

**Adult Basic Education and Training on literacy: A case study of Laaste
Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre in Limpopo Province**

by

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- The Almighty God, for inspiring me to victory through His Spirit and grace.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this report to my wife Raesetja for her ceaseless support and inspiration throughout the course of conducting this study.

DECLARATION

I declare under oath that this research titled **“Adult basic education and training on literacy: A case study of Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre in Limpopo Province”** was done by myself and to the best of my knowledge no one has ever at any given time submitted it to any university. I also declare that all the sources used in this report have been properly indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

M.A Rabothata

05 November 2016

Date

ABSTRACT

This study drew attention to the strategic necessity of the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme in equipping historically disadvantaged communities with basic numeracy, reading and writing skills. The Department of Basic Education regards the ABET programme as the vehicle on which individuals historically excluded from formal schooling life access basic education and skills that help them to be active agents of socio-economic change in their communities.

Whilst the ABET programme's broad objectives have been properly conceptualised and institutionalised, the central concern of this study is that little effort may have been invested by the Department of Basic Education to qualitatively assess the state of ABET programmes in rural-based Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) like Laaste Hoop. In order to ensure the Department of Basic Education recoup best returns from every effort invested in the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC such an assessment is imperative. This study employed the qualitative method and a case study design to examine the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC. Using the purposive sampling method, ten participants comprising one member of the centre's Governing Body, six learners, the centre manager and two facilitators were selected to participate in the study.

The main finding of this study is that the Laaste Hoop PALC is struggling to effectively fulfil its broad mandate due to poor budgetary support from the

Department of Basic Education. The study found that the Laaste Hoop PALC is generally in a state of neglect as the infrastructure is in an advanced state of dilapidation. The main recommendation of the study is that the Department of Basic Education needs to launch a targeted fundraising campaign in order to improve the operating and financial leverage of the centre.

Key words: ABET programme; adult literacy; numeracy; functional literacy.

ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
PALC	Public Adult Learning Centre
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Centres
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Apart from justifying the significance of the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme to broad nation-building objectives, Chapter One also outlines the background and contextual framework of the study. Issues covered by Chapter One include key concepts, research objectives and an abridged version of the methodology used to collect and analyse research results. The aim of Chapter One is to lay the foundation on which all the successive chapters will be benchmarked.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

All over the world, basic education is enlisted as a catalyst for development (Department of Basic Education, 2011:56). Without education, the goal to eradicate poverty and effectively develop and empower historically disadvantaged communities can never be fully realised (Freire, 2011:13). Globally, the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme is regarded as an integral component in the nation building matrix of every nation. The view advocated by Freire (2011:14), is that ABET programme is a major vehicle that drives every nation's developmental and social change agenda.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that every citizen has the right to basic education (Constitution of the Republic South Africa, 1994:67). Denying anyone unrestricted access to education is therefore a violation of that individual's fundamental right. According to the South African Constitution, the government is required by law to eliminate all legal, social, demographic, racial and economic barriers that naturally hinder citizens from accessing basic educational opportunities (Moyo, 2014:45). Since 1994, the Department of Basic Education initiated a literacy campaign programme to ensure that previously disadvantaged communities access affordable education and training opportunities (Chombo, 2013:34).

The ABET programme is one of the strategies adopted by the government after 1994 that aims to make education more inclusive and accessible to the general public. The ABET programme makes education more inclusive in character because every person no matter his or her socio-economic background is given an opportunity to learn basic skills like writing, reading and numeracy (Moyo, 2014:56). The reality is that due to various reasons, these adults have never tasted a formal schooling life. The ABET programme targets adults who have since passed the school going age but at the same time do not know how to read, write and numerate (ABET Institute, 2013:45).

According to the Department of Basic Education (2011:34), the ABET programme seeks to enhance or upgrade the literacy status of South African adults who by one reason or another missed an opportunity to enrol in the formal schooling system. The primary aim of the ABET programme is to improve the numeracy, writing and reading capacities of adults who missed an opportunity to attain formal education (Moyo, 2014:112; Department of Basic Education, 2011:45). Since 1994, a number of illiterate people particularly in rural areas have enrolled in the ABET programme (Department of Basic Education, 2011:34). Generally, the ABET initiative is credited for equipping illiterate adults with reading, numeracy and writing skills (Chombo, 2013:80).

The National Directorate for Adult Education and Training under the auspices of the Department of Basic Education is charged with directing and administering the activities of the ABET programme (Department of Basic Education, 2011:13). The role of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy in South Africa is acknowledged by Francis, Dube, Mokganyetji and Chitapa (2010:358). Francis et al (2010:359) argued that the ABET programme is instrumental in addressing the problem of illiteracy especially in rural areas.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2011:45) the ABET programme is a flexible, developmental initiative that addresses specific literacy needs of adults who have never experienced formal schooling life.

Upon completion, learners are issued with nationally recognised certificates (Moyo, 2014:15). Sharp (2014:16) iterates that the ABET programme is the entry point for illiterate adults into the formal schooling system. The ABET programme paves the way for learners to enroll for skill courses at various vocational skills training centres. Francis et al (2010:351) point out that at the end of the course, learners are expected to demonstrate their ability to read, enumerate and write. The view of the Department of Basic Education, (2011:21) is that the ABET programme needs to be coined to provide a platform where historically disadvantaged illiterate individuals improve their reading, enumerating and writing skills.

Corner (2010:72) argues that the ABET programme provides adults with the necessary knowledge required to enhance their literacy. Through ABET, learners gain understanding on the importance of literacy in their daily living (Francis et al, 2010:351). According to the Department of Basic Education (2011:56) the ABET programme encompasses a wide range of formal and informal learning activities undertaken by adults and out-of-school youth, resulting in the improvement of their literacy.

Whilst the role of the ABET programme to South Africa's nation-building agenda is known, the challenge is that very few scholars attempted to review the effect of the programme to the socio-economic profile of its beneficiaries (Chombo, 2014:10). This view is supported by Forest (2010:21) who cautions that the problem of most ABET courses is that they are more academic oriented than vocational skills-focused. Corner (2010:78) pointed out that as long as the ABET programme continues to put little emphasis on vocational skills, it will be difficult to ascertain their effect on the socio-economic profile of beneficiaries.

A close analysis of the current ABET literature shows that few authors have managed to qualitatively conceptualise the ABET programme's socio-economic contribution to society. The Department of Basic Education (2011:45) observed that the developmental role of the ABET programme has never been fully and inductively contextualised because of lack of

accurate data. For instance, the Department of Basic Education (2011:13) concedes that since the inception of the ABET programme in 1994, there was no tracer study instituted to assess the socio-economic status of learners who completed the programme.

Chombo (2014:98) reiterates that the challenge with most ABET programmes is that they are not results-based or outcomes-driven. The concern shared by Corner (2010:123) is that every year learners are churned out and yet authorities allegedly do not even bother to know what happens to them after leaving these adult learning centres.

Greenstein (2011:65) warns that no mechanisms are put in place to check how many former learners from these ABET centres start their own businesses. How many join the local workforce? How many end up joining the formal educational system? In other words, the ABET programme's major challenge is that most adult learning centres allegedly lack a coherent learner follow-up and support programme. Greenstein (2011:65) laments that former learners often struggle to make good use of the skills and knowledge they acquire after leaving these centres.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Rakoma (2008:1) whilst the role of the ABET programme to South Africa's nation-building agenda is widely acknowledged by many scholars, what has not been thoroughly conceptualised is the role of ABET in enhancing the literacy status of rural-based learners. A review of existing ABET literature shows that no or little attempts have been made by rural-based Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) like Laaste Hoop to conceptualise their roles in improving the literacy status of their learners. Moyo (2014:67) argues that little is known on whether learners at adult education centres are able to effectively enumerate, read and write on their own on completion. This study, therefore, investigates the status of the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC with the view to suggest ways on how the programme may enhance the literacy status of

its learners within the context of many challenges the centre is facing.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question was as follows:

- What is the status of the ABET programme in reducing the illiteracy of learners at Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre in Limpopo Province?

1.4.1 Sub-questions

- What are the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre (PALC) from reducing the illiteracy status of its learners?
- What are the views of the learners, facilitators, centre head and Centre Governing Body members on the ability of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC to reduce the literacy status of learners?
- What measures can be put in place to ensure that the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC meaningfully contributes to the reduction of the literacy status of learners?

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to assess the state of the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC with specific reference to its ability to effectively reduce the illiteracy status of learners.

1.5.1 Objectives of the study

The study addressed the following objectives:

- To identify the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC from reducing the illiteracy status of its learners.
- To assess the views of learners, facilitators, centre head and centre governing body members on the ability of the ABET programme

offered at Laaste Hoop PALC to reduce the illiteracy status of its learners.

- To recommend measures that can be put in place to ensure that the ABET programme meaningfully contributes to the reduction of illiteracy status of learners at Laaste Hoop PALC.

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts are defined:

1.6.1 Illiteracy

Knox (2009:34) defines illiteracy as the *“inability to use written language actively and passively”*. A contemporary definition of literacy is the *“inability to read and write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve decisions as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners”* (Knox, 2009:56).

In this study, illiteracy is defined as the condition of which an adult is unable to read, enumerate and write due to his or her disadvantaged socio-economic background.

1.6.2 Public Adult Learning Centre

The Department of Basic Education, (2012:2) refers to a Public Adult Learning Centre as *“a public school or an independent school which enrolls learners who due to one reason or another failed to enrol in a formal schooling system”*. According to Knowles (2011:10) a Public Adult Learning Centre *“is a centre that specialises on adult education and training programmes that target mainly adult learners with the view to offer them lifelong learning opportunities”*.

In the context of this study, a Public Adult Learning Centre is a Department of Basic Education funded institution that seeks to empower adult learners with various literacy skills.

1.6.3 Rural

Kretzmann and McKnight (2010:2) defines a rural area as “*an open swath of land usually located far away from the city and characterised with few homes or other buildings and not very many people*”. Ebersohn and Ellof (2003:15) define a rural area as “*a non-urbanised remote area that lacks basic social amenities, infrastructure and other economic privileges predominantly found in urbanised areas*”.

In this study, rural is a remote area located in a non-urban zone and which is usually governed by a traditional chief.

1.6.4 ABET

ABET is defined as “*a basic life skills education and training service offered to adults*” (Baumgartner, 2010:34). According to Moyo (2014:5) ABET is “*a tailor-made educational programme that involves the acquisition of basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The thrust of the ABET programme is to give an opportunity to adults who under normal circumstances failed to enrol into the formal schooling system. ABET is a basic life skills education and training initiative offered to adults who have since passed the formal schooling going age. This type of education includes the acquisition of basic skills of literacy and numeracy. It also provides opportunities for lifelong learning and development*” (Hinzen, 2012:21).

In this study, ABET is an initiative coordinated and funded by the Department of Education to equip illiterate adults with the basic skills on how to write, read and enumerate.

