incidents and names, occur in tandem*” (Locke, 2002:24).

Once this has started to emerge, data are compared to theory and coded into some theoretically meaningful structure. Coding systems are typically utilised to break down qualitative data, conceptualise it and then put together in new ways to “*allow a systematic, dense, explanatory theory to be developed*” (Priest *et al.*, 2002:32). Coding is the tentative development and labelling of concepts from the text that are considered to be of potential relevance to the problem. As the coding process progresses, not only will the list of concepts expand, but concepts will start to reoccur in subsequent paragraphs (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997:258). Coding in grounded theory mode is not only aimed at theory testing but rather to construct theory; i.e. generating rich explanatory theory that closely represents reality (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:36). While the process of coding does not happen before analysis, it represents a critical analysing tool and constitutes an important part of the analysis process. It is indeed “*a reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon*” (Weston *et al.*, 2001:397).

Three sets of coding procedures are applied, open, axial and selective coding. The overall aim is to identify **categories** (equivalent to themes or a classification of concepts) and their **properties** (characteristics of a category) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:96).

Interviews will be audio taped and fully transcribed. The transcript will be analysed using the principles of Inductive coding (Strauss, 1987: 213), in order to allow patterns to emerge.

The data were coded using the content analysis process. Content analysis is the process whereby a certain characteristic of spoken or printed materials is systematically identified (Jones, 1996:321). This method is used as it is associated with grounded theory. It requires that units of meaning from the data are identified and coded. Each unit of meaning is compared with other units and are then placed in appropriate provisional categories.

The researcher began the process of analysing data by first reading through all the interviews and related materials a number of times. The researcher then focused on each data source, reading each set of interviews, field notes and relevant documents twice before beginning the data analysis.

The researcher used inductive content analysis to analyse each source of data separately and independently of the other data sources. The development of inductive categories is appropriate as it allows the categories to be linked or “grounded” in the data.

After identification of themes, these were reviewed for further analysis in terms of expanding or collapsing various codes or themes within each source of data. Once analyses were completed for all data sources, comparisons were made to identify similar/ complementary themes and differences.

The information was grouped into themes by using codes. Codes are labels that assign units of meaning to the information obtained (Miles & Huberman, 1994:289). Codes were used to study brief actions, more durable activities, interview transcripts of participants, the participation of people in a setting, the relationships between people, or entire settings. Codes were linked to a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph or a larger section of data. Codes were interpreted within a certain context and in relationship to other codes.

All data generated from observations, interviews (records & notes taken) and associated documents were appropriately coded and categorised in a scientific effort to achieve the stated research objectives and to answer the stated research questions.

Content analysis of the documents such as the Attendance Register, learners` work and learning materials were analysed and compared in order to discover how attendance influences the learning acquired, the effectiveness of the learning materials in meeting learners` needs and how the materials help learners to achieve their learning objectives.

### **3.8 Validity and reliability**

Qualitative research revolves around issues of trustworthiness as opposed to objectivity (Maxwell, 1994:86). It is important that qualitative methods ensure the quality of the research findings, and therefore, qualitative researchers refer to the trustworthiness of the research (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:145). The following paragraphs will describe the strategies that will be employed to ensure the trustworthiness of this inquiry.

Validity refers to the extent to which a specific measurement provides data that relate to commonly accepted meanings of a particular concept. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:105) refer to validity as the extent to which the description of events accurately captures instruments or techniques, data, findings and explanations of what is claimed. Validity pertains to whether the researcher is observing, identifying and measuring what he or she says is being observed, identified and measured (Mason 1996:27).

#### **3.8.1 Internal validity**

“How do we know that the results of this piece of research represent the real thing, the genuine product?” (Cohen & Manion, 1989:129). Creswell (1994:158) explains that this genuine product is to be the result of triangulation to find congruence among sources of information. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:106) speak of validity checks between methods of training. The researcher achieved this through observation and interviews produced by the adult learners during an ABET programme.

#### **3.8.2 External validity**

This answers the question, “How do we know that the results of this piece of research are applicable to other situations?” (Cohen & Manion, 1989:129). Creswell (1994:158)

mentions that the intent of questioning respondents is not to generalise findings but to form a unique interpretation of events.

### **3.8.3 The reliability of the study**

The final test is judging the findings of the research. Objectivity, according to Yin (1984:40), is to make sure that if other researchers follow exactly the same procedure as described by an earlier investigator, he/she should arrive at the same findings and conclusions. Mason (1996:24) states that reliability involves the accuracy of research methods and techniques.

### **3.9 Interview questions**

Interviews followed a semi-structured format using an interview guide in which a number of sensitising concepts were designated a priori for discussion, but tempo and order of the conversation will flow from respondent (Patton, 2002:35). Sensitising concepts were derived from literature on Adult Education. The line of interviewing was organised around the following concepts:

- ABET Programme/Curriculum
- Motivation to learn
- Development & Employment
- ABET and Family health
- Teaching methods

The interviews provide in-depth information about a particular research issue or question. An interview can be seen as a specialised form of communication between people for a specific purpose, which is closely associated with the subject matter that is discussed. It is a form of discourse where the conversation moves beyond surface talk to a discussion on thoughts and feelings (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:80). Because the information is not quantifiable (i.e., not amenable to statistical analysis), the interview is often described as a qualitative research method.

Questions such as: Do you think the skills learned will help you to get a job in your region or elsewhere?, Besides reading and writing skills, are you being offered other life skills (e.g. opening a bank account or understanding a bank statement), which will help you to cope/manage successfully on your own?, Does the existing syllabus/ curricula meet your needs and expectations?, were asked to determine whether the programmes offer income-generating skills, opportunities upon gainful employment in the Region and whether the needs as expressed by participants are met. These questions were presented to all interviewees systematically and consistently, but the interviewers are permitted to probe and deviate from these questions.

A copy of the questionnaire is included as Annexure (A) of this report.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter contains the research design and research methods. Data collection techniques such as observation, interviews and document analysis were discussed. In addition, data analysis strategy was discussed. Finally, the trustworthiness of the research (validity and reliability) was discussed. Qualitative research design is more appropriate for this study because the topic needs to be *explored*. By this, I mean that variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behaviour of participants or their population of study, and theories need to be developed. The study was conducted in the four selected villages, with sixteen female learners; four in each of the four ABET centres. Methods such as observation, interviews and documentation were used to collect data. The next chapter will describe the research results, with a particular focus on how data were collected, conceptualized, analyzed, categorized and coded.

Chapter Four contains the research findings on the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter contains the research design and research methods. Data collection techniques such as observation, interviews and document analysis were discussed. In addition, data analysis strategy was also discussed. This chapter reports the findings of the study conducted in the Omusati region to determine the role of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme in the development of rural black women in the region.

The two research objectives of this field problem were to:

- determine whether the ABET programmes offered in the area lead to the general development of women in the area.
  
- find out whether the programmes:
  - offer income-generating skills and
  - opportunities upon gainful employment in the Omusati Region for women participants in particular.
  - meet the needs as expressed by the participants.

The Regional Director of ABET in Omusati Region welcomed the evaluation; and this paper will be made available to the Omusati ABET Regional Office, as well as to the Ministry of Education as an independent evaluation of the students programme.



