CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

With the foundations of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), people can benefit from further training and gain new skills. Adult Basic Education and Training is therefore seen as a vital way of opening up opportunities for those who have been economically and educationally disadvantaged. With the nature of work becoming more complex, employees need a wide range of basic skills in order to survive in the workplace, let alone be active participants in decisions and change in the workplace. Literacy skills can assist this process.

There are many programmes available on the market which cover many different aspects of language learning and language use. Faced with a mass of teaching material, what should programme decision-makers do when they have to select a particular programme from what is available?

One aspect of the solution to the diversity of programmes available is to devise a set of criteria. These criteria can then be used as a checklist, and would assist companies when selecting programmes. In addition, course designers can use these criteria when designing materials for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

Criteria for the evaluation of English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes are identified in this mini-dissertation. The key areas investigated are: aims and objectives; content; materials; teaching and learning activities; and assessment. This study also demonstrates how these criteria can be used to evaluate three English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

KEYWORDS: Adult Basic Education and Training; ABET; Adult Education; English Second Language; programme evaluation.

OPSOMMING

Die basis van Basiese Onderwys en Opleiding vir Volwassenes (ABET) bring die voordele mee van verdere opleiding en die aanleer van nuwe vaardighede binne die bereik van mense. ABET word dus gesien as deurslaggewend in die daarstelling van geleenthede vir diegene wat ekonomies en opvoedkundig minder bevoorreg was. Omdat die aard van werk ingewikkelder raak, benodig werknemers 'n wyer reeks basiese vaardighede om in die werkplek te kan oorleef. Geletterdheidsvaardighede kan hierdie proses meehelp.

Daar is etlike programme wat verskillende aspekte van die aanleer en gebruik van taal aanbied, in die mark beskikbaar. Hoe moet die beleidsbepalers van programme 'n bepaalde program kies uit 'n oorweldigende massa beskikbare onderrigmateriaal?

Een moontlike antwoord op hierdie vraag is om 'n versameling van kriteria op te stel. Hierdie kriteria kan gebruik word as 'n oorsiglys, en kan maatskappye handig te pas kom by die keuse van programme. Boonop kan kursusbeplanners hierdie kriteria gebruik waar die materiaal vir Engelse Basiese Onderwys en Opleiding vir Volwassenes beplan moet word.

Die kriteria vir die waardebepaling van ABET-programme word in hierdie mini-verhandeling uitgelig. Die belangrikste gebiede wat ondersoek word is: doelwitte en teikens; inhoud; materiaal; onderwys- en leeraktiwiteite; en waardebepaling. Hierdie ondersoek sal ook demonstreer hoe hierdie kriteria gebruik kan word om die waarde van drie ABET-programme te bepaal.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Basiese Onderwys en Opleiding vir Volwassenes; ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training); Onderwys vir Volwassenes; Engels as Tweede Taal; waardebepaling van programme.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIENTATION

In the new South Africa we are striving to compete with the global market. This can be achieved by an ever-increasing level of education and skill throughout society. However, "the historic inadequacy of school education, especially for Black communities, has ensured that a majority of the adult population, both in and out of formal employment, has had no schooling or inadequate schooling. This situation will be redressed, because basic education is a right guaranteed to all persons by the Constitution." (Ministry of Education, 1994:16).

Sinovich (1995:16) states that "we are encouraged and strengthened by the Government's commitment to educate the nation, but it will take more than Government support alone. Companies need to take the initiative and embark on effective developmental programmes for their employees".

1.2 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many companies realise that English language skills training cannot be ignored and are thus buying language programmes. Lowen (1993:33) states that some of these programmes capitalise "more on marketing skills and on the gullibility of the purchaser".

Foxcroft (1993:20) explains that in order for company decision-makers to make a responsible decision, they need "to verify the information provided" by the organisation selling the programme, and "check credibility, research existing clients and trainees". She goes on to say that

"you must check your own motivation as well - are you inclined to go for a quick, easy and cheap solution rather than one which will require commitment? Do you want to be seen to be doing something, but don't really mind whether or not it works?"

There are many literacy agencies which provide different types of English materials to these companies for learners at different levels. These learners' level of education varies from no formal education to a few years of formal education. With so many literacy agencies available to companies, French (1990:6) states that "management is seldom equipped to evaluate the issues involved, and the practice of giving the greatest weight to boardroom presentations is unsatisfactory. This worsens the tendency for management to be taken in by impressive, oversimplified and irrelevant claims to power and efficacy".

There are many programmes available on the market which cover many different aspects of language learning and language use. Cunningsworth (1984:1) states that this "ranges from comprehensive general courses, in several volumes and supported by visual and taped material, to specialised books which concentrate on one aspect of English, such as intonation, or one specific skill, such as writing."

Cunningsworth (1984:6) further asserts that "the real aim of language teaching is to bring the learner to a point where he can use the language for his own purposes, and this goes far beyond manipulating structure drills".

To demonstrate the widespread range of programmes available, Lyster (1992:104) states that in some classes students constantly chant meaningless syllables in a sing-song fashion and read from books which have nothing to do with their lives, whilst in other classes students engage in long discussions about their lives and analyse their positions in society. Some programmes focus exclusively on the language form, some teach grammar in the traditional way, some exclude the teaching of phonology, some emphasize listening and speaking skills, some do not integrate language and life skills, some neglect writing skills, while others stress vocabulary acquisition.

Faced with this mass of teaching material, what should programme decision-makers do when they have to select a particular programme from what is available? Unless a company has education specialists or linguists, it is difficult to select an appropriate programme from such a wide and

diverse range of available materials. When it comes to programme evaluation, French (1990:9) states that "just as the industry keeps its own books but calls in an auditor to provide a validated assessment of its position, so literacy programmes should be audited by a person with appropriate qualifications". However, there are various constraints which could make this unviable, for example finance and company policy. French continues by asserting that "management judgements of literacy projects have at times proved to be deeply flawed: either management fails to see real development because they expect literacy courses to be like production lines, or is taken in by superficial and sentimental considerations".

Steinberg (1993:2) states that "before deciding which courses to use, look through them carefully. Give yourself uninterrupted time to study them, looking at every page, before you make a decision whether or not to use them for your situation". This is a valid statement, but what does a programme decision-maker "study" and what does he look for on every page before making a decision?

Many companies do not merely want to implement any programme for the sake of it, but they want to provide the best programme to assist their employees. In addition, companies do not want to spend large amounts of money on programmes which initially appear to be very good but when implemented are in fact dubious and do not achieve the stipulated goals.

One aspect of the solution to the diversity of programmes available is to devise a set of criteria. These criteria can then be used as a checklist, and would assist companies when selecting programmes. In addition, course designers can use these criteria when designing materials for Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

Cunningsworth (1984:18) asserts that one of the benefits of materials evaluation is that "it spotlights both the strengths and weaknesses of coursebooks and identifies for the teacher areas of language teaching which require the use of supplementary materials".

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:96) define evaluation as "a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose". Evaluation is concerned with relative merit: there is no absolute good or bad.

The question of which programme to use is only one part of a global approach to literacy teaching. The success or failure of a programme depends on other factors as well. Lyster (1992:105) mentions certain factors which contribute to the success of a particular programme: "political will, integration of literacy programmes into wider development programmes, the enthusiasm and personality of individual teachers, the training and support available to teachers, and the planning and overall management of programmes".

Cunningsworth (1995:1) asks the following questions: "faced with the rich variety of coursebooks available, how do we make our choices? Should we choose the books with the most attractive illustrations? Would we be best advised to go for the ones that are strongly made and look as though they will survive several years of fairly rough classroom use? Is it advisable to select among the cheapest, leaving money in the budget for buying equipment such as cassette players?"

Candlin (1984:29) states that before purchasing a programme "it is as well to reflect on what it is that one is buying. *Caveat emptor* applies as much in the world of education as it does in the market place".

Cunningsworth (1995:1) recommends two approaches to materials evaluation. The first one is an impressionistic overview which gives a general introduction to the material. It is a general overview of its significant features which stand out, for example the quality of the visuals, the layout, what the course package is made up of, and the sequencing of items. However, as he notes, it cannot "be relied on to give enough detail to ensure a good match between what the coursebook contains and the requirements of the learning/teaching situation". For this, one needs an in-depth evaluation, which for example examines how specific items are dealt with. It examines representative samples of the material. These two approaches form a solid basis for evaluation. This ties in with Dr Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* : Particulars are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed.

From the issues discussed, various concerns regarding the selection of English Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes have emerged. The problem to be addressed is the following: what are the criteria that Adult Basic Education and Training programmes should meet, and do the selected materials used by various companies meet these criteria?

1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of the research are:

- to draw up detailed criteria for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.
- to briefly evaluate three English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

A descriptive design will be used in this study, and the study will consist of the following stages:

1.4.1 Review of the literature. It is clear from the literature that there are many different approaches and methods in Adult Basic Education and Training. What are the criteria that English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes should meet, and do the selected materials used by various companies meet these criteria?

1.4.2 A tentative set of criteria will then be drawn up.

1.4.3 20 experts in the field will be required to validate these criteria. The researcher will randomly select literacy/ABET specialists who have been in the field for at least two years.

1.4.4 A questionnaire based on the tentative criteria will be prepared and sent to the experts in the field. The experts will be required to state whether they "strongly agree", "agree", whether they're "not sure", "disagree", or "strongly disagree" with each criterion. In addition, the experts can add their own criteria to the researcher's tentative set of criteria.

1.4.5 From these results the criteria will be arranged in order of importance. The researcher will revue and amend the original criteria and present a final set of criteria.

1.4.6 Three English ABET programmes will be evaluated in accordance with the final set of criteria to illustrate how the criteria can be applied. All three programmes gear students towards the Independent Examinations Board's (IEB) Level 3 *Communications in English* examination. The programmes are used frequently in the industry. Each programme will be evaluated and rated on the degree to which it satisfies each of the criteria. A simple rating scale will be used:

1	2	3	4	5
fully meets the criterion				does not meet the criterion

1.5 THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Chapter 2 gives a brief overview of Adult Basic Education and Training.

Chapter 3 is a survey of the literature regarding the requirements of English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

Chapter 4 sets out a provisional list of the criteria that will have evolved from the literature study in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 reports on the results of a questionnaire that will have been distributed to subject matter experts. Experienced adult basic education and training tutors, course designers, and literacy agencies evaluated the provisional criteria. After analysing these findings the list of criteria was refined and finalised.

In Chapter 6 the final list of criteria have been applied to evaluate three English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

Chapter 7 concludes by giving an overview of the study as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING : AN OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of Adult Basic Education and Training. It includes a brief discussion about the origins of adult education, a definition of ABET, the importance of a general education, and the proposed National Qualifications Framework.

2.2 ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

At the end of the Second World War there was a short period of liberal optimism about the possibilities of creating a new South Africa. An official Committee on Adult Education, established in 1945, recommended that night schools be encouraged to eradicate illiteracy. In 1948 however, the newly appointed Nationalist government undermined the policy of support for night schools. The banning of the Communist Party and later the ANC and PAC removed important sources of committed and organised support for literacy work. Until recently there was very little official *adult basic education* in South Africa.

Training was added to the term Adult Basic Education as education must be linked to training - they cannot be seen as two independent entities.

In its draft policy, the Ministry of Education (1994:16) views Adult Basic Education and Training as "a force for social participation and economic development, providing an essential component of all RDP programmes. The objective of policy is a national ABET programme, focused on particular target groups which have historically missed out on education and training, and

providing an appropriate ABET curriculum whose standards will be fully incorporated in the National Qualification Framework." The main organisational principle of the national ABET programme encourages the building of partnerships of all constituencies with a vital interest in the ABET enterprise, including amongst others, stakeholders, organised labour and business.

Adult Basic Education and Training is now recognised as an integral component of a national training strategy and various structures are in place to develop a framework for adult education. A working group set up by the National Task Team of the National Training Board has agreed on the following definition of ABET:

> *Adult basic education and training is the basic provision of lifelong learning. It is aimed at learners who have had little - or no - formal schooling and who do not have a compulsory school-leaving certificate.*
> *ABET consists of levels along a continuum of learning, in which learners can enter and exit at multiple points and receive the equivalent of compulsory education certificates.*
> *ABET includes a core of behaviour, skills, knowledge, values and experiences which form the basis of a general education.* (Favish and Lurie 1994:14).

The question which emerges is, *what constitutes a general education*? Favish and Lurie (1994:14) state that advocates of a broader approach to general education, that is, those who stipulate that in addition to literacy and numeracy, themes from social and development studies should be reflected within an integrated curriculum, believe that "for adults to be able to participate effectively in all areas of life, they need to build up a knowledge of social institutions, of government structures at local, provincial and national levels and of community organisations. This view sees adults not only as workers, but as whole people, and sees education and training as a holistic process".

A general education can also provide adults with analytical and critical thinking skills which cannot be developed outside of knowledge and understanding of the world.

Timp (1994:15) states that "economic development will be the pivotal variable in ensuring a prosperous future for South Africa. An essential precursor to economic development is the provision of sound education and training for all citizens".

Without the foundations of adult basic education and training, it is difficult for workers to benefit from further training or to gain new skills. Adult basic education and training is therefore seen as a vital way of opening up opportunities for those who have been economically and educationally disadvantaged. With the nature of work becoming more complex, employees need a wide range of literacy and language skills in order to survive in the workplace, let alone be active participants in decisions and change in the workplace.

Favish and Lurie (1994:14) give some reasons why a general education is important:

- it provides a foundation for access to higher education and training.
- it contributes to economic growth and higher productivity.
- it ensures that people have the right to develop their full potential.
- it enables workers to adapt to changing forms of work organisation.
- it develops flexibility so that people are not locked into specific situations.
- it develops critical and analytical thinking skills.

Christie (1994:6) states that one way of achieving integration of education and training is to establish a single, national qualifications framework for all levels of education and training. This would be "from adult basic education to trade training to post-graduate university degrees". The national qualifications framework would bring different levels and contexts of learning into a single system.

2.3 THE PROPOSED NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

To develop a successful education and training system in South Africa one needs to implement an integrated national approach to education and training. Until now education and training have been strictly separated, since education has been seen chiefly as an academic activity, and training has been seen as a vocational activity. With the concept of integration one should not think of "education" and "training" in the traditional mould as separate definable entities limited to certain periods of an individual's life, but rather as a single entity within a single system. One should rather think about the importance of learning, whether in "education" or "training", especially where learning is a lifelong process.

The proposed National Qualifications Framework is based on a system of credits for learning outcomes achieved. A learning outcome is basically a capability developed in the learner

reflecting an integration of knowledge and skill which can be understood, applied and transferred to different contexts. Attaining a qualification in such a system is not dependent on attendance at particular courses, but by a learner accumulating credits on an agreed cluster of learning outcomes defined according to national standards at a particular level. Such a credit-based framework could also provide access to and progression through recognised qualifications for all learners, whatever their level, and allow learners to transfer credits across different modes of study and qualifications within the national framework.

Figure 1 (on the next page) shows the manner in which a National Qualifications Framework could provide the integrating force for education and training.

NQF level	Band	Types of Qualifications and Certificates	Locations of Learning for units and qualifications
8	Higher Education and Training Band	Doctorates Further Research degrees	Tertiary/Research/ Professional institutions
7		Higher Degrees Professional Qualifications	Tertiary/Research/ Professional institutions
6		First Degrees Higher Diplomas	Universities/Technikons/ Colleges/Private/Professional institutions
5		Diplomas, Occupational Certificates	Universities/Technikons/ Colleges/Private/Professional institutions/Workplace, etc.

Further Education and Training Certificate

4	Further Education and Training Band	School/College/Trade Certificates Mix of units from all	Formal high schools/ Private/ State schools	Technical/ Commu-nity/ Police/ Nursing/ private colleges	RDP and Labour Market schemes, Industry Training Boards, union, work-place, etc.
3		School/College/Trade Certificates Mix of units from all			
2		School/College/Trade Certificates Mix of units from all			

General Education and Training Certificate

1	General Education and Training Band	Std 7 / Grd 9 (10 years)	ABET Level 4	Formal schools (Urban/ Rural/ Farm/ Special)	Occupa-tion/Work-based training/ RDP/ Labour Market schemes/ Uplift-ment program-mes/Com-munity program-mes	NGOs/ Churches/ Night schools/ ABET program-mes/ Private providers/ Industry Training Boards/ unions/ work-place, etc.
		Std 5 / Grd 7 (8 years)	ABET Level 3			
		Std 3 / Grd 5 (6 years)	ABET Level 2			
		Std 1 / Grd 3 (4 years)	ABET Level 1			
		1 year reception				

Figure 1. Proposed National Qualifications Framework

- ABET Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 are seen to be the equivalent of education received up to year 9/10 of compulsory schooling, and lead to the acquisition of a General Education and Training Certificate.
- The Further Education and Training Certificate could be acquired in a number of ways, ranging from education at Senior Secondary Schools, Technical and Community Colleges, and so on. In all instances they would have a core and a variety of generic and applied options specific to the option selected.

