

The Perspectives of In-service Trainers on the Challenges of the Cascade Model

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ABSTRACT This article seeks to establish the challenges that in-service trainers face when attempting to implement the cascade model as it relates to the training of ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) in the North West province of South Africa. The Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation was employed. A qualitative approach was employed to gather information. Interviews were conducted with one Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) provincial trainer and five Area Project Office (APO) ABET specialists from five Area Project Offices. The data was analysed by recording interviewees' responses. Thematically, the results of this study shows that ABET educators are not adequately involved in the planning of their in-service training programme. It further identifies factors that impede the effectiveness of the cascade model of training. To circumvent these factors, this study recommends five intervention mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

The South African National Department of Education has used the cascade approach since 1998 in its in-service training and for its teacher development. The Department of Education (DoE) in the North West Province adopted a top-down cascade training model, as noted by McDevitts (1998), Bax (2002), Dichaba and Mokhele (2012) to train small teams of trainers at the provincial level and mandated them to convey the acquired knowledge to ABET educators in their diverse districts/clusters using the provided resources. According to Ono and Ferreira (2010), the cascade model entails "training-the-trainer" to ensure that the message "flows down" from experts and specialists, eventually to the teachers. Although this tool is regarded as the most suitable to develop a large number of teachers in a short period of time, thereby saving the government funds, it is not immune to criticism (Dichaba 2013).

The qualitative study on which this article is based investigated the challenges of the cascade model in the in-service training of ABET educators in the North West Province. The study from which this article is drawn was designed with the aim of capturing the views of the in-service trainers (at provincial and districts levels) on the cascade model and their thoughts on the challenges of the training provided. To that end, the main research question was formulated,

focusing specifically on the trainers' perceptions of the cascade model.

Objectives of the Study

The study addressed the following research question: what are the perceptions of the in-service trainers as regards the cascade model in the in-service training of ABET educators? The specific objectives of this research were: to determine the perceptions of in-service trainers on the challenges of the in-service training programmes using the cascade model provided by the provincial Department of Education, secondly, to suggest intervention mechanisms to achieve positive results in the use of the cascade model of training. The article begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the inquiry undertaken in this study. The second section outlines the critique of the cascade model drawn from existing literature. The third section presents the methods employed to collect and analyse data, followed by a discussion of the key research findings. The article concludes by offering recommendations informed by the results from the study.

Theoretical Framework

Adult Learning theory was used as a theoretical framework of the study as highlighted by Knowles et al. (1998, 2005). The first guideline of the Adult Learning theory is self-directed learn-

ing, that is, the ability of adult learners to take control of the techniques and purposes of learning. The second guideline is the learner's need to know: "how learning will be conducted, what learning will occur and why learning is important" (Knowles et al. 1998: 133). The third guideline implies that the prior experience of adult learners has an impact on learning in creating individual differences, providing rich resources, creating biases and providing adults' self-identity. The fourth guideline is motivation to learn. Adults are highly motivated to learn when they can gain the new knowledge to help them to solve important problems in their lives. The fifth guideline is readiness to learn. This implies that adults become ready to learn when their life situations create a need to learn. The sixth guideline is orientation to learning. This implies that adults prefer a problem-solving orientation in learning. Research on adult learning (McKeachie 2002; Knowles et al. 2005) has shown that tapping into adult learners' experiences through experiential techniques (discussions, simulations, problem-solving activities, or case methods) is beneficial. In this case, adults can learn best when knowledge is presented in a real-life context.

The above mentioned guidelines are pertinent to in-service training of ABET educators. Mothata (2000: 85) sees in-service training as a continuous professional development of teaching practitioners. It is a necessary extension of pre-service training with the aim of enhancing awareness, knowledge and skills of personnel (Malone et al. 2000: 54; Coetzer 2001: 78). Such activities are aimed primarily at adding to their professional knowledge, improving their professional skills and helping them to clarify their various professional values so that they can educate their students more effectively (Bolan 2000: 267; Adler et al. 2003: 137).