1.6.5 Adult

Rogers (2012:57) defines an adult as “*a responsible or self-directed person who by law has the capacity to enter into contracts or make his or her own independent decisions*”. According to Hinzen (2013:2) an adult is “*an independent person with recognised legal contractual capacity and ability to make responsible decisions*”

In this study, an adult is a person who has since passed the schooling going age but is not able to read, write and enumerate.

1.6.6 Adult educator

The Department of Basic Education (2011:23) defines an adult educator as “*a literacy promoter, a district literacy organiser or regional literacy officers*”. An adult educator is “*a specialist teacher who has been trained to deliver educational programmes to adults with no formal educational qualifications*” (Rogers, 2012:30)

In this study, an adult educator is an employee of the department of Basic Education who has been assigned to Laaste Hoop PALC to facilitate adult learning activities at the Centre.

1.6.7 Functional Literacy

Functional literacy refers to “*life-oriented literacy with programmes focused not only on narrow economic concerns but also on other concerns related to daily living; for example nutrition, health, family planning, and culture to mention just a few*” (Bhola, 2010:76). Rogers (2012:13) defines functional literacy as “*a literacy campaign programme that empowers adult learners with livelihood skills or skills that transform adults into agents of socio-economic change*”.

In this study, functional literacy refers to an educational programme that is dedicated to equip people with life-orientation skills and knowledge.

1.6.8 Numeracy

Numeracy is “*synonymous with the ability to manipulate basic mathematics skills like addition, subtraction, division and multiplication*” (Bryman, 2009:16). Numeracy is defined as “*the ability to use mathematics in everyday life. Being numerate means being able to reason with numbers and other mathematical concepts and to apply these in a range of contexts and to solve variety of problems*” (Rogers, 2012:14).

In this study, numeracy is defined as the ability of adult learners at Laaste Hoop PALC to add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers.

1.6.9 Community development

Community development means “*the improvement in economic, social and political conditions of a whole community in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity and unemployment* (Archer, 2011:259). The term community development means “*engaging in socio-economic activities that are designed to improve the socio-economic profile of people or communities*” (Vanderveen & Preece, 2010:76).

In this study, community development means the ability of the adult learners at Laaste Hoop to demonstrate basic literacy skills upon completion of the ABET course offered at the Centre.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology involves the strategy or plan that was used to select study participants as well as collecting and analysing research data.

1.7.1 Research design

The study was based on interpretive epistemology. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:56) interpretivism involves the belief that social reality has no existence apart from the meanings that individuals construct for it. The study adopted a qualitative methodology because the approach naturally presented an opportunity for the researcher to intensively probe the contribution of the ABET programme within the environmental context of the Laaste Hoop PALC using qualifying vocabulary and narrative themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:56).

Creswell (2011:15) defines a qualitative method as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. In this case, the social problem was to examine the contribution of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC in reducing illiteracy which is not known. The qualitative methodology was critical in two ways. Firstly, it enabled the researcher to interact with study participants on a face to face basis. Secondly, it provided an opportunity to describe the

environmental conditions of study participants using unstructured and non-numerical data.

A single-bounded case study design was adopted. A single-bounded case study design helped to critically review the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC from the perspective of people who directly manage and govern the centre (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:73). The single bounded case study design offered an authentic and intensive account of the contribution of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC. Using the Laaste Hoop PALC as a case site, the objective was to conceptualise the contribution of the ABET programme using learners, facilitators and Centre Governing Body members and the Centre Manager as key informants. These people are known to be familiar with how the programme is locally administered and governed in Laaste Hoop. Lived experiences of learners who are participating in the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC was also taken into consideration.

1.7.2 Population and sampling

Kruger and Mitchell (2011:47) define a population as all the people that are relevant to the study, from which a circumscribed sample will be selected for research. Laaste Hoop is a rural village found in the Capricorn district under Polokwane Municipality. According to Statistics South Africa (2011:34), Laaste Hoop covers an area of 9.58 square kilometres. It is home to a population of 6670 people. Whilst 99.9% of the population are black Africans, non-black Africans constitute 0.01% of the local population. Records show that 96.1% of the population in Laaste Hoop speak the Sepedi language. The Tsonga and Venda tribes constitute 1.2% and 2.69% of the population respectively. Further, only 0.01% speaks non-African languages.

Thirty-three (33) people comprising the PALC's Centre Manager, seven (7) Centre Governing Body members, five (5) facilitators and twenty (20) learners constitute the study's population. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:76) describe a sample as a subset of the total population that has been selected for a particular study. Six (6) learners, two (2) facilitators, one (1) member of the Centre Governing Body and the Centre Manager took part in the study. While learners shared their lived experiences on how the ABET at Laaste Hoop PALC

is helping them to read, write and enumerate, the Centre Manager and the Facilitators expressed their views on what needs to be done to ensure the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC is more effective and responsive.

The Centre Governing Body members shed light on how the programme can be better governed in order to make it more effective and result-oriented. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009:77). Since the researcher lived and worked in Laaste Hoop as a principal at a local primary school for more than 15 years, all members of the study population are known to him. As reiterated by Creswell (2011:35) only participants known to the researcher as information-rich were targeted by the investigation.

1.7.3 Data collection

The data collection activity was administered as follows:

- **Phase one: Document analysis**

The first phase involved documentary review analysis. Basically, secondary data was sourced from the adult learning centre's 2014 annual report, learners' assessment reports and various Department of Basic Education assessment reports.

- **Phase two: Semi-structured interviews**

The second phase involved collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews. According to Yin (2011:67) the advantage of interviews was that participants were interviewed in the comfort of their homes. According to Somekh and Lewin (2010:60), interviews can be useful in contexts where obtaining prompt feedback is a necessity. An interview schedule was used to manage all interview appointments.

- **Phase three: Observations**

The third phase involved making a scheduled visit to the Laaste Hoop PALC with the aim to directly observe how the centre conducts its day to day activities.

During the visit, the researcher checked the state of the learning centre's furniture, teaching aids as well as the learners' workbooks and textbooks.

1.7.4 Data analysis

According to De Vos (2011:339) data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Collected data was analysed inductively and textually. The open-coding method was used to analyse data. Specifically, data analysis unfolded in three distinct phases.

- **Phase one: Transcription**

This phase involved transcribing, editing, sorting and arranging field notes in order to easily analyse the content of the semi-structured interviews inductively (Yin, 2011:67).

- **Phase two: Textual analysis**

This phase involved reading through all the collected data to obtain a general sense or meaning of it. In addition, measures that brought textual meaning to the collected data were also put in place (Yin, 2011:67).

- **Phase three: Coding**

This phase involved coding the data into the computer. Coding ensured that all collected data was arranged into themes and sub-topics. Yin (2011:67) insists that data should be processed and analysed in an orderly fashion so that patterns and relationships can more easily discerned and validated (Yin, 2011:67). The data collected was reduced into manageable text so that it becomes helpful and relevant to decision makers.

1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Eisner (2012:80) warns that qualitative approach is sometimes subjective since its trustworthiness depends on the impartiality inclination of the researcher. Trustworthiness is the extent to which the findings of the study can be trusted or relied upon (De Vos, 2011:339). In order to guarantee the report's credibility, the following critical steps were taken:

- **Credibility**

The credibility criteria involved establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of study participants (Eisner, 2012:82). To ensure the credibility of the study, the final report was taken back to the participants for a second review. Furthermore, participants were given an opportunity to comment on the contents of the draft report before it was finalised.

- **Dependability**

Dependability ensures that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated (Yin, 2011:89). The researcher re-checked all used data transcripts to make sure that they do not contain overt mistakes and inaccuracies made during the transcription activity.

- **Confirmability**

Confirmability entails ascertaining how the research findings are supported by the data collected (Yin, 2011:89). In order to enhance confirmability, an audit trail was completed throughout the study to determine how each decision was made. Alternatively, a process of data triangulation which involved contrasting and comparing multiple data sources with the view to accurately interpret the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC was employed.

- **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a qualitative study can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Yin, 2011:89). The deemed view was that since a single-bounded case study was employed in conducting the study, it was naturally impossible to transfer the findings of the study (Yin, 2011:90).

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant in many ways. Firstly, this study may draw attention to the crucial role played by the Laaste Hoop PALC ABET programme in reducing adult illiteracy. Secondly, the results of this study may help the facilitators and centre leadership to re-examine the ABET curriculum and delivery methodology with the aim to make it more relevant and responsive to the literacy needs of the

adult learners in Laaste Hoop. Thirdly, the learners may also use the findings of this study to reflect on the importance of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy. The findings of this study are crucial in that they may alert policymakers on the contribution of the PALC's ABET programme in reducing illiteracy. Policymakers in the adult educational sector may be inspired by this study to craft and adopt adult education practices that may further reduce illiteracy levels at the Laaste Hoop PALC. Other academics may use this study to compare and contrast their findings on the same topic. On a bigger picture, this study may draw national attention to the influential role played by the ABET programme in advancing the developmental agenda of local communities.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The major limitation of the study was that it side-lined ordinary local community members and traditional leaders whose views would have helped to obtain a balanced appraisal of the contribution of ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC. The considered view is that the ordinary community members and traditional leaders represent an important constituency whose contribution to this topic is naturally critical. The other challenge is that this study extensively focused on contextualising the state of the ABET at Laaste Hoop PALC from an academic perspective, and in the process failed to equally examine and conceptualise the business case for the Centre to fully embrace vocational skills courses like carpentry, building, welding and dress making in the future.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations were observed during the course of this study:

- **Respect for persons**

The researcher secured informed consent of all key participants. Informed consent means that a participant in a study was helped to understand the purpose and benefits of the study (Yin, 2011:98). All participants signed consent forms first before interviews were conducted. This consent was voluntary, informed and preferably in written form.

- **The harm principle**

The researcher ensured that research participants are protected against any physical, psychological, moral and reputational harm. All social and cultural prejudices likely to endanger the social status of participants were dealt with consistently throughout the research process (De Vos, 2011:245).

- **Permission to conduct the study**

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the PALC Centre Manager and the Department of Basic Education (De Vos, 2011:235). A permission letter to that effect was obtained from the provincial office of the Limpopo Department of Basic Education.

- **The principle of justice**

In this research, the justice principle was primarily that of distributive justice. The researcher ensured that the research questions used were neither gratuitous nor resulted in the exploitation of study participants. The selection of research participants was based on principles of fairness and transparency (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:53).

- **Anonymity and confidentiality**

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, all the participants were requested not to disclose their identities. The confidentiality clause was expressly stipulated in the consent form (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:54).

1.12 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study comprised of the following five chapters:

- **Chapter One** introduced the context, purpose and significance of study.
- **Chapter Two** focused on literature review, whereby the scholarly views of other authors are highlighted.
- **Chapter Three** outlined the methodology employed to collect and analyse the research data.
- **Chapter Four** summarised, analysed and presented the research results using inductive methods.

