# Educating educators of adults in South Africa: reflections on unisa initiatives in the field

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## ABSTRACT

This article is a report on research undertaken into a qualification structure and training path for educators of adults; such a qualification structure and training path needs to conform to the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The research consisted of a contextual analysis of adult education practices and field analysis of the training provided for adult educators. The purpose of the research was to examine what is currently provided by the Faculty of Education at Unisa against the needs, trends and structures in the field and, from this examination, to derive indicators for future curriculum development and learning programme design. To analyse the current challenges confronting the Faculty of Education in educating educators of adults, I took into consideration the changing scenario of national qualification structures; new approaches to education, training and development practices and practitioners, and socio-political developments. My research identifies the following as being significant: access to university-based training programmes for educators of adults; the merit of certificate and diploma programmes for educators of adults; and curriculum development in adult education.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie artikel bespreek die resultate van navorsing oor 'n kwalifikasiestruktuur en 'n opleidingsroete vir opvoeders van volwassenes wat aan die vereistes van die Nasionale Kwalifikasieraamwerk voldoen. Die navorsing het bestaan uit 'n kontekstuele ontleding van praktyke in volwassene-onderwys en 'n ontleding van die voorsiening vir opvoeders van volwassenes op die terrein van volwassene-onderwys. Die doel was om ondersoek te doen oor die huidige voorsiening in die Fakulteit Opvoedkunde aan Unisa in terme van behoeftes, neigings en strukture en om riglyne af te lei vir toekomstige kurrikulumontwikkeling en die ontwerp van leerprogramme. Vir hierdie doel is huidige uitdagings wat die Fakulteit Opvoedkunde in die gesig staar oor die opvoeding van opvoeders van volwassenes; die veranderende situasie van nasionale kwalifikasiestrukture; nuwe benaderings tot praktyke en praktisyns in onderwys, opleiding en ontwikkeling, en sosio-politieke verwikkelinge in ag geneem. Beduidende aspekte wat geï dentifiseer is sluit toegang tot universiteitsgebaseerde opleidingsprogramme vir opvoeders van volwassenes, die status van sertifikaat- en diplomaprogramme vir opvoeders van volwassenes en kurrikulumontwikkeling in volwassene-onderwys in.

## INTRODUCTION

A major focus of the new educational dispensation in South Africa is adult education. This focus has significant implications for educating educators of adults. South Africa has a critical backlog in the formal provision of adult education. One of the obstacles to development in South Africa is the fact that much of the country's adult population is seriously lacking in basic education and skills at a time when skills development is a priority throughout the world. Today, higher education institutions have started to respond more positively to this problem and have started tackling the problem more formally than they did in the past. There has also been an increase in university-based courses in adult education. The Faculty of Education at Unisa recently introduced a number of initiatives to provide academic and professional development programmes for those engaged in teaching and training adults. The purpose of this article is to describe these initiatives and to examine them in the light of the remarks made so far and in the light of more recent developments in the field.

For the purposes of this article, it is necessary to clarify some of the terminology peculiar to adult education and to make conceptual distinctions between specific terms. The education of adults refers to the process of promoting and improving all the types of learning with which educators of adults and their learners may be involved. Adult education refers to the learning activities engaged in by adults in either a formal or non-formal educational setting for the purpose of effecting personal change and growth. It also refers to the field of academic study that examines the discipline of adult learning and the delivery of learning programmes for adults. The education of adults is part of the collective term education, training and development (ETD), which is used to describe the practices which directly or indirectly encourage or support learning. ETD practitioners are the persons who undertake ETD practices and, as such, include educators of adults.

## Contextual Analysis of Adult Education Proctices

To fully understand, compare and judge the merit of adult education programmes, we must examine these programmes in their sociocultural context. All adult education programmes are essentially creations of the sociocultural context in which they evolve (Brookfield 1985:295-318). For the purposes of this study, then, the education of educators of adults was analysed according to six contextual categories. These are discussed below.