## 4.2 Sampling procedures

In this research Purposive Sampling was used. The power of purposive sampling, according to Welman and Kruger (2001:63), is in its focus on natural, ordinary events and natural settings, helping to create a strong idea of what “real life is like” for respondents. The researcher focused in-depth, on understanding the needs, interests and quality of life of the selected participants. The researcher used typical case sampling to select the sixteen participants. Four female learners were selected from each of the four ABET centres. Initially, one female learner from all the four ABET levels in the four centres was to be interviewed. Since the four centres visited only offer ABET at two levels, two female learners from each of the two levels were selected for interviews. The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich-cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied.

In short, purposive sampling is best used with small numbers of individuals/groups which may well be sufficient for understanding human perceptions, problems, needs, behaviors and contexts, which are the main justification for a qualitative audience research.

Informations about the participants are shown in table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Participants Information**

<b>ABET Centre</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>ABET Level</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Employment status</b>
Centre 1	Participant 1	1	49	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 2	1	44	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 3	2	50	Single	Unemployed
	Participant 4	2	24	Single	Unemployed
Centre 2	Participant 5	1	26	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 6	1	28	Married	Unemployed

	Participant 7	2	46	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 8	2	50	Married	Unemployed
Centre 3	Participant 9	1	26	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 10	1	33	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 11	2	40	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 12	2	45	Widow	Unemployed
Centre 4	Participant 13	1	31	Married	Unemployed
	Participant 14	1	45	Divorced	Employed
	Participant 15	2	44	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wife	Unemployed
	Participant 16	2	40	Widow	Unemployed

As the table shows, with the exception of one of the women, all were unemployed. Furthermore, two were single, ten married, two widows and one divorced.

### 4.3. Data collection

This qualitative study presents experience of 16 participants identified and interviewed because of their regular attendance and commitment to ABET learning. A purposeful sampling and typical case sampling approach were used for the selection of the participants. The researcher had initially contacted the Literacy Promoters to help with the selection of the participants with a view to undertake a research. Data were collected over a period of 10 days.

Data were obtained by three methods, in-depth interviews, observations, and documents analysis of which a pilot study was conducted before the actual interviews.

### **4.3.1 Pilot study**

In order to establish the best sequence and word of questions, the researcher conducted a pilot interview in order to make modifications to the questions if necessary. Four women (ABET learners) from Yetuyama ABET centre were initially sampled before the actual interviews. This was necessary for the researcher to appreciate the importance of the issue and to use the outcome to construct a semi-structured interview. This exercise also served to determine whether the participants understand the questions and if they find the questions to be useful. It therefore contributes to the interviewer's reliability (Silverman, 2000:146). The sample consists of four women from Yetuyama ABET centre, three employed as domestic workers and one unemployed. Two married, one divorced and one single. The interview was conducted on 14 October 2006, with observation done on 13 October 2006.

The overall outcome of the pilot study was very encouraging. Useful lessons were learnt such as a need to conduct the interviews in Oshiwambo, which is the participants mother tongue. Areas for improvement were the language terms used, and the sequence of questions which have been rectified after the pilot study.

As a result, the four participants could not understand some of the terms used and experienced difficulties in expressing and share their experiences fluently in English. They all requested an explanation of some terms in Oshiwambo. Two Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners also reviewed the questionnaires and suggested several changes such as simplification of the language, alteration of the sequence and grouping of questions.

### **4.3.2 In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted with four female learners in each of the four ABET centres. Interview guides and a tape-recorder were used as tools in the data gathering process.

However, it needs to be stated that the interview format employed, incorporated a fragment of the semi-structured interview format. The researcher used a semi-structured interview scheduled with open-ended questions, which enabled interviewees to talk at length without restrictions (Patton, 1990:76). The semi-structured interview format is described as a compromise between structured and unstructured interviews (Lee, 1999:147). These interviews normally “have an overarching topic, general themes, targeted issues, and specific questions with a predetermined sequence for their occurrence, in this case the interviewer is free to pursue matters as circumstances dictate” (Lee, 1999:149).

The aim of unstructured interviewing is “to actively enter the worlds of native people and to render those worlds understandable from the standpoint of a theory that is grounded in behaviours, languages, definitions, attitudes and feelings of those studied” (Denzin, 1997:508).

In addition, the researcher motivated the research participants to the best of her ability to participate spontaneously and to share their own thoughts and experiences. However, on occasions when the researcher felt the research participants were moving too far away from the subject at hand, the researcher stimulated them through probing in order to steer them back to the research topic.

To ensure that perceptions and experiences of particular events and themes were solicited from all the research participants developed a schedule of questions/themes, which were used during the interviews. These questions were, however, not asked in any particular order, and were integrated after the research participant had presented her own viewpoints and experiences. Notes were taken during the course of each interview, rephrased issues, and probed for clarification as each interview proceeded. The notes formed part of the memos and reflections on the research experience. Each theme was substantiated by a combination of sources such as interviews, field notes, observations and documents (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 99). The participants opted to

use Oshiwambo *which they feel they are fluent in*. Finally, each of the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed and read several times to facilitate data analysis (Kvale, 1996:256).

The table below indicates the dates of data collection at the four ABET centres.

**Table 4.2: Schedule of Interviews**

<b>ABET Centres</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Date of data Collection</b>
Centre 1	Participant 1	23 October 2006 (observation)
	Participant 2	27 October 2006 (interviews)
	Participant 3	
	Participant 4	
Centre 2	Participant 5	24 October 2006 (observation)
	Participant 6	30 October 2006 (interviews)
	Participant 7	
	Participant 8	
Centre 3	Participant 9	25 October 2006 (observation)
	Participant 10	31 October 2006 (interviews)
	Participant 11	
	Participant 12	
Centre 4	Participant 13	26 October 2006 (observation)
	Participant 14	01 November 2006 (interviews)
	Participant 15	
	Participant 16	

As the table reflects, observation was done first before the interviews at all ABET centres, which gave the researcher an opportunity of establishing a good relationship. This made the conducting of interviews easier as they were then free to respond to questions and also to air their views.

### 4.3.3 Findings of interviews

#### 4.3.3.1 Motivation to attend

The females that were interviewed had similar reasons for attending. They all wanted to acquire literacy, social and hand working skills to improve their quality of life. They joined the centres with high expectations and when things did not happen the way they expected for example gaining knowledge and skills that will improve their living conditions, they got discouraged. They think reading was necessary, for instance, to be able to help children with their home work and monitor their progress at school.

One participant wanted to be able to read the Bible and sing from a Hymnbook in the church. Her comment was:

*Ota shi sifa ohoni oku kalamongeleka ito imbi shaashi kushi kulesha*

[It is an embarrassment not to be singing in church just because you can't read].

Some women wanted to save their marriages. Their husbands work in cities and might leave them for city women who are educated and civilized. Participant 7 indicated that her husband has a Diploma and she might lose him because of her illiteracy. One participant wanted to know how to read, write and speak English because of her need to complete forms and because most of the correspondences are written in English. She finds it embarrassing when she fails to complete forms in offices. She explained how she once failed to complete forms for borrowing money from the Build Together Programme (BTP) offices. Participant 5, the only learner who was employed, indicated that she wanted to learn because as she is working in garments factory, she is experiencing a problem in reading the colours. She also could not be promoted because of being uneducated. She has been working for fifteen years but earning an income of N\$ 300.00 per month.

Another common problem that the women mentioned why they were not getting jobs is because they were unable to write job application letters.