- **Chapter Five** drew conclusions and outline recommendations on how to reduce illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTRIBUTION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO ADULT LITERACY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to establish how the views of other scholars on the ABET programme can be harnessed to better conceptualise and interpret the role of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop. Literature review also gave an in-depth knowledge of what has been established by other writers in this area of study. A review of different theoretical perspectives on adult learning and the role the ABET programme plays in reducing illiteracy was critically examined within the context of the four key research objectives enlisted in Chapter One. Literature review is crucial in that it helps to benchmark the findings of the study with the scholarly teachings of established authors. Rogers (2012:12) argues that literature review helps to deepen or enrich the theoretical framework of the researcher. The chapter starts by evaluating the global and national trends on ABET programme.

2.2 GLOBAL CONTEXT OF ABET PROGRAMME

The problem of illiteracy is a global concern (French, 2010:45). Although adult illiteracy rates are falling, the numbers of illiterate adults aged 15 years and above continue to rise in absolute terms. According to UNESCO (2013:10) in 1970, there were about 760 million illiterate adults aged 15 years and above while in 1985 the estimated number was 889 million. The total number of adult illiterates aged 15 years and above for 1990 was estimated at 948 million and that for the year 2000 is estimated at 935 million (UNESCO, 2013:34).

UNESCO (2013:34) attributes the sharp increase in global adult illiteracy statistics to high population growth and steep rise of children dropping out of primary schooling due to adverse socio-economic conditions.

Adult illiteracy rates are highest in the countries of the developing world and among the poorest and most underdeveloped people. According to the UN Report (2012:34) in 1960 about 58% of adult illiterates were women but by 1970 this figure rose to 60%; and by 1985, it went up to 63%. Today an estimated 861 million adults including 140 million 15-24 year-olds worldwide are illiterate, and two third of them are women, despite literacy being recognised as a human right more than a century ago (UNESCO, 2013:14).

The call to extend basic literacy programmes to all South Africans under the banner of “Education for all” makes a lot of sense in today’s fast changing world. French (2010:45) warns that a nation with a high number of uneducated adults is always at risk of lagging behind in terms of inclusive development. Such a nation is rendered globally uncompetitive and always lags behind on development matters (Hinzen, 2012:7).

The picture painted by the United Nations (UN) Report (2012:34) is that high illiteracy rates pose a serious national security threat. The report cautions that countries with high number of people not able to read, write and enumerate are ridden with high levels of youth crime statistics and other social ills like drug abuse, prostitution and early teenage pregnancies. The report further iterates that putting more illiterate people in classrooms brings in itself national pride and prestige (UN Report, 2012:45). In other words, a health and prosperous nation is a nation whose adult population is able to read, write and enumerate.

According to the UN Report (2012:45), more than 960 million adults, two thirds of whom are women living in so called third world countries are illiterate. The “developmental role of adult education” is widely acknowledged in a number of United Nations Resolutions and International Conventions of which South Africa is a signatory. Adult education aims to advance the “Right for education for all” campaign as adopted by several UN resolutions and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (Davies, 2012:56). For instance, under the MDG framework,

governments are encouraged to prioritise efforts to improve adult literacy (UN Report, 2012:15).

2.3 SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF ABET PROGRAMME

The South African version of non-formal education is known as the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). The structure and the objective of the ABET programme has its origin in the National Education Policy Act of 1996. The National Directorate for Adult Education and Training under the auspices of the Department of Education is responsible for championing initiatives to ensure that all adult South Africans actively participate in the ABET programmes.

Although progress has been made towards reducing South Africa's high illiteracy rate since 1994, the considered view is that South Africa's adult illiteracy rate is generally still high. ABET as a government funded programme seeks to reverse high levels of adult illiteracy confronting South Africa's historically disadvantaged communities. Since 1994, the Department of Basic Education invested substantial efforts and resources to ensure previously disadvantaged adults access affordable and quality adult education and training (Bhola, 2010:01).

The current thinking within the department is that adult education still plays a critical role in bridging the skills divide inherited from the apartheid era. Since the adoption of the ABET programme in 1996, several adult learning centres were established across the country. The campaign saw many adult South Africans enrolling enmasse in ABET courses.

2.4 ABET PROGRAMMES

According to the Department of Basic Education (2013:34), the ABET programme comprises of the following key components:

- Writing skills that aim to improve the ability of learners to write letters, simple reports in their vernacular languages or English depending on the circumstances of the learners;
- Reading element which seeks to improve the learners' ability to read stories, books and letters and in the process help them to engage and communicate with others;
- Numeracy element, whose objective is to improve the learner's ability to calculate numbers, (adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying numbers);
- Life orientation skills that help the learner to interpret or understand the nature of his or her contribution to the development of self, community and the nation at large.

ABET encompasses a wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities undertaken by out-of-school youth resulting in the acquisition of new reading, numeracy and writing knowledge, skills and competencies. The end-result of the programme is to improve the quality of life of its beneficiaries (Corner, 2010:67). It must be understood that ABET is not an end on its own but a means to an end. Once a learner enrolls in an ABET programme, there is a legitimate expectation by society for that such a learner read, enumerate and write on his own upon completion.

In certain instances, the ABET programme is coined to improve the learner's ability to engage in income generating activities (French, 2010:14). The literacy campaign as rolled out by the Department of Basic Education strongly emphasises on the ability of the programme to use literacy as a mechanism to initiate learners into economic activities (Hinzen, 2012:13). The success of the ABET programme is measured by its ability to help learners actively participate in livelihoods programmes.

Hinzen (2012:12) states that as learners discover that acquiring reading, enumerating and writing can improve their income generating opportunities; their morale is boosted making it difficult for them to drop from the programme. In other words, the ABET programme needs to be

linked to economic empowerment or otherwise the programme can lose its relevance and responsiveness. The central concern is that the ABET programme should be coined in such a way that it increases learners' chances of actively participating in economic programmes.

For holistic human development to be realised, focus must be put on improving numeracy, writing and reading proficiencies of historically disadvantaged communities (French, 2010:15). According to the UN Report (2012:18) if communities are not literate enough, all efforts to promote socio-economic change and social cohesion within those communities may be futile. In other words, programmes to emancipate such communities from poverty and under-development can never bear the intended fruits.

Communities can only make their voices heard and felt if sustained efforts are made to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills (Belenky *et al.* (2009:45). This view is consistent with the views expressed by Hayes *et al.*, (2009:58) who argue that literate communities can effectively articulate and communicate their developmental needs and in the process entrench their ability to influence the direction of development in their respective communities. Literacy programmes transform learners into prolific communicators (Hinzen, 2012:67).

It is a common experience that illiterate people, due to their uneducated state, keep quiet and let those who are educated participate actively in economic activities. In light of this view, it is the role of ABET programmes to empower such people through the offering of literacy skills so that they can enter into the socio-economic and political sphere of the South African society (Department of Education, 2011:34).

According to the UN Report (2012:34), the low literacy of rural dwellers, limits their ability to participate in decision-making structures and benefit from training and extension services.

Literate women are more likely to ensure that their children attend school and since they are able to help their children at home, their children will

learn to read at an early age. Robinson-pant (2010:4) has a similar view when he encourages parental involvement in school matters, where he talks about parents visiting schools and becoming acquainted with classroom procedures.

2.5 ROLE OF ABET PROGRAMME

The general view is that literacy plays a pivotal role in the South African government's expanded efforts to eliminate poverty and promote inclusive development (French, 2010:90). The South African government has fully embraced the importance of literacy through various institutionalised literacy awareness campaigns (Gravett, 2010:45).

One of those institutionalised campaigns introduced by the government to eradicate widespread illiteracy among its populace since 1994 is called the ABET programme. According to French (2010:89) the ABET programme has the primary aim to increase lifelong learning opportunities to people who for one reason or another did not complete the first cycle of primary education.

The role of the ABET programme in the nation-building agenda of South Africa has been acknowledged by the Department of Basic Education on many occasions. For instance, the Department of Basic Education (2015:100) reiterates that the primary objective of the ABET programme is to promote access to equitable basic education and life-long learning for young people and adults with the view to make them effective agents of socio-economic development within their communities.

According to Hinzen (2012:45) the ABET programme as a key success factor for community development can no longer be rubbished. Corner (2010:19) argues that the ABET programme is a robust development instrument any government can use to empower poor communities so that they can actively be involved in the development affairs of their communities. The argument is that once a community is equipped with reading, numeracy and writing skills, such a community can easily alter developmental profile in a positive way (Corner, 2010:63).

2.6 CHALLENGES FACING THE ABET PROGRAMME

Like any other government funded programme, the ABET programme in South Africa is not immune to a myriad of challenges (Robinson-pant, 2010:4). Some of the challenges cited by French (2010:23) include inter-alia; poor budgetary support, high number of drop-outs, lack of trained and experienced teachers, poor material resources and the tendency by government to invest more funds into mainstream educational programmes and the failure to give learners proper follow-up and support upon completion of the programme. Katzao (2010:56) warns that the ABET programme in South Africa is not being treated as a strategic element of South African's development agenda. The government has a tendency of not committing adequate resources to effectively drive the programme's core activities and as a result most of these activities are not as effective as they ought to be because of poor funding.

In these tough economic situations, running an ABET programme effectively cannot happen without adequate financial support (French 2010:59). The private sector needs to be involved as well in order to improve the programme's budgetary support. Public Adult Learning Centres are advised to work in partnership with local companies to strengthen their financial and operating leverage (Tuchten, 2010:14).

Another challenge facing the ABET programme is the failure by Public Adult Learning Centres to attract competent and qualified teachers. Most of the centres cannot afford to pay attractive salaries or stipends and as such are struggling to attract experienced teachers (Katzao, 2010:13). The high staff turnover of teachers who continue to shun public adult learning centres in favour of better paying privately owned centres is the major cause of concern affecting operations of most Public Adult Learning Centres.

Katzao (2010:16) argues that the issue that makes adult education lose relevance and importance in the eyes of the public is that its net impact or effectiveness on learners is not quantitatively and qualitatively known.

For example, in the absence of a functional follow-up and support initiative or a trace study, it is difficult to know whether the ABET programme has made meaningful impact on learners (Tutchten, 2010:20). The question that has never been satisfactorily answered is “what happens to learners upon completion of ABET courses?” Do these learners become attractive to prospective employers on the basis of their ABET qualification? Do employers recognise the ABET qualification at all? All these issues make the ABET courses look less attractive thereby discouraging the majority of illiterate people to enroll in the programme.

The Department of Basic Education (2014:45) laments that by and large, in recent times, ABET programmes are no longer attracting a huge number of learners as it used to be two decades ago. The challenge was that after mounting a huge literacy campaign during the 1990’s, the momentum was lost over the years because the government’s focus significantly shifted towards promoting formal schooling programmes. The truth is more resources are being channelled towards higher education and other formal schooling schemes ((Tutchten, 2010:34).