In-service training can be beneficial because its purpose is to improve the level of knowledge in a specific area of teaching (Kirby et al. 2005: 122). Thus, the main purpose of in-service training is to impart new knowledge to current ABET educators that they will cascade to their colleagues and eventually implement in their learning centres. In order to keep ABET abreast with of changes and developments in curricula and teaching approaches, continual updates can be done through in-service training programmes. The successful implementation of new policies, such as the outcomes-based education and in-

clusive education, will only be effective if teachers are adequately prepared and equipped by means of initial retraining and if they realize the importance of improving their practice by means of continuous professional development (Coetzer 2001: 89; Early and Bubb 2004: 3). Thus, in-service training is essential to update ABET educators about recent instructional developments and curriculum innovations.

Effective continuous professional development should firstly be aware of and address the specific needs of teachers (Bredeson 2003: 9; Muijs et al. 2004: 291). This suggests that some sort of needs analysis of personnel, in this case ABET educators, has to be conducted to address those specific needs. Once these needs have been identified, activities need to be properly planned to support educators in applying the knowledge and teaching methodology creatively and confidently (Anderson 2000: 1). Training is only successful when participants have learnt, that learning happens when participants can recall the skills and abilities that were taught and can put them to work on the job (Cafarella 2002: 204). Therefore, by its very nature, in-service training is provided through seminars, workshops, conferences, short courses and long courses. In-service training expectations seem to be that the provision of information will translate directly into effective outcomes, that the one short workshop will meet the implementation needs of participants (Malone et al. 2000: 205). However, it could be argued that in certain circumstances the cascade model does not deliver similar outcomes. Dichaba and Mokhele (2012) maintain that in principle the cascade model appears to be a user-friendly approach to in-service training for larger-scale programmes, but in reality less and less is understood as one goes down the cascades.

In-service training relies on the prior knowledge (Bredeson 2003), the participants' potential and experience that can be built upon and incorporated into further initiatives (Early and Bubb 2004). For effective in-service training to happen, each training session conducted by in-service trainers should encourage trainees to draw upon and share their experiences with one another. Education for adults relies on the situations and experiences that need to be brought into the adult educational experience during in-service training.

Before the commencement of training, planners of training programmes should reflect on

what they wish to accomplish through training (Lessing and De Witt 2007). They should know who the customers of training are, that the right programme has been selected, that the right participants are in attendance, that the right participants have been appropriately orientated before coming to the programme and that the goals of the programme are specific, clear and measurable (Lapidus 2000). According to Steyn (2010: 550), professional development should be customised and should recognise that different teachers will respond differently to the same circumstances.

Furthermore, the in-service trainers need to receive constant feedback from the educators and both the trainers and the trainees need to reflect on the outcomes of the training, addressing the question, did the training achieve the set goals and objectives? Follow up is vital in every training activity. The method that has been used and found successful is where the staff developers work alongside educators in their own classroom after the training (Moon et al. 2000).

A Critique of the Cascade Model of Training

In South Africa, the cascade model was a bold attempt to popularize outcomes-based education and demystify Curriculum 2005 at the time when there was a great deal of confusion and anxiety (Chisholm 2000). More (2004) regards the cascade model as attractive to planners of change on a large scale. However, the period of time between the cascades, the quality of the presentations and the messages delivered may contribute to the deteriorating quality of the model.

Chisholm (2000), Janse van Rensburg and Mhoney (2000) posit that cascading of information results in dilution and misinterpretation of crucial information. This occurs, as less and less is understood, as one goes down the cascade. Concentration of expertise is at the top level of the cascade where the knowledgeable people of the cascade tend to use a purely transmissive mode of training at all levels. In the cascade model of training the audience is constantly changing from level to level and this poses a serious problem for the design of the package (McDevitt 1998). For instance, in India (Shah 2004) and in Bangladesh (Rashid and Rahman 2004), there was a considerable loss of information due to the time gaps between the training of various levels and lack of motivation among trainers and

facilitator's trainers who had neither genuine interest in nor aptitude for being educators of adults (Shah 2004). According Müller and Louw (2004), and Knowles et al. (2005), adults are responsive to some external motivators such as, increased job satisfaction, higher salaries, promotions, but the most potent motivators are internal, for instance, desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem and the opportunity to self-actualise. Therefore, adults' motivation can be blocked by training and education that ignores adult learning principles (Knowles et al. 2005).

