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Dropouts from literacy: an analysis of the meanings which adult learners attach to the fact of abandoning their training programme.

A dissertation presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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When considering their dropout, many described experiences of being a misfit, or feeling uncomfortable with discourse practices in which they were expected to engage. Some had logistical difficulties in attending, such as transport or small children, but even greater than these was the fact that they had been disappointed.

These learners believe the “literacy myth” that literacy, as a set of skills one can acquire, will result in significant improvements in one’s life. They also equate literacy with education, and although they experience none of the benefits that are supposed to accrue to the literate, they continue to say that they believe in its power. However, in practice, attendance at adult centres is relatively poor in comparison with numbers of potential students, those termed “illiterate.”

It may be deduced that adult “illiterates” regard literacy as some kind of “saviour”, a panacea for all ills. Even if it is not directly accessed, the fact of its existence and the notion of its power is enough to provide hope for a better future and comfort in hard times.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

"No other area of education elicits the range of emotions that adult literacy does. No other carries as many stereotypes. To enter the world of adult low literacy is to enter a world unlike any other - a world of hope, triumph, fear and guilt." Quigley (1997:2)

There is a range of opinion about literacy - what it is, what it can do, how it is acquired and its value. There is also a common perception that literacy has powerful effects - that it leads to "logical modes of thought, general and abstract uses of language, a skeptical questioning attitude, political democracy and greater social equity, economic development, wealth and productivity, urbanisation..." states Gee. (1988:196) People tend to believe strongly in the "powerful and redeeming effects of literacy" and adult learners seem to be no exception.

The field of literacy in South Africa is a complex one, characterised by ambivalence and contradiction. Among them is the fact that on one hand literacy providers, convinced that literacy is a right and no one should be deprived, work tirelessly to provide second chance education for adults, while on the other hand, enrolment at their Adult Education Centres is by no means at capacity. Providers consider their learners as "functionally disempowered", yet attendance by these learners is low, as are their levels of achievement - Prinsloo&Breier (1996:177). In addition, dropout rates are estimated as high as 30-35% per annum.

Yet adult learners tend to believe strongly that becoming literate will result in huge positive changes in their lives. Both learners who attend classes, and those who have dropped out express consistent and passionate commitment to their quest for literacy.

If the commitment is so strong, the activity should not be as limited as it seems to be, nor should learners be abandoning their training in such large numbers.

For a literacy practitioner, this anomalous situation invites investigation. An examination of the dropout experience should yield information as to whether adult learners do in fact place such a high value on literacy, and how they can express such a strong commitment to it whilst at the same time declining to pursue it.

1.2 Aim of the study

This study focuses on the issue of dropout by learners from Adult Education Centres. It attempts to shed light on the reasons why literacy learners decide to terminate their training programmes, and to examine from their perspective the implications that this decision might have for them, especially if they place a high value on literacy.

The research aims to inform ABET practitioners through an analysis of the meanings learners attach to their dropout. It will hear what "illiterates" have to say, and will attempt to investigate, analyse and interpret the apparent contradictions which characterise the experience of learner dropouts.

The Experimental World Literacy Project assessment published by UNESCO states that illiterates are often viewed as marginals. (1976:117) They are regarded as lacking in motivation, community knowledge and spirit. A major widespread aim and motivation of literacy providers seems to have been the integration of illiterates into the existing society, not simply to assist people to

read and write. That the imposition of foreign ideas or systems, or the necessity to make changes beyond the mere acquisition of reading and writing skills might not be well received did not seem to be an issue for them. Nor did providers seem to be aware at this stage that the process of being "integrated" might thrust people into an identity dilemma which could create a reluctance to participate.

As has already been pointed out above, definitions of literacy vary greatly, but it is clear that literacy is seldom neutral, and generally results in the shaping of recipients into the norms and values of the dominant culture, also known as "enculturation."

The fact is that in many countries the EWLP was not received with great support or interest. The reasons for this are by no means evident. But as Lyster points out (in Hutton, 1992:5) "..much of what is said about what literacy can achieve is said by people who are literate." It may be that the views of providers on the benefits of literacy differ from those held by "illiterates". Alternatively, many may in fact believe the myths about what literacy can help them achieve, but hold back from participation for reasons of their own. To investigate these reasons is the focus of the research.

This study aims to give to providers such as Education Departments, non governmental organisations, industry and other groups, insight into the perspective of the adult learners who attend their classes, from the point of view of the value they place on education, the kind of education they seek, and the reasons why many decide to turn their backs on it.

Adult learners might have higher priorities, certain reservations, or other perspectives on the concept of success and on literacy itself which may differ from those of providers. These anomalies and differences beg investigation.

1.3 Context of the study

In order to contextualise the problem of dropout and the anomalies described above, some background is required in terms of the scope of illiteracy, the history of literacy provision in South Africa, and the nature of the target group, the learners.

*** the size of the problem**

1990 was proclaimed International Literacy Year at the United Nations General Assembly in 1987 in recognition of the problems perceived to be created by widespread global illiteracy especially in third world countries: poverty, human rights violations, overpopulation, health crises to name a few. Increase in levels of literacy would surely alleviate such problems.

At this point, it was estimated that over one quarter of the world's population above age 15 was illiterate, and that the number of illiterate adults was increasing. According to de Lange (1990:3) this growth was owing to the fact that neo literates and school dropouts were lapsing back into illiteracy because of a lack of post literacy programmes. In addition, female global illiteracy was rising.

In South Africa, at the same time, percentage illiteracy was estimated around 48%. In terms of numbers, 15 million people, and according to the NEPI report of 1992, of those, only 100,000 adults were attending classes - less than 1% of the estimated "illiterate" population. This report called for research into poor attendance and lack of sustainability in adult (ABET) programmes.

It is evident that figures vary depending on how literacy is defined. A recent study by Harley et al produced different statistics. With Std 5 level of school education as an indicator of functional literacy (7 years of schooling) approximately 7.5 million adults over 15 years of age were illiterate. (1996:29)

With these indicators, illiteracy would be around 30%. This study estimates numbers attending classes at 335,481. (1996:60) This is a very low participation rate for people who profess a strong attachment to literacy.

*** a brief history of literacy provision in South Africa**

A large percentage of illiterate or semi-literate adults and of adult learners currently attending classes are people who dropped out of school during the Soweto riots of 1976 and for some years thereafter, owing to the struggle against a curriculum they regarded as unjust. They preferred to seek employment, however menial, rather than to return to school. They were sometimes referred to as the "marginalised youth" or the "lost generation."

It is widely accepted that the apartheid government of 1948 - 1994 deliberately provided inferior education for all non-white students. Schools were grossly under-resourced, tutors were inadequately trained, and materials and curricula were indoctrinating, unsuitable and sparse in the case of both adult learners and scholars.

Night schools were established by the Department of Education and Training (DET) for undereducated people wishing to upgrade their level of education. Tutors were drawn from the roll of school teachers, and given a week's training to assist them in teaching adults. It is no wonder that adult learners became demotivated.

There arose in them a determination to gain access to equal opportunities; to reject inferior systems and to aspire to the systems of success which they had been denied. They grew to value education practices from which they thought others were reaping great benefits. What they did not perhaps realise was how embedded in a different culture these practices were.

Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) emerged to offer more quality education. They were able to procure funding from sources other than government, those concerned over poor State provision.

In summary in the words of Prinsloo (1995:449) "the State ran a poorly resourced and largely ignored night school service; there was a smattering of classes run by a handful of donor-funded literacy projects scattered around the country, with a few thousand adult learners between them."

In the post-apartheid era, the government seems committed to playing its rightful role in providing quality education to every South African. However, at this juncture, since there is a myriad of needy sectors other than education, Adult Basic Education is not high on the agenda.

NGOs, industry and community groups continue to play a role alongside State provision.

The emerging National Qualifications Framework promises outcomes-based learning and assessment, recognition of prior learning and a chance for adult learners to access qualifications without having to start over. The Independent Examinations Board (IEB) has developed the first national examinations for ABET.

Kell points out (1997:5) that while these developments have "had a dramatic effect in the field" and have "penetrated into the most remote rural areas", the outcomes-based approach is basically flawed in its implementation. "Moving to outcomes without specifying and developing the inputs necessary to attain those outcomes creates a pedagogical vacuum in which content is replaced by procedures." (1997:1) She argues therefore that currently the implementation focuses more on performance than competence, thereby limiting recipients to "horizontal knowledge."

Literacy tutors, largely black, themselves schooled under Bantu education, are "very weakly apprenticed into competence models of pedagogy" and teaching is usually concerned with the "re-circulation and reorganisation of everyday knowledge into schooled forms."

A "myth of competence" is thus being created, whereas it is performance rather than competence which is in fact being fostered. (1997:3)

And so, along with these recent developments, which are viewed as positive by those who value literacy, a whole set of further contradictions has arisen.

The contradictory nature of the literacy learning experience is far more deeply embedded than any form of policy and planning can reach because it is lodged in the dynamics of social development as a whole rather than within the structures and provisions of any particular form of education provision.

*** the issue of dropout**

Dropout is a problem which seems to be a feature of all ABET programmes, particularly in South Africa. Whether for physical reasons such as a lack of transport or costs; for family reasons like childcare or resistant spouses; or for personal reasons such as feelings of humiliation or apathy, or for reasons not yet ascertained, there is generally a high dropout rate from adult classes globally.

Gee states that ABE, the (USA) government's official programme concerned with literacy loses 40% of those it reaches (and it reaches few minorities and few of the truly illiterate.) (1986:126)

Unfortunately, it is now impossible to obtain actual statistics from Adult Centres in South Africa. The amalgamation of the nine segregated Education Departments and their re-division per province in the months following the 1994 election resulted in administrative chaos, and valuable

records were lost. In spite of all the systems and mechanisms of the past for the return of annual statistics to the now defunct Department of Education and Training (DET) by its affiliated Adult Centres, figures on dropout are now unobtainable. Attendance figures are recorded in DET annual reports, but figures for dropout are not - perhaps an indication that these were not something of which the Department was proud.

The focus of this study is to explore adult learners' experiences of dropout in the light of the value they place on education in terms of success in life. If they really believe that literacy is the highway to success, it is important to know what keeps them from travelling that highway in droves.

*** the target group - adult learners**

"Put yourself in the shoes of a long-shot gambler who places his bets on ABE(T). You are a forty-five year old black man eking out a living at an unstable succession of menial and arduous jobs, poor, haunted by failure, numb with self-doubt, without study skills, and unable to read. Furthermore, going back to school seems an endless uphill struggle. Just learning the three R's means years of weary plugging, night after night, month after month. And then what? What will an eighth grade education get you? Into the ninth grade is about all. So you resign yourself to still more long months and maybe win a highschool diploma. What is the big payoff when you have finally made it? Talk about longshots and unbounded faith in the (American) dream." (Mezirow, 1975:37)

This description of an adult learner in the USA has a lot in common with descriptions of adult learners in South Africa - the unstable employment situation, poverty, exhausting and menial jobs, low self-esteem and "weary plugging" at a lengthy education programme only to find that meaningful or suitable employment can still be hard to find. This is a common scenario which is borne out by descriptions from interviewees in this study. The few

"success stories" fuel the fire of optimism or determination which keeps the dream alive, even if it remains only a dream and for many it does.

1.4 Structure of the study

Chapter 1 provides a context for the anomalies which surround the literacy experience and the issue of dropout. It describes the aims of the study, gives some history of literacy provision in South Africa, and describes the target group. It places the focus of the research upon the perspective of the learners rather than that of the providers.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature pertaining to issues which impact upon the study.

Chapter 3 describes and motivates the research design employed in the study.

Chapter 4 presents in four constructs the common themes raised by the interviewees in describing their experience of dropout.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis and interpretation of the common themes which emerged from the interviews. This is followed by some implications of the findings for ABET practitioners, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the literature relevant to the study. Research on learner dropout from literacy programmes must be contextualised within a framework of theory pertaining to the literacy field. Theories about literacy, literacy discourses and practices, orality and literacy, motivation for and deterrents to upgrading literacy all impact upon an understanding of the issue of dropout. Of relevance too is the research which has been conducted on dropout per se.

The theory which underpins the study examines these issues in the light of the one glaring contradiction central to literacy work, namely that the great claims made for literacy in past decades are nowhere manifest in reality. In short, the claims of the literacy myth are not reflected in the actual history of literacy. Literacy has seldom if ever resulted in huge benefits for its recipients.

It is within the framework of this theory that the research is embedded and can be articulated.

There are various definitions of and perspectives on literacy: what it is, what it comprises or encompasses; how it is or can be acquired; where its value lies and what its consequences and benefits might be. Providers, researchers, recipients and society in general differ widely in their opinions in this regard.

2.2 Provider perspectives on literacy

The term 'provider' refers here to all those involved in the campaign to eradicate illiteracy worldwide: governments, tutors and literacy organisations, and the donors who fund literacy initiatives. All strive to provide literacy to those whom they regard as deprived, marginalised, oppressed, or in some way needing advancement.

In their view, which is the widely accepted traditional view, literacy is a mental possession a person has which can be measured in terms of specific skills (the most basic of which would be reading and writing) and which will result in personal advancement.

Street has termed this the "autonomous model" of literacy (1987:9) in whose perspective literacy is an "independent variable... detached from its social context." The major consequence of literacy is seen as the development of rationality and objectivity (and thereby progress and success). By implication then, those without literacy are regarded as lacking these qualities and in need of assistance.

*** more than reading and writing**

Definitions of literacy vary even within the traditional view, but it is generally agreed that it involves more than reading and writing.

Perhaps the most basic statement on literacy within the traditional view is the UNESCO definition of 1978 quoted by English Literacy Project et al (1990:7)

"a basically literate person can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life." The writers go on to point out the inadequacies of this definition in terms of clarifying the purpose of literacy and addressing issues of level of skill, language and the actual point at which a person can be called literate.

A later UNESCO definition describes a "functionally literate" person as one who can "engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community....enabling him to use reading, writing and calculating for his own and the country's development." (1990:8)

This definition fails to take cognisance of the fact that the level of literacy required for "effective functioning" will of necessity differ depending on factors such as country, community and time.

*** critical thinking**

More 'progressive' practitioners agree that to be literate also involves having the ability to critically evaluate information. This would go beyond mere "functioning effectively." The Persepolis declaration of 1975 includes in its definition "the acquisition of critical consciousness" and the ability to act upon one's world and transform it. It states that literacy is "not an end in itself." (English Literacy Project et al 1990:9)

The development of critical thinking was certainly not a feature of the literacy programme devised by South Africa's apartheid regime, in which the learners of this study participated. As stated in chapter 1 above, the programme was deliberately inferior and did not encourage critical thought.

This viewpoint is supported by English Literacy Project et al (1990:9) where the South African system of 'Bantu Education' is described as having contributed not to the liberation of the people "but rather to their oppression.

The system has not in any way encouraged the development of critical, logical and problem solving skills."

With its lack of relevant content, its outdated methods and the absence of anything consciousness raising, it failed to interest, help or advance people in their struggle either for literacy or liberation. Those who had come to value literacy and believe in its power came face to face with its contradictory nature.

Providers following the ideology of Paulo Freire saw literacy as an emancipatory tool or vehicle. Freire believed that literacy should empower people and would only do so if it resulted in their becoming active questioners of the world around them. Freire believed that education was the key to changing society, provided that the methods used in the education situation did not reproduce the oppressive relations that exist in society.

The content and methodologies of Freirean approaches focused on challenging learners to think critically about everything which was happening in the world around them. Literacy should liberate their thinking and thereby empower them to bring about the desired changes in their society.

Adults learn what they wish to learn, what is relevant to their lives, and what they feel strongly about. Thus learners' lives should be the starting point of learning. This would serve the dual purpose of ensuring participation and ensuring relevance.

In 'propagandising' literacy thus, he avoids contemplating the contradictions inherent in literacy work. Relevant content will ensure participation. This kind of thinking causes providers to focus on re-working their materials and results in their avoiding deeper issues.

In Freire's view, education or literacy must be problem-posing rather than a "banking" approach, whereby the knowledgeable teacher makes deposits of

knowledge into the empty "accounts" of learners for their use. This method emphasises permanence and is reactive, while problem-posing "roots itself in the dynamic present." (1996:65) The latter method affirms people as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead. Instead of existing in a fatalistic rut, they realise their situation can be transformed. It is liberating and empowering.

"The interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them," states Freire. Once they adapt to a situation, they can more easily be dominated. They are seen as marginals, needing to be integrated into the "healthy" society. They need to adjust by changing their mentality, and this can only be done through an education which enables them to be critical. (1996:55)

*** literacy and ideology**

In Freire's teachings, it becomes clear that literacy can not be a neutral, detached capability of some kind. Literacy is bound up with ideologies and the way people live their lives, and it changes the learner fundamentally in his thinking and acting, empowering him as an individual. Dropping out would mean a denial of one's own liberation or empowerment.

However, even Freire, whilst promoting individualism, has a stance. Gee describes how Freire's learner workbooks encourage learners to "think correctly". (1988:207) Even whilst encouraging learners to think for themselves, he indicates that there is a "correct" way of thinking. Freire does not consider the identity dilemma a learner may face in changing his way of thinking, since Freire deems it necessary for him to change.

"Literacy always comes with a perspective or interpretation that is ultimately political," states Gee in his commentary on Freire. (1988:208) Learners become involved in far more than mere reading and writing.

In his work as a missionary in South Africa, Laubach also deemed it necessary for learners to change their way of thinking. Learners became indoctrinated into Christianity through their involvement in Laubach programmes. Here again, the dilemmas and contradictions are avoided in the 'propagandising' of literacy. Missionaries the world over have taught people to read and write for the purpose of 'spreading the gospel' to those whom they regard as being 'in darkness.'

Street describes the work of missionaries to Fiji around 1835. "The Wesleyans saw evangelizing as indissolubly linked with the provision of education and functional literacy." The Fijians showed reluctance over the religious elements but enthusiasm for education. However, since the only texts available were translations of Christian texts, "the foundation was laid for later successful conversion." (1987:10)

Hofmeyr describes the role of missionaries in literacy work in Transvaal around 1900. "Missionaries often misread any interest in literacy as a sign of religious feeling and a commitment to the values of the mission world." (1993: 49) Literacy was completely voluntary, and people "customised" their requests for various levels of literacy, depending on their purpose on the mission - some wanted to learn new hymns or recitations, others wanted to learn languages, whether their own language or a European language. The Bible and prayer books were available in African languages, as were primers. Here too, learners were indoctrinated into the basics of Christian thought.

*** language issues**

The question of language is a factor which is debated amongst providers. Most providers in South Africa believe that being enabled in "mother tongue" will provide learners with a strong foundation for second language acquisition, whilst at the same time allowing them some familiarity in an otherwise new experience.

Bhola, in a definition arising out of the 1982 UNESCO conference (1983:214) debates this issue. He states that while ideally literacy should enable the learner in his mother tongue, "literacy should not doom the new literate to a localised existence, bounded by a small community of people speaking his or her language and render the new literate unable to join the mainstream of politics and economy of the region or country. The official language must ultimately be taught."

Harley et al support this view in the South African context. "To function as a literate person in contemporary South Africa it will be necessary to read and write in a home language and in English." (1996:19) They describe English as the "dominant language of the future" in South Africa among the eleven official languages.

* **“schooled literacy”**

The discussion so far has examined elements of what can be termed "schooled literacy" where adults attend classes run by providers, and study a planned curriculum which usually comprises elements similar to those in the formal school system.

From the perspective of providers, illiterates are most often seen as deprived, oppressed or marginalised in that they have "missed out on" the benefits of an education. In the process of becoming literate, learners will be integrated into the mainstream. They will thereby have better prospects in life, will feel empowered and achieve success.

Providers strive to eliminate dropout. They generally blame dropout on poor transport systems, lack of resources or finance. Some providers work on their programmes, trying to ensure that content and methodologies are relevant and stimulating, and that learners can access qualifications of some kind. They believe that in so doing they will create a learning environment which will meet learner needs, thus reducing dropout and attracting adult learners in

greater numbers. They often fail to recognise that there may be more deep-seated issues which keep learners out of class.

2.3 Society's perspectives on literacy

Quigley suggests (1997:5) that society has a "sometimes romanticised, always view-from-a-distance perspective" in which low-literates are sometimes heroic victims, victims of an unjust society and its less than effective systems; sometimes lazy loafers whose plight is their own fault because they are "unteachables" and have "no love of learning." There is often media coverage of the life of low literates which keeps the nurturing instincts of the public alive. The illiterate is perceived as a "large child who, with nurturing, can be saved from the grip of illiteracy and its evils." (1997:35)

Society believes that low literates are failures, do not enjoy a meaningful life, and that literacy will be the vehicle to lift them from such meaninglessness. The perceptions of the learners regarding their own position probably vary considerably, but few would agree with the characterisation described above. Many however may believe that literacy has the power to bring about personal upliftment, since this is the view strongly and widely perpetuated by providers and by society.

Society generally views literacy in positive terms, and adheres to what Street terms the "autonomous model" where literacy is an independent capability which a person can acquire and from which benefits will accrue. Literacy is usually acquired through schooling, but those who have failed the school system can have access to schooling for adults, structured more or less in the same vane.

*** literacy and schooling**

Literacy is seen to be both the purpose and the product of schooling. It is also widely accepted that literacy plays a major role in upgrading the quality of life of individuals, groups and even whole societies, states Cook-Gumperz. (1986:16)

She describes how, early on in the history of schooling, a division was created in society in terms of the schooled and the unschooled, and how it was discovered that “a new form of social control could be exerted through the curriculum.” (1986:27)

Schooling gradually became synonymous with literacy and the idea grew that schooling could ensure adequate literacy development, which could be a necessary part of economic wellbeing at a personal level. During the twentieth century, this perception has grown beyond the personal level to encompass the notion of “social stability and economic advancement at the societal level.” (1986:33)

Through the expansion of school curriculum, literacy acquisition has been connected with a range of development, from that of good moral stature, through that of cultural knowledge, to, more recently, the enabling of various technologies. “Literacy itself no longer represents progressive development for people and society, but rather, as the fundamental technology on which modern societies are built, it becomes the precondition for any future change or progress.” Cook-Gumperz (1986:33)

Heath notes that “the school is not a neutral objective arena; it is an institution which has the goal of changing people’s values, skills and knowledge bases.” (1983:367) Adult classes, structured for compensatory education could also be described thus.

Gee states that literacy served as a means for “maintaining the continued selection of members of one class for the best positions in the society.” (1986:734) It solidifies the social hierarchy, and is used to “empower elites and ensure that people lower in the hierarchy accept the values, norms and beliefs of the elites.” (1988:205)

The development of a national system of education and a national standard of literacy in the early part of this century meant that schools became one of the “main channels for a selective transmission of knowledge.” (Cook-Gumperz 1986:37) In addition, the ranking of students according to their level of literacy and ability further entrenched selection and division. Schools began to sort, grade and label children for distribution in employment, rather than to educate.

Testing against national standards meant that capabilities (among them literacy) were measured against specific decided criteria, and that some passed and others failed, when compared to the ‘desired’ benchmark.

* **literacy crises**

In terms of the ‘desired benchmark’ for literacy, many countries are said to be experiencing a ‘literacy crisis.’ An unacceptably large number of children fail to gain functional literacy in school, and an unacceptably large number of adults are functionally illiterate or marginally literate - approximately one third of the United States nation, according to Gee. (1986: 719)

Gee states that the proclaiming of literacy crises is often a “displacement of deeper social fears and an evasion of more significant social problems.” (1990:27) Talk about literacy and its importance may be a way out of directly facing other less acceptable social concerns. The proclaiming of a literacy crisis has been a recurrent feature in Western society and according to Gee could be masking deeper issues. (1990:28)

Gee regards the issues described as literacy problems in the United States as problems originating with school and its practices rather than problems of literacy per se. Schools tend to perpetuate Western style discourses which render children from other cultures disadvantaged. Other education institutions also adhere to these practices, thus furthering their problems. Literacy programmes generally follow in the same vane.

The fact is that literacy interventions in response to the crises did not seem to have much success in addressing the “problem.”

*** UNESCO interventions**

UNESCO took up the battle against illiteracy in 1950 in response to Western society's concerns over the plight of illiterates worldwide. A range of problems was attributed to illiteracy, from poverty to the abuse of women to failing economies. There was what Gee describes as a "virtual call to arms" to combat illiteracy. (1990:27)

At intervals of around ten years, UNESCO convened a world conference on adult education, designed to review achievements, needs and issues and to plan for the future. Adult education and literacy emerged in many countries from a marginalised position to become part of the education system, but still over the decades, literacy campaigns failed to bring to reality the claims of the literacy myth and failed to attract the interest and support of learners.

One explanation for the failure of such campaigns is that they failed to realise that literacy is not simply a technical competence, but is a social practice that varies according to context and is part of cultural knowledge and behaviour. Street suggests that the fact that interventions did not relate in any way to learners' culture may have alienated many prospective learners or simply failed to convince them of its value for them. (1995:33)

Cook-Gumperz notes that literacy campaigns “while trying to be sensitive to different cultural needs also assumed that literacy skills were of central importance to all peoples’ lives.” (1986:20) Such an assumption may also have been a contributing factor.

Lowe summarises the UNESCO conferences. From the outset, the role of voluntary organisations was endorsed. (1975:10) In 1960, the Montreal conference set lifelong learning as a goal for the future policies of governments. Although adult education made notable progress in most parts of the world, financial support was low, and adults seemed unmotivated - the latter became a notable feature in all reports. The reason for low participation was seen to lie in the content of literacy programmes and efforts were made to address this. The notion of the contradictory nature of the literacy learning experience had either not yet emerged in the views of providers, or was not being recognised.

In 1964, UNESCO claimed that it would eliminate illiteracy worldwide, beginning with the Experimental World Literacy Project. This project, though well-intentioned was, according to Quigley, considered to be a failure even by UNESCO itself. The authors of the EWLP final assessment stated that “literacy programmes can only be fully functional if they accord to social, cultural and political change as well as economic growth.” (1997:17)

The Tokyo conference of 1972 was well attended, and saw representatives from governments as well as practitioners as delegates. Moreover, third world countries were strongly represented, as the period since 1960 had seen massive decolonisation. (Lowe 1975:13)

Here the conference centred around methods by which lifelong learning might be instituted for adults. It was recognised that much of what was being offered as education for adults seemed to be irrelevant to the needs of individuals and societies. The neglect of disadvantaged adults in education

provision was highlighted and became a major focus. 'Functional literacy' was criticised as being narrowing, and an holistic approach was recommended.

Changes were made, but participation in programmes remained relatively poor. The blame for this was placed this time on the venues and times that classes were held.

The Persepolis Declaration of 1975, according to Graff, is "a fitting testament to two hundred years of Western social thought and development theories about the relationship of literacy to modernisation." (1987:57) The uncritical acceptance of past assumptions is especially striking, he observes, the myths about literacy equally pervasive. "There is little awareness of the contradictory uses of literacy and none of the historical factors."

Bhola encapsulates the perspective of UNESCO on the effect literacy should have. "To fulfil the development needs of the third world, farmers, workers and housewives must be educated. Literacy will have to be taught if adult men and women, farmers and workers are to become independent consumers of information, and more importantly if they are to participate in the process of codifications of their own realities and definitions of their means and ends." (1983:9)

It seems doubtful that people who merely cannot read and write should be deemed incapable of independent thought and unable to define their own realities. It appears that Bhola is suggesting that they need to be socialised into Western perspectives in order for their lives to be meaningful.