The shift in focus has seen the ABET programme being side-lined or marginalised. By its own admission, the Department of Basic Education (2015:56) conceded that most Public Adult Learning Centres around the country are poorly resourced and being run with inexperienced personnel. Robinson-Pant (2010:23) points out that owing to shrinking fiscal support, most Public Adult Learning Centres in South Africa are facing dire operational challenges.

Katzao (2010:56) warned that the government has turned its back on the once vibrant and popular ABET programme. During the 1994 period, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) initiative underscored the need for the Department of Education to ensure that every citizen willing to read and write is afforded an opportunity to do so. The campaign dubbed “Education for All” was aggressively pursued and adequately bankrolled by the government. Compared to those years,

most of the Public Adult Learning Centres in the country suffer neglect due to poor funding (Moyo, 2014:78).

2.7 VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT ABET PROGRAMME

The role of the ABET programme in improving a learner's literacy skills has been acknowledged by many stakeholders. While some critics continuously question whether the ABET programme offered by various Public Adult Learning Centres is responsive or relevant enough in today's dynamic educational environment, everyone agrees that since its inception, the ABET initiative has played a notable role in accelerating South Africa's literacy campaign agenda.

Forest (2010:123) points out that the ABET programme is credited for helping people who never had a chance to read a book the best chance to do so. He emphasised that by its very nature, illiteracy condemns people deeper into poverty. A study conducted by the Hinzen (2012:61) in Zimbabwe showed that in areas where adult literacy programmes have been introduced, communities' participation and involvement in self-help activities tend to be more than in communities where adult literacy programmes were never introduced.

In Namibia, Katzao (2010:78) found that 90 percent of adults, who participated in adult literacy programmes, end up being opinion leaders in their communities. Such adults often earn the respect and admiration of their friends and family members.

While in some quarters of society, the ABET programme has been well-received, Bhola (2010:12) noted that the programme was resisted with some who view it as a waste of their precious time. French (2010:10) argued that the ABET programme did not receive overwhelming support in South Africa, because many adults never discerned its intended benefits.

A number of employed adults shunned the programme because of a perception that the programme was not given Recognition of Prior

Learning (RPL) status by many employers. Producing an ABET qualification at the workplace was not a guarantee that somebody will earn recognition status at the workplace (Forest, 2010:23). In other words, the ABET programme is still being treated as an inferior qualification.

Currently, the practice is that people who produced a formal matric qualification stand the best chance of getting a job or a promotion than those who submit an ABET qualification (Corner, 2010:56). According to Archer (2011:45) this challenge worked against the ABET programme's favour. Critics of the ABET programme warned that in the absence of a functional follow and support programme, it will remain difficult for learners to put the learnt skills to good use.

The issue is always that after receiving an ABET certificate, what is next? Baumgartner (2010:56) noted that ABET learners who have been funded by their employers were better off than those who were sponsored by the government. He gave an example in mines where upon completion; employees would be lined up for promotion or redeployment in well-meaning positions with slightly better salary packs (Chombo, 2014:34).

This incentive attracted huge number of employees into the programme. Moyo (2014:56) points out that it is natural for people to enrol in an education programme that makes them attractive to better job or promotion opportunities. In the absence of such incentives, a number of adults were discouraged from joining the programme (Baumgartner, 2010:81).

A study conducted by the Department of Education in 2013 revealed that most facilitators deployed in Public Adult Learning Centres throughout the country were dissatisfied with their conditions of service (Archer, 2011:67). The study also revealed that most centres based in rural areas were losing dozens of key personnel due to relatively low salaries and incentives. The study also found that due to weak budgetary support, most centres do not have sufficient funds to maintain the existing infrastructure which in most cases is at an advanced state of dilapidation

(Baumgartner, 2010:34). One of the issues raised by the study was that the enrolment levels in most centres were falling as many learners were pulling or dropping out from the programme. This should be understood in the context of a general lack of interest by learners.

2.8 MEASURES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

Although the above sounds like “gloom and doom” it must be noted that the challenges facing most Public Adult Learning Centres are not beyond redemption. A number of measures to effectively improve the state of the ABET programme in South Africa have been adopted and implemented by the Department of Basic Education (Moyo, 2014:3). Specifically the following measures have been put to test since 1994:

2.8.1 Budgetary support

Since 1994, the Department of Basic Education has allocated substantial resources to bankroll the ABET programme (Chombo, 2013:45 and French 2010:11). Critics may still argue that the fiscal support towards the ABET programme is often too little to adequately cover all the programme’s financial obligations. Although there are opportunities to expand more budget space for the programme, one cannot deny the fact that the government is doing its best to keep the programme afloat even in economically trying times.

2.8.2 Make the programme more responsive

According to Preece & Ntseane (2009:45) courses offered by the ABET programme should be carefully tailored to make them more relevant and responsive to the literacy needs of the local populace. There is a need for learners to be equipped with skills that help them improve their livelihood security (Bhola, 2010:67). For instance, rural learners need ABET courses that will help them to start their own businesses and improve their chances of getting jobs or employment. Any education programme that does not economically empower its beneficiaries is useless and therefore represents a sheer waste of money and time (Freire, 2011:67).

2.8.3 Incentives for facilitators

Moyo (2014:34) proposed that the Department of Basic Education needs to implement a financial incentive scheme to attract and retain qualified and experienced facilitators into the ABET programme. Attracting and retaining key skills at Public Adult Learning Centres must be at the centre of the Department of Basic Education's efforts to contain the high staff turnover experienced at PALCs (UNESCO, 2013:56). This view is also corroborated by Forest (2010:89) who argue that one of the panaceas to stabilise operations of Public Adult Learning Centres is to improve the reward structure of facilitators. The idea to attract and keep experienced adult facilitators within the employ of Public Adult Learning Centres has also been supported by Chombo (2014:34) and French (2010:62).

2.8.4 Staff development programmes

According to French (2010:23) the Department of Education needs to consider investing in initiatives to roll-out a sustained staff development programme with the view to up-skill the current crop of adult facilitators. Result-driven staff development programmes may go a long way in effectively addressing dire skills shortages being experienced in many Public Adult Learning Centres throughout the country (Belenky *et al.*, 1996:45).

2.8.5 Linkages with institutions of higher learning

Hinzen (2012:34) suggest that in order to improve the institutional capacity of Public Adult Learning Centres, the Department of Basic Education needs to establish twining arrangements with relevant universities. The bottom-line is that the training of adult facilitators must be done with accredited training specialists with a track record in the profession (UNESCO, 2013:12; Moyo 2014:13; Chombo, 2014:45).

2.8.6 Increased top management support

Moyo (2014:89) and UNESCO 2013:45 argue that the government through the Department of Basic Education needs to give the ABET

programme the same kind of attention and technical support given to the formal schooling programmes. The lack of meaningful ministerial and political support has been blamed by Chombo (2014:46) as one of the major reasons why the ABET programme in the post-1994 era has lost credibility and nationwide appeal. According to Moyo (2014:90) political support needs to be adequate enough in order to rekindle the waning public interest in the ABET programme.

2.8.7 Monitoring and evaluation framework

Belenky et al. (2010) assert that a combative monitoring and evaluation framework should be treated as a crucial element in the quest by the Department of Education to strengthen the performance and delivery machinery of the ABET programme. Moyo (2014:56) argues that in the absence of a functional monitoring programme, it will be difficult to assess whether the ABET programme is delivering the desired impact to learners.

2.8.8 Conclusion

Whilst Chapter Two critically reviewed the views of other scholars on the role of the ABET programme, the next chapter outlines the methodology that was employed to collect and analyse data collected from interviews.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Whilst Chapter Two focused on reviewing appropriate literature that benchmarked the study, this section provides the basis on how the research data was collected, analysed, presented and interpreted. The chapter also informs the processes and rationale behind the selection of the study's population and sample size.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study preferred the interpretivism approach because the approach naturally presents an opportunity for the researcher to intensively probe the role and underlying challenges facing the ABET programme within the environmental context of Laaste Hoop PALC using qualifying words and narrative themes (De Vos, 2011:45). According to Merriam (2009:56) interpretivism involves the belief that social reality has no existence on itself apart from the interpretations that individuals construct for it. The study is, therefore a naturalistic research undertaken within the habitat of the participants so that meanings and intentions that underline human action are understood and interpreted in relation to their context (Merriam, 2009:78).

The study was premised on a qualitative methodology. De Vos (2011:67) views qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. An expanded version of qualitative research entails that a researcher must study a social challenge in its own natural setting with the view to make sense of what is really taking place in the participant's environment. Creswell (2011:15) iterates that a qualitative method is critical in situations where participants are supposed to interpret what is happening in their world exactly the way they see it. Eisner (2012:67) defines qualitative research as a broader term involving an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode and interpret

social reality from the perspective of people affected by that reality. Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed around their world and how they make sense of the experiences they have in the world (Eisner, 2012:67).

In this case, participants were tasked to interpret the role of the ABET programme in their own words using their lived experiences as a reference point. The qualitative methodology was important in two ways. Firstly, it gave the participants an opportunity to openly share their views and experiences on the ABET programme delivered at Laaste Hoop PALC in their own words. Secondly, it created an interactive atmosphere that was more participant-focused. The interviews were done on participants' terms.

Since the aim of this study is not to come out with scientifically manipulated outcomes, but rather mere interpretations participants bring to the topic, it is therefore imperative to base this research on qualitative methodology (Creswell, 2011:15). The qualitative methodology was preferred because it made it easier to inductively analyse the participants' views and experiences using narrative and descriptive themes than what the quantitative or the mixed method could do.

The study chose the qualitative approach above other methodologies in order to remain independent of the issues being researched. The resultant effect of such a decision is that an inductive form of logic can easily be employed to check the accuracy of the responses. Using the mixed and the quantitative approach makes it impossible to do that (Eisner, 2012:56). Further, unlike other methodologies, a qualitative method made it possible to use qualifying words and narrative descriptions to tell Laaste Hoop PALC story using interviews and documents (Eisner, 2012:89).

A research design is a framework that guides how the research is to be conducted (Yin, 2011:56). Kruger and Mitchell (2005:16) reiterate that a properly constituted research design is deliberately coined to answer

research objectives as validly and accurately as possible. In this study, a single-bounded case study design was used.

A single-bounded case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Eisner, 2012:67). According to Yin (2011:78), a single-bounded case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In order to understand and rank the research questions in terms of meanings the participants brought to them, a single-bounded case study was the most ideal design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:73). A single-bounded case study made it easier to thoroughly investigate the role of the ABET programme in reducing adult illiteracy from the perspective of the learners, facilitators, Centre Governing Body members and the Centre Manager using semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2011:45).