The different learning contexts - ABET and school-based General Education - which lead to the obtaining of a common certificate (the General Education and Training Certificate), will require the establishment of mechanisms to ensure the articulation and equivalence of the curriculum across different learning contexts. The content of the curriculum for teaching methods, however, need not necessarily be the same across the different learning contexts.

There will be a single, national qualifications and certification structure for all levels of the education and training system with multiple entry and exit points. The latter will increase access to the education and training system as well as allow learners to acquire credits based on their specific needs and which could, through the obtaining of additional credits, be converted to a national qualification.

The national qualifications structure will have three major certificated levels or exit points:

- **General Education and Training Certificate** marks the completion of general education (9/10 years of schooling), including (equivalent) Adult Basic Education and Training.
- **Further Education and Training Certificate** marks the completion of further education (based on the integration of general education and vocational education and training) whether school-based or work-based.
- **Higher Education** marks the completion of college, technikon or university-based education.

In the case of Adult Basic Education and Training, there will be four nationally certificated attainment levels prior to the General Education and Training Certificate. The attainment certificates will provide learners with measurable targets towards the General Education and Training Certificate, address the needs of, and recognise the skills obtained by learners who have

specific and limited objectives such as developing basic literacy and numeracy or job-related functional skills.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) would be responsible for accreditation, certification and the maintenance of standards in the system.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Pennington (1994:xiii) aptly summarises the importance of Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa: "the provision of adult basic education (and training) should be linked to the development of human resources within national development aimed at restructuring the economy, addressing past inequalities, and the building of a democratic society." He continues by stating that adult basic education and training "can be used to help promote the principles of cooperation, critical thinking and civic responsibility and equip people for participation in a high skills economy and society as a whole."

CHAPTER 3

TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Before looking at the specific components of a programme, it is necessary to have a brief overview of course design. Nunan (1988:5) and Brumfit and Roberts (1983:147) define curriculum as a statement of content, which is used as the foundation for planning programmes of various kinds and which leads towards a specific goal. There is a starting point and a finishing point. There are a number of curriculum models which can be applied to the teaching-learning situation. These models can be divided into two main categories: linear and circular. Dippenaar (1993:8) states that "the circular models are more popular as they stress the integration of all elements as well as the cyclical nature of the teaching-learning situation". Steyn's (1982:21) model (Figure 2) will be used to illustrate components of the teaching-learning situation.

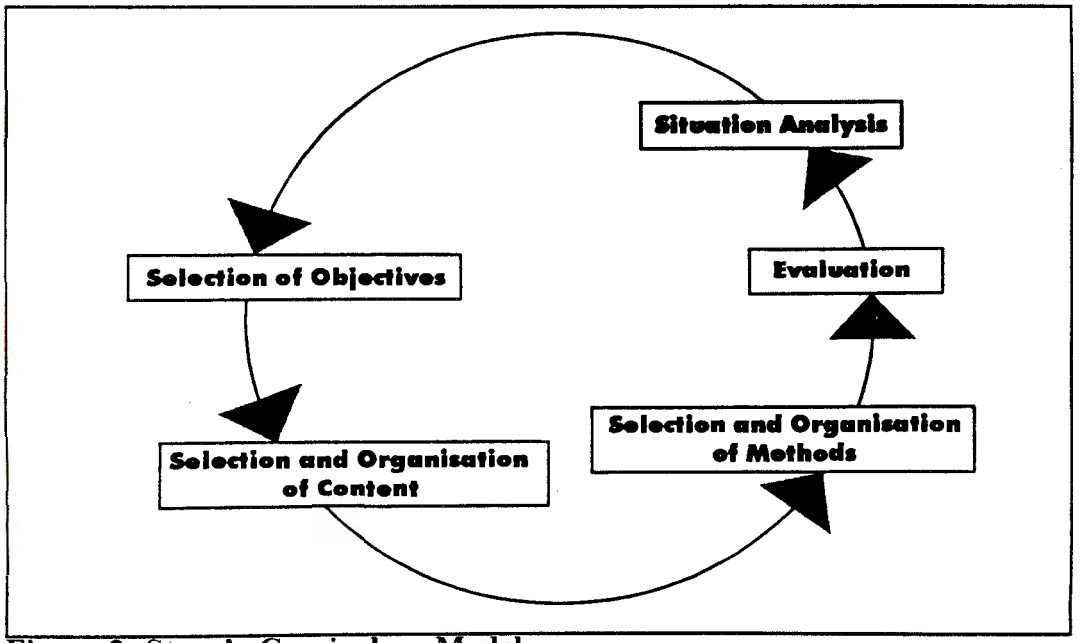

Figure 2. Steyn's Curriculum Model

Situation Analysis

The first step in a teaching-learning programme is a situation analysis, which takes the entire spectrum of the situation into account. A needs analysis can assist in preparing a detailed situation analysis.

Selection of Objectives

As Dippenaar (1993:11) points out, "aims and objectives are the most important step in any planning as they guide activities in the classroom and determine the success of teaching". Objectives are set after an interpretation of the situation analysis has been done.

Selection and Organisation of Content

Content is selected once the aims and objectives have been established. Dippenaar (1993:30) points out that "content should be realistic and useful, relevant and significant, encouraging and interesting, and selection will be influenced by the approach of the teacher, the situation analysis and the aims and objectives of the course".

Selection and Organisation of Methods

Dippenaar (1993:14) states that the selection and organisation of methods refers to the methods used to facilitate the attainment of aims and objectives. The type of content chosen will establish the possibilities of different learning activities and the methodology to be implemented in a certain lesson.

Evaluation

Evaluation is very important as it determines whether learning has taken place, and whether objectives have been reached. Steyn (1982:104) points out some functions of evaluation: it determines the amount of learning; it allows the tutor to evaluate and grade learners; it can be used as a basis for requirements to pass; and it can create opportunities for individual teaching.

The researcher has adapted Steyn's model slightly, and follows this pattern: aims and objectives -> content -> materials -> teaching and learning activities -> assessment. These areas will receive specific attention in this study.

3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Dippenaar (1993:11) defines aims as being "the educative purpose to be reached at the end of a certain time span and are focused on long-term results". Objectives, on the other hand, are more specific and focused on specific results. Widdowson (1983:7) defines objectives as "the pedagogic

intentions of a particular course of study to be achieved within the period of that course and in principle measurable by some assessment device at the end of the course." Objectives specify the expected outcome for the learner in terms of the level of knowledge or performance that is expected to be attained. The objectives should be stated in measurable and attainable terms so that they can be evaluated. Nunan (1988:61) states that there is some disagreement about the nature of objectives and the precision with which they should be formulated. He continues by stating that "some curriculum specialists maintain that no sound instructional system could possibly hope to emerge from a syllabus in which content is not stated in the form of objectives. Others argue that the process of specifying content in terms of objectives leads to the trivialization of that content". Ogunniyi (1984:9) states that "in order to be implemented, a programme should be designed in such a way that under favourable conditions certain learning outcomes will emerge". Steiner (1975) states that there are three main criteria for objectives: they must provide clear guidance to the prospective learners, they should be relevant by being meaningful to the learner, and they should be feasible. Tyler (1975) suggests that stating objectives should be in terms of what the learner should be able to do as a result of learning. He continues by stating that "the statement should be so clear and precise that an independent observer could recognize such behaviour if he saw it". Stenhouse (1975:32) asserts that "one must be clear about the skills and information the students are to learn by the end of the programme". Ouane *et al.* (1990:53) maintain that objectives need to be specific and must refer to the learning that should be promoted through training activities.

Richards and Rodgers (1986:157) assert that objectives detail the aims of a programme and identify the kind and level of language proficiency the learner will attain once he completes the programme. Objectives may be stated in terms of a proficiency level in a particular skill or in the form of behavioural objectives, that is, descriptions of the kind of behaviours learners will be able to show on completion of the programme. Richards and Rodgers (ibid) state that "without clear statements of objectives, questions of content, teaching and learning activities and experiences, materials, and evaluation cannot be systematically addressed." Nunan (1988:127) asserts that "coursebooks do not always explicitly state what it is the learner should be able to do as a result of undertaking a particular activity or unit of work".
Steinberg (1993) aptly poses the question, does the learning lead somewhere?

French (1992:79) states that a programme should be "purposeful, with broad aims expressed in

smaller attainable objectives or 'competencies'", and that it should have "some end objective in sight".

The aim of a programme is for the learner to be **communicatively competent**, where he has the ability and confidence to communicate in a variety of everyday situations, to a number of speakers, and for a variety of purposes. A programme should encourage learners to become communicatively competent. Hymes (1971:25) states that "communicative competence includes knowledge of different communicative strategies or communicative styles according to the situation, the task, and the roles of the participants". Xiaoju (1990:59) gives an explanation of what is meant by communicative competence: "communicative competence does not mean the ability just to utter words or sentences. It involves the ability to react mentally as well as verbally in communication situations". Communicative competence involves the creative functioning of the mind.

It is important for programmes to promote the use of language but as Hutchinson and Waters (1987:109) point out "it is unfair to give learners communicative tasks and activities for which they do not have enough of the necessary language knowledge".

Comeau (1987:58) maintains that "if communicative ability is to be developed, ... there must be practice in using the language to communicate meaningful messages, even in limited contexts". Hutchinson and Waters (1987:141) maintain that "using a range of skills greatly increases the range of activities possible in the classroom. This makes it easier to achieve a high degree of recycling and reinforcement, while maintaining the learners' interest".
Widdowson (1978:67) states that "an overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences tends to inhibit the development of communicative abilities". A programme should teach all four skills in relation to communicative competence.

3.3 CONTENT

Content deals with the language that is contained in the programme, that is, it deals with **what** is being taught (as opposed to how it is taught).

3.3.1 FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

The four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing are central to language learning. Cunningsworth (1995:64) asserts that "the skills dimension complements the dimension of grammatical/lexical/phonological knowledge and focuses on the ability of learners actually to operate in the language". The emphasis is on linguistic behaviour and on the learners' ability to use the language in different situations requiring different skills, usually used together.

3.3.1.1 Listening

Most people spend a large part of their waking hours listening, either to language or other stimuli. Bowen and Marks (1994:128) pose the question: *why is it important then that learners should 'learn to listen' or 'practise listening'?* They offer the following answers: "to give further practice and revision of previously-taught language in new contexts; to introduce new language items in context; to give learners opportunities to 'pick up' new language; to practise the skill of listening; to help learners understand spoken English; to build their confidence; to expose them to different varieties and accents of English; to help them realize that they shouldn't panic if they don't understand everything".

Hubbard *et al.* (1983:80) believe that "without actually having been taught to listen, a student may be able to express himself orally, but he will never be able to communicate with speakers of English if he is unable to understand what is said to him". Doff (1988:198) asserts that "we cannot develop speaking skills unless we also develop listening skills; to have a successful conversation, students must understand what is said to them". Listening to the spoken language is an important way of acquiring the language. There are two different ways to focus on listening. The first one forms part of general oral work and includes roleplays and dialogues. Here listening plays a secondary role compared with speaking. In the second way, Cunningsworth (1995:67) states that there are "recorded listening passages for comprehension, for extraction of information, as a lead-in to discussion in conjunction with a reading text." Here the material could provide pre-listening activities (such as pre-questions or asking learners to find certain information in the listening material) in order to focus the learners' attention on the topic of the passage.

Hubbard *et al.* (1983:89) make the suggestion that tutors can select listening material which

includes structures and vocabulary beyond the learners' ability level, provided the tasks the learners have to do after the listening activity are within their capabilities. In other words, the activity and not the material is graded.

Should a listening activity be recorded on a cassette, the quality of the recorded sound is very important. The speaking speed should be appropriate to the learners' level and ability. Overarticulated speech should be avoided and features such as elision and assimilation should be included. This type of listening activity, however, is not always realistic as one may think it is, as the learner is passive and takes no part in it and cannot influence it in any way. The material in the programme should give as much information as possible to facilitate comprehension. Billows (1972:143) argues that listening is the basis of speech. Learners should be given as many opportunities as possible to hear the language being spoken correctly and at normal speed.

Rivers (1981:151) believes there should be listening activities in a programme as learners are often emotionally embarrassed when they cannot understand what is being said to them and around them.

In an ABET class, listening activities are very important for the learners. In order to develop speaking skills, learners first need to develop listening skills. As listening is an integral part of any two-way conversation, learners need to be able to listen to what is said to them before they can respond.

3.3.1.2 Speaking

Speaking practice takes place through the oral practice of new language items, in dialogues, discussions, and in communication activities such as roleplays. Mechanical aspects of speaking are often covered in pronunciation practice. Topics for discussion are a good way of getting learners to practise speaking. Realistic communication activities often contain an element of uncertainty and unpredictability which is present in any genuine conversation. This assists learners in gaining confidence whilst in the relative safety of the classroom. Learners should be encouraged to work in pairs and in groups. Krashen (1981:110) believes that "there is a real need for early and functional second language production". Krashen (1982:178) maintains that "conversational practice provides comprehensible input and helps the students acquire the tools

needed for conversation with native speakers, which in turn results in more input and more language acquisition".

Rivers (1981:188) states that learners "will not learn to speak fluently merely by hearing speech in class, although this is most important for familiarizing them with accepted forms and the flow of authentic speech, as well as for giving them practice in the receptive side of communication". Tutors need to give their learners many opportunities to practise speaking. After all, we learn to speak by speaking. However, learners should communicate when they feel ready to do so. If they feel they have to communicate, their growth and development may be inhibited.

ABET learners need to communicate with English speakers on a regular basis. Very often they do not voice their opinions and possible concerns as they do not have the confidence to do so. It is therefore important that learners practise speaking in the relative safety of the classroom so that they can build the confidence needed to speak English in real situations.

3.3.1.3 Reading

Reading is one activity that can be done easily by learners outside the classroom as well. It is a skill which can be most easily maintained at a high level by the learners themselves without further help from the tutor.

Cunningsworth (1995:73) asserts that reading texts can be used for many different purposes: "developing reading skills and strategies; presenting/recycling grammar items; extending vocabulary; providing models for writing; giving information of interest to learners; stimulating oral work. Reading texts also allow students to reflect on the structure and use of language at their own pace without the sometimes stressful real-time constraints that go with listening and speaking."

Reading passages should be of real interest to the learners, challenging, topical, culturally acceptable, as authentic as possible and accompanied by purposeful activities which help the reading process. What is important to consider is the quantity of reading material, the type of reading passages, and the nature of activities linked to the reading passages. It is expected that these activities assist learners to read with understanding and enjoyment. In addition, one needs

to look at how complex the grammatical and discourse structures are, and the range of vocabulary for a specific level of learner. Bowen and Marks (1994:114) state that "interest and topicality are cited as criteria for selecting texts for learners to read, but so are level of language". Some tutors regard graded texts as childish and over-simplified, while others see them as a means of confidence-building and contextualizing language items.

Cunningsworth (1995:75) asserts that the type or genre of text used is also important. One should look for a range of different text types within the learner's ability and level. Different genres include advertisements, recipes, extracts from magazine and newspaper stories, leaflets, letters, etc. Goodman (1986:10) maintains that we learn through language at the same time that we're developing language. He gives the example that "we don't learn to read by reading *reading*; we learn to read by reading signs, packages, stories, magazines, newspapers, TV guides, billboards". That is, reading must be meaningful and relevant to the learners.

Rivers (1981:259) stipulates that "reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language".

An ABET learner needs to read at some stage of his life, be it the newspaper, a road sign, a novel or instructions on a medicine bottle. Reading is in fact a life skill, and it is imperative that tutors encourage learners to read, not only to increase their knowledge base, but also as a pleasurable activity.

3.3.1.4 Writing

Part of the task of learning to write is coming to bridge the gap between communicating in speech and the demands of written language. At one stage, reading was seen as words going in and writing as words coming out. Hubbard *et al.* (1983:63) state that often "when written work is set, it is assumed that if students can say something, they should be able to write it". Cunningsworth (1984:45), however, specifies that "writing is not speech written down, and writing ability cannot be adequately taught by simply getting students to write down oral drills or do written grammar exercises." Bell and Burnaby (1984) point out that "writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of

a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts". Of the four skills, writing is the skill which is most frequently neglected. Cunningsworth (1984:45) suggests that in the early stages of learning, learners should do specific writing exercises based upon given models of written English. They should become aware of significant features of the text, then they should write a short, controlled text based on the model given but containing different information. The types of writing tasks can include writing notes to colleagues, making lists, writing a diary, summarising texts, filling in forms, and writing formal and informal letters. Learners should be encouraged to do free and creative writing as well. Witthaus (1992:94) states that the main aim of learners' free writing is to encourage them "to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions in writing".

Hickman and Kimberley (1988:64) believe that writing must "suggest a real purpose to students, not just be a practice, a mechanical duty" that satisfies the demands of the education centre. They go on to say that "unless the meaning and significance are present there'll be no satisfaction and enjoyment and consequently no real learning". Soifer *et al.* (1990:18) make the point that one of the values of writing activities is that "comprehension is inherent when materials are created by the learner".