The table below shows the codes and their meanings used in data analysis

**Table 4.3 Codes for analysis**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Meaning (Motivation to attend)</b>
RBH	Learn to read the Bible and sing from a hymn book
LN	To learn literacy and numeracy
RWSE	To learn to read, write and speak English
CF	Learn to complete forms
GJ	To get a job
GP	To get promotion at work
SM	To save marriage
BOS	To broaden knowledge of other subjects
BU	To start a business
SC	Sewing and crocheting

Women have different needs when they joined ABET programme as indicated in the table above.

The following table represents the frequency of the themes as they occurred in the raw data for the interviewed women.

**Table 4.4 Frequency of themes**

Code	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Total
RBH	x	x																2
LN	x		x	x			X	x			x	x						7
RWSE					x				x	x			x	x	X	x		7
CF			x			x			x	x				x				5
GJ						x		x	x	x								4
GP														x				1
SM					x				x	x			x					4
BOS									x	x								2
BU	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x			x	13
SC	x	x	x		x	x	X	x								X		8

Many participants joined ABET programme to gain knowledge on how to sew and crocheting, learn to read, write and speak English, learn to read the Bible and sing from a Hymn book and to learn how to complete forms. Thirteen participants joined ABET centres to acquire business skills.

#### **4.3.3.2 Curriculum development**

Participants revealed that the state maintained authority over the development of primers, which were largely based on ideas of the curriculum developers emerging survey carried out in southern Namibia in 1991. The state did not conduct a nationwide survey to establish issues affecting different communities. Although there were financial constraints, the survey could have been conducted through an existing network of



extension workers in all regions. The decision not to involve other regions in the survey enabled the state to assert its control and reproduce its power over the content of literacy education. The same primers were used for all learners regardless of their geographical position and contexts.

One participant stressed 'most of the concepts were based on the experiences of the people in the southern part of Namibia, not necessarily what the learners in Omusati Region needed. The survey was geographically too restrictive for its findings to have been used as a fair basis for a national literacy programme. Another participant observed, 'the research done was not of a magnitude that could justify the establishment of a national literacy programme'. It did not include life experiences of people in the northern, western or eastern parts of the country but excluded their life activities such as fishing, farming, hunting and gathering.

The state therefore reproduced its hegemony through universalising these dominant group experiences. Participant 8 observed, "*I think those who wrote primers looked only at the social context of dominant communities in southern Namibia.*" Prospective learners from other parts of the country were not sufficiently consulted, planners only looked at what they viewed as common concerns.

As a result of universalising needs, the programme failed to address the aspirations of different groups of learners countrywide, which resulted in what one participant described as 'massive dropouts and rejection by the minorities such as the Owambos in the northern part of the country'. Another participant observed, 'primers teach the Owambos things which do not readily apply to their context'.

The use of common materials enabled the planners to reproduce the powers and interests of the elite but undermined the minorities who did not see the relevance of the programme in their lives. Participant 15 indicated 'overall, learners are looked at as just passive consumers'. As one participant emphasised, 'one would never know how other communities in Namibia learn from primers, such as fishers, hunters and gathers

among the nomadic San people, literacy does not relate to their bread and butter issues'. The primers content did not represent the multiple realities of different ethnic groups. Primers reflected the life patterns of dominant city people, and seemingly attempted to integrate minorities into mainstream culture. Participant 10 stressed, *'It will be better if one has to pilot materials that are going to be used in the actual programme'*.

Participant 6 indicated that gender issues were not taken into account; it is just a generic programme intended to address general issues. She further explained how the content and the teaching process reinforce women's domestic roles because literacy educators disseminate information on the cultural role assigned to women without enabling them to question their subordination.

She stressed, *'The topics on women are about fetching firewood, cooking and giving children medication, nothing outside the house. Everything about women is oriented to their domestic roles but does not help them to critique any aspect of their work'*. It could be argued that teaching and learning did not enable women to realise that dominant cultural practices are potentially oppressive to them.

Participant 3 summed up the situation of women when she observed that the programme did not envisage a situation where women could make choices to get married or remain single. She retorted, *'Not getting married is not taken as a choice one can make as a woman.'*

#### **4.3.3.3 Problems affecting attendance/barriers**

All women who were interviewed felt disappointed by the approach of the facilitators. Reading, writing and speaking English was a priority for them but some facilitators concentrated on offering Oshiwambo than English, which made them to become discouraged. They sometimes felt like not attending classes because they did not offer

the topics they are interested in such as Health Education – to assist them in looking well after themselves and their children.

Some women expressed the problem of attending to household duties. Sometimes they find themselves very occupied with household duties such as cooking for the family and fetching water or firewood during the time when classes are conducted since they have no money to buy firewood. They sometimes absent themselves from classes to sell vegetables for income. Some mentioned lack of concentration in class when there is no food for their children. Participant 15 is a third wife with nine children. Her husband cannot afford to support them. While she is supposed to concentrate on her schoolwork, she worries about her personal problems at home. It was not surprising to hear frequent statements such as these:

*“Actually I enjoy it, but getting into it and finding the time. It is dreadfully difficult.”*

Due to additional commitments women found it harder to cope.

Participant 2 stated that *“Well I found it very difficult, very difficult to balance my class attendance and family commitments”*.

However, some interviewees managed to keep a range of additional commitments going. One employee, in her fifties, working for a private sector organisation, spent about 13 hours a week studying on top of a full-time job.

#### **4.3.3.4 Benefits from attending classes**

Many of the learners interviewed said that they did not benefit from attending classes. They said that their living conditions are still the same. They are still in poverty and some could not write, speak or read English.

One participant indicated that she only improves her reading and writing skills but nothing in her life has changed. She started attending classes in 1995 but she is still in level one. For the other years she enrolled, she never benefited because as soon as

she started acquiring reading skills, the centre ceased to function. She only improved her reading and writing skills. She said that she is selling **Tombo** (home made beer) but she does not make any profit. She went on to say:

*Oku popya oshili i tandi vulu nande okupopitha omuntu mo shiingilisa sigo ompano”*

[To be honest, I still cannot greet a person in English]

The table below shows the experience of the learners as to how they have experienced the learning that was acquired either as effective or ineffective; whether ABET programmes that are offered lead to empowerment and how good the facilitators are.

**Table 4.5: Learner’s experience of ABET**

<b>Learners</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>ABET Programmes</b>
Participant 1	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 2	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 3	EFF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 4	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 5	INF	EFF	FR	INF
Participant 6	EFF	INF	GD	EFF
Participant 7	INF	EFF	FR	INF
Participant 8	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 9	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 10	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 11	INF	INF	FR	MF
Participant 12	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 13	INF	INF	FR	INF
Participant 14	INF	INF	FR	EFF
Participant 15	EFF	EFF	FR	EFF
Participant 16	INF	EFF	FR	INF

The following codes were used when analysing data.

- ✓ GD = Good
- ✓ FR = Fair
- ✓ EFF = Effective
- ✓ INF = Ineffective
- ✓ MF = Mixed effective

It is evident from this table that ABET programme are not imparting learning into learners. The table indicates that participants do not view ABET programmes as a way of empowering them, and facilitators are effective enough.

The table below shows the learners experiences, as a result of Table 4.5 on the effectiveness of the ABET programmes, learning, empowerment and the facilitators.