A single-bounded case study design aims to interpret and weigh the research questions studied in terms of meanings people bring to them (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:73). According to Merriam (2009:203) a single-bounded case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. In our case, the character of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC was thoroughly analysed with the aim to establish whether it is really improving the learners' reading, writing and enumerating abilities.

Using the single-bounded case study design, the study offered a participant-based account on the role of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC. Eisner (2012:45) points out that the aim of a single-bounded case study design is to reflect on research questions from the perspective of participants who are familiar with the research environment. In our situation, by using the single-bounded case study design, the aim was to offer an authentic profile of the challenges facing the Laaste Hoop PALC using the real-life experiences of people who run its day to day affairs.

3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.3.1 Population and sampling

Kruger and Mitchell (2011:47) define a population as all the people that are relevant to the study, from which a circumscribed sample will be selected for research. Laaste Hoop is a rural village found in Capricorn district under Polokwane Municipality. According to Statistics South Africa (2011:67), Laaste Hoop covers an area of 9.58 square kilometres. It is home to a population of 6670 people. Whilst 99.9% of the population are black Africans, non-black Africans constitute 0.01% of the local population. Records show that 96.1% of the population in Laaste Hoop speak the Sepedi language. The Tsonga and Venda tribes constitute 1.2% and 2.69% of the population respectively. Further, only 0.01% speaks non-African languages. Thirty-three (33) people comprising the PALC's Centre Manager, seven (7) Centre Governing Body members, five (5) facilitators and twenty (20) learners constitute the study's population. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:76) describe a sample as a subset of the total population that has been selected for a particular study. Six (6) learners, two (2) facilitators, one (1) member of the Centre Governing Body and the Centre Manager took part in the study. The study targeted Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 learners.

While learners shared their lived experiences on how the ABET at Laaste Hoop PALC is helping them to read, write and enumerate, the Centre Manager and the facilitators expressed their views on what needs to be done to ensure the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC is more effective and responsive. The Centre Governing Body members shed light on how the programme can be better governed in order to make it more effective and result-oriented.

The participants were selected using the purposive sampling method because the method naturally gave the researcher an opportunity to select study participants using his knowledge of the participants (Creswell, 2011:45). Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned

(Merriam, 2009:77). Since the researcher lived and worked in Laaste Hoop as a principal at a local school for more than 15 years, all members of the study population are known to him. As reiterated by Creswell (2011:35) only participants known to the researcher as information-rich were targeted by the investigation.

3.3.2 Data collection strategies

- **Phase one: Document analysis**

The first phase involved documentary review analysis. Basically, secondary data was sourced from the adult learning centre's 2013, 2014 and 2015 annual reports, learners' assessment reports and Department of Basic Education assessment reports.

- **Phase two: Semi-structured interviews**

The second phase involved collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews. According to Yin (2011:67) the advantage of semi-structured interviews is that participants can be interviewed in the comfort of their homes. According to Somekh and Lewin (2010:60), the other advantage of semi-structured interviews is that prompt feedback can easily be secured. An interview schedule was used to manage all interview appointments.

- **Phase three: Observations**

The third phase involved making a scheduled visit to the Laaste Hoop PALC with the aim to directly observe how the centre conducts its day to day activities. During the visit, the researcher checked the state of the learning centre's furniture and teaching aids.

3.3.3 Data analysis

According to De Vos (2011:339) data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Collected data was analysed inductively and textually. The open-coding method was used to analyse data. Specifically, data analysis unfolded in three distinct phases.

- **Phase one: Transcription**

This phase involved transcribing, editing, sorting and arranging field notes in order to easily analyse the content of the interviews inductively (Yin, 2011:67).

- **Phase two: Textual analysis**

This phase involved reading through all the collected data to obtain a general sense or meaning of it. This involved putting in place measures to bring textual meaning to the collected data (Yin, 2011:67).

- **Phase three: Coding**

This phase involved coding the data into the computer. Coding ensured that all collected data was arranged into themes and sub-topics. Yin (2011:67) insists that data should be processed and analysed in an orderly fashion so that patterns and relationships can more easily be discerned and validated (Yin, 2011:67). The data collected was reduced into manageable text so that it becomes helpful and relevant to decision makers.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the methodology issues of the study. The qualitative methodology was chosen as the leading methodology of the study. Subsequently, the study employed a case study design as a means to collect and analyse the research data. Ten participants, took part in the study. In the next chapter the results of the study are summarised and presented in textual format.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four presents the results of the study in a narrative format. The views of the Centre Manager, the facilitators, a member of the Centre Governing Body and learners on the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC formed the basis of the research's findings. This study sought to investigate the state of the ABET programme offered by Laaste Hoop PALC within the context of its contribution in improving the literacy levels of its learners. The issue of whether the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC is improving the literacy status of learners needs to be examined from the perspective of individuals who are familiar with how the programme is being delivered and administered. Consequently, the perspectives of the learners were also considered critical.

In order to better understand the influence of the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC on the literacy level of its learners, the following leading questions were asked:

- What is the status of the ABET programme in reducing the illiteracy of learners at Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre in Limpopo Province?
- What are the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre (PALC) from reducing the illiteracy status of its learners?

- What are the views of the learners, facilitators, centre head and Centre Governing Body members on the ability of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC to reduce the illiteracy status of learners?
- What measures can be put in place to ensure that ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC meaningfully contribute to the reduction of the illiteracy status of learners?

4.2 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study are sub-divided into three notable sections namely; Section One which covers findings from the documentary analysis, Section Two which covers findings from semi-structured interviews and Section C which covers findings from observations.

4.3 SECTION ONE: FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The centre's 2013, 2014 and 2015 annual reports were critically reviewed with the view to better understand the status of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC. The findings from the document analysis effort were as follows:

4.3.1 Inadequate budgetary support

The dominant view from the 2013, 2014 and 2015 annual reports made available by the Centre Management was that the Laaste Hoop PALC's ability to deliver a quality learning experience to the local community was hampered by the persistent lack of adequate funds to acquire proper learning facilities and infrastructure. The three reports revealed that the annual grants traditionally extended by the Department of Basic Education to the Centre are not enough to effectively cover all the Centre's financial obligations (Laaste Hoop PALC Annual Report, 2014:7; Laaste Hoop PALC Annual Report, 2015:8). The three reports cited a scenario where the centre scaled down its activities during the 2014 financial year due to acute shortage of learner workbooks and furniture (Laaste Hoop PALC Annual Report, 2015:16). The 2014 report also

conceded that the Centre’s plans to renew or replace the old furniture were shelved off due to shortage of funds (Laaste Hoop PALC Report, 2014:14).

4.3.2 Enrolment apathy

The other critical issue revealed by the two reports is that the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC was experiencing an unacceptable enrolment apathy. For instance, a close analysis of the 2013, 2014 and 2015 enrolment figures showed that the number of new learners admitted during the 2015 financial year declined by 17.1% compared to those enrolled during the 2014 financial year. Consequently, the 2014 enrolment figures also fell by 12.5% compared to the 2013 figures.

TABLE 4.1: LEARNER ENROLMENT FIGURES

Year	Enrolment Figures
2013	30 learners
2014	25 learners
2015	20 learners
Average Enrolment per year	25 learners

Source: Laaste Hoop PALC 2013, 2014 & 2015 Annual Reports

Although in 2013, the enrolment was at its peak (Thirty (30) learners) the average enrolment of the centre per year was twenty-five (25) learners. With only twenty (20) admitted into the ABET programme, the year 2015 witnessed a sharp drop of the enrolment figures by five (5) learners. The decrease in enrolment figures experienced by the centre in the past three (3) years could be explained in the context of the general lack of community interest in the ABET programme (Laaste Hoop PALC Report, 2015:3). The picture painted by the reports shows that the ABET programme has lost its yesteryear appeal.

The report quoted the Chairperson of the Centre Governing Body as saying:

“The absence of an effective post-learning support and follow-up programme means that many graduates of the Laaste Hoop PALC ABET programme are yet to realise meaningful socio-economic change as the result of their participation in the programme. Owing to this factor, the long-held perception in the community is that the ABET programme has lost its relevance and significance and hence many illiterate adults see it as a sheer waste of money and time”

4.3.3 Weak community mobilisation model

One of the crucial views articulated in the 2015 report was that the Laaste Hoop PALC was gradually losing the war against low community participation and interest in the ABET programme. The report attributed the notable decline in the ABET programme’s enrolment figures to the centre’s poor community mobilisation strategy. The report confirmed that due to poor funding, no meaningful efforts have been mounted to aggressively advertise the ABET programme to potential learners in the local community. The Manager of the centre acknowledged in her opening remarks that many potential learners in the local community do not know the potential benefits of enrolling in the Laaste Hoop PALC ABET programme. She challenged the centre to develop a combative community mobilisation and awareness strategy in order to lure more illiterate adults into the ABET programme.

4.4 SECTION TWO: FINDINGS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The findings from the semi-structured interviews were as follows:

4.4.1 Views of the Centre Manager

Section A deals with the views of the Centre Manager on the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC. The views are based on her response to the ten lead questions on the interview guide. The Centre Manager’s views are outlined below:

4.4.1.1 Experience as the Centre Manager

Asked to specify the number of years at the helm of the Laaste Hoop PALC, the Centre Manager indicated that she joined the Centre ten years ago. This shows that the Centre Manager commanded adequate experiential knowledge and experience needed to effectively manage and lead the Centre's day-to-day operations or activities. *“When I joined Laaste Hoop PALC ten years ago, the centre was celebrating its 11th year anniversary”*, said the Centre Manager.

4.4.1.2 Responsibilities of the Centre Manager

The Centre Manager outlined that her main role at Laaste Hoop PALC included among things providing strategic leadership and oversight on the entire operations of the centre, assessing the quality of the five facilitators' work, motivating them to deliver high performance as well as ensuring that the centre's assets and financial resources are used appropriately and prudently.

In her own words, the Centre Manager said, *“One of my key performance areas is to lead the centre's learner mobilisation and recruitment effort by engaging relevant stakeholders. I also act as the centre's ceremonial head, a role that makes the face of the institution. As the head of the centre, I also provide crucial secretariat services to the centre's governing body”*.

4.4.1.3 Structure of the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC

The perception of the Centre Manager was that the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop was being effectively managed although there was a room to improve its governance and financial management performance. She stressed that although the centre played an instrumental role in improving the local community's literate status, it lacked adequate budgetary support to effectively run its business.

The Centre Manager said, *“As long as the centre fails to diversify its funding base, it will be difficult for it to mobilise adequate funds to discharge its mandate effectively”*.

4.4.1.4 Admission criteria

According to the Centre Manager, for a learner to qualify for admission, such a learner is obliged to write a mandatory placement test. The results of the placement test will then be used to determine which ABET level the learner need to enroll for. In her own words, the Centre Manager was quoted as saying *“We also have moments where learners who fail placement tests are admitted into the ABET programme only after consideration of the special circumstances of an individual learner”*.