It was concluded that the availability of resources, in terms of training content, materials, funds and technical inputs gradually diminished and reached its minimum at the level of facilitator training (Mitra 2004). Bax (2002) notes lack of confidence, knowledge on the part of educators when they have to cascade what they have learnt from the workshop and power dynamics as some inherent challenges for the cascade model of training.

Jansen (2003), drawing on the case studies of curriculum change in South Africa, observes that although curriculum policy is developed and promulgated by central government, it is subject to various interpretations as it moves through the system to the classroom. Some disastrous consequences of the application of the cascade model are evident in the abortive attempts at implementing Curriculum 2005 in South Africa (More 2004: 85). The Governmental Report of the Review Committee that was presented to the Minister of Education in May 2000 was highly critical of the cascade model (Bax 2002: 167). The review noted that the cascade model failed to prepare either officials or school-based educators for the complexity of Curriculum 2005 implementation. In the first instance the cascade of information resulted in the watering down and/or misinterpretation of crucial information (Chisholm 2000; Janse van Rensburg and Mhoney 2000). This interpretive drift impedes the flexibility of the cascades. Dichaba (2013) argues that the period between the cascades, the quality of presentations and the messages delivered may contribute to the deteriorating quality of the model.

METHODS

To determine the perceptions of the in-service trainers of the effectiveness of the cascade model on the in-service programmes provided, a qualitative research method was utilized. The

study utilized semi-structured interviews as the main data gathering tool. An interpretive approach was employed; that is, participants' interviews texts were read hermeneutically in an attempt to grasp the meaning that they wanted to communicate, while acknowledging that the researcher was the co-constructor of the meaning.

This research was conducted in the ABET section of the DoE in the Ngaka Modiri Molema district in the North West Province of South Africa. A purposive sampling method was used in this study. Purposive sampling takes place when the researcher selects a sample because of his/her specific knowledge of the situation and from which the most can be learned (Strydom 2005; Uys and Puttergill 2003). In this case, APO ABET specialists were included in this study because they organized training programmes for the ABET educators and they also participated as facilitators and trainers in those training programmes. One Provincial in-service trainer (Teacher Education) and one ABET specialist from each of the five APOs which formed a total of five APO ABET specialists were sampled. The five ABET APO specialists who conducted the in-service training sessions from 2007-2009 in the sampled APOs were interviewed.

Qualitative analysis is an attempt to capture the richness of the information deduced from conversations with participants (Patton 2000: 305). Through interviews, "rich descriptions" of the roles of the APO ABET specialists as professionals as influenced by their unique circumstances were generated. These descriptions provided substantial data from which perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the cascade model were identified as themes and categories. These themes were used to suggest the intervention mechanism to assist the cascade model of training. In this article, the researcher used the tape recordings and questions that were asked during the interview and which sought to establish the chances for success and failure of the cascade model of training. The ensuing discussion highlights key findings that emerged from the study with special reference to the views and experiences of in-service trainers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the inquiry was to determine the perceptions of the in-service trainers on the effectiveness of in-service training programmes of ABET educators using the cascade model of

training in the North West Province. The perceptions of the respondents were obtained through the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

The following themes were identified:

- 1) Assessment of needs before training
- 2) Variety of activities to keep in-service trainees engaged
- 3) Filtering down of the content to ABET Educators
- 4) Factors that impede the effectiveness of the cascade model of training
- 5) Monitoring

These themes are briefly discussed to show the relationship between ABET educator in-service training and the effectiveness of the cascade model.

Theme 1: Assessment of Needs before Training

It can be inferred from the comments by the Provincial trainer and the ABET APO specialist that assessment of ABET educators' needs is conducted properly. The responses given by the Provincial trainer and ABET APO specialists demonstrate an insight into what needs assessment entails. It is interesting to note that although in-service trainers conduct needs assessment before planning in-service training, the training materials are packaged from the National DoE and the in-service trainers are expected to cascade it to ABET educators. In this case the needs assessment exercise undertaken by both the trainers seems to be futile.