### Historical context

In South Africa, adult education needs emerged from the country's sociopolitical history, a history which is characterised by policies of separate education and unequal facilities for South Africa's different population groups. It is important to note that, within the educational context, there were severe tensions between contested ideologies. From the 1970s onwards, protest became commonplace; at the same time, the number of poorly educated (and, indeed, completely uneducated) adults increased and the general lack of skilled labour hindered economic development. Reform initiatives within the formal state system of the time started in 1980 with the work of the De Lange Commission, which was directed to investigate equality of education for all. The De Lange Report drew attention to the potential of non-formal (adult) education as a field of practice (Morphet & Millar 1991:28-49). At the same time Hartshorne (1986:135) pointed out the shortage of professionally trained educators of adults within the context of non-formal adult education. Since then adult and non-formal education activity in South Africa has grown slowly but steadily as university adult and non-formal education departments, the private sector, various voluntary and non-governmental education organisations and the state developed the initiatives further. From the early 1990s onwards many developments occurred in the areas of community empowerment and development; training for work in industrial and commercial contexts; compensatory formal education for adults, and preparation of educators of adults at university level. Different sectors began to tackle these concerns and explored how to transform the systems, institutions and practices that provided adult education and training. The National Commission on Higher Education, the Adult Basic Education and Training Multi-Year Implementation Plan and the Skills Development Strategy are examples of this. The overall policy framework was the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), which reflected a particular strategy of social and economic development. Emerging ETD structures, policies and projects were conceptualised within the framework of the RDP.

### Political context

In South Africa, an understanding of adult education is closely linked to an appreciation of the political purpose of adult education. Outside the formal state system, adult and non-formal education in South Africa has been inherently linked with a political mission. The current status of adult education in South Africa was preceded by political activism and empowerment drives that involved individuals and communities. Political changes and new legislation acknowledged adult education as an important field in its own right. The purposes, aims, values, principles and the redress nature underlying the SAQA Act (1995), Employment Equity Act (1998) and the Skills Development Act (1998) have a direct bearing on the adult education scene in South Africa.

**Philosophical context**

The influence of the philosophies that, in effect, guide adult education in South Africa has led to basic differences between adult education practices in different contexts. Brookfield (1985:307) points out that, in the United States, adult education is influenced by technological and humanist discourses. The American education system is therefore characterised by pragmatic, technical and somewhat individualistic tendencies. In the United Kingdom, the more liberal and radical philosophical traditions have led to forms of practice which centre to a much greater extent on the debate over the proper purpose of adult education, intellectual development and the establishment of clear philosophical rationales by which practice might be shaped and judged. The educational requirements of undereducated adults in South Africa, alongside the drives and measures to transform and restructure national education policy, have created a challenge that has benefitted from the debate and tension between these two broad philosophical traditions. Because of the sociopolitical and economic drive of adult education in South Africa and the sociopolitical multicultural context from which adult education students are drawn, the progressive tradition - with its flexible blend of emphasis on individuals and the community - has inevitably become a dominant guiding philosophy (Smith 1993:67).

**Professional competencies**

The context of sociopolitical change continually shapes the professional competencies required of educators of adults in South Africa. These professional competencies include the ability to do the following (Christie 1991:294-295; Walters 1990:4):

- help an undereducated population to play an informed, critical role in political decision-making and government
- promote the development of production-related skills
- discourage western-style individualism, and encourage a shared, collective outlook on life
- teach critical thinking skills
- conscientise the working class and eliminate racism and sexism.

Other competencies range from teaching basic literacy and work skills to the complexities of helping people to change personal attitudes and behaviours in the sensitive area of cultural diversity. Smith (1993:68) categorises competencies relating to academic and cognitive development at one level and those relating to acquiring a range of skills in planning, designing and managing teaching at another level.

Social, economic and technological changes require new forms of competence on the part of ETD practitioners. In the past practitioners may have followed a set of rules or a sequence of activities without necessarily thinking about whether these were appropriate or effective. The ETD Practices Project Report (NTB 1997:106) proposes that qualifications in the adult education field in particular should credit applied competence, which consists of a combination of practical, foundational and reflexive competencies. In a study of the ETD field, Cooper (1997) found that practitioners are increasingly being required to think about and adapt what they are doing so that it is appropriate to the context, the audience and the nature of the knowledge or skill they are trying to help adult learners develop. For practitioners wishing to gain access to a higher education level, such a three-pronged competency model might improve their possibilities of access. Greater emphasis on their applied, practical experience would be beneficial to their practical experience on the job (Cooper 1997:11).