For beginner learners in an ABET class, learning to write the letters is one of the most important components of the programme. As they progress through the programme, writing remains important as they can now start communicating their ideas and opinions on paper. Whereas in the past they could only communicate orally with their families, colleagues, and friends, they can now communicate in writing.

3.3.2 GRAMMAR

Researchers of children learning a second language in a natural environment, found a fixed order in the acquisition of second language morphology and grammar, much the same as the order that had been found for first language acquisition. These findings confirm the hypothesis of the "grammar in the mind" or of the Language Acquisition Device, which unfolds in an autonomous way, independent of the input the child is faced with. Krashen (1982:180) included such findings

about unconscious acquisition processes in a more global model, called the Monitor Model. This model holds that learning is a conscious process whereas acquisition is mainly unconscious. From this it follows that, since learning never becomes acquisition, grammar should not be taught explicitly. However, Krashen (1982:187) has stated that "we can teach vocabulary or grammar, and, as long as it is done in the target language, a great deal of acquisition will take place, the medium being the message. We can teach situationally, giving learners useful, short dialogues that satisfy the craving for learning and memorized language, but, at the same time, present comprehensible input".

Krashen's influence on the discussion of explicit grammar teaching has been tremendous. His publications coincided with the trend toward communicative language teaching, and for many applied linguists the amalgamation of the two approaches led to the claim of banning all formal grammar teaching from the curriculum. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985:2), speech "emerges" on its own and is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Krashen continues by asserting that "if input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided". The tutor in fact, need not teach grammar.

Balcom (as cited in Dirven 1990:6) however, points out that teaching explicit grammar can contribute substantially to acquisition since this can make the input more comprehensible, help learners segment incoming speech signals into more efficient units of comprehension, and confirm or disconfirm the learners' unconscious hypotheses on the grammar of the target language. Ausubel (1964:421) points out that adults learning a second language could benefit from certain grammatical explanations. Clur (1994:15) believes that grammar "develops skills in selecting and analysing information, which are needed as a basis for reasoning". She states that learning to communicate is not enough: people also need to be able to reason. She adds that "people need to be able to relate present experience, past experience and possible future outcomes in order to anticipate potential difficulties. To prevent mistakes, they need to be able to predict what can happen in the future, based on their own and other people's experiences. They need to learn to think critically and provide logical reasons for their arguments".

Ur (1988:4) is emphatic that a knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of a language: one cannot use words unless one knows how they should be put together. Grammar can provide the basis for a set of classroom activities during which it becomes temporarily the

main learning objective. Learning grammar should be seen in the long term as one of the means of acquiring a good mastery of the language as a whole, not as an end in itself.

Cunningsworth (1984:18) believes that the internalisation of grammar rules is very important in language learning and that teaching programmes which do not include grammar are not really teaching language in the full sense of the word. Cunningsworth (1995:32) states that "it is an understanding of and an ability to use grammar that equips learners with the ability to create their own utterances and use language for their own purposes."

If the language is taught only or mainly as form, the material will focus on assisting the learner to produce grammatically correct sentences without paying too much attention to how these sentences would be used. It is important that the function of language items is also taught, and that the language is presented as a communicative system in a context of use so that it is an integral part of the pattern of social behaviour. It is not a matter of choosing either form or function, but rather teaching both. Cunningsworth (1984:16) states that what needs to be looked at is not so much whether the materials focus exclusively on form or exclusively on function, but how the relationships between form and function are handled and put across to the learner. He continues by saying that "whether we label *could you shut the door* as an example of a modal verb plus a lexical verb with a complement, or as an example of the function of making a polite request, is less important than how successfully we teach the relationship between the form of the sentence and its effective use in a context of social interaction".

Yalden (1987:152) believes that "grammar can be taught communicatively by being presented in a context. It is not necessary, therefore, to think in terms of syntax being taught solely by drills". Rivers (1981:196) maintains that grammatical structures must be experienced in possible and probable linguistic contexts: "forms and structures viewed in isolation may be interesting oddities, but students cannot be expected to know what to do with them". Smith (1995:45) points out that "teaching grammar is important, but that it shouldn't overshadow" other skills.

By teaching grammar in an ABET class, learners will be better equipped to segment incoming speech signals; the input they receive will be more comprehensible; they will develop skills in selecting and analysing information; and they will be able to acquire a better mastery of the language as a whole. However, grammar should not be taught for the sake of grammar; it should

be taught to enable learners to express themselves more clearly. Learners need to learn to **use** grammar, but they do not necessarily need to know how to explain the structures or their names, for example the future perfect. In addition, grammar should be introduced at the appropriate stage of the learner's development.

3.3.3 VOCABULARY

Vocabulary is extremely important and it cannot be neglected. Cunningsworth (1995:38) points out that "sustained communication is virtually impossible without access to a relevant and fairly wide range of vocabulary." Dictionary definitions of new words or word lists are not enough, nor should new words be taught in isolation or outside of context. Rather, there should be exercises which sensitize learners to the structure of the English lexicon and to various relationships which exist within it. Krashen (1981:109) is of the opinion that one must "emphasize vocabulary in order to encourage the acquisition of syntax".

Stevick (1976:18) suggests that items are learned and recalled easier if relationships can be perceived between the items forming the system. Lowen (1993:32) states that the programme content should be designed around a functional vocabulary and likely language usage by the learner. Bowen and Marks (1994:93) assert that there are two reasons in favour of presenting vocabulary in context. The first is that "the context itself can present an association for the learner that may help to trigger the recall of lexical items linked with this context". Secondly, contextualized vocabulary "presents learners with a means of physically storing vocabulary items under a topic category, rather than in random or alphabetical lists". They (ibid:101) are not in favour of the list-learning approach to vocabulary acquisition as "it is based on only one aspect of memory, namely that items are memorized by means of repetition and testing. This approach takes no account of the power of memory and the numerous ways in which the memory can be triggered by stimuli of various kinds". This is supported by Cunningsworth (1995:102): "lists of unrelated words are difficult to learn because the words appear in isolation and, lacking any context, do not appear to the learner to have any real meaning". Rivers (1981:469) agrees and adds that vocabulary is more "readily available for retrieval if it has been used in some meaningful activity". She continues by saying that "vocabulary learning should always be in a purposeful context". Goodman *et al.* (1987:212) claim that "vocabulary cannot be built in isolation from language and experience".

New words in a text should appear naturally rather than artificially. Bramley (1991:93) asserts that the words learners come across "for the first time should appear in their correct context, so the precise meaning can be conveyed". He continues by saying that words should have been chosen to convey precise meaning, even if this means introducing the learner to more difficult terminology.

ABET programmes should assist learners with ways for handling unfamiliar vocabulary which they will inevitably come across. Activities and exercises in a programme should assist learners to extend and develop their vocabulary in a meaningful and structured way.

3.3.4 PRONUNCIATION

Hubbard *et al.* (1983:207) believe that "the teaching of pronunciation is not an optional luxury". Pronunciation should be an integral part of a programme right from the early stages. Cunningsworth (1995:41) asserts that the emphasis of teaching pronunciation should be on aspects such as weak forms, stress, rhythm, as well as on producing individual sounds. He continues by stating that "the production of natural-sounding connected speech depends on the speaker's ability to handle the sentence stress and intonation of English with some degree of appropriateness." With both individual sounds and connected speech, excessive emphasis should not be placed on absolute correctness or native-speaker accuracy. He maintains that rather "there should be an awareness of areas where misunderstandings can most easily occur and focus on avoiding such unfortunate occurrences."

Bowen and Marks (1994:64) make the observation that many tutors assume that "to deal with pronunciation lessons in a meaningful way means to include whole pronunciation lessons in the syllabus, with corresponding cuts being made elsewhere". The teaching of pronunciation does not necessarily need to be dealt with both systematically and comprehensively. A programme should look at language holistically.

In ABET, pronunciation should be taught to help clarify meaning, to aid spelling, and to avoid misunderstandings. Pronunciation should be taught to enhance understanding. It should not be taught to correct accent.

3.3.5 SPELLING

Often learners simply learn the spelling of words on a one-off basis, or by analogy to words with similar sounds. Unfortunately, in many cases in English, analogy is a poor guide, as the following trio illustrates: ***bear***, ***bean***, ***steak***. Although one does not want to focus extensively on spelling and possibly demotivate learners, common sound-spelling relationships can be of great help to learners in their writing and reading. Witthaus (1992:72) suggests that "it is always best to read words first in a meaningful context". Spelling practice should be done after a reading or writing activity, using words from that activity.

When ABET learners are able to spell words better, they feel more confident when they have to write. Very often learners do not write because they are afraid of making spelling mistakes.

3.3.6 DISCOURSE

Cunningsworth (1984:48) defines discourse as the "combining and relating of sentences and utterances to produce units of language which are sequenced in a structured way". We do not use sentences in isolation - they relate to each other in their meanings and their functions. There are rules for linking sentences to form larger units of discourse, and materials should have examples of sentence linking. The rules of grammar are not the same as the rules and conventions by which sentences relate to each other and form larger units. The aim of a programme should not simply be to teach the learner to write or say grammatically correct sentences, but also to develop an awareness of how sentences are organised together.

Brown (1987:204) states that "without context, without the intersentential and suprasentential relationships of discourse, it would be difficult to communicate unambiguously with one another". Goodman (1986:27) asserts that "whole text, connected discourse in the context of some speech or literacy event, is really the minimal functional unit, the barest whole that makes sense". When tutors and learners look at words, phrases, and sentences, they should always do so in the context of whole, real language texts that are part of real language experiences of learners.

Learners in ABET should be taught to understand and produce whole units of language.

3.3.7 STYLISTIC APPROPRIATENESS

Stylistic appropriateness refers to the matching of language to its social context and function. The concept derives from the work done on communicative competence and from Hymes' (1971:278) classic statement: "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless."

When a learner uses a language, he needs to be able to grasp the social situation in which he is operating and be able to match the language used to the situation. The learner must perceive the social situation and select the appropriate language. One aspect of this task is non-linguistic and the other is linguistic, but they are so closely connected that neither aspect can be neglected. Cultural gaps often present problems to language learners, especially where there are cultural, political or religious differences.

There are three factors in verbal communication which exist in a dynamic relationship: appropriateness, meaning and form. All three are important when one is engaged in verbal communication. Yalden (1987:28) states that appropriate language use is often absent in courses. She gives the example that in certain approaches to language teaching "it is seldom revealed *at the same time* as the imperative forms of the verb are being taught that they are seldom used to convey polite messages". It is important that the functions of the language are included in a programme. Learners need to learn to express the functions of the language. Nunan (1988:35) defines functions as the communicative purpose for which language is used. Some examples of functions include: expressing agreement or disagreement; accepting an offer; offering to do something; giving and seeking permission to do something; expressing dissatisfaction; apologizing; requesting others to do something; and taking leave from a group of people. As Cunningsworth (1995:56) points out, "to the average student *making requests for information* means more than *interrogative form of modal verbs followed by infinitive*". Swan (1990:79) claims that "nobody would deny that there are language items that are appropriate only in certain situations, or (conversely) that there are situations in which only certain ways of expressing oneself are appropriate. English notoriously has a wealth of colloquial, slang and taboo expressions, for instance, whose use is regulated by complex restrictions".

Learners, therefore, need to be able to use language that is appropriate to the social context.

3.3.8 LIFE SKILLS

Roup (1994:4) states that "life skills acquisition should become an integral part of any training programme and a prime concern of all human resources and adult education practitioners . This should be endorsed as part of the process of lifelong learning towards self-actualisation". She mentions some of the benefits of life skills acquisition to the individual: self-empowerment and self-actualisation, better sense of self/pride/dignity, ability to plan and think ahead and predict problems, more comfortable with life, and ability to move ahead in one's career. Some of the benefits to the organisation or employer include: the workforce is educated beyond their production roles, people are more responsive, there is more job satisfaction and commitment to the job, there is more creative thinking, better communication, and there will be more cooperative teamwork. There are also benefits to the community and the nation: life skills acquisition can enhance community development, there are more able members of society, more sharing of skills, more self-empowered individuals, and more entrepreneurship. Life skills acquisition should go on throughout an individual's lifelong learning experiences.

Some examples of life skills include: filling in forms, preparing a will, shopping wisely, understanding expiry dates on food and medicines, and reading a payslip.

By teaching life skills in an ABET programme, learners are empowered to cope better with life, and probably improve their standard of day-to-day activities.

3.3.9 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

Culture is an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. As Brown (1987:138) points out, "culture patterns, customs and ways of life are expressed in language; culture-specific world views are reflected in language". For example, cultures divide the colour spectrum differently.

Stenhouse (1975:8) views culture as "the medium through which human minds interact in communication". Education gives people access to cultural groups outside their own. It makes culture available by giving learners an opportunity to take part in learning groups. The difficulty of having these groups is that often they introduce individuals to cultures which are not natural

to them and which often conflict with their own cultures. Programmes should introduce the "new" culture in ways which are not threatening to the learners. Learners should be made aware of the issues which are acceptable and unacceptable in the "new" culture. In addition, course materials should take the learners' culture into consideration: are there any passages which are offensive to learners? Is there perhaps a case study relating to the Xhosa way of life, but the characters have Zulu names? Passages should be factually correct in terms of cultural norms. These norms are important for the individuals in that culture, and passages should therefore not be belittling, condescending or incorrect.

Strevens (1980:34) points out that in some societies certain illustrations, references and relationships found in course material may be culturally unacceptable. Cunningsworth (1995:91) points out that a programme should not portray negative stereotypes such as "women regularly being shown as housewives or being seen as only able to attain fulfilment in life through their man or being portrayed as illogical and excessively emotional".

3.4 MATERIALS

Materials refer to the programme books or files that learners receive. A few guidelines as to what these materials should contain are discussed in this section.

3.4.1 AUTHENTICITY

Authentic materials refer to materials which are genuinely used outside the classroom. These include bus timetables, advertisements, menus, newspaper articles, and general notices. Hubbard *et al.* (1983:89) believe that authentic materials are important as a motivating device: "students get real satisfaction from having made some sense out of real-life language". They continue by asserting that if tutors can show their learners "how easy it is to understand *something* from authentic material rather than how difficult it is to understand *everything*, then students are more likely to want to understand more". Marland (1989:85) believes that real-life descriptions or dialogues can powerfully evoke situations which ring true to the learners and clearly relate to their understanding.

Melvin and Stout (1987:44) maintain that authentic texts "give students direct access to the

culture and help them use the new language authentically themselves, to communicate meaning in meaningful situations rather than for demonstrating knowledge of a grammar point or a lexical item". Soifer *et al.* (1990:11) state that the content of a programme must be authentic language, "everyday, useful, relevant functional language". Xiaoju (1990:62) makes the point that the language learners come into contact with should be real, that is, authentic. This means language that is actually used in real communication situations which are relevant to the learners. She adds that distorting language to fit into a grading framework is unnecessary and in fact hinders the development of the learners' communicative competence.

Goodman *et al.* (1987:404) state that exercises to practise reading, spelling, composition and grammar should be eliminated. They believe that the key is to move toward authenticity in all the experiences the learners have in the classroom that involve using language. The researcher does not disagree with using authentic material only, but is of the opinion that practice exercises cannot be eliminated altogether.

Candlin and Edelhoff (1982:60) point out that "the authenticity issue involves much more than simply selecting texts from outside the arena of language teaching, and that the process to which the learner submits aural and written texts and the things he or she is required to do with the data should also be authentic". Certain activities, however, may only remotely resemble the sorts of things learners are required to do on the real world. Nunan (1989:60) states that certain activities "would probably be justified on the grounds that, in carrying out the activities, learners are required to practise skills which will be useful in the real world".

Swan (1990:95), however, cautions against using authentic material only. He believes that both scripted and authentic material should be used at different points in the programme for different reasons. Authentic material gives learners a taste of *real* language in use, and equips them with genuine linguistic data for their unconscious acquisition processes to work on. If learners are only exposed to authentic material, they are unlikely - within the time of a course - to meet all the high-frequency items they need to learn. Scripted material on the other hand, is useful for presenting specific language items effectively. If, however, learners are exposed to scripted material only, they may end up learning an impoverished version of the language, and will find it difficult to cope with genuine situations. Often an authentic text at a level which is too difficult for the learners, forces them to focus on the code, and not on the meaning of the message (Swan

1990:95). Maley (1990:126) asserts that "simplified materials are a poor preparation for the encounter with the real language outside the classroom". Dubin and Olshtain (1986:30) maintain that if a programme "contains only re-written, watered-down stories that were adapted for the particular text, students using that material may never have the opportunity of encountering authentic text". Bowen and Marks (1994:114) remark that authentic materials are regarded "as motivating and a rich source of varieties of language by some, and frustrating for learners and difficult to use for teachers by others". Cunningsworth (1984:49) asserts that communicative activities in the classroom need not be totally authentic, but "they must be representative of and modelled on the processes that take place in real language use." He (1995:66) is in favour of using semi-authentic material, meaning material which was originally authentic but has been simplified.

In an English ABET class, there should be authentic material so that learners can see how language is used outside the classroom, but at the same time there needs to be scripted material which is representative of the language used outside the classroom.