**Table 4.6: Totals of learners experience of ABET programme**

	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Mixed Effective</b>
<b>Learning</b>	0	0	3	13	0
<b>Empowerment</b>	0	0	4	12	0
<b>Facilitator</b>	1	15	0	0	0
<b>ABET Programmes</b>	0	0	3	13	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>

Only three participants viewed learning acquired through ABET classes as effective, while thirteen participants found it to be ineffective. Four participants found ABET programme empowering, while twelve feel that the programmes are ineffective when it comes to empowerment. Only one participant appreciates the facilitators, the majority indicated that facilitators are inexperienced and not good enough.

#### **4.3.3.5 ABET contribution towards *poverty reduction and procurement of stable job***

The contribution of ABET programmes to employment creation could take two forms. First, it could mean the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills that creates jobs and thus alleviate unemployment. Second, it could mean the acquisition of skills that lead to procurement of a stable job.

The four centres visited only offer one ABET programme which is literacy and numeracy. When participants asked whether poverty had been alleviated and if they have gained employment after the training, all participants indicated that this had not been the case. They all felt that they did not acquire skills that would make them eligible to be employed. Respondents indicated that they need commercially related programmes such as banking, family planning, health education, banking courses, book keeping and dress-making that will enable them to get jobs. Clearly, a significant proportion perceive ABET programmes as a basis to higher incomes, and thus to alleviate poverty.

#### **4.3.3.6 The Role of the family**

Families have considerable influences on the student's motivation. Learners feel encouraged by a brother who wants his sister to become independent, a mother who hopes for a better future for her daughter, a father who thinks that education is important for women as well as men.

The need of family motivation towards learners is not only based on the wish to improve the woman's future. They also expect benefits for the family. The future salary of the learners will go into the house-hold budget. An educated woman gives a form of status to the family and she is expected to raise and educate her children in a better way.

However not all family members are convinced of the benefits of ABET programmes for women. Therefore, many women face opposition. The traditional idea is that education is unnecessary for women that it may even make them “bad” by putting ideas in their heads. Even if the families think differently, they find it difficult to face social pressure. In some cases, students said that they have to hide their books, because they fear that their relatives or in-laws will tear them up if they find out about their studies.

Usually, these women have at least one supportive family member to help them with excuses to go to the study centre. Obviously, women try to manipulate their family’s opinion in a positive direction.

Participant 3 stressed” *My sister and I first asked our father for permission to enroll in the Literacy programme, but he did not agree. However, our mother was in favour of education so we started studying. A new problem arose when mother died and our father decided to arrange marriages for us. We said we would only agree to the marriage on the condition that we would be allowed to finish our programmes. Both of us are married now and we are still studying.*”

Why did some people seem to cope better than others? The researcher found that a full support of the partner/husband/wife was regarded to be the fundamental to any successful learning activity, irrespective of a possible gender division. Un-prompted by the researcher, five women equally described and praised the support given by the partners in considerable details.

*“I have full support of my husband, he has taken over all the management of the house, so he does all the ironing, cleaning, shopping and cooking”* one participant stressed.

It is important to note that family obligations and support will weigh heavily in the decision to participate in ABET classes. Husbands play a significant role in the decision to enroll. The disruption to family routines and established roles and identities, can act as a barrier to enrolment.

#### **4.3.3.7 Income generating project (IGP)**

The problem is always, what kind of project lends itself to the IGP concept? It must be one that is culturally acceptable. The only project which is currently running in the four villages is Rabbit Farming in Onavivi, which is not a feasible project in the Omusati Region.

One participant stressed that *“We have a rabbit farming project at our centre which was just given to us, we were never consulted on what type of projects we wanted, as a result, we are not generating any income because people around here are not interested in rabbits.”*

The choice of an IGP that is culturally acceptable and beneficial to the members of the community who are involved in the ABET programmes is not an easy one. It should be made by them but not by an outside agency. They need financial assistance to initiate it but this has to be done in such a way that pride and self respect is maintained. An early indicator of whether an IGP can be sustained is the capacity of labour, materials, people and the amount of money that is contributed locally to supplement the external funding. “Self sustaining and self-reliant will never be achieved through giving people donations” (Obbo, 2000:95).

Therefore, it is better if the money is not given but loaned with a realistic loan repayment contract worked out between the community and the funding agency. Time will tell whether these incomes-generating projects will fulfill their purpose of providing financial self-sufficiency.

Projects such as sheep farming, baking bread, vegetable production, wood carving to carpentry were described as income-generating projects which offers reasonable chance for long-term financial self-sufficiency” we would like to have such projects, one participant said.



#### **4.3.4 Observation:**

The researcher was able to observe classes in all four villages that are Ouma, Nakayale, Anamulenge and Onavivi. Notes were taken during these observations. Observation was done by the researcher in one class in each of the four centres. The purpose was to be able to describe the programme as thoroughly and carefully as possible. Observations were used as a second major source of data in the study, which enabled the researcher to observe the behaviours and attitudes in class as well as the interaction among the learners and the teacher. This includes the description of activities that took place in the programme and the people who participated in those activities.

Observation has given the researcher a better understanding of the people to be interviewed and of the context within which programme activities occurred. Rural women, especially Ovambandjas, are very shy and it was anticipated that it might be difficult for them to provide information to a stranger. By meeting them in a classroom situation, for the first time the researcher had the opportunity of establishing a good relationship. This made the conducting of interviews easier as they were then free to respond to questions and also to air their views.

During observation field notes were taken. Patton (1990:32) defines field notes as “the description of what has been observed.” The field notes included the description of the classroom, the arrangement of desks and the participant’s activities together with how they interacted with one another in the class. The programmes offered to learners were also observed and recorded.

### **4.3.5 Findings of observation**

The following were notable aspects:

#### **4.3.5.1 Classroom interaction**

Although interaction among the learners and the teachers is minimal, the quantity and quality of teacher interactions with students in classrooms shows that the teachers give more attention of all kinds; instructional emphasis and individual guidance.

It was discovered that male learners dominated classroom communication. They were more interacting than women. Even more interesting was how teachers responded to same behaviours coming from men or women. When men called out answers without raising their hands, teachers tend to acknowledge the responses; when women did likewise, teachers were more likely to reprimand the behaviour. It is believed this is so because of the cultural norms that women have to respect men, and it will have a negative contribution towards the success of the programme in women.

Although societal stereotypes characterise women as more talkative, my observation both inside and outside the classrooms shows something quite different. In most encounters between women and men, the men do the talking and the women do the listening.

#### **4.3.5.2 Lack of adequate resources**

In spite of the government commitment to rise ABET programmes in Namibia, financing of ABET programmes is far from satisfactory.

Due to inadequate funding, ABET centres do not have facilities of their own. Classes are held under trees or schools. Only one village has an indoor classroom, the two villages held classes under a tree and another centre had a roofless classroom. Classes that are held in schools in most cases fails to materialise because the school children use those classes until very late before adults can have access to them. In many cases, even when these classrooms are available, they are not of much use to adults because they were designed to be used by children. There is a lack of learning materials, learners are sharing materials. As a result, they will not get a chance to do revision after class. In one centre only a teacher had a primer. Learning materials are quite in short supply.

There is no electricity; learners are making use of candles if they have to be in class until 20h00 in the evening. Some of the problems which hindered learning are for instance, the poor conditions under which classes were held at night in four of the villages. Learners are making use of lamps which did not supply sufficient light and women were often very tired as the classes began late and continued until 20h00. The researcher found the surrounding environment of the four centres not conducive for learning. There are shebeens scattered all over the place. Disturbance such as noises are quite destructive.