He goes on to say (1983:214) that "many illiterate adults did not feel the need to acquire the skills of reading and writing and did not know to what uses they would put these skills once they had been acquired." The need for social change, and for advancement in certain terms pushed aside their reservations. The providers and planners decided that "social change did not deal only with needs that were already felt by adults, but had to face the

challenge of fashioning new needs. They (the illiterates) had to be helped to learn a new need."

UNESCO continues to champion the 'illiterates' of the world using basically the same strategies. At the 1997 Confintea conference in Hamburg (1997:5) the goals were as follows:

- * to acknowledge the critical importance of adult learning
- * to forge worldwide commitment to the right of adults to learn
- * to exchange experience on present provision and needed improvements
- * to recommend future policy and priorities

The conference working document (1997) reported three major positive outcomes of the last two decades. Firstly, it reports that "the absolute rate of world literacy has sharply increased and the prospects for universal literacy are that much brighter." (1997para19) No figures are given.

Secondly, adult education is now "recognised to be an essential public service with comprehensive aims. Developing countries continue to name it in their national goals to escape from underdevelopment and to create viable economies." (1997para 20)

Thirdly, it is an international trend to "abandon traditional notions of education as the transmission of a body of knowledge by means of a prescribed curriculum and to focus instead on serving the learning needs of each individual and group." (1997para22)

The issue of 'enculturation' is briefly raised by Jean-Paul Hautecoeur (1997:75) in one of the conference background papers. He calls for the delegation of responsibilities for adult education to local communities and for basic education to be couched in local development projects. "Cultural plurality must be reflected in the diversity of programmes and cultures, and traditional styles of learning should be maintained" particularly in Africa. But

this important issue is not pursued in any depth in any of the declarations coming out of the conference.

On behalf of society, UNESCO links many nations together in international co-operation to ensure that adult learners are caught up in the mainstream. International standards are to be developed for the field. (1997para137)
Member countries expect UNESCO to play a leading role in the development of adult education. (1997para138)

Western society requires 'underdeveloped' countries to progress in terms of Western criteria so that they can make a positive contribution to the world economy. These countries themselves require it in order to maintain their economic links. Individuals are therefore pressurised to become literate so that they can participate. This requires them to change their way of living and even sometimes their values. Even when they are reluctant to participate they are coerced into it with promises of huge benefits, many of which have never been proved to be linked with literacy. (Gee 1990:32)

Graff notes that "perhaps the most striking feature of UNESCO discussions on literacy since 1965 is that it is remarkably little based on either experiment or historical precedents...UNESCO is committed to what amounts to a modernisation theory to the effect that economic progress follows upon a change in a man from illiteracy to literacy, preferably in one generation and even better, in the very same man. " (1987:33)

It is presupposed that this change, when effected en masse, will lead eventually to huge developments in a society and its values and ways and that as a result, economic progress will occur.

Graff notes that "productivity and wealth do not necessarily follow from mass literacy, as the histories of Sweden and Scotland demonstrate. Both

achieved near universal literacy before the nineteenth century, but both remained desperately poor.” (1987:65)

UNESCO with all its resources and global access has not succeeded in eradicating illiteracy. Greater cognisance of history, a deeper understanding of the cultural issues involved, and a more socially contextualised concept of literacy could greatly enhance their efforts.

*** dropout**

Dropout is of great concern to society, and both providers and the learners themselves are blamed for this. Society sometimes sympathises with the dropout, calling for a more relevant and flexible education system; sometimes blames the dropout, regarding him as ungrateful, lazy and dependent. Society believes and perpetuates the literacy myth, expecting low literates to attend classes so that they can be integrated into the mainstream instead of contributing to social problems.

*** aspects of the orality - literacy debate**

Great claims have been made for literacy in the traditional sense, as described above. In addition, literacy in this sense has been argued to be "the basis of a great divide between cultures" (Gee 1990:49) namely oral (those who do not use writing) and literate cultures (those who use writing).

Shifts from orality to literacy in cultures have been described in terms such as "from magic to science" or "from the savage mind to domesticated thought." (Ong 1982:29) Goody and Watt go so far as to say that "man's biological evolution shades into prehistory when he becomes a language-using animal; add writing, and history proper begins." (1963:304) These terms convey a common perception in society that people from an oral culture are inferior.

Street describes it thus - "the study of the transition from orality to literacy in 'other cultures' tended to be the study of how far 'they' were becoming like 'us.' Since 'we' with our forms of literacy have achieved such technical marvels as putting a man on the moon, the acquisition of such literacy by others means that it is only a matter of time before they 'catch up.'" (1995:7)

It has been suggested that writing assists cognitive development, particularly abstract thought, and that people from an oral culture may have inferior thought processes. Western society tends towards this view.

The effects of literacy upon a society have been debated for centuries. Gee provides commentary on some writers who have grappled with orality - literacy issues.

The earliest was the first Greek writer Plato who debated the merits of writing, oratory and debate in a predominantly oral culture. Plato blamed on writing the deterioration of the human memory, whereas recitation, he maintained, sharpened the memory. Writing he described as passive, unable to be engaged in debate, and open to interpretation. Gee points out the dangers in this - "witness what happened to Nietzsche in the hands of the Nazis, to the Bible in the hands of those who have used it to justify wealth, racism, imperialism, war and exploitation." (1988:198)

Goody and Watt further debate this strand of Plato's thinking. In oral society, the dialectic method was also an essential social process in which "the initiates passed on their knowledge direct to the young." Books give only a specious sense of knowledge which in reality can only be attained by oral question and answer. (1963:327) This can be seen as a strength of oral society.

However, there was a second 'strand' to Plato's thinking. On the other hand, and more importantly, writing enabled people to stop, consider and debate

the content of what they were continually reciting. Goody and Watt explain Plato's seeming ambivalence regarding writing. "Plato was torn between his interest and understanding of the prosaic, analytic and critical procedures of the new literate thoughtways on the one hand, and his occasional nostalgias for the 'unwritten customs and laws of the ancestors' along with the poetic myths in which they were enshrined." (1963:329)

Gee has a different explanation: Plato was attempting to alienate his rival the epic poet Homer in whose works, the Iliad and Odyssey, resided the moral and intellectual legacy of Greek culture. He was seeking to re-order his society, to re-locate power. To do so, he had to break Homer's power. Constant repetition of the poet's works embedded the teachings in people's memories, but kept them from debating the issues. (Gee 1990:33-34) They took for granted the contents, lulled to sleep by the poetry and the drama. Writing would enable them to debate and consider. It would facilitate the critical process. (Gee 1988:198)

Gee notes that there are two sides to literacy in Plato - literacy as a liberator, but also as a weapon.

Plato and Socrates were, in a sense, revolutionaries in that they were opponents of the traditional order of their society. Gee describes how by forcing Homer and the poets into prose, Plato could challenge their power base by stripping their work of its rhetoric and laying it open to questioning. This rendered the poets vulnerable to political assault. (1988:199) Plato did not value writing above oratory. Each had its place.

The use of literacy as a weapon also comes through in Graff as he examines the history of literacy.

Central to Graff's work is the disparity between the claims of the "literacy myth" and the actual history of literacy. Nowhere is there evidence of life-changing benefits which come about for those receiving literacy. In fact his

study contains several accounts of how literacy has been used to coerce people in oral societies into various moulds.

A striking example of this is that of Sweden in the eighteenth century. Sweden achieved near universal literacy before the end of the century. It involved reading only, but is nevertheless a remarkable feat. The goal of the literacy campaign was the promotion of Christian life and faith for citizenship training. Teaching took place in households (emphasising the importance of the literacy of women) and was supervised by the local clergy. Compulsory examinations took place once a year, and adults who failed were excluded from communion and also from marriage. (Graff 1987:35) The campaign was based on coercion, but also on individuals' perceived religious need.

Literacy here was a weapon used to coerce people into a way of thinking and set of values, that of the church. The church dictated the perspective on what was being read. Even within the church, the problem of perspective was an issue. Catholic dominated countries tended to be less literate than Protestant countries, perhaps because they were more reluctant to allow people free interpretation of the Bible and other religious texts, fearing that religious or even political dissension might arise. The capacity of literacy to give rise to critical awareness is the central issue here, just as for Plato.

In Graff's work, we also see that literacy solidifies the social hierarchy, empowering elites and causing the rest to take on the values and beliefs of the elites. According to Graff, the process of schooling ensures assimilation of non-elites, and control over them.

A debate which runs through the history of literacy is that on one hand are elites wanting to keep the lower classes from literacy in case it should make them unhappy with their low status in life. Graff notes that "many conservatives feared the acquisition of education by the masses, thinking that they would be unfitted for gruelling manual labour, unsettled in their stations and lacking respect for their betters." (1987:50)

On the other hand are elites arguing that that will not be so, and that literacy could make lower classes accept the values and practices of the middle classes. The latter group turned out to be right, but Graff attributes the willingness of the lower classes to take on these values and norms not so much to literacy per se, but to their socialisation into school-based literacy, associated with the world view of the middle classes.

Graff's work also describes how literacy was withheld to keep people in a position of subordination. In many places, states Graff, "literacy continued to be restricted and even systematically withheld from certain segments of the population. Slaves in the United States South offer one such illustration." (1987:50)

As Gee puts it, "literacy served as a means for maintaining the continued selection of members of one class for the best positions in society." (1986:734)

Woven into the literacy-orality debate are many critical issues such as power, control, status and critical awareness. Literacy as a technical skill is not imbued with any power in itself. It is the social contexts in which it is practised that give it significance.

Gee notes that "the important point to see is that literacy, of any sort, is always tied to a whole social system." He goes on to point out that "cultures without any trace of our 'essayist' literacy display advanced intellectual feats and many people who are fully literate in our culture do not. Many oral cultures show a keen interest in rational...sets of classificatory systems, and modern science in practice is often irrational." (1986:133)

Ong looks at the technical features and capabilities of literacy (as a skill or capability) as opposed to orality, but his perspective is narrowed by his definition.

Ong describes the features of an oral culture, also citing the techniques of the Greek poet Homer - the techniques of memorising, planning and philosophising. "You have to think memorable thoughts" (Ong 1982:34) Repetitions, alliterations, proverbs and metaphor assist a person to recall. They form the substance of thought, and the more sophisticated the oral culture, the more it is characterised by a set of expressions skilfully used. Writing, however, captures thought, thus enabling the mind, which no longer has to hold that thought, to speculate on new things - as pointed out in Plato.

Ong suggests (1982:43) that oral cultures strike literates as being "agonistic in their verbal performance and lifestyle." While oral cultures produce powerful verbal performances which may no longer be possible once writing has become entrenched, Ong believes that human consciousness cannot achieve its full potential without writing. Literacy, he says, is necessary for the development of science, history and philosophy, and for the understanding of literature art and language. Gee (1986:725)

One last factor in the orality-literacy debate which is of interest in this study is the notion that in mythological thought exists contradiction which energises and perpetuates it. Such contradictions cannot be removed - God and human; life and death; nature and culture, for example. These contradictions are reworked continually by the imagination in an ultimately vain yet temporarily satisfying attempt to resolve them. This is pointed out by Gee in the work of Levi-Strauss (1988:201) People who enjoy things mystical or mythical, and this is a feature of oral cultures, enjoy contradiction, and can hold contradictory elements in a balance.

According to Gee (1990:49-50) the perceived dichotomy between primitive and civilised society has all but broken down now through the research of modern social anthropology. Where civilised society was characterised by widespread literacy and technology, a sense of science and history, and most of all logical and abstract thought, the hallmarks of primitive society were

perceived as concrete rather than abstract thought, a sense of the mystical and mythical, and were considered inferior to the features of modern man. Levi-Strauss notes that "it is probably one of the many conclusions of anthropological research that, notwithstanding the cultural differences between the several parts of mankind, the human mind is everywhere one and the same, and that it has the same capacities." (1978:19)

A large amount of anthropological and linguistic work has shown that so-called primitive societies are not primitive in thought, word or deed. (Gee 1986:721) Such cultures often have complex classification systems, and thought processes (for example about witchcraft) as sophisticated as those involved in scientific thought.

The work of many researchers in the last decade (some of which is cited here and below) has indicated that the perceived divide between oral and literate cultures is more one of differing world views than of primitive versus civilised societies.

The work has tended "to stress the connection between different ways of thinking and larger cultural world views and values, not deficits," states Gee. (1992:37)

*** the literacy myth**

Governments, Literacy providers, tutors and society in general adhere to the traditional perspective on literacy, namely that it is a mental capability or possession which can be acquired and which enables people to read and write and to think critically or logically. Literacy, in popular perception, is believed to have powerful effects - it brings about "political democracy, greater social equity, economic development, wealth and productivity, and political stability. It leads to people who are innovative, achievement orientated, productive, politically aware, less likely to commit crime and more

likely to take the rights and duties of citizenship more seriously." Gee (1988:196.)

However, states Gee, "Graff clearly demonstrates that there is precious little historical evidence for the literacy myth." (1988:196)

Graff notes that "the number of asserted consequences and ecological correlations is literally massive...the evidence, however, is much less than the expectations and presumptions, as a review of the literature quickly reveals." (1987:19)

2.4 Recent research perspectives on literacy

In recent years it has been recognised that much of the earlier study of literacy was grounded in "narrow conceptions of what literacy meant in Western culture," since as Street points out, approaches were often derived from the literacy practices of the researcher's own culture. (1987:7)

In the last decade, a fairly cohesive body of research has emerged around a socio-cultural approach to literacy which challenges the traditional view of literacy as a mental capability. This body of research is sometimes referred to as the New Literacy Studies.

This perspective sees literacy as necessarily plural, and rests on the premise that different social or cultural groups or subgroups practise different types of literacy, and that literacy has different social and mental effects in different social and cultural contexts. (Gee 1986:719) It is a social practice which varies from one context to another.

*** a set of discourse practices**

In this perspective, literacy is seen as a set of discourse practices, or ways of using language and making meaning. These discourse practices are bound up with the values and beliefs or world view of particular groups.

Such discourse practices are therefore integrally linked with the identity or sense of self of the people who practise them. A change of discourse practices involves a shift in identity.

The discourse practices associated with schooling (and adult education) in Western culture represent the world view or values and beliefs system of mainstream institutions of Western society. These discourse practices are necessary for a person to achieve social or economic success in Western society and in Western terms.

They are also linked to the failure of nonmainstream students who attend Western education institutions and are not well versed in such practices. Students from other cultures need to become familiar with them in order to succeed and in so doing may have to engage in practices which conflict with their value system and sense of identity.

*** enculturation**

The Literacy or English teacher does not merely teach grammar or literacy, but is teaching these mainstream discourse practices often at odds with the world view of nonmainstream students. Gee points out that the teacher socialises students into the values system of the mainstream culture, in this case Western culture. This can be termed “enculturation.” (1986:742)

Nonmainstream students aspire to the success they witness in society around them, but they may have difficulty taking on the cloak of the mainstream discourse practices and their concomitant world view, or they may even feel reluctant to do so, finding it a threat to their own values system and sense of identity.

This may well be a significant factor in the low participation of adult ‘illiterates’ in literacy programmes, and in their decision to abandon classes.

The form of literacy prevalent in Western society is, in the view of Gee, one which is "neither natural nor universal." Known as 'essay-text or essayist literacy' it involves a number of skills in using language in expository talk or text in contrived situations. (1986:731) Skills such as the ability to analyse, summarise, condense, manipulate text and recombine key elements in new contexts are valued and developed.

Brice Heath's work *Ways with Words* (1983) is a study of the ways in which literacy is entrenched in the culture and social context of three communities in the United States. Heath concentrates on how children in each community acquire language and literacy, and are socialised into the value system and ways of their communities. Roadville is a white working class community centred around a mill; Trackton a black working class community also connected to mill life, but originally working the land; and the 'townspeople' a community of mainstream middle class blacks and whites who are urban-based. Heath analyses the "literacy events" of each of these communities.

The central thrust of her research was "for each of these groups...the effects of the preschool home and community environment on the learning of those language structures and uses which were needed in classrooms and job settings." (1983:4)

Her work shows how children are socialised into the practices and values of their community by their parents. "Detailed descriptions of what actually happens to children as they learn to use language and form their values about its structures and functions tell us what children do to become and remain acceptable members of their own communities." (1983:8) These are descriptions of "actual processes, activities and attitudes involved in the enculturation of children."

In all three communities, parents engaged in talk with their children. However it was the children of the townspeople who progressed in school. Heath

points out that it was “the kind of talk, not the quantity of talk that set the townspeople on their way in school.” (1983:352)

Roadville children, unlike the townspeople, although they engaged in many social activities where they used language, were given “few occasions for extended narratives, imaginative flights of establishing new contexts or manipulating features of an event or item.” Thus their school readiness was limited. Heath notes that academic success requires the ability to contextualise and manoeuvre information in different situations. She observes that “neither Trackton’s nor Roadville’s ways with the written word prepares it for the school’s ways.” (1983:235)

Her analysis of the bedtime story routine shows how parents, in this case Roadville’s, begin to socialise their children into the literacy practices with which they will need to be familiar at school.

The bedtime story routine is just one such method. The repetition of rhymes; continuous questioning and summarising; and using the same information in different contexts familiarises children with the basic practices of “essay-text” literacy. When they start school they are at an advantage. (1983:222-4)

Nonmainstream children who might have good imaginative skills or even verbal ability, or those from oral cultures who have strong story telling ability sometimes do not acquire the necessary composition skills to transfer their talents into a form which the teacher will recognise or accept. (Gee 1986: 740) The same applies to adult learners. It is the elements of “essay-text” literacy which teachers require.

If there is continuity between patterns of socialisation and language learning in the student's culture and those practised at educational institutions, chances of success are greater. Nonmainstreamers are disadvantaged from the outset.

Heath's study does however point out that school-based literacy practices can be acquired by apprenticing the nonmainstreamer to a school-based literate person who will break down "essay-text" literacy into parts which the student will need to practise often. (1983:363) The student would have to be willing to engage in unfamiliar practices which may at times conflict with his own values or sense of self or identity.

In addition to assisting students learn the tenets of "essay-text" literacy, the teachers involved in Heath's study learned to bring into the classroom some ways in which Trackton and Roadville children shaped experience and experienced knowledge. Thus they expanded the cultural patterns of all the children. (1983:368) This practice was however not acceptable to the institution, and teachers were forced to "revert to transmitting only mainstream language and culture patterns" or to leave the classroom.

This endorses the notion that a school is not a neutral arena. It aims to shape people's values and knowledge.

*** the identity dilemma**

The above discussion has indicated that changes in a person's discourse practices may necessitate a change in identity. Gee cites the work of Scollon and Scollon among the Athabaskan Indians of Canada and Alaska as an example of this. (1986: 734-736)

Scollon and Scollon describe how misunderstandings arise in Athabaskan-English interethnic communication, since the discourses or behaviours associated with dominance, display and dependence differ widely between the two cultures. (1981:16) One example is used here for clarification.

Their respect for the individual prevents Athabaskans from conversing with strangers, because "the possibility of having to negotiate a change of point of view" can be threatening. They tend to avoid conversation except where

participants' viewpoints are well-known, whereas the English use conversation to get to know people's points of view." (1981:15) This serves to illustrate that the expectations of each culture are different from the start.

Moreover, there are several practices which Athabaskans regard as taboo, and one of these is "the English idea of 'putting your best foot forward.'" (1981:19) It is considered inappropriate and bad luck to anticipate good luck, or to display oneself in a good light.

In job interviews (and other 'gatekeeping' situations) the English speaker expects the Athabaskan to speak freely, give opinions and present himself in the best possible light. He should "display his achievements and speak of his future ambitions." The Athabaskan feels threatened, feels that he is tempting fate, and faces a dilemma in using practices foreign to his culture and to himself. (1981:19)

In taking on elements of the "essay-text literacy" of the dominant culture, Athabaskans find themselves faced with an identity crisis. A composition or exposition would be considered making a display and would be uncomfortable. Another factor is the pausing and speaking protocols in their group communication. Athabaskans favour long pauses for the sake of politeness and respect. For this reason, they are considered by mainstreamers as being slow thinkers, while they regard mainstreamers as boastful. However, as Gee points out, unless they take on the practices of mainstreamers, their customs will ensure that it will be the latter who will select most of the topics in group communication and will do most of the talking.

The Athabaskan predicament is similar to that of many nonmainstream cultures in several countries. Mainstreamers are advantaged in that they are socialised in their formative years into discourse practices and their associated world view which will be similar if not identical to those of the

educational institutions they will attend. Nonmainstreamers are thus disadvantaged.

This is true for the learner dropouts in this study. Attendance of any education institutions in South Africa (including most adult literacy programmes) would necessitate their becoming socialised into Western style discourses. According to this perspective, their chances of success would depend upon their ability or willingness to adopt such practices and make any identity shift which doing so might require. Difficulty or reluctance might well be a factor in dropout and nonparticipation.

Kell describes the difficulties being experienced by adult Xhosa learners attending classes in an industrial complex in Cape Town. Required by the IEB outcomes at their level of study to format a letter, they had to include a "final greeting." The greeting suggested by the teacher used intimate terms, and conflicted with the Xhosa custom of "hlonipha" which requires relations-in-law, particularly women, to keep themselves at a respectful distance and to shun approach.

Although their teacher was herself Xhosa, came from the same area as the learners, and was familiar with their customs, she insisted that they follow the format, thereby requiring them to engage in a practice which conflicted with their values. (1997:6)

From this perspective, literacy may be seen as a form of "interethnic" communication which often involves conflicts of values and identities, states Gee. (1986:743) Literacy has no effects in itself, and no meaning, apart from the particular cultural contexts in which it is used. It does not lead to higher order thinking, economic development, political democracy or wealth and productivity as the "literacy myth" purports.

*** literacy practices outside of school**

Street also sees literacy as plural, and contextualised - "a plural set of social practices." (Gee 1986:743) According to Street, "there are many different ways in which we act out our uses and meanings of reading and writing in different social contexts, and the evidence from different societies and even eras demonstrates that it is misleading to think of one single, unified thing called literacy." (1991:2)

Street's perspective places literacy outside the framework of education and schooling in which it is most often placed and on which the above discussion focuses. Literacy also has a strong ideological element in it which has a personal rather than an educational focus. In this context, one can appreciate how fragmenting the imposition of a "foreign" kind of literacy can be in a community. Literacy practices can and do thrive and satisfy outside of school. Capabilities expand in a logical and natural way, and new literacy practices are cemented more easily into a person's way of life as and when he decides he needs them.

Street maintains that when a "new literacy" arrives in a community, individuals are not simply transformed by it, but incorporate it into their existing conventions and concepts to the degree to which they find it comfortable. He criticises development literacy campaigns for regarding "illiterates" as passive recipients, empty vessels for whom schooled literacy will make the necessary transformation, in spite of the fact that much of it may not relate to the recipients' way of life or context. (1991:5)

There is concern among researchers over providers' intentions to change people's lives and communities through literacy. Whilst it may have the power to bring about some positive changes in the way people think, work and organise their lives (from the Western perspective) there is the problem of the imposition of foreign ideas, systems or practices which often cause alienation or fragmentation in a society which lives and operates in a different paradigm.

Gee states that "as Western technology and literacy spread across the globe, this form of consciousness is influencing, interacting with, and often replacing indigenous forms all over the world." (1986:742)

This issue has relevance in the current study of dropout, for very often adult learners feel dissatisfied with classes because they prefer to live in their own familiar narratives without the disturbance of such change.

Often they are in fact involved in literacy practices which involve elements of schooled literacy, such as buying, selling, storytelling, but they do not even recognise it as such since they see themselves as underschooled and ignorant. They believe that schooled literacy will change their situation, yet they are reluctant to engage in new practices, finding them at odds with their own world view. They abandon classes.

The recent research described above may go some way towards explaining learner non-participation in and dropout from adult literacy programmes. The failure of such programmes to recognise and address issues such as "enculturation" and the success of literacy practices outside of school may render them obsolete in future decades.

2.5 Learners' perspectives on literacy

Adult learners tend to believe in the magical effects of literacy. It is what they hear from providers and society in general, and it offers them hope for the future. Just as illiteracy is blamed for social ills, learners blame their problems on their low literacy, and comfort themselves with the belief that improving their education will significantly improve their lives.

*** marginalisation and the literacy myth**

Many learners do seem to perceive themselves as illiterate or marginalised. In English Literacy Project et al (1990:15-17) the opinions of some learners are quoted. They describe themselves as having been "like prisoners" and "depending on other people for help" unable to give opinions and without confidence. They attest to the fact that attendance at literacy classes has created a new perspective on life and they see this as positive.

It may of course be the growth in their knowledge of Western discourses rather than literacy as such which has raised their confidence and freed them. The deep commitment of adult learners to literacy may well be rooted in a desire to learn the terms of Western cultural practices. They may regard the two as integral to each other, and that may be the context in which they see literacy classes as being the doorway to success.

Researchers of the New Literacy Studies contest the marginalisation issue. Prinsloo states that "the assumption that illiterates are marginalised and unable to participate in the political discourses of the new democracy in South Africa would not appeal to many youths who left school in the 1980's to fight the anti-apartheid struggle, and who see Nelson Mandela as having come to power through their efforts." (1995:450)

Fingeret states that while the literate general population regards the life of low literates as lacking significance "a dull, limited and dependent existence" (1983:133) few low literates would agree. Their lives hold significance and meaning within their own context and culture.

"Illiterate adults manifest a range of abilities to decode the social world...their strategies differ in different social locations and according to the resources available and the forces they must contend with." (1983:145)

In South Africa, literacy is now an issue within the State's discourse of social development whereas prior to 1990 it was an issue within oppositional discourse. The government is therefore determined to redress the evils of the

legacy of apartheid. Illiterate adults are seen as marginalised and disadvantaged, and plans are being made to ensure they become literate. (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:12) The Ithuteng campaign launched in 1996 is one such initiative.

Prinsloo questions the assumption of "cultural deficit and undersocialisation" implicit in much of the literacy work currently taking place among South African providers. (1995:458) He makes a strong case for the recognition of literacy practices in many communities as being satisfying to so many so-called "illiterates." Not every adult without a Standard 8 necessarily feels deprived and dysfunctional.

For many learners, "schooled literacy" is unattractive. Their narrative reveals little sense of stigma or marginalisation through being illiterate. Participation in their neighbourhood discourses (many of which have a literacy dimension) renders them empowered or at least satisfied, even if the practices involve assistance or mediation by other people, such as officials, family or friends. They don't regard themselves as being dependent, where others may set great store by being independent and not having to rely on others or have others reading or writing documents for them, especially letters.

However, as stated above, there are many who do seem to believe that they are at a disadvantage, and strive to address their problems through upgrading their education. They witness the success of people around them, their wealth, jobs or possessions, and they link them with their education. This reinforces their commitment to upgrading their own education in the hope that they can improve their living conditions.

*** literacy and education**

Learners believe the literacy myth. In addition, there is a secondary myth also widely believed - that literacy equates with education. Prinsloo and

Breier (1996:177) regard as problematic assumptions that "some months in part-time night schools will somehow reproduce the effects in middle-aged individuals that sustained full-time schooling is said to produce in children."