**Conceptualising adult education in higher education**

From his experience of adult education at university level, Brookfield (1985:309) believes that curricula of typical courses in British and American departments are based on fundamentally different conceptualisations of the nature of adult education. American departments work on the premise of meeting needs, an approach which leaves little room for introducing

educational alternatives. In this situation, the educator's role is mainly that of technicist responder. British departments rely more on exploring the question of what ought to be the central purpose of adult education. Smith (1993:68) states that if these two positions are conceptualised as opposite ends of a continuum with a wide range of different combinations in between, the concept of adult education that underpins the adult education programmes in South Africa would probably fall in the centre. This is because such programmes may be seen, among other things, as a product of tensions created by the following:

- the academic demands made by the higher education context within which lecturers in adult education work
- community demands for a competent adult education service
- a need to debate policy and the proper purpose of adult education in South Africa's changing sociocultural context.

## Perspectives on adult basic education and training (ABET)

ABET has its origins in adult literacy work and concerns about the problems of adult illiteracy. It involves instructional programmes for undereducated or functionally illiterate adults. Over the last decade the original focus on adult literacy extended into becoming a broader concept of adult basic education (ABE) and, owing to the policy commitment to the integration of education and training, the acronym ABET has replaced ABE. However, in practice, ABET usually still operates on the basis of ABE or even simply adult literacy. The education component of ABET is usually generic (Communications and Mathematics) and subject to national standards. The 1995 National Interim Guidelines of the Directorate of ABET imply that when the training component is included in ABET curricula, it is likely to be context specific. The most significant feature of ABET is that it is foundational. It involves learning which serves as a foundation for further education or training, for more complex skills development, or for access to higher forms of training or employment. The institutional locations for ABET qualifications are diverse, including universities, technikons, NGOs and commercial agencies. There are clear plans for the development of ABET qualifications and nationally recognised standards for ABET practitioners is now an integral part of the adult educator development scene. Like the adult education field, the ABET field generally has a reputation for being fragmented. However, the ABET field has shifted from one of activism to one of professionalism, utility and public interest. Various undergraduate diplomas, as well as postgraduate diplomas and degrees, are now offered in ABET. University certificates are offered to non-graduates, but the status of such certificates is uncertain because they are neither state funded and nor, strictly speaking, formally recognised.

## ADULT EDUCATORS - FIELD ANALYSIS

The field of adult education is faced with the same broad challenges as those facing education and training generally, namely: how to improve quality in ETD practices; how to break down the sharp distinctions between education and training and move toward integration, and how to equip practitioners with the competence necessary to meet new challenges. A field analysis of adult educators is needed to describe the nature of the field, currently and in the future, by: analysing the forces impacting on the field; mapping the pattern of progression in the field; indicating the transformations needed in practitioner competence; identifying the components of such competencies; indicating the existing governance and nature of provision for adult educators, and the changes needed to these. To get some perspective on the forces impacting on the adult education field, to better understand the field of adult educator development in higher education and to establish a basis for reflecting on the Unisa initiatives, I identified and analysed three documents that have a direct bearing on the question of adult educator development at higher education level: Phase 2 Report of the ETD Practices Project (1997); the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) Report: a Framework for Transformation (1996); and the Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation (1996). These sources are significant for recent and current developments in the field because, collectively, their central concern is the professional development of adult educators; their goals are deeply transformative in intent; they reflect important changes in the field; they seek to impact on the field by deepening and

advancing change, and they are concerned with the impact of global development on the field of adult education. As such, these documents are part of a number of initiatives that contributed to building the NQF, which, in itself, is a mechanism for transforming adult education and training. The overall goal of the ETD Practices Project, for example, was to produce a "negotiated model in terms of progression pathways, sets of unit standards and qualifications, accepted by the target groups for developing and recognising quality ETD practices, particularly within the National Qualifications Framework" (NTB 1997:11). The ETD Practices Project has taken up the reconstructive challenge of the NQF in line with the vision of an integrated approach to education and training (NTB 1994), which will improve the quality of learning and broaden access in support of the RDP's socioeconomic goals. The significance of the NCHE Report lies in the three central features of the proposals that it puts forward: a restructured higher education system striving towards greater participation from a diverse range of constituencies; greater cooperation and partnership between higher education and other social actors and institutions; and greater responsiveness to socioeconomic needs. The Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation, in turn, puts forward policy proposals for the restructuring of higher education, and sets out the principles on which these proposals are based. To analyse the key features of the proposals of these three documents, which could have implications for the education of adult educators in the Faculty of Education at Unisa, I asked the following questions about adult educators within the context of higher education:

What specific changes in the adult education field are perceived and/or implied?