#### **4.3.6 Documents**

Documents were also analysed for purpose of informing inquiry and supporting the data that were collected. These included attendance registers, learning materials and learner's work. The learning materials were studied to determine the content of the courses that were being offered. By checking the attendance registers the researcher could determine how frequent learners attended classes as well as dropping out.

The following table reflects the attendance registers for the four centres that were visited.

**Table 4.7: Learner`s enrolment**

ABET Centres	Number enrolled			Number dropped out				Learners attending			
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<b>Total</b>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<b>Total</b>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<b>Total</b>	%
Centre 1	5	66	<b>71</b>	3	37	<b>40</b>	<b>56%</b>	2	29	<b>31</b>	<b>44%</b>
Centre 2	3	62	<b>65</b>	2	40	<b>42</b>	<b>65%</b>	1	22	<b>23</b>	<b>35%</b>
Centre 3	15	40	<b>55</b>	0	21	<b>21</b>	<b>38%</b>	15	19	<b>34</b>	<b>62%</b>
Centre 4	10	52	<b>62</b>	7	31	<b>38</b>	<b>61%</b>	3	21	<b>24</b>	<b>39%</b>

The table above shows the number of learners enrolled, dropped-out and learners still attending. A total of 220 women were enrolled for the courses in January 2006 from the 4 Centres. The range of final attendance figures ranged from 35% to 62% of the original attendance figures. The table reflects that women drop-outs are high compared to men drop-outs. The reasons cited for dropping out are given below.

The main reasons cited for women dropping out from the course were recorded as follow:

- Marriage – resulting in women moving to their husband's villages.
- Sickness (malaria), Typhoid and pregnancy complications were the commonest problems.
- Child birth – after birth a woman has to take care of her baby for at least a year.
- Divorce – prompting women to leave village to return to their parents.
- Seasonal employment opportunities (especially in areas where Women Action for Development (WAD) was supporting rural road construction).

Interestingly, the drop-out rate of female heads of households appeared to be significantly less than that of women living in their husband's homes, simply because they are not married; power in the households and decision-making lies with them. An important ramification is the distribution of power in the households and the fact that women class attendance was controlled by men. In many cases men were reluctant to allow their wives to attend classes.

The number of household represented in each village ranged from 10% to 40%. In all villages, most female heads of households attended (in one village 75% of participants were from house-holds headed by women).

#### **4.4. Data analysis**

According to Silverman (2000:17) with regard to qualitative analysis "The move from coding to interpretation is a crucial one. Interpretation involves the transcendence of "factual" data and cautious analysis of what is to be made of them." He continues and suggests that "data analysis should consist of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification". Implementing these steps implied that the data assembled had to be coded on the basis of a theoretical scheme from where the link between these elements was found, slowly narrowing the focus during the fieldwork phase. This is in line with the grounded theory approach where the aim is to construct frameworks from the data rather than from pre-established assumptions, utilising the constant comparative method (Schurink, 2002:5).

The term 'grounded theory' has since its inception signified a number of different things. Not only does it refer to the theory grounded in qualitative data, but it also describes the method of grounded theory referring to the methodology for the systematic analysis of unstructured data (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997:268).

The Grounded theory is described as “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:24). Consequently, grounded theorists search for social processes present in human interaction. The aim is to “*discover patterns and processes and understand how a group of people define, via their social interactions, their reality*” (Cutcliffe, 2000:45).

The researcher requested permission to use the tape recorder and it was granted. Interviews were recorded as a way of preserving the verbal part while brief notes were made. After an interview was completed, the researcher listened carefully to the audio recording and transcribed the verbal text word for word. This was electronically captured in the language of the research participant and stored as the ‘complete’ version of the interview. In addition, to ensure that all data are captured, the interview notes were read meticulously and compared them with the ‘complete version’. Where necessary the interview notes were appended. From this ‘complete version’ and the interview notes, the researcher was able to compile a synopsis that captured the essence of the interview. Important or key phrases conveyed by research participants were quoted verbatim.

The aforementioned process paved the way for the coding procedure. In order to determine what was happening, starting with the first interview, sentences were analysed in order to find out what situation or event had been covered. Sentences were subsequently broken into discrete data fragments that were analysed and interpreted in order to assign meaning to them. Slash marks were used to indicate the data fragments to which meaning was assigned and used numbering to track the location of the fragment. Fragments constituted a working unit of meaning, which contained a few words or more than a single sentence. Each of these data fragments was studied and labelled according to my interpretation of its meaning.

**Table 4.8 Example of fragments**

Extract from interview transcript	Concepts
Actually I enjoy it, but getting into it and finding the time is dreadfully difficult	Women found programmes interesting / see the benefits of it / difficult to get time to attend classes (motivation to attend, barriers for class attendance, different commitments)
I found it difficult to, very difficult to balance my class attendance and my family commitments	Women with family commitments/ children / husbands/ find it difficult to balance the two commitments / class attendance & family matters (competing commitment, Family role)
The topics on women are about fetching fire woods / cooking / taking care of children / nothing outside the house	Women needs skills that can improve their quality of life / to generate income / enabling them to realize that dominant cultural practices are oppressive to them (curriculum development, Income generating skills, benefits from attending ABET classes)
I really want to know how to read, write and speak English	Women joined ABET centres with different expectations / to communicate in English/ (motivation to attend)
We need skills that will enable us to get money	Reading and writing skills is not enough for them / women need to acquire skills that improves their living condition (ABET Curriculum, ABET Programmes, income-generating skills)

Once this process was completed, the researcher worked through these provisional concepts and allocated the same wording to synonymous meanings in the context of the study. This detailed analysis of the data constituted the open coding phase. The

same painstaking transcribing process was followed with each interview. The researcher took care to complete each interview comprehensively before preceding with successive ones. After the first interview had been coded, coding of the second interview commenced. The researcher compared the content of the second interview with the data already elicited in the first interview, thus comparing data with data. The researcher continued this strategy with successive interviews until she was able to compare the interview data against the background of the emerging theory.

Data analysis involved constant coding, categorising the data to enable themes to emerge based on revealed regularities, as opposed to imposing pre-formulated categories (Woods, 1999:73).

The aim of data analysis is to make the process of interpreting data much easier. According to Struwig and Stead (2003:53) data analysis is the process of bringing order to the data and organising it into patterns, categories and basic descriptive units. After the interviews the recordings were checked to make sure that they were recorded properly. I also went over the interview notes to make sure that what was written made sense and to review the quality of information received from respondents.

The collected data were initially transcribed from the tapes and then re-read several times. The aim of this was to derive clarification regarding the specific meaning of terms and sentences as the interviews were conducted in Oshiwambo, and then translated into English. The field notes were also reviewed. All collected data for the individual interviews were processed into a comprehensive summary.

Grounded theory seeks to identify concepts that emerge from the data and compare these concepts to established ideas. The researcher's purpose was to develop an understanding of the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women. The analyses evolved through four distinct phases, each of which involved reviewing data from think-aloud protocols, field observation and interviews to provide insight in this area.