4.4.1.5 Role of ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC

The view of the Centre Manager is that the ABET programme is vital in equipping adult learners with necessary reading, numeracy and writing skills thereby preparing them for further education and personal developmental opportunities in the future. She further stressed that the programme was instrumental in transforming previously disadvantaged adults into active agents of socio-economic development in their families and communities.

The Centre Manager was quoted as saying *“In my ten years at the helm of the centre, I have seen dozens of young adults who have never been in the four walls of a classroom the rest of their lives, being able to write, enumerate and read Bibles on their own after completion of the ABET programme”*.

4.4.1.6 Contribution of the ABET programme to illiteracy reduction objectives

The Centre Manager reiterated that through experience she discovered that for the ABET to meaningfully reduce illiteracy levels among the learners, learners must be given supplementary individual and group exercises. She emphasised that activities such as class tests and in-

class demonstrations have proven to be excellent learning tools over the past few years.

“The contribution of the ABET programme to the socio-economic well-being of locals can never be over-emphasised. For instance, I know of three ladies in their late 70s who started a thriving stokvel business immediately after completing their ABET programme in 2012. Locally, this stokvel is popular with the local clients for its efficiency management practices”.

4.4.1.7 Competence level of Level One learners

The Centre Manager remarked that over the years, almost all Level One learners are generally promoted into the Level Two programme. As far as she could remember, she has never witnessed a scenario where a Level One learner fails to proceed to Level Two on incompetence grounds. She attributed this success to the hard work demonstrated by the facilitators particularly during the period towards the writing of the competence tests.

4.4.1.8 General view of the ABET Programme

The Centre Manager’s long held view is that upon completion of the ABET programme, learners must be more attractive to further education/skilling and employment opportunities. The Centre Manager was quoted as saying *“It will be a monumental error for the centre to produce graduates that are not ready to apply acquired reading, writing and numeracy skills to advance their day to day socio-economic interests”.*

4.4.1.9 Challenges facing the ABET programme

When challenged to pinpoint the most pressing challenges confronting the Laaste Hoop PALC, the Centre Manager conceded that apart from the centre struggling to attract more qualified and experienced facilitators, the absence of adequate administration personnel continued to hamper the efforts by the centre to improve its programme

administration effort. Asked to elaborate on the challenges facing the centre, the Centre Manager was quoted as saying, *“We do not have a qualified bookkeeper who specialises on capturing or recording the Centre’s financial transactions and as such we rely on external service providers who charge exorbitant fees”*.

4.4.1.10 Strategies to address the challenges

According to the Centre Manager, more resources need to be deployed in the future towards advancing the skills of the facilitators and media campaigns to advertise the activities of the centre. Further, the centre needs to focus on practical courses like sewing, gardening and IT. In her own words, Centre Manager said that *“We need to shy away from the tradition of equipping learners with only academic knowledge and move towards equipping them with basic vocational skills in order to improve their income generation capabilities”*.

4.4.2 Views of the facilitators

During interviews, the following views were expressed by the two facilitators:

4.4.2.1 Experience as a facilitator at Laaste Hoop PALC

The two facilitators confirmed that they joined the Laaste Hoop PALC in 2010 and 2011 respectively. This shows that the two facilitators were conversant or familiar with the way the ABET activities at Laaste Hoop PALC were run and managed. Whilst one of the facilitator was celebrating her six (6) year anniversary as an ABET facilitator, her counterpart had five (5) years of working experience as an ABET facilitator.

TABLE 4.2: NUMBER OF YEARS AS A FACILITATOR AT LAASTE HOOP PALC

	Year joined the centre	Number of years at the centre
Facilitator 1	2011	5 years

Facilitator 2	2010	6 years
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4.4.2.2 Specific role as an facilitator

Asked to clarify their specific roles as facilitators at Laaste Hoop PALC, the two revealed that apart from imparting basic writing, numeracy and reading skills, their other obligation was to motivate learners for improved performance. Facilitator 1 remarked that *“From time to time, we also provide follow-up and support to learners who request further post-learning assistance”*.

4.4.2.3 Number of learners per facilitator

The study found that the tradition at Laaste Hoop PALC is to assign twenty learners to each facilitator. Facilitator 2 stressed that the learner/educator ratio of 1:5 was ideal in that it helps the facilitators to effectively address individual learners’ educational needs and complexities. The study also learnt that on average, each facilitator can spend at least one hour on each learner every day.

4.4.2.4 Highest ABET Level at Laaste Hoop PALC

The two facilitators confirmed that the highest ABET qualification on offer at Laaste Hoop PALC was Level 4. This means that upon completion, the learners are conferred an ABET Level 4 certificate. In her own words, facilitator 2 said, *“A Level 4 ABET Certificate paves the way for learners to either pursue further learning opportunities with formal education providing institutions or seek attractive employment opportunities”*.

4.4.2.5 Role of ABET programme in reducing illiteracy

The unanimous view was that the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC was instrumental in eradicating the perennial illiteracy challenge confronting the local adult population. Facilitator 1 claimed that a number of illiterate people in the local area who earlier failed to enroll in the formal schooling system are now able to read, write and enumerate as a result of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC.

Facilitator 1 was quoted as saying, *“I can testify that during the past 3 years I have witnessed more than 20 previously illiterate adults in their late 60s being able to count, add, multiply, divide and subtract numbers”*. It was also revealed that a number of ex-learners from the centre are now influential entrepreneurs and prominent development activists in the local area. For instance, facilitator 1 gave an example of Jeda (not real name) a former graduate of the centre who is now running a fast growing and profitable grocery shop.

According to the two facilitators, the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC has contributed immensely in improving the literacy status of many young adults who due to one reason or another were not absorbed into the formal schooling system. Apart from reducing adult illiteracy, the two facilitators hinted that the ABET programme was also credited for building a good foundation for further employment opportunities. Facilitator 2 said *“I know of nine graduates of the centre who have been incorporated into various decision making units of various companies across Limpopo Province upon completion of the ABET programme”*.

4.4.2.6 Challenges facing the ABET programme

The two facilitators made it clear that the acute shortage of classrooms, the erratic supply of learner workbooks and the unavailability of experienced facilitators were some of the negative factors militating against the various efforts by the Laaste Hoop PALC to enhance its service delivery effectiveness and performance. Facilitator 2 asked the following question *“Can you imagine how many illiterate adults in the local community may be helped if the centre is backed with adequate financial support by the government”*.

4.4.2.7 Strategies to improve the programme effectiveness

The viewpoint of the two facilitators was that the Laaste Hoop PALC management has to mount an aggressive media campaign to woo more learners into the ABET programme. According to the facilitators, the media campaign must include such elements like door to door

campaigns, local ABET sensitisation meetings and radio advertisements. The focus of such campaigns is to entice or motivate more illiterate parents to join or enrol for various ABET programmes offered by the centre. Facilitator one said, *“One of the strategies to enhance programme effectiveness is to restructure the entire ABET programme with the view to make it less academic and more vocational in orientation and structure”*.

4.4.3 Submissions from the Centre Governing Body

As indicated earlier, one member of the Centre Governing Body was interviewed. Her views are summarised as follows:

4.4.3.1 Experience as a Centre Governing Body member

The body member revealed that she joined the Centre Governing Body as far as June 2015. This means that in June 2016, the member celebrated her one year anniversary at the helm of the centre’s top decision making body.

4.4.3.2 Role as a Centre Governing Body member

Asked to stipulate her role as one of the Centre’s Governing Body members, the participant was quick to point out that part of her responsibilities included inter-alia supporting management in its quest to implement various measures or mechanisms to improve the centre’s performance and delivery efficiency. In addition, the participant reiterated that monitoring and evaluation of the centre’s overall performance and fundraising also formed part of the body’s primary mandate. Learner recruitment and mobilisation was also cited as some of the competencies of the body members. The Centre Governing Body member clarified her role in this statement *“My role as a member of the Centre Governing Body is to provide inspirational and visionary leadership to the Centre Manager as well as ensuring that the moral support she needs is accessible at all times”*.

4.4.3.3 Number of meetings per year

According to the participants, the Centre Governing Body meets four times a year to receive, consider and review the business operations of the centre as directed in the quarterly reports presented by the Centre Manager.

4.4.3.4 Contribution of the ABET programme

Challenged to comment on the contribution of the centre to the adult literacy improvement agenda, the participant re-emphasised that the Laaste Hoop PALC was increasingly becoming a centre of excellence in equipping the local community with reading, numeracy and writing skills. The Centre Governing Body member said, *“There is consensus among the local populace that the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC is instrumental in reducing the number of illiterate adults in the Laaste Hoop village”*.

4.4.3.5 Challenges facing the ABET programme

Shortage of classrooms and qualified facilitators, absence of adequate learning infrastructure and low enrolment figures were cited by one of the Governing Body members as some of the challenges derailing the centre’s progress. The participant also attributed the challenges to poor budgetary support from the Department of Basic Education. In her own words, the Centre Governing Body member remarked, *“The noble ideals of the ABET programme are being betrayed by the visible lack of political will at the top to improve the financial and technical leverage of the programme especially in remote villages like Laaste Hoop”*.

4.4.3.6 Strategies to improve effectiveness

The view of the Centre Governing Body member is that more funding needs to be secured from both the government through the Department of Basic Education and the private sector to finance various capital projects that are considered critical to the survival of the Laaste Hoop PALC. The participant also urged the Department of Basic Education to

intensify efforts to enhance the skills and competence profile of the current facilitators. In her words, the Centre Governing Body member said, *“Changing the curriculum of the ABET programme to make it biased towards vocational skills must be at the centre of every effort by the government to transform it into an impact-driven programme. The issue is that after learners have been assisted to read, write and enumerate, a follow-up and support programme needs to be put in place to equip them with life-orientation skills that will prepare them to adequately deal with various socio-economic challenges confronting them. I strongly believe that any educational programme that cannot improve the quality of life of its beneficiaries is both irrelevant and useless”*. Further, the participant noted that a massive learner recruitment and mobilisation drive needs to be conducted on quarterly basis to improve the centre’s current enrolment performance.

4.4.4 Views of the learners

All six (6) learners targeted by the study took part in the study. This shows that the study generated significant interest from the targeted sample. The views of the six (6) are summarised as follows:

4.4.4.1 ABET level studied

TABLE 4.3: ABET LEVEL OF LEARNERS

Learner Code	ABET Level
Learner 1	Level 3
Learner 2	Level 4
Learner 3	Level 4
Learner 4	Level 4
Learner 5	Level 4
Learner 6	Level 4

Data in Table 4.3 shows that out of the six learners interviewed, one learner indicated that he was studying towards the ABET Level 3 qualification whilst the rest were completing their ABET Level 4.