- What are the concepts of the changing role of the adult educator?
- What is meant by the professional development of the adult educator?
- What are the current views on the qualification structures for adult educators working in higher education?
- What are the implications for access and progression for adult learners in higher education?
- What curriculum changes for adult educators in higher education are implied and/or envisaged?

**Perspectives on the adult education field**

An analysis of current conditions shows that the field of adult education and training is very fragmented in terms of the content, contexts, purposes and forms of ETD practice in different institutions. It also reveals that adult education is characterised by a very broad mixture of qualifications. Adult education is largely located within institutions, and internally referenced and evaluated (NTB 1997:34). Institutional location, where ETD takes place, dominates and fragments the ETD field in South Africa along the lines of education, training and development. Knowledge transmission and acquisition are distinguished in terms of formal, non-formal and informal education; ETD practices are organised in different ways by fields of knowledge, occupational area, or forms of social intervention; and there is great diversity in social purposes. The great diversity of ETD practices in different sites and contexts leads to significant institutional differences and boundaries, and a lack of coherence in the qualifications offered within each site of practice (Cooper 1997:5). The ETD field consists of three broad sites of ETD practice. The formal sector consists of specialised learning institutions where education and training is both the institution's core and whole job. The non-formal sector consists of public and private sector organisations or work sites with in-house education and training functions. Education and training is not core business and ETD roles are frequently embedded in more fundamental processes of production and customer service. The informal sector consists of civil society or sites of civic and cultural association, where ETD practices are usually partly related to the job and also part of a service relationship to some project other than formal education and training itself (NTB 1997:6,18). However, there are now dynamic moves towards integration. A potential integrative and new model that interconnects education, training and development is now envisaged in order to develop and recognise quality practices. A concern with learning will be at the centre of the new, integrated model of practice (NTB 1997:11, 34). "If this document's view of the adult education field is correct (that is, fragmented and under-resourced), this could have negative implications for

adult educators attempting to access HE. It is likely that the success of any project attempting to strengthen the development of adult educators through accessing HE level training will depend - in part at least - on the successful achievement of the 'integrative vision' of the field envisaged by the ETDP Project Report" (Cooper 1997:5).

This vision of an integrative field of ETD is already echoed in the way accreditation within the NQF is leading to a new, cooperative relationship between adult educators in adult literacy, community institutional sites, and workplace trainers within HRD. If the NQF is intended to integrate the field by describing the learning and career paths of ETD practitioners across the field, the standards and qualifications that apply to ETD practitioners will need to enable practitioners to: move from one context to another; promote different areas of learning; and undertake different roles (NTB 1997:33).

## Perceptions of the changing role and identity of the adult educator

Perceptions of the role of the adult educator are changing as different groupings of adult educators bring with them different learning experiences into a formal higher education environment. The self-identity of community educators and the attitudes of these educators to formal accreditation, for example, have changed substantially over the last decade. Changes in self-identity are also relevant to workplace trainers. Workplace trainers and community educators are arguably more aware of their development role now than in the past. "These changing identities could well impact on how such practitioners go about accessing higher education - both physically as well as epistemologically" (Cooper 1997:6,7). Practitioners in different sites of practice interpret their professional roles in very different ways. Their roles are constructed by their institutional context and shaped by whether education and training is core business (as in formal education institutions, where the practitioner performs the ETD function in a full-time whole-job capacity). In most state and private sector organisations, education and training is a component of service delivery and of the production process and there are only part-job ETD practitioners (NTB 1997:20,21). "It is argued that any ETD intervention strategy or model will have to respect and use the essential tension between common or generic roles and differences in situated practice. The ways in which roles are related to sites of practice are crucial. The development of quality ETD practices can take place only as this development engages with broader processes of institutional reconstruction in formal education, workplace and development contexts" (NTB 1997:7). However, the roles of ETD practitioners appear to be broadly similar across the field. They are grouped around three main role clusters: teaching, design and management. Institutional contexts also shape the actual activities of practitioners. In workplace contexts it is possible to offer programmes which provide opportunities for applying learning. The courses can include structured learning from practice, and the assessment can include an assessment of performance. In higher education contexts, because it is not immediately linked to the workplace, learning programmes tend to be evaluated in terms of whether learners have acquired knowledge rather than whether or not they can apply knowledge. It is obvious that practitioners perform any one or more multiple roles across a very broad field and in multiple sites of practice within delineated subfields of specialised ETD institutions; public and private sector organisations; commercial and industrial workplaces; and NGOs. The concept of a generic ETD practitioner as envisaged by the National Training Strategy Initiative (NTB 1994) was, therefore, perhaps rather premature (Cooper 1997:7). For the foreseeable future, it may be more relevant to continue working with the concepts of HRD practitioner, adult educator, and higher education practitioner.