Theme 2: Variety of Activities to Keep In-service Trainees Engaged

The Provincial trainer and APO ABET specialists agreed that they used a variety of activities to keep ABET educators (trainees) engaged. They indicated that ABET educators are given a chance to report about what they have learnt during training at plenary session presentations. This means that in-service trainers used reflective feedback during training to encourage in-service trainees' involvement. They clarify upon trainees contributions and give direction where needed. Supportive engagement strategies by in-service trainers are crucial for the cascade model to be effective. In-service trainers should know that it is important to keep the trainees engaged by allowing active participation and using a variety of delivery methods. Transfer of

learning is more likely to occur when the training material contains some personal meaning for trainees.

Theme 3: Filtering Down of the Content to ABET Educators

The response failed to address the issue of ensuring that what was cascaded in the training session would filter down to ABET educators at the centres without distortion. Duplicating training manuals is not adequate for successful filtering down of content to the centres. Giving relevant examples of how new learning can be applied to trainees' job and incorporating a variety of classroom activities and assessment methods that support transfer of learning in training can be used by in-service trainers.

In response to the question how APO ABET Specialists ensure that what was cascaded at the training session would filter down to other ABET educators at the centres, APO ABET specialists indicated that:

ABET Specialist 1:

For ABET educators to cascade training to their colleagues, time is quite limited because ABET educators work for three hours a day, that is from three to six, others from four to seven. In this case, they organize one hour a day for three days to make sure that all aspects of the in-service training they attended is successfully cascaded to their colleagues.

Another ABET specialist echoed similar sentiment when he reported,

We have to do a lot of work with the skill of helping ABET educators to train their colleagues at the centres (train the trainer course), although these ABET educators have been trained in other courses like assessor and moderator, little has been done to monitor whether what was learned has been practised in the centres.

The responses signify 'time constraint' as a factor that impedes the effectiveness of the cascade model. If the responsibility of ABET Specialist is to make follow-up after training and they do not, then the good intentions of the cascade mode will not be realized.

Theme 4: Factors that Impede the Effectiveness of the Cascade Model of Training

The reason for this impediment can be attributed to several factors, like ABET educators' desire to leave for better paying profession; gener-

al dissatisfaction and demotivation due to lack of fringe benefits, amongst others. These are factors that can affect training outcomes (trainee reactions, learning, behaviour and performance).

The Provincial trainer indicated the following factors:

Lack of application of learning that was learnt from the training. ABET educators see these workshops as irrelevant and time wasting. Some ABET educators regard teaching in ABET centres as their stepping stone whilst they are waiting for opportunity to present itself in the mainstream' employment. The morale of ABET educators in most cases is low due to the fact that their working environment is regarded as inferior so they are not motivated to attend workshops. The fact that we are training new faces every year hampers the Department of Education's good intentions.

Motivation to learn is indicated as a significant impediment of the effectiveness of the cascade model. Singh and McKay (2004) indicated that literacy educators are one of the least supported groups of educators worldwide. They note that literacy educators receive little, if any, regular remuneration, lack job security, and enjoy few training opportunities and little on-going professional support. The responses highlight the disconnect that exists between the training environment and the work place. It can be inferred that although the trainees leave the training with some level of intention to transfer what they have learnt from the in-service training to their centres, various environmental factors undermine this motivation. This in turn minimizes the effectiveness of the cascade model. Lack of transfer of learning from the in-service training to the ABET centres has the potential of impeding the in-service training. Evidence regarding lack of transfer of learning emerged from the following comments:

The APO ABET specialists indicated the following factors as impeding the effectiveness of the cascade model:

ABET specialist 1:

Lack of confidence of some ABET educators who are expected to train their colleagues at the centres. Educators do not bother to ask or contribute in training and the fact that trainees have limited communication with us after they return back to their workplace after training, does not allow for much development both at individual and at the centre level. Pressures of

work and limited time at the centres prevent ABET educators to train their fellow colleagues at their centres. They only work for three hours.