Prinsloo warns that learners' expectations that "part-time adult education classes can deliver the skills and social benefits needed is a serious misconception." (1995:450)

However, the structure of the new National Qualifications Framework has tended to endorse this misconception. Kell notes that "adult literacy is seen as the foundation for entering onto the lowest rungs of the ladder of the NQF, having equivalence with the ten years of schooling to which children will be entitled through its classification into levels and learning areas." (1997:4)

Malan (in Prinsloo&Breier 1996:154) explains that for some learners "the written word is made a fetish of or invested with social power." They adhere to the school-like structured construct, and some even see schooling as a "linear process" which begins at the beginning and is acquired in a "layered process." They tend to hold on to this and not to recognise their own "literacies" which often involve practices of reading and writing as such.

When adult learners talk about literacy, they mean schooled literacy, and they have a range of perspectives and opinion about what literacy classes should comprise. Most strive to recapture what they lost when they left school. Ironically, progressive teaching methodologies and materials often cause negative reactions among learners who adhere to familiar traditional approaches. They demand that teachers "teach" them, and resist learner-centred methods with which they are not familiar.

If they believe that literacy and Western practices are intertwined, as suggested above, they may be more likely to regard the teacher as being in possession of knowledge which learner-centred approaches might prevent from being accessed.

The work of Prinsloo and Mpoyiya has relevance here. In research conducted around Cape Town, particularly Khayelitsha, researchers found that in some cases "adult education students expressed a disappointment with adult classes that fail to follow the decorum of the schools they remember from their youth." Prinsloo&Breier (1996:189)

There is also evidence that the "learner-centred and interactive" principles of a great deal of education practice have less appeal for many people than those centres more "school-like" and hierarchical in their methods. Sometimes learners resist new approaches, preferring the practices with which they are more familiar, and through which they believe other people have been successful.

Whatever the approach, it is clear that learners have huge expectations of what their literacy programme should help them achieve, and have absolute faith in its potential. Malan recommends that "adult literacy educators would do well to confront unrealistic expectations of their students and see to what extent the classes depend on these desires." (1996:159)

*** learners as individuals**

Research amongst adult learners indicates strongly that they should not be seen as one large homogenous group. Providers should not regard them as the "target population" who need literacy. Instead of making distinctions between literates and illiterates, they should recognise that people may be differentially positioned in regard to literacy practices. Some may want to participate in literacy classes and may be ready to learn the skills and competencies which will change their thinking and their discourse practices, and impact upon their world view and thereby their sense of self.

Other learners may prefer to engage in the literacy practices and discourses of their own society or community, and decline to participate in practices which might require a change of this nature.

The dilemma which adult learners face is captured in the words of an East Cape student as recorded by Prinsloo and Breier (1996:197) "Education advantages, it gives you the green light. It disadvantages, it makes you forget your tradition."

As Gee points out, "literacy is not for the timid." (1990:42) Many learners who decide to participate and discover that participation makes demands upon them which they find uncomfortable decide to abandon their training programmes.

*** participation and dropout**

Research conducted among adult learner dropouts provides insight into some of the main reasons why they decide to terminate their training programmes. The studies described below inform this research in its investigation of adult learners' literacy experiences.

Reddy's study investigates possible deterrents to participation which may also apply to learners who have dropped out of class.

The study begins with an investigation of what motivates learners to attend in the first place. Lewin (in Reddy 1991:24) sees the motivation to participate as a combination of needs that spring from individuals and the meaning they attach to the activity within their surroundings. In this study, this would most likely be linked with individuals' perception that participation would benefit them in terms of advancement of every kind.

Miller's theory (in Reddy 1991:30) draws on Maslow's hierarchy of needs: adults will not participate in higher order activities such as education until

lower order needs are met. This impacts significantly on adult learners whose realities often have much to do with lower order needs such as food, shelter and employment or income. Although very often learners regard education as the way by which other needs will be met.

Darkenwald and Valentine (in Reddy 1991:59) state that an individual's decision not to participate in adult classes is not determined by one isolated factor, but by the synergistic action of multiple deterrents. The same is true for participation. According to Lowe (1975:53) motives for participation are numerous and overlapping.

Reasons for participation may include vocational, in which case they sign up to prepare for a new job, or to improve or increase their income; personal development where they wish to become better informed, spend leisure time or improve certain skills; social relationships, where they hope to meet new people; or out of boredom where they want to escape from their routines.

In South Africa, reasons are also numerous, which can be seen from this study. In most cases they tend to centre around getting a certificate or qualification at some level because they firmly believe that improved literacy levels will improve their lives in every respect.

Reddy describes five major categories of deterrents to participation: dispositional such as personal ability, lack of confidence or interest; personal which include lack of support, fear, prevention and the need for company; infrastructural support which includes physical constraints like transport, finance and inaccessibility of venues; lack of relevance of curriculum; and work constraints. (1991:53)

Amongst these, highest ranking were physical constraints such as transport, distance to travel, costs of fees and books, and time constraints. When the issue of dropout was discussed, similar themes emerged. Most respondents

knew at least one dropout. Their dropout was caused by "an inability to cope, whether financially, situationally or academically." (1991:178)

Learners who had not dropped out were often critical of those who had, referring to them as "lazy" or "the motivation and interest are just not there." It was also suggested that they had not been advised about the realities of being an adult learner. (1991:80)

Reddy does not elaborate on learners' dissatisfaction with curriculum and lack of interest in furthering their schooling. These issues, though expressed, were not pursued. Although it was the physical constraints which ranked highest in the range of deterrents, it was learned through interviews that "external and environmental barriers were easier to overcome than internal or attitudinal barriers." (1991:223)

This study aims to gain further insight into the attitudinal factors rather than the physical or external. As indicated by Reddy, these are more difficult to overcome and therefore impact more strongly.

Lowe groups reasons for dropout into a similar three categories. (1975:42) Personal constraints include fear of the unfamiliar, fear of ridicule, emotional insecurity, feelings of inadequacy, dislike of school and negative attitudes towards learning. For South African adult learners these would be linked to fear of facing for the second time the unfamiliar literacy practices of education institutions of a different culture.

Domestic factors, Lowe's second group of constraints, include difficulty in getting away, opposition from family members, and difficult conditions of study. All these are part of the experience of learner dropouts in this study. External factors were similar to those listed above, and of these, Lowe states that the most important clustered around attitudes towards education and teachers. There is great evidence that people drop out feeling bitter or demoralised. The fact that the most important factors centred around

negative attitudes towards education has relevance to the present study where this was not always the case. Many learners in this study found no fault with the teachers, and had positive attitudes towards education, in spite of negative experiences.

In the Tidwell study, dropouts had in general positive attitudes towards learning and the value of education, but had had negative experiences with regard to relationships with teachers, and the approachability of staff. They had felt marginalised. (1988:46) They all believed that learning was important, and saw the need for education to "make it in life."

In this study, the physical constraints ranked lowest, with personal and social reasons ranking highest. Dropouts found school boring, and poor performance was the highest ranking factor. The costs of dropping out were the same both for those in Reddy's study and for those in the current study. According to Tidwell, results would be "difficulty in finding employment, being relegated to low status, low paying jobs and lower life earnings." (1988:941)

In Mwiria's study of lack of sustained participation by women in literacy projects in Kenya, issues of gender are uppermost. Women are faced with multiple responsibilities in a male dominated society. Men discourage women from attending class because of "the threat men fear literate women will pose to them (1993:189). This unequal relationship hinders the spread of literacy. Here again, limited mastery of the two official languages is a factor which causes dropout, as is "having to contend with professionally unqualified teachers." (1993:183)

Throughout the world, similar issues confront adult learners - constraints on a personal, social, physical or external level set against the enormous benefits society declares to be invested in education.

The anomaly is perpetuated. Learners value education and believe in its power to enhance their lives significantly, but nowhere are great benefits evident in their lives.

*** profile of the adult learner in South Africa**

Mezirow's description of the adult learner quoted in chapter 1 encapsulates many of the characteristics of adult learners in South Africa - low self esteem and income, menial jobs, high hopes. This section serves to examine in greater depth some of their realities of life in order to enhance understanding of their world view and thereby their experience of classes and dropout.

Age and gender

Although adult learners in South Africa are sometimes perceived to be largely older people, the NEPI research of 1991 states that in their sample 71% of learners were in fact under the age of 40 and only 5% were over 50. "These ratios were similar for NGOs, contradicting the assumption that they cater for an older grouping." (1992: 15)

Debate over the age at which a person becomes an adult renders an acceptable definition of an adult learner difficult. Generally, the term "adult learner" refers to people attending classes who range in age between 18 and 50 years. There are sometimes the so-called "streetkids" who may be as young as 12, and older learners whose aims may be significantly different from those of their younger classmates.

According to Harley et al, 16 years of age and above is regarded as adult, since 16 was the minimum school leaving age in the education system.

(1996:17) Their research also confirms that there is an equal balance of men and women in attendance at adult classes. (1996:67)

Self image

Adult learners often have a low self esteem because of past negative experiences, particularly those which caused them to choose not to complete their schooling, and perhaps also because of their low status of employment as a result. However, as Lowe points out (1975:21) the learner "holds an image of himself which the teacher must respect. He may desperately want to learn, but resent being treated as a pupil." This is a key issue in dropout, and one that is endorsed by learners in this study.

A learner's self image or sense of himself in the world is strongly connected with his world view or values system, as has been described above. Another factor which may cause feelings of low self esteem is the learner's insecurity in discourse practices of Western culture with which he is unfamiliar. They would in all likelihood be similar practices to those experienced in his failed school career. Once again the issue of taking on foreign literacy practices which might necessitate changes in values and identity comes to the fore. This is a situation which must be faced by each and every adult learner in South Africa, since they are all members of cultures whose discourse practices are not those practised by the educational institutions of the country, at least at this point in time.

Independence

The adult learner is in class by choice, unlike school pupils for whom it is compulsory to attend classes. Pupils often cause disciplinary problems through boredom, underachievement or distress. When adult learners face such situations, they may simply leave. "He is free to avoid, engage in or withdraw from any educational experience, as he pleases," states Lowe. (1975:21)

Adult learners tend not to be confrontational. They prefer to leave than to complain. Many younger learners, especially those who have had some experience of 'liberation literacy' may choose to approach the teacher, but most times, their sense of respect for the teacher as a more educated person causes them to refrain from anything akin to criticism, and they leave, hoping that changes will one day take place.

Aims and expectations

The adult learner usually has very definite aims when attending class. These may range from reading the Bible, to helping their children with their studies, to getting Standard 5 or 10. Their expectations are often high and even unrealistic, as pointed out above.

Many adult learners have an orientation towards "schooled literacy" and believe the myths about the magical effects of literacy. They see it as "a panacea to open doors to social status and economic success."

(Prinsloo&Breier 1996:50) When they do not acquire the expected capabilities or results, they drop out.

"The adult learner regards the hours that he gives to learning as precious, and expects them to be used to some constructive purpose. If what he is taught seems neither relevant to his own experience nor of potential benefit preferably in the immediate future, he will almost certainly spurn it," says Lowe. (1975:50)

The reality of low economic status

Owing to the adult learner's lack of schooling, she is often employed (if she is lucky enough to find work) in a menial job on a low salary. Jobs are often part-time, sometimes paid on an hourly basis. This means that she is constantly faced with poverty, and carefully ekes out a living. There are often

children to feed, clothe and educate, and priority is generally given to them. When school fees or bus fares or the cost of books impact on her resources, she has to leave classes. The children come first. There is often a belief that the focus should shift from them to the children. They have great hopes and ambitions for their children.

Harley et al provide statistics on low literacy and economic activity, defining illiteracy in this case as having less than ten years of schooling. (1996:40)

Formal employment	32% illiteracy
Informally employed	67% illiteracy
Domestic workers	30% illiteracy
Agricultural workers	80% illiteracy
Unemployed	57% illiteracy

These descriptions provide something of a profile of the adult learner in South Africa and describe some of the realities which impact upon their decision to drop out of classes. It is a picture of people striving against massive odds to achieve the kinds of success which they perceive to be accessible through a Western style education. They battle poverty, low status jobs, language barriers and lack of knowledge of the discourse practices perpetuated by Western culture and practised in the education institutions. Given the recent changes in South Africa, Western culture may soon no longer be regarded as the mainstream but at this point, this is still the reality of the situation.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some of the theory relevant to adult learners' experience of literacy classes and dropout.

* it provided definitions of and perspectives on literacy - from the point of view of providers, society, recent research, and the learners themselves.

These definitions and perspectives provide a setting in which the anomalies and paradoxes of the literacy experience can be considered.

- * it described the essential differences between the traditional view of literacy as an "autonomous" individual and mental entity, and a recent theory of literacies, which regard literacy as essentially plural, a set of practices which are contextualised within a certain culture or society, and are linked with a person's values system and their sense of identity.

- * the chapter highlighted some of the characteristics and realities of adult learners in South Africa in order to provide some insight into their world view.

- * it gave some background to factors which motivate or deter learners in their quest to improve their education levels.

- * it highlighted the strength of the myth perpetuated by society and believed by learners that literacy has the power to bring about major positive effects - such as wealth, stability, and social success.

The next chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have provided a context for the research, and some of the relevant theory which underpins the study. This chapter describes the methodology used in the study and gives an account of the research process.

In order to explore the meanings adult learners attach to their experience of classes and of dropping out of class, it was necessary to find a research design within the parameters of social sciences research which would allow learners to speak frankly and without restriction or reserve about their experiences.

At the outset it was clear that it would be difficult to penetrate the veneer of the usual discourse one encounters when speaking of education. The advice of parents, community leaders, and even politicians and government have created a strong belief that education is the only way to "make it in life". And yet this is not always the case. Many successful people have had very little education and some may say that many educated people are not particularly successful.

It was necessary to try to circumvent the usual discourse, allowing dropouts to describe their literacy experience, particularly that of dropping out, so that it would be possible to examine their attitudes in relation to their practice, for this is where many anomalies lie.

The most appropriate approach, one in which learners would freely relate their experiences, seemed to be the qualitative research interview in a semi structured interview situation. This method was deemed most likely to produce details of a wide range of experiences and perspectives for examination and analysis.

3.2 Social Sciences Research

Social Sciences Research is a collaborative human activity in which social reality is studied objectively with a view to gaining a valid understanding of it. (Mouton&Marais 1988:7)

It has a sociological dimension in that it is a collaborative activity or process ; an ontological aspect, since it is the study of a social reality ; and it has an explanatory dimension in that it aims to understand that social reality. There is also a methodological dimension, as social sciences research is objective research, and strives for validity and truth. (Mouton&Marais 1988:18)

In social sciences research, different research traditions and paradigms are to be found within each of the disciplines. In addition, social sciences disciplines are multi-paradigmatic, unlike in the natural sciences.

The existence of a variety of research methods, paradigmatic preferences and differences in phenomena suggests that it is a mistake to assume that a single research methodology, appropriate for all situations, may be found.

The aim in research design is to attempt to generate valid research findings. (Mouton&Marais 1988:31) Internally valid results are achieved if data are accurate and reliable, and analyses are relevant. The findings have greater external validity if they are "generalisable" to other similar projects, and do not only apply to one particular study.

Construct validity is one of the most difficult problems in social sciences research. The social sciences are characterised by theoretical concepts or constructs derived from scientific theories and the researcher cannot always be sure whether his or her questionnaire actually does measure the construct it is supposed to.

The aim of any research design should be to plan and structure in such a manner that the validity of the findings is maximised. (Mouton&Marais 1988:33)

In the light of the factors discussed above, it was decided that since the aim of the research would be exploratory, more than descriptive or explanatory, the research design should be structured in such a way that interviewees would be free to relate details of their individual experiences of dropout around certain common themes. New insight could thus be gained into the issue of dropout. The structuring of the method is described in detail below.

3.3 The Qualitative Research Interview (QRI)

*** reasons for selection of the QRI**

According to Kvale (1983:174) the QRI is described as "semi-structured", neither a free conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. "It is carried through using an interview guide which focuses on certain themes. The interview is taped and transcribed word for word. The typed version from the tape constitutes the material for subsequent interpretation of meaning."

The purpose of the QRI according to Kvale is "to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee." (1983:174) The term 'life-world' is used to describe not only the living conditions and experience of a person, but also their values and social framework.

The difficulties researchers express over construct validity are circumvented in the QRI, since the mode of understanding in the interview breaks with the methodological rules for research which follow from a positivist orientation to science in that it encourages variety and spectrum rather than uniformity. "The interview has often been denied a scientific status as it hardly fulfils such traditional requirements as reliability and validity" (Kvale 1983:189).

The interview process used in this study adhered to the model described by Kvale, the qualitative research interview. Mikkelsen (1995:102) describes this method simply as a semi-structured interview (SSI) where "only some of the questions and topics are predetermined. Many questions are formulated during the interview, and irrelevant questions can be dropped."

In the interview there are questions on experience and behaviour, opinions and values, feelings, needs, knowledge and background, and questions address past, present and future. Mikkelsen describes the SSI as "one of the main techniques used in development studies." (1995:102)

Bernard includes such interviews in his range of methods known as "participant observation" (1994:137) He states that one of its strengths is that it "lets you in the door so that you can do research." It "involves establishing rapport in a new community." He recommends the SSI for situations where respondents will only be interviewed once. The SSI has much of the "freewheeling" quality of unstructured interviewing, but is more controlled. (1994:209)

This interview situation contrasts strongly with the multiple choice questionnaire, structured by experts, with questions and answers already formulated. It is a different mode of understanding. Here ordinary people are able to describe their own life-world, their opinions and acts in their own words "freewheeling" in a less structured approach.

The QRI is based on meaning, which rests on subjective understanding, in contrast to the objective separation of the scientist and his subjects demanded by quantitative approaches.

Kvale describes the QRI as "having a phenomenological (descriptive) and hermeneutical (interpretive) mode of understanding" (1983:171). "The hermeneutical research in human sciences is guided by an interest in obtaining a possible consensus of understanding between actors within the frame of reference of selfunderstanding mediated within a culture." (1983:193)

The QRI is not in itself an advanced method but it holds possibilities for getting beyond a surface understanding of human phenomena.

It was for this reason that the QRI was selected as a research method for this study. A questionnaire would have had a restrictive effect upon the interviewee's individual experience. It would have moulded the responses, enabling only surface answers and shallow response. The QRI enables the interviewer to question in greater depth, thus allowing the respondent a chance to probe his own attitudes perhaps hitherto not thought through.

*** aspects of the QRI**

The QRI is qualitative. It is never its purpose to obtain quantifiable responses. It is not a content analysis approach. This kind of interview seeks to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the respondent's life-world. It seeks to describe specific situations, not general opinions. It is presuppositionless, seeking to gather rich descriptions of relevant themes, instead of beginning with ready made categories. This implies an openness to new and unexpected phenomena.

The QRI tolerates ambiguity. The interviewer seeks to clarify ambiguity but realises that the respondent may have real ambivalences within. It is not his

task to resolve ambiguity, but to describe precisely the contradictory meanings expressed. It is possible that the respondent may undergo a change in the course of the interview. He may obtain new insight into or increased consciousness of the theme during the interview. This is acceptable.

Interviewers may differ in the way they use the interview guide due to varying knowledge or sensitivity. This is acceptable since the QRI employs a presuppositionless approach anyway, and different approaches are welcomed.

*** difficulties with or limitations of the QRI**

Although the QRI did seem to be the most appropriate research method to use in order to get rich descriptions of adult learners' experience of dropout without restricting them in any way to the moulded responses of a questionnaire, the method does have limitations. The difficulties described below are found in Kvale (1983:172-190) and are here related directly to this study.

Interviewer confidence

There is a great deal of security for the interviewer in using a structured instrument. Interviewers who use only a guide and are required to encourage respondents to pursue responses on certain themes need to be experienced or confident enough to pose suitable additional questions as a prompt, with no assistance.

In this study, five interviewers were employed, whose levels of experience differed. This meant that some enabled broader descriptions whilst others were content with less detail.

Analysis

The issue of the way in which extensive interview material can be structured for comprehensive analysis is cited as a problem. No system is suggested - the researcher can structure elaborate index systems ; group statements per theme ; or engage in repeated playing of tapes. This could be regarded as a limitation, or may be seen as providing a flexibility which renders it suitable across a wide range of studies.

In this study, the intention was that out of an abundance of disparate descriptions, commonalities would emerge, which could be clustered into themes. Through the analysis of these themes, a community profile would appear. The process would enable a layering of interpretation and analysis. This flexibility proved to be a positive factor rather than a limitation.

Lack of scientific theory

According to Kvale, there exists no theory of science for the interview. Its methodological status is low and yet it is widely used. It is in fact one of the most used methods in social sciences research, especially in psychology, but it is one of the least analysed within the theory of science. This is endorsed by Mikkelsen (1995:102)

Reliability and validity

Kvale suggests that in principle it is impossible to avoid leading questions which might perhaps distort integrity in an interview, but that in this approach, interviewers lead subjects towards examining certain life themes, but avoid leading them to specific meanings about these themes. (1988:190) It is a subjective form of research. It is difficult to formulate requirements for reliability of interpretation, since deep analysis may go beyond the selfunderstanding of the subject. (1988:191)

Levels of interpretation may vary - descriptions may be taken at face value or at a deeper level. In addition, one wonders if there is one correct interpretation or is there "a legitimate plurality of interpretations?"

Bias is another worry. However, within a phenomenological or hermeneutical understanding it is an advantage that interviewers vary in sensitivity to obtain a broader picture of focus themes. While it may reduce reliability, it produces a more nuanced picture of themes in the research, as has already been stated. In this mode of understanding, reliability gives way to favour a broad matrix of individual experiences.

Although these factors and limitations in the research design did pose concern for the researcher, there were enough positive factors to render the method highly suitable. The common themes of the life-worlds of adult learners in relation to their experience of dropout were obtained and could be analysed.

3.4. The research design of the study

*** introduction and background**

The research was conducted in 1995-6 amongst adult learner dropouts in Gauteng, particularly around Pretoria, in an attempt to gather information about their experience of literacy and dropout, especially whether they felt that their dropping out would affect their chances of success in life; whether they believed strongly in the literacy myth, and if so, why they had chosen to abandon their training.

*** the respondents**

Respondents were members of various communities in and around Pretoria. Some lived in informal settlements, others in more established communities.

Some were employed while others were not, and some had attended night schools run by the ex-Department of Education and Training, while others had attended classes run by NGOs. They were drawn from different locations and Adult Centres.

Subjects were selected by interviewers in the areas in which they lived and worked, either through nominations by tutors at centres or by selecting dropouts from registers. Some were known to the interviewers, most were not. There was considerable difficulty in finding dropouts, since few had left contact telephone numbers or addresses at the centres, and if these details did exist, they were often not current.

All had, in essence, dropped out twice. They had left school as children without completing a school leavers certificate, and had returned to school as adults. They had again as adults decided to drop out. This was the only criterion involved in their selection as respondents. None had progressed beyond Std 5 level on the grading/assessment of the Department of Education and Training. There was a mix of age and gender in the group.

In order to reach beyond physical barriers to attendance such as lack of transport or money, or inaccessibility of a centre, an attempt was made to find respondents for whom these were not problems. However this was not always possible.

Below is a table which records some of this information for all the respondents interviewed.

TABLE 1: LIST OF RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED

CODE	GENDER	AGE	YR DROP	ED LEVEL
D1	M	43	1995	Std 1
D2	F	40	1995	Std 1
K1	M	45	1992	Std 2
K2	M	25	1993	Grade 1
K3	F	28	1990	Grade 1
K4	F	34	1994	Std 2
K5	F	30	1993	Grade 2
A1	F	37	1995	Grade 1
A2	M	43	1995	IEB L1
A3	F	32	1995	IEB L1
A4	M	31	1995	IEB L1
A5	F	37	1995	IEB L1
A6	F	32	1995	Grade 2
J1	F	40	1993	Std 2
J2	F	50	1992	Grade 2
J3	F	33	1995	Std 5
S1	F	24	1994	IEB L1
S2	F	34	1995	IEB L2
S3	F	25	1995	IEB L1
S4	F	26	1995	IEB L1
S5	F	28	1995	Grade 1
S6	F	42	1995	Grade 1

*** the interviewers**

The interviews were conducted by five interviewers, not by the researcher herself because the researcher is not fluent in the Zulu or Tswana language.

The interviewers were: (coded in the table below according to the first letter of name)

**D - Diana Molefe; K - Khoabane Mofokeng; A - Albertina Twaise;
J - Jabu Majola; S - Soren Witten (assisted by Freddy Masilela)**

Selection of interviewers

Interviews were to be conducted in the first language of the respondents to facilitate ease of expression and thereby to obtain a detailed account of experiences without restricting respondents to the limited vocabulary of a second language. This necessitated the services of interviewers fluent in African languages.

It was of concern that respondents might be intimidated by the presence of an educationist, and possibly be reluctant to express any reservations regarding the value of education programmes in the presence of a person involved in education upgrading, so it was decided that interviewers' occupations would not be divulged to respondents.

Five interviewers were used over a period of 6 months. Three of the five (two women and a man) had previously conducted research. Three of the five were women, one facilitator, one trainer and a night school principal. Of the two men, one was a community worker, the other a white student. He was selected because of his experience of the QRI, and an interpreter accompanied him. Only the community worker was known to respondents.

The use of 5 very different interviewers resulted in a wide variety of descriptions, and added to the richness of the matrix of focus themes.

The selection of a variety of interviewers was intentional. According to Kvale (1988:178) interviews obtained by different interviewers using the same interview guide may differ due to varying sensitivity and knowledge. "This is perfectly acceptable as the QRI adopts a presuppositionless approach."

The most interesting and rich descriptions were obtained by the interviewer who was the least experienced researcher and who was not an educationist. He was selected because he is well known and trusted in his community, that from which his respondents were drawn.

Training of interviewers

The training of interviewers was conducted individually. A training guide was compiled containing information about the purpose of the research, the process involved in conducting a QRI, the questionnaire to be used as a guide in the interviews, and details of the focus of each question. A thorough discussion and briefing was held and the interviewers were asked to familiarise themselves with the process and to conduct one pilot interview which was then critiqued and discussed before others were conducted. Interviewers were paid per respondent interviewed.

It was decided that since each interview would be unique, one pilot run would be sufficient to familiarise interviewers with the recording process and the guide.

The Interview Guide (see Appendix)

Bernard's guidelines for semistructured interviewing (1994:209) were used in compiling the interview guide.

The interview guide was structured in the form of a questionnaire, with focus questions listed in sequence. The focus area and the reason for the inclusion of each question was indicated in the training guide so that interviewers could encourage elaboration. Interviewers were required to pose questions in sequence and to encourage respondents to give as much detail as they wanted to in reply. If responses seemed to take a different or new tangent, interviewers were to allow elaborations and to encourage detail.

Each interview was preceded by an introductory discussion informing the interviewee of some background to the research, giving assurances of anonymity, and establishing some biographical detail.

Focus of questions

Questions 2 - 7 explored the respondent's experience of adult classes, factors which contributed towards the decision to leave and the feelings experienced, both those of the dropout and those of friends and family.

Question 3 established at the outset the aims and expectations the interviewee had had in attending class, while question 4 focused on reasons for dropout.

Questions 5 and 6 sought to investigate feelings experienced at the moment of dropout, the polarities being either disappointment or relief. Answers to this question could indicate a positive or negative attitude towards classes for whatever reason.