## Professionalisation and professional development of adult educators

Professional career tracks and progression within the field are site specific. There are important differences across different sites of practice, but there is also a strong need for isolated career paths to be changed. There are two areas of common practices (Cooper 1997:7). Firstly, career progression typically occurs along three lines: from a limited to a broader ETD responsibility, from generalist to specialist roles, and from instructional to management roles. Secondly, there is high degree of insulation of career tracks from non-ETD into ETD work , and across ETD institutional boundaries. Within the adult education

context, "professional" is perceived as an internally-regulated sense of professional competence. The notion of professionalism is linked to the argument that practitioners who are proud of their work, knowledgeable in their fields, sensitive to the contexts of their learners and accountable to peer communities, employers and learners bring a love and dedication to their work that by itself leads to quality and adds value to the learning experience (NTB 1997:12,13). However, the divisions and insulations within the field of adult education impact negatively on practitioner development and, potentially, obstruct the development of professionalism within the field. They block shared professional knowledge, values and vision, as well as movement and the redeployment because ETD skills and knowledge are not very portable. This approach to professional development tends to emphasise standard-setting and assessment at the expense of curriculum and the learning process and, potentially, could be an obstacle to improving the quality of ETD practices. Quality ETD practices can only come about if these practices engage in the broader processes of institutional reconstruction (NTB 1997:72). In summary, then, the view is that the professional development of adult educators can only really take place within a more integrated field, in conjunction with institutional restructuring within that field, and within a quality improvement process that emphasises input and process as much as output.

**Qualifications structures for adult educators in higher education**

Historically, a wide range of qualifications other than adult education qualifications have been regarded as significant for adult educators working in different sites. For practitioners in higher education, it is research qualifications that are valued most highly, while in technikons the emphasis is on professional qualifications. In the corporate world supervisory or management qualifications have been most important to ETD practitioners. It is only in technical colleges, possibly, that specific teaching qualifications have been essential for professional advancement (Cooper 1997:9). Up to now, higher education qualifications in adult education have not played a critical role for the majority of practitioners. However this is changing, particularly in the public and private sector. The new value placed on training and knowledge acquisition will mean new professional paths that require new forms of recognition and qualification. This could mean that higher education adult educator qualifications could be set to play a much more important role in the future. Integration of higher education qualifications (by the NQF) for adult educators will ensure learning and progression pathways that allow for trans-institutional movement that fully recognise previous learning experience. Professional status can thus be achieved through experiential learning in the workplace and through formal learning (NTB 1997:64). This, in turn, could have important implications for access routes into higher education, and on increasing learner numbers in this sector. "If these arguments are accepted, the results could have a marked impact on the development of qualifications in an higher education context where institutions have traditionally operated with a fair degree of autonomy from the world of work" (Cooper 1997:9).

Both the NCHE Report and the Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation address the fragmentation and lack of coordination in higher education qualifications structures. "A single qualifications framework should be developed for all higher education qualifications, as part of the NQF. The framework should include intermediate qualifications within multiyear qualifications and should consist of a laddered set of qualifications at higher education certificate, diploma and degree levels" (NCHE, quoted in the Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation 1996:25). The NCHE Report also recommends that, for economic growth as well as financial reasons, there needs to be a large increase in lower-level qualifications within the next ten years, particularly at certificate and diploma level. According to Cooper (1997:21) a number of significant points, which may be relevant to the training of adult educators, arise from the above remarks. For a field such as adult education, where practitioners are spread over an extremely wide and diverse range of sites of practice, the incorporation of higher education qualifications into the NQF is highly significant. The close articulation of the NQF with multiple other sites of education and training, and its commitment to flexible entry and exit points will improve adult educators' chances of gaining access to higher education. The proposals that envisage, in effect, a qualifications "ladder" (which will include certificates and diplomas) will expand the numbers of adult education student enrolments at this level in future.