From these assertions, it is evident that at present that cascading is producing considerable frustration among the ABET educators, in-service trainers and ABET learners. The above mentioned concerns clearly indicate that the transfer of learning from the in-service training to the ABET centres is very poor.

ABET specialist 2 and 3 has this to say about the factors that impedes the effectiveness of the cascade model:

These ABET educators when they attend training they are absent minded or they don't comprehend, we really can't say. When we do monitoring we encounter such problems such that they are shy, they want to use their mother tongue which sometimes makes it difficult for others to understand or learn effectively what was presented in the training. When these educators return to their work places they may disseminate what they think is important.

ABET educators are generally poorly motivated, do little than the absolute minimum and are often absent from the centres. Sometimes peer group acceptance and credibility of the ABET educator attending the in-service training affect the extent of the dissemination of what was learned.

The responses reveal that training unmotivated ABET educators and expect them to train other unmotivated educators at the centres is really not fair. It is worth noting that most ABET educators work three hours daily and they are remunerated on an hourly basis and their salaries and their working conditions still compare very badly with those of their counterparts in the mainstream.

ABET specialist 4 and 5 responses with regard to the factors that impedes the effectiveness of the cascade model are as follows:

In some isolated rural communities, there is little exposure to English. Our ABET educators speak English as their second language, they have no command of the language even though some of them have ABET certificate and National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE). Workshops focus on helping ABET educators to learn new techniques that they are going to practice at the centres without helping them build on their training skills (that is, how to train others).

Pressures of work and limited time at the centres prevent ABET educators to train their fellow colleagues at their centres. They only work for three hours. ABET educators are leaving the ABET centres at a very alarming rate after being trained.

From these assertions various drawbacks were identified: misinterpretation of crucial information and the lack of knowledge, understanding, insufficient time, language usage, lack of motivation, dissemination of information and confidence of the trainers at the centre level. These indicates that without proper monitoring there will be no feedback as to whether ABET educators at the centres are given the correct information stipulated by the in-service trainers.

With regard to problems inherent to the use of the cascade model, Bax (2002) argues that lack of confidence on the part of educators when they have to cascade what they have learnt from the workshop, insufficient knowledge of educators who conduct the workshops at the centres and lastly, power dynamics, that is when fellow educators have to conduct training, the colleagues do not find it useful as he or she is seen as their equal and therefore not qualified and knowledgeable to train them. With regard to confidence of the trainees and insufficient knowledge of educators who conduct the workshops, literature indicates that in-service trainers should be aware that adult learners in this case ABET educators, bring numerous life and work experiences, needs, personalities and learning styles to their learning, education and professional development (Knowles 1998). They may transfer their previous learning to new situations which increase their self-worth and confidence. The Provincial trainer indicated that ABET educators' morale in most cases is low due to the fact that their working environment is regarded as inferior and they are not motivated to attend the workshops. One APO ABET specialist indicated that lack of confidence of trainees may be attributed to the fact that trainees do not bother to ask questions or make comments during training. Another APO ABET specialist alluded to the fact that when trained ABET educators had to cascade what was presented to them, they want to use their mother tongue. This has the potential of impeding the effectiveness of the cascade model of training.

Evaluation at this stage looks at the impact of in-service training experience on trainees or team performance at work. Key to Kirkpatrick's

level 4 of evaluation is the need to have agreed objectives prior to the learning experience so that when evaluation takes place there are measures to use. Did the learning transfer to the job? How has the in-service training improved individual performance? ABET APO specialists indicated that ABET educators are leaving the ABET centres at a very alarming rate after being trained. Kirkpatrick level 4 evaluation assesses the impact of training on organizational effectiveness and whether or not it is cost effective in organizational terms. How has the in-service training activity affected the ABET sector in terms of improved performance – for example, better ABET learners' results, fewer complaints, increased ABET educators' morale, ABET educators' professional image? Despite this disillusionment by the trainers about the cascade model of training as indicated in the literature and empirical investigation, it is still the dominant model used in most in-service training in South Africa.