4.4.4.2 Year of admission

TABLE 4.4: YEAR OF ADMISSION

Year of Admission	Number of learners
2012	2
2013	2
2014	1
2015	1
Total	6

When asked to indicate the year they were admitted into the ABET programme, the six learners expressed different views. For instance, whilst two learners revealed that they joined the Laaste Hoop PALC in 2012, the other two indicated that they enrolled in 2013. The remainder confirmed that they joined the institution in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

4.4.4.3 Reason to enroll into the ABET programme

Different learners expressed different reasons why they enrolled into the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC. For instance, learner 1 indicated that she saw the ABET programme as a potent tool to improve the quality of her life. Learner 3 made it clear that her desire to enhance her employability status inspired her to join the ABET classes at Laaste Hoop PALC. Further, learner 2 revealed that she viewed the ABET programme as a viable means to achieve lasting success in life. Lastly, learner 4 confessed that she joined the ABET classes solely because she wanted to learn how to effectively run her small business. Learner 5 revealed that her desire to enhance her English speaking skills motivated her to enroll for the ABET programme. Learner 6 was quoted as saying, *“Since my early childhood years, I was so much aggrieved when my parents could not send me to school due to their disadvantaged financial*

position. I vowed that if any opportunity to get education arises in the future, I will grab it by both hands even if I am 90 years old”.

4.4.4.4 Role of ABET programme

The common view shared by all the learners was that the ABET programme was commendable for its ability to give adults previously excluded from the formal schooling system a rare opportunity to revive their long forgotten academic ambitions. They unanimously agreed that the ABET programme was their only hope towards reviving their childhood educational and career dreams. Learner 2 said *“In 2009, I discovered that my two fellow childhood friends who completed their ABET programme in 2007 at Laaste Hoop were running successful construction businesses, I realised that attaining education is the best way to beat generational poverty and idleness in one’s life”*. Learner 5 was of the opinion that getting the ABET Level 4 certificate would help her to regain her dignity and respect in society. She reaffirmed this position by saying, *“I am convinced beyond reasonable doubt that the ABET programme is the only chance for people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds to rise up and reclaim their lost dignity and self-respect”*.

4.4.4.5 Competence level of learners

Asked to indicate whether their literacy competence improved since enrolling at the Laaste Hoop PALC, the learners expressed different experiences. For instance, Learner 1 was quoted as saying, *“Before I enrolled into the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop, I was not able to divide numbers accurately but thanks to the ABET programme, my ability to divide numbers has since drastically improved”*. Learner 2 had this to say, *“I can now read the Bible without the assistance of my granddaughter, something that I never did before I enrolled into the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC”*. Both Learner 3 and Learner 4 confirmed that their reading, numeracy and writing abilities significantly improved since they joined the centre two years ago. In her own words, Learner 3 said, *“Prior to the ABET programme, I did not know how to*

write a letter in English, a position that has since changed after I completed my Level 2 in 2015". Learner 5 conceded that the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop had a positive influence in the way she masters the art of reading her favourite newspapers. Lastly, Learner 6 confessed that since he enrolled into the programme in 2014, his ability to solve challenging mathematical problems has considerably improved.

4.4.4.6 Satisfaction level

When challenged to express whether they were satisfied with the services they were getting from the Laaste Hoop PALC, all of them commended the centre management for providing them with quality of services. Specifically, they were impressed by the friendly attitude displayed by the entire centre's staff. Learner 5 was quick to say, *"One of the things I like most at Laaste Hoop PALC is that the entire staff treats all of us with respect"*. Learner 6 also said, *"I am amazed at the manner at which the facilitators go out of their way to help us understand even things that we never thought we will understand"*.

4.4.4.7 Challenges facing learners

All the learners cited the shortage of learner workbooks, qualified facilitators, classrooms and adequate furniture as some of the major setbacks experienced by the learners in their quest to improve their learning experience. Learner 4 pointed out that the current teaching time was too short and she urged the centre authorities to increase the teaching time in order to improve the quality of teaching outcomes. Learner 3 was quoted as saying *"The ABET programme can only be effective if more learner workbooks can be sourced and average teaching time per subject increased from the current forty minutes per day to one hour"*. The absence of adequate learner workbooks means that most learners cannot properly do their homework and assignments.

4.4.4.8 Strategies to improve effectiveness

According to the six (6) learners, one of ways to make the ABET programme more effective and responsive was to mount a concerted

media and publicity campaign with the view to sensitise locals about the strategic necessity of adult education in South Africa's nation building agenda. The learners also urged government to introduce a set of enticing incentives to attract more illiterate adults in Laaste Hoop village into the ABET programme. They argued that a follow-up-and-support programme was necessary to ensure that those who complete the ABET Level 4 are assisted to further their educational opportunities.

Learner 1 repeatedly said, *“Any initiative to help learners explore lifelong learning opportunities after obtaining the Level 4 certificate is more than welcome. We will greatly appreciate efforts to help us plot our next move upon completion of the ABET programme. In most cases, learners don't know what to do next after exiting the programme. This means that more resources need to be redirected in efforts to help us utilise the skills we acquired during our stay at the centre”.*

4.5 SECTION THREE: FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

During the visit, the researcher checked the state of the learning centre's furniture, teaching aids as well as the learners' workbooks and textbooks.

4.5.1 State of the furniture

The researcher observed that apart from being inadequate, most of the furniture used by the centre was old, broken and in a state of disrepair. Specifically, at least five chairs and six tables did not have legs. The Centre Head attributed this to lack of adequate funds to replace old furniture and repair the broken ones.

4.5.2 State of the learning materials

Although a great proportion of the learning materials were in a good state, the researcher noted that the learner workbooks and textbooks were not adequate and as a result learners resorted to sharing.

4.5.3 Teaching aids

It was observed that although teaching aids play a vital role in enhancing the centre's visual learning goals, the centre was experiencing a dire shortage of teaching modern aids. In the absence of modernised teachings aids, the researcher noted that the facilitators were using improvised teaching aids.

4.5.4 Learning environment

The researcher noted that the learning environment was not clean and therefore not fit for a good learning experience. The researcher also observed that used plastics, paper and broken bottles were scattered all over the yard. In addition, it was noted that the interior of two classrooms were dusty.

4.5.5 Time management

It was noted that a number of learners had punctuality problems. For instance, on 26 April 2016, the researcher observed that seven (7) learners filled the attendance register at least an hour after the lessons had already started. The researcher later heard that due to pressing family and business commitments, 50 percent of the learners were finding it difficult to attend lessons in time.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Although the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC has been experiencing a myriad of operational challenges, the shared view is that the centre is making a commendable contribution to South Africa's nation building agenda. All the participants acknowledged the fact that the history of adult education in South Africa can never be complete without mentioning the role played by Laaste Hoop PALC in eradicating high levels adult illiteracy prevalent in the village. However, for the centre to effectively turn the corner against adult illiteracy in the Laaste Hoop village and surrounding areas, the government needs to increase its budgetary support in order to strengthen the centre's operational and

financial leverage. The next chapter focuses on the study's conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to interpret the research findings reflected in Chapter Four in order to draw appropriate conclusions of the study. Once the conclusions are made, the chapter will outline recommendations the centre management may adopt to improve the relevance of the ABET programme offered at the Laaste Hoop PALC. In general, this study sought to give a qualitative account of the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC using people who are directly involved with the institution on daily basis. The views of the learners, Centre Head, a member of the Centre Governing Body and facilitators were used to interpret and understand the state of the ABET programme.

5.2 CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS

The conclusion of the findings is structured in four sections. Whilst the first section deals with the role of the ABET programme, the second section highlights the operational challenges facing Laaste Hoop PALC. The third section takes into account the views of the six learners, the

Centre Head, one member of the centre Governing Body and two programme facilitators. The final section outlines the recommendations that may be adopted by the centre management to ensure the ABET programme meaningfully contribute to the objectives of adult literacy in the Laaste Hoop village.

5.3 ROLE OF ABET PROGRAMME

According to Moyo (2014:45) the ABET programme is at the centre of all government efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy particularly in rural areas where thousands of illiterate adults dwell. The strategic contribution of the ABET programme in eliminating adult illiteracy among the rural populace can never be over-emphasised (Chombo, 2013:23; French 2010:11; Department of Basic Education 2012:4). This study found that the ABET programme at Hoop Laaste PALC has been instrumental in rekindling the academic dream of adults who never had a chance to learn to read, write and enumerate during their childhood years. It is clear from views expressed by the participants that the ABET programme stand as the bridge of hope to many adults who never had an opportunity to be in a classroom. The deemed view is that the ABET programme remain a viable platform on which adults who have since passed the school going age reclaim their lost dignity and self-respect.

Rogers (2012:56) argues that the ABET programme has gone a long way in restoring the dignity of adults who were excluded from formal schooling life due to their socio-economic dispositions. The unanimous view is that the ABET programme plays a vital role in enhancing the socio-economic profile of individuals who were once marginalised due to their poor educational backgrounds. A case in point is that of the two former ABET Level 4 graduates who teamed up to start a flourishing stokvel business soon after graduating from the Laaste Hoop PALC. There is also a case of two former learners who went on to start thriving construction firms upon completion of their ABET Level 4 course. According to the Centre Head, the good news is that dozens of

unemployed youths in the local area are now gainfully employed by these two construction companies.

5.4 CHALLENGES FACING THE ABET PROGRAMME

Like any other like-minded institution funded from the public purse, the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC is not immune to a number of operational challenges. The Department of Basic Education (2012:34) conceded that several Public Adult Learning Centres across the country are facing collapse due to poor funding. French (2012:23) reiterates that many Public Adult Learning Centres in Africa are in a state of neglect because governments have the tendency of not prioritising them when it comes to budget allocation. The same challenge of poor funding has been noted at Laaste Hoop PALC. The centre is facing dire financial challenges as a result of poor funding from the government. Poor funding has been cited by the Centre Head, the facilitators and the Governing Body member as the teething challenge at the heart of many challenges facing the Laaste Hoop PALC. The negative effects of poor funding were visibly evident in the form of broken furniture, lack of adequate learner workbooks and textbooks and emerging teaching infrastructure.

This study can also conclude that over the years, the centre has been battling to attract qualified and experienced facilitators due to relative uncompetitive salaries. The study heard that many qualified facilitators snub PALCs based in remote villages due to squalid living conditions. Rogers (2012:45) argue that urban-based PALCs stand a better chance of attracting experienced facilitators due to better living conditions in urban areas. Moyo (2014:23) and the Department of Basic Education (2012:12) reiterate that the challenge facing rural PALCs is that they are continuously being snubbed by qualified and experienced facilitators.