**Implications for access to higher education for adult learners**

According to the DEAL Trust Report (1994) a large proportion of adult educator training at university level happens at certificate and initial diploma level. The certificate level courses, in particular, often employ alternative access mechanisms to admit students; access is based largely on practical experience rather than formal qualification. Providing more training opportunities at this level will improve adult educators' access to training at higher education level and will make it possible for more adult educators to move, subsequently, to higher-level qualifications. The overwhelming majority of educators who have wanted to gain access to first- or second-level higher education qualifications in the field of adult education have traditionally been black South Africans who have relatively low levels of formal education and who tend to come from working-class communities (Cooper 1997:22). However, the statutory minimum requirement for entry into all higher education programmes is a pass in the proposed further education certificate at NQF Level 4. If this is implemented without alternative admissions mechanisms, it will exclude a large proportion of adult educators who may wish to access a first-level adult educators' qualification at higher education. There have to be alternatives to the statutory entrance requirements and additional selection instruments that are sensitive to the educational background of potential students, and that can take into account candidates' educational history and some indication of their capacity to benefit from higher education. The NCHE Report (1996:137) mentions recognition of prior learning as a further area which requires attention, while the Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation (1996:33) says, more assertively, that selection also needs to incorporate recognition of prior learning, which is an essential component of the NQF and which is integral to the development of lifelong learning. This would have an extremely important bearing for adult educators who have no prior experience of academic discourse and who, very often, do not have school-leaving qualifications that enable them to cope with higher education. However, for adult educators to benefit from such changes, the whole status of adult education and the training of adult educators within higher education context needs to be reconsidered. The marginal status of first-level training courses for adult educators within the academic mainstream of universities have to change. Many university-based certificate- or initial diploma-level courses for adult educators are non-formal and non-accredited and there is doubt that they properly belong within a university context. Even where such courses have been formalised, most have continued to raise their own funding and continue to articulate poorly with other first-level higher education qualifications (Cooper 1996:27). This situation obviously needs to change. Adult education courses must receive due weight and status and be officially recognised as integral elements of a higher education system.

**Envisaged curriculum changes for adult educators**

The most important issues that could impact on the curriculum for training adult educators are: quality improvement and national standards. The curriculum should be closely linked to the standard setting process, and learning and the processes of learning must obviously be central to quality (NTB 1997:7). However, new standards should not be superimposed on old curricula: doing this may undermine any hoped-for impact resulting from new interventions (NTB 1997:48). "On its own the setting of standards will not improve a system. Standard-setting is but one part of a long-term process of research, development and evaluation" (NTB 1997:8). The curriculum should also link closely to the real world of work and citizenship. Such an emphasis means that curricula would need to focus on developing learners' capacity to be flexible, and their ability to retool and upgrade in a world which requires multiskilling and the capacity for lifelong learning (Cooper 1997:12). Restructuring the curricula for adult educator training in higher education institutions will therefore have to be closely directed to making such curricula relevant to the outside community.

The ETD Practices Project Report (NTB 1997:56) makes a number of detailed and substantial proposals regarding the adult educator curriculum. It supports the idea that it is desirable to construct (within the adult education field) a nationally-driven, outcomes-based approach to the curriculum (including at higher education level). However, outcomes should not be narrowly defined by notions of competent performance in the workplace. Instead, they should focus on learning outcomes - on the knowledge and understanding that underpin performance

and that are crucial for the transferability of competence (Cooper 1997:13). This emphasis on the inclusion of knowledge outcomes and the attention to learning processes provides the crucial link between curriculum and course development with unit standards as a resource for curriculum development. As such, it could prove compatible with traditional approaches to curriculum development normally adopted by higher education institutions.