According to Henning *et al.* (2004:101), “grounded theory requires that the analysis is extended to more sophisticated levels of abstraction and to conceptualised understanding of data that lead to the eventual substantive theory. This understanding needs to be clearly formulated in a coherent set of related concepts derived from this abstraction and used to produce a substantive theory”. In order to ensure the ‘sophisticated levels of abstraction’ and conceptualisation of data that would lead to the production of a substantive theory, I made use of the conventional grounded theory methods of data analysis as proposed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:124 -144).

I divided the collected data into small units of meaning, and named (coded) each unit according to the meaning it carried. I then grouped together (categorised) all the units that had the same codes. Each category contained codes that were semantically related. I examined each category, noting how each of them answered the research questions. The researcher derived these categories from inductive analyses of the interviews, field notes and observation data. There were no predetermined categories brought to this analysis. Each of the categories had broad and extensive support in the comments of the participants.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

From the observation, interviews and documents analysis, it was revealed the ABET programmes offered in the Omusati region are not effective. In this section the data was coded and organised according to categories. The data provided in this section was a preparation for the discussion of the findings, which will follow in Chapter Five. It is widely agreed that existing models of ABET programmes have failed to deliver what has been claimed for them. First, women who attended ABET class could acquire the ability to read and write and do arithmetic, although most did not. Second, skills were practiced by some women who had them. However, they were rarely practiced, and literacy was not well-integrated into the daily lives of illiterate women.

Chapter 5 contains an overview of the study, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations for further research as well as highlights limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapter 4, the findings of the study conducted in the Omusati region to determine the role of ABET programme in the development of rural black women in the region were presented. This chapter answers the research questions that emerged in chapter one and provide detailed description of the categories that were presented in chapter four of this study. The implication of the findings will be discussed and recommendations will be provided.

A literature review was carried out, from which a theoretical framework began to emerge, particularly focusing on the goals of adult basic education as related to elements of social constructivism in the learning process. It was established that, ABET programmes are intended to play a vital role in the lives of learners and therefore to measure the role of ABET programmes in the development of rural black women is very important. Furthermore, the researcher employed qualitative methods because she wished to obtain insight into the experiences and views of adult learners on the ABET programme.

#### **5.2 ABET curriculum**

ABET centres should serve as institutions for empowerment, programmes therefore need to empower the illiterate and disadvantaged black communities (Nafukho et al 2005:4). They need to be empowered to improve their living standards. Furthermore, education provided by ABET programmes should be relevant to the needs of that

community. Otherwise, development will be non-existent (Classen & Wesemael, 1992:72).

It is therefore very important that before an ABET project is implemented, research is conducted to determine the needs of that particular community. Chlebowska (2002:56) states that literacy programmes should be drawn up in the light of needs and interests as expressed by women. I strongly support Medel's (1997:86) idea that ABET centres need to involve women learners in designing learning materials, which is not only the conditions but also the aspirations of women to be incorporated. Many ABET literacy programmes have high drop-out rates or fail to achieve the desired results when learners do not benefit economically or financially from attending classes (UNESCO, 2000:31). Rogers (1999:88) maintains that, without the consideration of the community needs, cultural backgrounds, economic activities, beliefs and value systems, any organized literacy programme is bound to fail. Hence many people may find these programmes irrelevant, or rather not responding to their needs (Canieso-Doronilla, 1996:315).

Curriculum design in adult education is more diverse than school-centred education in terms of aims, content and methods. There exists very little material related to adult basic education in terms of curriculum design, as most of the work done on curriculum development has been done in relation to school-based education (Griffin, 1998:26). The present design concentrates more on the philosophical contents of the curriculum and therefore tends to neglect the more practical aspects of the curriculum, which is of greater relevance to the adult learner. There is a concern that most ABET materials and teaching have focused on the basic education and literacy components of ABET and have not incorporated the skills training aspect which should be aligned with an ABET programme. This view is consistent with those of both Morphet (1996:257) and Walters (2007:54) in the sense that it limits the appeal of potential learners, who see ABET as assisting them in attaining a better life and in particular, earning a better living.

Although ABET curricula may currently be viewed in a negative light, the need exists for curricula to be redesigned so that they meet learners' needs and standards, rather than the standards of faculty committees and institutional requirements. Walters (2007:49) viewed the interim guidelines regarding ABET learning programmes as concentrating on issues related to numeracy and language which tend to be based on outdated materials. These curricula are therefore regarded as not being sensitive to the needs of women or adults in general and are often seen as reinforcing stereotypes. These stereotypes are evident in the subjects that learners do. An example of this is that women learners were seen to be doing domestic subjects such as home economics rather than hand skills (Morphet, 1996:261).

Prior to offering any programme to women, a needs analysis should be done to determine exactly what women need to learn and ways of developing them further (Cropley, 1995:78).

Participants indicated that the programme consolidated elitism and failed to address the needs of the learners by using primers based on the dominant city living culture for all category learners. The exclusion of adult learners from curriculum development enabled the state to develop materials that many planners viewed as inadequate in terms of reflecting the contextual situation of learners from all parts of Namibia.

ABET education reproduced unequal power relations by failing to review primer materials that were developed from a needs assessment conducted in the central and southern Namibia and later applied to every body throughout the country without adapting them. The state imposed materials from South Africa on the learners regard less of concerns and whether the teachers were capable of teaching them. Learners are being treated as passive consumers and are excluded from the planning process (Deleon, 1997:87). The materials imposed from South Africa did not reflect the repertoire of experiences of the learners in Namibia. As a result, district planners recounted how adult learners in their districts dropped out in large numbers, which could

be attributed to language and the programme's failure to sufficiently address their social, cultural commitments and economic priorities.

According to the interviewed learners who were in level two, they felt it was not enough to learn literacy and numeracy only. This is an indication that female learners needed more knowledge. As expressed by the learners themselves, education is broad and they needed to be offered anything that can empower them.

### **5.3 Motivation and barriers to ABET participation**

The learners who were interviewed for this enquiry expressed their motivation to learn as being to acquire literacy as well as social and hand working skills. During the inquiry it was discovered that the above skills were never acquired. Those who improved their skills would write and read a little bit. As already mentioned in chapter three, when female learners join ABET classes they have high expectations. When learners do not receive what they expected, they drop out. The attendance registers studied, attest to that. Of the two hundred and twenty who enrolled, more than 50% dropped out of the programmes.

Centres do not offer hand work skills such as wood carving, tailoring and building. Some learners mentioned that they sometimes feel it is a waste of time to attend classes; thus they sometimes decide to stay away from classes. During the discussion some learners revealed their concern of not being offered other programmes such as business skills and health science to enhance their living standard.

The artifacts such as the attendance registers revealed that the drop out rate was high at all the centres visited. This normally happens when learners do not benefit from ABET programmes offered, especially when their living conditions do not improve. Learners perceived the programmes as not beneficially. Another contributory factor is poverty, which is significant in their families. Their children are starving and exposed to poverty related diseases. According to Davies and Saltmarsh (2007:74) poverty

manifests itself in many ways, including inaccessibility to health services, food insecurity, inadequate water, lack of good and proper clothing, inadequate shelter, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, inaccessibility to education and landlessness.

One of the participants also mentioned that they sometimes lose concentration in class when thinking of the problems they left at home. ABET centres could aim to remedy some of these problems. Some female learners mentioned that they do not know what to do to supplement their husbands' income. In some families both husband and wife are unemployed, as is the case for many of the female learners interviewed for the study. At the individual level, poverty has been identified as the single underlying cause of the low rate of literacy (Wenzel, 2007:32). Many adult programmes fail because they ignore the issues of basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. "It is impossible to teach a hungry, homeless person how to read and write or how to plan her family" (Wenzel, 2007:35). To raise the level of literacy in Omusati Region, there has to be a willing desire to reduce poverty.