Question 7 explored possible pressure or influence by friends and family brought to bear on the learner.

Question 8 sought to examine possible alternatives to classes which may have been more attractive.

Questions 9 - 11 investigated ambitions in an attempt to look beyond educational options.

Question 10 may seem anything but presuppositionless, but this question was inserted after the pilot interviews, in an attempt to encourage respondents to refrain from citing careers such as doctors, lawyers, teachers as their ambition, possibly unrealistic for a middle aged adult with a Std 2 certificate.

Questions 12 - 15 looked for role models. Questions 12 and 13 explored the issue of success without education. How could uneducated people be in a position of support if they were not successful. Questions 14 and 15 searched for role models and the reasons they are admired, but wondered if there could

be a role model who was not well educated who would be admired or regarded successful for reasons other than education.

Lastly, questions 16 and 17 sought to find out whether education played such a major role as to be the greatest ambition, and lack or loss of it the greatest fear.

3.5 The interview process

*** background**

The data was collected, as stated above, in a qualitative research interview situation by five different interviewers over a period of six months.

A pilot study involving four dropouts was conducted by the first interviewer and the researcher to test the research instrument. (See Appendix for details) Certain adjustments were made to the interview guide as a result.

The order of questions was altered, and question 10 was included to encourage respondents to focus on more realistic options.

*** process**

Interviews were mostly conducted in the respondents' first language, except in the interviews done by interviewer **S**, where an interpreter was used. The entire interview in all sessions, was recorded on tape, and interviewers wrote down nothing during the process. This allowed them to concentrate solely on the questioning process to ensure that focus was maintained. They were also asked to write down any significant behaviour or gestures which might add meaning to the verbal responses. Occasionally, these were mentioned in transcriptions from the tapes, but not significantly.

After each interview, the interviewer used the taped material to write down word for word the responses, translating them into English, but omitting no detail. Interviewers were asked to refrain from paraphrasing or summarising responses, but to write down exactly what was said, thus leaving interpretation to the researcher. There was therefore a transcript of each interview for analysis by the researcher.

Interviews were held at a venue suggested by respondents, so that they were in a place where they felt at ease. Nevertheless, venues were sometimes a problem in terms of privacy and suspicion by neighbours.

The interview process used was an ideal way to get a plethora of descriptions of the individual life worlds of the respondents interviewed in each of the communities from which they came.

3.6 Analysis of data

A typed transcript was made of each interview conducted.

Data were analysed first as case studies, looking at the entire experience of each individual and contrasting this with the experience of others. The case studies are included in the Appendix.

The data were then examined question by question, involving a cut-and-paste exercise where all responses across interviews are listed together per question for examination. A copy of the data in this format is also included in the Appendix.

Finally, data were grouped per focus theme each of which involved a group of questions e.g. role models (2 questions), experience of leaving (4 questions).

The focus themes were in turn grouped into four major constructs and further analysed.

3.7 Difficulties in the research process

Several difficulties were experienced both by the researcher and by the interviewers.

The interviewers encountered many problems. As stated above, the initial difficulty was to locate people who met the criteria, since they had left their education centres, and had very often not given a contact address which was current.

Suspicion on the part of family or neighbours was a problem. In one area, interviewers were concerned that respondents might be harrassed for participating in the study.

Dropouts often lived in areas which were not easily accessible to interviewers.

Transcribing the interviews from the tapes was a lengthy and laborious task, and in some cases there was concern over the accuracy of translation and the detail returned.

The major problem experienced by the researcher was the lack of experience of all but one interviewer. In spite of training in the interview process, either the transcripts or the interviewing itself lacked the detail anticipated. It was impossible for this to be ascertained by the researcher since these interviews were conducted in Zulu and Tswana language. Those conducted in English were conducted by the more experienced interviewer and contained more detail.

It is obvious from the transcripts that interviewers failed to pursue in great depth certain of the question areas, or they tended to try to encapsulate the essence of what was said when they translated the responses into English, rather than returning it word for word.

However, among the responses that were captured there is enough variety of theme, experience and opinion to render the study interesting.

3.8 Conclusion

The process of analysis enabled various levels of abstraction and interpretation. It involved a layering of analysis in a cumulative fashion, building from the lifeworld of each individual to a sense of commonality with others, thus enabling a community picture to emerge.

This chapter describes the research design used in the study, its difficulties and suitability, its limitations and its value.

The next chapter presents the results or data obtained from the interviews. Interviewees' responses have been grouped, as described above, into four main constructs.

CHAPTER 4

CONSTRUCTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents four major constructs which emerged from 22 semi-structured qualitative research interviews conducted as described in chapter 3.

The constructs were conceptualised in an attempt to focus the disparate descriptions and responses of the interviewees per question into manageable divisions for analysis and reflection.

Since the study was to examine meanings and experiences, it seemed advisable to formulate the constructs in terms of sections or parts of the learners' whole experience. This facilitated the search for themes.

The four constructs were loosely devised prior to data collection, but once the data were examined it became clear that this envisaged process for analysis and record would in fact be suitable.

The chapter describes, per question, the common themes which arose within each of the constructs. These results give an account of a range of aspects of adult learners' experiences in and perceptions about attending classes, and the possible implications they attach to their own dropout. The narrative is supported by direct quotes from the interviews.

The Appendix contains transcripts of responses given in each interview, both per respondent and per question.

The constructs comprise four focus areas of questioning in the Interview Guide (IG) used by interviewers in the research process.

* **Construct 1 : Classes** - the good the bad and the indifferent
(IG questions 2 -7)

The first construct focuses on the experience of adult classes; reasons/aims for attending; the experience itself, good and bad; reasons for leaving; feelings on leaving; reactions of significant others.

* **Construct 2 : Post dropout experience** - what to do now?
(IG questions 8 - 11)

The second construct focuses on the post-dropout experience ; the activity which has replaced attending classes; the subsequent changes of plans and direction; ascertaining whether or not there is still a desire to return to class; the strength of the attachment to education

* **Construct 3 : Support network and role models** - does education feature?
(IG questions 12 - 15)

The third construct encompasses the support group and how they can offer support if they are not educated; it looks at role models and the reasons why they are role models; it looks at one uneducated role model and the reasons why the person is a role model if he/she is not educated.

* **Construct 4 : Ambitions and fears** - does education feature?
(IG questions 16 - 17)

The fourth construct comprises ambitions and fears for self and family and whether education features in either.

4.2 Construct 1 : Classes - the good, the bad and the indifferent (IG questions 2-7)

Construct 1 comprises respondents' accounts of, their perceptions of and their experiences at the adult centres they attended. It encompasses the experience from reasons why they decided to enrol, to the reasons why they decided to dropout, their feelings upon dropping out, and the reactions of their friends and family.

*** the experience of adult classes - question 2**

There were four common themes which emerged out of discussions about the experience of adult classes

- relationship with tutors and the quality of teaching
- relevance/importance of the curriculum to their daily lives
- feelings of humiliation/ discomfort
- disappointment

Relationship with tutors and the quality of teaching

Good or bad teaching featured strongly in interviewees' accounts of their experiences at adult centres. Respondents differed a great deal on what they regarded as "good teaching". While most enjoyed interactive methodologies, and said that it was important for them to find answers for themselves, there were others who felt that they were at too low a level to be required to contribute and preferred the teacher to provide all the information. Some liked conventional "chalk and talk" methods with teachers in authority, while others preferred learner-centred approaches.

"The teachers were good to us...we sat in rows. The teacher did all the talking. I like the teacher to do all the talking because we are at the beginning levels."

In the opinion of another respondent, "We were made to work, to sweat for the answers. I like to work like this. If the teacher gives you the answers there is nothing you can learn. We just become lazy thinkers."

One respondent highlighted the fact that he was uncomfortable with new approaches: "They don't teach us like they did when we were young." He wanted the old familiar methods. "I don't get him well. It's not what I know."

"The methods they used were not familiar to me. I felt very uncomfortable in the class."

Apart from methodologies, learners commented on whether teachers cared for them or not. Answers ranged from

"The teachers had no time for us" to "they really care for us and made sure we feel happy in the group."

When they were mocked by peers, "teachers did not rebuke those who were laughing at me."

One teacher consistently failed to give a learner his test results, but although she did not care, and he left because he felt he was not achieving, he still described her as a good teacher. "She was excellent in her teaching. There is nothing negative I can say about her."

Learners also described how they became bored because "teachers took too much time on things we already knew." Teachers were not flexible enough to recognise prior learning. Learners became disappointed and disillusioned at their slow progress. "We studied the same thing every time. It was very slow for me."

"...at school the situation was not good as teachers were impatient."

Some respondents were negative to such a point that one commented "The way they were teaching, you would have run away. It was not the kind of thing I wanted to do."

"There is nothing that I have acquired from the centre."

Others were extremely positive about their teachers.

"The tutors helped me a lot, and now I am able."

"The teachers were very helpful."

Relevance/importance of the curriculum to their lives

Many respondents confirmed that classes had had relevance for their day-to-day lives. Numeracy helped in business, and in the spaza shop, and to calculate change to ensure that neither customer nor owner was being robbed. Magazines could be read, and forms could be filled in without help from other people.

"Now I can fill in forms - bank deposit and withdrawals."

"It was helpful learning to calculate for my own affairs."

"I have a spaza shop so I do a lot of counting."

Most learners felt that the curriculum did not meet their expectations in terms of improving their lives, particularly with regard to employment.

"I enjoyed school, but I changed my mind. Skills and experience are more important. High education can come later."

"Knowledge cannot get me money, so I will try crafts for that, then I will go back."

"Even learning to read, write and count will not get me more money at this level. It is helpful to me personally, but not for the job."

Many learners were disappointed at the slow progress they made, either because achievement was slow or because of ongoing costs. Teachers wasted time on things they already knew, and their expectations in terms of new skills were not met. Others said that even though they did make progress, they were anxious because the process was slow and every month required more money for transport and fees.

"The teacher took too much time on things we knew and the same thing.."

"I think it's good, but it was very slow for me."

Learners' expectations were often not met, either in terms of the relevance of the classes, or because through poor teaching they seemed not to be gaining in knowledge or experience. They felt they were wasting their time.

"I feel I am wasting my time because it will take me a long time..."

Feelings of humiliation/discomfort

Embarrassment at being "illiterate" was also cited as a factor that encouraged these learners to attend classes to improve their situation. However several respondents said that these feelings of inadequacy were in fact more acute in the classroom situation. In addition, some learners felt out of place, as if they did not belong.

"I don't get him well. It's not what I know and I feel confused."

"There is this saying that eyes speak louder than the mouth. I was not one of them. I did not like their ways."

"I felt that I would have been successful if the teacher had supported me."

"People attending school gave me problems. When I had to ask questions, they made fun of me. Classes were helpful... but teacher did not rebuke those who were laughing at me." Not only did their fellow students mock them, but they were not defended by their teachers.

Disappointment

Frustration came through strongly in learners' responses. Their expectations were not being met and nor were their needs.

"I could not get what I went there for."

"It was not the kind of thing I wanted to do."

"Some of the classes were very hard and I don't want to do those things."

"There is nothing I have acquired from the centre."

"I was disappointed."

"I got bored, I thought I was just wasting my time."

*** reasons for attending adult classes - question 3**

Reasons respondents gave for attending classes focused on learning to read, write and count with a view to improving their situation in life. For some, this was seen in terms of "reaching the top of my life" as one phrased it, for others, more practical and specific purposes were described.

"I wanted to be a good leader like others in the world. I wanted to be an example to and from my community."

"I attended classes with the intention of improving myself."

"I decided to join classes because of getting numeracy skills."

"It is difficult for me to sign documents (at a school meeting) and read copies (notices.)"

Many wanted to improve their performance at work, particularly through improving their communication skills so that they could communicate better with their employers. Those who were self-employed wanted to learn skills like calculating and business management so that they could progress in business.

"In my job as a domestic worker, my employer often left me notes.."

"I wanted to gain knowledge and sort out my accounts in my business."

For those respondents whose descriptions were not job or income related, their responses indicated that they regarded the attendance of classes as the way to progress in life. Their perception was that they were lacking something.

"There was something I was missing." "I see other people attending and I felt I was being left behind, so I decided to join them."

"I must attend so I can get light from the tutors."

"I want what other people I can see have got."

"With English many people progress. I hoped to progress also."

One respondent mentioned the social aspect. "There is nothing to do at night, so I wanted to meet some friends."

*** reasons for dropping out of classes - question 4**

Four common themes emerged from learners' descriptions of the reasons for their decision to terminate their attendance of classes. Some of these were repeated in respondents' descriptions of their experience of classes.

non-achievement
other priorities
humiliation/ misfit
physical problems

"I left classes because I did not get what I wanted" - non-achievement

Many interviewees attested to the fact that their aims in attending classes in the first place were simply not being met. Responses such as "I was not achieving anything" and "I did not get the skills I was looking for" clearly indicate a dissatisfaction with the classes. The phrase "I was wasting my time" was used several times. "Classes were disappointing."

"I realised I was not achieving anything because nothing was being done."

This lack of achievement often led to loss of motivation and feelings of frustration. The fact that progress was too slow was also mentioned. Both these factors also relate to the poor quality of teaching described above.

Other priorities

For some respondents, it was other priorities that caused them to drop out. One was selling goods and left home early and came back late. "I just had commitments."

Another had three little daughters and it became impossible for her to attend classes because there was no-one to look after them.

A third was trying to sell on the streets so didn't get time to attend classes.

Humiliation/ misfit

Several respondents (as noted above) described experiences in which they had felt humiliated, either by teachers or by their fellow learners. This was given as their major reason for deciding to leave.

"I left because I was laughed at. I never felt at home in those classes."

"In many cases the people that taught us don't care for us. ... when I asked a question ...they laughed at us. "

In addition some learners found difficulty engaging in the discourse practices required.

"I could not feel easy in that class. The ways I am used to and what I am looking for - it is not in that place."

"If I didn't do things the way everybody liked to do, then they laugh."

"But more than that, it all seemed foreign to me. I do not like their ways."

"I was telling you about how they treated me. I want to ask my questions but I feel strange."

Physical hindrances

Certain physical problems, mainly poor transport or lack of it, and costs both of transport and school fees were cited as reasons for dropout. Illness and

pregnancy were also hindrances. Even physical tiredness and in one case the emotional trauma of a burglary at home had caused dropout.

"Classes were bad especially when there was a strong wind outside."

"I dropped out because of the violence in Soweto. It was not safe to travel."

The purpose of this study is to search beyond these physical barriers or problems. Nevertheless, many respondents had encountered such difficulties and they cannot be totally ignored as factors in dropout.

*** emotions experienced upon dropout - question 5**

The majority of respondents said they felt disappointed that they had had to leave. They would like to have continued in class, but other factors necessitated their dropout.

"I felt disappointed because I wanted to continue my studies, but I also have children's fees to pay."

"I was sorry to leave. I would like to go back, if I get a room nearby"

"I felt upset because I need a better job and more pay and the school is so far and it takes so long to get there and also to get my education."

"I felt frustrated...it was too slow for me and I need a job."

Others also expressed disappointment, but their frustration was caused by the fact that they felt they were not achieving anything by staying.

"I was paying for learning but in the end I did not learn"

"I felt bad, angry and disappointed because I did not get what I went to classes for."

"I felt hurt because what I had expected to get from school I did not get."

Some who felt cheated by not getting what they had hoped for, felt relieved.

"It was easy for me to leave. I was unmotivated."

Those who had experienced feelings of humiliation were hurt, hopeless and angry.

"I was heartbroken that my own people laugh at me."

"I was angry. Those I left will progress while I will remain stupid"

"I felt hopeless. "

One respondent saw it in a positive light - "I felt good because I had been wasting my time."

Another coped because he told himself he would return - "I feel okay... I am just taking a break."

*** self-encouragement upon dropout - question 6**

The dropouts encouraged themselves in certain ways as they decided to leave. At this point in the interview situation, the majority said they comforted themselves with the thought that one day they would return to class. They would take a break, but they could always go back.

"I knew I could always go back."

"I decided I want to go back to class.. but a different centre."

"I told myself I would take a break then start again with the hope of getting something then"

Others pledged that they would continue with their studies either with the help of their friends or even by themselves.

"I know that I am very bright and I open my books and read in them"

"I resorted to reading the Bible "

"I would continue reading books and magazines."

Many simply accepted the fact of their dropout. Some were even pleased.

"I told myself I should stop wasting time and money."

"I said to myself that people cannot envisage or plan. It seems that there are those who are able to do things and those who don't"

"I was tired of it, and I told myself to get out once and for good."

Two respondents encouraged themselves in their dropout experience by turning their attention to other fields.

"I resorted to sewing instead to try and make money."

"I told myself I can still work on the farm."

*** reactions of friends and family to dropout - question 7**

Their significant others in nearly all cases had negative reactions to the dropout and attempted to get them to return to class because they regarded education

as being important to the learners' future. Even when they understood the plight of the learner, they expressed their concern.

"They were worried because now I had no interest and no chance of success."

"Everybody was very sorry and worried because now I had no chance in life. With education I can advance but now my hopes were dashed."

"Everybody was very worried because I had lost the opportunity to progress."

"My mother was angry because now I had no chance of helping my children."

"My parents want me to become educated so I can support them."

4.3 Construct 2 - Post dropout and reorientation - what to do now? (IG questions 8-11)

Construct 2 encompasses the post dropout experience. It is interested in what has replaced the attendance of classes, any new orientation, even one in which classes may not feature at all. Learners may have found that education is not the only way to success and self advancement.

*** occupation preferences when classes do not feature - question 8**

More than half of the respondents had not replaced the attendance of classes with any activity which they preferred to do. They were involved at home, or seeking employment, and most of these tried to get assistance with their learning from friends or from their children.

"I spend the time on my housework...I try to read when my friend is with me"

"I spend time at home doing nothing. There is no-one available to help me with these skills."

"I try to get my children to help me with the books."

"I prefer to clean at home, to fetch water from beyond the mountain"

"At the moment I am just looking for work, any work."

"Now I am looking for a job to work for my family."

"I am carrying on with my private studies with the aid of my friends."

Almost half of the interviewees were spending this time on their own business, like selling.

"I prefer to go and sell my goods to the pensioners..."

"I am busy with the sewing school"

"I have a job now on the farm in Moloto, but it is far and there is no chance of learning"

"I am copying fancy work and bead work from friends to sell for money."

Some interviewees seemed hopeless and had no other plans. They could see no other direction apart from becoming educated. They were just holding on to the hope that one day they would be able to resume classes.

"There is nothing better to do now. If I can get some work, I'll get money and go back to school."

"There is nothing I can do now. There is nothing better I could do without being educated."

"I am just waiting."

*** new direction now that aims in attending classes cannot be achieved because of dropout - questions 9 and 10**

A "priming question" was used here to help respondents recall the aims they had had in first attending classes. The purpose was to encourage them to set them aside in responding to the next question in order to consider possible other aims in life apart from those which were education related.

The majority of respondents refused to consider the notion that they were no longer in a position to achieve their stated aims now that they had dropped out. Instead of considering other pathways to success, they pinned their hopes of success on returning to classes. In spite of all the difficulties and negative experiences of adult classes which they had described earlier in the interview, they still valued education. Even some who had had bad experiences at one centre, would try another. Others who could not go back to class said they would get their friends to help them, but it was education that was for them the essential ingredient for future success.

"Because I want this knowledge I will not give up hope. I will go back to class"

"I hope to go back to classes...with the hope of getting these skills."

"One day I will go back to a different class."

"I still feel I did not waste my time. I still want to go back."

Others had decided that they would shelve their studies and concentrate on making a living. Education could wait a while.

"I want to go to the sewing school and sell to people"

"I will achieve my aims, but later. It is more important to get the sewing skills so I can start my own business. Later I will get a high education."

"I will have to continue selling until I can get a better job, or money to attend again."

"I want to invest the little money I get paid at work to open a small business like sewing, on the streets or from home."

There was one respondent for whom education AND employment could wait!

"I will buy two beers and relax a bit."

*** desire to return to classes in the future - question 11**

Respondents unanimously affirmed their intention to return to classes one day. Even interviewees whose current focus had shifted from progressing through upgrading their education level to progressing by means of making money from their own small businesses like selling or sewing goods stated that they would like to return to classes in the future.

Some positive responses were conditional.

"If teachers respect adults. I think they are not well-trained. In many cases they are teachers coming straight from the Primary schools."

"If chances of laughing at me stop."

"If the situation is normal. I was bored more than I can explain."

"If there can be electricity and other resources I will go back, but not in the dark."

"First I want to go.....to buy goods, even Mozambique where I can get materials to sell."

"If I can get a room nearby"

"If I can find a job"

"If I can find a school near where I work."

4.4 Construct 3 - Support network and role models: does education feature? (IG questions 12 - 15)

This construct comprises the dropouts' support network and role models. It enables an investigation of how education or lack of education features.

*** level of education of support group - question 12**

Most of the respondents had support groups who were not educated. Some had support groups who were educated, and the remainder either refused to acknowledge that they had support from anyone, depended on themselves, or had people whom they were supporting.

"I depend on my family and they are not well educated."

"I depend on myself and I am not well-educated"

"There is nobody who supports me if I have trouble"

"My children are educated and they are supporting me"

*** methods of support if support group is uneducated - question 13**

When those who had uneducated support groups were asked how they managed to give support though uneducated, not much detail was given. Some did not wish to elaborate. Mothers who were employed, self-employed or pensioners shared what little money they obtained with their families needing support. Some respondents focused on support in terms of motivation and encouragement, rather than financial support.

"We survive smoothly"

"My mother is a pensioner, so with the little money she receives every month at least we survive"

"My mother is able to support us because she is working somewhere."

"They give me support by motivating me from their own experience. They encourage me."

*** role models - question 14**

The interviewer then switched to the subject of role models. Interviewees were asked to think of, not necessarily name, two people whom they admired and would like to emulate, and the reasons for this.

Responses varied from Nelson Mandela to "women who can stand for their rights" to the solitary "there is no-one I admire. We have to make our own way."

People who were educated or who had money and therefore a better lifestyle were the most admired.

"Articulate businesswomen standing for women's rights; children who were educated; leaders like Mandela, Tutu, Zuma and Mangope admired for their achievements; lawyers and teachers, even the teachers at the centre; and in general people who earned a salary and could support their families adequately were named as worthy of emulation.

"I admire women who are educated, women who can....represent others."

"Madiba Mandela. Today we don't carry pass books, we drink beer under trees and we are not afraid of doing that."

"My friend Elsie. She is educated and is occupying a very challenging position at work."

"These two people can challenge life, because both are educated and working. It is nice to work, to earn a salary. I would like to follow in their steps."

"I admire people who are educated and give good support to their families."

"They are teachers. They work from 8 till 2. and they are sure at the end of the month there is a salary. The children are attending private schools...they wear nice clothes...they have cars and their living conditions are better than mine."

"There is a lawyer and a teacher I admire. Things go well for them."

Five respondents named less educated people - a friend running a sewing school; a brother who has a farm and livestock; disc jockeys who encourage others; spiritual people who give an example by the way they live their lives; a musician.

"Rebecca Malope with her music. She is not educated, but she is successful."

"Snyman Rankane on Radio Setswana. When he talks he builds people up with his advice. Also Sello Phiri. Actually what is important is I like people who build other people up."

*** role models who are not well educated - question 15**

Respondents were then asked to describe one person whom they admired who was not well educated.

Six interviewees said that they could think of no uneducated people whom they admired or regarded as a role model. Two would not consider an uneducated person worthy of admiration.

"There is nobody who is not well educated that I could admire."

"There is not one person who is not educated that I can admire. Some people who are not educated live extravagantly, but if they are not educated, then I cannot admire them."

Among the other respondents, some admired people who were uneducated but nevertheless successful through business. Some stated that this success in business could be further enhanced through education.

"There are many people I admire who are not educated but they are successful. My uncle has a small business and he also has a taxi. He manages his business, but when I look at him, I think if he had knowledge of how to manage, he would be more successful"

"My uncle is uneducated. He has a farm and also stock. He manages without education, but if he could get better educated in management, his enterprise would grow."

"My friend with the sewing school. She is successful"

"Mr Mofokeng Pule never went to school....he was bright, he had stock, cattle, sheep, tractors. He lived with his family, and he went so far as to say farming is your backbone, your treasure . There is no bank bigger than that. It was his business. When buying furniture he would sell one sheep or goat to get it."

"I like the singer in Bayete. I heard he was working in the streets with no education. But he is successful"

"There is a person in my family. He makes a living as a hawker."

Other respondents admired certain qualities of character in people rather than their success.

"I like Rev Moyenda. He taught us in Sunday school long ago. He knows the Bible very well."

"I admire my mother. She is not educated, but she willingly supports us and looks after us unselfishly."

"One of my friends, Suzy. She is not educated, but she keeps on motivating me"

Some admired others who had jobs and whose living conditions were better even though they were uneducated. This in contrast with the respondent quoted above who could not admire uneducated people living extravagantly. This kind of admiration may be closer to envy.

"My younger brother is not educated but I admire him. He is employed in Brits. He lives a better life than mine."

"The person I admire who is not educated lives around here. But when I look at her, I wonder why she is sitting there and her living conditions are better than mine. How can she be better off without education and without a job?"

4.5 Construct 4 - Ambitions and fears - does education feature (IG questions 16-17)

The purpose of questioning in construct 4 was again ascertaining the strength of interviewees' attachment to education. By asking them to describe their hopes and fears for the future, the researcher was examining whether education or lack of education might feature in the discussion. The questioning was in no way education related.

*** respondents' greatest ambitions**

Many respondents had ambitions for starting a business or expanding an existing business. These did not involve education.

"I want to start a sewing school.... I will think about going back to school myself after finishing at sewing school"

"I want to sell vegetables and fruit and do poultry farming"

"I am able to make bricks even though it is difficult for women..."

"Besides selling, I don't have any other ambitions."

"I started sewing lessons from friends so I can expand my income"

"My ambition is to learn sewing and to sell the things I make"

"My ambition for myself and my family is to buy goods like perfumes and creams and to sell them."

Some clung to education in their stated ambitions.

"My ambition is to be literate and be able to support my family"

"I want to be productive, to have direction, at least be able to communicate well, fill in forms and applications for myself, write letters and read them for myself and to be able to teach my family on these basic things."

"I will return to school one day"

"I will return to class and finish my Std 5"

"To be able to read and write and get a better job"

Other respondents had ambitions unrelated to either business or education, and one had a combination of the two.

"I would like to see my family living in a well developed area"

"To have a house and not a shack and enough money to live a better life"

"To get a better job and a better salary"

"To be a business woman. I wish I could be able to run a small shop, watch it grow into a big shop. I wish I could know how to read and write. I wish I could be able to ask for sponsors, write to them, write my price, count my money and save. I wish I could give my daughter an education, get her more educated so that she could fend for herself in later life."

Some responses wandered into the realm of dreams or wishes rather than concrete ambitions.

*** greatest fears - question 17**

In describing their fears for the future, only one third of respondents cited lack of education and its perceived implications as their greatest fear in life. The implications which they described shed further light on their perceptions of what education can do for them.

"I fear to leave my daughter uneducated when I die. I am afraid that she will not be able to fend for herself if she is not educated. I don't want her to suffer like me. I am fearful for my family because they are not literate and as a result we are poor."