3.4.2 APPEARANCE AND QUALITY

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:126) point out that one must "pay careful attention to the appearance of the material. If they look boring and scruffy, they will be treated as such". O'Neill (1990:151) gives a colourful rendition of the importance of the appearance of the materials. He states that they do not need to "be glossy, glittering products in full colour, packaged and sold like deodorants". He continues by saying that "neither should they ..... look like one of those catalogues you sometimes see in funeral parlours advertising coffins or cremations urns". Although Bramley (1991) deals specifically with the appearance of ABET library materials, the researcher feels that the criteria can be applied to the appearance of English ABET education materials. Bramley (1991:91) asserts that materials should be "adult in appearance". Learners should not be given the impression that they are attributed the status of children. He continues by stating that if the "cover is illustrated, then adults should be shown taking part in the activities covered by the work". This shows that the programme is intended for adults. The typeface used in the programme and the layout should not convey the feeling that the programme has been designed for children. Bramley (1991:92) states that "typefaces of different size, differing degrees of boldness, or in different colours, can be used to break up the text, which can help to clarify

more complex information and make data easier to assimilate".
Photocopied material should be appealing to the learner - smudges, black lines and skew pages are not acceptable.

3.4.3 VISUALS

Illustrations are important in that they help learners understand complex concepts. Not only are the illustrations themselves important, but the surrounding space is also important. The illustrations should not be cluttered with too much detail. In addition, the content of the illustrations must form part of the text - illustrations should not be included for the sake of having an illustration. Cunningsworth (1995:103) makes the point that when looking at a programme it is important "to consider whether the visuals are an integral part of the teaching material or are there simply for decorative purposes, to make the page look better". Attractively presented materials are, of course, desirable, but visuals with a clear teaching purpose are more central to the programme. Cunningsworth (1984:52) states that "visuals should be rooted in the teaching material rather than superimposed on it".

An ambiguous picture may arouse false expectations as it could lead the learner to focus on misleading features. (Lewis & Massad 1975:135). Pictures need to be drawn carefully and accurately in order to convey the correct message. Lewis and Massad (1975:135) give the example of a picture of a boy drinking from a glass. The response that was required was *He is drinking*. However, learners noticed that, in the drawing, the liquid in the glass did not actually touch the boy's lips. They therefore responded *He is not drinking yet.*

MacDonald (1995:5) maintains that "one should not assume that symbolic representations are understood by everyone. They are acquired through experience". She believes that drawings which are not outside the readers' background knowledge will help learners become better at interpreting pictures. Drawings, illustrations or photographs should be there for a reason and the accompanying text should make the reader interact with them; otherwise, readers may not look at them properly, if at all. Pictures should not make the programme appear old-fashioned with the passage of time. Hairstyles and vehicles for example, are traps in this regard. Rivers (1981:210) also cautions against unintentional humour in pictures which can make them seem ridiculous.

Bramley (1991:92) states that illustrations are valuable for ABET learners. Illustrations should be directly related to the text, both in their physical location and content.

3.5 TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Teaching and learning activities refer to **how** the content is taught, that is the methodology. The activities covered in this sub-section are: integrating skills; adult-oriented; learner-centred; active participation; prior experience and existing knowledge; dictation; pair work and group work; grading and recycling; cognitive/thinking skills; enjoyment; and variety.

3.5.1 INTEGRATING SKILLS

In actual language use one rarely uses one skill in isolation. Xiaoju (1990:66) emphasises that learners must constantly combine and integrate the four major skills, and "therefore to develop not four separate skills, but rather composite skills involving sometimes one, sometimes two or more of the conventional four skills". In fact, many communicative situations in real life involve integrating two or more of the four skills. For a learner to achieve a degree of communicative ability, he needs practice in coping with communicative situations which involve the realistic integration of language skills. Byrne (1981:108) defines integrating skills as the process that "involves linking them together in such a way that what has been learnt and practised through the exercise of one skill is reinforced and perhaps extended through further language activities which bring one or more of the other skills into use". Skill-building should be an integrative process. Goodman (1986:30) asserts that "integration is a key principle for language development and learning through language". Foxcroft (1993:19) also states that a programme should develop all four skills of language. Filling in letters on a worksheet or memorizing individual sounds or letters is not enough if done in isolation from actual reading and writing tasks.

Many everyday communicative situations involve integrating two or more of the four language skills. It is important for ABET learners to practice communication which involves the integration of the four skills.

3.5.2 ADULT-ORIENTED

Adults have different expectations and want different things from Adult Basic Education and Training than from school. They also expect to be treated differently, more in line with the other adult roles they play. Adult learners have multiple roles and responsibilities which are different to those of children and adolescents. Smith (1995:45) points out that "adults don't want to read about Spot, Dick, and Jane. They need materials that relate to their world". Brookfield (1986:13) makes the point that the learners must feel that they are valued as separate and unique individuals deserving of respect. The programme must reflect this, and the exercises and activities should be of interest to adults. As Steinberg (1993) aptly states, the programme should be respectful of learners.

ABET learners are adults and therefore the programme must be relevant to them, that is they must be able to identify with the activities and exercises.

3.5.3 LEARNER-CENTRED

Cunningsworth (1995:16) states that the learner-centred approach aims "to bring learners to a point where they reach a degree of autonomy and are able to use the language themselves in real situations outside the classroom. This progression from dependence on the teacher and on the coursebook towards growing confidence and independence is often difficult but it is crucial to the individual success of learners and to the success of teaching programmes".

Witthaus (1992:6) defines a learner-centred approach as "a way of teaching in which the learners are seen as the most important part of the process". She maintains that this involves:

- asking learners what they need to learn and then trying to help them with their needs.
- doing activities in which the learners actively participate.
- helping learners learn *how* to learn.
- encouraging learners to find out things for themselves.
- evaluating the learning with learners.
- treating learners with respect.

ABET learners are very often dependent on the teacher and the programme. However, they need

to build confidence and independence so that they can be more successful in their learning.

3.5.4 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:128) assert that "it is not enough for learners just to *have* the necessary knowledge to make things meaningful, they must also *use* that knowledge". Learners have to *do* things themselves. They need to discover the use of the acquired knowledge. Meaningful tasks are more fully and easily learned (Brookfield 1986:31). There is a Chinese proverb that reads:

> I hear and I forget.
> I see and I remember.
> I do and I understand.

This is particularly relevant in language learning. Melvin and Stout (1987:44) state that too often tutors are too eager to share their knowledge that they deny their learners the thrills of discovery. Ouane *et al.* (1990:32) maintain that learners should be provided with opportunities to do things by themselves, not only information on how to do them. By doing things, learning is ensured at the practical level as well as the cognitive level. Morrow (1981:64) states that "a cardinal tenet of learning theory is that you learn to do by doing". So for example, "only by practising communicative activities can we learn to communicate".
Hutchinson and Waters (1987:128) state that "'activity' should not be judged in terms of how much learners say or write, but in terms of how much the learners have to think - to use their cognitive capacities and knowledge of the world to make sense of the flow of new information". Brookfield (1986:10) maintains that "activity" does not always require learners to **do** something in the sense of performing clearly observable acts, it can for example, include cognitive activities. He continues by stating that adults must see themselves as proactive, engaged in continuous recreations of their personal relationships, work worlds and social circumstances.

McLaughlin (1987:50) quotes researchers who argue that "*understanding* new forms is not enough; the learner must be given the opportunity to *produce* the new forms". Active participation in learning can improve retention (Brookfield 1986:31).

In real life situations, ABET learners need to be able to use the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom. The only way to do this is for the them to be active agents in the learning

process.

3.5.5 PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

Adults have accumulated many life experiences, and for learning to take place, they use their existing knowledge to make the new information comprehensible. Morphet (1992:93) describes this experience as "the accumulated baggage of personal history". The learners' existing state of knowledge is a vital element in the success or failure of learning. Morphet (1992:94) asserts that "the roots of the contradictory effects of adult experiences lie in the connections between the sets of rules we as adults have internalised, and the new information that we are trying to work with, or the problems we are trying to solve in class. If the rules we know are applicable to whatever we are trying to do, then it will be relatively easy to grasp the new material and to integrate it with the basic knowledge that we already have. If this is the case, we can expand our repertoire of rules, and we can continue to draw on our well-established day-to-day knowledge. Success follows". If, however, new ideas and concepts are strange and unknown, we will battle to understand them. Brookfield (1986:30) states that "adults use experience as a resource in learning so the learning content and process must bear a perceived and meaningful relationship to past experience". He (ibid.:12) asserts that programmes should present new knowledge, concepts and ideas in such a way that these are comprehensible in terms of the learners' own experiences. Hickman and Kimberley (1988:62) state that the knowledge learners already have "is used to push them on to new knowledge and awareness, new ideas and a greater control over language". If the learners' past experiences are taken into consideration, their self-awareness could develop further, they could change their view of themselves and feel they've got something valuable to contribute, and their confidence will grow. Learning should thus capitalize on the learner's experience. Brown (1987:140) makes the point that a learner "can make positive use of prior experiences to facilitate the process of learning". Ouane *et al.* (1990:32) confirm this and state that "new knowledge and skills are better acquired when related to previous experiences, since this gives them a personal meaning".

Goodman *et al.* (1987:137) claim that "as the individual meets a new situation, new data is assimilated into old related material; at the same time, these older ideas are accommodated to the new". When it comes to reading, for example, they (ibid.:210) maintain that "readers depend heavily on their experiential background and conceptual schemas to comprehend what they are

reading". If texts do not relate to experiences that readers have had, they will have difficulty comprehending even though all the language elements may be familiar. We cannot read written language that deals with concepts beyond our existing knowledge, for which we have no schemas. Concepts must be within the grasp of readers. When developing training material it is difficult to establish a learner's prior experience and knowledge. However, the type of activities, for example classroom interactions, reading exercises, roleplays, debates, problem-solving activities, should encourage the learner to use his prior knowledge and experience.

A learner who has had no formal education has still acquired a wealth of knowledge and has gained valuable experience. ABET learners come to classes with a lot of knowledge and life experiences. These must be acknowledged and taken into consideration.

3.5.6 DICTATION

In the 1960s dictation was seen as a hopeless means of testing learners' language abilities. After all, it did not test word order, it did not test vocabulary, nor did it test aural perception. At the end of the decade however, this orthodoxy was challenged. Hughes (1989:72) reports that "examination of performance on dictation tests made it clear that words and word order were *not* really *given*; the candidate heard only a stream of sound which had to be decoded into a succession of words, stored, and recreated on paper". A dictation is a useful technique for verifying whether learners have learned to make certain discriminations among sounds. The learner draws on various linguistic systems when he processes the sounds and uses all his experience of the language.

Good dictation gives learners practice in all four language skills: listening, writing, reading and speaking. A dictation need not be a monotonous activity. If done as a meaningful activity, it can be very challenging: interesting and relevant passages can be chosen; learners can mark their own work; instead of the tutor reading the passage again once the learners have written it down, one of the learners can read it back; a gapfill dictation can be used where learners are given a summary of a story with a few words missing and gaps for them to fill in the missing words. Withaus (1992:78) states that dictation is useful "for writing and spelling practice; to practise writing drafts and summaries; to practise listening for meaning". Haycraft (1978:38) states that "dictations are valuable ..... as a bridge between spoken and written English, helping students to

consolidate written structures, idiom and vocabulary, which can already be pronounced correctly, and are also a useful test of listening comprehension".

Rivers (1981:134) maintains that a dictation usually serves a triple purpose: "as an exercise in aural comprehension and discrimination; as a test of the students' knowledge of combinations of letters which traditionally represent specific sounds; and as a test of knowledge of structural elements, particularly those of a morphological nature".

The most important aim of a dictation in an ABET class is to verify whether the learner has learned to make certain discriminations among sounds.

3.5.7 PAIR WORK AND GROUP WORK

Marland (1989:45) defines group work as using "the group experience as a resource for the learning of its members". Witthaus (1992:8) asserts that "people learn best when teaching becomes a group activity with everyone participating and sharing". This increases the motivation of the learners. With group work and pair work everyone gets a chance to speak and voice their opinions. In addition, the more advanced learners can sit with the weaker ones and help them.

If an exercise is done 'round the class', very often learners only say one sentence each and, particularly in larger classes, many learners say nothing at all. Pair work and group work give learners more chances to speak. Nolasco and Arthur (1990:194) believe that pair work and group work widen the "turn allocation procedures used in the classroom by extending from the teacher to the learner the responsibility of deciding who should speak". Learners tend to get more involved in a task when they work in pairs and groups. Doff (1988:141) points out that if a discussion, for example, is conducted with the whole class together, it is often dominated by a few learners, while the others become passive observers and may even lose interest. Often learners are shy and would never say anything in a whole-class activity. If they work in pairs or groups they may feel less anxious and more confident to attempt an exercise or task. Pair work and group work also encourage learners to share ideas and knowledge more freely, and can be used to build on existing social relationships. Marland (1989:46) believes that it is good for reserved and quiet learners to sit with more verbally assured learners. Learners can rely on peer learning for support, information exchange, stimulus through new ideas, and locating relevant

resources. This in turn, can lead learners to become more self-directed in their learning.

Hickman and Kimberley (1988:62) assert that group work should be organised through self-chosen groups. Their reason for this is that the learners' confidence is greater than when they have to work with people they don't really know. However, it is at times wise for the tutor to assign people to specific groups. This is particularly necessary when there are weaker learners in the class who need to be with stronger learners. Marland (1989:45) states that self-chosen friendship groups are helpful, but at times "this old familiarity acts as an unseen barrier to fresh thinking".

Pair work and group work must be purposeful and must have didactic relevance. A tutor must not give group work so that he can catch up on his administration tasks! It is not a matter of dividing the class into groups or pairs and "teaching" a lesson. Tutors must understand the value of group work and pair work so that the learners learn something and their learning is enhanced.

Many ABET learners lack the confidence to speak or voice their opinions in the classroom. With group work and pair work, everyone gets a chance to speak. Learners feel that their input is important, and their confidence improves.

3.5.8 GRADING AND RECYCLING

Cunningsworth (1984:25) states that grading relates to "how much new material is introduced in a given number of hours, how close together or how far apart new grammatical structures are in relation to each other, how much new vocabulary is introduced in each unit and so on". In other words, grading refers to the way in which content is organised. Nunan (1988:55) points out the various purposes of grading: to assist in selecting content, to assign learners to different class groupings, and to modify the course and methodology.

Cunningsworth (1995:28) states that "one principle of recycling is that items are encountered in a structured way on several occasions in different contexts". This assists learners in fixing these items in memory, gaining fluency in using them and coming to a full understanding of their meanings. Thus learners learn the form and the sound of a language item (grammatical form or lexical item) through progressive exposure, and by meeting it in a number of different contexts

they develop an increasing understanding of its use and meaning. Brookfield (1986:15) emphasises that a central principle in adult learning is praxis. This process "centers on the need for educational activity to engage the learner in a continuous and alternating process of investigation and exploration, followed by action grounded in this exploration, followed by reflection on this action, followed by further investigation and exploration, followed by further action, and so on".

Many ABET learners have never been in a classroom or have had very little formal education. ABET is probably a new experience for them. Recycling assists learners in fixing new items in memory, gaining fluency in using them in different contexts, and to gain an understanding of their meanings.

3.5.9 COGNITIVE/THINKING SKILLS

Piaget (as cited in Brown 1987:29) claims that cognitive development is at the centre of the human organism and that "language is dependent upon and springs from cognitive development". Cognitive and linguistic development are intricately intertwined with dependencies in both directions. The cognitive domain also distinguishes between meaningful and rote learning. Ausubel (1964:422) emphasises that most items are "acquired by meaningful learning, by anchoring and relating new items and experiences to knowledge that exists in the cognitive framework". A learning situation can be meaningful if learners have a disposition to relate the new learning task to what they already know, and if the learning task is relatable to the learners' structure of knowledge. In addition, a meaningfully learned item has far greater potential for retention. He describes rote learning as the process of acquiring material as "discrete and relatively isolated entities that are relatable to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion, not permitting the establishment of [meaningful] relationships". Krashen (1981:103) adds to this by saying that "mechanical drill is activity in which the primary focus is on the *form* of the language being used rather than its communicative intent". Mechanical drills are in fact, not natural. He believes that rote learning is not related to existing knowledge and experience. However, rote learning is usually only used for short-term memory. It is therefore important that courses focus extensively on meaningful learning.

Brookfield (1986:17) stresses that education is "centrally concerned with the development of a

critically aware frame of mind". The learner's cognitive capacity must be extended.

An orientation to literacy curricula which Wrigley and Guth (as cited in McKay 1993:108) advocate, is the development of cognitive processes, which emphasizes "learning how to learn". This stresses understanding rather than memorization, and strategies rather than skills. Some classroom activities would include predicting meaning from context and using one's general knowledge to understand the text. There is also an emphasis on problem-solving strategies.