Theme 5: Monitoring

For knowledge and skills to be cascaded effectively from the in-service training to the

ABET centres, the effective role of the DoE to support and monitor in-service trainees after training is crucial. Contrary to the above statement, the following comments confirm that post-training monitoring is inadequate especially in rural ABET centres. The Provincial trainer indicated that they do monitoring most frequently.

After training, we team-up with APO ABET specialists

and visit centres according to APOs, we make it a point that we spend a week in that particular APO so as to reach as many centres as possible.

The APO ABET Specialists mentioned that: Considering the various duties that we are allocated to do in one year and the deadlines that we are expected to meet, it makes it impractical to visit all the centres especially the most rural and far centres that falls under our APO. The fact that we are understaffed makes it difficult for us to make follow-ups for our trainees.

The study revealed that post-training monitoring is severely inhibited and that not all ABET centres undergo follow-up check-ups especially those in rural areas. This concern coincides with the uneasy realisation that a serious challenge

facing South African education in general is the lack of any successful translation of new curriculum reforms into classroom practice (Dichaba and Mokhele 2012). The above assertions indicate that in-service training should be co-ordinated so that the training outcomes of one group are reconciled with the training outcomes of other groups.

CONCLUSION

In the light of this research, the challenges related to the effectiveness of the cascade model of in-service training of ABET educators were identified and discussed. The planning and organization of in-service training at the centre levels of the cascade were found to be lacking. The competences of in-service trainers at the centre level were found to be of questionable quality while the transfer of learning to the centres was found to be poor. As a result of these findings, it emerged that there was a need for more structured in-service training of ABET educators if the cascade model of training was to be effective.

Finally it became apparent that the unique context of individual centres and APO should be taken into consideration by the Directorate of ABET when in-service training was designed for ABET educators. This article therefore, acknowledged that transfer problems in in-service training exist due to the time gaps between the training of various levels, lack of motivation among ABET educators, dilution of training and misinterpretation of crucial information. Lack of transfer of learning is being regarded as a challenge facing most training programmes in in-service training of ABET educators. This article also offers comprehensive alternatives to the barriers of training implicit in the cascade model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lastly, the cascade model could be successfully implemented through basing training on careful assessment of ABET educators' needs, a variety of activities to keep in-service trainees engaged during training, by using work-related situations in training, by limiting time gaps between the training of various cascade levels, by conducting post-training monitoring and evaluating the impact of in-service training.

Basing Training on Careful Assessment of ABET Educators' Needs

An in-service training programme should undertake a needs assessment. Assessment of needs is not an easy task and it is likely to fail if it is based on naïve assumptions of the in-service training organizers. It is worth noting that the effectiveness of any in-service training requires expeditious data collection and analysis. Prior to the in-service training, design and implementation of an in-service training programme, a training plan should be formulated. The basis of who must be trained, what must be trained, when training will occur, and where the training will take place are accomplished in this plan. When constructing the in-service training plan for the ABET educators the trainers should first ask themselves what must the ABET educators know, how are they going to acquire that knowledge, how will they (in-service trainers) know when they (ABET educators) have acquired that knowledge. This exercise has an aura of administrivia, but if it is neglected, it can impede the effectiveness of the cascade model of training. In-service trainers should ensure that the in-service training is well designed to meet the needs of in-service trainees.

A successful in-service training should have clear objectives, based on careful identification of ABET educators needs, have the support of the in-service trainers to monitor and make follow-ups after in-service training. Well-structured and well formulated objectives will facilitate the effectiveness of the cascade model of training.

Variety of Activities to Keep In-service Trainees Engaged

In-service should try as much as possible to involve in-service trainees in ways which would ensure that the in-service training has a close bearing on their teaching. They should try to frame each training experience to the orientation of adults in each training. It is worth noting that it is not possible for in-service trainers to prepare trainees for all the contexts in which they work. They should attempt to involve them as far as possible in the process of their own training by allowing them to voice their views concerning their working situations.