The female learners' confidence is not built up in the ABET classes, as the programmes that are offered do not contribute to building women's confidence. Generally, illiterate black women have low self-esteem. By offering relevant skills and make use of relevant methods of teaching adult learners and understanding the principles of adult learning, female ABET learner's confidence could be nurtured.

It is imperative that female learners acquire confidence to cope on their own. Women from these areas are often left alone when their husbands migrate to cities and plantations. They are heading families and need to be confident in doing so. The use of group work in classroom activities builds confidence when learners get a chance to voice their views. Erasmus and Van Dyk (2003: 317) affirm this statement when they say that in small group people practice freedom, autonomy and mutual acceptance.

Participation contributes to improve critical thinking. According to Mafela (1994:87) in a democratic society, women need to be critical thinkers. They should have critical skills to be able to question their circumstances. They also need to contribute to the political sphere of their society at large. Programmes offered to female ABET learners need to transform them from being passive participants into active participants. The women interviewed lacked confidence and critical skills and could benefit from empowering methodologies. By learning in groups, they might collaboratively find a solution to a problem. This would allow them to gain confidence to discuss their personal and family problems and come up with solutions. As women group they can collectively discuss issues such as how they can fight poverty in their families and their community.

#### **5.4 ABET teachers and teaching methods**

Taking issues such as settings, content and climate into consideration would seem so simple, but when adult learners are interviewed about difficulties, they tend to report on issues such as a lack of assistance in mastering tests, coldness, hostility, lack of communication and the lack of developing a sound relationship between the facilitator and the learner. The ideal relationship between an educator and an adult learner should be based on trust, mutual respect, open dialogue, open questions that invite dialogue, responsibility and immediate response to questions and issues that are raised (Vella, 1994: 68).

Preece and Ntseane (2006:23) proposed that the teaching of adults required a facilitation approach: 'Facilitators do not direct; rather they assist adults in order that they may complete learning efforts that they the learners have defined'. ABET educators should appreciate that participants can resist domination and are resilient. Based on the tradition of free and open discussions, the culture of democratic participation prevails in Omusati Region.



Freire (1990: 222) talks about a democratic learning process where learners should have the freedom to question and disagree with the facilitator's analysis. Women as learners need to be accorded the freedom to express their needs. They should be free to say exactly what they wish to learn. The type of education where there is a democratic transformative relationship between learners and the teacher is needed.

According to Vella (1994:89) cognitivists provide a sound foundation for integrating active learning strategies into teaching with adult learners. Adult learners already bring one of the two important components for using the cognitive approach – their experience and previously learned information. Combining this experience with involving students in active learning completes the two key elements in the cognitive approach to learning.

## **5.5 Income generating skills**

In Omusati Region there are many people whose income generating powers are very limited, indeed, in many cases so limited that they are unable to fully provide for themselves. ABET should offer income generating programmes that seek to redress this imbalance by equipping these people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values such that they become positive contributors to their nation's economy. In addition, these programmes assist these people to develop self-esteem and be self-reliant. Newland (2001:7) stated that IGPs are designed to contribute to both the social and economic welfare of a community and a nation. Income generating programmes invariably involve adult people with particular learning needs, who require customised as often as conventionally structured packages which should be available at any stage of their life.

Through income-generating skills programmes women will be able to acquire entrepreneurship skills that create jobs and thus alleviate unemployment. Learners need to acquire skills, on how to start a business and manage the businesses; and for those who already own businesses be able to expand them their businesses. Participants also indicated a need to know how to write a business plan in order to get

financial aid from banks. What the participants need is the offering of income generating skills to empower them economically. The learners who were interviewed had problems of how to become self-sufficient and earn a living. The ABET centres that were visited do not offer programmes that offer skills that they can apply to generate money.

By acquiring income generating skills learners would be able to start their own businesses. In a community such as this where unemployment is rife, this might present a solution for some. The following are the possible projects which women are interested in to generate some income: tailoring, reed, furniture/wood, carving, building and business skills (Mellard, et al., 2007: 100).

## **5.6 Limitations of the study**

As indicated previously, the study was conducted in Omusati Region only. This can be related *inter alia* to the time and financial constraints I was aware of beforehand. Additionally it can become expensive to collect data by means of personal interviews. Traveling, recording material and the transcribing of the interviews can become a costly endeavour. If the whole country could have been included in the sample, it most certainly would have taken much longer to conclude and been much more costly. In my opinion this shortfall does not reflect negatively on the validity or reliability of the study, as the findings can be used as guidelines.

However a wider array of participant viewpoints could have been collected if a bigger sample could have been included in the study. Experience and exposure to the grounded theory approach is most certainly an advantage, which as a novice, I did not have. This contributed to the fact that I found the approach difficult and struggled grasping and applying its methodology. Wider exposure and more experience in this methodology could have produced better theory.

The research that was conducted unfolded other dynamics involved in adult learning programmes. One might be swayed into thinking that adults have a limited scope of learning and that what matters to them is reading and writing. It is only after looking at the dynamics of the programme that one is able to identify genuine problems, which are engraved in the minds and lives of the illiterates. The study revealed a need to address the needs of the illiterates as well as drafting a sound and relevant programme. As expressed by the learners, some of their needs and expectations differ from one individual to the other. As with any study that involves human beings, this research has constraints. In surveying adult learners of the Omusati Region, the results of the study cannot be generalised to the wider population of adult learners in other centres.

Although the results cannot be generalised, the researcher has achieved her objectives, as she found out that ABET programmes that are offered are not effective in making a difference to the women's lives.

## **5.7 Personal experience**

Having been involved with the study and the writing of the dissertation for many months, and utilising qualitative research generally and the grounded theory approach particularly, I deem it necessary to briefly reflect on some of my experiences that I found most striking. Implementing grounded theory offered me for the first time in my practice of social science research, the opportunity, to adjust flexible qualitative methods to the life worlds as experienced by people. Listening to the participants as they shared their views, reflecting on their views and experiences, extract key themes from their accounts and beliefs to abstract theoretical concepts found in the literature, were exhilarating and gratifying. I was able to illuminate their authentic social worlds by examining the appropriateness of some of the most esteemed international scholar's work.

But I also wish to caution those attempting to follow the grounded theory approach. I for one (wrongly) thought, that by following this formal approach with its set of procedures, theory developing would be rather straightforward. This however was not the case and

there were times that I was doubtful whether I was on the right track. Initially I struggled to come to terms with the approach's terminology and methodology and to attain a clear understanding of the key issues that defined and divided the two distinct grounded theory approaches. I believe that it is important that researchers should become knowledgeable about the different applications of grounded theory and should obtain clarity as to which approach they want to follow before applying the approach in empirical research. Furthermore, it is vital that researchers define the parameters of their studies clearly, and formulate properly their research question/s with regard to which data are to be collected. Not addressing these issues will almost surely overwhelm future researchers with an enormous quantity of data to systematise and analyse. Notwithstanding the fact that I demarcated the study, and was extremely careful in gathering data, the approach still generated a vast quantity of rich material that I had to analyse and make sense of. This required screening the data, reviewing it, and managing frustration bordering on despair, at not deriving any meaning and insight initially. This highlights another downside, namely that grounded theory is undoubtedly very time-consuming.