Critical thinking affects the way we process incoming information. Carman (n.d.:6) maintains that "as our critical thinking skills develop, we learn to question and analyze incoming information to determine whether it makes sense to us and if we should accept it". Critical thinking involves analysis (looking closely at the parts we read, see and hear) and evaluation (judging the parts we read, see and hear) of information and situations. In other words, it means thinking *carefully* about what we read, see and hear. Another aspect of thinking is creative thinking. This helps learners see and make connections from the outside world to their own knowledge and beliefs so that they may better understand both.

ABET learners need to understand what they are learning and not only be able to memorize unrelated items. In addition, they need to be able to think critically, that is they must learn how to question and analyse incoming information.

3.5.10 ENJOYMENT

As Hutchinson and Waters (1987:141) state, "enjoyment isn't just an added extra, an unnecessary frill". It is very important and it is one of the simplest ways of engaging the learner's mind. It is an aspect of pedagogy that is too often forgotten with adults. It really doesn't matter how relevant a lesson may appear to be, but if it bores the learners, it is a "bad" lesson. Brookfield (1986:97) believes that adult learning should be seen as "a wholly joyous experience, a flowering of latent potential"!

On the topic of enjoyment, games can be used successfully in adult programmes. Kim (1995:35) claims that "there is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature, and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really

learning. This is a misconception." It is possible to learn as well as enjoy oneself, and one of the best ways of doing this is through games. Kim (ibid) offers the following advantages of using games in the classroom:

- they are a welcome break from the usual routine of the class.
- they are challenging and motivating.
- they provide language practice in the various skills - speaking, writing, listening and reading.
- they encourage learners to interact and communicate.
- they create a meaningful context for language use.

Dallmann *et al.* (1982:151) offer some criteria for playing games which are used as learning activities: learners should be cognizant of the purpose served by the game; the game should be on the interest level of the participants; if competition is an element of the game, it should be chiefly competition with self rather than with others; the directions for a game should be so simple that learners can easily understand and follow them; and the game should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. Smith (1995:46) points out that learning should be fun. Many adults have never been taught to think creatively, how to solve problems or how to think of alternative solutions. To help develop such skills, games and puzzles can be incorporated into the programme.

Learning should not be seen as a tedious activity. ABET learners need to have fun in the classroom as this facilitates the learning process.

3.5.11 VARIETY

In learning a language, learners need to repeat things in order to learn them, but frequent repetition creates boredom: our minds switch off and learning is minimal. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987:76) assert, "variety is not just a nice thing to have for its own sake: it is a vital element in keeping the learners' minds alert and focused on the task in hand". The same information can be processed through a variety of skills so that reinforcement can be achieved while still maintaining concentration. Variety is the spice of learning. There must be variety to keep the mind alert in order to get the repetition necessary to help learning. Rivers (1981:486) says that "the spice is provided by surprise items (a language game, an anecdote, some cultural

information with a visual accompaniment, a culture quiz, a competitive test of what has been learned, or some pertinent contribution by a student which will interest or amuse the others)". Hutchinson and Waters (1987:140) suggest a number of ways to achieve variety: variety of medium (text, pictures); variety of classroom organisation (group work, pair work); variety of learner roles (thinker, presenter); variety of exercise (activity or task); variety of skills (reading, graphic skills); variety of topic; variety of focus (fluency, pronunciation). Dubin and Olshtain (1986:30) maintain that variety of text type, for example, may be significant in exposing learners to the types of text they will most likely come across beyond and outside the course. Rivers (1981:485) stresses that a well-designed lesson contains a number of different activities. She suggests that "frequent, spaced practice is more effective than great blocks of one activity for undue lengths of time".

Marland (1989:84) cautions that, even if there are a variety of activities, "it is wise to try to avoid a monotonous pattern of the same sequence", for example stimulus - discussion - writing.

3.6 ASSESSMENT

Hubbard *et al.* (1983:255) comment that, in a sense, the learner "faces some kind of test each time he uses the language". Hughes (1989) maintains that information regarding an individual's language ability is necessary and useful. Individuals should be given a statement of what they have achieved in their language class. Assessments also provide information about the achievement of groups of learners, without which it is difficult to see how rational educational decisions can be made. An assessment should be regarded as a natural step in the learning process. It serves two purposes: as a guide to the learners and a guide to the tutor.

Brown (1987:219) observes that "in formal testing, in which carefully planned techniques of assessment are used, quantification is important, especially for comparison either within an individual (say, at the beginning and the end of a course) or across individuals". Withhaus (1992:100) believes that "through evaluation, learners can recognize their weak spots and improve them". Evaluation helps learners as well to see how they are doing. This gives them confidence to continue their learning. Soifer *et al.* (1990:14) maintain that assessment is an ongoing process with both tutor and learner involved.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

The appropriateness of an assessment is largely determined by purpose:

- why is an assessment needed at a specific stage in the learner's learning? and
- what use will be made of the results?

Three types of assessments will be discussed here, namely placement, diagnostic, and exit.

Placement Assessment

A placement assessment is designed to sort out new learners into groups, so that they can start a programme at approximately the same level as the other learners in the class. It is concerned with the learner's present standing, and thus relates to general ability rather than specific points of learning. Harrison (1983:27) points out that the language content of a placement assessment "cannot be specified in detail because it must be suitable for a wide range of students with different learning backgrounds". He suggests that a placement assessment be set on an incline of difficulty, that is, an assessment should start at a fairly easy level and get more difficult as it continues. The advantage of this is that a single assessment provides something for learners of all levels. The placement assessment should form part of the programme.

Diagnostic Assessment

Harrison (1983:6) asserts that a diagnostic or progress assessment "checks on students' progress in learning particular elements of the course. It is used for example at the end of a unit in the coursebook or after a lesson designed to teach one particular point". Hughes (1989:10), who refers to these assessments as achievement assessments, states that they are assessments which are "directly related to language courses, their purpose being to establish how successful individual students, groups of students, or the courses themselves have been in achieving objectives". The demands for this kind of assessment are that it must relate to specific short-term objectives.

Doff (1988:257) discusses reasons why regular assessments are important. He maintains that they tell the tutor what the learners can and cannot do, and show what areas need to be taught. In addition, assessments tell the learners how they are progressing. Regular assessments encourage learners to take their learning seriously, and give them definite goals to aim towards. Harrison (1983:6) points out that if a learner's "learning has been successful, the results will give a considerable lift to the student's morale and he is likely to approach the next learning tasks with

enthusiasm. If he finds he has not mastered the point at issue, the test should give him clear indications of how he falls short, so that he can do some useful revision".

Cunningsworth (1995:17) states that periodic quizzes or progress assessments help learners realize how much progress they have made. This adds to their motivation and enhances learning. Brookfield (1986:29) reinforces this by stating that learning is further enhanced by regular feedback on progress. It is important for a programme to include progress assessments. However, should a programme not have regular diagnostic assessments, it is up to the tutor to design appropriate assessments. Baker (1989:103) points out that "the results of a progress test can be used as a pointer to parts of the course content which have not been mastered by significant numbers of learners and thus to indicate need for remedial action". Basanta (1995:58) maintains that continuous feedback will benefit learners, "who will feel that their weaknesses are being properly diagnosed, and their needs met".

Tutors need to provide their learners with a variety of diagnostic assessments, that is, it is not sufficient to do dictations or spelling assessments only. There needs to be a variety to test various aspects of language. Many aspects of language, at a number of levels and in a variety of ways, may be tested. Rivers (1981:346) points out that "the selection of material for a test and the way this material is to be tested will depend on the purposes of the test, as determined by course objectives".

Exit Assessment

Harrison (1983:7) states that an exit assessment "is intended to show the standard which the students have now reached in relation to other students at the same stage". The important issue is that the standard remains constant as far as possible from course to course, and that it is external to the individual class or programme. An exit assessment relates to the long-term aims of the programme. Unfortunately, in many cases an exit assessment has the trivial function of indicating whether a learner should be awarded a certificate or not. However, an important aspect of this assessment is when it functions as an exit assessment for one course and the entrance assessment for the next. Baker (1989:104) states that in this case "it is the responsibility of the course designer to ensure that the level reached at the end of one course satisfies the prerequisites for the course above". A programme should have an exit assessment, and it should be linked to a nationally recognised qualification, such as the Independent Examinations Board's examinations.

In other words, learners should be able to write the particular programme's exit assessment as well as an IEB examination once they've completed that programme.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a brief overview of course design was given. Then the main characteristics of English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes were discussed in detail.

What programme decision-makers and ABET practitioners seem to need is some sort of direction or criteria which they can use in order to evaluate and select English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

The information in this chapter has come from many sources and can be used as the basis for the development of criteria for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes. The criteria will be proposed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 characteristics for English Adult Basic Education and Training were discussed. In this chapter, the characteristics are formulated into criteria and each criterion is discussed. It must be pointed out however, that the proposed criteria are not exhaustive, but the core of English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

4.2 PROPOSED CRITERIA

4.2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.2.1.1 The aim of a programme is that a learner should become communicatively competent

A learner has to develop the ability and confidence to communicate in a variety of everyday situations, to a number of speakers, and for a variety of purposes. As Hymes (1971:25) points out, communicative competence includes knowledge of communicative strategies and styles according to the situation, task and roles of the participants. (cf. 3.2).

4.2.1.2 A written set of clear and measurable aims and objectives for the programme should be stated

It is important to know the kind and level of language proficiency a learner will attain once he completes a programme. Objectives specify the expected outcome for the learner in terms of the

level of knowledge or performance that is expected to be attained. The objectives should be stated in measurable and attainable terms so that they can be evaluated. Without clear objectives, learning activities and experiences cannot be evaluated. Each programme has to have objectives against which the learners' progress can be measured. As Steinberg (1993) puts it, the learning must lead somewhere. (cf. 3.2).

4.2.2 CONTENT

4.2.2.1. Listening activities set in a meaningful context should be included

Although we spend many of our waking hours listening, it is important that learners should practise listening as well as learn to listen. A learner must be able to understand what is said to him before he can respond. Listening activities can form part of oral work, such as roleplays; and listening passages can be used for comprehension, extraction of information and as lead-ins to discussions, in conjunction with a reading text. A listening activity recorded on a cassette is useful, but this is not always realistic. The learner is passive and takes no part in it and cannot influence it in any way. (cf. 3.3.1.1).

4.2.2.2 Learners should have many opportunities to practise speaking

Since we learn to speak by speaking, it is important that a programme has a spoken component. The speaking activities should be as realistic as possible - this promotes an element of uncertainty and unpredictability which is present in any genuine conversation. This helps learners gain confidence whilst in the relative safety of the classroom. (cf. 3.3.1.2).

4.2.2.3 Reading material should be meaningful and relevant

As Goodman (1986:10) maintains, we don't learn to read by reading *reading*, we learn to read by reading meaningful and relevant material. Learners can interact with meaningful text so that they can construct meanings that build on prior knowledge they have about the topic. Reading texts must be relevant to the learners, and must be adult-oriented so that they can identify with the topics. (cf. 3.3.1.3).

4.2.2.4 Written exercises should be meaningful and functional

Writing must suggest a real purpose for learners. It should not be seen as a mechanical duty to satisfy the tutor. As Hickman and Kimberley (1988:64) point out, if there is no meaning and significance in writing, there will probably be no satisfaction and enjoyment, and consequently no real learning. (cf. 3.3.1.4).

4.2.2.5 Learners should be encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing

Learners should do specific writing exercises based upon given models of written English. They should become aware of significant features of the text, then they should be able to write a short, controlled text based on the model but with different information. Learners should also be encouraged to do free and creative writing, where they express their thoughts, feelings and opinions in writing. (cf. 3.3.1.4).

4.2.2.6 Grammar should be taught

Balcom (as cited in Dirven 1990:6) points out that teaching explicit grammar can contribute substantially to language acquisition since this can make the input more comprehensible, help learners segment incoming speech signals into more efficient units of comprehension, and confirm or disconfirm the learners' unconscious hypotheses on the grammar of the target language. Clur (1994:15) believes that grammar "develops skills in selecting and analysing information, which are needed as a basis for reasoning". She states that learning to communicate is not enough: people also need to be able to reason. Teaching grammar can be seen as one of the means of acquiring a good mastery of the language as a whole. (cf. 3.3.2).

4.2.2.7 Language form (structure) and use (meaning) should be taught

Learning language form assists the learner in producing grammatically correct sentences without paying too much attention to how these sentences would be used. It is important that the function of language items is also taught. As Cunningsworth (1984:16) states, one should not look at whether the programme focuses exclusively on form or exclusively on function, but rather on how the relationships between form and function are handled and put across to the learner. (cf.

3.3.2).

4.2.2.8 Vocabulary should be presented within a meaningful context

Cunningsworth (1995:38) points out that "sustained communication is virtually impossible without access to a relevant and fairly wide range of vocabulary". Activities and exercises in a programme should assist learners to extend and develop their vocabulary skills in a meaningful and structured way. Lowen (1993:32) states that the programme content should be designed around a functional vocabulary and likely language usage by the learner. The context can offer an association for the learner that can help trigger the recall of lexical items linked with this context, and it can present the learner with a medium of physically storing items under a topic category. Lists of unrelated words are difficult to learn as the words appear in isolation and lack any context. Vocabulary learning should always be within a meaningful context. (cf. 3.3.3).

4.2.2.9 Pronunciation should be taught

Pronunciation should be an integral part of a language programme. This does not mean that tutors must spend hours on pronunciation lessons. Pronunciation can be dealt with when teaching other language skills. Emphasis should be placed on areas of pronunciation that help avoid misunderstandings. (cf. 3.3.4).

4.2.2.10 Spelling exercises should be included

Often learners simply learn the spelling of words on a one-off basis, or by analogy to words with similar sounds. Unfortunately, in many cases in English, analogy is a poor guide. Although one does not want to focus extensively on spelling, common sound-spelling relationships can be of great help to learners in their writing and reading. Spelling is necessary, and is probably best practised in conjunction with other language skills. (cf. 3.3.5).

4.2.2.11 There should be exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse

Sentences are not used in isolation, that is, they relate to each other in their meanings and their

functions. There are rules by which sentences relate to each other and form larger units such as a paragraph or a text. The aim of a programme should not only be to teach the learner to use grammatically correct sentences, but also to develop an awareness of how sentences are organised together for communicative purposes. (cf. 3.3.6).

4.2.2.12 Learners should be taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something

A language learner needs to be able to grasp the social situation in which he is operating and be able to match the language used to the situation. Appropriateness, meaning and form are three factors in verbal communication which exist in a dynamic relationship. All three are important when we are engaged in verbal communication. (cf. 3.3.7).

4.2.2.13 Life skills should be included in the programme

Roup (1994:4) states that "life skills acquisition should become an integral part of any training programme". It is important that learners can apply what they have learnt in the classroom to real life situations. Some life skills that should be included in a programme are banking, applying for a job, purchasing an item on HP, etc. (cf. 3.3.8).

4.2.2.14 The programme should take social and cultural values into consideration

Culture is an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. Education gives people access to cultural groups outside their own. Programmes should introduce the "new" culture in ways which are not threatening to the learners. Learners should be made aware of the issues which are acceptable and unacceptable in the "new" culture. In addition, course materials should take the learner's culture into consideration: are there any passages which are offensive to learners? Is there perhaps a case study relating to the Xhosa way of life, but the characters have Zulu names? The content of a programme should be factually correct in terms of cultural norms. In addition, the programme should feature a fair mix between male and female characters. Negative stereotypes should be avoided at all times. (cf. 3.3.9).

4.2.3 MATERIALS

4.2.3.1 Authentic as well as scripted material should be used

There are many researchers who believe that authentic materials used in a programme are important as a motivating device and a rich source of varieties. Authentic materials give learners direct access to the culture and help them use the new language authentically, and help them communicate meaning in meaningful situations. Swan (1990:95) believes that if learners are only exposed to authentic material, they are unlikely - within the time of a course - to meet all the high-frequency items they need to learn. Scripted material is useful for presenting specific language items effectively. Authentic material which is at too difficult a level of language forces the reader to focus on the code. There should therefore be a mix of authentic as well as scripted material. (cf. 3.4.1).

4.2.3.2 The appearance of the material should be professional and adult-like

The appearance of the material should make the learners want to pick it up and work through it. The learners are adults, so the appearance of the programme must reflect this. There must be no indication that the programme was intended for children, but is being used for adults. This can be very demotivating and discouraging for adults. (cf. 3.4.2).

4.2.3.3 Visuals should be an integral part of the programme

The saying goes *a picture tells a thousand words*. This is very relevant in Adult Basic Education and Training. Visuals help learners understand complex concepts. Visuals should be an integral part of the material and have a clear teaching purpose. The visuals and the accompanying text should make the learner interact with both. If visuals are merely there for the sake of it, learners may not look at them properly, if at all. (cf. 3.4.3).

4.2.4 TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

4.2.4.1 Exercises should focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing

In actual language use one rarely uses one skill in isolation. Xiaoju (1990:66) maintains that learners must constantly combine and integrate all the four major skills. For a learner to achieve a degree of communicative ability, he needs practice in coping with communicative situations which involve the realistic integration of language skills. (cf. 3.5.1).