However, narrow professionalism and, in particular, the separation of roles associated with design, teaching and management must be avoided. Separating such roles in curriculum design leads to the separation of instructional and design roles in those cases where design is external; if instruction is internal, separating these roles tends to lead to the curriculum being "imported". This practice (ie of separating the design and teaching and management roles) restricts instructional roles to being little more than forms of transmission and adaptation, and design roles to being nothing but abstract modelling and product selection (NTB 1997:26). The curriculum must ensure that ETD roles are connected, not separated. The integration of role clusters around one of the three particular forms of expertise: ETD expertise, contextual expertise and occupational expertise is proposed. It should also cluster around the three related knowledge bases: philosophical and procedural knowledge in the case of ETD expertise; knowledge about learner, institutional and social contexts in the case of contextual expertise; and subject and curriculum knowledge in the case of occupational expertise (NTB 1997:100-102). The ideal curriculum model will need to strike a delicate balance between integration and specialisation; between foundations and flexibility; and between context-embeddedness and mobility across contexts (Cooper 1997:14). This is a highly nuanced and sophisticated conception of the curriculum - one which some higher education institutions may find difficult to adopt.

As far as the content of the higher education curriculum is concerned, the envisaged changes imply the development of a greater mix of programmes, with a greater emphasis on vocationally-based competencies and the development of interdisciplinary and cooperative skills needed in the workplace. Most of the recent statutorily proposed curriculum changes in higher education discussed above have already been foreshadowed by changes (or proposed changes) in the field of adult educator training. This is because adult educator training sees itself as linking directly to the country's socioeconomic needs; is generally strongly practitioner-oriented (vocationally oriented); and recognises the need for more recurrent, continuing adult education. "Thus adult education provisioning is in some sense able to 'lead' the envisaged changes in HE curriculum and delivery, and will at a minimum adapt easily to such changes" (Cooper 1997:25).

**UNISA TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR EDUCATORS OF ADULTS**

The adult education programmes offered by Unisa in general aim to provide academic and professional development in formal and non-formal adult education and training and to contribute to developments in this field. The following qualifications are offered by the Faculty of Education:

**Academic development**

This area introduces students to the knowledge, information, theory, foundational issues and debates in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, research, educational theory and instructional science. These areas are mainly covered by the Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education (DTE Postgraduate). In terms of the field analysis categories discussed above, this postgraduate qualification has a very narrow higher education focus. Students need not have experience in or be engaged in adult education. Until recently, all the modules offered in this qualification centred on academic subdisciplines. However, a recent revision of the diploma resulted in a thematic approach, which to a much larger extent also provides for professional components. No specific workplace focus is present, which makes this a qualification that serves the general academic and epistomological purposes of tertiary education institutions, insulated from other contexts in terms of competency. At present, the DTE (Postgraduate) provides admission to Master's degree studies in education; in future, however, it will no longer be able to do so in terms of the new NQF level descriptions.

**Professional development**

Activities in this area include planning, design, management, presentation and evaluation of education and training programmes. These areas are mainly addressed by the Certificate Programme for ABET practitioners, Diploma for ABET Practitioners, Certificate Programme for ETD Practitioners, and the Advanced Certificate Programme for ETD Practitioners. In terms of the field analysis categories discussed above, these qualifications, all recently introduced, to a much greater extent meet the field needs and requirements of access, context, competency areas, integration and responsiveness. Students working to obtain these qualifications must be engaged in a field of adult education or training. They need not hold a matriculation exemption certificate, although they must have a minimum number of years' relevant experience in a field of adult education and training. Admittance of such students to studies through a tertiary institution represented a significant break with standard university admission policies (this "new" admission practice has been in place since 1994). This willingness to loosen academic traditions helped to accommodate the realities of needing to provide access to a wider spectrum of adult educators. All the non-formal qualifications mentioned here are at NQF Level 5 (except for the Diploma for ABET Practitioners, which is at Level 6).

**Discipline development**

This area involves developing the subdiscipline of adult education through the creation of knowledge, mainly from project and research work completed by students and lecturers. Master's and Doctor's degree projects, as well as the research and project components of the DTE (Postgraduate), and the ABET and ETD Practitioner certificate and diploma programmes, all include certain aspects of discipline development.