"I fear to leave my family uneducated, to leave them poor. I want my children to get what I could not get..."

"I fear not to have an education. I will not live this life like my parents."

"To remain in darkness, be without a job and create misery for my family."

"I fear not being educated in the near future as my children are growing up and they will look down on me."

"I fear if I don't have education there won't be a good job and no money"

"I fear having no education, no work and therefore being poor in life."

The conviction being expressed here is essentially that education will get you a good job, for which you will be paid good money, and therefore that education will save you from poverty.

The majority of respondents expressed fears which were not related to education. Unemployment, death, injury and poverty featured strongly in their descriptions.

"I fear to live under oppression and to struggle"

"I fear that one of my family will pass away: It might be the one we depend on"

"I fear accidents and burning - even death."

"What I fear most is death. I am worried that if I die today what is going to happen to my children and who is going to bury me? Who will cover costs?"

"I fear losing my job, which will bring my family into poverty."

"My greatest fear is if my mother were to die now. I would suffer a lot."

For these respondents poverty seems to be always close at hand. For the others, education is seen as the way out of poverty.

4.6 Conclusion

The constructs presented, which emerged from interviews with adult learner dropouts in the study, serve to focus the descriptions of their literacy experience and dropout and what this means to them into four major areas - experiences of classes up to the point of dropout; the post-dropout experience; support network and role models; and future hopes and fears.

Respondents mostly described their experiences and perceptions freely in the interview situation and this resulted in a rich tapestry of interwoven themes drawn from the lifeworld of each interviewee. The most common themes raised in the research have been detailed in this chapter.

The meanings which these interviewees attach to their literacy experience, particularly the fact of their dropout, will be explored in greater detail in the light of these descriptions and in the context of the relevant theory and literature in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to examine learners' experiences of literacy and particularly dropout, with a view to developing an understanding of what it means to them to discontinue their attendance of classes, and the implications they might perceive this having upon their lives.

The study highlighted various issues which characterise adult learners' experience and factors which contribute to learner dropout, factors beyond the logistical difficulties they encounter, and which ABET providers and planners need to take into account. Most previous research on dropout in South Africa has either had a quantitative focus, or has described physical constraints which adults face in attending classes and which result in their dropout. This research has attempted to look beyond such difficulties at the contradictory nature of the experience.

The report began by contextualising the problem of dropout. Chapter 1 described the scope and history of literacy provision in South Africa and some of the characteristics of adult learners.

Chapter 2 provided the theoretical context in which the problem can be articulated.

Chapter 3 described the research design, its theoretical context and its practical application.

Chapter 4 presented four constructs which emerged from the interviews conducted, and the major themes in learners' descriptions of their experiences, aspirations and disappointments, and which have significance in the study.

This chapter comprises an analysis and discussion of the research findings. It reflects on some of the meanings which learners attach to the fact of their dropout. Common narratives that emerged from the interview data provide the focus for the discussion, which culminates in a reflection on the most challenging issues which must be considered. This is followed by recommendations for ABET providers in South Africa, and the chapter concludes with proposing further possible research.

5.2 Discussion of findings : an analysis of the common themes (per construct) in adult learners' literacy experience

There were 4 constructs which emerged out of interviews with learners, as presented in chapter 4:

- experience of classes
- post dropout experience
- support networks and role models
- ambitions and fears

Several common themes and perceptions were described within each construct. The analysis and discussion of these themes will take place per construct rather than per question so as to allow them to be considered in the broader context.

*** reflection on construct 1 - Experience of classes**

A purpose in attending

In essence, all respondents had had some particular purpose in mind when they had enrolled for classes. Whether it was to learn to read, write and calculate, or to keep up with their peers, for every respondent it was seen as the route or pathway to self-improvement and for many this was linked to job improvement. Each one felt there was "something missing" and had set about filling the gap. Their belief in the literacy myth was clear: literacy classes would provide an education and a better future. Classes would enable them to access the positions and lifestyle of those whom they admired.

Non-achievement and disappointment

Their reason for dropping out was mostly the fact that they were not achieving their aims, for whatever reason - disappointment and frustration were the overarching factors. Many had become disillusioned and said they were wasting their time. Some blamed their disappointment on elements of the literacy provision, such as tutors or curriculum; others felt ill at ease in the experience. In essence, their needs and expectations were not being met.

In spite of this, all respondents comforted themselves with the thought that they would go back to classes some day. Their faith in the potential of literacy classes to secure them a better future remained undiminished.

Unsatisfactory teaching practices and curriculum

Some had found they could not achieve their aims because of unsuitable teaching practices or methods, and they left classes. Some learners had a problem with the old teacher-centred approaches, while others had a problem with "progressive" learner-centred methodology because they felt threatened by the unfamiliar or were reluctant to engage in practices strange to their culture. The element of enculturation in literacy provision described in chapter 2 emerged in this study. Learners who either did not object to or did not realise

how the new discourses were changing their world view seemed more comfortable.

Respondents who felt they were not making progress expressed dissatisfaction with the curriculum. Too much time was spent on what they already knew, and subjects sometimes did not relate to life. There were too many subjects and not enough skills which would help them make money to pay their bills or (ironically) to pay their own fees and transport in order to continue attending. While some did value more academic subjects, what emerged clearly was that it was practical skills which would meet their immediate needs in terms of making a living.

This theme emerged strongly as a reason for dropout - the learners' realisation that, important though education may be, it was not the answer for immediate gain. It could wait. Some respondents had decided to shelve their attendance of classes in favour of pursuits which would bring them immediate gain, particularly financial gain - sewing, farming, selling.

However, all declared that they would one day resume their studies.

Humiliation/misfit

Many learners commented on whether teachers cared for them or not. In most cases, teachers did care and were described as "helpful" or "supportive", but for several respondents, teachers "had no time for us" or "did not rebuke those who were mocking." In the Tidwell study too, "respondents called for an improvement in the attitudes and behaviour of teachers, specifically in their sensitivity and tolerance." (1988 p 951)

Apart from lack of support from teachers, non-acceptance by fellow learners was also described in some interviews. This too resulted in feelings of inadequacy and humiliation. Adult learners sometimes have a low self esteem

either because they perceive themselves to be disadvantaged, or because they sense that others might consider them to be less competent, educated or able.

The discomfort in the classroom experienced by some learners relates to their reluctance (or slowness) in adapting to the discourse practices required by the system. Some did experience a threat to their own self identity and values.

Logistical constraints

Several respondents described physical or logistical constraints to their attendance. While this study does focus beyond these problems, they cannot be totally ignored. The most common problem raised by respondents was that of transport - the cost, the unpredictability, inaccessibility or the loss thereof. Although the old adage "where there's a will there's a way" is often relevant, in the case of after hours literacy classes, public transport is simply not available, and on-going taxi and train violence cannot be ignored.

Attachment to education

It is clear that each interviewee without exception places a high value on education. In spite of an unsatisfactory curriculum, their own slow progress, poor teaching, feelings of humiliation, and logistical constraints, which they all described in detail, every one later stated that he or she would return to class one day. Even though this dream or intention may never be realised, it signifies an attitude towards education, a strong perception they have that literacy equates to education, and that education is the pathway to success.

The reactions of friends and family to their dropout, as described in the interviews, serves to illustrate the attitude towards education which is held by their support network. This would further reinforce their belief about the importance of education. As Malan suggests "the written word is made a fetish of, or invested with social power." (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:154)

Out of the individual descriptions given by the interviewees emerges a picture of the broader community. In essence, the central experience described in this construct is frustration. There is a strong sense of disappointment with what they believe their going to classes can achieve and is not achieving. The majority have left because they are not making progress and they need money.

However, whilst this is clearly a realisation, there is an inability or a reluctance to admit that this education falls short of the power that they have always believed it to hold.

And so here is a community who can hold in a balance the realisation that their education is not taking them anywhere, while still holding an idealism or dream which sustains a determination to resume that education programme again at some future time, so strong is their belief in the literacy myth.

“There is nothing that I have acquired from the centre, so I still want to go back.”

In the meantime they abandon, temporarily, the classes which have failed to meet their needs and expectations.

*** reflection on construct 2 - Post dropout experience**

Current activities - “just waiting”

In this part of the interview, respondents were asked to describe any activities which had replaced the activity of attending classes. The purpose was to search for any reorientation which may have taken place after the abandoning of classes, a possible rejection of the pursuit of education in favour of some more attractive or gainful pursuit.

Results showed that most of the dropouts had not really reorientated. A few were spending class time extending their own business or learning skills for

business. Most spent the time at home, and some of these said they worked sporadically at their reading and writing.

Respondents were then asked to recall their original aims in attending classes, so that the interviewer could get them to set aside these aims for a moment and focus on other options by means of question 10: "Now that you have left classes and you cannot achieve that, what are you going to do?" This somewhat blunt question was formulated after the pilot study, because it was very difficult to get respondents to consider options apart from classes.

However, in spite of this blunt approach, most respondents did not consider other kinds of success pursuits and reaffirmed their commitment to improving their education.

Even the few who since dropping out, had switched their attention from classes to their own businesses made it clear that it was with a view to obtaining money, and in no way a negation of the importance of education. They planned to return to class. Currently business was considered to be more important and attractive. Morphet writes about "the hunch" that people were not attending classes because they were doing something else which to them was more significant "or at the very least more attractive." (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:258) This could be true of these people, but they saw it as temporary.

For some respondents improving one's education was not linked to being employed and earning money. These people wondered whether acquiring literacy skills would significantly improve their employment prospects. Only better communication skills, and filling in forms for job applications were mentioned with regard to jobs. Self employment was regarded as the answer for earning an income.

For one respondent, frustration had led to nonchalance: "I will buy two beers and relax a bit." This is reminiscent of an interviewee in the Mwiria study. He no longer attends literacy classes because "after a hard day's work in the

forest, what I need is a bottle of beer to drown my tiredness, not to be bothered with education that will not benefit me at my age." (1993:187) He had abandoned the ideal of education because of his age. However in this study, even the nonchalant interviewee would relax only "for a bit". The implication is that even he will one day return to class.

Independence

A theme which emerged from the question reviewing aims in attending classes was the sense of independence gained through not having to request help with reading or writing personal documents or letters. "It is disempowering to have other people read and write for you," said one respondent, and another "I didn't want to always get help with my affairs."

This view contrasts with research conducted by Malan, where adults claiming pension money or voting were content to use the services of mediators or officials when they could not read and write (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:146). Certainly, if people cannot read and write, they would have to make peace with the fact that they would always need help, but for these dropouts who had achieved a degree of literacy, they found literacy skills empowering in allowing them the privacy they had previously lacked.

"I will go back"

The final question in this construct investigated their desire to return to class. Respondents unanimously affirmed their intention to return to classes. Some respondents added conditions to their resuming classes, but it was clear that even though provision was poor, the image of education had been in no way tarnished by the poor performance of some of its practitioners, and remained the ultimate goal.

This finding is supported by the research of Reddy (1991:222) "One of the most significant aspects to emerge from the discussion on how constraints were overcome, was the driving motivation to someday finish schooling."

There is no reason to suspect that these dropouts were exaggerating their attachment to education, perhaps to impress the interviewers. If there is a discrepancy between their belief and their practice, it could be simply that they have been convinced of the value of education by significant others, but have found that, at their current level of literacy, progress and its rewards are slow in coming. They have chosen therefore not to abandon it entirely, but to shelve their pursuit of education until their immediate needs have been satisfied, namely their need for money and/or employment.

And so the contradictions are perpetuated. The literacy myth is widely believed, even though learners find that literacy learning does not in fact result in significant changes in their lives. They drop out of classes whilst remaining convinced that literacy is what they want and need.

Construct 2 endorses the finding of the previous construct, namely that this is a community with a fierce attachment to education in spite of the fact that it has not satisfied their needs. Even when they are not attending classes, the fact that classes are still an option in the future gives them hope and sustains them in the hardship of their current reality.

*** reflection on construct 3 - support network and role models**

Construct 3 reflects how strongly education features in the lives of respondents' support groups and role models.

The first two focus questions which fell into this construct examined the role of the support network, with particular emphasis on how their support people could be in a position to offer support if they were not educated. As was the case in the last construct, the intention in questioning was to investigate their

thoughts on the possibility that a person can be successful or contented without education.

This theme was developed in the next two questions where respondents were requested to think of role models and reasons why they were worth emulating. Some role models quoted were educated, many uneducated, and once again, the notion of being admirable or successful in spite of being uneducated was mooted.

No support network

Descriptions of the function of the support group, particularly the uneducated support group, were not very enlightening. Some respondents did not wish to elaborate on the subject, either because it was something they did not wish to divulge; or because they were unsure of what kind of information was being sought. Interviewers were perhaps not experienced enough to seek further elaboration.

Answers were disappointing. In formulating the question, the research interest lay in the notion that adults in this kind of situation in life might have a network of support whose ways of coping might not require or involve being educated. The question could have played a consciousness-raising role.

Answers given by these respondents revealed that the support network providing assistance, in their case, was not much of a network at all, but comprised largely mothers who were employed, self-employed or on pension. In their generosity and love of their children and grandchildren they shared the little that they received to eke out a living for their families as well as themselves. There were no magical ways of coping in their uneducated situation, just dogged hard work with little financial gain.

Others said they received moral support from friends and family, but most of this was encouragement to return to classes. For the most part, the financial support given was sacrificial in that the income was small.

The researcher's anticipation of discussion about burial societies, "stokvels", church groups and other community support networks did not materialise. These were descriptions of hardship and toil in a community whose lifeworld was one of deprivation and struggle and a dogged clinging to the belief that literacy would one day provide them with a better future.

Successful role models

Education featured strongly in the role models discussion, although the questioning was in no way education related. Approximately two thirds of respondents, when asked to think of any role models, described educated people whom they considered worthy of emulation and gave reasons mainly in terms of their "living conditions", independence, jobs, money and leadership roles.

A third of the respondents spontaneously mentioned uneducated role models, half of these for reasons of success in business, where they specifically stated that they admired their role models because they were successful even though they were uneducated. This seemed worthy of admiration because it was unusual or unexpected. The other half admired their uneducated role models for reasons of good character.

Interviewees were subsequently asked specifically to describe uneducated role models they might have.

Uneducated role models

Here again, it was for reasons of success in business in spite of poor education that people were mainly admired. However at least two respondents stated that

if these businessmen had a higher education level, their success would be even greater. A lack of education was still seen to be a limiting factor.

Six respondents could think of none, and two respondents went so far as to state that they could not admire an uneducated person, however successful he might be. In the words of one:

"There is not one person who is not educated that I could admire. We Africans hide things. Some people who are not educated live extravagantly and enjoy themselves, but if they are not educated, then I cannot admire them."

In some responses, feelings of envy had been combined or confused with feelings of admiration, particularly in the case of discussions around lifestyle or "living conditions."

People who could afford to buy new clothes for their children or could transport children to school were admired. A picture emerges here of parents struggling to meet the needs and demands of their children, their sadness at not being able to provide adequately for or share in their children's education.

Admiration was again expressed for uneducated people who were unselfish, lived good lives and offered support in friendship.

Judging by how strongly education and lack of education featured in descriptions of people whom respondents held or would not hold as role models, it is not surprising how strongly attached they are in general to the ideal of education for success in life.

Even though in practice, some have abandoned their training programme for the purpose of expanding their own employment or business prospects, they still seem to harbour in their minds the conviction that this is an interim measure, and one day they will resume their education programme which will help them to achieve their ultimate aims, whatever those might be.

Education is like a beacon on a hill, distant and difficult to access, but the very fact that it can be seen provides the promise, a way of escape from the present hardship at some future date.

*** reflection on construct 4 - ambitions and fears**

Construct 4 encompasses the discussion about people's greatest ambitions and fears. Questions were attempting to ascertain whether education upgrading would emerge as a common theme.

Ambitions

It is interesting to note that only about a third of respondents had as their greatest ambition the desire to resume or upgrade their education. The majority looked to self-employment as their ambition. This may appear to be contradictory in the light of the strong commitment to education as an ideal which has emerged in the study so far. However, the ambitions which the majority of interviewees chose to describe were those which were practical and achievable in the short-term, whereas a high education was not.

The kinds of businesses described did not require skills acquired through schooling but involved making, buying and selling and would result in immediate gain.

Other interviewees named ambitions unrelated to business or education which had to do with better provision for families, better houses and living conditions.

It is again clear from respondents' descriptions here that education is seen as a long-term goal or aim, but that it lacks the immediate power to bring about the kinds of changes they so urgently need in their lives. It is the light at the end of the tunnel, an ideal which they can hold in mind as a comfort while beset with the difficulties of their present circumstances. Even though they know from

their own experience that literacy does not necessarily bring about the improvements they believe it does, they continue to believe it will one day.

Tidwell's study of highschool dropouts has relevance here. 50% of the unemployed dropouts were not involved in study or activities which would enable them to exert control over their lives in terms of employment. When they were questioned about their ambitions, the answers were similar to some of those in this study. "Future plans were cast in vague terms like 'I plan to' or 'I want to'. Even though they placed a high value on education, they deferred further study to a vague future." (1988:953)

Fears

The second thrust in this construct captured interviewees' comments about their greatest fear for the future. Over two thirds of respondents cited death, poverty and unemployment as their greatest fears.

It appears that there is a relationship between their fears and their ambitions. It is possible to assume that their ambitions would be those which would allay their fears, and it was business, in fact self employment which would keep these wolves (death, poverty and unemployment) from the door, not education. The respondents who said that lack of education was their greatest fear, linked it very clearly with fears of poverty. They were more idealistic and perhaps less practical than most, and regarded education as the way out of poverty. One respondent said "I fear to remain in darkness, be without a job and create misery for my family." Her fear and lack of hope contrast with the proactive approach of the prospective businesswomen interviewed. Morphet describes the stunting effect which experiences of literacy classes can have. "It (literacy) carries a few chosen souls from "darkness to light" but its more pervasive consequence is to leave many with stunted interpretations of their own identities." (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:259) This woman considered herself to be in deficit.

The fear of death related by respondents was not fear of their own death, or losing their own life, or the unknown, but was clearly linked to the death of the provider in the family and what would happen to the family in that case. One specifically mentioned burial costs as a concern. These descriptions challenge the notion that there is a large support network in the community which will open its arms to provide for the needy. There is no hint of that in this research.

Respondents' accounts of their fears and ambitions place in perspective the limited role which education can play in their lives in the short-term. There is no doubt that each one holds education as an ideal, but it is equally clear that most of them in fact recognise that it cannot give them the help they currently need. Yet they seem unable to abandon it entirely, expressing unanimously their intention to pursue it in the future.

5.3 Conclusion

The aim of the study, as stated in chapter 1, was to "hear what 'illiterates' have to say" about their experiences of literacy classes and dropout, in order to analyse and interpret the contradictions which characterise that experience.

This research presents and analyses a range of meanings which adult learners attach to their experience. Many common themes emerged, which are discussed and analysed above. In its analysis and interpretation of these themes, the study highlights certain challenging issues.

*** the power of the literacy myth**

A sobering fact which emerges is that adult learners believe strongly in the power of literacy to improve their lives, get them jobs, wealth, respect and independence, and to free them from poverty and hardship - the literacy myth widely perpetuated by providers, governments and society in general.

In the South African context, there is also the conviction that literacy classes can be equated to twelve years of formal schooling, or that a well-planned sequence of classes will get a person educated. Literacy and education become synonymous.

Moreover, the life improvements and success which learners believe will accrue as a result of literacy classes are those which they see in the lives of those they admire, their role models amongst others.

Their concept of success has been shaped by and into that of Western culture. When learners' stated aims are "I wanted to reach at the top of my life" or "I want what other people I can see have got," it is success in Western terms to which they are aspiring.

Their commitment to literacy classes could possibly be linked with a desire to learn the terms of Western cultural practices, since literacy classes generally exercise such practices. They see classes as the place where Western practices can be grasped. When they find out that literacy classes do not help them to any significant degree in this regard, or when they feel uncomfortable in the new discourse practices, their resolve wavers and they withdraw. But they remain convinced that literacy does have the capacity to advance them in the Western milieu.

These myths and beliefs are reflected in the answers given by the interviewees in this study. It is clear that this community of adult learners reveres education, and believes that literacy classes will get them that education, and thereby success and wellbeing.

Even though their experience of classes is often one of disappointment and frustration, they seem unable to accept the fact that literacy does not bring about the results they have always believed it will. The dropouts in this study were faced with poor quality teaching and inappropriate content; unfamiliar methodologies and peer humiliation; difficult circumstances and financial

constraints. They eventually abandoned the training programme which was not meeting their expectations, but remained resolved to resume their studies at a later stage, maintaining their belief in its power to uplift them.

It seems that in their view, literacy has a magic, spiritual quality. Even if they are not actively engaging in or with it, the fact that it can possibly be accessed at some future time provides comfort in the present, courage to face the future, and an ultimate direction for their lives.

Literacy is like a mystical vehicle which carries them. They can fail, or even leave classes disappointed, but they continue to believe. It has a similar quality to the belief which religious people hold. They have another imagined identity, the thought of which carries them. They are sinners, but they will be saved one day. The bread and wine keep hopes of redemption alive.

There seems to be a fundamental cognitive structure which can accommodate two such polarities in a balance, although they are in contradiction. Similarly, many people may cling to a fantasy or sometimes a memory, whilst living out a totally different reality. They draw on the fantasy or the memory to give them strength to face a difficult reality.

As noted in chapter 2 above, people who enjoy things mystical or mythical, and this seems to be a feature of predominantly oral cultures, tolerate contradiction and can hold contradictory elements in a balance.

These adult learners remain convinced by the myth. On one level they experience the fact that literacy classes are not making any significant difference to their lives and they drop out, but at the same time they do not lose faith in the potential. And that seems to be sufficient. It is the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Even if they never get there, it remains constant and provides direction and purpose for their lives.

*** an identity crisis for literacy learners**

In some respondents' descriptions of their feelings of humiliation, the issue of identity and self-image arose. This is another issue to which this research draws attention.

Their slowness or reluctance to learn the basics of Western style or "essay-text" literacy brought them to a dilemma. In becoming literate in this way, they faced enculturation, the taking on of the practices and world view of a different culture. Feelings of awkwardness and humiliation arose and, feeling uncomfortable, they decided to drop out rather than learn the discourse practices foreign to their sense of self.

Other respondents seemed to be less concerned or threatened and regarded the new practices as part of the process of gain.

As described in chapter 2, non mainstream cultures are in danger of being engulfed by Western culture. Gee points out that as learners take on Western style literacy, they are socialised into its discourse practices and concomitant values system, and this will usually involve an identity shift. For some learners this is threatening, and they resist it.

For others, the desire for success or progress in Western terms might render them more willing to become socialised into Western practices and to change their world view, and they would not experience it as a dilemma.

*** paradoxes, contradictions and anomalies**

This research endorses the literacy field as one which is characterised by paradox and fraught with anomaly.

The "literacy myth" maintains that great benefits accrue to recipients of literacy. Nowhere in the history of literacy is this upheld, and certainly not in the lives of these learner dropouts.

Learners profess their strong belief in the power of literacy to save them from poverty, unemployment and hardship, yet they do not attend literacy classes in significant numbers.

Learners continue to believe that literacy will result in positive change for them, whilst at the same time experiencing (mostly) that the opposite is true.

What the experience of literacy classes can change, while it does not really change their living conditions, is their world view and thereby their sense of identity. By engaging in Western style literacy discourse practices, they take on its world view and concomitant values system. This presents a dilemma, since it is a threat to their culture and their sense of identity and self in it.

Literacy, in the words of Graff, is "profoundly misunderstood. That is one consequence of the long-standing literacy myth. Misunderstanding of literacy is as true for the past as for the present and this misconstrual has resulted in the many contradictions which result." (1987:17)

5.4 Implications for ABET providers in South Africa

In the course of this research, many issues were raised either by respondents or in the literature. These issues have implications for providers.

*** mass literacy campaign**

The government proposes massive and centralised delivery of ABET in a bid to counter the "marginalisation" or disadvantaging of millions of people who lack basic education. The Itutheng campaign launched in 1996 aims to assist

100 000 learners annually in each province. If this campaign is to have the desired result, it should take into account recommendations made by researchers in this field.

The findings of Prinsloo et al raise important issues for policy makers about mass literacy. It is clear (and providers agree) that adults should be taught according to their own needs and experience. However, they also recommend that, in addition, people's aspirations should be recognised through a range of various types of literacy practices, and that provision should take into account local factors. This could possibly advance literacy acquisition in that it would cater for differing learning styles and would link with current knowledge and activities. So often literacy materials and practices are divorced from the learners' reality and this accounts for slow progress and loss of interest.

Moreover, as described above, unfamiliar discourse practices can also result in a sense of alienation on the part of the learner, and a threat to his identity, since he might experience a values shift as he is socialised into Western practices, and those of his own culture become subsumed.

ABET provision on a mass scale would need to promote various literacy practices, and to support education programmes which meet the needs of a range of aspirations and preferences. It would need to enhance and value the culture and values of the learners.

Finally, it must be recognised that mass literacy does not in itself lead to productivity and wealth, nor to economic progress, as Graff's history of literacy reveals. (1987:65) This should be acknowledged by all stakeholders.

*** realistic expectations**

It is important that providers assist adult learners to have realistic expectations of what literacy classes can help them achieve in life. Learners often become disillusioned with slow progress and feel they are wasting their time, because

they have set for themselves unrealistic goals. Aims such as "I wanted to reach at the top of my life" or "I wanted to become a good leader like others in the world" which were expressed by respondents in this study would probably be unachievable, given the duration and focus of the classes they had attended.

Learners should be assisted to set realistic goals achievable within a certain timeframe. The myth that literacy classes can achieve the equivalent of twelve years of formal schooling can only be dispelled if providers themselves face this fact and communicate it.

*** integrating schooled literacy, skills training and literacy practices**

According to Ensor (1996:11) " a tension exists between what learners actually seek in an ABET programme and what they are satisfied with in terms of their immediate needs - mainly technical and practical learning."

If ABET provision is to be relevant and helpful beyond simple literacy skills and consciousness raising, it may need to incorporate the kinds of practical skills which will enhance income generation in some way. Some of these skills were mentioned by respondents in this study - sewing, selling, brickmaking and bead work. If literacy skills could be integrated with these practical skills, learning could take place in a more relevant way and this could assist learners to move away from the unrealistic assumptions they have about the power of literacy to fulfil their needs.

Once again, it must be stressed that if provision is in fact to provide, it must meet the needs of the intended learners in their particular context so that it is relevant and helpful. Planners and providers should be informed in their planning and practice by the aims and needs of their "target population" and should bear in mind that they are not a "uniform homogenous mass with similar circumstances, needs and aspirations." This according to Ammon and Robbins (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:158) is a major problem in literacy interventions.

Providers assume that their understanding of the utility of literacy will correspond with that of this huge group of "illiterates."

Mpoyiya and Prinsloo (Prinsloo&Breier 1996:195) suggest that it is inappropriate to assume that learners will share adult educators' assessments of their need for literacy. Night school-type provision needs to connect with people's actual practices in order to provide programmes relevant to its learners. It cannot be assumed that the model of schooled literacy will automatically be of value. The very adults for whom the intervention is intended may then be further alienated.