4.2.4.2 The programme should be specifically for adults

Adults have different expectations from children, and expect to be treated differently, more in line with the other adult roles they play. Adult learners have multiple roles and responsibilities which are different to those of children and adolescents. As Brookfield (1986:13) points out, adult learners must feel that they are valued as separate and unique individuals deserving of respect. The programme should therefore centre around issues and activities which are relevant and meaningful to the adult learner. The programme shouldn't be child-like and have activities which are suitable for children. (cf. 3.5.2).

4.2.4.3 The programme should be learner-centred

Cunningsworth (1995:16) states that the learner-centred approach aims "to bring learners to a point where they reach a degree of autonomy and are able to use the language themselves in real situations outside the classroom. This progression from dependence on the teacher and on the coursebook towards growing confidence and independence is often difficult but it is crucial to the individual success of learners and to the success of teaching programmes". In the learner-centred approach, learners are seen as the most important part of the learning process. This involves doing activities in which the learners actively participate; helping learners learn *how* to learn, encouraging learners to find out things for themselves; and evaluating the learning with learners. These are issues which need to be present in ABET programmes. (cf. 3.5.3).

4.2.4.4 Learners should be encouraged to be active agents in the learning process

It is not enough for learners to have the necessary knowledge to make things meaningful, they must also be able to use that knowledge. Learners have to be active agents in the learning process. They have to do things themselves. They need to discover the use of the acquired knowledge. As Ouane *et al.* (1990:32) state, learners should be provided with opportunities to do things by themselves, not only information on how to do them. (cf. 3.5.4).

4.2.4.5 The learners' prior experience and knowledge should be taken into consideration

Adults have accumulated many life experiences, and for learning to take place, they use their existing knowledge to make the new information comprehensible. The learners' existing knowledge is a vital element in the success or failure of learning. A programme should present new knowledge, concepts and ideas in such a way that these are comprehensible in terms of the learner's own experiences. Ouane *et al.* (1990:32) state that new skills and knowledge are better acquired when they are related to previous experiences. When developing training material it is difficult to establish a learner's prior experience and knowledge. However, the type of activities, for example classroom interactions, reading exercises, roleplays, debates, problem-solving activities, should encourage the learner to use his prior knowledge and experience. (cf. 3.5.5).

4.2.4.6 Learners should be required to do dictations

In order to be successful in a dictation, a learner needs to decode, store and recreate on paper a stream of sounds. Learners practise all four language skills when doing a dictation, and draw on various linguistic systems when processing these sounds. Dictations are in fact, a bridge between spoken and written language. (cf. 3.5.6).

4.2.4.7 Learners should be encouraged to work in pairs and in groups

If an exercise is done 'round the class', for example, very often learners only say one sentence each. Shy and reserved learners would often not say anything in a whole-class activity. With pair work and group work, everyone gets a chance to speak and voice their opinions. If learners work in pairs and groups they may feel less anxious and more confident to attempt a task. Learners

also tend to get more involved in a task when they work in pairs and groups. By working in pairs and groups, learners are encouraged to share ideas and knowledge more freely. Pair work and group work can also lead learners to become more self-directed in their learning. (cf. 3.5.7).

4.2.4.8 There should be grading and recycling of content

Grading refers to how much new material is introduced in a given unit, how much new vocabulary is introduced in each unit, and how close together or far apart new grammatical structures are in relation to each other.

What is important is the amount of practice material provided after a new language item has been presented and before the next one is introduced. Recycling involves encountering items in a structured way on several occasions in different contexts. This assists learners in fixing these items in memory, gaining fluency in using them and coming to a full understanding of their meanings. In other words, learners consolidate their knowledge of the language. (cf. 3.5.8).

4.2.4.9 There should be activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities

The cognitive domain distinguishes between rote and meaningful learning. With meaningful learning, learners anchor and relate new items and experiences to knowledge that exists in their cognitive framework. A meaningfully-learned item has far greater potential for retention. Learners need to question and analyse incoming information to determine whether it makes sense to them and whether it should be accepted. Learners need to think carefully about what they read, see and hear. (cf. 3.5.9).

4.2.4.10 There should be activities and exercises which are fun to work through

Enjoyment is one of the simplest ways of engaging the learner's mind. A misconception that exists is that learning should be solemn and serious in nature. It is possible to learn as well as enjoy oneself, and one of the best ways of doing this is through games. Other learning activities that will promote enjoyment include quizzes, crossword puzzles, word searches, debates, projects, collages. A programme needs to have a variety of such activities to cater for different learners. Enjoyment is closely linked to the learners' active involvement in the programme. (cf. 3.5.10).

4.2.4.11 A variety of types of exercises should be present in the programme

In learning a language, learners need to repeat things in order to learn them, but frequent repetition creates boredom: our minds switch off and learning is minimal. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987:76) assert, "variety is not just a nice thing to have for its own sake: it is a vital element in keeping the learners' minds alert and focused on the task in hand". The same information can be processed through a variety of skills so that reinforcement can be achieved while still maintaining concentration. Rivers (1981:485) stresses that a well-designed lesson contains a number of different activities. She suggests that "frequent, spaced practice is more effective than great blocks of one activity for undue lengths of time". (cf. 3.5.11).

4.2.5 ASSESSMENT

4.2.5.1 A placement assessment should be administered before a learner starts a programme

Before a learner starts learning, he needs to do a placement assessment. This is intended to provide information which helps to place a learner at the stage of the programme most appropriate to his abilities. Placement assessments are used to assign learners to classes at different levels. (cf. 3.6).

4.2.5.2 Regular diagnostic assessments should be administered by the tutor

A diagnostic assessment is directly related to the classroom lessons. They establish how successful individual learners or groups of learners are in achieving the stipulated objectives. They measure the progress that learners are making in the programme. Diagnostic assessments show the tutor what learners can and cannot do, and in addition, show learners how they are progressing. (cf. 3.6).

4.2.5.3 At the end of the programme, learners should complete an exit assessment

In many cases an exit assessment has the trivial function of indicating whether a learner should be awarded a certificate or not. However, an important aspect of this assessment is when it

functions as an exit assessment for one course and the entrance assessment for the next. The level reached at the end of one programme should satisfy the prerequisites for the course that follows. The exit assessment should, in fact, be linked to a nationally recognised qualification. (cf. 3.6).

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings of the literature study have been developed into criteria for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes. The criteria will be used in a questionnaire so that they can be validated and finalized. This will be done in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

VALIDATION OF THE CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to report on the validation of the proposed list of criteria by submitting them to a group of ABET specialists. From the results of the questionnaire, the criteria are arranged in order of importance.

5.2 PROCEDURE

Questionnaires were sent to twenty one ABET specialists, including practitioners, programme designers, and adult educators. These specialists, who were randomly selected, have had substantial experience in the field and are very knowledgeable. In total, seventeen questionnaires were returned.

The questionnaire consists of the proposed list of criteria established in Chapter 4. The questionnaire is included in Addendum A. The criteria were validated by the specialists, and from the results obtained, the order of importance of the criteria was established. The specialists were also encouraged to add their own criteria to the existing ones. These additional criteria are included in the list of final criteria.

5.3 FINDINGS

Generally, the specialists agreed with the criteria, but in some cases they were not sure of a

specific criterion, or strongly disagreed with a criterion. Some specialists felt that the wording of some of the criteria was unclear or not specific enough. The researcher took these into consideration and amended the proposed list of criteria. A few specialists were not sure whether dictation, spelling and pronunciation should be included in a programme, while others strongly disagreed with grammar, vocabulary, and grading and recycling of content.

5.4 FINAL LIST OF CRITERIA

This list is based on the findings of the questionnaire. The criteria were ranked in order of importance within the five main categories.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. The aim of a programme is that a learner should become communicatively competent
2. A written set of clear, achievable, and specific aims and objectives for the programme should be stated.

CONTENT

1. Reading material should be meaningful and relevant to the learner.
2. Listening activities set in a meaningful context for the learner should be included.
3. Learners should have many opportunities to practise speaking in a variety of contexts.
4. Life skills should be included in the programme.
5. Learners should be taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something.
6. Vocabulary should be presented within a meaningful context.
7. Written exercises should be meaningful and functional for the learner.
8. The programme should include different social and cultural values.
9. Learners should be encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing.
10. There should be exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse.
11. Language form (structure) and use (meaning) should be taught and integrated with each other.
12. Grammar should be taught.
13. Spelling exercises should be included.

14. Pronunciation should be taught.
15. Learners should have their own space to include content which interests them.

MATERIALS

1. Visuals should be an integral part of the programme.
2. The appearance of the material should be adult-like.
3. Authentic as well as scripted material should be used.

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Learners should be encouraged to be active agents in the learning process.
2. The learners' prior experience and knowledge should be taken into consideration.
3. There should be activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities.
4. There should be learning activities and exercises which are entertaining to work through.
5. Exercises should focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
6. The programme should be learner-centred.
7. A variety of types of exercises should be present in the programme.
8. Learners should be encouraged to work in pairs and in groups.
9. The programme should be specifically for adults.
10. There should be grading and recycling of content.
11. Learners should be required to do dictations.

ASSESSMENT

1. A placement assessment should be administered before a learner starts a programme.
2. At the end of a programme, learners should complete an exit assessment.
3. Regular achievement assessments should be administered by the tutor.

5.5 CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA

In order to make the use of these criteria more user-friendly and less prescriptive, the researcher converted the criteria into questions and drew up a checklist for use when a course is evaluated.

A simple rating scale can be used:

1	2	3	4	5
fully meets the criterion				does not meet the criterion

Once a decision-maker has evaluated a programme using this checklist, he needs to look at his aims and objectives as well as the learners' needs. He needs to look at the responses which do not meet the criteria and decide whether this component or criterion is important to achieve the aims and objectives. For example, should a programme have a "5" response for pronunciation, that is, pronunciation is <u>not</u> taught, the decision-maker needs to decide whether pronunciation is needed for his learners. If not, the response can be ignored; if yes, supplementary material on pronunciation needs to be introduced by the tutor.

	1	2	3	4	5
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES					
Does the programme undertake to enhance the learner's communicative competence?					
Is there a written set of clear, achievable, and specific aims and objectives for the programme?					
CONTENT					
Is the reading material meaningful and relevant to the learner?					
Are listening activities set in a meaningful context for the learner?					
Are there many opportunities for the learner to practice speaking in a variety of contexts?					
Are life skills included in the programme?					
Are learners taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something?					
Is vocabulary presented within a meaningful context?					
Are written exercises meaningful and functional for the learner?					

Does the programme include different social and cultural values?					
Are learners encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing?					
Are there exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse?					
Are language form (structure) and use (meaning) taught and integrated?					
Is grammar taught?					
Are spelling exercises included?					
Is pronunciation taught?					
Do learners have their own space to include content which interests them?					
MATERIALS					
Are visuals an integral part of the programme?					
Is the appearance of the material adult-like?					
Is authentic as well as scripted material used?					
TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES					
Are learners encouraged to be active agents in the learning process?					
Is the learner's prior experience and knowledge taken into consideration?					
Are there activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities?					
Are there learning activities and exercises which are entertaining to work through?					
Are there exercises that focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing?					

Is the programme learner-centred?					
Are there a variety of types of exercises?					
Are learners encouraged to work in pairs and groups?					
Is the programme specifically for adults?					
Is there grading and recycling of content?					
Are learners required to do dictations?					
ASSESSMENT					
Is a placement assessment administered before a learner starts the programme?					
Do learners complete an exit assessment at the end of the programme?					
Are regular diagnostic assessments administered by the tutor?					

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:105) point out that "the highest number of points does not necessarily indicate the most suitable materials, since the points may be concentrated in one area. Look for the widest spread of desired features and concentrations in the areas you consider most important".

Cunningsworth (1995:138) states that "where material is lacking in a particular area or deals with the area in an unsuitable way, the options are to find supplementary material from other published sources or to produce your own material".

5.6 CONCLUSION

The criteria were sent to ABET specialists in the field for validation. The criteria were then ranked in order of importance within the five main categories. Most of the criteria have a score well above the average, therefore they may be regarded as valid for use of evaluation of English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

CHAPTER 6

AN EVALUATION OF THREE ENGLISH ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Most tutors rely to a large extent on the programme books as the only source of teaching materials. It is therefore necessary to determine how these books measure up to the Adult Basic Education and Training requirements. In cases where books cannot be replaced, it would be useful for tutors to know where these books need to be supplemented with additional materials.

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate three programmes used for teaching English in Adult Basic Education and Training, and to illustrate the use of the criteria.

6.2 THE SELECTION OF PROGRAMMES

Three programmes which are widely used to teach English in Adult Basic Education and Training were randomly selected. All three programmes lead to the Independent Examinations Board Level 3 *Communications in English* examination. The programmes are:

- PROLIT. 1993. **Interact : An English Course for Adults Level 3**. Pretoria : Prolit.
- COMMUNITY TRAINING INSTITUTE. 1992. **Advanced English Programme**. Johannesburg : CTI.
- BURROUGHS, E. (*ed*). 1994. **English for Adults : Social English Programme**. Parkhurst : Mishelo Publications.

6.3 PROCEDURE FOR THE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

The programmes are evaluated in accordance with the criteria established in Chapter 5. There are 34 criteria in total. Each of the programmes is evaluated and rated on the degree to which it satisfies each of these criteria.

For the purpose of rating a simple scale is used:

1	2	3	4	5
fully meets the criterion				does not meet the criterion

The complete evaluation of each programme, according to each criterion, is contained in Addenda B, C, and D. This chapter provides a summary of the results of these evaluations.

6.4 PROLIT. 1993. Interact : An English Course for Adults Level 3. Pretoria : Prolit.

This programme is made up of five courses, covering ABET Levels 1 to 4: **Action English**, **Phonics**, **Interact Level 2**, **Interact Level 3**, **Interact Level 4**.

The **Interact : An English Course for Adults Level 3** programme is divided into 8 modules with three units in each module. Each unit is in a separate booklet. Altogether there are 24 booklets.

The aims and objectives of the programme are clearly stated. There are ample opportunities for the learner to practise his reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. These are meaningful and relevant to the learner, and are set in a meaningful context. Most of these activities are related to life skills, for example, buying goods on hire purchase, and completing forms. Reading, speaking, writing, and listening activities are integrated. Learners learn to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to ask for directions, give advice, and how to classify things. The vocabulary presented in each unit is always within a meaningful context. In many cases, learners are introduced to language use first, then language form. Grammar is taught within the context of each unit. Spelling is not taught explicitly, but spelling is introduced

in each unit. Although pronunciation is not taught, it is recommended by the programme providers that the tutor correct and monitor his learners' pronunciation.

Visuals are used extensively and appropriately in the programme. All the pictures are there for a purpose, that is, they enhance understanding of the text. Some of the diagrams and illustrations, however, are of a poor quality. It is evident that the material is for adults and that it would appeal to adult learners. Authentic as well as scripted material is used throughout the programme.

Learners are active in the classroom, constantly engaging in some activity. Although there are certain issues that would be difficult for the learners to identify with, the learner's prior knowledge is taken into account. There are many activities which engage the learner's cognitive capacities. Most learners would enjoy working through this programme, as there are many fun activities to do. Learners work extensively in pairs and in groups. There is grading of content, but there is not a great deal of recycling of information.

Potential learners need to do a placement assessment before they start the programme; after each unit there is a short diagnostic assessment; and at the end of the programme learners may write the Independent Examinations Board Level 3, *Communications in English* examination.

This is an educationally sound programme which meets 68% of the established criteria for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

The detailed evaluation of this programme appears in Addendum B.

6.5 COMMUNITY TRAINING INSTITUTE. 1992. Advanced English Programme. Johannesburg : CTI.

This programme has been designed by the Community Training Institute (CTI) and is part of a series of programmes. The programmes in the series are the **Basic Oral**, **Basic I**, **Basic II**, **Advanced**, and **Writing Bridge** programmes. The Advanced programme consists of one booklet, containing seventeen sections. The tutor's package contains several cassettes for the learners to listen to.

The providers of the programme clearly stipulate the aims of the programme. The objectives for each section have also been clearly stated. The development of the learners' communicative abilities could be inhibited by an overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences.

There are a number of reading passages which are relevant to the learner, and with which they can identify. Each section has a cassette with recorded material which the learners must listen to. These activities are set in a meaningful context for the learners. Although the core material of the programme does not offer many opportunities for the learners to practise speaking, the enrichment exercises introduced by the tutor encourage learners to practise speaking. Life skills are introduced through enrichment exercises introduced by the tutor. Learners are not taught the functions of language, for example, requesting something. New vocabulary is introduced to explain grammatical structures. Many vocabulary words, however, are not relevant to the learners and would probably never be used by them. The written exercises are, in some cases, meaningful and functional, but very often learners merely need to complete parts of partly completed written material. As the main focus is on controlled writing, there is little evidence that learners need to do any creative writing. Most of the exercises introduce units of language, but do not show the learners how to combine these to create discourse. There is a strong emphasis on language form, but very little language use is taught. The tutor would have to introduce supplementary material to show the use of the language. Although grammar is taught in the programme, many grammatical and spelling errors occur in the text which are totally unacceptable. Pronunciation is taught through the cassettes. Learners read aloud and their pronunciation is corrected and monitored by the tutor.