## **5.8 Suggestions for further research**

One concern is the need for future research on initial motives and topics of interest of Adult learners, in order to come up with programmes that are relevant to the needs of the Adults learners. Research on how educational backgrounds and abilities affect participation of adult learners in ABET programme is suggested. Another issue concerns the organisation of instruction. While the variables of length, duration, and content of instruction are thought to be important to learning outcomes, more systematic examination of these factors is needed. An identification of the teaching and learning models used in adult literacy classrooms as part of a wider study that examines the impact that participation in adult learning and literacy programs has on adult's lives and communities; and how individual adult learners learn, rather than how groups learn.

## 5.9 Recommendations

In views of the findings I will recommend the following:

1. ABET must be a holistic concept that goes beyond the acquisition of the elementary skills of reading, writing and arithmetic in order to enable the learner to know, obtain information and acquire other skills that can contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of individuals, their families and community, but should also offer the following programmes:
  - Income generation skills: by acquiring these skills learners would be able to start their own businesses. In a community such as this where unemployment is rife, this might present a solution for some.
  - Business Skills: learners need to know how to start and manage their own businesses. Those who are already selling would be able to expand their businesses.
  - Health Education: is also a valuable programme to assist these women to look well after themselves and their children. Thus ABET programmes should incorporate health knowledge.
  - Legal Education: the offering of legal education is also necessary for rural women to know their rights.
  
2. Immediate and Transformative Frameworks. Literacy programs could be located within the framework of women's concerns or it could be tackled within an advocacy of gender equality. Given the limits and opportunities for women in the Omusati Region, the literacy programs could be envisioned within the range of what women think should be strengthened and what needs to be changed or transformed.

3. Design literacy programs that will engage women to reflect and act on the unequal social and cultural constructions on women-men relationships in their everyday life. The social relations between the family, clans, traditional power structures and the norms, practices and beliefs in everyday life have subjugated women's knowledge.
4. Strengthen the capacities of the women to meet the challenges they confront in the home, health and nutrition, agricultural production, women's own health and reproduction, and formation of the children. Literacy can provide women more access to knowledge that could improve her ways and approaches in dealing with these concerns.
5. The planning process should be decentralised with power devolved to the districts in order for the programme to be responsive to the real needs of local contexts. Planners should increasingly view ABET planning as a political, critical and negotiated experience (Cervero & Wilson, 1994:37).

## **5.10 Conclusion**

The study investigated the role played by ABET programmes in the development of rural black women in the Omusati Region. The study was conducted in the four selected villages, with sixteen female learners; four from each ABET centres. Methods of qualitative research were used for data collection. Observation was done in one class at each of the four centres. Documents were also analysed for investigation purposes. In-depth interviews were conducted with four female learners in each case. Research findings established that the female ABET learners are not improving their quality of life. The ABET programmes are not developing them economically, as was their prioritised need which result in a high dropout rate. The study revealed the lack of offering skills that can lead to the development of women. It also revealed a need for ABET programmes that are relevant to the specified needs of poor rural people who see education as an opportunity to improve their lives and that of their families.

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# APPENDIX: A

## TOPIC:

**THE ROLE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL BLACK WOMEN IN THE OMUSATI REGION IN NAMIBIA.**

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This survey is designed to obtain information whether the ABET programmes offered in the area lead to any development of any kind; whether the programmes offer you income-generating skills; opportunities to gain employment and whether the programmes meet the needs expressed by participants. All responses will remain confidential.

#### 1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name:.....

Age:.....

ABET Centre:.....

Marital Status:.....

Education:.....

1.1 Are you currently employed?

.....  
.....

1.2 If so, what work do you do?

.....  
.....  
.....

1.3 Do you like your work or would you rather like to do something else?

.....  
.....  
.....

1.4 If unemployed, what work would you like to do?

.....  
.....  
.....

1.5 Are there other jobs in the region you would like to do?

.....  
.....  
.....

**2. FAMILY**

2.1 Tell me about your family composition and education level?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2.2 What does your husband do?

.....  
.....  
.....

**3. SKILLS LEADING TO GENERAL DEVELOPMENT**

3.1 Are you happy with the classes?

.....

3.2 For how long have you attended the classes?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.3 When will you finish the Course?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.4 Are you learning new skills?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.5 If yes, what types of skills have you learned so far?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.6 Are you making use of the skills learned/gained? e.g. Agriculture - growing vegetables etc.

.....  
.....  
.....

3.7 Is there anything you can do better in your life or work because of ABET?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.8 Do you think the skills learned will help you to get a job in your region or elsewhere?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.9.1 Besides reading and writing skills, are you being offered other life skills (e.g. opening a bank account or understanding a bank statement), which will help you to cope/manage successfully on your own?

.....  
.....  
.....

3.9.2 Do you have any money making project / business which you started with the skills gained from ABET? E.g. sewing business, fruits and vegetables, etc.

.....  
.....

.....

#### 4. ABET PROGRAMMES AND CURRICULUM/SYLLABUS

4.1 Do you enjoy what you are being taught?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.2. Which module/class do you enjoy most and why?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.3 Which module/class do you enjoy least and why?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.4 How do you find the ABET syllabus and Programme? Please tell me about it?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.5 Is there the syllabus/curriculum discussion done with you for the ABET Programmes Development to determine your needs and interest?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.6. If yes, Do you think that ABET programmes are drawn up in the light of need and interest as spoken by participants?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.7 If not, what do you think is needed?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.8 Does the syllabus/curriculum content relate to your real life situations?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.9 Does the existing syllabus/ curricula meet your needs and expectations?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.10 Do you think the study materials used needs to be changed, if so, how?

.....  
.....  
.....

4.11. Is there any thing missing in the syllabus/curriculum that should be covered?

.....  
.....  
.....

**5. MOTIVATION OF LEARNING & TEACHING METHOD.**

5.1 What motivates you to attend ABET classes?

.....  
.....  
.....

5.2 Do you think it is worthwhile/valuable attending classes and why?

.....  
.....  
.....

5.3 Do you think the promoters are taking your experience into consideration during the learning process?

.....  
.....  
.....

5.4 What language do the facilitators use during lessons? Is it easy for you to understand the language and words that they use?

.....  
.....  
.....

5.5 Are there enough discussions in the class between the different members?

.....  
.....  
.....

5.6 Do you get personal attention or support from the teacher?

.....  
.....  
.....

5.7 How good are the teachers to help you learn effectively?

.....  
.....  
.....

**6. BARRIERS IN ABET PROGRAMMES**

In this section, I will require participants to provide any information on practical barriers that may affect the learning and delivery of ABET programmes in your area

6.1 Tell me about the support you are getting from the community and family about attending ABET classes

.....  
.....  
.....

6.2 How serious is their motivation affecting your attendance or participation?

.....  
.....  
.....

6.3 Are the teachers/promoters always committed at attending classes?

.....  
.....  
.....



6.4 How far is the ABET centre from your home, and how do you travel there?

.....  
.....  
.....

6.5 Do people from the Ministry of Education visit you?

.....  
.....  
.....

6.6 Do you experience any problems which make it difficult for you to learning or participating in the ABET Programme?

.....  
.....  
.....

6.7 Do you have any other comments about the ABET classes?

.....  
.....  
.....

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT**