**Programme participants**

The adult education student population, that is, adult educators, are typical of the diversity of Unisa's student population. They differ radically and widely from each other in terms of their cultural and social background, previous educational levels achieved, general life experiences as well as their specific orientation to adult education. They are employed in various fields of adult education: in state-based organisations, NGOs, private sector organisations involved in literacy and basic education, health education, tertiary education institutions, schooling sector with the view of entering the adult education field, community development, as well as industrial and commercial training. This is an example of the type of site diversity described earlier.

**Programme structures**

The curriculum design developed to cover these areas involves students in the study of the following ETD practitioner role-related themes: contextualising teaching, learning and development in the ETD field; the adult learner; instructional design; learning facilitation; learning theory; technology in instruction; assessment; evaluation; strategic training and development; leadership and management; theoretical frameworks; learning programme development; research; student development, and ETD project work. These themes cover most of the standards for occupation-directed ETD Practitioners generated for the National Standards Body of Field 05 of the NQF (GTZ 2000). However, they do not explicitly cover guidance and counseling, skills plan development and continuing occupational development, which are considered as very important in terms of the envisaged learnership system of the Skills Development Act (1998). Learnerships are mechanisms for facilitating the link between structured institutionalised learning, on-site learning and work experience in order to obtain a registered qualification signifying readiness to enter the world of work. Learnerships are also intended to overcome the present divide between theoretical education and skills training and will, as such, depend on close cooperation between government departments, formal institutions and other social partners (Barnard 2001:41).

Another deficiency is that these modules are only offered at NQF Levels 5 and 7, while there is a real need at NQF Level 4. The fact that there are no formal, mainstream qualifications offered at NQF Level 6 at the moment causes many students to proceed with their studies at other institutions or in other fields, such as Human Resource Management or Industrial Psychology. A proper measure could be to change the Advanced Programme for ETD Practitioners to a Diploma for ETD Practitioners with the current Programme for ETD Practitioners as an exit level certificate qualification for students who do not proceed to the diploma level. The introduction of a Higher Diploma for ETD Practitioners at NQF Level 6 would then fill the gap. It is also proposed that the DTE (Postgraduate) be replaced by an Advanced Diploma in Adult Education at NQF Level 7, with an Advanced Certificate in Adult Education as exit level qualification for students who do not proceed to the Advanced Diploma level. In this way the Faculty of Education would not only provide greater access to higher education for adult educators, but would also provide a continuous progression path through all the levels of the NQF. The current occupation-directed focus of the certificate programmes for ETD practitioners and the community development focus of the programmes for ABET practitioners would also serve the purpose of providing an integrated approach to training for adult educators in particular and adult education in general.

**CONCLUSION**

The contextual analysis of the adult education field offers some insights into the competencies required of educators of adults in South Africa and the concept of adult education on which adult education programmes are based. It also provides an overview of perceived training needs for educators of adults in Unisa's Faculty of Education. The field analysis highlighted the complex organisational structure of adult education programmes, their curriculum development processes, the implications for practitioners in adult education and students in programmes for educators of adults, and the need for an integrative approach to the development of the field in South Africa.

Although the current field of adult education is viewed as fragmented and of varying quality, the reconstructive vision of a future, integrated and more professional field would, if realised, have major impact on the numbers and kinds of adult educators seeking higher education qualifications. Such a vision (again, if realised) will also present challenges in terms of both curriculum development and choice of learning facilitation methodologies. The fact that adult education practitioners are located and based in multiple sites of practice must be taken into account in both the process of curriculum development and the construction of new qualifications. The concepts of professional and professionalisation, and the innovative curriculum models provided, offer exciting possibilities for the restructuring of adult education provisioning in the Faculty of Education at Unisa and for improving the quality of such provision.

The prospects of integration of higher education adult education programmes within the NQF, the need to increase higher education opportunities at certificate and diploma levels, and the general commitment to improve all learners' chances to gain access to training and education all have an important bearing on the education of adult educators at a higher education level. The curriculum changes envisaged by the three documents researched dovetail with many of the recent and current curriculum innovations in adult educator training in the Faculty of Education at Unisa.

There are, however, a number of potential obstacles. The inflexible implementation of admission requirements, with no provision for alternative admissions mechanisms such as RPL, the fact that much of adult educator provisioning at higher education level does not currently enjoy mainstream funding, and the historical marginality of the education of adult educators may, for some time yet, hamper access and progression of adult educators in higher education training.

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