The visuals used in the programme may assist learners, especially towards the end of the programme. However, the visuals are not really an integral part of the programme. A vast number of pictures include children, but generally, the appearance of the booklets would be acceptable to adults. Most of the material is scripted, although authentic material is used as well, especially for the enrichment exercises.

Learners are encouraged to be active in the classroom, and they need to do things by themselves in order to understand new concepts. There are cases where the learner's prior knowledge is not taken into account, and there are issues which may not relate to experiences that the learner has

had. There are many rote drills, but towards the end of the programme, there are more cognitively challenging exercises. Once again, it is up to the tutor to do cognitive enrichment activities. Tutors are also urged to spend time on different ways of using newly-learnt skills. Learners do not spend much time working in pairs and in groups. The programme is suitable for adults, but there are certain passages and activities which are more suitable for children. At times it appears that there is grading of content from one section to the next, while at other times the jump from one section to the next seems to be too vast or too small. Some of the information is recycled too much and some too little. Learners need to do dictations in the pre- and post-tests only.

The programme has a good placement assessment, and there are very regular diagnostic assessments. This programme leads to the Independent Examinations Board Level 3 *Communications in English* examination.

This programme only meets 49% of the established criteria for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes. There are some areas of the programme which are excellent, but many other areas need substantial attention, that is, the tutor would need to use extensive supplementary material.

The detailed evaluation of this programme appears in Addendum C.

6.6 BURROUGHS, E. (Ed). 1994. English for Adults : Social English Programme. Parkhurst : Mishelo Publications.

There are four programmes in the English For Adults (EFA) series: **Formative English**, **Social English**, **Operational English**, and **Advanced English**. The Social English programme consists of two books.

The providers of the programme state the aims of the entire EFA series, as well as the aims of this specific programme. Each lesson has an objective and learners know up front what they will learn in each lesson. Learners have many opportunities to communicate meaningful messages, and thus develop their communicative competence.

The reading material presented in the programme is meaningful and relevant to the learners. The listening activities are set in a meaningful context. There are numerous opportunities for the learner to practise speaking in a variety of contexts. Emphasis is placed on life skills. In almost every lesson, learners are taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context. Vocabulary is only presented within a meaningful context. Each lesson has a written component, and these exercises relate to the topic of the lesson. There is a good mix between controlled and free writing. Words, phrases and sentences occur within the context of whole, real language texts that are part of real language experiences of learners. Language form and language use are always taught and completely integrated. There is a grammar component in each lesson. There are no spelling exercises as such, but new words are introduced in each lesson. Pronunciation is not taught explicitly, although learners are corrected when they practise speaking.

Each lesson has a picture related to the main topic. Learners are encouraged to discuss the picture before reading the accompanying text. The programme is for adults and the materials reflect this. There is a lot of authentic as well as scripted material.

Learners are always active in the classroom. Lessons adhere to the following pattern: look, listen, read, study, write, speak, drill, roleplay, ask, answer, and survey. The programme assumes that the learner comes to the class with some knowledge. The lessons therefore build on the learner's existing knowledge. There are many activities which require the learner to use his cognitive capacities. There are also many fun activities in the programme. The four skills of listening, speaking reading and writing are fully integrated. Learners are seen as the most important part of the learning process as it is very learner-centred. In most lessons, learners must work in pairs or in groups. The content is graded and there is a steady progression from one lesson to the next. Revision is an important component of this programme.

A very comprehensive assessment is administered before a learner starts the programme. There are limited diagnostic assessments - the tutor would need to devise extra ones so that learners are assessed after each lesson. This programme leads to the Independent Examinations Board Level 3 *Communications in English* examination.

This is a very good programme which meets 69% of the established criteria for English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes.

The detailed evaluation of this programme appears in Addendum D.

6.7 SUMMARY

It must be emphasised that there is no single programme that will meet all the criteria. It is a very complicated task compiling a programme as there are many factors which need to be considered.

The list of criteria serves as a measuring instrument by means of which programmes can be evaluated and selected with some confidence. The application of criteria also brings to light areas with shortcomings. These areas can then be supplemented with additional materials.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Cunningsworth (1995:7) emphasises the importance of selecting the appropriate programme: "It is generally accepted that the role of the coursebook is to be at the service of teachers and learners but not to be their master. Its role is not to exercise a tyrannical function as the arbiter of course content and teaching methods. However, it has to be recognized that teaching materials can exert considerable influence over what teachers teach and how they do it. Consequently, it is of crucial importance that careful selection is made and that the materials selected closely reflect the aims, methods and values of the teaching programme."

After an in-depth survey of the literature regarding requirements for teaching and learning English in Adult Basic Education and Training programmes, a set of criteria to evaluate these programmes was established. Three English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes currently used were randomly selected and evaluated.

After the evaluation of the three programmes it has become evident that no programme fully meets the requirements of the criteria. All of them have certain points of merit as well as certain shortcomings. The criteria can also serve as guidelines for the design of supplementary material.

It is hoped that course designers and programme "buyers" will find the criteria useful for evaluating programmes.

7.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

The scope of this dissertation was to evaluate and examine programmes as they stand, that is, the theoretical value, or construct validity of the programmes.

Breen (as cited in Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992:30) provides a distinction between the theoretical and empirical value of materials. Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992:30) have adapted Breen's diagram to illustrate the three phases in the evaluation of materials:

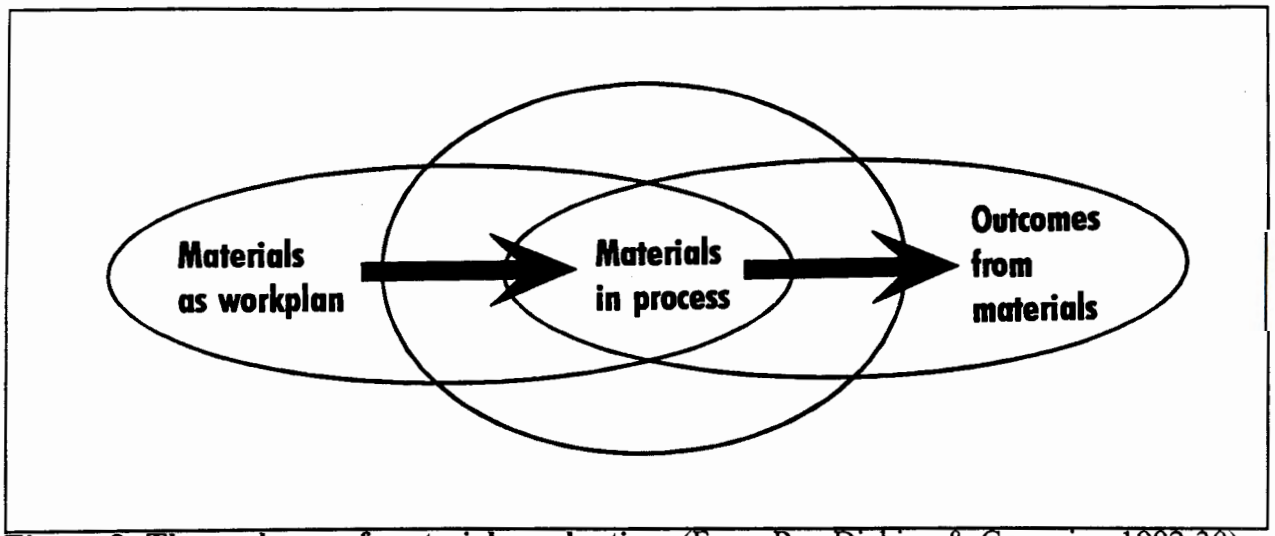

Figure 3. Three phases of materials evaluation. (From Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992:30)

Materials-as-workplan refers to the theoretical value of a programme; *materials-in-process* generates information about the ways in which tutors and learners actually use and respond to a programme; and *outcomes from materials* represents the relative achievements of learners.

Now that the researcher has provided the first phase of material evaluation, that is *materials-as-workplan*, he recommends that further research be conducted into phases two and three.

Please indicate your response to the following statements regarding English Adult Basic Education and Training programmes. Simply make a tick in the relevant box to indicate your choice.

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

		strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree
1.1	The aim of a programme is that a learner should become communicatively competent					
1.2	A written set of clear and measurable aims and objectives for the programme should be stated					

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA RELATING TO AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

2. CONTENT

		strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree
	LISTENING					
2.1	Listening activities set in a meaningful context should be included					
	SPEAKING					
2.2	Learners should have many opportunities to practise speaking					
	READING					
2.3	Reading material should be meaningful and relevant					
	WRITING					
2.4	Written exercises should be meaningful and functional					
2.5	Learners should be encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing					
	GRAMMAR					
2.6	Grammar should be taught					
2.7	Language form (structure) and use (meaning) should be taught					

	VOCABULARY					
2.8	Vocabulary should be presented within a meaningful context					
	PRONUNCIATION					
2.9	Pronunciation should be taught					
	SPELLING					
2.10	Spelling exercises should be included					
	DISCOURSE					
2.11	There should be exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse					
	STYLISTIC APPROPRIATENESS					
2.12	Learners should be taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something					
	LIFE SKILLS					
2.13	Life skills should be included in the programme					
	SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES					
2.14	The programme should take social and cultural values into consideration					

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA RELATING TO CONTENT	strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

3. MATERIALS

		strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree
	AUTHENTICITY					
3.1	Authentic as well as scripted material should be used					
	APPEARANCE AND QUALITY					
3.2	The appearance of the material should be professional and adult-like					
	VISUALS					
3.3	Visuals should be an integral part of the programme					

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA RELATING TO MATERIALS	strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

		strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree
	INTEGRATING SKILLS					
4.1	Exercises should focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing					
	ADULT-ORIENTED					
4.2	The programme should be specifically for adults					
	LEARNER-CENTRED					
4.3	The programme should be learner-centred					
	ACTIVE PARTICIPATION					
4.4	Learners should be encouraged to be active agents in the learning process					
	PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND EXISTING KNOWLEDGE					
4.5	The learners' prior experience and knowledge should be taken into consideration					

	DICTATION					
4.6	Learners should be required to do dictations					
	PAIR WORK AND GROUP WORK					
4.7	Learners should be encouraged to work in pairs and in groups					
	GRADING AND RECYCLING					
4.8	There should be grading and recycling of content					
	COGNITIVE/THINKING SKILLS					
4.9	There should be activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities					
	ENJOYMENT					
4.10	There should be learning activities and exercises which are fun to work through					
	VARIETY					
4.11	A variety of types of exercises should be present in the programme					

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA RELATING TO TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES	strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

5. ASSESSMENT

		strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree
5.1	A placement assessment should be administered before a learner starts a programme					
5.2	Regular diagnostic assessments should be administered by the tutor					
5.3	At the end of a programme, learners should complete an exit assessment					

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA RELATING TO ASSESSMENT	strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THIS STUDY:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

EVALUATION OF *INTERACT : AN ENGLISH COURSE FOR ADULTS LEVEL 3*

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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Does the programme undertake to enhance the learner's communicative competence?

There are exercises in which learners can build the confidence they need to put their newly-acquired skills to practice in everyday situations and for a variety of purposes.

Rating 1

1.2 Is there a written set of clear, achievable, and specific aims and objectives for the programme?

The overall aims of the programme are not stated, in a comprehensive manner, anywhere in the programme. Each unit has its objectives and, in addition, there is a list of competencies, skills language functions, exponents, and performance outcomes that will be addressed in that unit.

Rating 2

2. CONTENT

2.1 Is the reading material meaningful and relevant to the learner?

Many reading passages are in the form of dialogues which learners must practise reading with a partner. These dialogues revolve around issues which are relevant to the learners.

Rating 1

2.2 Are listening activities set in a meaningful context for the learner?

There are a number of listening activities, and they are set in a meaningful context. The unit relating to sport for example, has an exercise where learners need to listen to two short commentaries read by the tutor. They then need to answer questions based on these commentaries.

Rating 1

2.3 Are there many opportunities for the learner to practise speaking in a variety of contexts?

There are many discussions on numerous topics - these take place in pairs and in groups. Learners are also encouraged to go around the class to collect relevant information from other learners.

Rating 2

2.4 Are life skills included in the programme?

There are many life skills in the programme: preparing a CV, completing an application form,

interpreting maps, medical aid and pension funds, dealing with emergencies, buying goods on hire purchase, on account and on lay-by.

Rating 1

2.5 Are learners taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something?

Yes, learners learn how to ask for and give directions, discuss opinions, give advice, hold a debate, classify things, agree and disagree. Learners are also taught the conventions of polite communication, and formal and informal expressions.

Rating 1

2.6 Is vocabulary presented within a meaningful context?

Each unit deals with a different topic, for example, transport, employment, sport, and shopping. The vocabulary introduced in each unit is always within a meaningful context. Generally, new vocabulary is pre-taught before being used in a reading comprehension or practice exercise.

Rating 1

2.7 Are written exercises meaningful and functional for the learner?

Most of the written exercises involve completing some grammatical structure, which enhance learning and assist the learner to build confidence needed to write correctly. The functionality of these types of exercises is not always evident. There are many other written exercises based on free writing, however, which are more meaningful and functional for the learner.

Rating 2

2.8 Does the programme include different social and cultural values?

To a certain extent the programme does look at different values.

Rating 2

2.9 Are learners encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing?

There are many exercises where learners need to fill in missing words and answer comprehension questions. There are however, many free writing exercises on various topics, for example *I think buses are safer than taxis, but cars are the safest.*

Rating 1

2.10 Are there exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse?

Words, phrases and sentences are within the context of whole, real language texts that are part of real language experiences of learners.

Rating 1

2.11 Are language form (structure) and use (meaning) taught and integrated?

In many cases, learners are introduced to the language use first, for example *He caught a bus home*, then the language form, i.e. the past simple tense, is explained.

Rating 1

2.12 Is grammar taught?

Grammar is taught within each unit. It is always presented within the context of that unit.

Rating 1

2.13 Are spelling exercises included?

There are no spelling exercises as such, but spelling is introduced within each unit.

Rating 3

2.14 Is pronunciation taught?

Pronunciation is not taught explicitly. The tutor would probably correct and monitor his learners' pronunciation.

Rating 5

2.15 Do learners have their own space to include content which interests them?

Yes. If for example a unit deals with sports, learners may want to extend the lesson by discussing other sports-related issues.

Rating 2

3. MATERIALS

3.1 Are visuals an integral part of the programme?

Visuals are used extensively and appropriately. All the pictures used are there for a purpose, that is, they're there to enhance understanding of the text and thus assist in the learning process. Some of the diagrams and illustrations however, are of a poor quality.

Rating 2

3.2 Is the appearance of the material adult-like?

It is clear that the material is for adults and that it would appeal to adult learners.

Rating 1

3.3 Is authentic as well as scripted material used?

Authentic material is used (advertisements, newspaper clippings). There are a few literary texts interspersed amongst scripted text.

Rating 1

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

4.1 Are learners encouraged to be active agents in the learning process?

Learners are constantly active in the classroom, either reading, writing, speaking, or preparing to do

a mini survey in their neighbourhood.

Rating 1

4.2 Is the learner's prior experience and knowledge taken into consideration?

In most cases the learner's prior knowledge is taken into account. However, there are certain sports for example, with which many learners would not be able to identify. The sport in question is skiing. Although it is good to introduce new vocabulary and concepts to enrich learners, they may struggle to understand or identify with some issues.

Rating 2

4.3 Are there activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities?

Learners discuss a variety of situations and events in groups and in pairs. Learners are given a table with data for example, and they are required to prepare a bar chart from that information. Learners are also encouraged to do research work, for example, in a group they must think of five questions on any issue they choose, then go to their neighbours and carry out this research. Learners need to categorise items on a scale (from the most general to the most specific); compare graphs; and predict outcomes of an experiment. At times learners also need to discuss profound issues such as *A laser beam directed at the eyes of the monkey causes them to sizzle and explode.*

Rating 1

4.4 Are there learning activities and exercises which are entertaining to work through?

Most learners would probably enjoy working through this programme. There are comic strips to

read, interesting class surveys to do, and fun role plays to carry out. There is also a shopping game which would appeal to many learners.

Rating 1

4.5 Are there exercises that focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing?

The units all have writing, reading and speaking exercises which are fully integrated. The listening exercises, however, are limited.

Rating 2

4.6 Is the programme learner-centred?

Learners are involved in activities in which they actively participate; their needs are addressed; they learn how to learn; and they are encouraged to find out things for themselves. At Level 3, one can expect to begin reaping the benefits of learner self-direction, such as learners' enhanced abilities as planners and problem-solvers.

Rating 1

4.7 Are there a variety of types of exercises?

There are many different types of exercises to do, ranging from filling in blank spaces, to answering comprehension questions, to writing letters, and completing charts.

Rating 1

4.8 Are learners encouraged to work in pairs and groups?

Within each unit, learners work extensively in pairs and in groups.