The disjuncture between schooled literacy and everyday literacy practices must be addressed. This would deal with the problem of the dilemma learners face in terms of their sense of self when they are required to engage in discourse practices which conflict with their values and identity. It would also preserve and value elements of nonmainstream cultures.

*** research**

According to Harley et al (1996:124) it is the paucity of research in all countries around learners' reasons for abandoning classes and learners' choice of areas of learning which has led to assumptions being made by providers - assumptions such as literacy is good for everybody; essential for modernisation; will empower marginalised people; will promote democracy. "Such assumptions do not bear close scrutiny."

There is clearly a great need for a carefully structured and implemented programme of research into why adults want to study and what it is they hope to achieve. If their aims are unrealistic, classes can only lead to further disappointment and loss of self esteem.

Adult literacy providers need to realise that not even if they could address all the problems would they meet all learner needs, because no-one could ever hope to equate even a well-planned sequence of classes with education. More importantly, the discourse practices of nonmainstream cultures in South Africa need to be researched so that these can be practised and valued in all South African educational institutions, in order to address the issue of disadvantage or detriment which nonmainstream students experience.

Heath notes that “unless the boundaries between classrooms and communities can be broken, and the flow of cultural patterns between them encouraged, the schools will continue to legitimate and reproduce communities of townspeople who control and limit the progress of other communities and who themselves remain untouched by other values and ways of life.” (1983:369)

Research should inform providers in the field so they can combine the passion of their commitment with the power of knowledge and thus become more effective.

5.5 Issues for further research in the ABET field

A number of issues arose during the study which require further research.

This research in no way attempted to investigate possible differences between the genders in perceptions, experiences, aspirations and meanings attached to their dropout. This is one possible avenue for further investigation.

It is important for providers and planners to gain insight into the reasons why learners decide to terminate their attendance of literacy programmes, so that appropriate changes can be made. This study, or parts of it, could be repeated in different contexts in order to obtain a far broader web of themes which are more context specific around reasons for study, and reasons for dropout.

It would be of interest to conduct this research among dropouts whose literacy levels are higher than those in this study. In a sense they would possibly be nearer to achieving their aims and may have different perspectives.

According to Harley et al, thorough research on "who learns what, and why" (1996:124) would assist providers to develop the breadth of vision required to encompass in their provision a range of different literacy needs and practices so that it would not be prescriptive but interactive, sensitive to local influences, and integrated into learner experience.

Adult literacy education has great potential to make an impact on learners, provided that learners have realistic assumptions about what it can help them achieve, and if it really meets their needs.

It is important that literacy provision in whatever form be a tool for affirming people within their own culture rather than one which alienates them from it by enculturating them into the ways and values of Western culture and destroying their own. Ways of marrying literacy practices and discourses familiar to learners with the technical skills they seek need to be researched.

Quigley states that adult education is "in urgent need of support and renewal" (1997:4).

Graff holds a similar view. "I have attempted to link the past with the present, showing both the roots of modern social thought and the pervasiveness of traditional assumptions (about literacy). I also have tried to suggest that a new paradigmatic formulation of literacy is needed." (1987:71)

As we enter the twenty-first century, we need to assess where literacy has been, and what it has become. We need to address some of the conflicting realities that have shaped and still control it.

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APPENDICES

TABLE 1: LIST OF RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED

CODE	GENDER	AGE	YR DROP	ED LEVEL
D1	M	43	1995	Std 1
D2	F	40	1995	Std 1
K1	M	45	1992	Std 2
K2	M	25	1993	Grade 1
K3	F	28	1990	Grade 1
K4	F	34	1994	Std 2
K5	F	30	1993	Grade 2
A1	F	37	1995	Grade 1
A2	M	43	1995	IEB L1
A3	F	32	1995	IEB L1
A4	M	31	1995	IEB L1
A5	F	37	1995	IEB L1
A6	F	32	1995	Grade 2
J1	F	40	1993	Std 2
J2	F	50	1992	Grade 2
J3	F	33	1995	Std 5
S1	F	24	1994	IEB L1
S2	F	34	1995	IEB L2
S3	F	25	1995	IEB L1
S4	F	26	1995	IEB L1
S5	F	28	1995	Grade 1
S6	F	42	1995	Grade 1

NOTES:

Code letters refer to the names of the interviewers:

D - Diana Molefe; K - Khoabane Mofokeng; A - Albertina Twaise;

J - Jabu Majola; S - Soren Witten (assisted by Freddy Masilela)

Learners attended a number of centres around Pretoria and Johannesburg. Some were affiliated to the DET, others to the IEB.

INTERVIEW GUIDE - February 1996

TITLE OF STUDY:

Dropouts from literacy: an analysis of the meanings which literacy learners attach to the fact of abandoning their training programme.

NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: Interviewees should have attended adult classes and then dropped out. Their education level should not exceed Std 5.

1. In initial introductory conversation, interviewer make a note of gender, age, year of dropout and education level.
2. Tell me your experience of the adult classes you were attending. Positive and negative. How were classes helpful/disappointing?
3. Why did you decide to attend adult classes in the first place? What were your reasons for attending? Your hopes and ambitions?
4. Why did you leave classes? What were your reasons?
5. When you left, what were the feelings you experienced?
6. What did you say to yourself to encourage yourself when you left?
7. When you left, what were the reactions of your family and friends?
8. What do you prefer to do with your time now that you are no longer attending?
9. When you first went to classes, what were you hoping to achieve?

10. Now you have left classes, and you cannot achieve that, what will you do?
11. Do you think you will ever return to class?
12. Are the people you depend on for support when in difficulties educated?
13. How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?
14. Think of two people you admire and would like to emulate. What is it about them that you most admire?
15. Is there one person you greatly admire who is not well educated? What is it about that person that you admire?
16. What is your greatest ambition in life now? For yourself and your family.
17. What is your greatest fear in life? For yourself and your family?

PILOT STUDY - 1995

A Pilot Study was conducted in 1995 to test the process and the instrument.

One interviewer conducted interviews with four respondents in order to judge whether the phrasing of the questions was clear and open-ended enough to elicit the kinds of answers being sought.

Interviews were conducted in respondents' first language, and recorded. Responses were transcribed from the tapes, and analysed. It was decided that the questions were not open-ended enough to elicit information, and that changes should be made.

The questioning process was changed, allowing interviewers to explore question areas further if they deemed it useful in terms of the research focus. Instead of a questionnaire, an Interview Guide was developed, which enabled interviewers to use areas of questioning rather than one specific question, and to pursue emerging details where possible.

Interviewers were familiarised with what the research was attempting to ascertain, and were trained to use the guide, but only one of them really used it to its full potential. A second pilot should have been conducted involving the new approach and all the interviewers to give them some experience in the method. The pilot was therefore used to test the instrument more than to familiarise the interviewers.

As a result of the pilot, an additional area of questioning was added to the process - "Now that you cannot achieve your aims, what will you do?" This question was used in an attempt to ascertain what aspirations respondents might have apart from the hugely ambitious aims people expressed in the pilot study - becoming a lawyer or a doctor. In fact, in the main study, most

aims expressed were in fact fairly realistic, and some respondents when asked this question replied strongly that they would achieve their stated aims.

After the pilot, it was decided that instead of conducting a second phase of interviews or focus groups as originally anticipated, an approach of broader questioning would result in a rich enough spread of answers. If the training in this new approach had been more thorough, an even broader range of answers would have resulted.

The pilot study was helpful in that it honed the questioning and the approach into a sharper focus.

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH ADULT LEARNERS

A. RESPONSES PER INTERVIEWEE

CASE STUDY - D1 - MALE 43 YRS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of adult classes** - Classes sometimes were helpful, sometimes not. They were helpful when we were being taught new things, but in most cases the teacher who taught us took too much time on things we knew and the same thing - umama, ubaba.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I attended classes with the intention of improving myself. I am working at the moment and my boss is a white person and this means that I always have to communicate with him in English. I do not know how to speak well, how to write well in English. Therefore I had hoped to learn how to read and write and speak English. I had hoped at least to get basic communication skills.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I left classes because I did not get what I wanted. I did not get the skills that I was looking for - reading and writing as well as being able to speak in English. I know Zulu, I grew up in Zululand and I know most of the things in Zulu. But we do not communicate in Zulu only. We have to use English in most cases I think all over the world.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I felt bad, angry and disappointed because I did not get what I went to classes for.

6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I told myself that one day I will come back again even if I don't know whether I will be coming back for something good. I will just try. I told myself that I will learn from other people how to communicate in English.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** When I left, no-one was happy. But because violence was rife at the time, thugs guarded us against our enemies who would wait to attack us when we went home, my family was relieved. But also disappointed because we all need an education so desperately.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I spend the time at home doing nothing. There is no-one available to help me with the skills I need. So I am just waiting.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you first went to classes?** I hoped to be skilled with communication, to gain knowledge in presenting myself so I could apply for jobs, talk for my family and myself when there are problems.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I hope to go back to school or to classes with the hope of getting any skills I can.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** No they are not educated. I can't depend on them - they depend on me, because I am working and they are staying on the farms.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** They do not support me, I support them because I am working.

14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I have an uncle who has a farm and also has stock, who is uneducated. He still manages that without being well educated. I admire him, but I also think that if he can get more educated on things like management, his properties will grow.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated?** My uncle. (See above response)
16. **Greatest ambition** I wish to be productive, to be able to show direction. Be at least able to communicate well. Fill in forms (application) for myself, be able to write letters and read them for myself. On my own, and be able to teach my own family on basic things.
17. **Greatest fear** To leave my family uneducated. To leave my family poor. I want my children to get what I could not get. They must live an affordable life. They must manage to work for themselves.

CASE STUDY - D2 - FEMALE 40 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995.
2. **Experience of adult classes** When I first attended classes I did not know what I was doing. I could not get what I went there for. I first thought I would at least be taught how to write letters, and fill in forms. I thought I would be able to speak well, be able to express myself well at work, and even to people in general. But we always did one thing, studied the same thing every time we attended classes: learned in Zulu the same words. I got bored, I thought I was just wasting time. I then dropped out because I got discouraged. I was disappointed.

3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to know how to read and write, and be able to speak. I wanted to be able to write in my mother tongue as well as in English, and more in English because I especially need to know how to speak English at work. I should be able to read English because almost everything is written in English.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** When I started I did so because I wanted to learn, but when I realised I was not achieving anything because nothing was being done, I then left.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was feeling bad. I was disappointed because I paid for those classes. Paying for learning but in the end I did not learn. I paid for nothing.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I told myself I should stop wasting time and money. I should rather stay at home and be doing some housework in that time. I told myself that I should take a break and then start again with the hope of getting something then. I was not happy when I left. I wanted knowledge. I want to go back to class but it will be a different.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** I am not staying with my family.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I spend the time on my housework. Sometimes I try to do some work. I try to read when my friend is with me. She also helps me with my English.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I hoped to get knowledge. I wished to know how to read write and speak my language and English. I wished to be taught how to start and manage a small business.

10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** Because I want this knowledge I will not give up hope. I will go back to class but before I start I will speak to the Head and ask her to get a someone who can teach us good, relevant things.

11. **Will you return to class?** Yes.

12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** I depend on myself and I am not well educated.

13. **How do they manage to support if they are not well educated?** I support myself by doing part time jobs. My sister sometimes helps me but the problem is she stays very far from me, so in most cases I have to fend for myself.

14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I admire women who are educated. Women who can stand for their rights and who can represent others. I admire businesswomen. I wish I could start my own business.

15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated? Why?** There are many people I admire who are not educated. But they are progressive, and successful. My uncle is not educated but he has a small business and he also has a taxi. He manages his business but when I look at him, I think if he had knowledge of how to manage it, he would be more successful. He is old now. He cannot really go back to school, but if only he could have a little knowledge on managing a small business.

16. **Greatest ambition** My greatest ambition now is to be a businesswomen. I wish I could be able to run a shop, a small shop and make it grow into a big shop. I wish I could know how to speak and read and write. I wish I could be able to ask for sponsors, write to them, and write my price, count

my money and save. I wish I could give my daughter education, get her to be more educated so that she can fend for herself later in life.

17. **Greatest fear** My greatest fear is to leave my daughter uneducated when I die. I am afraid that she will not be able to fend for herself if she is not educated. I don't want her to suffer like me. I am fearful for my family because they are not literate, and as a result we are poor.

CASE STUDY - K1 - MALE 45 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1992

2. **Experience of adult classes** I have a problem of going back to school. At the adult school they don't teach us like they did when we were still young. The teacher speaks English saying dog, kitchen, but I don't know what is a kitchen. Now if he was showing us on the picture drawn, so that when he talks about the kitchen, or cat we know, it's better. I don't get him well. It's not what I know, and I feel confused.

3..Why did you decide to attend adult classes? I look some years back when I first started to register. I found that it was important for me to attend adult classes, as I had wanted to get a better education because we did not go to school much as we were supposed. We were herd boys. If I can just learn to write and read. We saw people writing and we wanted to copy them. When we were at Std 1 they taught us to read by using small stones and well shaped sticks. I like those methods because they are easy to me. But now these new ways are not good for me.

4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** We have the problem that in many cases people that taught us don't care for us. They talk English. When I ask a question they said to us that it is not them that have said that we should go to school. They were laughing at us. When

we tried to write, some of the learners finished first and they were looking from side to side at us and we felt intimidated by that. Then I felt I should stay at home. When my children are going to or attending schools I will ask one of them to help write and read. But now they are still young to go to school. When I tried to get the teacher to show me how to write word he does not want to. He would say look at what others are doing. Then I decided to stay at home. They were unhelpful.

5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was hurt at the time I left because what I had expected to get from school I did not get.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** It seemed to me that people could not envisage or plan and see that there are those who are able to do things and those who don't. Then I found I was drawing back instead of going forward.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** Friends came to encourage me to go back to the classes, but I refused. Then I said maybe in future, when it is a new government, there shall be teachers that will recognise our adulthood, we are not children.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** There is nothing I can do. I just spend it at home or looking for work.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I told you I wanted to get a better education. When we had to register I knew I needed to get a better education, and I must go to classes. I knew some people who went there.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will try to get my children to help me with the books, to write and to read.

11. **Will you return to class?** I can go back to school only if the teachers can respect adult people. I think this teacher was not well trained in this field, because in many cases we are taught by teachers that are coming straight from primary schools. They treat us like children, but even children should not be treated the way they did.
12. **Are the people you depend on in difficulties well educated?** This is a difficult question for me, I don't know what to say. I get help from the church of the reverend. He is educated. They gave us beans, mealie meal, soups, small packets of sugar, and if you become absent from attending church service you might lose the whole package. Maybe I will work one of these days once my children are educated, and will be able to read and write letters for me. Then I can get a good job.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not well educated.**
The reverend is well educated. The church can support many people.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I admire Bishop Tutu. He is looking out for the struggle of the people who were arrested for failing to carry pass books with them, and the rights of those who died in jails. I like him because he is behind the whole thing. He is fighting for justice. The other is the old man Madiba Mandela , today we don't carry pass books, we drink beers under the trees and we are not afraid of doing that. He is a good leader and he looks out for our rights.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated and why?** I like reverend Moyenda. He taught us in the Sunday school long time ago. He knows the Bible very well.
16. **Greatest ambition** If I could just get money to send my children to school.

17. **Greatest fear** I fear to sleep without having anything to eat at all, sleep hungry. And in the family, I fear to be beaten by my wife, my heart will be black, I will take my jacket and leave the house.

CASE STUDY - K2 - MALE 25 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1993

2.

3. **Experience of adult classes** I tried to go to school. I discovered that at the school the situation was not good as teachers were impatient.

Classes were disappointing the way they were teaching, you would have run away. The methods that they used were not familiar to me. I felt very uncomfortable in the class, even humiliated. It was not the kind of thing that I wanted to do.

3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** My intention was to read, do Maths and write, to know other people's names.

4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Classes were bad especially when there was strong wind outside. But more than that, it all seemed foreign to me. I do not like their ways.

5. **How did you feel when you left?** I don't know what I am going to do. I feel hopeless because I know what I want, but I know I'm not going to get it at that school. It's not my place. So now I will just wait and see what happens.

6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** It was as if in a heat I told myself I will never attend again. And I felt better because I would not have to go back there. I made my decision.

7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** Friends told me to take courage, but it was too late for that. I had already decided that I would not go back there. I didn't want that courage even though they thought I should go back and stomach it.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I do my own things, meet friends or do a job.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted to read, write and do Maths.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will buy two beers and relax a bit.
11. **Will you return to class?** I will never go back to school again, until the situation is normal again. Now I am bored more than I can explain. If there can be electricity and other resources, then I will go back.
12. **Are the people you depend on in difficulty educated?** I depend on myself. There is no-one I can depend on anyway.
13. **How can they support you if they are not well educated.** I support myself
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate? What do you admire?** I admire a lawyer and a teacher. Their things are going well.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated, and why?** The person is in the family. He is able to live by selling as a hawker. He does not have a good education but he is good at his job. I admire him.
16. **Greatest ambition** I'd like to see my family staying in well developed areas.

17. **Greatest fear** What I fear with family is to see us living under oppression and struggle.

CASE STUDY - K3 - FEMALE 28 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1990.
2. **Experience of adult classes** I went to adult school to try. I was doing grade 1 but I was not happy. I did not like their ways. When other learners saw a girl like me in the class, they were saying what do I want here, because they said I was supposed to have been with other scholars with uniforms at other schools. This made me drop out. There is this saying that eyes speak louder than the mouth. I was not one of them.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to improve my education. I want to learn to read and write. I want what other people I can see have got. I can't have those things.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I was telling you about how they treated me. I was not one of them. That is why. The teacher was also saying to me that I was a child and I should be faster in understanding than other learners in the class. When I ask you should answer first, she said, because your mind is still new. Then I left. I could not feel easy in that class. The ways I am used to and what I am looking for - it is not there in that place.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** When I left I was very hurt. Everything was strange for me. I was not happy at that place.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I said I can still work on the farm.

7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** My family are surprised to see me working on the farm because they too were working at the farm, that same farm. Friends were laughing at me. They nearly made me leave my school the time I was still attending. Now the problem is big. I was laughed at by the learners who were attending with me, my friends and the teacher. So now I found that it is no more possible for me to go to school again.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I prefer to clean at home, to fetch water beyond that mountain every day. It is difficult.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** To try and get some education.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I found that it will work for me to invest the little money that I am paid for my work to open up a small business selling in the street and at home to keep life going.
11. **Will you return to classes?** I would go back again as I have mentioned before.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulty educated?** I depend on my family and they are not well educated. We all work on the farms.
13. **How do they support you if they are not educated?** We just struggle with what we get paid for our work on the farm.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I like the minister of health, minister Zuma. She is good where she is. She knows what the women need and want. At the moment where we are, there no clinics, we walk 8 kilometres to attend clinic. I would not forget the thing that I have seen sometimes back in my life - I

saw a woman giving birth to a child under a tree and this was during the time of apartheid. Rebecca Malope with her music. She never went far with education but is successful in life.

15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated? Why?** I like the singer in Bayete. I heard that he was working in the streets with no education, but he is successful now.
16. **Greatest ambition** I like to have a house not a shack, and enough money to live a better life. At the moment I'm living in a shack and this makes my life not to change.
17. **Greatest fear** I fear not to have education. But I am also scared to go back. If I had education I would not live this life like my parents.

CASE STUDY - K4 - FEMALE 34 YEARS

1. **Dropped out in 1994**
2. **Experience of adult classes** There was something that I was missing. I missed being able to talk English so as to communicate smoothly and I wanted to understand English. I did progress but I was disappointed by illness, this has cut off my time to go to school.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I did not understand spelling very well. I am able to understand if one speaks English but I don't know how to respond back. With English many people progress. I hoped to progress also.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Ill health made me decide to leave the school.

5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was sad when I had to leave. Those I left at school will progress while I will remain stupid.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I am a person who is sick. Even if I want to do something, most of my time I spend in hospital. It is in my life. When I have time at home I will read those books that I used when I was still at school.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** I don't really have friends. I can only talk of my children who said I should continue attending school, as schooling is important. I asked them to buy me a big dictionary for me to understand English better.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I am a person who likes to sell something whilst I am at home. But just when my business goes well you will find that now is my time to go to hospital again. But I like selling things from home.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I was hoping to improve my English and to make progress in my life like everybody who does that.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I realise that I should go to the school of sewing and then sell my goods to the people from home.
11. **Will you return to class?** The school is far for me to reach and I cannot afford it again because I am sick. If I am well again, I will go.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulty educated?** Yes. The school.

13. **How can they manage to support if they are not educated?** We did not have to pay anything at school. The teacher received the money from Mafikeng.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I will give you one person who likes to talk on the radio. He's called Snyman Rankane of Radio Setswana. When he talks he build people up with his advice. I like him very much. The other one is Sello Phiri. Actually what is great is that I like people who build up other people.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated?** Mr Mofokeng Pule never went to school. My husband was a person who never went to school at all. He was bright, he had livestock e.g. cattle, sheep, tractors. He lived by farming and he went as far as to say farming is your backbone, your treasure. There is no bank bigger than that. It was his business, when buying furniture he will sell one sheep or goat to get it.
16. **Greatest ambition** I like to work very much. I don't like to sit with my hands folded. I will better sew or do gardening. I would look after my poultry. When visitors come, I kill one for the visitors. Gardening is a problem because water is a problem in our area.
17. **Greatest fear** What I fear with my family is that I don't want to hurt someone. So with myself I don't want to hurt a person either. I like that if we don't agree on something, we'd better talk to one another with peace for a settlement then build one another.

CASE STUDY - K5 - FEMALE 30 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1993.

2. **Experience of adult classes** I had liked the school. The people I attended school with gave me problems. If I had to ask the teachers questions they laughed at me and I found that rather than to be a joke to them I'd better stay at home. Classes were helpful in terms of reading and writing. The teacher did not rebuke those who were laughing at me. I felt that I would have been successful if the teacher supported me.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to reach at the top of my life through education.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Because I was laughed at I never felt at home in those classes. If I didn't do things the way everybody liked to do, then they laugh. I want to ask my questions, but I feel strange. They don't like my way.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was heartbroken that my own people laugh at me. I am their sister, but they like to laugh at a person who is just trying to learn the new things.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I was very tired, and I told myself just get out once and for good.
7. **What were the reactions of friends and family?** My family was very disappointed. They try to get me to return because it is a good thing.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I'd better preach in the streets and tell people about God.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted to go as far as I can with education.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will think about what I can do. Maybe I will tell people about God.

11. **Will you return to class?** I will ask God to let me go back. If chances at laughing at me can stop, I will go back.

12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulty educated?** There were people who paid for my education, but now they live a distance away, far away. I live through God's prayer and I don't depend on anyone. People don't live through eating food only through praising and praying for God.

13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated.** They don't support me.

14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I admire Mr Mangope. Although he left us in the lurch, he knows how to combat crime and tsotsis. His police were beating only.

15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated?** My husband.

16. **Greatest ambition** I am prepared to sell vegetables, fruits and do poultry farming

17. **Greatest fear** I fear a snake. It has a bad spirit for my family. I fear my husband when he is angry everything becomes a mess.

CASE STUDY - A1 - FEMALE 37 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995

2. **Experience of adult classes** Positive. It was helpful learning to calculate for my own affairs. I attended the basic numeracy class.

3. **Why did you attend adult classes?** I wanted to gain knowledge and sort out my accounts in my business.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I lost my job and had to go back home.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** Very sorry. I'll go back if I get a room nearby.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I resorted to reading the Bible.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** Everybody was sorry and worried because now I had no chance in my life. With education I can advance, but now all my hopes were dashed.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I have now got a job but sleeping on the farms in Moloto. So there is no chance of learning at the school.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I hoped to get good knowledge and be able to do things by myself with nobody's help.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I am still keen to read with the help of my friends, but it's not the same. I won't be able to progress this way.
11. **Will you return to class?** If I get a room, I would love to get back to school.
12. **Are the people you depend on in difficulties educated?** No. I only depend on myself.

13. **How do they manage to support if they are not well educated?** By motivation only.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire.** None.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated. Why?** No.
16. **Greatest ambition** I have started sewing lessons from friends at home so as to enlarge my income to cover myself and my family.
17. **Greatest fear** To remain in darkness and be without a job and create misery for my family.

CASE STUDY - A2 - MALE 43 YEARS.

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of adult classes** Positive. Helpful but doesn't help me get a job. I was attending the level 1 class. Teachers were very good, but their ways are different. I think it's good, but it was very slow for me. Even learning to read write and count will not get me more money at this level. It is helpful to me personally but not for the job.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** To be helped to see things with a clear mind. There is so much I cannot see now, and it is all new for me.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Transport fares were high, and I was very slow.

5. **How did you feel when you left?** Very sorry and frustrated. It was too slow for me and I need a job.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I told myself I will still try if time allows me.
7. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** Everybody was sorry and worried, because now what would I do to improve my life?
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I'm carrying on with my private studies with the aid of friends.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** To gain more knowledge.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will keep on doing private studies.
11. **Will you return to class?** I'm ready to get back to school if I can first get a job.
12. **Are the people you depend on in difficulties educated?** Some of them are.
13. **How do they manage to support if they are not well educated?** Through motivation.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** My church elders the way they preach and talk to the congregation.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated. Why?** No.
16. **Greatest ambition** To be able to read, write and get a better job.

17. **Greatest fear** If no education there won't be a good job and there will be no money.

CASE STUDY - A3 - FEMALE 32 YEARS

1. **Dropped out in 1995**
2. **Experience of adult classes** Disappointing. Very slow. I was in level 1 and learning to speak English. Some of the classes were very hard for me and I don't want to do those things.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to be able to read and write in English, but it was very slow.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** My salary was very low. I could not afford school fees and transport, and it was taking a long time.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** Very sorry. I didn't know what to do, but I feel I was wasting my time there.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I would continue reading books and magazines.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** They were very worried because I had no interest and no chance of success.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** Reading stories and watching TV.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** To understand written work and be able to read books so I can learn.

10. **Now that you can't do that, what will you do?** I feel confused at present. It's my home affairs at present. A burglary has taken place. So I am just waiting.
11. **Will you return to class?** I am ready to go back to school.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** They are semi-literate.
13. **How can they support you if they are not educated?** By motivating me to carry on.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** People who are learned, and are able to give good support to their families.
15. **Is there any one person you admire who is not well educated? Why?**
No-one.
16. **Greatest ambition** To be literate and able to support my family.
17. **Greatest fear** If I am not learned in the near future as my children are growing bigger they will look down on me.

CASE STUDY - A4 - MALE 31 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of adult classes** Positive and helpful. The teachers were good. I was in level 1, learning to read and write in my own language.

3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to be able to read and write first in my own language and then I need to learn English. But I speak Afrikaans better than English, but I don't want to learn that language of our oppressors.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Our mode of transport was poor, and I was very confused with all the languages. School was far and takes so long.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I felt sorry and upset but I need a better job and more pay.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I would keep on reading the books and magazines.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** Everybody was sorry because I had lost an opportunity to progress.
8. **How do you spend the time now?** Reading story books for myself but I have no new ones so I can't move.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I was keen to learn to read and write, as I told you.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will just watch TV. What can I do?
11. **Will you return to class?** If I can get a school nearer my work I will return.
12. **Are the people you depend on in difficulties educated?** No

13. **How do they support you when they are not educated?** They just encourage me, but they do not support with money. I can't have that.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** The way they bring up their family and their mode of life. I would like to be like that. They live near me.
15. **Is there one person who is uneducated that you admire?** No.
16. **Greatest ambition** To get a better job and salary
17. **Greatest fear** Losing a job which might bring myself and my family down.