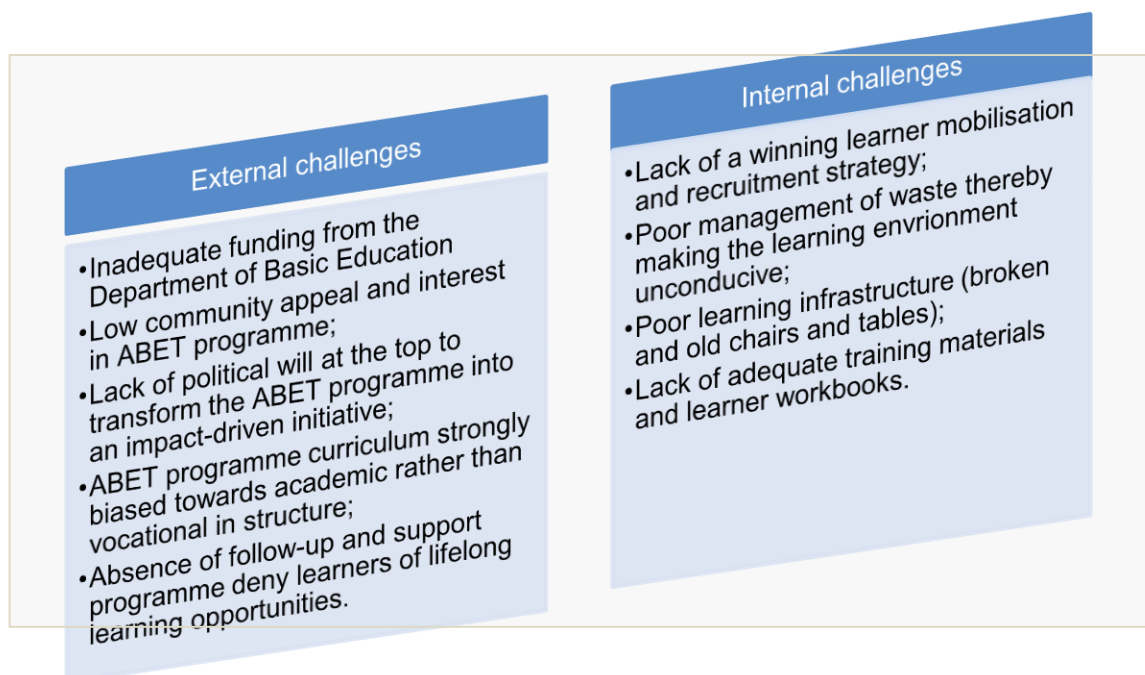
One can safely conclude that in the absence of sufficient budgetary support, the centre's future hangs in the balance. While a number of challenges facing the centre were triggered by external factors, empirical evidence shows that not all the challenges were fuelled by external

factors. To the contrary, this study observed that some of the challenges confronting the centre were internally-driven. For instance during observation visits, the researcher discovered that the learning environment was not conducive for effective learning because of poor waste management practices. The presence of broken bottles and scattered pieces of paper all over the yard testified to this effect. Another central concern was that the centre management was battling to stamp out chronic late coming among learners. For example, during one of the observation visits, the researcher noted that most learners filled the attendance register at least one hour after lessons officially commenced.

5.5 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES

The following represents a summary of challenges that confronted the Laaste Hoop PALC:

FIG 5.1: SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES



Source: Developed by the researcher

The Figure 5.1 demonstrates that the ability of the Laaste Hoop PALC to deliver quality services to learners is hindered by both external and

internal factors. It is clear from Figure 5.1 that at the core of these challenges is weak budgetary support and unavailability of suitable learning infrastructure. The persistent challenge of limited supply of training materials and learner workbooks continue to militate against the Centre's attempts to effectively fulfil its service delivery goals.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations to improve the literacy status of the ABET learners at Laaste Hoop PALC are put forward:

5.6.1 A new funding model

It is recommended that a new funding dispensation to improve the financial and operating leverage of the ABET programme be developed by the Department of Basic Education in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders. The Department of Basic Education is urged to roll-out a countrywide fundraising campaign to raise adequate funds to finance the operations of rural based Public Adult Learning Centres like the Laaste Hoop PALC. The thrust of this initiative is to broaden the funding base of the ABET programme and in the process help to lessen the state's cost burden.

5.6.2 Infrastructure renewal drive

In a move meant to give the dilapidating infrastructure at the centre a major facelift, it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education create an infrastructural renewal and replacement fund. The objective of the fund will be to finance wide ranging infrastructural renovation projects mostly targeting rural-based Public Adult Learning Centres like Laaste Hoop PALC. The fund will go a long way in enhancing the interactivity and user-friendliness of the learning environment. Giving adult learners a rare modern learning experience needs to be the Department of Basic Education's top most priority.

5.6.3 Adopt a vocational-oriented ABET curriculum

At the centre of the Department of Basic Education's strategy to ensure that the ABET programme remain relevant and responsive is for the department to embrace a more vocational-oriented ABET curriculum framework. According to all the participants, the Department of Basic Education needs to initiate and accelerate processes to replace the current academic-inclined ABET curriculum. A new vocational-based ABET curriculum needs to include courses like basic end-user computing, sewing, gardening, building, carpentry and craft and crocheting, only to name a few. The thrust of such a curriculum will be to equip learners with livelihood skills that will make them effectively address the socio-economic challenges facing their communities.

5.6.4 Intensify community mobilisation drive

In order to woo and initiate many illiterate adults into the ABET programme, it is recommended that the centre management join forces with local traditional councils to mount sustained community awareness and sensitisation campaigns. Stakeholders such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), local councilors, private companies and local newspapers may be instrumental in spreading the "*Education for All*" campaign message. This may be one of the only ways the centre may adopt to arrest enrolment apathy and double its enrolment figures.

5.6.5 Suggestions for future research

While this study extensively focused on contextualising the state of the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop PALC, future studies need to focus on how the Laaste Hoop PALC can be transformed into a sustainable vocational skills training centre offering various livelihood improvement skills to local and surrounding youths.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This study drew attention to the state of the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC in terms of its challenges and net contribution to the

broader adult literacy improvement objectives. The study advocates a scenario where government must increase its budgetary support to the ABET programme to improve its operating and technical leverage.

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APPENDIX I:LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Enquiries: Rabothata M.A
Cell Number: 0722817917/0835164118
Email: mabokorabothata@gmail.com

P O Box 3045
Polokwane
0700
25 November 2015

Centre Manager
Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre
P O Box 406
Tholongwe

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above matter refers.
2. I am a student registered for the degree Master of Education in Community and Continuing Education at the University of Limpopo.

3. I hereby request the permission to conduct research study titled **Adult Basic Education and Training on literacy: A case study of Laaste Hoop Public Adult Learning Centre in Limpopo Province.**
4. The following participants will be involved in this study: one centre manager, one centre governing body member, two educators and six learners so that they can provide with rich data on the above topic.

Yours faithfully

Rabothata M.A

APPENDIX II: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Enquiries: Rabothata M.A
Cell Number: 0722817917/0835164118
Email: mabokorabothata@gmail.com

P O Box 3045
Polokwane
0700
25 November 2015

The Head of Department
Limpopo Province
Department of Basic Education
Research Department
Polokwane
0700

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above matter refers.
2. I am a student registered for the degree Master of Education in Community and Continuing Education at the University of Limpopo.

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4. The following participants will be involved in this study: one centre manager, one centre governing body member, two educators and six learners so that they can provide with rich data on the above topic.

Yours faithfully

Rabothata M.A

APPENDIX III: CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TITLE: ADULT BASIC EDUCATION and TRAINING on LITERACY: A CASE STUDY OF LAASTE HOOP PUBLIC ADULT LEARNING CENTRE IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE

Date: 27 October 2015

1. I, the undersigned, hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the above mentioned study.
2. I agree that the benefits and purpose of the study were clarified to me in Sepedi which is my home language.
3. I personally volunteer to participate and no undue influence has been used to entice me to participate on this study.

4. I declare that I was given an opportunity to verify everything I needed to know about the study and steps were taken to clarify everything to my satisfaction.
5. I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I have read and understood all the terms and conditions of this consent form and therefore give my voluntary consent to participate in it on the condition that my confidentiality will be strictly protected.

Participant's Name:

Date

APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE CENTRE MANAGER

1. How long have you been employed as a Centre Manager at Laaste Hoop PALC?
2. What is your main responsibility as the Centre Manager?
3. How is the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC?
4. What is the centre's admission criterion?
5. What is the effectiveness of ABET programme in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC?
6. How does the ABET programme contribute to the reduction of illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC?
7. How competent are the learners after completion of the ABET Level 1 at the centre?
8. What is the view of Centre Manager towards the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC?
9. What are the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC from achieving its primary goal of reducing illiteracy?
10. What strategies can be put in place to ensure the ABET programme play an effective role in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC?

APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE EDUCATORS

1. When did you first become an educator at the Laaste Hoop PALC?
2. How long have you been an educator at the Laaste Hoop PALC?
3. What is your specific role as one of the educator of the Laaste Hoop PALC's?
4. How many learners are you currently teaching in your class?
5. What is the contribution of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy?
6. What is the effectiveness of Laaste Hoop PALC in reducing illiteracy?
7. What are the views of educators towards the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC?
8. What are the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC from achieving its primary goal of reducing illiteracy?
9. What strategies can be put in place to ensure the ABET programme play an effective role in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC?

APPENDIX VI: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE GOVERNING BODY MEMBER

1. When did you become a member of the Laaste Hoop PALC's Centre Governing Body?
2. How long have you been a member of the Centre Governing Body?
3. What is your specific role as one of the members of the Laaste Hoop PALC's Centre Governing Body?
4. How many times do you meet per year to deliberate about the affairs of the Laaste Hoop PALC?
5. What is the contribution of the ABET programme in reducing illiteracy?
6. What is the effectiveness of Laaste Hoop PALC in reducing illiteracy?
7. What is your view towards the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC?
8. What are the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC from achieving its primary goal of reducing illiteracy?
9. What strategies can be put in place to ensure the ABET programme play an effective role in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC?

APPENDIX VII: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE LEARNERS

1. What ABET level have you enrolled in?
2. When were you admitted as an ABET learner at Laaste Hoop PALC?
3. What inspired you to enrol for an ABET course at Laaste Hoop PALC?
4. How long is your ABET course at Laaste Hoop PALC?
5. What is the role of the ABET programme in improving your ability to read and write?
6. What is your competent level after completion of the ABET Level 1?
7. What are your views towards the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC?

8. What is your satisfaction level with the way the ABET programme at Laaste Hoop is being administered?
9. What are the challenges that hinder the ABET programme offered at Laaste Hoop PALC from achieving its primary goal of reducing illiteracy?
10. What strategies can be put in place to ensure the ABET programme play an effective role in reducing illiteracy at Laaste Hoop PALC?

APPENDIX VIII: DATA CODING

Data Themes
1. Organise data related to challenges affecting the smooth operations of the ABET programme
2. Organise data related to challenges

affecting the learning process
3. Organise data related to challenges affecting facilitators
4. Organise data related to support granted to learners upon completion of the ABET programme
5. Organise data related to challenges support given to learners by their spouses
6. Data related to challenges related to resource constraints