Rating 1

4.9 Is the programme specifically for adults?

Everything relates to adults and their world.

Rating 1

4.10 Is there grading and recycling of content?

Grading is evident from one unit to the next. However, there is not a great deal of recycling.

Rating 3

4.11 Are learners required to do dictations?

No.

Rating 5

5. ASSESSMENT

5.1 Is a placement assessment administered before a learner starts the programme?

There is a placement assessment.

Rating 1

5.2 Do learners complete an exit assessment at the end of the programme?

There is a programme exit assessment. In addition, learners may write the Independent Examinations Board Level 3, *Communications in English* Examination, once they've completed this programme.

Rating 1

5.3 Are regular diagnostic assessments administered by the tutor?

After each unit there is a short diagnostic assessment.

Rating 1

FINAL RATING

The total amounts to a negative score of 54/170 and therefore a positive score of 116/170. This equals 68%.

EVALUATION OF *COMMUNITY TRAINING INSTITUTE ADVANCED ENGLISH PROGRAMME*

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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Does the programme undertake to enhance the learner's communicative competence?

There are situations in the programme where learners are required to communicate meaningful messages which will develop their communicative competence. However, there tends to be an overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences. This could inhibit the development of communicative abilities.

Rating 4

1.2 Is there a written set of clear, achievable, and specific aims and objectives for the programme?

The providers of the programme clearly stipulate the aims of the programme. The objectives for each section have also been clearly stated. These objectives do not appear in the learners' books but in the tutor's manual. An example of an objective is taken from Section 7: *To teach students the question words. Firstly, as a vocabulary enrichment, and secondly for comprehension purposes. A lot of reading situations are based on question words. The understanding of these is essential for*

comprehension. Thirdly, these question words are going to give the student the structure for sentence construction.

Rating 1

2. CONTENT

2.1 Is the reading material meaningful and relevant to the learner?

There are advertisements to read about housekeepers, barmaids, motorcycle drivers, etc. This is relevant to the learners. There is a poem (*Questions at Night* by Louis Untermeyer) which the researcher believes is difficult for the learners to understand. A reading passage which learners can relate to is *Wiseman Gumede*, a story about a machine operator who works in a gold mine and lives in Soweto. There are also a number of relevant passages related to life skills. For example, there is a comprehension exercise about Peter opening a savings account at the Post Office.

Rating 2

2.2 Are listening activities set in a meaningful context for the learner?

There are seventeen sections in the programme, and each section has a cassette with recorded material which the learners must listen to. The activities are set in a meaningful context for the learner.

Rating 1

2.3 Are there many opportunities for the learner to practise speaking in a variety of contexts?

The core material does not offer many opportunities for learners to practise speaking, but the enrichment exercises done by the tutor do encourage learners to practise speaking. Tutors may, for example, present a picture to the learners and ask them to discuss what is happening in the picture; tutors may choose a headline from a newspaper article and ask learners for their opinions and ideas about the topic; or to practise sequencing, learners may need to role play to the class how to make a cup of tea. Tutors are, at all times, urged to do enrichment exercises and activities - this includes speaking activities.

Rating 1

2.4 Are life skills included in the programme?

The comprehension exercise of Peter opening a savings account is an example of a life skill. In another activity, learners are given a map of Johannesburg and are required to locate certain areas on this map. Learners are also given a table with data, from which they must extract relevant information. The tutors would need to provide additional life skills when doing enrichment exercises.

Rating 3

2.5 Are learners taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something?

This is not found in the core work of the course. It is covered by the tutor during enrichment work.

Rating 3

2.6 Is vocabulary presented within a meaningful context?

Generally, new vocabulary is introduced to explain a grammatical structure, for example, *anti-aircraft* and *submarine* are used to explain the use of prefixes. Many vocabulary words introduced in the programme are not relevant to the learners and would probably never be used by them, for example, *post-script*, *triannual*, *pedigreed*, *scuba-diver*, and *His Highness the Emperor*.

Rating 4

2.7 Are written exercises meaningful and functional for the learner?

In most cases learners need to complete parts of partly written material. For example, from a group of suffixes learners need to choose the correct one and write it next to the appropriate root. For compound words, learners are given a sentence such as *A small tray which holds cigarette ash* and they must write *ashtray*. Learners are also given short comprehensions to do, where they are required to supply a few missing words. Learners also need to fill in correct prepositions in the spaces provided. Generally, the written exercises seem to be mechanical drills, although towards the end of the programme, there are a few exercises where learners are required to write something about a picture.

Rating 4

2.8 Does the programme include different social and cultural values?

No such values are evident.

Rating 5

2.9 Are learners encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing?

The main focus is on controlled writing. There is no evidence that learners need to write about their own experiences or something special they've done. In other words, there is no free writing.

Rating 4

2.10 Are there exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse?

Most of the exercises introduce units of language, but do not show the learner how to combine these to create discourse.

Rating 4

2.11 Are language form (structure) and use (meaning) taught and integrated?

There is a strong emphasis on language form, but very little language use is taught. It would be up to the tutor to introduce supplementary material to show the use of the language.

Rating 4

2.12 Is grammar taught?

Grammar is taught extensively in the programme. However, the researcher found that there are many grammatical errors throughout the programme. For example, *er* is supposedly the suffix in the word *water*, and *ure* is the suffix in *future*; *the granny*, together, are classified as a noun; and there are odd sentences such as *Pretty, thin Susan walks.*

Rating 1 (The evaluation is based on the fact that grammar is taught, however, the standard of grammar is poor).

2.13 Are spelling exercises included?

Spelling exercises are included. Once again, there are spelling errors such as *deminish* to introduce the prefix *de*.

Rating 2

2.14 Is pronunciation taught?

Indirectly, pronunciation is taught through the cassettes. In addition, learners read aloud and their pronunciation is corrected and monitored.

Rating 1

2.15 Do learners have their own space to include content which interests them?

To a certain extent, learners are allowed to indicate topics that interest them. It is up to the tutor concerned to "create" a lesson around the learners' interests.

Rating 3

3. MATERIALS

3.1 Are visuals an integral part of the programme?

The visuals used may assist learners, especially towards the end of the programme. There is for example a picture of a medical doctor and the word *doctor* underneath. At this level learners should all know what a doctor is and recognise a doctor in the picture. Another picture has a boy holding a ball and wearing a t-shirt with "boy" printed on it. The word underneath is *student*. This does not seem to be an appropriate match between the visual and the text. Visuals are used effectively to explain prepositions: *under*, *in*, *above*, etc. Visuals are also used effectively in a few exercises where various pictures are given and learners need to arrange these in sequential order. Overall, the visuals are not really an integral part of the programme.

Rating 3

3.2 Is the appearance of the material adult-like?

A vast number of pictures have children, but generally, the appearance would be acceptable to adults.

Rating 2

3.3 Is authentic as well as scripted material used?

Most of the material is scripted, but authentic material is used as well.

Rating 2

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

4.1 Are learners encouraged to be active agents in the learning process?

Learners are seen as active agents in the learning process. They need to do things by themselves in order to understand new concepts.

Rating 1

4.2 Is the learner's prior experience and knowledge taken into consideration?

There are cases where the learner's prior knowledge is not taken into account, for example the picture of the medical doctor with the word *doctor* underneath - at this level a learner knows what a doctor is. To explain nouns, pictures such as a dog and a chair, together with their names are given. Again, at this level learners know what a chair looks like. Some of the exercises, for example the one of the scuba-diver under the sea, may not relate to experiences that learners have had, so they may have difficulty comprehending them.

Rating 4

4.3 Are there activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities?

There are many rote drills. For example, in one exercise there are four columns (noun, verb, adverb, prep/noun) with appropriate words in each column. Learners are required to choose a word from each column and form sentences. How much learning takes place in this situation? In other activities, learners must underline verbs and draw circles around prepositions. Even with comprehension exercises, learners are asked a question, then half the answer is already provided -

they only need to complete the sentence.

Towards the end of the course however, there are exercises where learners must extract information from given data, and analyse certain passages. Many of the exercises suggested are good, but certainly, cognitive-type exercises are few and far between in the core of the programme. Tutors are told in each section to do cognitive-type enrichment exercises.

Rating 4

4.4 Are there learning activities and exercises which are entertaining to work through?

Games and role plays are not part of the core programme. Fun activities are not apparent in the core programme. They would probably be part of enrichment exercises. Tutors are urged to spend time on different ways of using the newly-learnt skills, for example word games.

Rating 3

4.5 Are there exercises that focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing?

Yes. Learners need to listen to a passage from the cassette. They are then given the passage to read. They need to talk about the topic discussed in the passage, then they need to write a few sentences related to the passage.

Rating 1

4.6 Is the programme learner-centred?

The learner is seen as the most important element of the learning process. Learners actively

participate in the programme; they are encouraged to find out things for themselves, and some of their needs are addressed.

Rating 2

4.7 Are there a variety of types of exercises?

There are a variety of types of exercises.

Rating 1

4.8 Are learners encouraged to work in pairs and groups?

There isn't much evidence that learners should work in pairs and groups. This would be left to the tutor presenting the course.

Rating 4

4.9 Is the programme specifically for adults?

Overall, the programme is for adults, but there are certain passages and activities which are more suitable for children.

Rating 2

4.10 Is there grading and recycling of content?

Yes and no. At times it appears that there is grading from one section to the next. At other times, the "jump" from one section to the next seems to be too vast or too small. Some information is not

sufficiently recycled. The tutor would need to be aware of this and spend extra time reinforcing certain concepts.

Rating 3

4.11 Are learners required to do dictations?

Not in the programme, only in the pre- and post-tests.

Rating 5

5. ASSESSMENT

5.1 Is a placement assessment administered before a learner starts the programme?

The programme has a good placement assessment.

Rating 1

5.2 Do learners complete an exit assessment at the end of the programme?

There is a programme exit assessment, and in addition, learners may sit the Level 3 Independent Examinations Board, *Communication in English* examination.

Rating 1

5.3 Are regular diagnostic assessments administered by the tutor?

This is definitely a positive feature of the programme. Diagnostic assessments are administered

regularly.

Rating 1

FINAL RATING

The total amounts to a negative score of 87/170 and therefore a positive score of 83/170. This equals 49%.

EVALUATION OF *ENGLISH FOR ADULTS SOCIAL ENGLISH PROGRAMME*

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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Does the programme undertake to enhance the learner's communicative competence?

Definitely. There are many exercises in which learners can build the confidence they need to put their newly-acquired skills to practice in everyday situations and for a variety of purposes. Learners have many opportunities to communicate meaningful messages.

Rating 1

1.2 Is there a written set of clear, achievable, and specific aims and objectives for the programme?

The providers of the programme stipulate the aims of the entire series of programmes, as well as the aims of the Social English programme. Each lesson has an objective and learners know up front what will be covered in the lesson and what skills will be acquired.

Rating 2

2. CONTENT

2.1 Is the reading material meaningful and relevant to the learner?

All the reading material is meaningful and relevant to the learner. Some of the reading topics include: *following instructions*; *making choices*; *asking for directions*; *making enquiries*; and *going to the bank.*

Rating 1

2.2 Are listening activities set in a meaningful context for the learner?

With each lesson, learners look at a picture, listen to a cassette recording of the passage which follows the picture, and then read the passage. The listening activities are all set in a meaningful context.

Rating 1

2.3 Are there many opportunities for the learner to practise speaking in a variety of contexts?

There are numerous opportunities for the learner to practise speaking in a variety of contexts, ranging from enquiring where he can catch a taxi, to where he can find the nearest bank, to asking someone about the most exciting thing that ever happened to him.

Rating 1

2.4 Are life skills included in the programme?

There is a great emphasis on life skills. These include filling in forms, going to the bank, asking about accommodation, asking for help, applying for an ID document, and dealing with emergencies.

Rating 1

2.5 Are learners taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context, for example, how to request something?

In almost every lesson, learners are taught how to use language that is appropriate to the social context: making requests, asking for directions; talking about likes and dislikes, making excuses, saying sorry, making enquiries, complaining, apologizing, making suggestions, and asking for information.

Rating 1

2.6 Is vocabulary presented within a meaningful context?

Vocabulary is only presented within a meaningful context. If for example, the lesson is on *What's the matter*, the vocabulary introduced is related: *flu*, *temperature*, *migraine*, *cough*, *medicine*, *remedy*, *sore*, *keep out of reach of children*, *I've got* _____, etc.

Rating 1

2.7 Are written exercises meaningful and functional for the learner?

Each lesson has a written component. These exercises relate to the topic of the lesson. In most cases

the exercises are meaningful and functional for the learner, but there are instances where there are drill exercises which may be rather meaningless.

Rating 2

2.8 Does the programme include different social and cultural values?

The learners' "new" culture is introduced in a non-threatening manner, and they are made aware of issues which are acceptable and unacceptable.

Rating 1

2.9 Are learners encouraged to do controlled as well as free writing?

There is a good mix between controlled and free writing exercises. There are exercises ranging from *fill in the missing preposition* to write a paragraph about *the most exciting thing that has happened to you.*

Rating 1

2.10 Are there exercises that teach the learner how to combine functional units of language to create discourse?

Learners are made aware of how sentences are organised together. Words, phrases and sentences occur within the context of whole, real language texts that are part of real language experiences of learners.

Rating 1

2.11 Are language form (structure) and use (meaning) taught and integrated?

Language form and use are always taught and completely integrated.

Rating 1

2.12 Is grammar taught?

Grammar is taught in each lesson.

Rating 1

2.13 Are spelling exercises included?

There are no spelling exercises as such, although new words are introduced in each lesson.

Rating 5

2.14 Is pronunciation taught?

No, although pronunciation is corrected when learners practise speaking and during role plays.

Rating 3

2.15 Do learners have their own space to include content which interests them?

Should learners be interested in a topical issue, the programme is flexible enough for the tutor to accommodate.

Rating 2

3. MATERIALS

3.1 Are visuals an integral part of the programme?

Most definitely. Each lesson has a picture related to the main topic. Learners are encouraged to discuss the picture before reading the passage which follows.

Rating 1

3.2 Is the appearance of the material adult-like?

The programme is for adults and the materials are adult-like.

Rating 1

3.3 Is authentic as well as scripted material used?

There is a lot of authentic material (newspaper clippings, advertisements, product leaflets) as well as scripted material. Each lesson has a scripted passage at the beginning.

Rating 1

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

4.1 Are learners encouraged to be active agents in the learning process?

Learners cannot be passive in this programme. Lessons adhere to the following pattern (with slight variations): look, listen, read, study, write, speak, drill, role play, ask, answer, survey.

Rating 1

4.2 Is the learner's prior experience and knowledge taken into consideration?

The programme assumes that the learner comes to the class with some knowledge. The lessons build on the learner's existing knowledge.

Rating 1

4.3 Are there activities which engage the learners' cognitive capacities?

There are activities which require the learner to use his cognitive capacities, for example: *what do you dream about for your future?*; *planning a project*, and *write an advert for a lost item.*

Rating 2

4.4 Are there learning activities and exercises which are entertaining to work through?

The role plays are great fun and most enjoyable. Learners are encouraged to do surveys, for example, they need to talk to five colleagues and ask about their interests, their likes and dislikes, etc. Learners also complete their family tree.

Rating 2

4.5 Are there exercises that focus on all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing?

Each lesson deals with listening to a cassette recording; talking about the main picture and doing

some other speaking practice; reading the main passage; and writing something.

Rating 1

4.6 Is the programme learner-centred?

The learners are seen as the most important part of the learning process. Learners are involved in activities in which they actively participate; their needs are addressed; they learn how to learn; and they are encouraged to find out things for themselves.

Rating 1

4.7 Are there a variety of types of exercises?

There is an incredible variety of types of exercises ranging from rather boring ones to very exciting and challenging ones.

Rating 1

4.8 Are learners encouraged to work in pairs and groups?

In most lessons, learners must work in pairs or groups.

Rating 1

4.9 Is the programme specifically for adults?

As the name of the entire programme (English For Adults) indicates, it is designed specifically for adults, and the exercises and activities relate directly to adults.

Rating 1

4.10 Is there grading and recycling of content?

The content is graded and there is a steady progression from one lesson to the next. Revision is an important aspect of this programme.

Rating 1

4.11 Are learners required to do dictations?

No.

Rating 5

5. ASSESSMENT

5.1 Is a placement assessment administered before a learner starts the programme?

A very comprehensive assessment is administered before a learner starts the programme.

Rating 1

5.2 Do learners complete an exit assessment at the end of the programme?

There is an exit assessment at the end of the programme. In addition, learners may write the Independent Examinations Board Level 3, *Communications in English* Examination, once they've completed this programme.

Rating 1

5.3 Are regular diagnostic assessments administered by the tutor?

There are diagnostic assessments, but not enough of them. There should be a short diagnostic assessment after each lesson so that the tutor knows whether the learners have mastered the content of that lesson before moving on. The tutor would need to devise additional diagnostic assessments for this programme.

Rating 4

FINAL RATING

The total amounts to a negative score of 52/170 and therefore a positive score of 118/170. This equals 69%.

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