CASE STUDY - A5 - FEMALE 37 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of adult classes** Positive and helpful but not really getting me a better salary. I was in level 1 and learning English, Maths and Zulu. It was a good school and the teachers were very good to us.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** To be able to read write and count to improve my life.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Our group lost the transport
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was very sorry, but it was very far and taking a long time to get there and also to get my education. It cost me a lot of money

6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I resorted to sewing to make money.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** They were sorry and my mother was angry because now I had no chance of helping my children to learn so that our family could be stronger.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** Reading the Zulu Bible and Zulu magazines. But I need English.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** To gain knowledge of reading writing and filling in forms.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I am hoping to continue reading books with the help of my children.
11. **Will you return to class?** No. I don't think so but I am not sure.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** No.
13. **How can they support you if they are not educated?** They only support me by word of mouth.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** The way they read the Bible and give examples.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated and why?** I admire my mother because she can do many things and she is not educated.
16. **Greatest ambition** Continue with my work and support my children.

17. **Greatest fear** Losing my job and my family would feel out of place in life.

CASE STUDY - A6 - FEMALE 32 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995.
2. **Experience of adult classes** Classes were okay. They were helpful. I was learning to read and write in my own language, and the teachers were good. They really cared for us and made sure that we felt happy in the group.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted knowledge and a lot of my friends who were domestic workers went to the centre and enjoyed the classes. There is nothing to do at night, so I wanted to meet some friends. I wanted to learn to read and write.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving?** The school was far and transport was scarce.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was disappointed.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I said I could always go back to school if I could find one nearer.
7. **What were the reactions of friends and family?** My friends at the centre were disappointed with me, because they said I would not be able to see them, and I would not get on. My family did not know I was going to classes.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I copy fancy work from friends and I sew.

9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted to gain knowledge and read and write. I didn't want to always get help with my affairs.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will just get on with my beadwork.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes
12. **Are the people you depend on in difficulties educated?** I depend on myself and I am not educated
13. **How do they support you if they are not well educated?** They just encourage me, and you don't need education for that.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I admire my teacher and all the knowledge she had. I also admire my employer in the way that she brings up her children.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not well educated?** No, not really.
16. **Greatest ambition** To get a better job so as to be able to support myself and my children
17. **Greatest fear** No education, no work and a poor life. One makes the other.

CASE STUDY - J1 - FEMALE 40 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1993

2. **Experience of adult classes** I was attending an adult centre and was in the Preparatory course (Std 2) There was nothing that made me want to attend the school really. It was next to my house. We had no books to refer to, just exercise books to write. There were too many subjects and not enough hours to do them properly.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** The school was next to my house. I had no objectives to achieve in attending because I was at such a low level. There were many learners there, so I thought I could get something.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** There was nothing to stay for, no books, too many subjects - Environment Studies, health, Tswana, English. I decided I was wasting my time and I didn't gain anything. Even the teachers had no time for us.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was not motivated, so it was easy for me to leave.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I said I am wasting my time and I didn't feel bad.
7. **What were the reactions of friends and family?** My husband is also not educated, but he was okay.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I am at home looking out for my domestic affairs.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to class?** I did not have anything I wanted to achieve because it was difficult for me to say my hopes as a person who was on that low level.

10. **Now that you cannot achieve your aims, what will you do?** I am looking after my domestic affairs.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes, but not at that centre, and I think I will do one subject at a time.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** I depend on my husband and he is not educated.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** We survive smoothly.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** There is no-one really. I am just myself.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not well educated?** No.
16. **Greatest ambition** I don't have ambition. I just have to make a way in life.
17. **Greatest fear** I fear for myself because I am not proud of myself, I don't have self confidence.

CASE STUDY - J2 - FEMALE 50 YEARS

1. **Dropped out in 1992**
2. **Experience of adult classes** Classes were so helpful, especially numeracy. I have a spaza shop so I do a lot of counting.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I decided to join the classes to get numeracy skills for my shop.

4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I dropped out because of the violence in Soweto. It was not safe to travel on trains. I work as a cleaner at Wits but I live in Soweto, so I could not stay late. Also, the teacher helping me with numeracy left and it was hard for me to cope with a new teacher.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I felt disappointed because I was experiencing the progress but the situation forced me to leave.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I knew I could always go back if things changed.
7. **What were the reactions of friends and family?** My children are encouraging me all the time.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I am just waiting.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted numeracy skills when I started, but now I want more.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I can do that, but not now. Next year I will return to classes to finish my Std 5 and I will specialise with numeracy and English. I have heard about the IEB. I have plans for this year, but next year I will do that.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** My children are educated and they support and encourage me in my difficulties.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** They are.

14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I admired my teacher, and I admire my children because they are successful.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated?** Not really.
16. **Greatest ambition** To get my Std 5 and a better job.
17. **Greatest fear** I fear the violence.

CASE STUDY - J3 - FEMALE 33 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of adult classes** I was studying English and Maths Std 5, but I dropped out before completing. I enjoyed school but I changed my mind. Skills and experience are more important. I feel I am wasting my time because it will take me a long time to complete Std 8. High education is important but it can come later.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I am a cleaner, and I was hoping that if I got Std 8 certificate they might promote me, or I could apply for a better job, or start my own business like sewing.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I changed my mind. Std 8 certificate won't help me because I'm in a hurry. There are many people who run their own business with no education.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I felt good because I had been wasting my time.

6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I have started at sewing school. I will think about going back when I have finished there.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends.** They agree with me.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I have started at the sewing school.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** To get Std 8 to get promotion or a better job.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will do that one day, but for now I have started at the sewing school.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes. I will think about going back to school when I have finished the sewing.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** Some of them are.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** I am motivated by the friend who has the sewing school. Because I have children to support, I can't depend on education.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** I admire my friend at the sewing school. Skills and experience of those skills are important. High education will come later.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated?** My friend with the sewing school.
16. **Greatest ambition** To get my Std 8 one day.
17. **Greatest fear** There is nothing I fear. I know what I want to do.

CASE STUDY - S1 - FEMALE 24 YEARS

1. **Dropped out in 1994**
2. **Experience of adult classes** When I attended school at the Ithuteng centre I couldn't read or write. The tutors helped me a lot and now I am able. But I am bright. I am positive about the centre. There is nothing negative I can say about the class. Everything was okay. Most of the time the tutor gave us notes and we had to copy them. Then she explained. The tutor did most of the talking. I prefer the tutor to give us work and divide us into groups or pairs. So we can find solutions by ourselves. We didn't want the tutor to spoonfeed us. If we had problems we prefer to go back to the tutor and say come and help us solve this problem.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to learn to read and write, so I can say I did achieve my aim. I wanted to be a good leader, like other leaders in the world. I wanted to be an example to and from my community.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** Actually, I didn't leave. It was just that I was selling goods somewhere and I came home very late. So I couldn't attend. I felt that I was dropping behind, so I should leave. But in fact it was just some commitments.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was disappointed that I must make that choice.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I was okay because I know I will go back. It's just time.

7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** My mother and my friends encouraged me to go back to classes and I promised I will go back as soon as I can. My parents want me to become educated so I can support them. My friends say life is difficult these days, without education there is nothing we can do. If you stay at home you become illiterate again, so it's better to attend school.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** I prefer to go and sell soft goods to the pensioners. If I am not doing that I prefer just to stay at home. Apart from that, I clean the house and go on leisure with my friends.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted tutors to help me in reading and writing. I also wanted to be like them as tutors. That was what I wanted to achieve first. I wanted to become a teacher.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I intend going back to my classes. Even tomorrow I can go back to school.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes. Anytime.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** My family are not well educated.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** My mother is a pensioner so with the little money that she receives every month at least we manage to survive. Apart from my mother there is nobody who is working here at home. I'm also doing my best with the money I make from selling.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** The first person is Fingi, a tutor at the centre. The second is my neighbour Daniel. He has completed his Matric and he is always

encouraging me to return to these literacy classes so that I become well educated in the future. He is my role model for education and for selling. He is my advisor in terms of good and bad.

15. **Is there one person you admire who is not well educated. Why?**

One of my friends by the name of Suzy. She is not educated but she keeps on motivating me that we should go back to school. I admire that.

16. **Greatest ambition** To become a dressmaker and sewing. There are other things that I wanted to do, but I can't remember now. I still prefer to be one of the dressmakers in life so that my family could become very much happy about what I would be doing for myself and for them in life.

17. **Greatest fear** Death. Apart from death I don't want to break into other people's houses and I don't want to see myself jailed for such things.

CASE STUDY - S2 - FEMALE 34 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995

2. **Experience of classes** Since joining the classes there was much improvement because when I started there I could not read and write but at least now I am able to read and write, The teachers and my colleagues were very supportive, encouraging and motivating to me. I don't have anything negative to say. I am now able to buy magazines and read them with nobody's help. There was not enough interaction between the tutor and members of the group but it was okay - we learned.

3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I did not get much opportunity to attend school when I was young. So I felt it was good to attend these classes in terms of reading and writing. And I knew other

people who were attending and I felt I was getting left behind. My aims were to get better educated to get a better job.

4. What were your reasons for leaving? I enjoyed staying at home for a while. I had some personal problems which I don't want to reveal at the moment. But I want to continue with my lessons.

5. How did you feel when you left? I feel okay, because it is my aim to get back to classes. I am just taking a break. Even here at home, I open the books.

6. How did you encourage yourself when you left? I know I am very much bright. And I open my books and read in them. But I feel I am staying behind. I must go back.

7. What were the reactions of friends and family? They don't want to see me sitting here at home!

8. How do you spend that time now? I keep myself busy cleaning the house, cooking and just basking in the sun.

9. What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes? I wanted to read, write letters to friends and maybe get employment somewhere.

10. Now that you cannot do that, what will you do? I still want to go to school. I can do that.

11. Will you return to class? I can back anytime - even today or tomorrow.

12. Are the people you depend on when in difficulties well educated?
Yes they are.

13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** They are, and they feel responsibility to support.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** One of my friends Elsie. She is educated and is occupying a very challenging position at work. She looks after herself. The other one is still attending school and that is my sister. She is in Std 10 and I'm very proud of her for being in that standard.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated. Why?** Mostly I admire my mother. She is not well educated but she is able to support and look after us all.
16. **Greatest ambition** I prefer dress making because I feel that is the easiest job I can do in my life.
- 17 **Greatest fear** I fear only God.

CASE STUDY - S3 - FEMALE 25 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** of class in 1995
2. **Experience of classes** The teachers were very good to us. They had quality of teaching If we were absent, they would come and check. There is nothing negative. It was good to me We had different ability groups of learners. Some adults were slow, others were better. We worked according to our abilities and the teacher worked with one group at the time. We had to find out things for ourselves. I started adult school as an illiterate, and now at least I could write my name and read books.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I wanted to read documents given to me and understand without help. Sure they say you must

sign your name, so I wanted to read, understand and sign where appropriate. I wanted some enlightenment from the centre.

4. **Why did you leave the classes?** I was pregnant and then I had problems with my health. Even afterwards I had problems so I decided to stay home and consult a doctor because both the child and myself had problems.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I feel disappointed because I couldn't reach that destination I wanted. I should think I am planning to go back next year.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I felt bad but the child was very sick. I said there is nothing I can do, just accept it.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** My parents and friends understand the problems. They are not surprised.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** There is nothing you can do at this moment, nothing better without getting educated. I prefer to go back. There is no benefit staying home.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** There are still a lot of things I want to know from school. I didn't have enough time to grasp everything that was given to us. So there is so much I want to do to improve my education.
10. **Now that you cannot do that what will you do?** I don't know what to do, because there is nothing I can do.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes.

12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** Yes.
My parents are educated.
13. **How do they manage to support if they are not well educated?** They are educated.
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate? What do you admire?** My friend and her husband are well educated. They got their Matric. They occupy better positions where they work. Those are the people I admire most.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated. Why?** There is nobody I know who is not well educated that I could admire.
16. **Greatest ambition** My ambition for myself and my family in future could be sewing and selling what I have made, my products.
17. **Greatest fear** I fear accidents and burning, even death too is my greatest fear in life.

CASE STUDY - S4 - FEMALE 26 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of classes.** What I experienced from the centres was that the teachers were very much helpful. They showed us how to write our names and read. I really admire them. They have good quality of teaching. There was interaction in the teaching. We worked individually and in pairs, to come and give answers, fill in gaps. The teacher did not give all the answers. We were made to work, to sweat for the answers. I prefer if the teacher does not give us all the answers - we just become lazy thinkers. We must find answers for ourselves.

3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** My parents were not working and they couldn't take us to school, so I wanted to educate myself as an adult.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I had 3 little daughters to look after. Therefore it was impossible for me to attend classes because there was no-one to look after them. In fact the other two children belong to my younger sisters who just came and dropped them in. For the past 5 years. So I dropped out.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I felt very disappointed because I wanted to continue. Even now, the people I started classes with are far ahead of me. So I was sad about that. Nothing I could do.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I told myself that I will rejoin classes as soon as possible. But there was nothing I could do by them. I was under a tremendous pressure.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends.** I told my husband I could not attend because of these daughters and he felt very disappointed and worried about that. He asked me is that the reason. I said there is nothing I could do - I could not take these 3 daughters to school they would disturb my studies and even the others too.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** There is nothing better that I could do now. I am just looking for work to get employed somewhere so that I could earn some money and go back to school. The school I could attend is the one that starts at 6 in the evening.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted to become educated so that I could get a better job, work for

myself. Because there is no-one who can help you if you are not educated and not working for yourself.

10. Now that you cannot do that what will you do? There are various things I wish to do, but because I am not working I can't do them or achieve them. If I was working it would be very much better. I am doing a bit of selling of vegetables to make money to buy reading materials.

11. Will you return to class? Yes I am looking forward to it.

12. Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated? My mother is not educated.

13. How do they manage to support you if they are not well educated? My mother is able to support us because she is working somewhere. She earns a little but she is able to support me.

14. Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire? I want to become like my sister and my brother in law because these 2 people they are well educated. My sister is working at the hospital and he is working as a soldier. He is helped by a bursary, so these are the people I admire because they can challenge life. Because both of them they are educated and they are working. It is nice to work for yourself and earn a salary. I wish I could follow in their steps.

15. Is there one person you admire who is not educated. Why? There is not one person whom I greatly admire who is not well educated. Because we Africans, we have got a tendency of hiding things. We will see people living enjoying their life, living a luxurious life but without education. But there is no-one I know I can say this one is not educated. People have their own secrets. You can't find out how they can live a luxurious life without being educated.

16. **Greatest ambition** I am able to form bricks, the bricks you see here at my home. It is difficult work, at least I can do that. Nobody taught me, I just see people doing it. That is my ambition. Besides that, I am able to work as a domestic worker because I can clean.

17. **Greatest fear** It is that if my mother passed away now, I would suffer a lot. So I have a great respect for death.

CASE STUDY - S5 - FEMALE 28 YEARS

1. **Dropped out in 1995**
2. **Experience of adult classes** The teachers were good to us. They explained that they were going to help us because we had not had opportunities at school. They were going to help us in reading and writing. We sat in rows, and the teacher did all the talking. She wrote on the board. I like the teacher to do the talking because we are at the beginning levels, we can't even read, so that is fine. There is little that I acquired from the centre so I still want to go back. In fact there is nothing that I have acquired from the centre.
3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I have 3 children at school, so I felt that if the principal of the school calls a meeting for us to attend it would be difficult for me to sign documents. Also if we were given some copies to read it would be difficult, so I must attend so I can get some light from the tutors.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** If the fees were not too much, I would have continued my studies.

5. **How did you feel when you left?** I felt disappointed because I wanted to continue. But I couldn't pay the fees because I also have children's fees to pay.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I couldn't encourage myself because I don't have money. And I am unemployed and so is my husband, so it is impossible. Nobody encourages me.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** My friends are not here. They are far away in Giyani. I think they would help me.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** Now I am looking for a job to work for my family. Because I am at home, there is nothing I can do. Any work is okay, even labour, just to get the money.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to classes?** I wanted to be able to understand road signs, fill in forms and if there was work somewhere, to fill in application forms. It is disempowering to have other people read and write for you.
10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I would like to cook for the family, clean the house and just relax.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes, I want to go back.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** No they are not.
13. **How do they manage to support you if they are not educated?** They are selling fruits and vegetables with the commission we can survive.

14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. Why?** There is no-one in this area. Only my sister in Std 6 and she is having a baby unfortunately.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated and why?** My younger brother is not educated. He is employed somewhere at Brits. He is living a better life compared to my life. That is the person I admire most because he is working. If I compare my life with his there is a vast difference. Although he is not educated.
16. **Greatest ambition** The greatest ambition for myself and my family is to go and buy goods and sell them to people. Thing like glycerine, lotions and perfumes.
17. **Greatest fear** What I fear is to steal other people's property. It is better to go and ask from people not stealing. I fear jail. If one of the family passes away that will be a disappointing thing to me because it could be a person we depend on.

CASE STUDY -S6 - FEMALE 42 YEARS

1. **Dropped out** in 1995
2. **Experience of classes** What I have experienced from the centre is disappointing. I wrote a numeracy test and I did not get my results. When I asked the tutor they said they were still searching for them. This happened again. Then I felt there was nothing that I could achieve at the centre if I don't get results. But the teacher was very good. She was excellent in her teaching. I can't say anything negative about her. We worked in groups and with the teacher. I don't like it if the teacher gives us answers. Then we can't think for ourselves. The numeracy was very

helpful in everyday life. And now I can fill in forms - bank deposit and withdrawals. But my problem is knowledge cannot get me money. So I will try crafts for that, then I will go back.

3. **Why did you decide to attend adult classes?** I worked as a domestic worker and I found it very difficult when my employer left me notes. So I needed the English for my job. It is important to be able to read signs that are written for people like "no entry" and one must be able to read job advertisements. So I went there with the aim of getting this kind of knowledge from my teachers. But English is difficult for me.
4. **What were your reasons for leaving classes?** I am presently not employed and I am a very busy person. I have got children at school, so I am trying to sell goods on the streets to get money. In the evenings I must go and buy such goods somewhere, so I can no longer attend classes. I am also very tired from a hard day.
5. **How did you feel when you left?** I was very disappointed but there was nothing I could do. I had to get money.
6. **How did you encourage yourself when you left?** I decided to stop because I was falling behind. My attendance was poor, sometimes I'm there, sometimes not, and I decided it was best to stop.
7. **What were the reactions of family and friends?** They wanted me to go back. My mother was very sad at my decision.
8. **How do you spend that time now?** Most of the time I'm selling on the streets as I said. But after that I come home to clean my house.
9. **What were you hoping to achieve when you went to adult classes?** I wanted to learn English mainly because it is very difficult to me. I even needed to know more about my own language Zulu, and also Afrikaans,

because for the employer it was important to know English and Afrikaans. Communication was the main reason for going to classes.

10. **Now that you cannot do that, what will you do?** I will need to be selling my goods to get money. Once I have money I will see what I can do about those aims. I want to go to Cape Town to buy things, and to Mozambique to get materials. I travel a lot.
11. **Will you return to class?** Yes I am prepared to but I must do some selling first.
12. **Are the people you depend on when in difficulties educated?** There is nobody supporting me. I support myself and my children.
13. -
14. **Two people you admire and would like to emulate. What do you admire?** The two people are my friends. The one is teaching at a primary school, the other at a pre-school. They work from eight till two. And they are sure at the end of the month there is a salary they will receive. Their children are at private schools, my children are just at the local school here. They have cars. Their living conditions are far better than mine. Because I am not educated there is nothing I can do. Their children wear nice clothes - she has no problems buying for them. I am suffering a lot.
15. **Is there one person you admire who is not educated. Why?** The person I admire around here is not educated. But I am very worried. Her living conditions are better than mine, yet she is not educated. I don't know how.
16. **Greatest ambition** Apart from selling, I don't have any. That is my trade.

17. **Greatest fear** Death. I am just worried that if I die today, what is going to happen to my children, who will bury me. How to cover all the costs.

B. INTERVIEWEE RESPONSES PER QUESTION

QUESTION 2. EXPERIENCE OF ADULT CLASSES

Classes sometimes were helpful, sometimes not. They were helpful when we were being taught new things, but in most cases the teacher who taught us took too much time on things we knew and the same thing - umama, ubaba.

When I first attended classes I did not know what I was doing. I could not get what I went there for. I first thought I would at least be taught how to write letters, and fill in forms. I thought I would be able to speak well, be able to express myself well at work, and even to people in general. But we always did one thing, studied the same thing every time we attended classes: learned in Zulu the same words. I got bored, I thought I was just wasting time. I then dropped out because I got discouraged. I was disappointed.

I have a problem of going back to school. At the adult school they don't teach us like they did when we were still young. The teacher speaks English saying dog, kitchen, but I don't know what is a kitchen. Now if he was showing us on the picture drawn, so that when he talks about the kitchen, or cat we know, it's better. I don't get him well. It's not what I know, and I feel confused.

I tried to go to school. I discovered that at the school the situation was not good as teachers were impatient. Classes were disappointing the way they were teaching, you would have run away. The methods that they used were not familiar to me. I felt very uncomfortable in the class, even humiliated. It was not the kind of thing that I wanted to do.

I went to adult school to try. I was doing grade 1 but I was not happy. I did not like their ways. When other learners saw a girl like me in the class, they were saying what do I want here, because they said I was supposed to have been with other scholars with uniforms at other schools. This made me drop

out. There is this saying that eyes speak louder than the mouth. I was not one of them.

There was something that I was missing. I missed being able to talk English so as to communicate smoothly and I wanted to understand English. I did progress but I was disappointed by illness, this has cut off my time to go to school.

I had liked the school. The people I attended school with gave me problems. If I had to ask the teachers questions they laughed at me and I found that rather than to be a joke to them I'd better stay at home. Classes were helpful in terms of reading and writing. The teacher did not rebuke those who were laughing at me. I felt that I would have been successful if the teacher supported me.

Positive. It was helpful learning to calculate for my own affairs. I attended the basic numeracy class.

Positive. Helpful but doesn't help me get a job. I was attending the level 1 class. Teachers were very good, but their ways are different. I think it's good, but it was very slow for me. Even learning to read and write and count will not get me more money at this level. It is helpful to me personally but not for the job.

Disappointing. Very slow. I was in level 1 and learning to speak English. Some of the classes were very hard for me and I don't want to do those things.

Positive and helpful. The teachers were good. I was in level 1, learning to read and write in my own language.

Positive and helpful but not really getting me a better salary. I was in level 1 and learning English, Maths and Zulu. It was a good school and the teachers were very good to us.

Classes were okay. They were helpful. I was learning to read and write in my own language, and the teachers were good. They really cared for us and made sure that we felt happy in the group.

I was attending an adult centre and was in the Preparatory course (Std 2) There was nothing that made me want to attend the school really. It was next to my house. We had no books to refer to, just exercise books to write. There were too many subjects and not enough hours to do them properly.

Classes were so helpful, especially numeracy. I have a spaza shop so I do a lot of counting.

I was studying English and Maths Std 5, but I dropped out before completing. I enjoyed school but I changed my mind. Skills and experience are more important. I feel I am wasting my time because it will take me a long time to complete Std 8. High education is important but it can come later.

When I attended school at the Ithuteng centre I couldn't read or write. The tutors helped me a lot and now I am able. But I am bright. I am positive about the centre. There is nothing negative I can say about the class. Everything was okay.

Most of the time the teacher gave us notes and we had to copy them. Then she explained. The teacher did most of the talking. I prefer the tutor to give us work and divide us into groups or pairs. So we can find solutions by ourselves. We didn't want the tutor to spoonfeed us. If we had problems we prefer to go back to the teacher and say come and help us solve this problem. Since joining the classes there was much improvement because when I started there I could not read and write but at least now I am able to read and

write, The teachers and my colleagues were very supportive, encouraging and motivating to me. I don't have anything negative to say. I am now able to buy magazines and read them with nobody's help. There was not enough interaction between the tutor and members of the group but it was okay - we learned.

The teachers were very good to us. They had quality of teaching If we were absent, they would come and check. There is nothing negative. It was good to me We had different ability groups of learners. Some adults were slow, others were better. We worked according to our abilities and the teacher worked with one group at the time.

We had to find out things for ourselves. I started adult school as an illiterate, and now at least I could write my name and read books.

What I experienced from the centres was that the teachers were very much helpful. They showed us how to write our names and read. I really admire them. They have good quality of teaching. There was interaction in the teaching. We worked individually and in pairs, to come and give answers, fill in gaps. The teacher did not give all the answers. We were made to work, to sweat for the answers. I prefer if the teacher does not give us all the answers - we just become lazy thinkers. We must find answers for ourselves.

The teachers were good to us. They explained that they were going to help us because we had not had opportunities at school. They were going to help us in reading and writing. We sat in rows, and the teacher did all the talking. She wrote on the board.

I like the teacher to do the talking because we are at the beginning levels, we can't even read, so that is fine. There is little that I acquired from the centre so I still want to go back. In fact there is nothing that I have acquired from the centre.

What I have experienced from the centre is disappointing. I wrote a numeracy test and I did not get my results. When I asked the tutor they said they were still searching for them. This happened again. Then I felt there was nothing that I could achieve at the centre if I don't get results. But the teacher was very good. She was excellent in her teaching. I can't say anything negative about her. We worked in groups and with the teacher. I don't like it if the teacher gives us answers. Then we can't think for ourselves. The numeracy was very helpful in everyday life. And now I can fill in forms - bank deposit and withdrawals. But knowledge cannot get me money. So I will try crafts for that, then I will go back.

QUESTION 3. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO ATTEND ADULT CLASSES?

I attended classes with the intention of improving myself. I am working at the moment and my boss is a white person and this means that I always have to communicate with him in English. I do not know how to speak well, how to write well in English. Therefore I had hoped to learn how to read and write and speak English. I had hoped at least to get basic communication skills.

When I first attended classes I did not know what I was doing. I could not get what I went there for. I first thought I would at least be taught how to write letters, and fill in forms. I thought I would be able to speak well, be able to express myself well at work, and even to people in general. But we always did one thing, studied the same thing every time we attended classes: learned in Zulu the same words. I got bored, I thought I was just wasting time. I then dropped out because I got discouraged. I was disappointed.

I look some years back when I first started to register. I found that it was important for me to attend adult classes, as I had wanted to get a better education because we did not go to school much as we were supposed. We were herd boys. If I can just learn to write and read.

My intention was to read, do Maths and write, to know other people's names.

I wanted to improve my education. I want to learn to read and write. I want what other people I can see have got. I can't have those things.

I did not understand spelling very well. I am able to understand if one speaks English but I don't know how to respond back. With English many people progress. I hoped to progress also.

I wanted to reach at the top of my life through education.

I wanted to gain knowledge and sort out my accounts in my business.

To be helped to see things with a clear mind. There is so much I cannot see now, and it is all new for me.

I wanted to be able to read and write in English, but it was very slow.

I wanted to be able to read and write first in my own language and then I need to learn English. But I speak Afrikaans better than English, but I don't want to learn that language of our oppressors.