This research recommends that in-service trainers should devote more time to experiential learning and practice. In this case matching training methods to the in-service trainees' experi-

ence is crucial for the effectiveness of the cascade model of training. The researcher recommends that role plays instead of lecture methods must be used in training. In-service trainers should encourage ABET educators to integrate new ideas (what they are learning in the training) into their own experience in a creative and constructive way, instead of merely receiving ideas.

Using Work-related Situations in Training

In-service trainers must use as many relevant real life examples as possible. The in-service trainer must tailor examples to the work situations of these ABET educators. This can be achieved when in-service trainers encourage trainees to discuss among themselves about situations where they might apply the learning and the difficulties they may encounter. When planning the actual content, in-service trainers should include a wide variety of strategies in their training. The training strategies should be potentially effective, easily learned by ABET educators and easily blended into regular teaching and likely to show transfer of in-service training to the ABET centres. It is imperative to note that in-service training is only part of a solution to meet the ABET educators' needs identified in needs assessment process. Trainers must first understand what ABET educators presently do in the ABET centres and how in-service training will change the nature of their work afterwards.

Limiting Time Gaps between the Training of Various Cascade Levels

The use of the cascade model of training, especially in respect of training events of immense magnitude, requires careful consideration. At the top the main principles are imparted. As the level descends, more elaboration, concrete examples and more participation are provided for, so that the objective of reaching the people is fulfilled. It is recommended that there should be fewer tiers (at least three as a minimum) in the training system so that no information is lost as it is passed on. Also the delivery should be done according to the needs of trainees and the availability in the environment.

Conducting Post-training Monitoring

Follow-up after in-service training is a critical aspect of the training. Trained ABET educators (trainers in the centres) require support and

mentoring. Periodic visitation (post-training visits) to the centres and revision of the in-service training would be required to ensure optimal transfer of learning to the centres. Provincial ABET Specialists are best suited to play this role. However, if time constraints do not allow for this, then APO managers or one staff from the Provincial Department of Education could be considered to fill this gap. If a need arises in the future for external support then, one staff from MiET could be called, this way, the goals of the in-service training would be achieved effectively.

Evaluate the Impact of In-service Training

Inadequate support is viewed as the second most critical factor which currently is serving as a major obstacle of the cascade model of training. Some ABET educators do not pass what they have learnt from the in-service training workshop to their colleagues on time. One way of facilitating the effectiveness of cascading what was learnt from the in-service training back to their workplace is by use of action planning during their training. If trainers do not make follow-up immediately after the in-service training, what was learnt from the training may fade in the memory of trainees. For the cascade model to be effective, Provincial and ABET APO specialists should make it their priority to monitor and have regular and on-going supervision of in-service trainees after training.

There is an increasing number of reports of ABET educators leaving the ABET centres. One APO specialist contends that "Appointments of ABET educators are usually based on renewable eleven months contracts depending on the number of ABET learners returning back to the centres". Specific clarification of conditions of service of ABET educators and guidance related to this issue from Department of Education personnel would be extremely helpful. It is further recommended that the Department of Education should clarify the condition of service of ABET educators. In this case it is recommended that ABET employment be formalized or be a fixed term of three to five year contract.

In the last instance though, the provincial Department of Education needs to acknowledge that the cascade model as it stands does not work. To that end, the provincial Department of Education needs to commit huge amounts of money in its budget to support sustained train-

ing of educators by experts in the field, experts who can be deployed to provide training (sustainable) that will also have a meaningful impact.

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Appendix A

The researcher asked the following questions in the individual interviews:

1. How did you assess the needs of ABET educators when planning for their in-service training?
2. Was there variety of activities to keep in-service trainees engaged (for instance, trainer led sessions, individual work)? Please elaborate.
3. As all ABET educators cannot attend the in-service training at the same time, how do you ensure that what was cascaded in the training session would filter down to other ABET educators at the centres without any distortion?
4. Are you confident that your in-service trainees (ABET educators) transfer what they have learnt from the in-service training to their workplaces? Elaborate.
5. How often do you do monitoring after cascading in-service training to ABET educators?