To be able to read write and count to improve my life.

I wanted knowledge and a lot of my friends who were domestic workers went to the centre and enjoyed the classes. There is nothing to do at night, so I wanted to meet some friends. I wanted to learn to read and write.

The school was next to my house. I had no objectives to achieve in attending because I was at such a low level. There were many learners there, so I thought I could get something.

I decided to join the classes to get numeracy skills for my shop.

I am a cleaner, and I was hoping that if I got Std 8 certificate they might promote me, or I could apply for a better job, or start my own business like sewing.

I wanted to learn to read and write, so I can say I did achieve my aim. I wanted to be a good leader, like other leaders in the world. I wanted to be an example to and from my community.

I did not get much opportunity to attend school when I was young. So I felt it was good to attend these classes in terms of reading and writing. And I knew other people who were attending and I felt I was getting left behind. My aims were to get better educated to get a better job.

I wanted to read documents given to me and understand without help. Sure they say you must sign your name, so I wanted to read, understand and sign where appropriate. I wanted some enlightenment from the centre.

My parents were not working and they couldn't take us to school, so I wanted to educate myself as an adult.

I have 3 children at school, so I felt that if the principal of the school calls a meeting for us to attend it would be difficult for me to sign documents. Also if we were given some copies to read it would be difficult, so I must attend so I can get some light from the tutors.

I worked as a domestic worker and I found it very difficult when my employer left me notes. So I needed the English for my job. It is important to be able to read signs that are written for people like "no entry" and one must be able to read job advertisements. So I went there with the aim of getting this kind of knowledge from my teachers. But English is difficult for me.

QUESTION 4. WHAT WERE YOUR REASONS FOR LEAVING ADULT CLASSES?

I left classes because I did not get what I wanted. I did not get the skills that I was looking for - reading and writing as well as being able to speak in English.

When I started I did so because I wanted to learn, but when I realised I was not achieving anything because nothing was being done, I then left.

We have the problem that in many cases people that taught us don't care for us. They talk English. When I ask a question they said to us that it is not them that have said that we should go to school. They were laughing at us. When we tried to write, some of the learners finished first and they were looking from side to side at us and we felt intimidated by that. Then I felt I should stay at home. When my children are going to or attending schools I will ask one of them to help write and read. But now they are still young to go to school.

When I tried to get the teacher to show me how to write word he does not want to. He would say look at what others are doing. Then I decided to stay at home. They were unhelpful.

Classes were bad especially when there was strong wind outside. But more than that, it all seemed foreign to me. I do not like their ways.

I was telling you about how they treated me. I was not one of them. That is why.

The teacher was also saying to me that I was a child and I should be faster in understanding than other learners in the class. When I ask you should answer first, she said, because your mind is still new. Then I left. I could not feel easy in that class. The ways I am used to and what I am looking for - it is not there in that place.

Ill health made me decide to leave the school.

Because I was laughed at I never felt at home in those classes. If I didn't do things the way everybody liked to do, then they laugh. I want to ask my questions, but I feel strange. They don't like my way.

I lost my job and had to go back home.

Transport fares were high, and I was very slow.

My salary was very low. I could not afford school fees and transport, and it was taking a long time.

Our mode of transport was poor, and I was very confused with all the languages. School was far and takes so long.

Our group lost the transport

I wanted knowledge and a lot of my friends who were domestic workers went to the centre and enjoyed the classes. There is nothing to do at night, so I wanted to meet some friends. I wanted to learn to read and write.

There was nothing to stay for, no books, too many subjects - Environment Studies, health, Tswana, English. I decided I was wasting my time and I didn't gain anything. Even the teachers had no time for us.

I dropped out because of the violence in Soweto. It was not safe to travel on trains. I work as a cleaner at Wits but I live in Soweto, so I could not stay late. Also, the teacher helping me with numeracy left and it was hard for me to cope with a new teacher.

I changed my mind. Std 8 certificate won't help me because I'm in a hurry. There are many people who run their own business with no education.

Actually, I didn't leave. It was just that I was selling goods somewhere and I came home very late. So I couldn't attend. I felt that I was dropping behind, so I should leave. But in fact it was just some commitments.

I enjoyed staying at home for a while. I had some personal problems which I don't want to reveal at the moment. But I want to continue with my lessons.

I was pregnant and then I had problems with my health. Even afterwards I had problems so I decided to stay home and consult a doctor because both the child and myself had problems.

I had 3 little daughters to look after. Therefore it was impossible for me to attend classes because there was no-one to look after them. In fact the other two children belong to my younger sisters who just came and dropped them in. For the past 5 years. So I dropped out.

If the fees were not too much, I would have continued my studies.

I am presently not employed and I am a very busy person. I have got children at school, so I am trying to sell goods on the streets to get money. In the evenings I must go and buy such goods somewhere, so I can no longer attend classes. I am also very tired from a hard day.

QUESTION 5. HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU LEFT?

I felt bad, angry and disappointed because I did not get what I went to classes for.

I was feeling bad. I was disappointed because I paid for those classes. Paying for learning but in the end I did not learn. I paid for nothing.

I was hurt at the time I left because what I had expected to get from school I did not get.

I don't know what I am going to do. I feel hopeless because I know what I want, but I know I'm not going to get it at that school. It's not my place. So now I will just wait and see what happens.

When I left I was very hurt. Everything was strange for me. I was not happy at that place.

I was sad when I had to leave. Those I left at school will progress while I will remain stupid.

I was heartbroken that my own people laugh at me. I am their sister, but they like to laugh at a person who is just trying to learn the new things.

Very sorry. I'll go back if I get a room nearby.

Very sorry and frustrated. It was too slow for me and I need a job.

Very sorry. I didn't know what to do, but I feel I was wasting my time there.

I felt sorry and upset but I need a better job and more pay.

I was very sorry, but it was very far and taking a long time to get there and also to get my education. It cost me a lot of money

I was disappointed.

I was not motivated, so it was easy for me to leave.

I felt disappointed because I was experiencing the progress but the situation forced me to leave.

I felt good because I had been wasting my time.

I was disappointed that I must make that choice.

I feel okay, because it is my aim to get back to classes. I am just taking a break. Even here at home, I open the books.

I feel disappointed because I couldn't reach that destination I wanted. I should think I am planning to go back next year.

I felt very disappointed because I wanted to continue. Even now, the people I started classes with are far ahead of me. So I was sad about that. Nothing I could do.

I felt disappointed because I wanted to continue. But I couldn't pay the fees because I also have children's fees to pay.

I was very disappointed but there was nothing I could do. I had to get money.

QUESTION 6. HOW DID YOU ENCOURAGE YOURSELF WHEN YOU LEFT?

I told myself that one day I will come back again even if I don't know whether I will be coming back for something good. I will just try. I told myself that I will learn from other people how to communicate in English.

I told myself I should stop wasting time and money. I should rather stay at home and be doing some housework in that time. I told myself that I should take a break and then start again with the hope of getting something then. I was not happy when I left. I wanted knowledge. I want to go back to class but it will be a different centre.

It seemed to me that people could not envisage or plan and see that there are those who are able to do things and those who don't. Then I found I was drawing back instead of going forward.

It was as if in a heat I told myself I will never attend again. And I felt better because I would not have to go back there. I made my decision.

I said I can still work on the farm.

I am a person who is sick. Even if I want to do something, most of my time I spend in hospital. It is in my life. When I have time at home I will read those books that I used when I was still at school.

I was very tired, and I told myself just get out once and for good.

I resorted to reading the Bible.

I told myself I will still try if time allows me.

I would continue reading books and magazines.

I resorted to sewing to make money.

I said I could always go back to school if I could find one nearer.

I said I am wasting my time and I didn't feel bad.

I knew I could always go back if things changed.

I have started at sewing school. I will think about going back when I have finished there.

I was okay because I know I will go back. It's just time.

I know I am very much bright. And I open my books and read in them. But I feel I am staying behind. I must go back.

I felt bad but the child was very sick. I said there is nothing I can do, just accept it.

I told myself that I will rejoin classes as soon as possible. But there was nothing I could do by them. I was under a tremendous pressure.

I couldn't encourage myself because I don't have money. And I am unemployed and so is my husband, so it is impossible. Nobody encourages me.

I decided to stop because I was falling behind. My attendance was poor, sometimes I'm there, sometimes not, and I decided it was best to stop.

QUESTION 7. WHAT WERE THE REACTIONS OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

When I left, no-one was happy. But because violence was rife at the time, thugs guarded us against our enemies who would wait to attack us when we went home, my family was relieved. But also disappointed because we all need an education so desperately.

I am not staying with my family.

Friends came to encourage me to go back to the classes, but I refused. Then I said maybe in future, when it is a new government, there shall be teachers that will recognise our adulthood, we are not children.

Friends told me to take courage, but it was too late for that. I had already decided that I would not go back there. I didn't want that courage even though they thought I should go back and stomach it.

My family are surprised to see me working on the farm because they too were working at the farm, that same farm. Friends were laughing at me. They nearly made me leave my school the time I was still attending. Now the problem is big. I was laughed at by the learners who were attending with me, my friends and the teacher. So now I found that it is no more possible for me to go to school again.

I don't really have friends. I can only talk of my children who said I should continue attending school, as schooling is important. I asked them to buy me a big dictionary for me to understand English better.

My family was very disappointed. They try to get me to return because it is a good thing.

Everybody was sorry and worried because now I had no chance in my life. With education I can advance, but now all my hopes were dashed.

I told myself I will still try if time allows me.

They were very worried because I had no interest and no chance of success.

Everybody was sorry because I had lost an opportunity to progress.

They were sorry and my mother was angry because now I had no chance of helping my children to learn so that our family could be stronger.

My friends at the centre were disappointed with me, because they said I would not be able to see them, and I would not get on. My family did not know I was going to classes.

My husband is also not educated, but he was okay.

My children are encouraging me all the time.

They agree with me.

My mother and my friends encouraged me to go back to classes and I promised I will go back as soon as I can. My parents want me to become educated so I can support them. My friends say life is difficult these days, without education there is nothing we can do. If you stay at home you become illiterate again, so it's better to attend school.

They don't want to see me sitting here at home!

My parents and friends understand the problems. They are not surprised.

I told my husband I could not attend because of these daughters and he felt very disappointed and worried about that. He asked me is that the reason. I said there is nothing I could do - I could not take these 3 daughters to school they would disturb my studies and even the others too.

My friends are not here. They are far away in Giyani. I think they would help me.

They wanted me to go back. My mother was very sad at my decision.

QUESTION 8. HOW DO YOU SPEND THAT TIME NOW?

I spend the time at home doing nothing. There is no-one available to help me with the skills I need. So I am just waiting.

I spend the time on my housework. Sometimes I try to do some work. I try to read when my friend is with me. She also helps me with my English.

There is nothing I can do. I just spend it at home or looking for work.

I do my own things, meet friends or do a job.

I prefer to clean at home, to fetch water beyond that mountain every day. It is difficult.

I am a person who likes to sell something whilst I am at home. But just when my business goes well you will find that now is my time to go to hospital again. But I like selling things from home.

I'd better preach in the streets and tell people about God.

I have now got a job but sleeping on the farms in Moloto. So there is no chance of learning at the school.

I'm carrying on with my private studies with the aid of friends.

Reading stories and watching TV.

Reading story books for myself but I have no new ones so I can't move.

Reading the Zulu Bible and Zulu magazines. But I need English.

I copy fancy work from friends and I sew.

I am at home looking out for my domestic affairs.

I am just waiting.

I have started at the sewing school.

I prefer to go and sell soft goods to the pensioners. If I am not doing that I prefer just to stay at home. Apart from that, I clean the house and go on leisure with my friends.

I keep myself busy cleaning the house, cooking and just basking in the sun. There is nothing you can do at this moment, nothing better without getting educated. I prefer to go back. There is no benefit staying home.

There is nothing better that I could do now. I am just looking for work to get employed somewhere so that I could earn some money and go back to school. The school I could attend is the one that starts at 6 in the evening.

Now I am looking for a job to work for my family. Because I am at home, there is nothing I can do. Any work is okay, even labour, just to get the money.

Most of the time I'm selling on the streets as I said. But after that I come home to clean my house.

QUESTION 9. WHAT WERE YOU HOPING TO ACHIEVE WHEN YOU FIRST WENT TO CLASSES?

I hoped to be skilled with communication, to gain knowledge in presenting myself so I could apply for jobs, talk for my family and myself when there are problems.

I hoped to get knowledge. I wished to know how to read write and speak my language and English. I wished to be taught how to start and manage a small business.

I told you I wanted to get a better education. When we had to register I knew I needed to get a better education, and I must go to classes. I knew some people who went there.

I wanted to read, write and do Maths.

To try and get some education.

I was hoping to improve my English and to make progress in my life like everybody who does that.

I wanted to go as far as I can with education.

I hoped to get good knowledge and be able to do things by myself with nobody's help.

To gain more knowledge.

To understand written work and be able to read books so I can learn.

I was keen to learn to read and write, as I told you.

To gain knowledge of reading writing and filling in forms.

I wanted to gain knowledge and read and write. I didn't want to always get help with my affairs.

I did not have anything I wanted to achieve because it was difficult for me to say my hopes as a person who was on that low level.

I wanted numeracy skills when I started, but now I want more.

To get Std 8 to get promotion or a better job.

I wanted tutors to help me in reading and writing. I also wanted to be like them as tutors. That was what I wanted to achieve first. I wanted to become a teacher.

I wanted to read, write letters to friends and maybe get employment somewhere.

There are still a lot of things I want to know from school. I didn't have enough time to grasp everything that was given to us. So there is so much I want to do to improve my education.

I wanted to become educated so that I could get a better job, work for myself. Because there is no-one who can help you if you are not educated and not working for yourself.

I wanted to be able to understand road signs, fill in forms and if there was work somewhere, to fill in application forms. It is disempowering to have other people read and write for you.

I wanted to learn English mainly because it is very difficult to me. I even needed to know more about my own language Zulu, and also Afrikaans,

because for the employer it was important to know English and Afrikaans. Communication was the main reason for going to classes.

QUESTION 10. NOW THAT YOU CANNOT DO THAT, WHAT WILL YOU DO?

I hope to go back to school or to classes with the hope of getting any skills I can.

Because I want this knowledge I will not give up hope. I will go back to class but before I start I will speak to the Head and ask her to get a someone who can teach us good, relevant things.

I will try to get my children to help me with the books, to write and to read.

I will buy two beers and relax a bit.

I found that it will work for me to invest the little money that I am paid for my work to open up a small business selling in the street and at home to keep life going.

I realise that I should go to the school of sewing and then sell my goods to the people from home.

I will think about what I can do. Maybe I will tell people about God.

I am still keen to read with the help of my friends, but it's not the same. I won't be able to progress this way.

I will keep on doing private studies.

I feel confused at present. It's my home affairs at present. A burglary has taken place. So I am just waiting.

I will just watch TV. What can I do?

I am hoping to continue reading books with the help of my children.

I will just get on with my beadwork.

I am looking after my domestic affairs.

I can do that, but not now. Next year I will return to classes to finish my Std 5 and I will specialise with numeracy and English. I have heard about the IEB. I have plans for this year, but next year I will do that.

I will do that one day, but for now I have started at the sewing school.

I intend going back to my classes. Even tomorrow I can go back to school.

I still want to go to school. I can do that.

I don't know what to do, because there is nothing I can do.

There are various things I wish to do, but because I am not working I can't do them or achieve them. If I was working it would be very much better.

I am doing a bit of selling of vegetables to make money to buy reading materials.

I would like to cook for the family, clean the house and just relax.

I will need to be selling my goods to get money. Once I have money I will see what I can do about those aims. I want to go to Cape Town to buy things, and to Mozambique to get materials. I travel a lot.

QUESTION 11. WILL YOU RETURN TO CLASS?

All respondents indicated their intention to return to class one day. Additional comments made in interviewees' responses are listed below.

I will need to be selling my goods to get money. Once I have money I will see what I can do about those aims. I want to go to Cape Town to buy things, and to Mozambique to get materials. I travel a lot.

I will never go back to school again, until the situation is normal again.

Now I am bored more than I can explain. If there can be electricity and other resources, then I will go back.

The school is far for me to reach and I cannot afford it again because I am sick. If I am well again, I will go.

I will ask God to let me go back. If chances at laughing at me can stop, I will go back.

If I get a room, I would love to get back to school.

I'm ready to get back to school if I can first get a job.

If I can get a school nearer my work I will return.

Yes. I will think about going back to school when I have finished the sewing.

Yes I am prepared to but I must do some selling first.

QUESTION 12. ARE THE PEOPLE YOU DEPEND ON IN DIFFICULTIES EDUCATED?

No they are not educated. I can't depend on them - they depend on me, because I am working and they are staying on the farms.

This is a difficult question for me, I don't know what to say. I get help from the church of the reverend. He is educated. They gave us beans, mealie meal, soups, small packets of sugar, and if you become absent from attending church service you might lose the whole package. Maybe I will work one of these days once my children are educated, and will be able to read and write letters for me. Then I can get a good job.

I depend on myself. There is no-one I can depend on anyway.

I depend on my family and they are not well educated. We all work on the farms.

Yes. The school.

There were people who paid for my education, but now they live a distance away, far away. I live through God's prayer and I don't depend on anyone. People don't live through eating food only through praising and praying for God.

No. I only depend on myself.

Some of them are.

They are semi literate.

I depend on myself and I am not educated.

I depend on my husband and he is not educated.

My children are educated and they support and encourage me in my difficulties.

Some of them are.

My family are not well educated.

Yes they are.

Yes my parents are educated.

My mother is not educated.

No they are not.

There is nobody supporting me. I support myself and my children.

QUESTION 13. HOW DO THEY MANAGE TO SUPPORT YOU IF THEY ARE NOT EDUCATED?

They do not support me, I support them because I am working.

I support myself by doing part time jobs. My sister sometimes helps me but the problem is she stays very far from me, so in most cases I have to fend for myself.

The reverend is well educated. The church can support many people.

I support myself.

We just struggle with what we get paid for our work on the farm.

We did not have to pay anything at school. The teacher received the money from Mafikeng.

They don't support me.

By motivation only.

Through motivation.

By motivating me to carry on. They just encourage me, but they do not support with money. I cannot have that.

They only support me by word of mouth.

They just encourage me and you don't need education for that.

We survive smoothly.

I am motivated by the friend who has the sewing school. Because I have the children to support, I can't depend on education.

My mother is a pensioner so with the little money that she receives every month at least we manage to survive. Apart from my mother there is nobody who is working here at home. I'm also doing my best with the money I make from selling.

They are and they feel responsibility to support.

They are educated.

My mother is able to support us because she is working somewhere. She earns a little but she is able to support me.

They are selling fruits and vegetables. With the commission we can survive.

QUESTION 14. TWO PEOPLE YOU ADMIRE AND WOULD LIKE TO EMULATE?

I have an uncle who has a farm and also has stock, who is uneducated. He still manages that without being well educated. I admire him, but I also think that if he can get more educated on things like management, his properties will grow.

I admire women who are educated. Women who can stand for their rights and who can represent others. I admire businesswomen. I wish I could start my own business.

I admire Bishop Tutu. He is looking out for the struggle of the people who were arrested for failing to carry pass books with them, and the rights of those who died in jails. I like him because he is behind the whole thing. He is fighting for justice.

The other is the old man Madiba Mandela, today we don't carry pass books, we drink beers under the trees and we are not afraid of doing that. He is a good leader and he looks out for our rights.

I admire a lawyer and a teacher. Their things are going well.

I like the minister of health, minister Zuma. She is good where she is. She knows what the women need and want. At the moment where we are, there are no clinics, we walk 8 kilometres to attend clinic. I would not forget the thing

that I have seen sometimes back in my life - I saw a woman giving birth to a child under a tree and this was during the time of apartheid.

Rebecca Malope with her music. She never went far with education but is successful in life.

I will give you one person who likes to talk on the radio. He's called Snyman Rankane of Radio Setswana. When he talks he build people up with his advice. I like him very much. The other one is Sello Phiri. Actually what is great is that I like people who build up other people.

I admire Mr Mangope. Although he left us in the lurch, he knows how to combat crime and tsotsis. His police were beating only.

My church elders the way they preach and talk to the congregation.

People who are learned, and are able to give good support to their families.

The way they bring up their family and their mode of life. I would like to be like that. They live near me.

The way they bring up their family and their mode of life. I would like to be like that. They live near me.

I admire my teacher and all the knowledge she had. I also admire my employer in the way that she brings up her children.

There is no-one really. I am just myself.

I admired my teacher, and I admire my children because they are successful.

I admire my friend at the sewing school. Skills and experience of those skills are important. High education will come later.

The first person is Fingi, a tutor at the centre. The second is my neighbour Daniel. He has completed his Matric and he is always encouraging me to return to these literacy classes so that I become well educated in the future. He is my role model for education and for selling. He is my advisor in terms of good and bad. One of my friends Elsie. She is educated and is occupying a very challenging position at work. She looks after herself. The other one is still attending school and that is my sister. She is in Std 10 and I'm very proud of her for being in that standard.

My friend and her husband are well educated. They got their Matric. They occupy better positions where they work. Those are the people I admire most.

I want to become like my sister and my brother in law because these 2 people they are well educated. My sister is working at the hospital and he is working as a soldier. He is helped by a bursary, so these are the people I admire because they can challenge life. Because both of them they are educated and they are working. It is nice to work for yourself and earn a salary. I wish I could follow in their steps.

There is no-one in this area. Only my sister in Std 6 and she is having a baby unfortunately.

The two people are my friends. The one is teaching at a primary school, the other at a pre-school. They work from eight till two. And they are sure at the end of the month there is a salary they will receive. Their children are at private schools, my children are just at the local school here. They have cars. Their living conditions are far better than mine. Because I am not educated there is nothing I can do. Their children wear nice clothes - she has no problems buying for them. I am suffering a lot.

QUESTION 15. ONE PERSON YOU ADMIRE WHO IS NOT EDUCATED

My uncle..(as per previous question's response) I have an uncle who has a farm and also has stock, who is uneducated. He still manages that without being well educated. I admire him, but I also think that if he can get more educated on things like management, his properties will grow.

I admire women who are educated. Women who can stand for their rights and who can represent others. I admire businesswomen. I wish I could start my own business.

I like reverend Moyenda. He taught us in the Sunday school long time ago. He knows the Bible very well.

The person is in the family. He is able to live by selling as a hawker. He does not have a good education but he is good at his job. I admire him.

I like the singer in Bayete. I heard that he was working in the streets with no education, but he is successful now.

Mr Mofokeng Pule never went to school. My husband was a person who never went to school at all. He was bright, he had livestock e.g. cattle, sheep, tractors. He lived by farming and he went as far as to say farming is your backbone, your treasure. There is no bank bigger than that. It was his business, when buying furniture he will sell one sheep or goat to get it.

My husband.

I admire my mother because she can do many things and she is not educated.

My friend with the sewing school.

One of my friends by the name of Suzy. She is not educated but she keeps on motivating me that we should go back to school. I admire that.

Mostly I admire my mother. She is not well educated but she is able to support and look after us all.

There is nobody I know who is not well educated that I could admire.

There is not one person whom I greatly admire who is not well educated. Because we Africans, we have got a tendency of hiding things. We will see people living enjoying their life, living a luxurious life but without education. But there is no-one I know I can say this one is not educated. People have their own secrets. You can't find out how they can live a luxurious life without being educated.

My younger brother is not educated. He is employed somewhere at Brits. He is living a better life compared to my life. That is the person I admire most because he is working. If I compare my life with his there is a vast difference. Although he is not educated.

The person I admire around here is not educated. But I am very worried. Her living conditions are better than mine, yet she is not educated. I don't know how.

QUESTION 16. GREATEST AMBITION

I wish to be productive, to be able to show direction. Be at least able to communicate well. Fill in forms (application) for myself, be able to write letters and read them for myself. On my own, and be able to teach my own family on basic things.

My greatest ambition now is to be a businesswoman. I wish I could be able to run a shop, a small shop and make it grow into a big shop. I wish I could

know how to speak and read and write. I wish I could be able to ask for sponsors, write to them, and write my price, count my money and save. I wish I could give my daughter education, get her to be more educated so that she can fend for herself later in life.

If I could just get money to send my children to school.

I'd like to see my family staying in well developed areas.

I like to have a house not a shack, and enough money to live a better life. At the moment I'm living in a shack and this makes my life not to change.

I like to work very much. I don't like to sit with my hands folded. I will better sew or do gardening. I would look after my poultry. When visitors come, I kill one for the visitors. Gardening is a problem because water is a problem in our area.

I am prepared to sell vegetables, fruits and do poultry farming.

I have started sewing lessons from friends at home so as to enlarge my income to cover myself and my family.

To be able to read, write and get a better job.

To be literate and able to support my family.

To get a better job and salary.

Continue with my work and support my children.

To get a better job so as to be able to support myself and my children.

I don't have ambition. I just have to make a way in life.

To get my Std 5 and a better job.

To get my Std 8 one day.

To become a dressmaker and sewing. There are other things that I wanted to do, but I can't remember now. I still prefer to be one of the dressmakers in life so that my family could become very much happy about what I would be doing for myself and for them in life.

I prefer dressmaking because I feel that is the easiest job I can do in my life.

My ambition for myself and my family in future could be sewing and selling what I have made, my products.

I am able to form bricks, the bricks you see here at my home. It is difficult work, at least I can do that. Nobody taught me, I just see people doing it. That is my ambition. Besides that, I am able to work as a domestic worker because I can clean.

The greatest ambition for myself and my family is to go and buy goods and sell them to people. Thing like glycerine, lotions and perfumes.

Apart from selling, I don't have any. That is my trade.

QUESTION 17. GREATEST FEAR

To leave my family uneducated. To leave my family poor. I want my children to get what I could not get. They must live an affordable life. They must manage to work for themselves.

My greatest fear is to leave my daughter uneducated when I die. I am afraid that she will not be able to fend for herself if she is not educated. I don't want

her to suffer like me. I am fearful for my family because they are not literate, and as a result we are poor.

What I fear with family is to see us living under oppression and struggle.

I fear not to have education. But I am also scared to go back. If I had education I would not live this life like my parents.

What I fear with my family is that I don't want to hurt someone. So with myself I don't want to hurt a person either. I like that if we don't agree on something, we'd better talk to one another with peace for a settlement then build one another.

I fear a snake. It has a bad spirit for my family. I fear my husband when he is angry everything becomes a mess.

To remain in darkness and be without a job and create misery for my family.

If no education there won't be a good job and there will be no money.

If I am not learned in the near future as my children are growing bigger they will look down on me.

Losing my job and my family would feel out of place in life.

No education, no work and a poor life. One makes the other.

I fear for myself because I am not proud of myself. I don't have self-confidence.

I fear the violence.

There is nothing I fear. I know what I want to do.

Death. Apart from death, I don't want to break into other people's houses and I don't want to see myself jailed for such things.

I fear only God.

I fear accidents and burning. Even death too is my greatest fear in life.

It is that if my mother passed away now, I would suffer a lot. So I have a great respect for death.

What I fear is to steal other people's property. It is better to go and ask from people not stealing. I fear jail. If one of the family passes away that will be a disappointing thing to me because it could be a person we depend on.

Death. I am just worried that if I die today, what is going to happen to my children, who will bury me. How to cover all the costs.